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Editorial Leadership

Editorial Board

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Cover Art: mage description: a photo of the CCCC Feminist Caucus wall quilt, sewn by Holly Hassel from fabric squares made by attendees of CCCC 2019. Overlaid in the lower right corner is a yellow square with Peitho Volume 25.3 Spring 2023 typed in a handwriting font.

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Editors' Introduction

Aurora Matzke, Louis M. Maraj, Angela Clark-Oates, Anyssa Gonzalez,

& Sherry Rankins-Robertson

Aurora Matzke is Writing Center Director at Chapman University. She enjoys learning about and working toward ways to create successful access pathways for all students. Most recently, she collaboratively guest edited a special issue of Writing Program Administration based on the legacy of Mike Rose and authored a chapter in Women's Ways of Making. Currently in press are a collaboratively edited collection Systems Shift: Creating and Navigating Change in Rhetoric and Composition Administration and a chapter in Mentorship and Methodology.

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Sherry Rankins-Robertson is chair and professor of writing and rhetoric at the University of Central Florida. Her research includes community-engaged writing, feminist leadership, writing program administration, and teaching and admin-

istration in online learning environments. She has co-edited two book collections along with a special issue of WPA: Writing Program Administration and co-authored a first-year composition textbook along with numerous articles and book chapters. She has held leadership roles on executive committees and task forces in the field of writing. For the past twenty-five years, she's taught first-year writing; she also teaches graduate-level theory courses. For more than a decade, she's been teaching in prisons. Sherry is a 200-hour registered yoga teacher with Yoga Alliance.

Coalitions sometimes sustain—whether through embracing or navigating differences (Glenn and Lunsford) by releasing those who disagree with their respective practices and missions, or in recalibrating and finding new purpose in some other shared motive. Coalitions, however, also often dissolve: perhaps the dissolution takes place due to the fracas of attempting to include, or because some attempt to speak for others, or maybe in contentions over best practices, or even in a kind of successful irrelevance–as its members' "*strategic* use of positivist essentialism in a scrupulously visible political interest" possibly having seen fruit with policies revised, officials elected, or mindsets changed (Spivak 205).

But coalitions do not come easy, as they usually represent ephemeral, desired attachments to what cultural theorist Sara Ahmed might call "happy objects" in her 2010 book *The Promise of Happiness.* And often, as historical challenges to mainstream white feminism borne of unbelonging—particularly in calls by Black feminists like Audre Lorde and feminists of color like Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa—attest, coalitions can offend, disbar, and serve racist, heteropatriarchal, settler-colonial, ableist, or otherwise normative ends, whether or not they intend to. They may, alternatively, result in the formation of new kinds of coalitions among racially marginalized subjects; for instance, Black lesbian feminist and Combahee River Collective founder, Barbara Smith, credits Moraga and Anzaldúa's collection *This Bridge Called My Back* as "a document of and a catalyst for these coalitions" (xliv). And while some cultural philosophies–such as Afropessimism, for example (Wilderson III)–ultimately reject coalition altogether, those in feminist circles have theorized/practiced the politics of coalition (arguably) from nascence, from the event that collective organization became central to its justice-oriented missions.

It may be worth repeating that coalitions certainly do not come easy, and when idealized by its participants' visions of "common ground," might grow more difficult, less open, and do more harm than any initial aspiration for social good. They also often fail: fail to reach across difference/s, fail to fulfil their purposes, or fail to maintain momentum after initially coalescing. And, of course, coalitions do emerge and exist with more explicitly nefarious end-goals. Coalitions are not inherently positioned toward human good. With this backdrop in mind, alongside the contemporary work of the many who continue to reiteratively theorize coalition in our fields and subfields, such as communication scholar Karma R. Chávez, rhetoric and writing studies scholar Pritha Prasad and technical communication scholars Rebecca Walton, Kristen R. Moore, and Natasha N. Jones, this special issue emphasizes the myriad (re-)makings, (re-)breakings, complications,

desires, challenges, and dreams lived, practiced, and theorized by its contributors in their varied roles and spaces.

When we proposed this special issue, we sought to illuminate the conceptual and embodied contact zones we discuss above. Tensions that, for us, were centered by scholars and attendees who participated in any of the three CCCC Feminist Workshop between 2021-2023 when the majority of the editors of this special issue co-chaired. During that time frame, CCCC's shifted from in-person to fully online to hybrid due to COVID-19 and attempted to move toward more national and international attendance inclusivity. With this organizational backdrop, it was during the 2021 CCCC Feminist Workshop that we grappled with coalition as a commonplace. Lana Oweidat called on us to understand the value of sitting in discomfort, arguing for coalitions that center accountability, responsibility, ethics and intersectionality (a call carried forward by Fitzzsimmons's and Prasad's piece in this issue). Aja Martinez also reminded us of the potential of being uncomfortable, of recognizing our discomfort as an indication that we were engaged "in the homework of coalition," echoes of which we experience in Karen Tellez-Trujillo's contribution, temporal loops experienced by many of us as we moved through the virtual spaces of conference that year.

As we carried the ideas of Oweidat and Martinez, along with the ideas from the other feminist scholar presenters and attendees, back to our communities and began proposing the 2022 CCCC Feminist Workshop, we responded to Perryman-Clark's call by inviting feminist scholars whose research and teaching addressed the need for us, as educators and activists, to construct spaces--in our classrooms and communities--that adequately respond to the traumatizing lived experiences of our students, while acknowledging how traumatizing many of academia's practices, practices steeped in white supremacist notions of power and power acquisition, continue to be. We also more formally imagined the workshop space as having the potential to be an intellectual and professional loop, proposing a recursivity in attendance, speaking, and mentoring by feminist scholar presenters from one year to the next.

Consequently, scholar-presenters (graduate students, current faculty, and emeritus scholars) from the 2021 CCCC Feminist Workshop were invited to return as respondents and Workshop co-leaders in 2022 and 2023, where the cycle would then, again, repeat. This, we believed, might be a sustainable strategy for rooting the Workshop as a constant (prospective) site for coalition-building. The CCCC Feminist Workshop, then, would be an annual convening dedicated to offering an opportunity to construct a diverse, intergenerational coalition that would not ignore the discomfort and violence of past attempts to build trans-generational coalitions in feminist circles in our field. If this was possible, a space to construct more opportunities to listen recursively to emerging, current, and past wisdom of participants might open (Brereton & Gannet; Wang; Gaillet). We hoped, then, that the coalition-building would both be attendant to what Aja Martinez argues is the "responsibility of privilege," and we would work to center and amplify new and diverse voices by encouraging a joining and rejoining of on-going and ever-changing scholarly conversa-

tions.

Centering the above strategy, then, the 2022 Feminist Workshop featured BIPOC and un(der)represented scholars, which included august feminist respondents and emerging scholars, who grappled with how to focus on student wellbeing in the decision-making of education, how to approach teaching and learning through trauma-informed perspectives, how to address the double pandemic that was (and still is) affecting both our health and our ability to live safely in an environment where black and brown bodies are constantly being policed and killed, and how, if any way, coalition could be used to inform these processes (search #FeministWorkshop #4C22 on X, formerly Twitter, for snapshots of the day). Karma Chávez, who is published in this issue, challenged us during that workshop to interrogate an assumption of commonality that is pervasive in discussions of coalition-building, particularly in feminist circles, while Mays Imad, a neuroscientist, shared her research on trauma-informed pedagogies and practices being deployed more frequently in higher education, as communities found themselves collectively processing the ongoing trauma of COVID-19, asking the audience to attend to the very real generational and active traumas experienced by students and educators. We ended the day listening and learning from Beverly Moss, Shirley Wilson Logan, Lana Owedait, and Kathi Yancey as they conversed in a roundtable discussion. “What’s a different type of model for coalition going forward?” Moss asked. In response, Logan encouraged us to disrupt the idea(s) that coalition-building is an invitation to others to join us in the spaces in which we already reside; instead, she said, we should consider learning where folx are already doing the work and building coalitions in those spaces. From these ideas, the editors began (re)imagining this work as a recognition of and as a traveling *toward* coalition. As reflection and movement.

Moss’s question, carried from the 2022 workshop into our everyday lives, encouraged the co-chairs to trouble presence for the CCCC 2023 Feminist Workshop, acknowledging in the proposal that we had already spent two years focused on the trials, opportunities, and trauma inherent in coalition building, emphasizing a commitment to disrupt, dismantle, and rebuild coalitions across commonplaces and differences. As Karma Chávez observes in *The Borders of AIDS: Race, Quarantine, and Resistance*, “because coalescing cannot be taken for granted, it requires constant work if it is to endure” (8). Inspired by Frankie Condon’s challenge to think more deeply about how we might “do hope” in difficult circumstances, we expanded our focus on coalitions as means for inclusion/exclusion by focusing on how our organizations and institutions limit or expand notions of “presence.”

In Chicago, we centered rage and discomfort, movement and inertia, sound and silence, flow and “stickiness” (Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*). We asked: what does it mean “to be present” in spaces historically structured for the exploitation and demise of historically marginalized peoples? In what ways might we dream new futures together by acknowledging, mourning, and healing from–but not premised on continuing–such violence? When we met face-to-face

for the first time in two years, we celebrated *and* lamented *and* challenged *and* imagined. One of the key initiatives at the Workshop was also the invitation to various Caucus leaders to come and share key initiatives from their own workshops, special interest groups, and SIGs. Representatives from the Asian/American Caucus, Black Caucus, Latinx Caucus, LGBTQIA+ Caucus, and more, came and educated Feminist Caucus members regarding their initiatives, ideas, frustrations and hopes for coalition.

As workshop leaders, feminist scholars, and attendees challenged, interrogated, reimagined, and (sometimes) reproduced what Fitzsimmons and Prasad (in this issue) call "the rhetorics of positivity and abundance surrounding questions of identity, power, and social justice" an exigency emerged to continue these conversations in the pages of *Peitho*. In this way, we wanted the intellectual work of the workshop to extend to the larger field, to ask folks to listen and learn how feminist scholars navigate the paradox of coalition-building. The authors in this issue took up our call to the field to continue to interrogate this paradox, to challenge the belief that coalition-making is inherently a tactic that centers a building *with*, to expose the failures of coalition-building to construct more diverse, equitable and inclusive spaces, to articulate, as Chávez reminds us, both "the dangers and possibilities of coalitions."

In this vein, we have organized this issue into four thematic categories that emerged as we read and re-read across the manuscripts. In the first section, entitled "Coalition in Theory/Praxis," authors Chávez, Glasscott et al., House et al., and Fitzsimmons and Prasad work to uncover the potential for fractures, repairs, and new growth in coalitional work. The authors provide context for what they argue is the potential of hegemonic reification in coalitional work. When read collectively, the difficulties Chávez and House highlight are further brought into focus by the practices detailed by both Glasscott et al. and Fitzsimmons and Prasad. Ultimately, the authors deftly break down how, if unacknowledged or under-examined, imperialist desires for conquest insidiously and negatively impact just structures of engagement. They provide readers with ways to apply inclusive coalition theory to practice even in these troubling times. These skilful reminders then lead us to section two, "Accountability with/in Community Relations."

"Accountability with/in Community Relations" opens with Letizia Guglielmo and Meghan Stipe's detailing of their campus and community partnership, as they detail their own practice of Del Hierro, Levy, and Price "orientations and re-orientations." These differing instantiations of accountability continue in section two through both the works of Keshia McClantoc and Megan Faver Hartline and Maria Novotny. McClantoc highlights how understanding, defining, working with, and establishing community partnerships requires actionable principles of accountability. Principles of accountable reciprocity, then, as outlined by authors Hartline and Novotny through the works of Alvarez, Riley Mukavetz, Shah, Patel, Baker-Bell, Martinez, Crewnshaw, and McCoy, are applied throughout the section. The *Peitho* authors poignantly demonstrate that without direct leadership from community partners, feminist coalition cannot thrive.

From unearthing practices rooted in white supremacist notions of suppression to the klaxon call of the effects of burnout on student performance, section three or, "The Promises and Perils of Coalition Building in Academia," these authors focus our attention on the ways in which coalition impedes or promotes inclusive academic ecologies. The section opens by Abbas et al, who show that coalition work, especially in the context of an academic department is always, already messy, complicated, unfinished, and generally further from change than coalitional activists might hope. This is followed by McDermott who performs an examination of the ways in which their disciplinary training might be one of the very things inhibiting the ability of feminists to form life-giving coalitions for change. These investigations are further challenged by the work of Ghimire et al, as they position transnational mentorship as a functional way to build disciplinary coalitions across time and space.

To remind us of the time-bound nature of coalition, section four closes the issue with the section "Temporal Politics of Coalition." The authors of this section remind us of the recursive nature of coalition, both in the forming and maintenance of inclusive coalition. They examine the ways in which coalition and relationships with/in them change over time while having the potential to chase continuity along the thoroughfares of established legacy. From the localized examples provided by McMartin and Diaz to the instantly recognizable iconography examined by Molko, this section provides ways in which readers can examine time and timeliness as concepts directly influenced by the building, staying power, and adaptability of locality. The section closes with Tellez-Trujillo's individual contemplation on coalition's meanings for her inside and outside of the academy, emphasizing how lived experience, writing, and retreat may inform coalitional engagement and mentorship across time and space.

Of course, the special issue would not be complete without the work of some of our foremothers who bring each of us to this space. Shirley Wilson Logan, Cheryl Glenn, and Andrea Lunsford use the afterword to ruminate on dual calls–one from Moss in the Workshop itself (as we've mentioned earlier), and one in the 2015 text in *Peitho* by Glenn and Lunsford that calls for more inclusion "to seize kairotic moments as they arise to keep central the goals of supporting research by, about, and for women and mentoring young scholars squarely in its sights" (13). Together, these foremothers consider how this special issue responds to their calls, to continue our recursive trajectory, as we work to uncover, recover, and trouble the temporality and embodiment of coalition.

We want to thank the diligent support of Clancy Radcliff and the Peitho team for their engagement, guidance, and patience from the writing of our call for this special issue through its publication. We are particularly grateful to PS Berge for the thoughtful design of the cover. The collection would be empty if not for the over fifty authors who worked tirelessly to write, revise, rewrite, revise, and edit these texts. It was our honor to facilitate this collective conversation on coalition.

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Coalition in Theory/Praxis

The Risks and Possibilities of Academic Feminist Coalition Building

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Abstract: Feminist scholars have long debated the importance and challenges of doing coalition work across lines of difference. This work has often centralized the difficulties of cross-racial feminist coalitions, but as it has often emerged from an intersectional perspective, other dimensions of power such as class, education, gender, ability, nation, and sexuality are also among the relevant considerations when theorizing and practicing coalition. In this reflection, Chávez considers the risks and opportunities engendered in building feminist coalitions within the academic context across our many power differentials—as administrators, tenured professors, tenure-track professors, contingent faculty, staff, graduate students, and undergraduate students. Despite Chávez's body of work that praises the possibilities of coalition, in this work, she focuses more on the difficulties, the obstacles, and the material constraints that prevent coalescing in academia. The reflection suggests key areas of focus for feminist scholars of rhetoric.

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Keywords: coalitional accountability; material constraints; feminist relationship-building; feminist mentorship

"You don't go into coalition because you just like it. The only reason you would consider trying to team up with somebody who could possibly kill you, is because that's the only way you can figure you can stay alive" (Johnson Reagon 356-7).

"Coalition work is not work done in your home. Coalition work has to be done in the streets. And it is some of the most dangerous work you can do. And you shouldn't look for comfort…You go to the coalition for a few hours and then you go back and take your bottle wherever it is, and then you go back and coalesce some more" (359).

"Coalition can kill people; however, it is not by nature fatal" (361).

A significant part of my scholarly and political work has involved understanding the contours of creating political coalitions and actively trying to build them. It is safe to say that, especially as a young scholar, I tended to glorify coalition, thinking of it as an ideal political practice, maybe the

most ideal political practice to affect change and achieve liberation. It has only been through the years of really doing the work that I've come to understand more fully the cautions that Bernice Johnson Reagon offers about coalition. There's nothing to glorify in coalition. Coalition building is necessary; it is dangerous; and it is not home. Yet, Johnson Reagon did not offer her stark warnings to deter people from the practice; after all, if you're attempting it, it is because you need it. I tend to believe that Johnson Reagon put things in such blunt terms so that people would know what they are getting themselves into and proceed with care.

This essay is a short meditation on the dangers and possibilities of what I call "academic feminist coalitions." I offer a simple argument: it is useful for us, as academic feminists, to think about our relationship building, networking, and mentoring as coalition work. Doing so provides a framework to ask crucial questions that robustly attend to the risks engendered by feminists relating in the academy and lean into the possibilities that such work can simultaneously invite. There is so much possibility for meaningful social and political change in coalition, but we cannot think about the possibility without thinking about the danger, and the danger for whom. In other words, we can't think about coalition without thinking about our differences from one another.

In the academy, we don't exist in Habermas' ideal public sphere where differences can be bracketed. As Audre Lorde says, "Refusing to recognize difference makes it impossible to see the different problems and pitfalls facing us as women [or insert your assumed collectivity here]" (118). What Lorde points to are the dangers inherent in assuming a coherence in identity categories like "woman" or "feminist," which may be better thought of as coalitions comprised of people with a multiplicity of identities and therefore fragile and incoherent. In our contemporary time, this fragility and incoherence has become even more transparent as we have been called so forcefully to consider the multiple subjects of feminism by those who question the gender binary, particularly as binarized gendered thinking intersects with ability, race, class, caste, age, nation, religion and more.

In striving for the possibilities of coalition, we cannot take coalition for granted nor can we take coherence for granted, either within a coalition or within a supposedly coherent identity group on the basis of which one joins into coalition. This is essential when we think about our feminist practices in the academy. Sure, it may seem as if we come together under the auspices of our shared identity as feminist scholars of rhetoric, communication, and composition, but how much do we share?

When we reflect upon feminist teaching, learning, and mentoring, we must raise questions about the coalitions we hope to form among ourselves as faculty and with students. Although in my experience we often begin by asking what we have in common with each other, like Lorde suggests, we may be better served by asking in what ways we are different from each other and from students. For those of us with positions of structural power—as professors and mentors and

people with stable jobs, we must then ask questions about how structural power impacts the way we seek and build coalitions. Again, my experience suggests that we must take that power very seriously and interrogate what it means constantly in our relationships with each other and with students. The interrogation of power is not a straightforward endeavor. As Foucault so poignantly reminds us, power is not held, and it is not uni-directional. Power is exercised. To me, this is a reminder that while faculty are obviously structurally empowered vis-à-vis students and differentially so with each other, no one is without the ability to exercise some form of power in a given relationship. For example, students can exercise immense power, and sometimes that power is even threatening. As a younger gen-Xer, I am on the learning-curve end of social media platforms and practices, and the idea of being an "influencer" is strange to me. It is also hard for me to imagine broadcasting my life on social media like I see some of my students and junior colleagues doing. But many of them do it, and that's totally fine, and many of them have huge followings, sometimes in the tens of thousands on platforms like X (formerly known as Twitter). If someone takes to X to air their grievances about someone or some institution, that is a powerful move. It can rightfully call attention to damage done, and it can also do harm by reducing complex interactions to 140-character bites. I've seen this happen. For example, I once knew a student who identified as a queer feminist of color who felt that a faculty member who was also a queer feminist of color was dishonest with them because the faculty member didn't tell the student that they might be leaving the institution—before the faculty member even knew if the move was a sure thing. When the student found out that the faculty member was leaving, they took to all their social media to publicly decry the faculty member as a liar. While the student couldn't harm the professor's position at either university because the faculty member was tenured, reputational damage was no doubt done as the student had power by virtue of a significant social media audience.

Moreover, often students are far more up-to-date on the latest scholarship, theory, and thinking than those mired in service and teaching, and/or they have very specific (and often quite informed) views about the ways certain course material should be taught. That knowledge can be exercised as a form of intellectual power (and one I hope we generally welcome), but it can also be used to reinforce other forms of power and privilege. For example, I know several Black women professors in feminist courses who have had their syllabi challenged by their non-Black students because they are supposedly teaching too many white scholars or too much "canonical" work. This has happened even in cases when most of a syllabus is comprised of scholars of color and more recent works. In some instances, students have made their grievances known to a department chair or senior faculty member before questioning the professor who teaches the class. The students may have had legitimate concerns, but going directly to someone with more power than the professor is a problematic power move. It suggests both a level of disrespect for the professor's intellectual choices and an understanding of the power the students hold in relation to that professor. I am making some blunt cuts around the different kinds of power people have, but I offer them as anecdotes to remind us that power is complicated and should be treated as such. And those power lines are even further complicated when considering contingent faculty of all kinds,

relationships with department chairs and administrators, and even governing boards or legislators.

When we think about academic feminist relationships of all kinds as coalition work, I think it invites us to ask critical questions about difference and power so that we enter into such relationships intentionally and cautiously. A coalition framework invites us to remember that our academic feminist relationships are political and that it is crucial to consider carefully the harms we can cause, and have caused, sometimes, oftentimes, without even realizing it. When students of color, for example, seek us out as feminist mentors in predominantly white departments, they are in a very precarious position. It may not be life or death, to return us to Johnson Reagon, but it may be. And, we may not know. For instance, I once mentored a brilliant queer, feminist, first-gen, graduate student. The student had a lot of mechanical issues with their writing and came to me for assistance, which I eagerly offered. To me, this student seemed smart and self-assured, so I didn't shy away from offering them very critical but constructive feedback. I didn't hear from them for a good long while after offering the feedback. When they finally surfaced, they reluctantly let me know that my feedback had catapulted them into a bout of extreme anxiety that felt immobilizing. I was stunned, but through conversing with them, I realized how my failure to more carefully frame my feedback in a way that emphasized the strengths as well as the weaknesses did significant damage. I had just come from teaching at an institution with almost all white and privileged students, and so doing this kind of care work had apparently stopped occurring to me. I have since worked hard never to repeat my errors, so that I can meet students where they are and support them in more appropriate ways.

We thus must be transparent about and accountable to our differences and listen to those we want to support, for example, about what support means to them, while never shying away from erecting boundaries that are meaningful to us and that enable our own survival. And it is on this last point where things can also get complicated, particularly when students have an idea about what feminist mentorship, across many lines of difference, is supposed to look like, even more so perhaps when we've signaled to them one kind of relationality only to change course later. That difference, too, must be considered and tended to. I once had a queer feminist student of color with whom I was good friends before they entered the graduate program. When they entered the graduate program, they, rightfully I think, expected our friendship to continue as it had. I expected, without clearly communicating, that for the duration of their graduate program, our relationship would transition to something more professional. I assumed that it was obvious that if I maintained a close friendship with them while not offering the gesture of friendship to other students in the same way that I would be perceived as playing favorites. But this was not clear to a student who was new to graduate school, and it took some careful tending and hard conversations to come to a place where we could both understand where the other was coming from and come to an agreement about what our relationship would look like in this academic space.

This work is hard. It is not, by nature, fatal. But doing it wrong, and I have done it wrong, can be very deeply damaging. It probably sounds too simple, but clear and honest communication is at the heart of effective coalition building. Thinking of our teaching and mentoring as coalition building is important, not so that we can glorify the possibilities of our coming together across difference, but so we can take those relationships with the dead seriousness that Johnson Reagon insists is necessary for coalition work.

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Feminist Editing: Learning to Engage through Coalitional Accountability

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Abstract: This article describes what we call a coalitional approach at the core of the open-access scholarly journal, *Literacy in Composition Studies* (LiCS) that we started over ten years ago. This coalitional orientation guided the founding and ongoing management of what was, in retrospect, a somewhat risky venture: building an independent journal from the ground up as a group of pre-tenure scholars committed to creating a nonhierarchical and collective editorial structure. In the process of developing the journal, we have strived to discover and implement processes, procedures, and practices that highlight coalitional accountability.

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Keywords: coalitional accountability; open-access publishing, open-access ethics, feminist editing ethics

Introduction

Sometimes you only realize how risky something was in hindsight. This article describes what we call a coalitional approach at the core of the open-access scholarly journal, *Literacy in Composition Studies* (*LiCS*), that we started over ten years ago. This coalitional orientation guided the founding and ongoing management of what was, in retrospect, a somewhat risky venture: building an independent journal from the ground up as a group of pre-tenure scholars committed to creating a nonhierarchical and collective editorial structure. The risks here were multifold because not only were we building something new, but we were also committing to a certain level of vulnerability. This vulnerability existed on several levels, from the individual risks we took with our careers in investing time that could have been allocated to researching and publishing our own work, to creating a platform to publish the work of other scholars, to committing to a praxis that asked us to practice listening and self-reflexivity. In the process of developing the journal, we have strived to discover and implement processes, procedures, and practices that highlight coalitional accountability.

As an open-access academic journal investigating the interstices and overlaps of both literacy studies and composition studies, the work we publish speaks, and is spoken to, by a diverse range of scholars committed to forging new coalitional politics and scholarship across disciplinary lines. Yet, when we first set out to create the journal, our notions of multilateral transparency both vertically and horizontally were both nascent and emergent. In ways that echo Cheryl Glenn and Andrea Lunsford's reflection on coalition as it figures in the CWSHRC (Coalition of Women Scholars in the History of Rhetoric and Composition), we began *LiCS* with "a desire to move beyond the perceived patriarchal (hierarchical and competitive) structures of our disciplines and professional organizations and the masculinist practices that had long guided them" (11). The journal's editorial collective committed to a feminist ethos at its founding; this article explores how our understanding of that ethos has evolved as the journal has attempted to engage with shifting challenges through coalitional accountability.

Our feminist editing practices borrow heavily from feminist and critical pedagogy and import praxis from this theory. For instance, we adopt a stance toward editing in which we actively listen to writers, readers, reviewers, editorial board members, and the wider disciplinary community but also while intentionally "raise critical questions" about editorial processes. This practice is informed by bell hooks' description of the "feminist classroom" as a space "where students could raise critical questions about pedagogical process" (6). Using a process that takes seriously "critical questions" into consideration also means that we commit to inviting and collaboratively negotiating discomfort. bell hooks explains, "rather than fearing conflict we have to find ways to use it as a catalyst for new thinking, for growth" (113). This article explores the new thinking and growth

that have been catalyzed in our editorial practices through a feminist engagement with conflict and difficulty. As we continually (re)learn, to undertake feminist editing is to be always in a state of becoming; as Sara Ahmed reminds us "to become a feminist is to stay a student" (11).

In a series of four vignettes, this article will explore how the editors of *LiCS*, working in concert with authors, mentors, editors, and our readership, pursue our project of coalitional accountability as a feminist practice within the context of open-access academic publishing. As we work to expand our feminist ethic to actively pursue antiracist publishing practices and systems, we attempt to navigate the "local" specifics that work for our journal within a broader "global" critique of academic publishing systems, guided by Chandra Mohanty's reminder that performing this navigation without "falling into colonizing or cultural relativist platitudes about difference is crucial in this intellectual and political landscape" (229). Across these reflections, we'll detail what intersectional, coalitional approaches (Walton, Moore, and Jones 71) looked like for our editorial team when applied to journal production, circulation, exchange, and mentorship. Before sharing the vignettes, we will provide a bit of context for the journal's initial mission, founding and guiding philosophical and ethical commitments. Then, the vignettes will proceed thusly:

Vignette One: Coalitional Modes of Production

In this first vignette, we explore how our horizontal editorial structure was conceived and implemented before highlighting how our collaborative decision-making process ensures coalitional accountability in the context of publication decisions. We also explore the editorial practices and processes we abide by in order to maintain multilateral transparency and consensus and how our processes for navigating disagreement and dissensus have evolved.

Vignette Two: Coalitional Building Through Circulation

In this second vignette, we consider *LiCS* in the context of circulation and rhetorical velocity (Ridolfo and DeVoss). Specifically, we explore how the processes of indexing and preservation ensure that the work published in the journal continues to be accountable for scholarly and non-scholarly audiences both now and in perpetuity.

Vignette Three: Sponsoring Coalition Building via Infrastructures of Exchange

In this third vignette, we consider how relational methods of exchange keep journal editors and authors engaged and accountable to each other and the collective "we" of our disciplines. Because articles published in *LiCS* straddle disciplinary, methodological, and temporal boundaries, it is essential that we sponsor infrastructure that facilitates continued exchange as an accountability mechanism, allowing for new coalitional emergences at the nexus of diverse epistemological

grounds. This vignette explores these places of convergence in the pages of *LiCS*.

Vignette Four: Mentorship & Opportunities for Coalitional Labor

In the final vignette, we explore our ongoing attempts to provide multiple mentorship opportunities to prospective authors and editors. Because we are committed to the broader democratization of academic publication, our work in developing an engaged mentorship infrastructure attempts to flatten the traditional hierarchies inherent in a mentorship arrangement in the hopes that coalition building and transparency can flow both ways across a mentor-mentee relationship. Further, to safeguard against presentism and provide contextualization of ongoing concerns across the fields in which we publish, we also implement a vertical mentorship infrastructure by relying on the expertise and knowledge of senior scholars in the field. We believe this close relationship among the editors and the editorial board facilitates collective accountability for the work that we publish.

Context

LiCS published its first issue in March 2013; this publication date represented two years' work among the Editorial Team in conceptualizing the journal and assembling the Editorial Board and a panel of Editorial Associates. The inaugural issue consisted of a roundtable discussion among Editorial Board members engaging various concepts, controversies, and conversations in the fields of literacy studies and composition. Since that first issue, *LiCS* has published over 100 articles, symposium contributions, interviews, and book reviews spread across 10 volumes. During that time, three of the five founding editors—Brenda Glascott, Chris Warnick, and Tara Lockhart—are still actively running the journal. Holly Middleton and Richard Parent were also founding editors. Justin Lewis joined as Layout and Design Editor in 2012 and Juli Parrish joined as Senior Copyeditor in 2013. More recently, Kara Poe Alexander joined as Submissions Editor in 2020, Helen Sandoval joined as Book Review Editor in 2020, and Al Harahap joined as Editor in 2023. Our new members have been integral to all Editorial Team decision-making, and we're lucky to have them aboard to share their ideas and the labor of publishing the journal.

Since its founding, *LiCS* was designed to provide a different approach from that offered by conventional journals in Writing Studies. From a disciplinary perspective, the editors of *LiCS* noticed a marked lack of scholarship that bridged the fields of literacy studies and composition studies. Literacy Studies is both international and multidisciplinary, with scholars from humanities and social sciences worldwide contributing to a global conversation. Composition Studies, on the other hand, is more rooted in a U.S. context although scholars borrow methods from both the humanities and social sciences. Since the fields have significantly overlapping areas, we were interested in seeing greater exchange between the scholars in these fields and greater cross-pollination of methods, theories, and pedagogies. As such, *LiCS* was created to sponsor scholarly activity at the

nexus of both fields to invite critical uptakes of writing as contextually-bound and ideologically-motivated sociocultural activity. This stance privileges multiple readings and complex, multitudinous meaning-making in any given literacy act, including our own editorial reading process. From an access perspective, *LiCS* wanted to follow other journals like *Kairos* and *Composition Forum* by providing scholarship that is born digital, online, free of cost, and free of copyright and licensing restrictions ("Open Access Overview"). To support this mission, and to encourage uptake and circulation of journal content, the editors decided, early on in the planning process, to publish articles under the CC-NC-ND license and to pursue as many indexing and cross-referencing opportunities as possible. From an editorial perspective, *LiCS* editors have eschewed a traditional vertical editorial structure in the interest of a feminist-informed, horizontal framework that encourages consensus but isn't necessarily bound by universal agreement. This feminist-informed editing praxis is joined to a commitment to open access publishing that determines our approach to the creation, production, and circulation of scholarship.

Vignette One: Coalitional Modes of Production

Composition studies has recognized the value of collaboration, particularly as a goal for our students. We are also a discipline that often characterizes itself as valuing professional collaborations and collaborative scholarship, although—depending on the politics and tenure and promotion requirements at varying institutions—collaborative writing can still be a tenuous undertaking. When we first talked about starting this journal, we embraced a goal that is radically collaborative and aspired toward operating as a collective: the founding five editors decided to work as what we called an Editorial Collective. This original language was purposeful: marking the absence of a hierarchy and the distribution of decision making among the collective in its entirety. Our goal in decision making was consensus, for the collective to reach full agreement on any course of action. In operating the journal, we soon discovered that framing our collaboration as the work of a collective created challenges. In our experience, to function as a collective necessitates not just shared ideology, purpose, and values, but also a willingness to subsume individual perspectives and elevate the most widely shared ones. This kind of collaboration undercuts the possible significance of contributions from those in the group's minority. We realized our conceptual frame was undermining the work we could do together and moved to a coalitional approach. A coalition is a much more tactical concept (DeCerteau 36) wherein individual values and ideological commitments may be at odds but are put aside for moments of collaboration around a shared-at-the-time purpose–in our case, the administration of the journal. Adopting a coalitional approach to the day-to-day functioning of the journal was an important aspect of our praxis; how we related to each other as editors was embedded in our goals to foster a transparent and mentor-based relationship with authors.

As with all best laid plans, we hit obstacles along the way. Although we published our first issue in March 2013, it wasn't until spring 2014 when the Editorial Collective, which quickly was renamed the Editorial Team in correspondence with the Editorial Board and authors, implement-

ed the structure and process that we currently use. The Editorial Team met weekly via Google Hangouts (and continues to do so), and throughout 2013, we had a series of what we called "meta-meetings" about how best to manage the tasks we had and how to handle failures to reach consensus. In November 2013, we posed these questions:

> a. How do we know when a decision has been made? Is it unanimous agreement? What happens when one person doesn't agree?
>
> b. Can we anticipate the kinds of decisions that we will need to make in a publication cycle and essentially schedule them?
>
> c. Who gets to decide what needs a pressing answer and what can be tabled? What if the person raising the question disagrees? Are there identifiable characteristics of things needing immediate attention?

We read two articles, "Decide How to Decide" by Ellen Gottesdiener from *Software Development Magazine* and "Negotiation and Collaborative Problem Solving" by L. Steven Smutko from NC State University's Natural Resources Leadership Institute. Smutko's piece was central to reconsidering our goal of reaching consensus. We discovered that while consensus can mean full agreement, it can also incorporate degrees of "endorsement" of a action or decision. In other words, the Editorial Team realized that "a shared viewpoint of the world is not a prerequisite for temporarily joining together to take action on an issue of mutual importance" (Walton, Moore, and Jones 55). Rather, by listening and honoring the sometimes divergent perspectives and contexts of each Editorial Team member, the coalition as a whole reached agreement based on our shared principles and commitments to our scholarly values and open-access ethics.

By the end of February 2014, we decided to focus on this coalitional decision-making process, rather than striving for consensus. We wrote in our minutes that "consensus is the goal; collaboration is the method (?)" and that when we disagree, we would "collaborate to unearth… underlying issues" ("Minutes of Weekly *LiCS* Meeting"). In the same period, we also worked to clarify our roles and responsibilities. We did this inductively, by first writing lists of the work we were doing in our capacities. While we made all decisions collectively, we had divvied up certain areas of work and assigned titles to them, such as Submission Editor and Managing Editor, in order to make our individual work visible to tenure and promotion committees. We have a Google Doc where we named the responsibilities that fall under particular roles, and we have revisited it subsequently to update it and to discuss workload and production process.

This model of collaborative decision-making carries over in the process we use to evaluate submissions. When a new manuscript is submitted, it is read and discussed by at least two mem-

bers of the Editorial Team, who share their responses to the following questions on a rubric the Editorial Team collaboratively designed over the course of several meetings:

- Is the manuscript relevant to the mission and scope of LiCS?
- Does the manuscript develop a clear research project or argument?
- Does the piece seem particularly (or potentially) innovative, important, or fills a gap in the research?
- Does the manuscript state clearly how the project contributes to a relevant scholarly conversation(s) in composition and literacy studies?
- Does the manuscript engage with recent research in both literacy and composition studies?
- Does the manuscript demonstrate the project is methodologically sound?
- Is the manuscript organized in a way that makes sense and serves the project?
- Should the manuscript be sent out for review and, if so, what suggestions do you have for selecting reviewers?

If the two members of the Editorial Team who first read the manuscript agree, we send it out for external review to two readers selected from our Editorial Associates: they answer similar questions and offer a publication recommendation. When we've received feedback from both readers, all six members of the Editorial Team discuss the manuscript and the reviews, reaching a consensus about whether to continue working toward publishing the manuscript. At any point in this discussion among the Editorial Team, an editor may veto publication, initiating another round of discussion; further, if a team member isn't ready to veto a manuscript, they can voice their reticence to publish using a fingers-based Likert scale. Relying on Smutko's description of the "Five Finger Scale" (23), the Editorial Team uses this rating mechanism because it offers a quick barometer for testing where the team is at while also providing confirmation of one's comfort in publishing a manuscript. If a team member isn't ready to veto but isn't ready to publish, another round of discussion takes place until another vote is called. This collaborative process among the Editorial Team continues until we reach a final decision about the manuscript.

Even though one member of the Editorial Team manages the submissions process and signs off on communications with the author, we collaboratively write feedback to authors. Each Editorial Team member comments on each manuscript in a Google doc shared among the group before our meeting to discuss the manuscript. A member of the team volunteers to compile these responses in an email to the author that is eventually sent out by the individual in the role of Submissions Editor.

The coalitional modes of production at *LiCS* is a conscious attempt to open up the editorial process by valuing the knowledge, expertise, and opinion of each member of the Editorial Team. By working towards consensus via collaborative deliberation, our editorial process tries to democratize the vertical and often black-boxed decision making process used by traditional journals in the humanities and social sciences while acknowledging that a shared worldview isn't required for collaborative editorial decision making.

Vignette Two: Coalition Building via Circulation

It is a truism that anyone with an Internet connection can produce content and that conventional wisdom states "the Internet is forever." Yet, the very openness of the Internet and our lived online experiences obscure the challenges to online scholarly publishing. At *LICS,* we want to reach audiences in the fields of composition and literacy studies. The ethics of open-access scholarly publishing mandate that we also preserve that work for future audiences. But, open access also allows us to reach audiences outside of our fields. How a scholarly journal reaches both scholarly and non-scholarly audiences, meets its ethical obligations to preservation, and builds scholarly authority is the subject of this vignette: coalition building via circulation.

LiCS is indexed in restricted (MLA Bibliography, JStor) and open-access (CompPile) scholarly databases specific to our fields, which of course allow scholars to find our authors' work through database searches. Yet, it is also accessible to anyone with an Internet connection. This means that when Annette Vee was interviewed for the *Mother Jones* article "We Can Code It!: Why Computer Literacy Is Key to Winning in the 21st Century," journalist Tasneem Raja linked to Vee's *LiCS* article "Understanding Computer Programming as a Literacy" within the *Mother Jones* text, bringing her scholarly work to a *Mother Jones* audience. A reader of any web publication expects to be able to link to further web content, and making scholarly knowledge available in this way is the great promise of open-access publishing. It allows our scholarship to travel, building tactical connections among scholars across disparate fields who hold commitments to exploring the complex intersections of composition and literacy.

However, any reader of web content is also familiar with the error message of broken links, "404 not found," which we have the ethical obligation to ensure never appears when a reader clicks on Vee's or any other article in *LiCS*. Any URL is temporary, so while the Internet may be forever, paths to finding online content are not. As open-access publishers of born-digital content, we have to ensure our links remain stable and able to continue building connections among our readers. To that end, we have recently registered all of our current and past content with CrossRef, so that each article has its own digital object identifier (DOI). DOIs work as forwarding addresses that will always direct users to an article's current location; they function as a stable reference for both private and public indexing services. DOIs are the standard for articles in the social sciences, humanities, and STEM fields. At *LiCS*, we're excited to be adopters of DOIs and

are committed to using them to increase article circulation and connection both inside and outside our disciplines.

The expectation of a *Mother Jones* reader—access—is yet again different from that of a tenure and promotion committee, which demands scholarly authority. While the collaborative editorial process of peer review at *LiCS* determines whether a piece of writing is "scholarly," many scholars see print as authoritative and are still skeptical about born-digital content. In other words, we cannot expect that every member of a tenure and promotion committee will accept a URL, DOI, or printout of a web page as scholarship. Therefore, from our inception, we have published articles as PDF with a traditional document design modeled on established journals in our field. In this way, the same article that is linked in *Mother Jones* or shared on Twitter (now known as X) can be submitted to a conservative tenure and promotion committee as a print article indistinguishable from those published in more traditional print journals. While PDF is an important design format that establishes our credibility with more traditional readers, it is also crucial for us as an archival format that preserves *LiCS* content for future audiences.

Offering PDF versions of digital content that mimics print publication was also a coalitional action toward prospective writers. Part of our feminist editing ethos is to intentionally query how infrastructure decisions impact different users of the journal through lengthy conversations among the editorial team and through annual reports about our efforts and decision-making to the Editorial Board. Perhaps because the editors were all either pre-tenure or in non-tenure track positions as we developed our publishing infrastructure, we were acutely aware of how the materiality of publications might affect scholars' job prospects or stability. The additional labor involved in publishing print-like PDFversions of the HTMLcontent was a decision we explicitly discussed as a way to build trust with prospective authors. We imagined what it would take to be in coalition with potential authors who, like some of us, felt hesitant or vulnerable about publishing in a fully digital journal, because of the ways bias against digital scholarship could impact employment.

Our commitment to coalition with authors also drove our focus on establishing a preservation infrastructure for the content we published. For digital publishers, the costs and process of preserving content are reversed. Print publishers are able to serve their future audiences once the book or journal is indexed and placed on the library shelf or captured on microfilm. The costs of print publication are also incurred upfront through the publishing process itself. Now that the publication process has been democratized, the costs are reversed. Instead of the initial cost of printing and distribution, digital publishers are instead allocating resources toward guaranteed access of content for perpetuity. By addressing the question, "How do you make that article available—even findable—to future readers and to published authors?" with a variety of preservation technologies, *LiCS* is consciously contributing to the stable web of knowledge that undergirds the open-access scholarship movement in the academy. By ensuring the preservation of *LiCS* content in perpetuity, we are fulfilling a commitment to the authors who publish with us that their writing will not vanish

and will remain accessible. We believe that these commitments to circulation and access ensure that strategic alliances among scholars and readers across a variety of fields can spark important conversations and initiate justice-informed actions related to reading, writing, and meaning making outside the confines of the journal's pages.

Scholarly born-digital content can be preserved through an institutional repository, and journals sponsored by universities are often preserved in this way. As an independent journal, *LiCS* does not have an institutional home, so we researched our options. At the time, Portico, LOCKS, and CLOCKSS were the online archives available to independent journals, but we chose CLOCKSS for several reasons. One is its method, which audits and repairs digital content at twelve university repositories, thereby offering a level of built-in redundancy that we considered the safest option of the three. Importantly, if a journal ceases publication, CLOCKSS is the only option that automatically makes triggered journal content open-access. CLOCKSS also has stringent requirements to ensure that member journals have established DOIs, inclusion in indexing services, and open-access publication policies. We began indexing our content with CLOCKSS in 2017, ensuring that our content can continue inspiring connections, collaborations and coalitions in perpetuity.

By indexing with various metadata services, assigning DOIs to article content, and employing the CLOCKSS preservation technology, *LiCS* content is circulated and made accessible to all audiences with an internet connection and a desire to read. Utilizing these technologies allows *LiCS* authors to contribute to infrastructures of open knowledge; by harnessing the medial capacities of the web, circulation technologies, like DOIs and CLOCKSS, help the Editorial Team maintain their commitment to an open ethics publication. While access and preservation technologies aren't typically considered central to coalition building, they are significant–if invisible–ways to be in coalition with authors towards the wider democratization of knowledge. Thinking about our preservation commitment as an act of coalition raises interesting questions about the activity of being in coalition. The concept of coalition implies that the parties involved are conscious of–and reciprocating–coalitional action. Can an activity be coalitional if it is illegible to one or more of the parties? Authors and potential authors do not necessarily know to ask digital journals about preservation, or even know that it is something to be concerned about. And yet, the early attention to preservation was motivated by the editorial team's desire to serve authors in the best way available. It was a coalitional action that might be unnoticed by some of the members participating in the coalition. Or, perhaps it is better to characterize it as an imminent coalitional action that will be coalitional if and when authors begin to demand this curatorial responsibility from digital journals.

Vignette Three: Sponsoring Coalition Building via Infrastructures of Exchange

In *Digital Rhetoric,* Douglas Eyman begins his section on "Digital Ecologies" thusly:

> I begin by setting up a framework that situates digital circulation within specific ecologies and economies of production: while circulation ecologies represent the places, spaces, movements, and complex interactions of digital texts as they are produced, reproduced, exchanged, or used, the exchanges and uses that take place within those specific ecological circumstances are governed by the economics of circulation (which in turn are subject to the constraints and affordances offered by situated ecologies in which the texts circulate). (84)

Eyman's definitions of circulation, exchange, and ecology are helpful for considering how we designed the infrastructure of *LiCS* with exchange in mind. This is not only the case in terms of technologies like the DOIs described in Vignette Two but also in the ways that the journal structure and individual journal sections invite moments of exchange and possible coalition-building among communities and individuals who may not have the opportunity to engage frequently. In this vignette, we'll describe how existing and planned journal sections create a space for engagement and a place of familiarity for scholars working at the intersection of related, but often differentiated fields. By positioning *LiCS* as a site of exchange that relies on the technologies of circulation described in Vignette Two, Vignette Three highlights the journal itself as a site of engagement and a place where these circulation practices inform an ethics of interdisciplinarity and intersectionality that are enacted toward coalition building around issues in literacy and composition.

While all articles published by *LiCS* straddle the disciplinary boundaries between composition studies and literacy studies, the Symposium section offers a unique opportunity for direct exchange across the pages of the journal. Symposium contributions extend the conversation begun in the inaugural issue concerning a variety of topics, including the ideological nature of literacy; literacy sponsorship; historical legacies of literacy studies in composition; the social turn in literacy studies; and the intersections of rhetoric, literacy, and writing. Symposium contributions since issue 1.1 have expanded the scope of the section, encouraging exchange in areas of concern such as mis/disinformation, health literacy, The Indianapolis Resolution, prison literacy programs, and teaching literacy in the post-Obama era. As a space of productive critique, Symposium contributions offer rich ideas and arguments that, when exchanged, propel the shared conversations of the journal forward and open up new avenues of coalescence and enrichment across disciplines. As the central site of exchange in *LiCS*, the Symposium section is a conduit for circulation and allows ideas to be reproduced, used, extended, refined, and modified to meet the complex and ever-shifting terrain on which composition studies and literacy studies rest.

In addition to the ongoing Symposium, *LiCS* also hosts special issues that provide unique opportunities to extend and transform the ongoing mission of the journal in important ways. To date, *LiCS* has published six special issues. In March 2015, Ben Kuebrich, Jessica Pauszek, and Steve Parks guest edited a special issue titled "The New Activism: Composition, Literacy Studies, and Politics." Just a few months later in October 2015, Rebecca Lorimer Leonard, Kate Vieira, and Morris Young guest edited a special issue on "The Transnational Movement of People and Information." A special issue on "Literacy, Democracy, and Fake News" was published by the Editorial Team in Fall 2017. Recent special issues include "Composing a Further Life," guest edited by Lauren Marshall Bowen and Suzanne Keller Rumsey (2018); an issue dedicated to the life and work of Brian V. Street, guest edited by Antonio Byrd, Jordan Hayes, and Nicole Turnipseed (2021); and "Working Toward a Definition of Queer Literacies," guest edited by Collin Craig, Wilfredo Flores, and Zarah Moeggenberg (2022). These special issues have provided important spaces for exploring focused areas of inquiry in the pages of the journal.

From our perspective, special issues offer multiple points of exchange and a chance for coalition building: first, as editors we're provided an opportunity to expand our vision of the journal by collaborating with experts and practitioners in our field. Second, for the readership of *LiCS*, the special issues connect scholars in a specialized area with a larger audience for their ideas. Because the majority of *LiCS* articles are in some way politically engaged, the special issues give readers a peek into specific contexts and situational ecologies and encourage action, reflection, and connection building on a given topic. Third, the special issue also democratizes the editorial process, allowing the *LiCS* editors to *exchange roles and authority* in the administration of the journal. This process of exchange between the ongoing and guest editors is a learning process for both groups and is an action in keeping with the feminist commitment of democratizing power that guides our editorial vision. In some ways, any journal that publishes special issues under guest editorship is engaging in coalitional work. On the other hand, this coalitional action might be mediated through greater or lesser editorial transparency, making it more or less likely that early career scholars, for example, would feel empowered to propose to guest edit.

While Vignette Two discussed the technologies of dissemination and circulation that undergird *LiCS*, we hope this third vignette has provided a peek into how the structure of the journal itself is designed to encourage various forms of exchange and possible coalition-building across a diverse range of contexts and topics. Because the free exchange of ideas is a logical outcome of the rights to access encouraged by open-access scholarly publication, we've designed structures to promote this exchange into the infrastructure of the journal itself. As the journal transforms and our readership shifts and expands, the forms of exchange facilitated by these sections will likely necessitate new sections and permutations in the journal's composition. For example, based on our website analytics, readers of *LiCS* in non-English speaking, non-North American contexts have been visiting the site with increasing frequency. We very much welcome these readers and hope they'll also contribute to the journal and enrich our readership with their own epistemolo-

gies around literacy. Providing a space for reprints or original work that appeared outside of a North American or English language context is something we're trying to grow through scholarly networking, international conferencing, and membership in international literacy-focused organizations, such as the Writing Research Across Borders conference and the International Writing Research Workshop at CCCC. Because of the flexibility of digital journal administration and organization, we need only reach a critical mass of submissions and participation to launch additional sections of the journal that sponsor coalition building around future reading audiences outside of our own North American, English speaking context. The economics of circulation and the ecological transformations in technology, readership, disciplinarity, and editorial make-up will continue to transform the coalitional possibilities encouraged by *LiCS's* commitments to engagement and will continuously remake the journal in exciting ways.

Vignette Four: Mentorship & Opportunities for Coalitional Labor

As highlighted in Vignette One, decision-making processes and editorial responsibilities are shared across the *LiCS* Editorial Team. Our form of horizontal organization allows each editor to play an important role in the publication process from manuscript submission to article launch. This horizontal organizational structure also provides opportunities for editors to build coalitions on other journal matters, such as decisions regarding preservation technologies, publishing management systems, Editorial Board interactions, and social events to promote the journal. The editors of *LiCS* also believe that a horizontal mentorship program is at the core of the journal's mission and demonstrates a commitment to the democratization of the publication process in an open-access paradigm. In addition to the horizontal mentorship program, the *LiCS* Editorial Team incorporates vertical mentorship to leverage disciplinary and historical knowledge and experience from senior scholars in the field to guard against presentism and provide contextualization of issues in the intersecting fields of literacy studies and composition studies. The *LiCS* commitment to mentorship in horizontal and vertical forms is another form of ethical engagement with colleagues and collaborators both inside and outside the field of Writing Studies; further, it is a core infrastructural component that extends the open-access ethic into the relational aspects of disciplinary membership and scholarly communication in our shared areas of inquiry. Reflecting on what we have and have not accomplished in mentoring raises interesting questions about formal and informal modes of coalition as described below.

Providing mentorshipfor writers was a central goal of the journal at its founding. Initially, the *LiCS* editors saw a major part of their mission as guiding emerging scholars who lack extensive experience formulating arguments at the intersection of literacy studies and composition studies. The editors saw this goal as an extension of the coalitional action of the journal. In short, we wanted to build an experience for authors that expressed respect and investment in a shared outcome. However, taking a coalitional approach to mentoring is complex. Because of this, our mentoring processes reflect a spectrum of informal and formal activities and surprises.

Creating a formal mentoring infrastructure that is coalitional is challenging. Faced with our authors' job pressures, we worry about inviting a writer to engage in a process of revision with no guarantee of publication over an undefined period of time. We have been engaged in a multi-year process of designing a formal mentorship process with active collaboration from members of the Editorial Board and headed by a newer member of the Editorial Team, Al Harahap, who brings experience in building formal mentoring infrastructure. The types of questions we need to answer to build a responsible mentoring program include:

1. How does an author access mentoring? Is it requested, assigned, suggested? At what stage in the submission process does this happen?

2. What is the timeline for mentoring?

3. What commitments is the journal undertaking in mentoring an author on a publication? What happens if the piece is not "publication ready" after a certain period of time?

4. Who should be mentors? How is their labor accounted for? How are they trained to facilitate a productive mentoring experience?

These thorny questions have delayed our initial ambition to offer a formal mentoring infrastructure. This delay can feel like a failure, but it is also an outgrowth of the carefulness that emerges from our coalitional ethos.

One success we have had in a mentoring ethos is more informal and emerges from our commitment to openness. We strive to be transparent with writers at every step of the process and to treat writers with respect by communicating about–and being accountable for–our timelines for review. Even in cases of manuscripts we do not send out for external review, we write extensive revision notes so that authors will potentially find something useful in their communication with us. In reflection, we think the active practice of collaboration and communication necessary for editing the journal as a coalition might foster the values of transparency and accountability that inform our communication with authors.

We have been more successful with horizontal mentorship within the editorial coalition itself. The Editorial Team has supported members as they apply for jobs and go through tenure and promotion processes. We have been readers of each other's drafts, both scholarship and job materials. Likewise, we have experienced horizontal mentorship within the community of editors of journals in Composition and Rhetoric, particularly with editors of other independent journals. These experiences of horizontal mentoring have been a surprising benefit from our local editorial team coalition and from the unexpected coalition we found with other journal editors. The coalition with other journal editors was initially fostered through conference panels on journal editing; in this way, the infrastructure offered by professional organizations has been central to the creation of

coalitional relationships. Conversations with other editors led to multiple journals offering collaborative workshops intended for conference attendees interested in publication practices and participation in journal editing.

This horizontal mentorship among journal editors has led to collaborations meant to mentor emerging editors and writers. Partnering with Laura Micciche of *Composition Studies*, the *LiCS* Editorial Team proposed a horizontal mentorship workshop for the 2017 CCCC conference in Portland, Oregon, that targeted new and experienced scholars interested in getting published in independent academic journals in the field. Editors from *LiCS*, *Composition Studies*, *Enculturation*, and *Across the Disciplines* facilitateda half-day workshop that demystified the publication process from submission to release. At this workshop, attended by pre- and post-dissertating graduate students, early career faculty, and scholars and instructors in non-tenure positions, we intended to focus on a set of access points to publishing: strategies for submitting a manuscript or a book review to an independent journal, for example. We were reminded quickly, however, not to take for granted what people know about submitting manuscripts to journals—or even about journals themselves. In response to questions from attendees, we found ourselves talking about a range of other issues: not just how to identify "fit" with a journal but also the fact that even journals within the same subfield have specific, sometimes quite narrowly-defined, focuses. Not just how one might begin copy-editing for a journal as a way to get some editorial experience but also what copy-editing really involves, and why it matters. In asking our attendees to think about the work that goes on behind the scenes at independent journals, we also found ourselves offering them richer ways to imagine themselves participating in the life of academic journals as potential writers, reviewers, and editors.

Our participation in this workshop reminded us that our coalitional goal might bring with it a responsibility to provide a venue in which people might publish their work and to understand that many people—established teachers as well as newer graduate students and scholars—need help entering into and navigating this process. Our commitment to open access, in other words, might motivate us to open up more points of access to more potential writers and to make those points of access more transparent. To this end, we partnered with editors from other independent journals to offer a half-day workshop at CCCC in Pittsburgh in 2019 to invite new people to consider editing or even starting new journals. This workshop, "Building and Running an Academic Journal: A Behind-the-Scenes Workshop in Independent Publishing," was a collaboration between editors at *LiCS*, Laura Micciche of *Composition Studies,* Kristine Blair of *Computers and Composition*, and Michael Pemberton of *Across the Disciplines*.

These kinds of horizontal professional engagement opportunities allow the editors of *LiCS* to enact mentorship in the interest of flattening the academic publication hierarchy, a hierarchy that might lead to black-box decision making processes or concentrated disproportionate amounts of power in the hands of a single editor. For the long term infrastructure health and growth of our

field(s), we see horizontal mentorship as an ethical imperative to sustaining inquiry at the intersection of both composition studies and literacy studies.

While the *LiCS* editors distribute authority and agency across the editorial coalition, they also realize that vertical mentorship from experts in the field is important to their own growth as scholars as well as the growth of authors that appear in the pages of the journal. By frequently relying on the Editorial Board to provide guidance and direction in matters of concern, the journal editors receive instruction from other scholars that safeguards against presentism and locates the journal and its commitments in longer social, cultural, and academic histories. In addition to mentoring the editors, some members of the Editorial Board are providing direct mentorship to emerging scholars in the field. This form of vertical mentorship not only enriches the production of scholarship but allows pre-tenure authors the opportunity to connect with Associate and Full professors over issues outside of the scholarship, including the tenure and promotion process, interfacing with administrators, and the ability to find a productive life-work balance. Though these kinds of issues aren't the concern of *LiCS* directly, our commitment to mentorship and to our colleagues and disciplines more broadly make this kind of engagement an ethical necessity.

Conclusion

In this short piece, we've attempted to show how our editorial infrastructure is anchored in a commitment to open-access, feminist editing praxis, and coalition building among authors, editors and readership. These commitments shape our production, circulation, exchange, and mentorship activities in important ways, allowing the *LiCS* editorial team to organize the complex labor of publishing an independent journal in non-traditional ways. Yet, our work is not without its challenges: the disadvantages of organizing our coalitional activity include a significant investment in time, workload, and editorial labor. Because the *LiCS* editorial team is responsible for every aspect of the publication process, from author submission to manuscript publication, to digital publishing platform design and implementation, to indexing and preservation of journal contents, the workload required from each editorial team member extends beyond decision making into the *doing* of academic journal publishing. Further, our commitment to collaborative deliberation and coalition-based decision making means we also spend a large amount of time working toward decisions in the administration of the journal, the publication of manuscripts, and the determination of the journal's future direction. All of these tasks and processes take time, and time is something in short supply for most.

Challenges aside, the *LiCS* editorial team wouldn't trade our current infrastructures for more traditional organizational models. We believe that the aforementioned engaged, coalitional networks and infrastructures we've created and refined over the last ten years allow us to main-

tain a high level of transparency both among each other as well as with the authors we hope to publish; further, because of the intensely collaborative nature of our work, we are buoyed by the ongoing, real-time nature of our process and genuinely excited when we collectively move a manuscript from submission to publication. By augmenting traditional notions of open access via circulation and preservation with social and relational open ethics via production, exchange, and mentorship, we hope that the *LiCS* coalitional editorial model extends the conversation about open access in the realm of academic publication toward opportunities to sponsor coalition-building in the creation and production of scholarship in our respective fields.

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Distributed Definition Building and the Coalition for Community Writing

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Abstract: The author offers distributed definition building as a method that community-engaged teachers and scholars as well as coalition leaders can use for justice-focused coalitional work. She looks at moments that demonstrate the Coalition for Community Writing's commitment to representation, recognition and celebration, program building, and mentorship as examples of and a means toward what this distributed definitional method can offer in building a coalition. The author takes the term "community writing" and asks the Coalition for Community Writing (CCW) board members and a CCW Emerging Scholar to share their definition of coalitional work in community writing. The multiple and sometimes conflicting or divergent perspectives on meaning showcase the messiness and affordances of coalitional work.

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Keywords: Coalition for Community Writing; community writing; community-engaged writing; distributed definition building; coalition building

What does it mean to work in and help build coalition within our own communities and with communities of which we are not a member? How do we define those communities? In this reflective article, I offer a method for justice-focused coalitional work that I call *distributed definition building*. I use the term "community writing" to model how distributed definition building rejects narrow, top-down, definitive definitions of critical or contested terms that could stifle community

member voices, making clear that there is no one definition for “community writing”; in fact, the capaciousness of the term is its strength. Rather than trying to control the definition of community writing, there is strength in re-distributing the ability to define the term out to the people doing the community writing work themselves.

The Coalition for Community Writing (CCW), which I founded as a 501c3 in 2019 with a national group of scholars, teachers, organizers, and activists, is one of Rhetoric and Writing Studies’ disciplinary organizations that is also interdisciplinary and inter-community in its aspirations toward coalitional and transformational work. As the Coalition’s Executive Director and Conference on Community Writing’s Founding Director, I share a brief history of why and how the Conference and then the Coalition began, in part, I would argue, because of definitional confusion over “community writing.” I then offer two examples of distributed definition building around what “community writing” means, bringing in fifteen of CCW’s board members’ and one of the CCW Emerging Scholars’ reflections on why coalitional, relational work is so vital in ethical community-based, justice-focused work. Finally, I conclude by demonstrating how the distributed definitions may help members to identify an action plan concerning the strengths and gaps within the Coalition.

The method of distributed definition building helps build equity, accessibility, and accountability into the iterative process of building a coalition toward substantive change. Part of my role as a coalitional leader is to make spaces for a multiplicity of definitions for “community writing” to emerge from faculty, students, and community members and partners. Distributed definition building can be useful to coalition builders and leaders working with complex or contested terms. The distributed approach to definition building is a method that can move a coalition toward justice in the intentional rejection of narrow and hierarchical rules for who can participate and what “counts” as important. It can help to guide mission and vision, and it can help hold members of a coalition accountable to the sometimes shared, sometimes different values of those involved.

A Brief History of the Conference on Community Writing and Coalition for Community Writing: The Need for Change

At the time that I first pitched the idea for a conference to colleagues in the writing program at University of Colorado Boulder, where I was a faculty member until 2021, I’d founded and had been directing the Writing Initiative for Service and Engagement for six years, helping to coordinate the writing program’s transformation into one of the first writing programs in the country to integrate community-engaged pedagogies throughout its lower- and upper-division courses. In work I’d done running faculty workshops at the university and as an Advisory Board member of Campus Compact of the Mountain West facilitating Engaged Faculty Institutes, participants consistently named several impediments to successfully doing community-engaged work.

Graduate students and junior faculty would often say that they'd been told not to do community-based work until they had secured a job or, even more troubling, until post tenure. Sometimes that advice came from a well-meaning place–a mentor or chair who wanted to protect the person's time. Sometimes it reflected an institutional misconception that community-engaged work is service rather than intellectual and rigorous scholarship. My own writing program director at the time called community-engaged scholarship "academic light." All too often, institutional mission statements that affirm commitment to community do not align with realities of support or with institutional policies around review, tenure, promotion, and hiring priorities for community-en graduate students and faculty. [1]Relationship-focused partnerships that center trust building, collaboration, and knowledge sharing are the foundation of community-engaged work (e.g. Arellano et. al.; Blackburn and Cushman; Goldblatt; Powell; Rousculp; Shah). It does not make sense, then, that collaboratively-written work, often with students or community partners, is sometimes counted in promotion and tenure cases as less significant than single-authored work, or that public-facing scholarship cannot be counted as scholarship, which reinforces academic ideologies of individualism and isolationism.

The frequent dismissal of community-engaged work's significance or place in the academy outside of "service" has led to feelings of frustration and exhaustion. As colleagues around the country shared their stories at the Engaged Faculty Institutes, it became increasingly clear that these issues of misunderstanding and lack of support are in fact related to a problem of definition. People in positions of power were often defining "community-engaged writing" or "community writing" as service or as less-than-rigorous scholarship and therefore would impact and limit what was possible for faculty and students at those institutions and in the field of writing and rhetoric. I believed–when first conceiving of the Conference on Community Writing–that a critical mass of community writing scholars and teachers could create a disciplinary shift on a national level toward support for community writing work that would make it more viable and sustainable for individuals.

Drawing on the Campus Compact model for Engaged Faculty and Engaged Departments, I asked conference participants during the Chair's Address at the inaugural CCW, "What if we think of ourselves as the first 'Engaged Discipline?'" What are the possibilities:

- for how writing programs are structured?

- for institutional support for justice-focused, community-based research and pedagogical projects?

- in terms of how we consider where knowledge is housed and produced?

1 The Coalition for Community Writing produced a Resource Guide that includes "How to Make the Case for Your Community-Engaged Work" and "How to Modify Campus Governance Documents to Address Community-Engaged Work."

- for how graduate students are trained?
- for faculty searches and priorities for hiring?
- for review, tenure, and promotion cases?
- for our academic journals and book series?

How do we (here meaning community writing scholars and practitioners in rhetoric and writing studies) re-shape the field of rhetoric and writing to include community writing as an integral part of an established and shared definition of the discipline? A disciplinary shift would require re-defining community writing so that it is legible, understandable, and, therefore, supported.

At the first Conference on Community Writing, more than 350 speakers shared their community writing work–work that varied significantly from project to project and place to place. A few speakers even asked whether their work was "community writing," as those of us gathered together in Boulder tried to understand what it was that was coalescing. From this beginning event, and as CCW has since rooted itself as an important disciplinary conference, it is clear that it is not a matter of creating a single, uniform definition of community writing, but rather creating space to generate, share, and support multiple, meaningful definitions.

After the second CCW in 2017, again hosted in Boulder, CO, several colleagues from universities, colleges, and community organizations and I collaboratively wrote bylaws and a mission and vision statement for a Coalition for Community Writing that would be an international network of faculty, students, community partners, artists, writers, activists, and organizers who share knowledges and projects across communities–using writing, broadly defined, as a force for social change. In 2019, the Coalition for Community Writing became an official 501c3. Distributed definition building is a collaborative way by which the organization continuously adapts in an iterative, generative, and capacious process to align with members' values and needs and hold itself accountable.

Distributed Definition Building and Community Writing

While the term "community writing" was used in scholarship and practice before my colleagues and I launched the Conference on Community Writing[2] in 2015, the term is now more commonly used in scholarship, course titles, and job ads. But it may not always be clear what is meant by the term. In the last twenty-five years, the scholarship and practice of community writing have developed significantly with key concepts such as: "writing beyond the curriculum" (Parks

2 I want to thank Seth Myers, Alexander Fobes, Catherine Kunce, Christine Macdonald, and Gary Hink for their tremendous work in helping to imagine and host the Conference on Community Writing in 2015 and 2017.

and Goldblatt); writing about, with, and for communities (Deans); literacy, archival research, and historical work (e.g. Epps-Robertson; Royster; Pauszek); community publishing and writing by and as the community (e.g. Hubrig; Mathieu, et al.; Monberg; Moss, A Community Text); ethnographic research (e.g. Cushman; Jackson and Whitehorse DeLaune; Roossien and Riley Mukavetz); community engagement in writing program administration (e.g. House; Rose and Weiser); community literacies (e.g. Feigenbaum, Collaborative; Flower; Grabill; Pritchard; Richardson); public rhetorics (e.g. Hsu; Long; Ryder); the public turn (Farmer; Mathieu); Writing Democracy (Carter et al.); decolonial and antiracist pedagogy and research involving literacies inside and outside of academic spaces (e.g. Alvarez; Baker-Bell; Cushman; Jackson and Whitehorse DeLaune; King et al.; Kynard, "All I Need"; Kynard, "Teaching While Black"; Maraj; Martinez, Counterstory; Ore et al.). The term can also refer to community-based writing such as slam poetry, public performance, museum exhibits, graffiti and mural art, zines, protest signs, and much more. I understand community writing as an umbrella term that embraces and continually evolves with these diverse areas.

It is not that "community writing" is so broad a concept that it means everything and nothing at once. Rather, often the naming of sub-fields and fields of study can be designed either to develop an us/them binary that is exclusionary or to claim intellectual territory. While the claiming of ideas is not inherently exclusionary, intention is important. Academics are notoriously trained toward individualism–publishing single-authored works, striving for acclaim and tenure, claiming ideas, and often ignoring or discounting ideas, knowledge, and expertise housed in non-academic spaces. These actions can make for a toxic culture of competition and scarcity. A benefit of distributing the definition of "community writing" out away from a single founder or person in a position of power is to counter exclusionary and individualistic tendencies. Community writing work, at its best, is a means toward dismantling, transforming, and repairing, coupling the work with clear actions and accountability.

How does accountability show up through distributed definition building? As Rachel C. Jackson explains, "settling" of meaning is a colonial academic practice that does not leave room for alternate ways of knowing and non-Western methodologies (Jackson and Whitehorse DeLaune 40). To deliberately not settle the meaning of "community writing" and with the aspiration of justice-focused coalition building, CCW can use distributed definition building to bring together a diversity of individuals, projects, and organizations. Part of the Conference's and Coalition's work is to provide people a platform to share their projects and connect, regardless of age, physical or mental ability, race or ethnicity, cultural or economic background, as we work toward structural programmatic, institutional, disciplinary, (inter)disciplinary, and community-based change. Scholars, students, teachers, activists, organizers, artists, playwrights, policy writers, poets, and so many more, in sharing their unique and various projects at CCW events, participate in distributed definition building and in a process for justice-focused coalition building as they also generate that coalition in real time.

What are community-engaged writing and rhetoric scholars and teachers positioned to do, as we straddle our academic and non-academic communities? Part of building definitions that can shift academic and non-academic systems is to stress that we in academia are always also community members. It is why Terese Guinsatao Monberg wrote about "writing as community." Elaine Richardson's work on Black girls' and Black women's literacies, Beverly Moss's ethnographic research on churches and church sermons (*A Community Text; "A Literacy Event*") and Ada Hubrig's work on disability justice offer three examples of scholars embedded in their communities doing research with and as members of those communities themselves. At the Conference on Community Writing, we strive to welcome in non-academically affiliated community leaders and members to share knowledge and expertise. CCW members help to build a justice-focused coalition as they call out gaps in CCW's representation, programming, and accessibility. In so doing, they are helping to continually expand and shape the definition anew.

Representation in Definition Building

Representation is an essential part of distributed definition building as it is also part of the work of building a justice-focused coalition. This means not only, for example, collaborating with those present at events or those publishing in CCW's affiliated journals, *Community Literacy Journal* and *Reflections*, but also continually looking at the gaps. Who is attending events, and who is not; which concepts and voices are foregrounded, and which are not; who is being published and cited in the journals, and who is not; who has access to our programming, and who does not? Those of us in leadership roles in the organization learn from taking a hard look at this information and pledge continually to do better through dedicated actions. Through the recursive work on representation, we are working to expand and incorporate definitions for what community writing is and is not, the values that matter, and the people and projects involved. Distributed definition building allows community members, whether scholars, students, activists, artists, organizers, writers, or the many, many people involved in the Coalition, to write their own definitions of community writing based on their unique projects, aspirations, ethics, and positionalities that are then represented at the conference and in our affiliated journals, in our classrooms and on our syllabi, in our community-engaged activism, advocacy, and research. The building of coalition happens in the process of distributed definition building.

To celebrate and develop recognition for the exemplary work of our members, the Coalition for Community Writing has several nationally vetted awards including Outstanding Book in Community Writing. The book award offers an example of how distributed definition building has helped the organization internally to understand gaps in representation of certain kinds of projects, and, therefore, expand its focus and scope. In 2019, the book award committee determined that there were three books of the thirteen nominated that were exceptionally worthy of the award. Each book dealt with a different kind of community writing. Rather than choose one, which would seem to privilege one kind of work over another and therefore one definition over another, the commit-

tee determined to award all three to show the organization's desire to reject a narrow definition for community writing excellence and to instead celebrate a broader range of projects.

During the next awards cycle in 2021, a book was nominated for the Outstanding Book Award, but the award committee saw that it did not fit into the criteria for how the organization had been defining community writing scholarship as work that happens outside of college and university campuses. Rather than exclude this exceptional book from the running, CCW created a new award to indicate the organization's desire to expand its existing ideas of where community writing occurs to fit the critical antiracist, activist work happening in academic communities on campuses. In both instances, the awards committees felt that to definitionally limit what community writing is would feed into the individualistic, scarcity mindset prevalent in higher education. They chose to reject that way of thinking about outstanding work and, in the process, to expand CCW's understanding of what community writing can be and how we can support work and people under that expanded definition.

Collaboration in Distributed Definition Building

The Coalition for Community Writing continually addresses the question of to whom we hold ourselves accountable as we look for the gaps between what is and what we aspire to. It may be easy in top-down and non-coalitional organizational models to ignore legitimate concerns or suggestions from members rather than to continually strive for organizational evolution. Alternately, our commitment to accountability through representation and collaboration involves transparency, adaptability, and radical openness to justice-focused work.

There are several ways in which CCW strives to be collaborative. One example is coalitional collaboration across justice-focused organizations, which is a part of distributed definition building. For example, in 2020, CCW in collaboration with the American Indian Caucus, the Asian/Asian American Caucus, the Black Caucus, the Latinx Caucus, and DBLAC, created the Conference on Community Writing Emerging Scholars Award for BIPOC graduate students and junior faculty. Because community-engaged scholars' work is often delegitimized, those who research and teach community writing can experience isolation, lack of support and mentorship, and threats to security. This reality is heightened for BIPOC students and scholars (Kannan et. al.; Kynard, "Teaching"; Kynard, "All I Need"; Martinez, *Counterstory*). As a guiding principle of CCW, we denounce the long and ongoing legacies of white supremacy culture, settler colonialism, and violence against the intellectual ideas, bodies, and mental wellbeing of BIPOC students, colleagues, community partners, and loved ones.

The Emerging Scholars Award was a small action step we could take in coalition with the caucuses and DBLAC as we considered not only representation and collaboration, but accountability in striving toward a justice-focused coalition. In "Intersectional Feminism & Coalition

Building," Carmen Perez explains that to create healing, coalitions should "hold space for the discomfort that is necessary to make amends for harms done… [W]e cannot build strong coalitions unless we're committed to healing our wounds–and our wounds look different." Damián Baca, Romeo García, Lisa King, Andrea Riley Mukavetz, Terese Guinsatao Monberg, Ersula Ore, Khirsten Scott, Amy Wan, Kimberly Weiser, and I collaboratively wrote the call for applicants and particularly welcomed applications from graduate students, adjuncts, non-tenure track faculty, and faculty without other funding sources, people with disabilities, and LGBTQIA people at community colleges, HBCUs, HSIs, and tribal colleges. We wanted to acknowledge both the different wounds and needs of each individual and the collective wounds, needs, and goals of the cohort.

The Black, Latinx, Asian/Asian American, and American Indian CCCC caucuses and DBLAC each selected a group of four Emerging Scholars. Awardees received Coalition for Community Writing membership for 2021 and 2022 and Conference on Community Writing registration for the October 2021 conference. Awardees were recognized at the conference Awards Ceremony, and Dr. Aja Martinez met with all interested Emerging Scholars to discuss navigating academia and publishing. Additionally, Coalition for Community Writing offered professional development opportunities through online workshops like our annual Job Market Materials Workshop; Review, Tenure, and Promotion Workshop; CCCC Mentoring Workshop; and invitations to present at the conference and publish in *Community Literacy Journa*l.

In considering representation and recognition, this cross-coalitional work was a critical part of building the definition of community writing. It indicates that the extraordinary work people are doing in the caucuses is essential to community writing, and people who may not have considered their work "community writing" can find additional support and resources through CCW, while the organization grows and becomes more meaningful through their participation. This reciprocal, relational way of building coalition helps expand our definition towards justice.

Distributed Definition Building at Work

To demonstrate benefits of a kaleidoscopic view of "community writing," I invited all CCW board members and one of CCW's Emerging Scholars to contribute to this article by responding to the following email invitation: "share your thoughts on what community writing and coalitional work mean to you in terms of what CCW strives for." Here, they share their thoughts, arranged alphabetically by their last names.

Sweta Baniya

Community writing and coalition work are important to tackle global challenges that continue to cripple the world. In the current transnational world, we need to teach students to navigate transnational and multicultural spaces via communication, technology, and engagement. Rhetori-

cians who are engaged in studying the coalition-building work cannot only do this work alone and in silos. If you are "studying" the community, you need to constantly ask yourself how you are contributing to this community. How have you utilized your resources and the privileges that you have in ways that you can support the community, contribute towards community growth, and develop a long-term partnership?

Community Writing scholars across the country can incubate some ideas of working together as well as have a safe space to discuss community needs together and collaboratively tackle the issues of our communities. The ripple effects of the global pandemic in various vulnerable communities are seen in various sectors of society and it will continue to impact the most vulnerable and the marginalized. Hence, we need to envision working with various local and global communities to build a sustainable future as we cannot do this alone. Hence, we need a coalition of both academics and the community together to mitigate the challenges of the global community.

Paul Feigenbaum

To me, coalitional work is, ideally, an ongoing process of trust-building guided by humility, compassion, and the pursuit of mutual listening and understanding across cultural, institutional, and sometimes ideological lines of difference. It requires adopting a beginner's mindset in relation to the various forms of expertise and knowledge that everyone is bringing to the collaborative process. It also requires making peace with uncertainty and ambiguity.

When coalition partners try to enact these principles and practices together, they can more effectively access and circulate their collective wisdom, and they can more effectively cultivate flexible and creative responses to their dynamic circumstances. None of this is easy, of course, nor is it efficient. This is why I think people need to rededicate themselves regularly to pursuing these principles and practices together, and they must try to be generous with each other when members of the coalition inevitably fall short of these ideals.

Megan Hartline

To me, what makes CCW coalitional rather than just collaborative is the way the organization aims to create space for community writing practitioners whose needs are often unmet. To put it another way, CCW works hard to live out its values. Leaders in the organization know that scholars of color, particularly of marginalized genders, are most likely to take on community work without recognition and have prioritized a diverse set of voices in leadership as well as created space for recognizing and mentoring emerging scholars of color. They know that community partners are not often financially compensated for their heavy work to make projects successful, so the CCW conference brings in local community activists as keynote speakers and pays them for their time

and labor. CCW understands that community writing is an ever-changing, often-messy network of relationships and practices that require a coalitional approach to work together toward a more just world.

Lisa King

When I think about coalition, community writing, and CCW's goals, I think about finding ways to break down academic disciplinary/caucus silos that keep us from collaborating, and meeting communities where they are. The work I'm doing with Native Nations partners on a new exhibition that centers Indigenous voices to tell the story of the Indigenous mound on campus requires both of these actions simultaneously. I have to be able to work with collaborators across the campus museum, repatriation office, history, anthropology, landscape design, and campus gardens; but more importantly, the university team I'm working with must foreground the partnerships we are developing with the multiple Native Nations on whose lands we live and work. Whether it's label copy, grant applications, website materials, composing image and design features for the exhibition, or caring for the mound itself, working with our Native co-curators from the ground up is what already makes this project transformative.

Seán McCarthy

I see CCW as a vital and experimental space within the field as we negotiate and build out hybrid spaces not just between universities and communities but also across sectors. This involves not just relationship building but also thinking about our methods of engagement and re-imagining writing and its effect on high-impact learning and change. That work can only happen in community, and I think CCW has a vital role to play in that kind of futuring work.

Maria Novotny

Community writing is not just a practice, but it is also a series of ethical commitments whereby community voices and perspectives are centered over scholarly analysis and theory. In other words, I see the role of CCW as reimagining the role and form of scholarship in order to best represent and serve the purposes of communities who engage in writing. Adopting a more critical-creative form to what it means to produce scholarship — a form that may bend or even resist traditional scholarship — I think helps scholars in community writing engage in more reciprocal and accountable community writing practices.

One example of how scholars may incorporate a critical-creative orientation to community writing is curation, whereby community perspectives and knowledges (whether in writing or some other visual/multi-modal form) is rhetorically assembled into a carefully crafted narrative for publics

to engage with, learn from, and encounter. Curation then forces the CCW scholar to be accountable not just to themselves but to the community's the curation represents and to the publics it engages with — pushing the aims and scope of our scholarly potential well beyond university walls.

Jessica Restaino

My goals in community writing work have increasingly been about honoring real human relationships, nurturing them as they are, working from a place that's honest about needs and interests. Sometimes, when these relationships begin outside the university, they eventually show us how universities can help. It's very important to me that, when I do engage the university in some way, it's done as a trustworthy, recognizable, and informed response to what my community partners have taught me. The instances where I've rushed to connect university resources have been the moments where I've failed most readily--so, patience, steadiness are key takeaways for me.

Sherita V. Roundtree

Feminist theories offer an important framework for understanding coalition in community writing. Contemporarily, coalitional work has often become entangled in an effort to collaborate with organizations doing complementary work. Although complementary, these labors are not one in the same. As Karma R. Chávez reminds us in discussing the experiences of Queer migrants, coalition is an unimagined horizon across divided "sites of tension." Chávez continues by explaining that "Coalition cannot be easily categorized, fit into an identity, or fixed on a map. Coalition is not comfortable. It is not home" (147). Coalitional work must take into account the process along with the potential for progress. Often those processes require us to not only sit in the discomfort but also take action in it. As statements like the 1977 "The Combahee River Collective Statement" and many other Black feminist political movements imply, we must assess where we are in the now and continue to reassess.

Daniel Singer

In coalitional writing, "We" keeps its most empowering meaning– A-Many-Led-Us- Speaking-In-Concert. It's our shared act of coming together in pursuit of a common end in common terms—speaking in chorus rather than in singular voice and without calling for the dissolution or devaluing of our separateness, our difference, our ability to be un-totalized by a single collective effort that is likely one of many for any individual coalition member. It says: "We come together for a purpose, but we are more in our own right than that purpose." It says, "We need many nonidentical hands to make the work actually work." It says: "We need to say more, do more, be more

than any one of us could on our own; than all of us subsumed by only our common goals could say, do, become."

Lara Smith-Sitton

"Only if we constantly ask ourselves why we take certain actions or teach in certain ways can we hope to make decisions that can sustain later scrutiny and can serve as foundational choices for later work" (Goldblatt 6). This idea aligns with a critical component of the CCW Vision Statement: "a transformation of higher education." Yet despite burgeoning scholarship about the theory, practice, and pedagogy of community-writing, it can be challenging to know not only what questions to ask ourselves and others but also how our projects can effectuate impactful and needed change. CCW is an organization rooted in building connections between established and emerging community-engaged scholars and then presenting opportunities to listen to and learn from community partners and members. The work to build coalitions enables richer, stronger projects that more thoughtfully consider the needs of all stakeholders and participants.

Karen Tellez-Trujillo

When I think of the Coalition on Community Writing, I focus on the word "community," as that is my experience with the coalition. Within this coalition, I have found a community committed to social justice, that is dedicated to providing numerous opportunities for bringing about change, whether it's at a conference, in publication, or through mentorship and support for faculty, students, and community members. Having worked with students on my Southern California campus to create literacy events (Moss, "A Literacy Event"; Branch) and writing opportunities outside the classroom, I believe my foundation of support has come from CCW and from exposure to approaches to community writing that I have learned at conferences and from the Community Literacy Journal. Coalition work means coming together to make our communities a better place, and CCW gives us the support and resources we need to do just that.

Don Unger

Coalition building means creating strategic alliances with other organizations over a particular issue. The organizations might not agree on root causes or long-term solutions, but they agree that the issue needs to be dealt with. For example, during the 1980s and 1990s, many feminist organizations built coalitions to defend Planned Parenthood from attack by Operation Rescue (OR) and other groups that were attempting to shut clinics down, attack employees, and harass clients. Groups like the National Organization for Women (NOW), the National Association for the Repeal of Abortion Laws (NARAL), and the National Women's Rights Organizing Coalition (NWROC) called out their members to participate in joint actions around the country to ensure that

OR did not impede a person's right to have an abortion. Beyond coming together for these direct actions, NOW, NARAL, NWROC, and others had little in common theoretically or organizationally, and they did not hide their differences. These coalitions exemplify the old leftist motto: march separately, strike together.

Bernardita M. Yunis Varas

The CCW's Emerging Scholars program, with its mission to support young scholars in community writing, can further its coalition-building mission by engaging the Emerging Scholars in bimonthly gatherings. These meetings will bring scholars together to reflect on growing scholarship and emerging theories, bridging academic spaces between elders in community writing and young scholars, setting up intentional spaces of mentorship and sustainability in leadership and writing.

Kate Vieira

My community writing work recently has involved collaborating with writers, educators, and activists in Colombia to think about, practice, and teach writing for peace. For us, "peace" is impossible without equitable social relationships. So really what we're after is writing for healing and change, which involves as much listening as writing.

My collaborators have worked for years in areas impacted by Colombia's armed conflict. And me, I work here in the U.S. with teachers, who are definitely not working in contexts characterized by peace. Our legacies of violence are different, and it's important to remember the U.S. has had a more than minor role to play in worsening the conflict in Colombia. But here we are, writing and teaching together because we believe that across languages, cultures, and borders we can develop shared practices, shared solutions, shared ways forward. I am beyond grateful to belong to the Coalition for Community Writing, where others are developing similar partnerships, where the slow and difficult and joyous nature of this work—the deep meaningfulness of it—is shared and understood and supported. This shared understanding allows us to progress.

At the 2019 CCW, poet and activist Dr. Jhoana Patiño Lopez and I presented on a Writing for Peace community-authored book and board game we co-edited. In 2021, the co-founders of the writing-for-peace organization, EncantaPalabras, Juana María Echeverri and Rodrigo Ospina Rojas, presented on principles of writing for peace that we are developing. Each time, there was an opening, an understanding, a shared recognition. The Coalition for Community Writing reminds us that our work is never done in isolation.

Ada Vilageliu-Díaz

I understand community writing as an opportunity to produce transformative community engagement through writing. At the same time, and more importantly, I see how this community approach must also include coalitional spaces to work. As a Canary Islander of African Indigenous descent, I enjoy finding, joining, and creating communities that allow me to collaborate and contribute, especially when we share similar histories or experiences as BIPOC. CCW is a very important space for me since I discovered it in 2019 and found a community of women that reminded me of the need to find or create nurturing safe spaces for BIPOC academics, students, and community workers who are constantly facing microaggressions and erasure in academia.

That is why I joined the organization as a board member and proposed we formalize safe spaces at academic organizations and conferences so that we can explore ways of addressing the need for safe spaces while simultaneously providing one. This year, we have prepared a Deep-Think Tank safe/healing space at CCW that would be run from a BIPOC perspective that we hope gets the movement started. I have also applied what I learned at CCW to CCCC by helping create a Black/Latinx/Native scholars coalition through which we just submitted a full day workshop at the next CCCC convention.

Stephanie Wade

What I love about coalitional work is that it allows us to live the equation that 1 + 1 > 2, because together we can do things that are impossible individually. For me, this means showing up for projects that others have organized, from hauling garbage at a city clean-up to attending a departmental open house, and looking for and listening for opportunities to make connections, to channel resources to underserved communities, and to contribute to the creation of inclusive spaces–both material, such as gardens, and ideological, such as publication opportunities–for creative work. My experience teaching community writing and serving on the CCW board continues to teach me about the essential connections between material work and culture work, the value of the relationships that grow from these projects, and the rich knowledge that comes from slowing down and engaging in this work.

Christopher Wilkey

For me, community writing originates through rhetorical situations that invite readers and writers to seek out encounters with the most vulnerable and oppressed for the sake of learning how to live. Coalition-building is inherent in this process, as all interlocutors are dependent on each other in establishing rhetorical agency through the work of social change. CCW strives to amplify such instances of rhetorical agency through a re-imagination of community-university partnerships as aligned with the work of social justice.

Using Distrib[illegible] and Gaps

What can we lea[illegible] what coalition and community writing r[illegible] her person's. What is essential for one, [illegible] single definition could encapsulate t[illegible] ions. And that has the potential to be [illegible]

Frequency	Word
58	Community(ies)
34	writing
39	Work(ing)
28	Coalition(al)
15	Need(s)
14	together
12	scholars
9	Engage(ment)
9	spaces
8	Just(ice)
7	peace
7	shared
6	across
6	space
6	organization
5	important
5	support
5	safe
5	needs
5	partners
5	practices
5	emerging
5	projects
5	change
5	relationships

Figure 2: Table lists the top 25 words used across the responses and the frequency with which they occurred.

When we think about what community writing can do across a large number and scope of projects, there are many, many possible definitions, as we can see reflected even across this small group. As the word cloud and table display, there are also some key similarities across the definitions. In coalition building, we can look for similarities and for reminders to ensure our programming and resources align with needs. The reflections prioritize ethical relationships. Several mention breaking barriers of silos, hierarchies, and knowledge-holding. Some mention using resources to circulate and amplify community member stories and knowledges. Some prioritize amplifying and supporting scholars of color. These similarities in the definition building point to CCW's core values, what we aspire toward in community writing, the trunk that grows into many branches with many leaves.

Other definitions may indicate more specific key elements of what helps CCW align values with actions, i.e. Megan's comment about ethically bringing in and compensating non-academically affiliated community members is a core part of what community writing might entail. Her definition tells me, as a coalition leader, that maybe the organization needs to prioritize reciprocity as central to the definition of who we are. Sherita brings up the importance of acknowledging strength in differences and in acting through and in discomfort. Her citation of Black feminist and Latina works reminds me that maybe "community writing's" definition mandates an antiracist commitment. Sweta and Kate remind me that the Coalition includes people outside the United States and that maybe we need more programming to better include international audiences. These examples show how those helping to build or lead a coalition can carefully listen to what people define as essential to the work or the mission. Then, this distributed definition building can help maintain accountability and can advance new ideas for programming and needs that any one individual may not have considered. Distributed definition building can help coalition leaders look for gaps in representation; it can help shed light on what members value; it can offer new ways to acknowledge and celebrate people; it can lead to new ideas for programming and resources.

In coalitional work, core principles and shared goals offer stability and support. But, stability does not mean rigidity. Community writing for Sweta might mean her global work with Nepal. For Paul, it may mean working with incarcerated writers. For Jessica and Don, it may mean the work they each do with gender equity and justice. For Ada Vilageliu-Díaz, it may mean her work to build Safe Spaces inside and outside of academia. Each person's definition is different. However, as Kate Vieira reminds us, while the projects may be different, "our work is never done in isolation." Distributed definition building offers a flexibility, a capaciousness, a generosity of ideas needed to build justice-focused coalitions in which each member can grow in ways they need, bolstered and perhaps even transformed by the support, resources, and ideas of others, and they can help others to do the same.

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Coalitional Refusals: Transformative Justice Beyond Repair

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Abstract: This article theorizes "coalitional refusal" as a set of tools that are necessary for coalitional work grounded in abolitionist thought and transformative justice. Coalitional refusal questions the limits of "togetherness" in coalition's "togetherness-in-difference" (Mao 100) and makes space for the possibilities of refusal to help build and sustain coalitions. The authors discuss key trends in rhetoric and composition's dominant approaches to "scholarship-activism" that highlight the necessity for coalitional refusal as a legitimate, and often vital, form of political engagement. This essay offers frameworks for conversations about writing that attend to, open space for, and build relationships with lived experience—and address when we have slipped away from it. This article offers a pathway towards "orientations and re-orientations" (Del Hierro et al.) in our coalitional work within and beyond our field.

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Keywords: coalitional refusal; transformative justice; embodied presence; coalitional accountability; scholarship-activism

Introduction

In Jordan Peele's sci-fi/UFO film *Nope* (2022), film industry horse handler and Black man, OJ Haywood, notices one night that the lights and sprinklers in his ranch's indoor arena have been mysteriously turned on. He turns them off and begins to walk away when, to his surprise, the sprinklers turn on again. When he realizes someone–some*thing*–is hiding in the arena, he considers going back to investigate, but changes his mind. "Nope, nope, nope," he says, shaking his head and walking away.

Such "nope" moments, which occur throughout the film, appear to be secondary to the plot. But, they nonetheless forward one of the film's most important rhetorical questions: Why should Black people risk their lives to save the world? Unlike in a typical sci-fi film in which protagonists might feel compelled to fight aliens to save humankind, in *Nope,* neither OJ nor his sister Em have any interest in saving anyone. This is why, rather than notifying any state or government officials of a possible alien invasion, OJ and Em instead work to secure video proof of UFOs they can sell to save their family's ranch from bankruptcy. "Nope" is a political refusal, a resistance act that rejects white futurity and refuses the abstract "happy talk" (Ahmed 10) of inclusionary paradigms that suggest "we are all in this together" (even when "we" are not).

Inspired by *Nope*, Pritha and her colleagues Alexis McGee and Louis M. Maraj proposed a panel for the 2023 Conference on College Composition (CCCC) originally entitled "Doing Nope: Surviving Anti/Racism in the University" (an implied critique of the conference's theme of "Doing Hope"). The panel sought to highlight the "harmful, divisive, and dangerous strategies" institutions embrace to "appear equitable and just." How, they asked, can we do our jobs as unwarranted attention "force[s] BIPOC into the rigged spotlights of our institutions and disciplines? How do we cultivate 'hope' while making space for 'nope'" (Maraj et al.)? Each presentation on the panel featured moments of "doing nope" via personal narrative, from refusing technologies of anti-Black surveillance in the academy in the Zoom era, to unsettling white institutional apologies, to highlighting gossip as a Black feminist rhetoric of resistance and survival. But when the three presenters arrived at CCCC in February 2023, they were surprised to find that the program had listed their panel as "Doing *Hope*" instead of "Doing Nope." The program had also classified them, without their prior knowledge or consent, as a "featured" panel that would be live-streamed and recorded. Ironically, CCCC organizers had not only forced Pritha, Lexi, and Lou into the very same "rigged spotlight" their panel critiques, but they had also–in their efforts to highlight hopeful visions of social justice–failed to consider the material risks of livestreaming/recording three BIPOC junior scholars sharing personal narratives of institutional racism at the field's largest professional conference.

Such "performance culture" (Ahmed 85) supports institutional norms of diversity and inclusion and forecloses possibilities for refusal–for "nope." In valorizing romanticized notions of "performative solidarity" (Cohen), this paradigm disavows the messier questions that surround coalition-building: How does the disciplinary embrace of "social justice" (Walton et al.; Carter et al.) and the "rigged spotlight" it entails for multiply-marginalized folx complicate or foreclose possibilities for coalition-building? When do we make space for enthusiastic moves articulating solidarity across power differences to be *refused*? What if coalition isn't just about what we welcome *in*, but also what we intentionally keep *out*–for protection, for survival, for transformative justice *beyond*/*outside* the academy?

As we consider these questions, we might also think of the CCCC's 2024 conference

theme of "Writing Abundance." Citing Candace Fujikane's work on "Indigenous economies of abundance" as a refusal of capitalist logics of scarcity, the CFP calls for "tak[ing] stock of the growth we have seen in this organization" as a "result of the abundant and ongoing work of BIPOC scholars" (CCCC). While the CFP seeks to legitimately, meaningfully center and celebrate the intellectual and resistance labor of multiply marginalized communities, how might *uncritical* narratives of abundance still support colonial and carceral narratives of *extraction* that regard "the labor/knowledges of disabled, queer, (and) people of color as an endless resource" and delimit possibilities for "respectful and reciprocal" relationships (Cedillo et al.)? Can *refusal* to engage in "inclusion," to support abundance rhetorics, or to mobilize our knowledges as multiply-marginalized folx to support institutional "social justice," lead to coalition-building?

In this essay, we offer "coalitional refusal" to describe coalition-building based in abolitionist, transformative justice (brown, *We Will Not*; Hassan; Page and Woodland). Though Leslie D. Gonzales and Heather Shotton describe coalitional refusal as the building of coalition "by refusing the impositions of a neoliberal university" (549), we expand how we think about the uses of refusal in/for/towards coalition. In working outside of the dialectics of abundance vs. scarcity, inclusion vs. exclusion, and presence vs. absence that typically dominate academic theorizing, coalitional refusal presents an alternative to the liberal-multicultural models of "recognition" that are too often narrowly focused on belonging *within* the dominant.

Refusal, we argue, offers us an alternative. As Audra Simpson argues, refusal goes beyond belonging-based frameworks by raising "the question of legitimacy for those who are usually in the position of recognizing: What is their authority to do so? Where does it come from?" (11). Refusal "involves an ethnographic calculus of what you need to know and what I refuse to write" (Simpson 105). It is necessary in the face of dispossession, whiteness's "skewed authoritative axis," and the ongoing role of "writing and analysis" in forwarding logics of imperialism via "discursive containment" (Simpson 105). Extending Simpson, we offer *coalitional refusal* in this essay as a kind of political act that, in not purporting to present "everything" (Simpson 105), critically questions the limits of "togetherness" in coalition's "togetherness-in-difference" (Mao 100). Is there space for an understanding of coalition that not only maintains, but also values, when necessary, the power of purposeful *disengagement*—the "turning point" (Chávez 9) of a coalitional moment as turning *away* rather than turning *towards*? How do we recognize when "a coming together, or a juncture, for some sort of change" (Chávez 9) is *not* possible? Even as rhetorical and cultural studies scholars imagine what sustainable models for coalition might look like (Hubrig; Jackson and Cedillo; Hatrick; Licona and Gonzales; Reyes; Yam), what happens when the answer is, simply, *nope*? In what follows, we identify and discuss key trends in rhetoric and composition's dominant approaches to "scholarship-activism" that highlight the necessity for coalitional refusal as a legitimate, and often vital, form of political engagement.

Re/Defining Coalition and Coalitional Refusals

Calls for refusal as a coalitional gesture have long been part of scholarly work on activist/academic collaboration, although remarkably, much of the foundational critical work explicitly interrogating the ethics and political implications of "scholarship-activism" has occurred *outside* of rhetoric and composition studies proper. In her foundational 1993 essay, "Public Enemies and Private Intellectuals," Ruth Wilson Gilmore identifies four tendencies in "oppositional studies": 1) individualistic careerism; 2) romantic particularism; 3) luxury production; and 4) organic praxis (72-73). For Gilmore, only organic praxis can reject the careerist, particularist, and luxe modes of "displac[ing] needed energy from where it is most needed" (73), and meaningfully interrogate relations between/among institutions, laborers, activists, and material and embodied violences across geographic and cultural spaces.

Scholars' mere presence and participation within institutions that depend upon continued external support from state and corporate actors, however, fundamentally call into question whether transformative or radical "oppositional studies" are even possible within the university. Because institutions of higher education often exercise and support carceral and militarized power *through* rhetorics of "diversity" and "equity" themselves, the mandate of academic theorizing to keep scholarship "'objective" (mystifying), 'nonpolitical' (nonsubversive), and 'academic' (elitist)" will never enable the academic mainstream to produce a revolutionary or radical practice (James and Gordon). As Julia C. Oparah notes, the "academic-military-industrial complex" fosters "an interdependent and mutually constitutive alliance whereby corporate priorities and cultures, including the intellectual needs of the military-industrial complex, increasingly shape the face of academia" (101). In this system, diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) rhetorics "provide much needed moral capital because of their association with progressive values,"–an illustration of the "dangerous complicities implicit in our attempts to carve out sites of resistance from within the neoliberal university" (Oparah 101). Joy James and Edmund T. Gordon therefore prefer "radical subject" to the notion of "scholar-activist," arguing that radical subjects do not primarily concern themselves with coherence in the academic arena, but instead "suggest a coherence shaped by political literacy emanating from communities confronting crisis and conflict" (James and Gordon 371). Oppositional, radical subjectivity requires a complex attunement to the material, the local, and the immediate, rather than an emphasis on the global thinking and abstraction that characterizes scholarly knowledge-production in the university.

We argue that it is this "radical subjectivity" that is too often missing from dominant methodological trends in rhetoric and composition studies. Some rhetorical studies scholars, for example, too-optimistically identify inductive methods like grounded theory as "decolonial" for how they ostensibly assist analysts in avoiding biases and emphasize "respect for participants, humility, flexibility, and reflexivity in data gathering and analysis" (Dorpenyo 72). While we appreciate these general aims, such methods still typically valorize and work in service of the same forms of ab-

straction, researcher individualism, and "luxury production" that Gilmore critiques. Even in aspiring to construct knowledge "from below" (Dorpenyo 72), they prioritize upward theorizing (James and Gordon 371) and the researcher's own epistemic orientation and self-reflexivity.

In a 2020 article on the potentials of grounded theory for "social justice research and critical inquiry in the public sphere," for instance, Kathy Charmaz discusses reflections from qualitative researchers on their experiences using grounded theory. One researcher, Kapriskie Seide, discusses her work on issues of the social construction of health and health equity in Haiti: "I was in Haiti with no school, no advisor, no computer, no office, and no choice but to face my participants, whose words savagely slapped me into seeing my inadequate attachment to 'data' and shook me to overcome my own parochialism" (Seide qtd. in Charmaz 166). Even though Seide herself emigrated from Haiti, she notes how she nonetheless "saw the world from the perspective of an American and could not be trusted to decipher the subtleties of their lives without help." Seide then goes on to praise the "flexibility and social astuteness" (Seide qtd. in Charmaz 166) of grounded theory as a method, as well as its requirement that researchers "travel between research and practice" (Seide qtd. in Charmaz 167). Charmaz thus concludes that grounded theory can "move researchers to develop theoretical categories that situate their participants' lives within larger social and political structures" and show "where, why, and how change can occur in their respective public spheres" (174).

Note how Seide's insightful reflections on the potentials of grounded theory to provide nuanced understandings of social justice issues still replicate logics of colonialism and extraction. Seide, though a kind of insider-outsider as a Haitian researcher working for a U.S. university, reads her research participants and the "data" collected as unruly, uncomfortable, even "savage." While she does reflect upon her distrust of her positionality, she suggests that this distrust might still be successfully overcome with the "help" of her research participants, or through the act of iteratively "traveling" between "research and practice"–the former located in the realm of the academy, with the latter confined to the presumed wildness and unruliness of the "data." Charmaz's conclusion that grounded theory can "move researchers to develop theoretical categories" to imagine "change" in "their respective public spheres," then, again recenters "coherence in the academic arena" (James and Gordon 371) as the ultimate goal of grounded theory. Even though Charmaz and Seide's methodological reflections emphasize a nuanced commitment to rejecting objectivism, to what extent might such in/abductive methods reinforce capitalist, colonial visions of research participants and the "data" they yield as endless assets for intellectual and academic knowledge-making? Even as the field calls for "reciprocity" in research across power differentials (Powell and Takayoshi; Middleton et al.; Brady; Santiago-Ortiz), when does reciprocity and its focus on *mutual* benefit become yet another way the academy reasserts itself into the center of "social justice" work? Opposition in the form of refusal, we argue, can offer a key pathway towards a critical, embodied approach to coalition.

Indeed, our field still lacks sufficient tools to pursue accountability, address harm, and do the "constant work" of coalition without falling back on the same carceral logics and histories that have necessitated these struggles to begin with: "social justice" scholarship that works to support the university's narratives of "imperial benevolence" (Durazo 190); "diversity" initiatives masking the university's historical complicity with technologies of state and military surveillance[1]; and ongoing efforts to fold the rhetorics and platforms of radical resistance movements into the institutional lexicon via the perpetual creation of DEI committees, task forces, and institutional policy statements (Ahmed; Ferguson, We Demand; Prasad). Often, this work takes the place of actually challenging (and working with students to challenge) the systems of control and surveillance that structure our classrooms (Kynard, "This Bridge"), and police and censor students and faculty (Chatterjee and Maira 5). This means, of course, that we *keep needing* those committees, task forces, and policy statements, since the field has not actually addressed the conditions that create the need for them.

To articulate a mode for coalitional practice that centers radical subjectivity and the "fragmented self" James and Gordon discuss, we argue that a return to embodied, material understandings of coalition is necessary. In particular, we, like Christina Cedillo, call for understandings of critical embodiment that use and rely on embodied knowledge and a critical view of how embodied experience is structured and created to help us "contest the conditions that create exclusion." Activist-engaged rhetorical scholars should work towards coalitions that model transformative justice–not reforms to a discipline, university, or scholarship that are still working in the same exclusionary ways they were designed, and which keep their power through systems of punishment that are built on the same carceral logics that many Black and women of color feminist, trans, and disabled activists and scholars have long critiqued.

Marquis Bey, in fact, argues that this kind of practiced undoing and constant renegotiation is core to what coalition must be; that the "undoing" of coalitions can itself operate as an articulation of coalition (208). This type of refusal–a "refusing to succumb to circumscripts" tethered merely to "positional identities" (Bey 207)–can enable us to imagine alternative futures for justice work. This coalitional refusal, for Bey, is a "refusing to leave while refusing to let here" (207). In this way, we might understand coalitional refusal as a temporally specific and materially situated practice. If, for example, the resources available for "coalitional" work *now* and *here* do not enable an "organic praxis" (Gilmore) or "radical subjectivity" (James and Gordon), the act of undoing or turning away may itself be, as Maria Lugones writes of coalition, the "horizon that rearranges both our possibilities and the conditions of those responsibilities" (ix).

1 As Roderick A. Ferguson (2017) discusses at length, the category of "diversity" was often deployed post-Civil Rights in opposition to student protesters of color. Then-President Richard Nixon, in response to the 1970s murders of Black student protesters, established a President's Commission on Campus Unrest that ultimately recommended universities establish diversity initiatives emphasizing "values held in common" to both snuff out insurrection and frame student protesters of color as threats to democracy and public safety (Ferguson, We Demand 18).

Furthermore, an inability to meaningfully address harm outside of punitive models makes us rigid–unable to address coalitional tensions, changing needs, and harm when it happens. This is a problem of practice, but it is also an indicator that we don't actually understand coalition as founded in linked struggle. Fred Moten, for example, argues that coalition is not "a maneuver that always gets traced back to your own interests." It emerges "out of a recognition that it's fucked up for you, in the same way that we've already recognized that it's fucked up for us . . . I just need you to recognize that this shit is killing you, too, however much more softly" (qtd. in Harney and Moten 140-141). This kind of understanding of struggles as linked doesn't just require a systemic analysis; it actually requires a deep attention to embodied experience—to our own subjectivities. That is, we must–as we might also learn from many recent and historic student-led movements–foreground *joint struggle* in our moves towards coalition (Hitchcock 94). Moten, here, relies on a model of coalition that emphasizes material realities and embodied experience; coalitional work, then, would ask us to research and write (or, sometimes, not research and write) from a central understanding of one's own positionality and *how that positionality is tied up in systems*.

Thinking about coalition like Lugones, Harney and Moten, Bey, and others asks us to re-frame how we might think about terms like "reciprocity" that typically structure activist-engaged research, scholarship-activism, and community partnerships. At present, rhetoric and composition's understandings of these concepts remain underdeveloped. For example, Katrina M. Powell and Pamela Takayoshi note the limits of "reciprocity" as *methodologically* determined, preferring instead to highlight reciprocity as an ethical framework. Too often, they argue, researchers create and assign predetermined roles for research participants rather than building genuine, "quality" relationships in which research participants "should be allowed to construct roles for themselves and us in the same way we construct roles for them" (398). Ellen Cushman, however, in her 2004 response, rightly critiques Powell and Takayoshi's romantic suggestion that reciprocity and collaboration might actually level asymmetrical power relations, particularly through the type of self-reflection they model in their essay. Researcher self-reflection, Cushman writes, can not only overpower participants' lived realities and literacy practices, but it can also become a "performance of exotic moments of trial, distress, or anxiety" and a sensationalization of "tense moments or researchers' personal lives" (152).

Consider, for example, the common practice across academia, popular culture, and politics of simply listing one's demographic characteristics to mark positionality. Phrases like "I recognize my privilege as a white, cisgender, heterosexual white man in discussions of race and racism," which are often deployed as gestures to mitigate racial anxiety or tension, can be weaponized to relieve oneself from the responsibility of delimiting *specifically* what one can and, more importantly, cannot know by virtue of their identities and lived experiences. They also work to re-center the speaker's own epistemic orientation and uncertainty at the expense of those for whom (or over whom) they are speaking. Such performances, as an iteration of what queer of color critique theorist Kevin Duong identifies as "descriptive intersectionality," foreclose possibilities to think

beyond the binary of inclusion/exclusion. This narrative affixes whiteness, heteromasculinity, and able-bodiedness at the epistemic center; it is usually only an abstract response to "the political problem of exclusion" (Duong 375) rather than an intentional interrogation of material and epistemological relationships between and across differences.

Relatedly, cultural anthropologist and queer of color critique theorist Suparna Bhaskaran critiques social sciences' disciplinary valorization of researcher experience and experiential knowledge over the perspectives of those who are "the researched," a notion she theorizes as "arrogant experience" (16). Arrogant experience embraces a liberal humanist ethnographic approach whereby ethnographers represent a "core" Western, imperialist, atomistic-individual, white-male subject, who "chooses to travel to new worlds to gather data from Others, and who objectively reports back to the metropole" (17)–an ethnographic humanism "reproduced in brown/black face" (17) that romanticizes relationality and collaboration to "boomerang" back to the white academy (we might again recall, here, Seide's reflection on her research participants during her fieldwork in Haiti). Similarly, Cedillo argues, "The "invisibility" of privileged bodies lends credence to the discourses advanced through those bodies, equating their speech with objectivity as though said discourses were not products of specific standpoints."

These imperialist, Western modes of discourse structure rhetorical studies' relationship to and understanding of bodies writ large. As Cedillo notes, "those whose bodies are seen (in terms of surveillance and an ableist predilection for sight) as Other are framed as too corporeal and incapable of legitimate speech, as rhetorically expedient but never rhetorical in their own right. They are mere bodies, objects upon which meaning can be imposed." As Indigenous scholar Sandy Grande has argued, however, one cannot simply mitigate the materiality of power differences through discursive self-reflection, citation politics, or methodological nuance. Doing so contributes to what Grande calls "whitestream" theory, which depends heavily on postmodernism and post-structuralist epistemologies that privilege academic theorizing and knowledge-making over political, material action (330) and enable "high status feminists" to build "lucrative careers by theorizing the lives of 'other' women" (331). This, we would argue, is where refusal becomes a coalitional tool; we might pursue the undoing of discipline, punishment, and carcerality *within our discipline* through strategic refusals of whitestream norms and epistemological mandates.

We already see such refusals reflected, for example, in the 2020 "This Ain't Another Statement! This is a DEMAND for Black Linguistic Justice," which, drawing on the work of Carmen Kynard (*Vernacular Insurrections*), both explicitly refuses the field's longstanding practice of "position statements" and argues for the ways in which "Students' Right to Their Own Language" was "always imagined, and yet never fully achieved." This erasure, Kynard writes, "falls squarely in line with our inadequate responses to the anti-systemic nature of the '60s social justice movements" (74). That is, an effort to include varieties of English other than white mainstream English without changing the systems that led to the centering of white mainstream English to begin with does not

lead us to justice. We might also consider calls for us to refuse individualized approaches to accommodations for disabled, mad, and neurodivergent students and instead meaningfully address how *which* universities are built of "steep steps" (Dolmage, *Academic Ableism*, 41; see also Price). These exclusions are perpetuated, of course, in the writing classroom, which has long placed emphasis on preparing the next managerial class (Ruiz 59-60) by prioritizing the written word (Dolmage, "Writing Against Normal") and particular criteria for rhetoricity that excludes other forms of rhetorical expression and ways of knowing (Yergeau 7-8). These priorities reflect the whitestream epistemologies that have historically shaped the field by valorizing logocentric, Judeo-Christian models of written or verbal expression. We might *allow* difference within these norms, but while they stand, difference is allowable only so far as it can be, as disabled folx are often told, "*reasonably"* accommodated.

The field increasingly acknowledges subjectivity the way we acknowledge injustice–as systemic, attached to groups, and larger than any one interaction can address. While understanding both the construction of identity and systems of oppression as bound up in one another is important (Greene 49), Ruha Benjamin warns that we sometimes use arguments about systems to the exclusion of addressing ways that we "can uphold unjust systems" in everyday actions (21). Within our own field, Cody Jackson and Christina Cedillo point out a growing acceptance for discussion of the systemic nature of injustice that is incapable–or unwilling–to move down into the ways individuals, small groups, or specific organizations are perpetuating those injustices in the immediate, material, embodied moment (109). This is not to say we should over-individualize, or not pay attention to the systemic nature of oppression, but rather that, if we're seeking to build coalitions, we also need to build in practices that identify and address the ways we perpetuate those systems, both individually and as a field, a department, or a university. This certainly includes building alternative practices, such as different models for tenure and promotion that value work beyond the terms set by the academy, or editorial policies that decenter white standardized English and language norms. It can also look like working coalitionally to define small actions that systematically, collectively refuse whitestream norms and epistemologies in order to make room for those alternative practices.

Coalitional refusal can help us work towards transformative justice. More specifically, it can help us work with and beyond our academic, disciplinary, and research commitments in ways that don't not simply create "access to the same crappy system that everybody else has" but rather "think about how we move towards what a just world would look like for us all, and what liberation really looks like" (qtd. in Macdougall, "Beyond Access"). Coalitions cannot survive when priorities are on optics, research agendas, and project deliverables; we must refuse these kinds of "idealized coalitions," as Pritha has called them. An *idealized* coalition, in fact, is a replication of carceral logics, because in this model, one pays far more attention, in research and professional spaces, to *optics* rather than actual, messy, embodied experience. One might be so concerned about optics–about *looking wrong* and being somehow punished for doing so–that they are unable (or unwilling)

to meaningfully address harm when it happens. This prevents an understanding of struggles as linked in the deep, embodied ways we need to build the power to overturn systems of oppression and address how the academy and university perpetuate them in everyday actions.

In fact, coalitions grounded in transformative justice must at times refuse restorative justice precisely because restoration to a carceral past is itself a violence. As Chávez puts it, "coalition connotes tension and precariousness in this sense, but it is not necessarily temporary. It describes a space in which we can engage, but because coalescing cannot be taken for granted, it requires *constant work if it is to endure*" (8, emphasis ours). In taking up this definition, Gavin Johnson pushes scholars to consider their coalitions in light of these questions: "What work comes after the disruption of institutions? How do we–as rhetoricians, activists, and/or teachers–move beyond the tendency to simply critique and toward an ethic of coalitional accountability and restorative justice?" While Johnson echoes Chávez's call to move beyond critique, the appeal to restorative justice emphasizes a return to a sense of peace, wholeness, or hope within unjust systems. Restorative justice–appeals to which are echoed in other work on non-punitive models of justice in the field (Juergensmeyer; Kells; Carter)–assumes it is possible to restore an institution or system to some earlier point where that institution or system was, presumably, centering justice in how it operated (brown, *We Will Not Cancel Us*, 4). However, many of the institutions and systems we might work to (coalitionally) refuse–the university included–have not strayed from some less violent past; they are working as intended.

This extends, too, to our scholarly discourse. Critical histories of our field note how rhetorical studies is built on rhetorical and systemic violences (Kynard, *Vernacular Insurrections* 133; Ruiz 41-43). The risk of ignoring these histories is that call-outs from, in particular, women of color scholars in the field are perceived as ruptures in our imagined coalitions–ones that must quickly be repaired in order to restore an idealized multicultural, coalitional rhetorical studies. However, repair can itself be a violence; addressing harm often requires a complete undoing–a move to something new. As adrienne maree brown writes, while "restorative justice [has] often meant restoring conditions that were fundamentally harmful and unequal, unjust," transformative justice addresses "harm at the root, outside the mechanisms of the state, so that we can grow into right relationship with each other" (*We Will Not Cancel Us* 4).

One way coalitional refusal might help us move towards transformative justice is by refusing the carceral logics tied up in apology[2]. This includes punishing ways of being with each other in which apology is used to avoid punishment rather than meaningfully address harm or prevent it from recurring. These kinds of carceral logics limit our imagination; they prevent conceptions of callouts or critique as generative, as a form of care, and–of particular interest to us here–as a form of refusal. *Transformative* justice is predicated on addressing harm not through punishment but

2 See Prasad and Maraj, "'I Am Not Your Teaching Moment': The Benevolent Gaslight and Epistemic Violence" (2022) for an extended discussion and critique of the racial politics of white apologies.

through identifying and addressing the root cause of harm in ways that center the person who has experienced harm (Kaba and Hayes; Kim), and this includes accountability (which does not carry the Judeo-Christian expectation of apology as a means of restoring a relationship). It similarly includes moves to change underlying structures–including disciplinary ones–that make repeating that harm imaginable.

Coalitional refusal might also mean a refusal to *do research*. Recent scholarship from rhetorical studies on *in situ* or participatory research has sought to forge methodological models for ethical, participatory/activist-oriented research across identity and power differences. Michael Middleton et al., for example, theorize "participatory critical rhetoric," a set of research practices that bridge ethnography with rhetorical criticism to reconsider the relationships between critic, rhetor, text/context, and audience (xiv). Under this framework, "the critic enters a naturalistic field in which rhetoric occurs in order to observe, participate with, document, and analyze that rhetoric in its embodied and emplaced instantiation" (Middleton et al. xv). A participatory critical rhetoric scholar thus becomes "an activist both in their scholarly efforts and in their embodied engagements with the rhetorical communities they examine" (xviii). Middleton et al., too, note the value of privileging researchers' embodied, affective responses "to being in the moment… to hold signs and march along with their participants" as well as the risks "rhetorical communities" take when they allow critics "representational authority over their identities and their rhetorical practices" (164). This process allows the critic to "reforge" observer-observed hierarchies "into more of a partnership" to do ethnography "with," rather than "of" (164).

While Middleton et al.'s intervention is promising in *theory*, these moves towards participatory partnership and collaboration can sometimes lead to "idealized coalitions" in which progressive publics "imagine collectivity in places where it may not actually exist" and falsely assume shared politics across axes of power, even in contexts in which reciprocity or consent might not even be sustainable or possible (Prasad). A white rhetorical critic studying Indigenous movements, for instance, may make any number of nuanced self-reflexive, theoretical, and methodological moves to navigate and attend to histories of distrust and violence between settler-colonizers and Indigenous peoples in the Americas (Tuhiwai-Smith; Tuck and Yang). But a shared, collective vision may still be impossible or unavailable given both the critic's identity and orientation to power and their commitment to the same knowledge-making institutions that have underpinned colonial and imperialist logics and violences.

Researchers too often ask the question of *how* to do particular types of research "ethically" or "responsibly," yet may be afraid to ask questions that meaningfully unsettle the epistemic authority of the academy: *Should* I do this research? *Can* I even do this work ethically? Does "hold[ing] signs and march[ing] along with participants" (Middleton et al. 164) necessarily place researchers in solidarity or coalition with research "participants"? In one Kansas City occupation in which Brynn participated, the coalitional move was distinctly not to "hold signs and march along

with participants"; in fact, while Brynn did work with activists during and following the occupation, coalitional work didn't really begin until Brynn stepped away from the occupation, which had become so preoccupied with holding signs, marching, and keeping a tent city going that the coalitions it was built on had fallen apart. The obsession of, predominantly, other white people in their 20s (like Brynn) with *participating* at a certain point prevented the cultivation of longer-term, strategic relationships and behind-the-scenes work that defined coalitional work, rather than just work for a single activist moment (Reyes).

Here, we note another refusal: sometimes, coalitional work means a refusal to do something *right now* in favor of longer-term relationships and coalitions. Coalitional refusal might look like refusing a grant or research project in the present, even if the work is needed in the future. The "constant work" (Chávez 8) of coalition-building is also slow. The mere choice to just *slow down*, however, is not alone a coalitional refusal (nor is it always possible). Rather, as Eli Meyerhoff and Elsa Noterman write, "slow scholarship needs to be a collective political project rather than merely an individual one–and one that addresses power and inequality in the university" (219). This politicized, *coalitional* slowness is a refusal also aligned with notions of *crip time* (Samuels; Price; Piepzna-Samarasinha and Lakshmi); it is refusing the demand for *output*–of research, of grant project deliverables, of CV lines, of conference presentations–that can distract from or actively prevent coalition-building.

For example, Brynn's most recent research project included collaboration with Kansas City-based abolitionist citizen journalists from Independent Media Association (IMA). In 2021, IMA participated in a grant-funded project in collaboration with the university and a School of Nursing faculty member. While the grant aimed at fostering research and public-facing events, IMA hoped it would serve to help them build community–and, ultimately, coalition–with other citizen journalists. The project timeline (even with generous extensions from the grantmaking organization), however, didn't allow for the slow pace of community-building the group needed both to avoid burnout themselves and to effectively connect with others doing community media work. Instead, IMA members commented that in working with the university, they found themselves standing in for "the community" in ways they weren't comfortable with when community was something they were still building. The timeline of a grant project that was meant to end in research created more burnout than funding alleviated.

Even if we don't refuse research altogether, the best coalitional practice sometimes might be to refuse to let the urgency created by a grant or conference deadline, a graduate program's timeline, tenure clocks, or a publication cycle structure our relationships with activists and community members. This might look like siphoning institutional resources in the undercommons (Harney and Moten; Hatrick), advocating for funding for relationship-building or operational costs for community partnerships rather than project-based funding (brown, "Thoughts for Foundations"), or postponing, slowing down, or reimagining research and public-facing collaborative work.

While coalitional refusal represents a set of generative strategies for working collectively against oppressive and carceral logics, systems, and norms, we recognize that refusal can also be a typical white, masculinist response. This kind of refusal might *also* refuse apology, for example, or refuse to engage in research based not on accountability, but rather the types of individualism and opportunism that can sometimes characterize many (often very charismatic) leaders in activist movements and academic fields alike. Many activist spaces both in and outside the university have faced the impact of refusals that gesture at being coalitional while actually supporting the kinds of virtue-signaling and individual platform-building that have historically harmed activist efforts and movements. While being conscious of this potential for slippage between coalitional and hegemonic forms of refusal is crucial, we feel it would be overly simplistic or even naive to offer a clean framework that allows us to determine when refusal is or isn't coalitional. Indeed, these distinctions, in practice, are often worked out in individual contexts and relationships–and *over time*. We might instead consider how a refusal of the compulsive desire for certainty, for a *framework*, might itself be a coalitional move towards transformative justice that emphasizes accountability within the ebbs and flows of relationships and their material and temporal specificities, rather than through absolutist logics of judgment and punishment.

Conclusion

If, at this point, you are wondering what we should *do* rather than what we should *refuse*, we would ask you to sit for a moment in that feeling and perhaps reconsider this binary. Refusal isn't the opposite of action or hope or abundance. Rather, it's a coalitional move–a collective, politicized, and generative choice to not research, or be productive, or engage in rhetorics of apology, or negotiate with dehumanizing systems and epistemologies. We see these uses of refusal at play when activists march in the streets or occupy public property in an effort to refuse state surveillance and violence while simultaneously allowing space to do *something else*. Sometimes that "something else" looks like grassroots efforts to house people, feed people, care for people's mental health, or educate people, but sometimes it looks like creating and holding space to be. In fact, some activists, like Kyharra Williams, a Kansas City abolitionist activist, argue that's what protest is for. As they told Brynn in a 2022 interview: "Protests aren't for the oppressors; they're for the people…it's a place where we can gather and hold space for people that we've lost, for each other, and just like, remind ourselves that we have community with people" (Williams). Space doesn't have to be filled with action, or some hopeful message, or some new framework or scholarship, to be useful and necessary.

In closing, we return again to Nope. In the film, Angel Torres, an acquaintance of the Haywoods who helps them set up cameras on their ranch, at one point rationalizes their continued work together with the justification that it will be worth it if they can, beyond the money, also "save some lives" or even humanity. Em says "yeah," but by the end of the film, after retaining photographic proof of the alien, she screams in celebration of the Haywoods' "Oprah shot," yelling "no-

body fucks with Haywood, bitch!" Em gives meaning to the Haywoods' actions not because they may have saved the world, but because they've succeeded here, now in doing what they needed to survive. The feeling of hope with which the film leaves viewers is the Haywoods' vision of hope, not one inspired by some grand, moral imperative or even the capitalist film industry upon which their ranch has depended. The film shows us that refusal and hope aren't mutually exclusive, even as–like in the example of Pritha's 2023 CCCC panel–the impulse to reject "doing nope" in favor of "doing hope" might suggest not only that refusal and hope must be opposites, but also that of the two ends of that binary, we must always orient towards hope.

Is it any wonder that so many of us as multiply-marginalized scholars are burnt out if all we can ever imagine for our coalitions is what we *do* or what we are asked to do? We do hope, we do antiracism, we do access work, we do SafeZone trainings, we do public-facing scholarship, we do talks on that public-facing scholarship for the university, and so on. What might be possible if we were instead to work together, within our coalitions (whatever those look like), to cultivate coalitional refusals–to refuse to participate in our current scholarly, institutional, economic, or political systems, and be hopeful about it?

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Accountability with/in Community Relations

U.S. Women's Suffrage as a Strategy for Counterstory and Coalition: Creating Shared Rhetorical Space Through Library-Campus Partnerships

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Abstract: This essay explores coalition-building through campus-community partnerships guided by feminist rhetoric and pedagogy. Centered in a public library, this grant-sponsored community book club and discussion series on women's suffrage and the 19th Amendment was informed by and fostered intersections in the authors' dual feminist interventions in the dominant narratives shaping stories of library and activist work. The series invited participants not only to consider women's rhetorical roles as activists for women's suffrage, but also to understand broader coalition and sustained activism for voting rights through the counterstory (Martinez) of Black women's rhetorical activities. Through a multivocal and reflective conversation about what it can look like to actively listen for counterstories as an act of community-building and activism, the authors blend theory and practice, offering readers strategies for building similar campus-community partnerships that foster relational literacies for change.

Letizia Guglielmo is a professor of English and Interdisciplinary Studies at Kennesaw State University. Her writing and research explore feminist rhetorics and pedagogy, gender and pop culture, and student and faculty professional development. Her work has appeared in a variety of journals and edited collections. Book projects include *Immigrant Scholars in Rhetoric, Composition, and Communication: Memoirs of a First Generation, Misogyny in American Culture: Causes, Trends, Solutions, Scholarly Publication in a Changing Academic Landscape, Contingent Faculty Publishing in Community: Case Studies for Successful Collaborations*, and *MTV and Teen Pregnancy: Critical Essays on 16 and Pregnant and Teen Mom*.

Meghan Stipe, Bartow County Library System is a collection development librarian for Library Systems and Services, where she purchases adult fiction and all ages Spanish books for libraries across the country. At the time of the article, Meghan was an adult services librarian and head of the adult department at Bartow County Library System. Throughout her

six years in the public library system, Meghan was keenly aware of the vital role played by public libraries in connecting their patrons with information and resources, and worked to create and arrange programs to further this goal.

Keywords: activist coalitions, book discussions, campus-community partnerships, Counterstory, feminist pedagogy, feminist rhetorics, public libraries, relational literacies, women's suffrage

Introduction

Growing out of an American Library Association (ALA) grant-sponsored community book club and discussion series on women's suffrage and the 19th Amendment's centennial anniversary, this essay explores the potential for coalition-building through campus-community partnerships grounded in and guided by feminist rhetoric and pedagogy. With funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), the project arose from the ALA's Let's Talk About It initiative (LTAI), a program model based on book discussion and meant to spark conversations at public libraries around the country. Offering resources on more than thirty different topics including Being Ethnic; Becoming American; Jewish Literature; Conversations on Death and Dying; and Muslim Journeys, the LTAI program identifies an overarching theme, a selection of books on the topic chosen by a scholar, and support materials for the programs, including an essay, discussion guides for the books, marketing materials, and more. The idea is to work with a local scholar to host a series of programs on each book and have conversations about the theme through the lens of literature.

In early 2022, Meghan, the Adult Services Librarian at a local public library in Georgia, applied for the ALA grant with hopes that Bartow County Library System (BCLS) would be one of the twenty-five libraries selected across the country to receive funding and support materials for this series of programs on the women's suffrage movement. The program seemed like a gentle way to broach a difficult subject in the library's small, conservative town. When BCLS was selected as a grant recipient, Meghan invited Letizia, a professor of writing and rhetoric and gender and women's studies at a local university, to serve as the local scholar for the series. The program included five books focused on women's suffrage:

- *The Woman's Hour: The Great Fight to Win the Vote* by Elaine Weiss, a richly detailed look at the ratification of the 19th Amendment through the eyes of both the suffragists and the "Antis" and told in the form of an exciting story, was useful as the first book in the series, as it gave us a look at the event as a whole and set the stage with facts, figures, and dates.

- *Women Making History: The 19th Amendment Book*, a collection of thirteen essays compiled by the National Park Service and edited by Tamara Gaskell, covers important figures and historic sites commemorating the movement and illustrates how the movement worked in different areas of the country. This book helped to begin our conversa-

tion on the people and events less talked about in history books.

- *Vanguard: How Black Women Broke Barriers, Won the Vote, and Insisted on Equality for All* by Martha S. Jones begins to disrupt the dominant narrative on the women's suffrage movement, telling the story of Black women's often completely separate movement for rights fought through both racism and sexism.

- *Ida B. the Queen: The Extraordinary Life and Legacy of Ida B. Wells* by Michelle Duster, an engaging and accessible biography written by the great-granddaughter of Ida B. Wells, speaks at length about Wells's life and activism and again touches on the role and lived experiences of Black women during the movement.

- *The Once and Future Witches* by Alix E. Harrow, the only fiction book of the group, tells the story of three sisters and their part in the women's suffrage movement of New Salem through the lens of fantasy and witchcraft.

Spanning ten weeks from June to August 2022, the series created space to engage storytelling within the context of the U.S. women's suffrage movement in multiple ways with a variety of rhetorical purposes. Most significantly, the series of five book discussions invited participants not only to consider women's rhetorical roles as activists for women's suffrage, but also to understand broader coalition and sustained activism for voting rights through the counterstory (Martinez, *Counterstory*) of Black women's rhetorical activities. Through the lens of feminist pedagogy, we recognized "that through the learning experience, learners come to understand the world and all of its inequities and injustices, and then see themselves as empowered agents of change who can transform these inequities and injustices" (Accardi). We used the entryway created by the book club to directly face some of these inequities and injustices by exploring race in relation to the women's suffrage movement, namely the exclusion of Black women and their lived experiences from the most often recorded and taught histories.

Guided by feminist pedagogical tenets, including collaborative meaning-making and consciousness-raising, the program created rhetorical space for exploring individual positionalities, lived experiences, and the connections between narrated histories and our current political realities. From the beginning, we agreed "that these relationships be deeply collaborative and voices co-equal [as] vital to feminist engagement" (Nickoson and Blair 50), and we committed to partnership with participants. Most significantly, we experienced elements of feminist consciousness-raising in sharing the personal and understanding the identification possible through shared experience, moments that can spark activism and sustain civic engagement. Furthermore, the program was guided by and fostered intersections in our dual feminist interventions in dominant narratives shaping stories of library and activist work. Through a multivocal and reflective conversation about what it can look like to actively listen for counterstories that push the boundaries of what we know

as an act of community-building and activism, in the sections that follow, we blend theory and practice, offering readers strategies for building similar campus-community partnerships that foster relational literacies for change.

Feminist Pedagogies and Literacies for Change

Although our professional work at the start of our collaboration may have looked different on the surface—Meghan, the Adult Services Librarian at a public library, and Letizia, a professor of writing and rhetoric and gender and women's studies at a local university—underscoring our partnership and our collaborative work was a commitment to feminist theories and pedagogies at the intersection of literacy practices. A significant body of work informs our engagement with feminist pedagogies and how these pedagogical theories and practices shaped our approach to our library-campus partnership. Feminist pedagogy, according to Robbin Crabtree, David Sapp, and Adela Licona "is an *ideology* of teaching inasmuch as it is a framework for developing particular *strategies* and *methods* of teaching in the service of particular *objectives* for learning outcomes and social change" (emphasis in original, 4). To that end, the authors explain, "feminist pedagogy seeks not only to enhance students' conceptual learning, but to promote consciousness-raising, personal growth, and social responsibility" (Crabtree, Sapp, and Licona 9). Engagement, then, lies at the heart of feminist pedagogy, shaping the classroom into a space for reflective and collective learning, for supporting activism, and for fostering change (Shrewsbury 6).

With connections to the collective engagement of consciousness-raising groups of the women's movement, these liberatory, decentered, and activist tenets shape teaching and learning environments guided by feminist pedagogy into spaces where students and instructors each play active roles as co-teachers. Significantly, "feminist pedagogy emphasizes the epistemological validity of personal experience, often connected to notions of voice and authority. Through a critique of the ways traditional scientific and academic inquiry have ignored or negated the lived experiences of women, feminist pedagogy acknowledges personal, communal, and subjective ways of knowing as valid forms of inquiry and knowledge production" (Crabbtree, Sapp, and Licona 7). Participants, then, engage reflectively with each other and with course content, identify opportunities to blend theory and practice, and apply feminist rhetorical strategies like intervention and interruption to highlight and amplify marginalized voices and perspectives (Blair and Nickoson; Crabtree, Sapp, and Licona; Chick and Hassell; Guglielmo, "Classroom"; hooks; Micciche; Reynolds; Rinehart; Ryan).

With similar reflections on the intersections of feminist pedagogy and librarianship, Maria T. Accardi explains, "feminist pedagogy is a kind of lens or filter through which we can approach and reenvision library work, even in settings that do not appear to have overt, literal classroom teaching moments." Feminist pedagogy, Accardi claims "insists on the humanity of all participants in the learning experience, in the library, and this emphasis on care, compassion, and affirmation,

and making visible the harms caused by inequity and oppression and undoing that harm, changes not just the lives of learners and librarian—it changes the world." These outcomes also align with many of the core values of librarianship set forth by the American Library Association (ALA), including diversity, education and lifelong learning, the public good, and social responsibility ("B.1 Core Values"). This confluence of values allows librarians, through the practical application of feminist pedagogy, to better serve as stewards in the public library's modern role as a community center.

Recognizing that feminist theories and practices also challenge ways of "codifying and preserving knowledge," including what counts and who can contribute (Pritchard), our collective approach to the women's suffrage book club also allowed us to engage Adela Licona and Stephen Russell's definition of "literacy work," which they define "as work that is relational, informed by community concerns, considers community members as knowledgeable, treats community histories as meaningful, makes people and places knowable and understandable to one another across contexts, and is oriented toward social change" (2). Our goals, then, within the framework of the book club and our discussions, were to foster a space for what Licona and Karma Chávez describe as "relational literacies":

> Understood as practices, relational literacies imply the labor of making meaning, of shared knowledges, or of producing and developing new knowledges together. In other words, relational literacies are understandings and knowings in the world that are never produced singularly or in isolation but rather depend on interaction. This interdependency animates the coalitional possibilities inherent in relational literacies. (96)

Particularly significant within Licona and Chávez's exploration of coalition is the connection they make to political expediency, explaining, "our understanding of coalition differs slightly from conventional definitions, which often situate coalition in the realm of the temporary and the politically expedient" (96). Furthermore, they explain, "much of the rhetorical scholarship on social movements neglect[s] attention to community organizing and coalition building, two key components to movement work" (Licona and Chávez 98). Given the focus of our library-campus partnership, coalition building became a topic we actively theorized throughout the process. Within the context of the women's suffrage movement, we consistently explored white women's suffrage activism and rhetoric grounded in racism and political expediency at the expense of coalition and how the counterstory of Black women's activism deliberately disrupted that narrative, as we explore in later sections of this essay. Engagement with coalition building as a topic also allowed us to apply that learning to current activism regarding reproductive justice and other political realities. As Licona and Chávez explain, "Put concretely, relational literacies enable the space for new kinds of understanding, interaction, and politics" (97).

With these shared theoretical foundations underscoring our collaboration, we shift now

to individual narratives for the next sections of this essay with a few goals. First, we aim to highlight how we each engaged with this work, both the individual roles we played in the process, in its planning and facilitation, and how that work was informed by our individual positionalities. We hope this sharing of logistics in our personal voices will invite readers to imagine possibilities for their own roles in similar library-campus partnerships, including those that might replicate in whole or in part the work that we share here. Second, guided by bell hooks, we believe strongly that "all efforts at self-transformation challenge us to engage in ongoing, critical self-examination and reflection about feminist practice, and about how we live in the world. This individual commitment, when coupled with engagement in collective discussion, provides a space for critical feedback which strengthens our efforts to change and make ourselves anew" (24-25). We approach this process of narrative self-reflection with multiple aims:

> First, narratives explain to ourselves and to others what events we are narrating. Second, narratives explain to ourselves and to others what we have learned about these narrated events. And third, narratives explain to ourselves and to others how we are constructing our own subjectivities (as points of view), the subjectivities of others (as characters in our own narratives), and the cultural spaces that we all share (as settings). (Ratcliffe 506)

As part of the meta-narrative of this library-campus partnership, including the conversations we are continuing with the book club participants, we invite readers to join us in this reflection.

Meghan: Exclusionary Realities of Public Librarianship & Challenging Oppressive Systems

My beginning goal when reaching out to Letizia, as it always was in the public library space, was to bring valuable educational resources to my patrons. Everything I did when working at BCLS was done with this goal in mind. When I found out about the LTAI: Women's Suffrage initiative, I knew this would be a great way of creating dialogue in the community, and I also knew that I needed an expert to make that happen. The books chosen for the LTAI program, as well as the subject in general, lent themselves easily to approaching the topics of race and intersectional feminism. Though it was not the focus of the program, the parallels between women's history and the history of the public library, particularly the recording of these histories, are undeniable in their exclusion of anything other than the dominant white voice. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, in 2022 the librarian and media collections specialist field was 86% white and non-Hispanic, a fact which has not changed much over the past twenty years ("Household Data"). A study of the librarian population in 2006 by the ALA put that number at 89% based on census data from 2000 ("Librarian Ethnicity"). Earlier forms of the library were not the centers of diversity, equity, and neutrality that they claim to be today, a narrative that arose from "ahistorical and acultural revisions of library history that have severed institutions from their deep roots in early practices of social struc-

tural control and development" (Matthews 192). The reality of the skewed demographics of the LIS profession show just how important it is to challenge the utopian narrative of the public library.

Amber Matthews puts things in perspective for us: while the public library is typically looked at these days as a place "in which access is equitable, information is neutral, and diverse perspectives are found" (187) the reality is that "it is not coincidental or insignificant that white normativity flourishes unabated in a field that lacks substantial resemblance to many of the communities that it serves" (188). Such falsely positive depictions of the library, in both modern and historical contexts, only "[serve] to perpetuate the seeming neutrality of the library system, [fail] to recognize how libraries are ideologically constituted by other social forces and how they have been engaged in historically-situated racial projects" (Honma 3). Todd Honma further describes the problem of libraries functioning in a "race-blind vacuum" in similar terms, explaining,

> All too often the library is viewed as an egalitarian institution providing universal access to information for the general public. However, such idealized visions of a mythic benevolence tend to conveniently gloss over the library's susceptibility in reproducing and perpetuating racist social structures found throughout the rest of society. (2)

This parallel between the subject of the program itself and one of the major flaws in the LIS world was an important part of why I wanted to host this program. How can we, as librarians and educators, challenge the white supremacy of both public libraries themselves and of the histories we share as purveyors of information?

With a significant number of the books chosen for the LTAI initiative focusing on the experience of Black women during the women's suffrage movement, I knew this was a small way we could start to work towards that goal. Sarah Pritchard describes some of the core tenets of librarianship as "selecting, organizing, preserving and retrieving" knowledge and information, and she draws a distinction between this and feminist thought, which "calls into question the values and definitions underlying our very concepts of knowledge, thus questioning the institutions and services we build around those concepts." Crucially, if done well, this would be a series of library programs centered in feminist thought that both upheld my duty to my patrons as a public librarian and created an opening for authentic conversations on race.

As hoped, Letizia's thoughtful questions and the content of the books, particularly *Vanguard* by Martha S. Jones, sparked conversation on the often-neglected legacy of Black women in the women's suffrage movement. Jones speaks to the differences in the suffrage movements of white and Black women: "But only a small number of Black women joined these new suffrage associations. The racism that persisted there often drove them out. And suffrage alone was too narrow a

goal for Black women. They went on to seek the vote, but on their own terms and to reach cures for what ailed all humanity" (122). Passages like this lit a fire under our discussions and not only allowed us to talk openly about race and injustice in a historical context, but also opened conversations on modern politics, racial tensions of the past few years, and problematic race-blind narratives of women's rights.

This opening of dialogue around neglected information is an important part of librarianship as a knowledge-sharing profession. Especially with a goal of active practice of feminist pedagogy in librarianship, conversations like these are not only important but fundamental. As Pritchard points out, this kind of feminist practice is inseparable from librarianship, since it "is informed by basic ethical and philosophical tenets also found in librarianship, for example, a concern for clarity in language; for access to services and information regardless of social or economic category, or topic of inquiry; and an awareness of the importance of context in understanding questions and organizations." Only through feminist pedagogy and active anti-racism can librarians begin to work through the problems in the LIS field.

Meghan: Background and Getting Started

In the United States, the public library's role and main goals have changed a lot over the years with so much information available at our fingertips through smartphones. In their article about the growing intersection of social work and public librarianship, Tracy M. Soska and Adria Navarro point out that modern public libraries are "reinventing themselves to better and more strategically address community needs, as well as to stay relevant and impactful to their patrons and community residents" (409). Public libraries have pivoted to meet the changing needs of their communities by becoming more like community centers. Soska and Navarro note that the library has taken on "a hub role in the community through partnerships with other institutions to connect people with services and assistance" (412). While still focused on education and reading, the public library is now also a place where patrons can find local aid and resources, take part in free activities, find companionship, and simply sit in a temperature-controlled environment. LTAI directly supported our goal of acting as a community center by bringing people together and helping to find a common thread among a group of unique patrons. The LTAI initiative joined two of our main focuses by offering free educational resources and creating shared space for developing relationships in the community.

After being selected to receive grant funding and confirming Letizia's involvement in the program, the first step was getting the word out, so I set to work marketing and contacting local organizations. This included notifying the local elections office, reaching out to the local radio station for an interview, distributing signage and digital kiosk slides around the county, and creating interactive book displays and posters inside the library, in addition to the promise of tea and branded swag for participants. Perhaps the most successful marketing step was contacting our local chap-

ter of the League of Women Voters (LWV) in hopes that they might offer in-library voter registration during each of the five programs in the series. They were happy to help, even spreading the word for us among their members, who ended up accounting for a large number of our attendees. I set up a table for them in the lobby before each program, and they decorated the table, answered community questions about voting, and registered people to vote. In our case, the efforts of the LWV brought patrons from across multiple counties who might not have otherwise visited BCLS. Through my own marketing efforts and this collaboration with the LWV, we were able to get new patrons inside our doors, while also tying in materials and displays inside the library to support the goals of the program and show what the library has to offer. Once we had successfully begun to generate public interest, we shifted our attention to the content of the program.

Meghan: Community Engagement Through Public Library-Campus Coalition

As Letizia will discuss in further detail, the format of the program was as important as the content: if we wanted to create an environment that allowed for meaningful dialogue around the subject of women's history and rights, we needed our participants to feel comfortable sharing their thoughts. Just as Licona and Chávez describe in their article on relational literacies, "Our goal in the dialogue was to generate ideas by encouraging one another to work with still-forming questions" (98). We started deep, meaningful conversations in a group of strangers who became much closer over the course of the program. We were able to create a learning environment that was friendly and open, not exclusionary or overly academic, so that the participants felt confident expressing themselves. The program and participants benefited from the collaborative meaning-making facilitated through relational literacies, which "enable[d] the space for new kinds of understanding, interaction, and politics" and opened the door to the possibility of coalition-building (Licona and Chávez 97).

The public library-campus coalition presents a unique opportunity to reach outside the traditional academic world and form lasting connections with the community. Pritchard speaks to this benefit in her discussion of feminist librarianship, noting that "the impact of women's studies is this redefinition of the universe of knowledge; it challenges the boundaries between disciplines, between 'scholarly' and more personal forms of knowledge, between the academy and the community." Here we give a voice to people who might not be involved in academic community or have gone to a university, but still have valuable life experiences and input on topics like these. Nickoson and Blair point to the "common occurrence of power inequities between members of the academy and members of their surrounding communities" as one important aspect of these collaborations (51). This partnership not only makes the topic more equitable and accessible to people who otherwise might not be included, it also improves the quality of the conversation by offering more varied experiences. Authentic and impactful community engaged work must

include the perspectives of students and community partners, narratives that chronicle

> the lived experiences of stakeholders from a diverse range of cultural backgrounds and material conditions that have mediated their access to democracy, empathy, and respect. This inclusion is vital if feminists are to move beyond the rhetoric of engagement to provide more authentic interventions that benefit the students and communities we serve and position this work as activist in both theory and practice. (Nickoson and Blair 51)

On the other side, this partnership also offered a unique opportunity for our library patrons to learn from and engage with a university professor, an opportunity they may or may not have had in the past. Pritchard explains the delicate position of libraries, which "serve as gatekeepers of culture and learning. In selecting some items and ignoring others, in codifying and preserving knowledge, in actively assisting users or passively standing by, libraries control access to, and impose a relational value system on, all forms of information and communication." I take this role very seriously, and I know that my own role is that of facilitator. I may not be able to lead the discussion on a topic, but I do know how to find an expert who can. The quality of Letizia's content, the critical questions she asked, and her experience in encouraging active participation from attendees created a space for exchange of ideas and, by the end of the series, a sense of trust among returning attendees. As one of our participants shared with us, "The book club discussions elevated my sense of empowerment and purpose. It reminded me of how far women have come even since my mother's time and how comments, and/or actions, can create long-lasting effects."

Letizia: Engaging Feminist Rhetorics and Pedagogy Outside the Classroom

When Meghan reached out in October 2021 and invited me to serve as local scholar for the book series, I was delighted by the possibilities this collaboration would foster and energized by the opportunity to extend my teaching and scholarship beyond my own courses. The program focus—women's suffrage—was closely connected to my teaching, including work on feminist rhetorics, and Jones's *Vanguard* was already on my desk as a possible course text for the following fall semester. With a Carnegie classification as a community-engaged university, my institution maintains a university-wide commitment to community engagement in student and faculty work, and while I was interested in participating in community-campus partnerships, I didn't know what those first steps might look like. I was excited about the potential conversations this program might help to facilitate and grateful for the timing of the invitation.

As a teacher-scholar whose work lies at the intersection of writing and rhetoric and gender and women's studies, I was supported by a long history and strong foundation in theory and practice of activist work that actively bridges the classroom-community divide and imagines "community-based engagement as feminist intervention" (Blair and Nickoson 12; see also Costa and Leong; Orr; Naples and Bojar; Nickoson and Blair; Sheridan and Jacobi). Significant to this body of work, however, are also questions that Costa and Leong raise regarding "how women's and gender studies practitioners may participate in the civic engagement movement in a manner that

sustains feminist values, commitments, and solidarities" (171), a commitment that guided my own approach to the broader, less activist frame of community-engagement supported by my university. Aware that "feminist pedagogy values many of the same ideals put forth by scholars of civic engagement, including critical analysis, self-reflexivity, and active participation to accomplish the social good" (Costa and Leong 172), and "as a way to explore and illustrate the value of feminist learning" (Nickoson and Blair 50), I envisioned approaching the reading and discussion series with a foundation in feminist rhetoric and feminist pedagogy. With storytelling and coalition-building as broad frames for our reading and discussion, I invited participants not only to consider women's rhetorical roles as activists for women's suffrage, but also to understand broader coalition and sustained activism for voting rights through the counterstory of Black women's rhetorical activities. Invoking Aja Martinez's concept of "counterstory" and its potential "to expose, analyze, and challenge stock stories of racial privilege and . . . to strengthen traditions of social, political, and cultural survival and resistance" ("A Plea" 70), we also explored narrative and story as a strategy for complicating dominant narratives about the suffrage movement and for contemplating the role of personal narrative and lived experience in that process.

The selection of books by the ALA LTAI program already created an opportunity for foregrounding storytelling and the formation of dominant cultural narratives. Through *The Woman's Hour* and the collection of essays published by the National Park Services (Gaskell), we considered, for example, what we already knew or believed we understood about the women's suffrage movement in the United States—its history and timing, its primary goals, its most recognizable activists. With each text, however, we also were confronted with counterstories that required us to reshape that history—its tidy narrative arc, its intersection with cultural and political realities, and its silences and erasures, most notably those regarding the contributions and lived experiences of Black women. Guided by feminist pedagogical tenets, including collaborative meaning-making and consciousness-raising—pedagogical strategies that underscore my teaching and scholarship—I aimed to foster discussions that created rhetorical space for exploring individual positionalities, lived experiences, and the connections between narrated histories and our current political realities.

I opened our first meeting with this invitation and reinforced these pedagogical values during each book discussion: "At the start here, I want to reinforce that this is an informal and collaborative space and an opportunity for us to share ideas, to ask questions, and to have a conversation, so please feel free to jump in at any point, as there's no formal process for doing so. We'd like the majority of our time to be focused on discussion, so I'm looking forward to sharing space with all of you and learning from our conversation." During each session, we deliberately moved from the presentation area, with a podium, rows of chairs, and a screen for projecting presentation material, to a circle for discussion that Meghan had created in designing our program space within the library. This shift signaled not only a few minutes for participants to grab or refresh tea, take a break, and begin reflecting on the discussion questions projected on the screen as a place

to begin our discussion, but also an invitation to contribute, to share, to "mak[e] meaning… and develo[p] new knowledges together" (Licona and Chávez 96). In each of the five discussions over ten weeks, we demonstrated collective meaning-making through validation of lived experience, repeating participants' comments, and making connections among comments. These moments of meaning-making included reflecting on what we did not know about the women's suffrage movement, including who were anti-suffragists and why and how coalitions for suffrage among women with diverse lived experiences developed outside the northeast and south, often the sites of dominant narratives of suffrage activism.

Letizia: Making Space for Relational Literacies

As a feminist rhetorician, my way into this work was, unsurprisingly, exploring its rhetorical significance: how we make compelling arguments in a variety of contexts, how we use narrative and storytelling as part of those arguments, whose stories or which versions of stories are told over and over again, and how counternarratives or counterstories can provide more complete and complex versions of those narratives. I framed this rhetorical approach to the book series and discussions with a set of questions that we returned to, reconsidered, and reframed for each text.

These questions focused on

1. Exploring the role of rhetorical choices and rhetorical appeals in the activism and lived experiences of the women whose stories we read, including how each text allowed us to find evidence of this process and helped us to understand what these choices looked like or required. We also considered how these rhetorical choices varied for different people in each version of the story. How they varied for women and men, Black women and white women, and for working class women for whom labor activism facilitated another intervention into the dominant narrative of the suffrage movement.

2. Becoming more conscious of the ways social and cultural norms shaped those choices and lived experiences, including the dominance of racist and gendered assumptions and the persistence of misogyny and white supremacy. We considered how social movements build upon each other and what examples and resources they provide us for ongoing work in a variety of areas of U.S. culture, helping us to see the length of struggle and progress and to prepare for the kinds of responses and objections we are likely to encounter in movements for change.

3. Identifying what is repeated and what is repurposed in the kinds of arguments advocates make, the objections that are raised, the dangers that activists face, and how this knowledge shapes our understanding of rights activism today.

4. Critically engaging with the choice for political expediency in white suffragists' activism and the counterstory of Black women's sustained coalition-building and broader voting rights activism. We considered the continued role of political expediency in rights activism today including who benefits and how these choices for expediency shape the morality of the cause and its advocates, especially when "centralizing white women's experience and repeating feminist activism's historic exclusions of women of color" (Daugherty).

5. Recognizing whose voice and perspective is heard, amplified, obscured, and silenced in these narrated histories and in the stories shared by each author in each text. We

explored the significance of storytelling, including what it means to tell a new, expanded version of the story from a new perspective(s) and how this knowledge can shape how we understand stories we're currently hearing and the kinds of questions we can ask about those stories and storytellers. We asked, what other versions or pieces of this story might exist?

6. Uncovering (hidden) motivations of the suffrage movement's most visible participants, including motivations for advocating for and against suffrage for women and what they illustrate about politics, industry, and business interests, and who holds power.

7. Understanding what all of this means for us today, including what insights we glean about the political process and what persists and remains the same. What can we gain by studying this movement and extended moment in history?

I also invited participants to consider their own ways into this work: although my lens was rhetorical and focused on the process of re-collecting the narrative of women's suffrage (Guglielmo, "Introduction"), it was important for participants to explore the ways in which they identified with the texts and the moments of connection, surprise, and outrage that they were willing to share with the group. In our first discussion of Weiss' text, for example, one of our participants immediately made connections between white suffragists' racism and how, in her words, "we did the same thing in the 70s" as part of second wave feminism. And much of this "private speech in public discourse, intimate intervention, making another text" as bell hooks describes (17), created space for literacy acts that allowed us "to identify the spaces where we begin the process of revision" (15). Collectively, as part of our book discussions, the texts functioned as counternarratives, disrupting public conversations in varied and complex ways, resisting stock narratives about the suffrage movement and voting rights in the United States. In particular, the stories collected in Jones's *Vanguard* and Duster's biography of Ida B. Wells respond to Aja Martinez's call for a proliferation of counterstories, as narratives that "serve the purpose of exposing stereotypes, expressing arguments against injustice, and offering additional truths through narrating authors' lived experiences" ("A Plea" 51).

Rhetorics of Women's Suffrage as Counterstory

With our broader framing questions as a guide, we approached Jones's *Vanguard* as an intervention into the larger suffrage narrative and movement for women's suffrage in the U.S. Significantly, Jones identifies women's suffrage and the 19th Amendment as one small piece of a larger and longer narrative of Black women's activism before the 19th Amendment and extending after its ratification. Jones illustrates that this expanded narrative is made up of the story of individual Black women who have been excluded from or obscured in the more dominant narrative of women's suffrage. Learning that voting rights were not guaranteed by the 19th Amendment, we considered what it means to shift the narrative or story to one of voting rights and not simply one of suffrage, especially given rampant and persistent voter suppression long after the ratification of the 19th Amendment in the form of literacy tests, poll taxes, grandfather clauses, intimidation, and

violence. Although our previous reading and discussions made clear the dangers women experienced in speaking publicly, and specifically, in speaking publicly about suffrage and women's rights, Jones brought into clear focus the additional dangers women of color faced when bringing public attention to topics challenging the status quo. And these dangers included not only *speaking* publicly but also *moving* publicly. Transportation and the harassment and violence that accompanied travel for Black women was an early and ongoing site of activism, especially for Ida B. Wells, and this was clear in the counterstories both Jones and Duster shared.

The multiple threads of individual women's stories in Jones's text also reveal additional social and cultural norms that attempted to limit women's activism. From our previous readings and discussions, we understood the extent to which Black women could participate in activist organizations but often as subordinates, a fact in suffrage groups largely organized by white women. Yet Jones also illustrates this subordination of Black women in their communities and churches. A number of the texts we read pointed to the role of political expediency in the suffrage movement, including what white women were willing to sacrifice to appease Southern states and to support their own interests. Duster, for example, reinforces Wells's refusal to walk at the back of the 1913 suffrage parade in D.C. at the request of white suffragist organizers to appease southern suffragists. Jones and Duster demonstrated the sustained commitment to coalition and to eliminating all inequality in Black women's activism. Jones writes, for example "But Black women never limited their work to a single issue. Winning the vote was a goal, but is a companion to securing civil rights, prison reform, juvenile justice and international human rights" (9). Reaffirming this ongoing work she closes the text, "The story of Vanguard is still being written" (268). This example became particularly significant in our meeting and discussion just after the Supreme Court decision overturning the federal constitutional right to abortion in June 2022. As we discussed abortion activism and participants shared their individual ways in, drawing from lived experience and making the personal political, we imagined how the framework of reproductive justice–created and sustained over many decades by women of color–could allow us to engage in allyship and intersectional coalition.

Most significant, however, were the many opportunities that Jones and Duster provided us to engage critically with Black women's rhetorical work. Jones opens the text with stories of her own family, illustrating that she is part of the story that she tells and allowing us to explore what it means to name the women who came before. We discussed this rhetorical strategy as one used by many of the women in the text–noting the activist work of the women who came before them–and revealing both their positionality and their shared ethos (Daniell and Guglielmo). As Jones described how the work that Black women were doing in their communities contributed to education, literacy, organizing, and community building, she illustrated how they built spaces to tell their own stories and defined women's rights in their own ways. We learned more about the roles of racism and sexism in limiting Black women's participation and their voices and the role of ethos and the body. Although Jones explained that Black women were used to their bodies being read (69), this

detail created space for participants to consider what it means to spend additional time arguing for the right to be in the space or to speak on the subject. Consistently, Jones returns to the significance of Black women telling their own stories, prompting our discussions on what it means not to be able to tell your own story and what it can look like to write yourself into the story, as Black women did through the works they published and distributed (see Jones 41-42; 128).

And finally, we came to understand the significance of intervention and interruption in Jones's and Duster's work as an element of counterstory and as part of "the feminist tradition of engaging and disrupting dominant structural systems—to intervening in what is and to imagining what could and ultimately must be" (Blair and Nickoson 3). Jones, for example, expands the history of the women's suffrage movement collected by Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton in their six-volume publication that excluded Black women. Similarly, Duster prompted us to consider *who* is telling the story and how that shapes how we understand the details of women's lives and work. Jones and Duster engage in multiple acts of re-collecting (Guglielmo, "Introduction") this history: in the activism of individual women they profile, of the cultural memory of women's suffrage, of making whole the women's stories whose activism on voting rights may have been left out of previous narratives of their lives. Through their extensive archival research, Jones and Duster also prompted us to consider where we might look for the history and stories that have not been told, moments that created space for participants to recall and to recount activism of women in their own families, remembered in bits and pieces but not widely known or shared.

Conclusion

As we continue reflecting on this experience, we are reminded that "Feminist pedagogy also benefits the practitioner, the teaching librarian, because facilitating empowering experiences for library users is a rewarding, relationship-building experience" (Accardi). This certainly has been true for us as part of the library-campus partnership we share here. We invite readers to consider how programs like the ALA LTAI initiative offer opportunities for community-engaged partnerships that intersect with their own teaching and scholarship and their personal and professional goals, and to expand the narrative we have shared. Essential to the process of self-reflection on our experiences is "the critical need to listen: listen to the voices of our students, our community, to those who experience the world differently than ourselves… [as we] theorize [our] own experience of [our] educational, feminist, and activist roles in the academy and beyond" (Blair and Nickoson 14). As we look to next steps in the process of this multivocal narrative, recognizing that missing here are the voices of our participants, "we share a common commitment to making visible and also interrogating the relationships and voices among all participants in community-based teaching and research—teachers, researchers, students, and community partners" and we would add library professionals (Nickoson and Blair 50). Given our partnership with the local chapter of the League of Women Voters (LWV) and the large number of participants in the book club who were also members of LWV, we are especially interested in further exploring the element of coalition-building

that occurred as part of that collaboration and the ways in which it helped to shape "the development of intergenerational coalitions and relational literacies" within the group (Licona and Chávez 102). Finally, with a continued "interes[t] in rhetorical processes within and for coalition building" (Licona and Chávez 104), we intend to create space for reflection with our participants on acts of consciousness-raising that may grow out of these rhetorical practices within the context of the library as a community center.

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Coalitional Accountability for Feminist Rhetoricians in a Post-*Roe* World

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Abstract: In the wake of the reversal of Roe, we argue for the importance of accountability in feminist reproductive justice scholarship and activism to address the competing sociopolitical factors and positionalities that surround reproductive care and advocacy. We argue for four processes of accountability when engaging in coalitional reproductive justice work: inclusive listening, embodied risk taking, reciprocal action, and reflective recommitment. By using these practices iteratively to ground reproductive work, feminist scholars can consider not only how to contribute to broad notions of increasing local, state, and/or national reproductive justice but also, and perhaps more importantly, how to remain accountable to those most affected by reproductive issues in their own communities and the activists already leading this work.

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Maria Novotny is an assistant professor of English at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Her research considers how reproductive health patients advocate for care through her organization The ART of Infertility. Her co-edited collection *Infertilities, A Curation* (2023, Wayne State University Press) portrays the myriad voices and perspectives of individuals who experience infertility and recurrent reproductive loss using art and writing as mediums for personal healing. Other scholarship related to the intersections of infertility, rhetoric, and advocacy has been published in C*ommunication Design Quarterly, Community Literacy Journal, Present Tense, Reflections, Rhetoric Review, Rhetoric of Health & Medicin*e, and *Technical Communication Quarterly*.

Keywords: accountability, coalition building, feminist action, reproductive justice

Introduction: Post-*Roe* Exigence for Feminist Rhetorical Action

The U.S. Supreme Court's decision to repeal *Roe v. Wade* and effectively end a person's right to an abortion has led to an influx of national (i.e., NARAL), regional (i.e., Midwest Access

Coalition), and state-based (i.e., WI Abortion Fund) organizations working to ensure abortion access. The polarizing impact of this decision calls for coalition building across groups that work toward gender, racial, disability, criminal, and religious justice to reinstate these key rights to bodily autonomy, and feminist scholars should be a part of these collaborations. For feminist *rhetorical* scholars, this moment offers an unprecedented exigence to work across difference (Cagle) and determine how we might "coalesce with other groups working toward social justice" in order "to create coalitions situated in lived experiences and feminist praxis" (Matzke, Maraj, Clark-Oates, and Rankins-Robertson).We view reproductive justice (RJ[1]) as a successful framework fostering coalition building and advocating for the most marginalized reproductive bodies, and we believe that adopting a feminist scholar-activist approach may support current reproductive justice coalition aims.

Coalition building has been imperative to reproductive and sexual health movements well beyond the U.S. Supreme Court's decision to repeal *Roe v. Wade*. For instance, coalitions like the "Army of Three" consisting of Pat Maginnis, Lana Phelan Kahn, and Rowena Gurner, which formed in 1964, were essential to ensuring the right to have a safe and legal abortion. Yet, it wasn't until 1994, thirty years later, that the term "reproductive justice" came to be. The term's introduction ultimately led to the creation of SisterSong, the organization credited with creating and advancing the reproductive justice movement, which went beyond a reproductive rights framework by defining reproductive justice as the "human right to maintain personal bodily autonomy, have children, not have children, and parent the children we have in safe and sustainable communities" (n.p.). To date, SisterSong remains the leader in reproductive justice organizing and coalition building. We overview the history of reproductive justice in the U.S. in order to emphasize caution to those who may unknowingly adopt a reproductive justice framework to their teaching/research/service *without* accounting for the bodies and histories that have shaped and informed this coalitional force. Feminist rhetoricians should and rightly will take interest in issues of access to reproductive health care, yet to do so without attending to the histories and labor of the BIPOC-led movement does a disservice to its well-documented coalition building success.

To respond to that concern, we evoke the concept of "accountability" as a necessary practice that addresses the competing sociopolitical factors and positionalities that surround reproductive care and advocacy. Accountability, for us, requires critical awareness of the histories that have shaped community-focused processes and mandated more public outcomes and assessments of our scholarly work beyond traditional feminist rhetorical research outcomes like books, articles, and presentations. We argue for four processes of accountability when engaging in coalitional RJ work: inclusive listening (Baker-Bell; Crenshaw; Martinez; McCoy; Ratcliffe; Fishman and Rosenberg), reciprocal action (Alvarez; Riley Mukavetz; Opel and Sackey; Shah), embodied risk taking (Cedillo, et al.; Tetreault), and reflective recommitment (Diab, et al.; Harper). By using these

1 We use abbreviations throughout this text: 1) reproductive justice (RJ) refers to the activist approach developed by Black women to address a broad range of reproductive issues, 2) rhetorics of reproductive justice (RRJ) refers to the field of scholarly study.

practices iteratively to ground reproductive justice work, feminist scholars can consider how to contribute to broad notions of increasing local, state, and/or national reproductive justice and how to remain accountable to the Black women and other activists who have been leading this fight for decades and to those most affected by reproductive issues in their own communities.

In this article, we illustrate accountable feminist rhetorical practice through a storying approach, narrating moments from our RJ work, which has included storytelling, lobbying, legislative research and training, and more (though not all are detailed here)–all done in partnership with long-term activists across the country. Following a review of literature that situates our work within feminist rhetorical studies and defines accountability, we discuss and story each of the four processes of accountability listed above, sharing how we, particularly as cis white women, have included accountability within our own work and, through a visual heuristic, how others might enact these processes as well. Throughout, we argue that to engage feminist rhetorics in the social and material concerns of our day, we must center accountability and shift discussions from institutional critique to responsible community action. Ultimately, we share how the act of being accountable serves and supports coalition building in reproductive advocacy organizing.

Feminist Rhetorics, Reproductive Justice, and Accountability

We draw on feminist rhetorical scholarship that values lived experience, multiple ways of knowing/doing, and a commitment to amplify stories that have been erased or marginalized. Feminist rhetorics has been paramount in creating legitimacy for feminist projects spanning: recovery (Glenn; Royster), mentoring (Eble and Lewis Gaillet), digital rhetorics (DeVoss; Frost and Haas), Black feminism (Browdy; Carey; Kynard), and more. The uptake of feminist rhetorical studies has also led to interdisciplinary scholarship such as: embodiment (Knoblauch and Moeller), gender and sexuality (VanHaitsma; Licona and Chávez; Rhodes), fat rhetorics (Manthey), and motherhood (Osorio; Vinson). In sum, feminist rhetorical approaches have enabled scholars to expand who, what, and how they study to better account for the lived realities of people of marginalized genders.

Given the embrace of more interdisciplinary approaches, coupled with contemporary threats harming bodily autonomy, feminist rhetoricians have aligned their scholarship more explicitly with a reproductive justice framework, including Heather Adams on rhetorical shame and blaming within reproductive health, Sara DiCaglio and Lori Beth De Hertogh's special issue on futures of feminist health literacy, Kimberly Harper's work linking Black motherhood to unjust police violence, and Sharon Yam on visualizing birth stories. Collectively, these scholarly contributions have made space for rhetorical scholarship to contribute to contemporary and historical study related to discursive issues impacting reproductive bodies–shaping the subfield commonly referred today as rhetorics of reproductive justice or RRJ.

Rhetorics of reproductive justice is defined "as the study of how discursive activities mediate individuals, groups, and communities as they work to address the 'intersecting oppressions' and 'power systems' (SisterSong) that influence reproductive bodies and related healthcare policies" (Novotny and De Hertogh 375). We appreciate the scope of this definition and its intentional linkage between RRJ scholarship and social activism. Yet, we are concerned by the lack of discussion around the stakes by which one may, even unintentionally, appropriate reproductive justice for their own scholarly advancement. Similar concerns about academic use have been offered up by rhetorical scholars. For instance, John Gagnon and Maria Novotny write about using personal and/or trauma stories as a form of data scholars can analyze and ultimately "use" to support their research claims. They call for changes to the "limited and limiting paradigm" where "trauma stories are institutionally exploited and commodified as research narratives, circulated largely to the benefit of the system" (Gagnon and Novotny 497). We, too, echo similar concerns about paradigms that protect the academic over the individual and/or community in RRJ. And we find similar lines of concern with the blind use of a reproductive justice framework within feminist rhetoric scholarship and caution against its use when connected only to scholarly purposes.

Listening to reproductive justice movement leaders informs our caution concerning feminist rhetoricians' use of this framework. For instance, in tracing the origins of the term "reproductive justice," Loretta Ross explains that "reproductive justice was never meant to replace the reproductive health (service provision) or reproductive rights (legal advocacy) frameworks. Instead, it was an organizing concept intended to amplify and shed light on the intersectional forms of oppression that threaten Black women's bodily integrity" (290-291). Ross's words serve as a reminder about the purpose and intentions of reproductive justice, underscoring how it is intentionally designed as an intersectional framework that dissects and critiques systems of oppression through praxis. Reproductive justice praxis "puts the concept of reproductive justice action by elaborating the connection between activism and intersectional feminist theory" (Ross 287). Embracing a praxis orientation can prove challenging for feminist rhetoricians as it demands situating the aims of one's scholarship beyond more traditional forms and into more community-engaged, public, even critical-creative forms of scholarly action. Additionally, reproductive justice as a praxis takes time to produce and document, both of which are often antithetical to more traditional and institutional Western colonial academic models.

We sit with these tensions and raise them for readers to contemplate the practices that may best guide feminist rhetorical use of reproductive justice as praxis. For Megan and Maria, who are both cis white women who have been invested in issues of reproductive justice for over a decade, we rely upon *accountability* as a guiding practice to best address not just the aims of feminist rhetorical work related to reproductive justice but accountability as a practice that helps ensure proper use and outcomes of our RJ feminist rhetoric work. The work we describe later in this piece is explicitly shaped by long-term reproductive justice leaders in the community, not the university–following the lead of Black feminist scholars like Angela Davis and Audre Lorde to remain account-

able to those who are most affected by, in this case reproductive, injustice in our communities.

Accountability is a concept with its own histories and trajectories. Patricia Hill Collins writes extensively about valuing intersectional experiences as exercising accountability to social change, explaining "although Black feminist thought originates within Black women's communities, it cannot flourish isolated from the experiences and ideas of other groups" (41). Accountability is an independent practice that does not reassert the individual experience/need but a more universal/communal experience/need. Hill Collins enforces this point when quoting Sonia Sanchez who states: "'I've always known that if you write from a black experience, you're writing from a universal experience as well…I know you don't have to whitewash yourself to be universal'" (Hill Collins 41). Black feminist thought produces a practice of accountability that invites "groups who are engaged in similar social justice projects… [to] identify points of connection that further social justice projects" (Hill Collins 41). This practice of accountability can also support coalition building.

Adopting Hill Collins' approach to accountability requires a critical consciousness and awareness of one's embodied privileges and purviews. Accountability requires that we do not assume a singular reproductive experience nor privilege a particular reproductive need over others. For instance, reproductive justice work that fails to include trans persons and perspectives should not be claimed as work upholding reproductive justice aims. Reproductive justice work must be intersectional in that it accounts for multiple embodied experiences, including race, ethnicity, dis/ability, sexuality and class to name a few. Additionally, reproductive justice work must account for reproductive bodies *beyond* access to abortion services and should embrace the multi-pronged tenets of SisterSong's reproductive justice definitional framework. These examples illustrate the need to adopt a critical consciousness to question who and what our social change work accounts for. We also must account for the historical, structural, and system inequities that produce ourselves and the world around us. Ann Russo's "praxis of accountability" invites "a process of scrutiny" that is "not about calling out individual or organizational failures as anomalies, but rather about making visible the fault lines of structural inequities that distort and undercut the relational possibilities for individual and social action and transformation" (10). These are critical inclusions to any practice of accountability, particularly so when accounting for the multiple bodies, positionalities, experiences, and needs in reproductive justice.

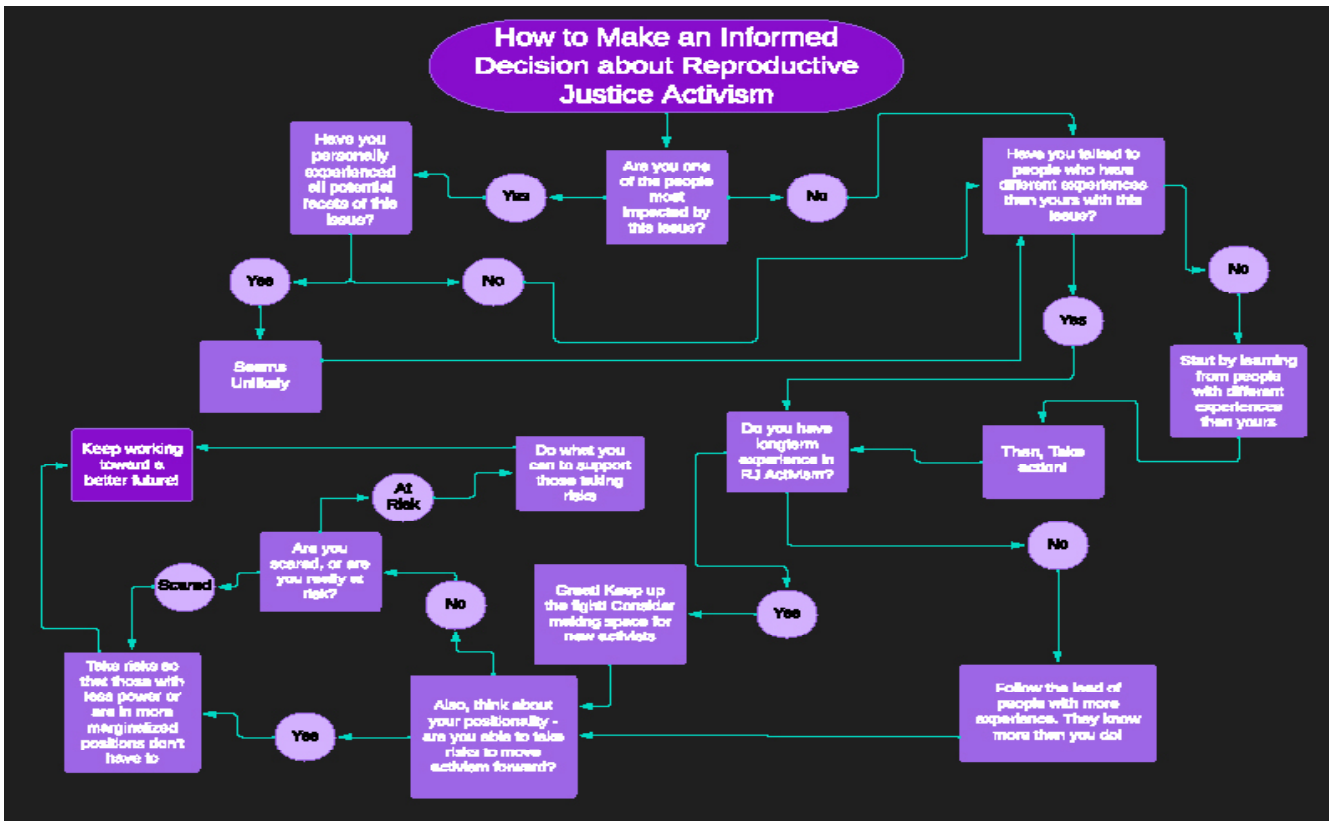
For us, practicing accountability rests on four iterative processes: inclusive listening, reciprocal action, embodied risk taking, and reflective recommitment. We propose that using these processes, which we define and illustrate next, can enable feminist scholars to consider more critically how each step of their RJ work is accountable to broader communities, taking a coalitional rather than individualistic approach to their scholarship and activism.

Approaches to Accountability in Two Reproductive Justice (RJ) Projects

In what follows, we story accountability practices by offering examples from our own reproductive justice (RJ) work, using moments from our projects to illustrate what coalitional work might look like for feminist rhetoricians. Specifically, we share moments of our work that align with the accountability processes we list above:

1. Inclusive Listening
2. Embodied Risk Taking
3. Reciprocal Action
4. Reflective Recommitment

Additionally, we have created the following heuristic for considering how to work through these processes



Though both our narratives and the heuristic offer a linear approach, we recognize that RJ work rarely happens in such a fashion, but we didn't want to clog up the graphic with a million extra arrows. Take these with a grain of salt and understand that your version of these practices is going to happen according to who you talk with in your community, what you learn about specific needs and goals, and how you, in your own positionality, can move forward to contribute to (likely) already built coalitions and expand capacity for RJ activists. Our stories aim to showcase not only what these processes are but how messy they can be. But the messiness is where coalitional work can form—in maintaining flexibility and willingness to shift based on ever changing needs. To be frank, the stories we share below are not meant to be taken as "exemplar" models of enacting the various approaches supporting accountable practices. Rather, we share them in order to illustrate what reproductive justice as praxis often entails and how we have attempted, often in fits and starts, to remain accountable to our communities beyond the university.

Inclusive Listening

Reproductive justice scholar-activists must consider experiences different from their own to better understand how RJ issues are intersectional. Critical inclusion of voices/experiences is regularly called for across the field (Baker-Bell; Martinez; Crenshaw; McCoy), and rhetoric scholarship on reproductive justice is no exception. We must draw on diverse scholarship and, more importantly, diverse understandings of reproductive justice by those who are most affected. We posit that listening–engaged in as a rhetorical form (Ratcliffe) and literacy practice (Fishman and Rosenberg)–is one action that supports more inclusive approaches to reproductive action. We recount stories that illustrate how we practice inclusive listening within community settings to make visible a practice *often assumed* to take place but rarely accounted for in rhetorics of reproductive justice scholarship.

Megan

My largest reproductive justice project to date started with an email a few months into my first semester out of my PhD–2017, year one of the Trump administration when so many people began seriously paying attention to reproductive rights issues (a term I use purposefully to distinguish those who had been working toward reproductive justice long before). I was the Associate Director of Community Learning at Trinity College, and I knew I wanted to throw myself into activism in my new community, and I, like many others, was particularly concerned about reproductive issues. My students and I began partnering with Erica Crowley and NARAL Pro-Choice CT on their work to limit deceptive advertising practices from Crisis Pregnancy Centers (CPCs). While showing up to help with a city council public hearing was the seed of a long-term relationship between Trinity College and Pro-Choice CT whose work continues today, I want to focus on the listening Erica did *long before* that public hearing, detailed in "Coalition Building for Reproductive Justice" (Hartline et al.). Erica had started working for Pro-Choice CT as a community organizer

when St. Gerard's Center for Life opened a new office under the name "Hartford Women's Center" right next to the Hartford GYN Center, the only independent abortion clinic in the state. She saw their deceptive practices in action through her office at the GYN Center and her work as a clinic escort: CPC workers gave the appearance of a well-trained medical staff, they told confused GYN Center patients that their appointments were at the Women's Center, and repeatedly said they would give people seeking an abortion information they needed but delayed until an abortion could no longer be performed. Erica, a cis white woman, knew this was happening and wanted to address it, but she also recognized that she was not in the population most affected by this issue. She writes: "CPCs disproportionately target poor women, women of color, medically underserved communities (like Hartford), people without health insurance, LGBTQ+ individuals, immigrants, young people, college students, and other marginalized populations and experiences addressed in the reproductive justice framework" (Hartline et al 130). To address that fact, she and her team spent a significant amount of time collecting stories from the young Black women who were targeted by the CPC and tricked into going there instead of their appointments at the GYN Center. Stories were shared anonymously by writing their experiences down without their name and giving permission to organizers to share them with local legislators and read them aloud at a public hearing. The foundation of this work, which eventually led to both a Hartford-specific local ordinance and a statewide law limiting CPC deceiving advertising, lay in listening to people who were most impacted by the issue. By listening to these women and allowing them to tell their stories in ways that made them feel comfortable, Erica and her team practiced inclusive listening to guide their activist work, which in turn shaped my and my students' RJ work with Pro-Choice CT.

Maria

My reproductive justice scholarship has largely been informed from my community-engaged work pertaining to infertility and access to alternative family-building care. Like most feminist scholars, I incorporate my research into my teaching, mentoring, and service as I position myself as a scholar-activist. So, when I learned of an open call to create a funded "laboratory" of sorts at my university, I jumped on this and emailed my colleague, Rachel Bloom-Pojar, who was also engaging in reproductive health research. Reviewing the call, Rachel and I discussed at length two criteria: (1) the formation of an interdisciplinary research team; and (2) how we may frame the focus of this laboratory. For us, both criteria informed each other.

It was a stipulation of the laboratory's application that we construct a lab composed of scholars outside of our discipline/department. Knowing the need to stress interdisciplinarity, we had to develop a project broad enough to support a variety of disciplinary perspectives. By discussing the criteria, we identified a series of graduate students and faculty members from a variety of disciplines whom we could ask to participate. Talking through the disciplinary expertise identified (geography, psychology, Puerto Rican studies, writing and rhetoric), we mapped the various ways our scholarship related to reproductive health connected. One faculty participant came to the

lab with research related to biopolitics and race connected to Milwaukee's infant mortality reduction program. Another lab member was well-versed in RJ because of their qualitative research on experiences of obstetric violence in Puerto Rico. For many graduate students, their disciplinary expertise was still developing, yet they saw the opportunity to join the lab as an alternative learning experience ripe with available mentorship. Our various perspectives led us to question what we should call or theme the laboratory. For instance, we asked: should we call this "The Reproductive Health Story Lab?" Such a title captured the humanities-based method of storytelling dominant in the lab, yet it also seemed to be less inclusive of those who had expertise in fields of social science, who didn't have much experience with story as method. As such, we proposed a more general title, "The Reproductive Justice Collaboratory," which at its core represented SisterSong's tenets and wove together all of our individual projects and scholarly disciplinary training. Notably, there was a felt unease with claiming this title largely because of our own embodied orientations: six out of the nine members were cis white women. And while there was some BIPOC representation, it should be noted that the three BIPOC members occupied more precarious positions, one was an undergraduate student and single mother, one was a graduate student who lived 90-minutes away from the university, and one was an academic faculty member who taught five sections of students each week.

Knowing the collective history of reproductive justice and its roots in BIPOC reproductive experiences, we spent much time at the beginning of the collaboratory reading, reflecting, and discussing what it means for us to claim this title given our collective representation. In this way, we situated the history of reproductive justice as a way to listen and learn from influential leaders of the RJ movement (i.e., Loretta Ross and Monica Simpson) to consider how we may maintain inclusivity by amplifying diversity, despite the majority of our lab being white cis women. As we sat and wrestled with this during meetings, we openly acknowledged the limitations of our positionality with this term but also used this awareness to guide the various projects we wanted to fund with the monies granted. Such actions were an attempt to listen to those not at the table and ponder how we could be accountable to those perspectives not actively there.

For both Megan and Maria, listening was key to starting reproductive justice work, finding the stakeholders most affected by an issue and hearing from them about what steps should come next. Erica led that process for the long-term work Megan took on with her students in Hartford, and Maria and Rachel worked collaboratively with the multiple lab participants who wanted their work represented in the name and description of their work while considering the relationship of the name to other community-based RJ organizations. Listening for us is then a multi-faceted practice guiding out accountability.

Embodied Risk Taking

To work toward reproductive justice in coalition with others requires accounting for one's own positionality. Depending upon how a scholar-activist comes to reproductive justice work, they may need to de-center themselves not only in how they listen but also how they act. Such personal accounting for one's own embodied orientation to an RJ project is important given the origins of reproductive justice, which are rooted in BIPOC experiences. To claim reproductive justice work as part of a scholar's identity, they must account for how that scholarship benefits or addresses the most marginal in order to align with the objective of how and why RJ as a coalitional term formed. This action demands a more *critical* embodied approach to reproductive justice work. Meaning, while bodies and attention to embodiment have always been important to advancing reproductive justice, we believe there is a need and value to adopting a more critical embodiment orientation to RJ. A critical embodied approach understands that "feminist rhetorical studies often recenters the needs of the most privileged" and in response "choose[s] to attend to the specific needs of BIPOC, queer, trans, D/disabled, M/mad, and im/migrant peoples whose gender, worth, and entelechy are determined by their utility" (Cedillo, et al.). Adopting this approach demands then that RJ scholar-activists consider how their positionality is critical to what actions they can and should take. For our work to yield reproductive justice, not only must we account and be consciously aware of our own embodied positionalities and privileges, we must also not be limited by them. That is, for us as cis white women, we believe in the need to embrace the uncomfortable and to take risks when they appear to align and support the needs of the most marginal. It also means recognizing moments where we need to step aside or back down.

Megan

One important example of embodied risk taking that has been key in my RJ community-campus partnerships is speaking out at public hearings. When my students and I first approached Erica about helping with the Hartford city ordinance, she asked if we would be willing to read testimony from those directly impacted by the CPCs who were uncomfortable discussing their experiences publicly. As Erica explains, "Because of the stigma around abortion, particularly in Black communities in Hartford, none of the women felt comfortable publicly testifying" (Hartline et al. 131-132). My group of mostly white students from outside of Hartford had the embodied positionality that made them safer to testify publicly. Additionally, as current Hartford residents they were able to join a coalition of Hartford residents and activists to speak back to the largely white, largely non-resident opposition. Similarly, when the legislation moved to the statehouse, voices were again needed to share their stories and support, and, especially, to read testimony from those most affected.

In our collaborative article, Eleanor Faraguna shared her experiences reading testimony in the Legislative Office Building (LOB) for the Committee on Public Health. In addition to her discus-

sion of why people may not want to divulge their private medical information to a public audience, she notes the way that public hearings are set up to discourage large portions of the public from showing up to share their concerns. Eleanor writes,

> Certain populations targeted by the CPCs, such as working-class communities, are also systematically disenfranchised in legislative proceedings because of the time, access, and privilege needed to navigate this system. Here my positionality and privilege as a white person and a college student provided me access to a process that other people are denied. I stayed in the building for extended hours and testified without great risk to myself, but that is not the case for many others, which is an essential shortcoming of this system of justice. (139)

She, and all of the mostly white collaborators in this community-campus partnership, recognize that we stand to lose much less than others by taking public stands for reproductive justice, but we also recognize that we are not the population most impacted by these issues and do what we can to raise the concerns brought to us by those who *are* deeply impacted and want to see change but are also more at risk when sharing their own experiences and goals.

Maria

As the lab wrestled with our embodied positionalities, we used our meetings as a space to openly reflect and process how to move forward on a collective reproductive justice project. Many of us were interested and invested in how reproductive justice issues impacted Milwaukeeans. For instance, we frequently circulated news articles that claimed Milwaukee as a city with particularly alarming racial and ethnic disparities in maternal and infant health outcomes. Alarmed by the statistics and traumatic stories these articles included, we thought that our lab could develop a collective project related to this local issue. However, as we discussed that idea, more hesitation emerged. First, none of us (to my knowledge) had direct lived experience with this topic. The lack of embodied lived experience would create significant challenges with how we built trust with those who had experienced, for instance, Black infant or maternal mortality. Second, as we began investigating the topic, we became aware of multiple local, grassroots organizations and community doulas who were already doing much of the “on the ground” work. The optics of a university-funded laboratory, consisting largely of cis white women, attempting to create a project on the topic seemed in many ways antithetical and harmful to the work already established by these organizations. To account for the ways in which our embodied positionalities (because of our collective race, sexuality, and university-affiliation) served as a productive process to guide how we move forward as a lab, we asked: How could we de-center our embodied positionalities in order to build connections and trust with leaders in Milwaukee, many of whom occupied more marginalized positions? This question served as a guiding framework to assess any community reproductive justice project we, as a collaboratory, wanted to take on. And in centering such a question, we had

to accept risk. Risk in that our collective, privileged positions could pose a threat and even be a barrier to doing reproductive justice work in our community. Simply stated, we knew that because of our own embodied positionalities, some community members would perhaps reject our outreach; and, ultimately, we had to become comfortable with that reality and accept the risk that we maybe should not be pursuing such work.

In both projects, Megan and Maria saw that they needed to de-center themselves as people who were not most impacted by the issue at hand, but their positionality did put them into particular positions to move their issues forward. De-centering, however, does not mean excusing oneself from the issue and the action needed to improve justice. Rather, de-centering requires the ability to de-privilege oneself and thus become more uncomfortable in spaces perhaps where one is often more comfortable than multiply marginalized individuals. By de-centering, and thus de-privileging our perspectives, we become not only more accountable but more suited to work alongside those whose embodied experiences are not our own

Reciprocal Action

As our work continues, we always have to consider what makes our actions reciprocal by asking how is this work mutually beneficial for all parties involved? Community writing scholars have frequently discussed why reciprocity and accountability matter (Alvarez, Riley Mukavetz, Shah, Opel and Sackey) in ensuring that work advances the community, not just a scholar's career. To be scholar-activists who take on coalitional reproductive justice work, our actions must be deeply embedded in reciprocal partnerships and that these partnerships may require rethinking for whom and how our work benefits those communities most impacted. Reciprocal action in this way may move us towards producing less traditional forms of scholarship and, instead, ask us to reimagine how our positions as scholar-activists can redirect or repurpose our institutional privileges in order to advance the needs of community organizers.

Megan

For me, reciprocity hinges on doing work that is focused on moving toward justice, no matter what that looks like for my career. Partnerships require push and pull, give and take. My collaborations with Pro-Choice CT never started and ended within the confines of the semester or stuck within the parameters of the specific projects we designed. Those projects were built to extend Pro-Choice CT's capacity and produce work they might not have been able to do otherwise, while also deepening student understanding of the intricacies of social action, policy research, and how inward and outward facing communications foster change. But my (and many of my students') work with Pro-Choice CT did not stop there. A lot of what we did involved showing up: for hearings, for rallies, for discussions, for the people and organizations that existed in coalition with Pro-Choice CT, for the bills that forwarded justice, and for the people of Hartford. I've

attended outdoor rallies for reproductive justice in the rain. I've spent hours in the LOB waiting to testify. I've brought in Pro-Choice CT as speakers at activist meetings and college functions. I've lobbied my representatives on bills forwarded by Pro-Choice CT's coalition toward social justice. I've cheered on and commiserated with Pro-Choice CT staff. I've watched a CT legislative vote on my computer in Tennessee as a bill that I helped work on was finally passed four years after it was initially introduced. None of those moments were in my annual review materials. They aren't on my CV. I don't get "credit" for doing them except, I guess, in that I'm talking about them here in this article years later. But these are the moments that make up coalitional, reciprocal action, and detailing the less flashy work of these partnerships makes visible the reciprocal action that is more about the *activist* part of being a RJ scholar-activist, than the scholar part that shows up in publications, presentations, and course projects.

Maria

As the lab gained more knowledge about those leading reproductive changemaking in Milwaukee and the issues at stake, we began to question what actions the lab could and should take. Who would our work benefit? What would be of use to those who were already embedded in the reproductive justice landscape of Milwaukee? How could we redirect our funding and various privileges we had because of our university affiliation? In asking these questions, we began to identify what we offered based on (or given) our positionalities and expertise. *Individually*, many of us were working on story-based projects[2] related to a reproductive health topic (infertility, reproductive loss, COVID-19's impact on reproductive care, and experiences of Latinx health promoters). Story was a consistent theme across our work and seemed relevant to many of the reproductive justice organizers who were circulating stories as a strategy to resist legislative threats brought about by the reversal of Roe. *Collectively*, we remained invested in community experiences of reproductive justice and in experiences that more ethically incorporated community knowledge and expertise in university settings.

By mapping our collective and individual orientations, we arrived at the conclusion that there could be benefits to bringing together Milwaukee's reproductive justice organizations in order to better understand and discuss how they see and use storytelling as a tool for RJ organizing. Such a realization sparked the idea for an event titled "The Power of Stories in Advancing Reproductive Justice." The aim for this event was to create a space where researchers and RJ community advocates in Milwaukee could work together to identify how they use and center story/ies to advance action around reproductive justice. We saw this as a way to evoke reciprocity and action in our program design and in the labor required to participate.

First, the event program was a space for participants to collectively share their own repro-

2 At this point, the two lab members with social science expertise were no longer able to actively participate and as a result the lab took on a more humanities-based identity.

ductive health projects with each other, learn more about what others across the city were doing, and foster future connections to further collaborations. Second, the labor to participate was minimal. The event was *intentionally* free: there were no proposals to submit, and participants could bring what they wanted (some brought handouts/brochures, others brought just themselves). We made these decisions as we recognized the labor they were already doing as RJ leaders. Finally, we fed everyone and fed them with *good* food. This mattered because not only did it sustain conversations, but it was a small gesture to thank those who showed up for their work and commitment to doing this work and sharing their knowledge with not just us but with all who attended the event. Through these small, micro decisions, the action we took did not consist of grand gestures but rather the action of planning and hosting this event consisted of small steps facilitating moments for us to learn from those already "doing the work"; thereby de-centering our experience and allowing us to slowly build community relationships, and hopefully trust, that could further any next steps we would perhaps want to take as a laboratory.

Megan and Maria both prioritize small, unflashy moments as the heart of what they consider reciprocal action. It isn't giving a speech or taking credit. It's doing what we can to expand capacity, not take charge or overshadow, of the excellent work already being done. This leads to the question: how do we shift institutional systems so those most affected feel more comfortable centered within the advocacy work? Asking such a question is imperative if we believe universities (and those that work for them/study at them) are accountable to their communities' needs.

Reflective Recommitment

Reproductive justice, like all kinds of social action, is not a static process, and these accountability practices must happen iteratively as this work rarely follows a precise linear timeline. For instance, Rasha Diab, Thomas Ferrel, and Beth Godbee write about sustaining commitments to racial justice and advocate for a framework that encourages "continually doing the self-work and work-with-others…[which supports] a recursive theory-practice-theory- practice life allowing us to never stop learning and acting with our local, national, and international communities" (37). While we contend that a racial justice framework cannot be substituted for a reproductive justice framework, we find Diab, Ferrel, and Godbee's insights useful to think through a framework necessary to sustain recommitting to reproductive justice. Reflecting and recommitting means doing, as Diab, Ferrel, and Godbee put it, the "self-work and work-with-others" to understand and adapt our approaches to justice to account for the many lived experiences of reproductive issues–including racial justice and, we would add, trans justice.

For us, reproductive justice scholar-activists are answerable to our communities, and taking these reflections forward as we recommit is key for a reproductive *justice* approach that centers those most affected by our contemporary political and social landscape. This work takes time, which can be hard to accept given the increased harm reproductive bodies face with the reversal

of Roe. Nonetheless, we believe that for reproductive justice scholar-activists "tending to the slow work of collaboration can make visible the moments that foster coalitional commitments that center the aims of community-driven research within the community/ies" (Novotny et al. 36).

Megan

In Hartford, recommitment was not particularly difficult for me. I was in regular communication with folks at Pro-Choice CT. I kept up-to-date on current legislative issues. My students continued to do reproductive justice focused projects. And then I moved to Tennessee in 2020, and recommitment has been more difficult. I immediately tried to jump into similar legislatively focused advocacy work here, but despite several attempts, I never quite found a way to partner with local RJ organizations. I have spent a lot of time reflecting on why it didn't work, sitting in the messiness of what RJ entails and focusing on the broad parameters of SisterSong's definition. What I've come to realize is that the work I have been part of–largely centered around food access and girls' literacy education–*is* part of reproductive justice work. Even as someone who has spent years trying to work on reproductive *rights* as a means of enacting *justice*, mentally aligning my current partnerships with reproductive justice is difficult, particularly following the reversal of *Roe v. Wa*de. But when I think of the conversations with Chattanooga residents and organizers over the last three years, the real needs I'm trying to meet are enabling people to "parent the children we have in safe and sustainable communities" (SisterSong). Providing access to healthy, locally-grown produce through City Farms and offering strong mentoring relationships and educational opportunities through Girls Inc. are important ways to create safe and sustainable communities where all children, and people for that matter, can thrive. Being a part of that work *is* reproductive justice.

Maria

In April 2022, we hosted our RJ storytelling community network event. Just before the event, we made the decision to reapply for another year of laboratory funding. This time, however, we would be structured more as a working group rather than a large "laboratory." This decision was strategic and responded to the realization that we had come to throughout the year: we needed to better understand our lab's identity in relationship to Milwaukee's reproductive justice landscape.

To be honest, we were unsure for a while whether we would reapply at all. Throughout the year, our laboratory organizing felt a bit scattered. While we had intentionally thought we would design a large RJ project focused on Milwaukee, tensions persisted with how we would be accountable to those most impacted by reproductive injustice in the city as well as those leading the conversation and action. At the same time, we also began to connect with new persons across the university who were doing RJ in their own departments but were in search of a more collective, collaborative unit to support the embodied toll of RJ scholarship/teaching. These university needs

encouraged us to ultimately reapply with a slightly larger group of individuals, though still predominantly cis and white. Shortly after our storytelling event, we were informed that we were indeed funded again. This news was largely welcomed as many of the exit surveys we collected after that event indicated a desire to continue offering similar network programming to invest in those who were committed to RJ action in Milwaukee.

To this day, though, some hesitation remains about how we may best move forward with positioning the lab as an entity that supports reproductive justice organizations. The outcome of what continuing our lab means remains murky at best. Perhaps new relationships will emerge with some community leaders, perhaps a collaborative community-engaged project will result, but more likely on-the-ground, experiential learning about what is at stake when committing ourselves to reproductive justice action will emerge. These lessons, while not resulting in a direct CV line, perhaps are more valuable than a six-figure grant. Rather than resulting in an institutionally-desired outcome, this work underscores the value of sowing the seeds and cultivating community relationships for reproductive justice action.

Recommitment requires reflection–thinking through what is and is not working within our current scholar-activist approaches. For Megan, that means sitting with the lack of direct connection to reproductive rights in her justice work. And for Maria, it involves considering how to move forward to continue offering networking space for scholars and activists while centering the needs of the community. For whom are we (and our work) accountable to and why?

Conclusion

Collectively, our stories underscore the reality that to practice accountability for RJ scholar-activists requires a lot of *humility*. As scholars, we are often pursuing knowledge that drives us into a particular niche, becoming one of a handful of people taking on a set of questions, ideas, and processes. Coalitional RJ work is pretty explicitly *not* that. As scholars we have to recognize that we are stepping into a longstanding activist tradition built by Black and Brown women *and* that we are taking on questions and concerns of the body that no one person will ever have *all* the embodied knowledge of. There are almost always going to be other people, particularly RJ activists, who have been doing this longer and have a better understanding of what is needed than we do.

We can join the coalition and take part in the work, but we are likely not going to be leaders if we want to prioritize justice work rather than opportunities and credentials that make us look good. This can lead to tensions for feminist scholar-activists who want to embrace a rhetorics of reproductive justice framework, because those commitments may not neatly align with a tangible scholarly product. We share this fact knowing that Megan and Maria both embody privilege in being cis white women, employed in tenure-track jobs, who have less to risk than our BIPOC colleagues and/or those working in contingent faculty positions or as graduate students. We recog-

nize that positionality and privilege matter for feminist scholar-activists committing to reproductive justice. And we make this clear because we see our ability to do this work at our institutions and to write about our experiences here as an opportunity not everyone has, but we make the decision to write about the importance of RRJ in feminist rhetoric work in order for those in more precarious positions of power to use this piece to make arguments at their institutions about why and how their RRJ coalitional work matters.

These four practices–inclusive listening, embodied risk taking, reciprocal action, and reflective recommitment–offer one way to think through how to be accountable to your community and those who are already doing the work there. Though we have categorized different portions of our stories as relevant to a particular practice, you can also see how these practices are interrelated and co-occurring. Maria's process of reflective recommitment involved inclusive listening to other RJ activist-scholars at her institution. Megan's discussion of iterative reciprocal action shows all the ways she is regularly recommitting to the work by following the lead of RJ activists and listening to what would benefit them. We realize that these stories center our experiences and do not account for our BIPOC, queer and trans colleagues who also do this work. That is undoubtedly a limitation to this piece, and we call that into attention as we hope that by sharing our stories readers will ponder and reflect on their own embodied positionalities and experiences as they may consider (re)committing to reproductive justice action. Ultimately, we see this piece as one small step in advancing feminist rhetorician's ability to contribute as accountable allies to the reproductive justice coalition building happening in communities today.

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Coalition-Building, Rural Organizing, and Academic Accountabilities: Letting Rural Women Take the Lead

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Abstract: This article interrogates what coalition means in the face of increasingly polarizing times, especially as means to coalesce across rural vs. urban divides. Settled in Chandra Mohanty, Karma Chávez, and Pritha Prasad's ideas of coalition, it unravels rural mythologies and calls for academic accountability toward rural organizing. In particular, this text focuses on two rural-centered organizations (Yellowhammer Fund and Rural Assembly), highlighting their rhetorical positionalities, their actions, and their BIWOC feminist leadership teams as powerful models of coalition. This work invites readers to imagine coalitional possibilities within these models and asks them to listen and learn from rural women as coalitional leaders.

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Keywords: coalition, feminist coalition(s), rural activism, rural assembly, rural inequities, rural women, rural-urban divide, The Yellowhammer Fund

Introduction

Take a moment and view the stage–three scenes are set here.

In the first scene, it's the summer of 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic is at its peak, the presidential election of Joe Biden is just a few months away, and Black Lives Matter protests are making waves across the country. At the start of summer, a Black man named George Floyd was killed in Minnesota, a direct result of the excessive force deployed by white police officer Derek Chauvin. Within two weeks of Floyd's death more than 2000+ BLM protests spread across the United States–and one of them just happens to be in Rocky Mount, Virginia (Burch et. al). A distinctly

rural town, Rocky Mount's population sits at just under five thousand and nearly 70% of that population is white. Yet when Brigette Craighead, Katosha Poindexter, and Malala Penn, three local Black women, plan a Black Lives Matter protest, hundreds of people show up, all of them a mix of different genders, ages, and races. Craighead, Poindexter, and Penn, who lived in Rocky Mount their entire lives, were shocked by both the crowd itself and the diversity within it. Craighead even pointed out that it "was more people than she had ever seen at one time in Rocky Mount" (Natanson).

The second scene takes place in Temple, Texas in October 2021. Though larger than Rocky Mount, Temple is still rural in both its culture and geographies–especially in comparison to its nearest urban center of Austin, Texas. And in Temple, Kendall Tinoco has just been banned from using the girl's restrooms and locker rooms at her school. Though she has been using women's facilities since she came out as transgender at age thirteen, teachers at her school now deny her the right, claiming that Tinoco should not be in either of those spaces while "'actual girls' are in there" (McNab). Tinoco takes to Instagram, where she and her friends call out the school and plan a transgender rights walkout for the following week. Though they initially only expected a handful of students to participate, hundreds of students ended up walking out and rallying around Tinoco. There was even support from people within the larger Temple community, who showed up to document the walk out and to support the students' protest. As Tinoco noted, "the support was overwhelming–in a good way. I loved it" (McNab).

The third and final scene shows a view from Topeka, Kansas in August 2022. At the capitol, votes are being tallied for the "Value Them Both" amendment, a piece of state legislation that significantly restricts abortion access in Kansas. This is one of many similar laws being voted on in the United States, all of them acting as a response to the Supreme Court overturning Roe v. Wade in June 2022. However, the votes in Kansas are making it clear that this amendment will not pass. What is surprising is just how many of those pro-choice votes are coming from the state's most rural places. In Osage County, 56% of voters reject the amendment and in Jackson County, 52% vote against. Similar numbers are present in many of the state's rural counties, with margins that lie in significant opposition to voting patterns during the 2016 and 2020 elections (Bahl and Hrenchir). The amendment failed and for now, Kansas still has the right to choose. As Pamela Martinson, a deeply Catholic woman from Jackson County said: "It's very simple. Being Catholic, I don't believe in abortion for myself, but I feel women have a right to decide what happens to their bodies" (Bahl and Hrenchir).

I set the stage of this article with these three scenes because they are not unique, but rather, they are representations of contemporary coalition building in rural spaces. In 2020 and beyond, there were Black Lives Matter protests in hundreds of rural and small towns across the United States (McCarty; Solliday; Robertson). Over the last decade, there has been a significant rise in LGBT+ events across rural America, as well as calls for providing trans-affirming healthcare in

these same areas (Martin; Kenning; Gandy et. al). And in the urgencies of a post-Roe world, people are giving more attention to reproductive inequities in rural areas than ever before (Batstone; Carey). These are only a few ways that activism and coalition-building are deeply present in rural America. It's easy to overlook rurality, because we're constantly told the same myths: urban areas are progressive, while rural areas are conservative, and our best hope for radical change lies in liberal cities, not in the small towns whose presence is insignificant in the larger scope of social movements. These myths are easy to believe, proliferated by cultural and political tensions, and used to fan the flames of ever-increasing polarizing divides. When we believe these mythologies, we refuse accountability to rurality and the many ways working across cultural and geographical boundaries may lead us to new coalitional possibilities.

This article is an invitation to listen and learn, with a particular focus on how rural organizations led by BIWOC (Black, Indigenous, Women of Color) can act *as coalition*. In giving attention to these organizations, and the rural women who lead them, I make calls and inquiries for academic accountability toward rural geographies, highlight how coalitional possibilities exist within these organizations, and posit inquiries about reimagining coalition within academic thinking. I position my thoughts on coalition around Jaquette Shade-Johnson and Phil Bratta's offering in their introduction to *Spark: A 4C4Equality Journa*l: "coalitions are not formed on merely shared ideology, but they must integrate difference and embodied experiences as they develop collaborative action that addresses oppression, exploitation, and discrimination to build more just and livable worlds" (Shade-Johnson and Bratta). I also consider Karma Chávez's arguments in *Queer Migration Politics* about analyzing coalitional moments to witness how "activists draw resources toward building alternative rhetorical realities and possibilities for livable lives" (Chávez 9). I give attention to these arguments for more livable worlds, because in our current times the world feels deeply unlivable, especially for marginalized folks. Coalition-building is an answer to this, a practice of radically hoping in these unlivable times, in fighting against present realities to create more just and equitable worlds for all. These scholars also argue that coalition is about navigating differences and embodied experiences, about collaboratively working together to position more powerful rhetorical possibilities.3 I build on their ideas to argue that some of the best models for coalition-building lie in the rural spaces that rhetorical imaginaries have rarely considered. Organizations in these rural spaces are productively responding to present crises and policies, serving diverse communities whose needs are often overlooked, and powerfully acting as coalition in difficult times. looked, and powerfully acting as *coalition* in difficult times.

Learning from these organizations comes first in unraveling tightly woven rural mythologies. In *Critical Rural Pedagogy*, Sharon Mitchler argues that rural is not "a static concept, but rather a dynamic, variable, and contested reality" (Mitchler 76). Our understandings of rurality should

3 Throughout this paper, I use the singular use of "coalition" most often to refer to the overarching ideas of coalition itself, as proliferated by academics, activists, and rural organizations. I use the plural term of "coalitions" most often to refer to specific initiatives and movements, which exist in multiplicity underneath the larger ideas of what coalition means.

describe this complexity as well as acknowledge the ongoing boundary shifts within rural areas themselves, instead of only viewing these differences in relation to rural areas' urban counterparts. In doing this, we ground our understandings in actual realities rather than in the presumptions of rural mythologies. Or, as Mitchler offers, we should "honor the multiplicities of peoples, cultural structures and contributions, and relevancy of the spaces called rural" (15). Through an expansive understanding of rurality, we open doors to moments of coalition-building and rhetorical possibilities beyond mythologies, offer productive means of shaping more livable worlds across cultural and geographical boundaries, and better answer to the calls of coalitional moments. According to Chávez, a coalitional moment is "when political issues coincide or merge in the public spheres in ways that create space to re-envision and reconstruct personal imaginaries" (8). Our present exigences demand we re-envision coalition-building across boundaries of difference, and rural organizations can act as a model for doing so. I am especially interested in rural organizing that answers to pressing traumas and marginalization of women across the spectrum[4]. Women's reproductive rights are more fraught than ever; transgender women and other queer women are being stripped of various agencies; immigrant and refugee women continually face backlash; and the struggles of BIWOC *multiply at every turn.* These inequities affect women in all geographic locales, but they are particularly prevalent in rural areas, where women have significantly less organizational, cultural, and political support than their urban counterparts.

As such, in my analysis of our present coalitional moment, I look to two different organizations of rural organizing. The first is Yellowhammer Fund, a reproductive health organization dedicated to serving women in the Deep South. Yellowhammer Fund is a relatively new organization, which collates its structure and services around grassroots activism. The second organization is Rural Assembly, a group dedicated to building civic activities, like workshops, campaigns, advocacy roundtables, and a multitude of other initiatives, to marginalized populations in rural areas. Rural Assembly is a long-established organization with significant ties to national activisms and politics.

Though the goals and methods of these two organizations differ, they are primarily led by rural BIWOC and primarily serve the needs of rural women, even as their missions encompass dimensions beyond rurality. Both organizations also represent forms of coalition-building situated in intersectional lived experiences and feminist praxis unique to rural areas. However, in acting as coalition, they act as models for rethinking academic theorizations of coalitional possibilities. In my analysis of Yellowhammer Fund and Rural Assembly, I contextualize their origins and services, outline how they rhetorically position and build coalition, and examine the feminist leadership teams that guide them. These organizations offer frameworks for coalitional potentials, serve as models for inclusive and equitable activisms, and imagine new rhetorical possibilities in enacting

4 I use the term "women" here as an all-inclusive term to consider all people who may concretely or loosely identify as "woman," as these identities are present within rural areas. Additionally, as TERF ideologies and anti-trans policies continue to increase, it's deeply important that rhetorical positionings of "woman" are as inclusive and equitable as possible.

more just futures–and they do this in the face of dismissive political and cultural mythologies that do not consider rural geographies as livable worlds. In letting these rural women take the lead, we unravel rural activism mythologies just as much as we reimagine a multitude of coalitional possibilities.

Rural Organizing as *Coalition*

So far I have used coalition-building as an umbrella term to push for thinking and activities that break down boundaries of difference in cultivating more livable worlds. Before I look to Yellowhammer Fund and Rural Assembly as *coalition* and suggest their BIWOC-centered teams as productive models of coalitional feminist leadership, I further untangle perspectives on coalition.

Though calls for coalition have been present in feminist rhetorics since the 1960s onward, Chandra Mohanty's *Feminism without Borders* made waves by defining coalition outside of the middle-class, white-centered frameworks that dominated calls for coalitional sisterhoods in second and third-wave feminisms. In particular, Mohanty argues for understanding "politics of location… the historical, geographical, cultural, physic, and imaginative boundaries that provide the grounds for political definition and self-definition" (Mohanty 106). Coalition-building comes not in overlooking the politics of location to champion feminist sisterhoods, but in understanding, working within, or around these differences. As Mohanty says, "I have argued for a politics of engagement rather than a politics of transcendence" (122). I borrow from this thinking in my positioning of coalition-building, especially as I argue for coalition as pushing beyond cultural and geographical boundaries. Like Mohanty, I do not want these differences to be ignored or dismissed for promises of universalizing transcendence. The struggles that rural women face are deeply shaped by their embodied experiences within rural realities, experiences that may overlap with urban women, but often require more specific theories and actions to work through. When I call for more attention to rural geographies, unravel rural mythologies, and cast an analytical eye to BIWOC-centered rural organizing, I do so to engage with these differences. I offer Yellowhammer Fund and Rural Assembly as coalition because they are actively navigating these differences, both in rural areas themselves and in relation to their urban counterparts. In my invitation to consider the feminist leadership and rhetorical possibilities within these organizations, I push for academic accountability and act alongside Mohanty's reconstruction of coalition around the politics of location.

For more contemporary views of coalition, I turn to Pritha Prasad, who follows Mohanty in critiquing coalitional rhetorics of the past by offering responsive theorizations of coalition-building for presents and futures. In "'Coalition is Not Home': From Idealized Coalitions to Livable Lives," Prasad calls out "coalitional gestures"–well-meaning but empty rhetorical moves that emerge as a response to violence (particularly racialized violence) but do little to work against these oppressions (Prasad).[5] She argues that these gestures too often exist temporarily, rarely imagining

5 Prasad particularly focused on the #BlackOutTuesday movement that happened in June 2020. A response to the murder of George Floyd and happening alongside the many Black

coalition as sustainable beyond kairotic moments, which positions coalition around false forms of collectivity, rather than around reciprocal means of ongoing work. As she asks, "what would it look like to shift from idealized coalitions towards coalitional structures and modes of collectivity that are reciprocal, materially-grounded, and do not depend primarily upon racialized violence for exigence" (Prasad). Though I have positioned rural organizing as a significant model for responding to current political polarizations, it also models how to move through a multitude of coalitional moments. Yellowhammer Fund and Rural Assembly offer the coalitional structures Prasad calls for: they are materially grounded in the needs, wants, and exigencies of rural women and offer coalition before, during, and after crises. Similarly, they structure collectively around imaginative, rhetorical possibilities rather than in response to violence (though sometimes these possibilities do mitigate violence). Further and finally, they enact coalition through actionable gestures of change rather than empty gestures of false collectivity. In other words, they act as coalition just as much as they aim to create and sustain coalition as a "continual and committed practice" in cultivating more just and livable worlds (Prasad). 3

I build off of these scholars as well as others (Chávez; Glenn and Lunsford; Shade-Johnson and Bratta) to consider both the theoretical and actionable potentials in learning from each organization. When unpacking the potential theorizations of rural organizing, I consider what rural organizing might teach us about navigating difference, what rhetorical possibilities look like in these organizations, and what it means to be a coalitional feminist leader. Action, however, is just as important as theory because without it, our scholarly work is an empty coalitional gesture, akin to the type of false forms of collectivity that Prasad critiques or even the transcendent calls for sisterhood that Mohanty undoes. When considering the actionable potentials of rural organizing, I consider how coalition is built through action, how these actions may serve pasts, presents, and futures, and how these actions are reflections of coalitional feminist leadership. In analyzing Yellowhammer Fund and Rural Assembly, I also practice and challenge others to consider academic accountability, to theorize and act ourselves, alongside these coalitions of rural organizing.

I posit academic accountabilities alongside Karma Chávez's arguments on accountability, doing work "in a way that is deeply accountable to the communities I work with, the communities whose voices I want to engage, whose voices I want to work with to build theory" (Johnson). I feel academic accountability toward rurality, because I am both personally and professionally tied to these geographies: I grew up in a rural area, teach rural students, and run literacy programs for rural communities. As such, I continually act in service to the many and varied potentialities of rurality. However, my practice of academic accountability also comes in challenging others to see these same potentials, or in pushing them to imagine potentials that I have not yet envisioned. There

Lives Matters protests in summer 2020, #BlackOutTuesday asked that social media users post black squares in solidarity in the BLM movement, a performative rhetorical move that almost immediately backfired. As Prasad notes: "This performative gesture of posting black squares using the '#BlackLivesMatter' hashtag, in spite of its 'well-intentioned' deployment to express collective solidarity, thus demobilized and erased protest efforts on the ground, rather than upholding or extending them" (Prasad).

is powerful rhetorical possibility within these spaces, in rural organizing that acts as coalition in polarizing political times, and in pushing ourselves beyond comfortable cultural and geographical boundaries. As Chávez notes, "what we do with ideas is all about accountability" – so take these ideas about the theoretical and actionable potentials of rural organizing and find ways to make them matter to you (Johnson).

The Yellowhammer Fund

Though the Yellowhammer Fund has made headlines over the last few years, this reproductive justice organization is still relatively new, as it was only founded in 2017.[6] Its organizational base is in Tuscaloosa, AL, but they offer services to all corners of the Deep South in the United States. These services include financial and practical assistance for any and all aspects of reproductive health, from basic medical procedures to abortions. They deliver emergency contraceptives, safe sex kits, childcare supplies (diapers, baby wipes, etc.), and menstruation supplies across Alabama, Mississippi, and the Florida panhandle. They also generally advocate for reproductive healthcare at local, state, and national levels. Until recently, the Yellowhammer Fund also acted through a dedicated abortion fund and owned a rural abortion clinic. However, these latter two services have been temporarily paused, a result of Alabama's recent abortion ban–a trigger bill that went into place when the Supreme Court overturned Roe V. Wade in June 2022 (T*he Yellowhammer Fund*). Despite the pause to these services, their leadership team promises to "serve our communities in the best capacity in our new post-Roe reality" (Miller).

Though the Yellowhammer Fund serves women across the Deep South of the United States, they most significantly serve rural women. Part of this is due to the obvious geography: nearly half of the nation's rural population lives in the Deep South (Fields et. al). But another part comes in how they rhetorically position their stance on reproductive justice as an invitation toward inclusive and equitable worlds. The Yellowhammer Fund cites SisterSong (the Women of Color Reproductive Justice Collective) in their definition of reproductive justice: "the human right to maintain personal bodily autonomy, have children, not have children, and parent the children we have in safe and sustainable communities" ("Reproductive Justice"). Following this definition, one founded on the theorizations of women of color, Yellowhammer Fund collates its services around eight primary concerns: abortion, abortion stigma, sex education, birth justice, criminalization of pregnancy, self-managed abortion, and access to healthcare. In their outline of these concerns, they cite specific policies and laws that surround these issues, discuss how these issues affect women in rural vs. urban areas, and give attention to how these issues affect BIWOC, trans women, and other women who are variously marginalized. They also issue demands with each of these concerns, about specific policy changes, economic funding, and cultural shifts that are needed to enact reproductive justice. These demands offer rhetorical possibilities for more livable

6 Since its founding in 2017, the Yellowhammer Fund has been discussed in national politics, been profiled by The New York Times, The Washington Post, and a multitude of other major media outlets.

worlds, or in their words, “a society in which reproductive decisions are made free from coercion, shame, or state interference, a society in which individuals and communities have autonomy in making healthy choices regarding their bodies and their futures” (*The Yellowhammer Fund*). By rhetorically positioning their beliefs in this way, the Yellowhammer Fund builds coalition from the ground up.

Their understandings of reproductive justice pay homage to women of color, a resistance to the whiteness that dominates many narratives of reproductive health. Within their primary concerns, they give nuanced attention to reproductive issues across boundaries of cultural and geographical differences by calling attention to the inequities between rural vs. urban healthcare as well as acknowledging how reproductive healthcare often fails BIWOC, trans women, and other multiply marginalized women. And further, they position coalition by understanding it as means for building more just futures. This rhetorical vision of coalition feels akin to how Chávez presents coalition as “a present and existing vision and practice that reflects an orientation to others and a shared commitment to change. Coalition is the ‘horizon’ that can reorganize our possibilities and the conditions of them” (146). Coalition-building exists within the Yellowhammer Funds’ present beliefs as well as in the rhetorical possibilities of futures grounded in reproductive justice. When they give attention to the maternal mortality rates of Black women, demand a full range of healthcare services in rural areas, call for more inclusive sex education curriculums, or make any number of similar rhetorical moves, they are enacting coalition as Chávez describes, as a shared commitment across difference, as a coalescing vision and practice, and as an imaginative reorganization of our present horizons into more livable worlds.

Coalition-building is also present in the actions that Yellowhammer Fund takes. The fund is committed to “community education and empowerment, policy advocacy, and the development of systems of mutual aid” (*The Yellowhammer Fund)*. Mutual aid, in particular, is an inherently coalitional system, which asks people to collaboratively answer to the wants and needs of others. It also works as a coalitional method for building communities across differences. As Dominiguez et. al note, “Mutual aid is different than empathy…it implies a practice tied to acts of solidarity and a desire to overcome structural injustice through social transformation and action” (Dominiguez et al 7). The Yellowhammer Fund’s systems of mutual aid are how they supply their various services; how they maintain delivery systems across the most rural areas of the Deep South; and how they act *as coalition* by reciprocally aiding a number of different communities. They also build coalition by working with “partners in action,” six other grassroots organizations in the Deep South, some which focus on similar missions of reproductive justice and others that focus on assisting LGBT+, BIPOC, or immigrant women across rural and urban divides. As their website notes, “creating a racially and economically just society means building strong relationships and uplifting our allies as we work together” (*The Yellowhammer Fund*). Their actions build coalition in multiple ways, from mutual aid that offers assistance across various differences to cultivating partnerships across a “multiplicity of subjectivity, agency, and politics” (Chávez 147). These inclusive and equitable

actions reflect Yellowhammer Fund's feminist leadership team.

Run by a group of four women, one non-binary individual, and one man, members of Yellowhammer Fund's leadership team have shaped the organization's missions around their own embodied experiences. This is present in how Jenice Fountain's struggles as a single Black mother continue to shape her attention to the specific needs of BIWOC, how the financial burden of Kelsea McLaine's abortion shaped her desires for economic equalities in reproductive care, or how Denni Arjona's childhood in border communities shapes their work with immigrant women (*The Yellowhammer Fund*). Each member of their team has a story, which is not only highlighted within the organization's priorities but also extended, so that their stories speak across a variety of cultural and geographical boundaries, to converse with those whose stories are both like and unlike their own. They build coalition by being accountable to their own identities and experiences, by rhetorically positioning these experiences within larger conversations on equity and inclusion, and by collaboratively enacting coalition throughout all facets of their organization. Prasad notes that coalitions are a "sustained, ongoing alignment of one's own self-understandings, interests, and goals with other oppressed groups" (Prasad). The organizational team of the Yellowhammer Fund represents feminist leadership as settled in self-understanding and beyond, where coalition-building transforms them from individuals into a productive and responsive collective.

Rural Assembly

Located in Whitsburg, Kentucky, Rural Assembly was first started in 2007 as both a coalitional branch of the Center for Rural Strategies and as an individual organization itself ("Rural Assembly"). Rural Assembly is dedicated to teaching, developing, and organizing assembly activities across rural America: such as campaigns, roundtables, workshops, action groups, media profiles. The Rural Assembly also runs a series of programming dedicated to specific issues in rural areas (such as Rural Journalism Collective, Connecting to Our Heartlands, Pathways to Repair, Rural Youth Catalyst, and more) and moderates several rural-centered media platforms (such as The Daily Yonder, Everywhere Radio, Drawing Resilience, etc.). Rural Assembly also holds a yearly conference, Rural Assembly Everywhere, where rural leaders come together to share ideas, hold discussions, and coalesce across differences. These are just a few of the ways Rural Assembly builds "more opportunity and better policy for rural communities" (*Rural Assembly*). While Yellowhammer Fund identifies as a grassroots organization, Rural Assembly's scope is greater in longevity, size, and funding. It has significant support from the Center of Rural Strategies, has a large variety of partnerships with other rural-centered organizations, and the investment of several key political figures.[7] As such, this organization acts as coalition in wide-reaching ways.

Rural Assembly acts as coalition in part because they explicitly identify as a coalition; this is most obvious in how they rhetorically position rurality. As their mission offers, rural America is

7 In particular, Rural Assembly has the support of Deb Haaland, of the U.S. Department of the Interior, and Xochitl Torres Small, the USDA Undersecretary for Rural Development.

"more than the convenient stereotypes and stories that dominate public discourse. It is a place of innovation, tight-knit communities, and civic participation" (*Rural Assembly*). Instead of giving into these stereotypes, Rural Assembly wants to "draw the connections between rural and its counterparts, to name the roads, fibers, and futures that connect us" (*Rural Assembly*). They see their work as a productive means to combat the issues facing rural areas and for building connections between rural and its counterparts.

By rhetorically acknowledging the importance of these differences, Rural Assembly understands that "coalitions ultimately need people to relate and connect to each other without erasing difference and differential experiences" (Shade-Johnson and Bratta). I have echoed these same ideas throughout my argument, that coalition is about undoing rural mythologies, about seeing possibilities within the rurality, and about reframing those possibilities for imaginative and expansive futures. Within Rural Assembly, I am especially interested in how these coalitional moves are led by and directed toward rural women. Although Rural Assembly is not specifically dedicated to rural women (in the same way Yellowhammer Fund is not), their organization is primarily led by women, the Rural Assembly Conference has featured almost exclusively women speakers, and their various programming is run by or acts in service to rural women. In other words, even if they do not explicitly name it, the rhetorical positioning of their mission collates around rural women.

These same ideas echo in the expansive actions that Rural Assembly takes, especially in how it understands that "real change moves at the pace of relationships" (Rural Assembly). Rural Assembly runs all their present, in-progress, and potential programming through four principles of reciprocal, ongoing action:

- *Gathering,* creating a web of connection between rural people, places, and issues.
- *Mobilizing*, cultivating and amplifying diverse rural voices.
- *Advocating*, building bridges between rural leaders and national platforms.
- *Acting*, providing tools and media support for rural-led campaigns.

These principles build coalition by concentrating efforts around the direct concerns of rural people; by making connections between cultural and geographical boundaries; and by giving rural folks the tools they need to take the lead. In their #RuralWomenLead Profile Series, this means making ample space for BIWOC to share their commitments to change and community building. In their Rural Youth Catalyst program, this looks like granting space to and validation of LGBT+ youth. And in their Drawing Resilience project, it comes from giving attention to rural leaders (mostly women and LGBT+ folks) who are "staying in the work, in relationship, in community, even amid deep divisions, systemic injustices, and social and economic challenges" (*Rural Assembly*).

The prioritization of these reciprocal, ongoing principals are present in these programs and in Rural Assembly's in-progress projects. As such, they build coalition through open and sustainable forms of action, a continued effort of "staying in the work" to cultivate more equitable futures.

This sustainable focus on coalition is especially present in the Rural Assembly's leadership team. Though a branch of the much larger Center for Rural Strategies, Rural Assembly is primarily run by a team of five women and one man. What is significant about these leaders is just how much work they are doing in service to rural areas–as their positions in Rural Assembly tends to be one of only many. For instance, Tyler Owens also works for the National Congress of American Indians, Kim Phinney does work for Rural and Native Initiatives, and Joel Cohen does work with Rural LISC. Other members of their team also hold a variety of positions, practicing feminist leadership in Rural Assembly, the Center for Rural Strategies, and a handful of other organizations. They are dedicated, in both specific and expansive ways, to serving rurality on multiple fronts (*Rural Assembly*). Prasad notes that "coalition should be understood not just as an activist response to an issue or context, but a life-affirming practice" (Prasad). The leadership team of Rural Assembly represent feminist praxis in building coalition not only as a response to the contexts of this organization but as life-affirming practices that carry them to many and varied organizations (*Rural Assembly*). They build coalitions both inside and outside of the Rural Assembly and continually work toward the goals of cultivating more livable worlds for rural peoples across a variety of boundaries and positions.

Following Rural Women's Leadership

What is notable about Yellowhammer Fund and Rural Assembly is that they are primarily (though not exclusively) led by women of color–women who are building inclusionary spaces in rural communities, spaces that urban America rarely imagines exists in these rural regions. As the scholars I have referenced throughout this work have noted, women of color have always been coalitional leaders, but too often, calls for coalition ignore their contributions and dismiss the theoretical and actionable potentials of letting them take the lead. Scholarship might gesture to women of color in theory, it might reiterate their arguments, and it might call attention to the inequities they face, but there's a difference between borrowing from women of color and in building coalitions alongside them. I echo Mohanty, Chávez, and Prasad by calling attention to these insufficiencies in coalition-building, because I do not want my perspective as a white academic to supersede the arguments these scholars, as well as other scholars of color, have made about building inclusionary coalitions across academic and activist spaces. Just as much, I want my analysis of the BIPOC feminist leadership teams at the center of these rural organizations to highlight the significant contributions these women of color have made within the rural spaces they occupy. I emphasize their leadership because within it, there are a multitude of possibilities for imagining and enacting powerful forms of coalition building.

Understanding women of color's power as leaders is a move toward academic accountability. Within both academic and activist contexts, there is a time and place to step up and be generative within leadership, but there is also a time and place to step back, to understand that feminist coalitions are built through responding to the leadership of those outside of the self. In rural areas, which are so often mythologized as lost causes, it is especially important to acknowledge feminist leaders whose lives and activisms resist dominant narratives of homogeneity. This call for academic accountability is twofold: as a white academic deeply concerned with rurality, my scholarship, teaching, and activisms have been significantly influenced by knowing when to find power in the leadership, especially in those whose positionalities differ from my own–an academic accountability that I try to continually embody as praxis. I also believe that those within the academy, across our many positionalities and agendas, could greatly benefit from turning further attention to rurality and models of BIPOC feminist leadership within these geographies. Prasad notes that in an age of corporate and institutional misappropriation of anti-racist ideas, solidarity often comes in the form of "abstract rhetorical gesture rather than a material and systemic intervention" (Prasad). I call attention to the women of color at the center of these two organizations to resist abstract rhetorical gestures, to view their leadership as a model of material and systemic intervention within rural spaces, and to build theory and actions alongside them, as we all learn how to make the world more livable for everyone.

In other words, rural women taking the lead means BIWOC take the lead, trans and other queer women take the lead, disabled women take the lead, and immigrant and refugee women take the lead, because it is only in understanding and learning from these differences that we enact coalition. Coalescing across differences cannot exist without inclusionary theories and actions, and in calling for academic accountability throughout this work and, in the following conclusion, I invite readers to consider the significant ways coalition has been formed by, continues to be pushed by, and should be led by marginalized women in a multitude of ways.

A Call for Academic Accountabilities

In their key concept statement on coalition, Cheryl Glenn and Andrea Lunsford offer that "the 'co' in coalition is key for us because it invokes more than one: in it we hear doubling and redoubling along the reverberations of other key words beginning with 'co': collaboration, coordination, cooperation" (Glenn and Lunsford 11). My analysis demonstrates the many ways these rural organizations reverberate with various dimensions of "co" in acting as coalition: how they rhetorically position coalition, how their actions build coalition, and how their diverse leadership teams are centered in a feminist praxis of coalition. Coalition starts here, in writing this scholarship, in reading this article, and in understanding how to "turn our attention(s) to our own house" (Johnson). Chávez notes that "one of the reasons why a lot of organizing and activist communities are so anti-academics being in their space at all, let alone building theory from their ideas, is because academics have been historically and notoriously completely unaccountable to the communities

that they study" (Johnson). I conclude by calling for academic accountabilities in learning from rural organizing, in letting rural women take the lead, and in reverberating across various dimensions of "co" within our own work.

I am particularly interested in imagining theory and action as academic accountability to rural areas. One way of doing so comes from direct, interpersonal measures: undo notions of rural mythologies by listening to rural women, especially rural BIWOC, following diverse leadership, and donating to rural organizing as a coalescing investment across differences. The Yellowhammer Fund and Rural Assembly are certainly smart places to begin with these efforts, but rural organizing exists in all corners of the United States. Do some research, discover what rural issues speak most to you, and put your time and money where your words are.

These are the beginning steps of building academic accountability to rural areas, interpersonal measures that may guide readers in creating more significant and sustainable partnerships between academic positionalities and rural geographies. There's more to imagine beyond these direct measures (though direct measures are always needed), because academic accountability involves moving beyond interpersonal relationships–it asks us to bring theory and action into our own academic homes. In my own academic home, I've worked with the Nebraska Writing Project to participate in and plan initiatives that build bridges between rural and urban educators across the state. These initiatives begin as conversations across differences and often, they are sustained by listening to, learning from, and letting rural teachers take the lead. I have also supported students as they have participated in the Rural Fellows program, which partners undergraduate students with rural communities to work on projects defined by wants, needs, and exigencies of rural communities themselves. In my personal academic accountability, I have worked with rural LGBT+ organizations, worked in rural archives, and continually draw attention to rurality as a space of possibility. I continue to do so now, in calling for more individual and collective academic accountability in letting rural women take the lead.

Conclusion

The examination of rural organizing I have offered invites and imagines a multitude of coalitional paths in undoing rural mythologies; it positions rhetorical possibilities in coalescing across differences; it offers reciprocal and sustainable actions for building coalition; and draws attention to models of BIPOC feminist leaders, whose dedication to rurality is both individually and collectively grounded in building more livable worlds. For me, these theories and actions manifest in my scholarship and pedagogy in a multitude of ways, in anything from writing articles that continually illuminate rurality as akin to possibility, to designing classrooms where students interrogate their own politics of location. For others, this examination of rural organizing may hold a litany of other potentialities.

The assertion I am making within this work is less about offering a specific conclusion and more about inviting readers toward imaginative possibilities. This invitation asks you to undo your notions of rural mythologies; to research and learn about the issues facing women and other marginalized individuals in rural areas within your own geographies; to listen to, learn from, and work with rural leaders in these same geographies; and to understand academic accountability as a sustained praxis of building coalitions across cultural and geographical differences. These coalitions should be responsive to our present coalitional moment, but they should also offer rhetorical possibilities toward more livable worlds for all. This is how we resist, how we hope, and how continually reverberate with the many possibilities that the "co" within coalition entails. I featured these rural organizations and their BIWOC feminist leadership as models for acting as coalition in this way, but I conclude with a final inquiry, one which I hope leads readers into possibility: What coalitional theories and actions, as well as personal and collective praxis, merit space within our academic homes?

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The Promises and Perils of Coalition Building in Academia

Dialogue and Coalition Building in a Multidisciplinary Writing Program

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Abstract: Cultivating and sustaining coalitions, even when informed by feminist values, is an enduring process, and one which cannot be accomplished without shared understandings of values and goals. As a selection of faculty from a multidisciplinary university writing program, we came together to discuss the strengths and richness afforded by the pluralism of our workplace, but also examined our challenges and inadequacies. We offer excerpts from those conversations, and creative riffs on them, in hopes that they will reveal the art and angst of the pursuit of intersectional feminism in other institutional contexts.

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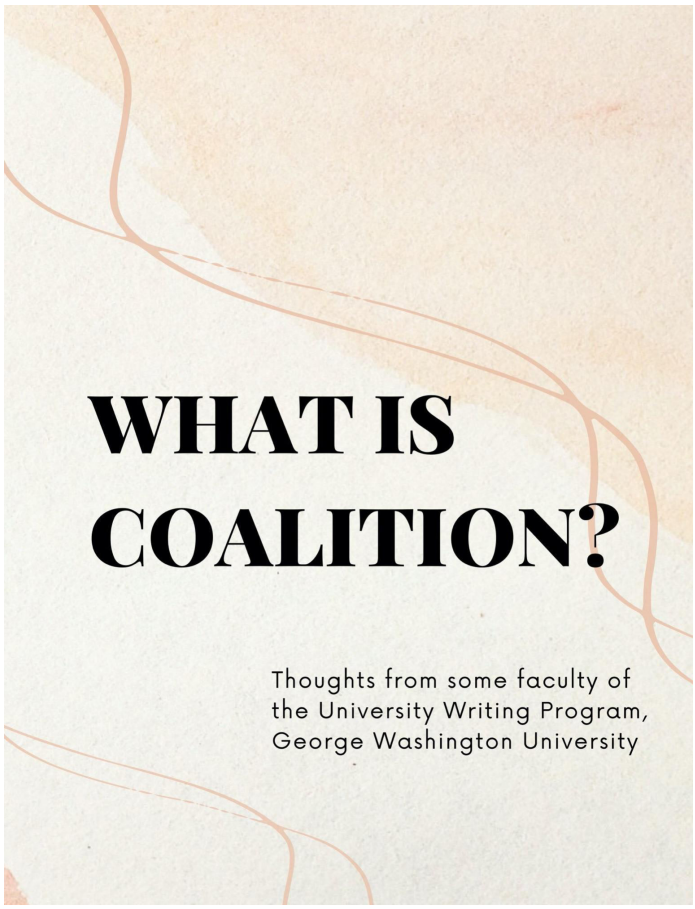


Introduction

> *"In a modern society, who is allowed to speak with authority is a political act."* (Cottom, 19)

What does it look like to engender coalition when individuals may have contradictory goals? When the institutional contexts in which we work are themselves at odds with our collective agendas? We co-authors (all part-time or full-time faculty in a multidisciplinary university writing program, further described below) are composing in this space to work through the contradictions of collectivity we have encountered, some of which we knew before we set out to write this piece together, while others were revealed through the process of answering the CFP for this issue. We thus offer a multi-vocal and multi-modal reflection on what we hold in common and what we currently cannot claim as commonplace.

What we offer here is an exploration of coalition as we understand it. We find multi-modality important to fully express authors' diverse perspectives on coalition, while multi-vocality is essential to this piece to examine disagreement and the evolution of ideas and praxis we have uncovered. We did not expect this collaborative investigation to produce a manifesto regarding how to

fix our academic program, nor did we expect to produce a self-congratulatory conversation about social justice. We thought we would be examining how our existing practices engender or hinder our ability to enjoy a lived experience as a faculty coalition. While the discussions we had in order to write this piece have in some instances resulted in understanding and agreement, in others the discussions scratched at old wounds, or produced cautious revelations amongst ourselves.

The process of crafting this piece revealed that the co-authors all find common ground in many of the tenets of feminism: decentralized leadership, pluralism, transparency, and attention to power differences. However, enacting those feminist tenets has at some moments and in some spaces not lived up to the values of an intersectional feminism. For example, we do not all agree that white supremacy and unearned white dominance are the primary axes upon which institutional and individual power operates. In Shannon Sullivan's Revealing Whiteness, her term "whiteliness" distinguishes between being white as a phenotypic feature versus being whitely as a kind of ignorance of one's unearned dominance through that white embodiment. Charles Mills calls this the "white epistemology of ignorance," in which practitioners "need not to know" the realities of racism and white dominance. Education researchers such as Michalinos Zembylas and Cheryl Matias have recently taken up these lenses to interrogate the "emotionalities of whiteness" among teachers, examining the refusal to see how racialization and racism operate in education spaces. The authors here have variable ways of theorizing these matters, while those who drafted this intro have found that a practiced ignorance of the privileges afforded by whiteness has been a recurring theme in our program's history and is a current impediment to solidifying coalition in the ways we believe we could practice it. We also recognize that even in the inclusive space intended by this multi-vocal effort, not everyone has felt–for reasons of professional status, contingency, marginalization, and other constructed precarities–the security to speak openly in their full authority.

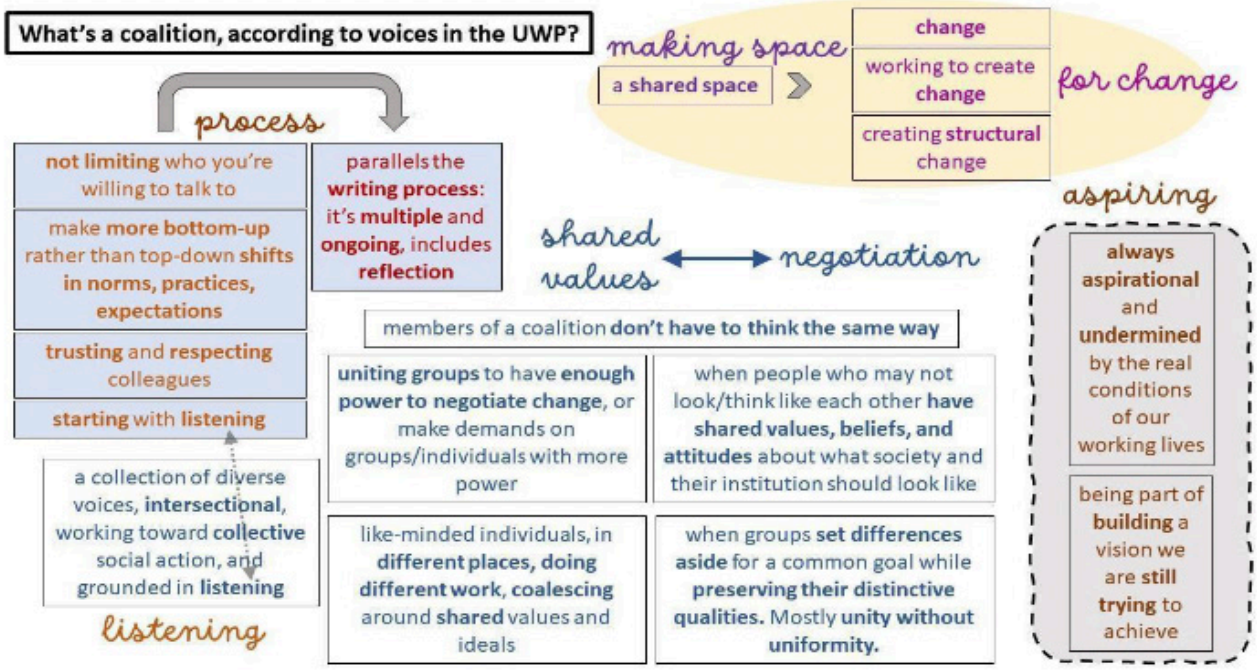


Fig. 1. Clustering of coalition definition concepts that emerged in interviews among co-authors. Image description: Alt text contains full transcription of the quoted phrases grouped into process, listening, making space → for change, shared values←→negotiation, aspiring.

Who are "we"?

The UWP is housed in the College of Arts and Sciences (CCAS) and consists of three distinct divisions (First-Year Writing, Writing in the Disciplines, and the Writing Center). The co-authors of this piece are all First-Year Writing instructors. The program has a sizable faculty, whose research interests and creative work reflect a multi- and interdisciplinary approach to writing instruction. Faculty research strengths lie in a range of scholarly areas, but most prominently in the intersections among writing, pedagogy, social justice, race, and gender.

In the 2022-23 academic year, the UWP had 78 faculty members, 55 assigned on three- or five-year contracts and 19 part-time unionized faculty. There were also three one-year Visiting Assistant Professors and a sole tenured associate professor who held a joint appointment between the UWP and a regular CCAS department.

From 2002-2003, the program was entirely white, with representation from faculty who identified as gay/queer and/or disabled. From 2003 to 2008, the faculty added two Black women. Other BIPOC faculty rotated in and out of regular part time and adjunct positions, but between 2008 and 2017, there was no increase in full-time BIPOC faculty. Current full-time faculty include several new hires who identify as BIPOC.

When the co-authors were asked how they would like to be identified in the article, the

following responses were provided. Clearly, there is more to each of us than what is listed here, but this is what we saw as most important in terms of how we form and fit into coalitions: Working class, middle class, professional class, Southern US, Syrian-American, Afro-Caribbean, immigrant, first-generation college graduate, disabled, Black, White, Muslim, Jewish, secular Jewish, secular Christian, atheist, lesbian, woman, and man. The identities in this assemblage skew toward ones that are traditionally marginalized in US society as well as in our institution.

Programmatic Context

The UWP was formed as an independent academic unit in 2003 as a Provost's Signature program, newly separated from the English Department. With this change came a themed four-credit first-year writing course that all students were required to successfully complete.

Notably, in the development of this new program, there was an administrative desire to rid the UWP of its previous emphasis on cultural studies, a field concerned with the operations and intersection of race, gender, class, and other markers of identity. In fact, faculty in the new UWP were expressly told not to use the term "cultural studies" in representing the new program or their work. This ban reflected a tension between understandings of the relationship between content and writing instruction in writing pedagogy: some across the university saw them as in conflict, while others saw them as interdependent.

Thus, the work of the program was ideologically inflected from its start, and subject to external and internal pressures regarding content and approach. Despite this, the first two years of the program could be described as a period of collective effervescence (Durkheim), building a new writing program with substantial institutional support. Faculty designed writing courses across a range of topics and remained committed to content-driven inquiry as a foundation for writing instruction.

Twenty years later, the shape of the program has shifted in response to the ongoing withdrawal of resources and a constant state of emergency (exigencies often of institutional making). To point to only a few of the most obvious examples of these resource-driven decisions, the program quickly pivoted from hiring only full-time faculty to employing a sizable part-time, contingent faculty; first-year writing courses have moved from caps of 12 to caps of 17 students; and course loads from four four-credit courses per year to six or seven.

Alongside this continued internal state of emergency has been, of course, the much larger, public crisis around racism, which the program has attempted to grapple with to varying degrees. Such work has been informed and made more challenging by a faculty that is, as noted above, predominantly white; by our faculty's very different experiences in the UWP; and by individual views on coalition that seem to sit in conflict with one another at times.

One particularly stark moment showing this came in the fall of 2020. Subsequent to the murder of George Floyd, many organizations published statements affirming their commitment to anti-racism. In response to comments about the program's in/actions and colleagues' in/sensitivities around Black students' and faculty's experiences by one of our Black faculty members and a subsequent related workshop led by another Black faculty member, the UWP formed an ad hoc Anti-Racism Committee, which proposed an anti-racism statement for possible publication on our website. Because we were not in the habit of endorsing program-wide statements, and because committee members felt that an insincere statement was more harmful than no statement at all, we agreed that the statement must garner 100% faculty support, or we would not publish it. The proposal failed.

It is with this programmatic makeup and history and in this environment, that we consider our efforts to create coalition/s within the UWP individually and collectively; we examine how, when, and where these efforts succeed and fail, and we do so multi-vocally not only to allow for voices and perspectives that might not otherwise be heard in publication, but also to highlight the nuances, the struggles, and the ongoing shifts in understanding that one program experiences.

Process

We chose a round-robin interview process as a feminist and coalition-building tool for our explorations. Each co-author asked questions of a colleague and recorded the results; the interviewee then formulated new questions based on that exchange and asked them of a third colleague, and the process continued through all the co-authors. One conversation happened adjacent to this process, between the two Black women faculty members with the longest history in the program, primarily because one had retired and we didn't want to ask for additional labor from her.

As a tool, the round-robin approach highlights the writing process itself, given that the interview process is discovery-oriented, highly individuated, and recursive in nature. We valued the opportunity it offered for listening across varied perspectives and for sharing lived experiences (DeVault and Gross).

This tool also allowed for reflective scrutiny. In rereading the interviews, we have been able to recognize what came to the fore or is markedly original or confirms our understanding of our Program and coalition-building. Of equal importance, we have been able to assess what potentially was elided, neglected, obscured, or lost in the questions and answers. To return to the words of Tressie McMillan Cottom, not all interviewees stand with equal authority to be heard in more public spaces, and some may not feel they can be heard or taken seriously within even a feminist method such as these interviews. While we chose a discovery method intended to center listening, we were always already operating within the political contexts of our and McMillan Cottom's modern society.

Once interview excerpts were compiled, co-authors worked together to sculpt the final manuscript, which includes soundbites and creative interventions: multimedia works, enmeshed compositions, reflective thoughts, and forms of poetry, including some inspired by the ghazal form. Creative re-uses of the interviews helped us to process the revelations from these conversations, and to seek to truly listen to our colleagues on their own terms.

Finally, we crafted intro and outro (as used by adrienne maree brown) bookends to the excerpts from the round-robin dialogue. Our hope was that these generative discussions and the writing they engendered would reveal the art and the angst of coalition building in a/our University Writing Program, which may be instructive for us and for those laboring in other institutional contexts.

Interlude: Sandie Friedman on The Center Table

Figures by Cayo Gamber

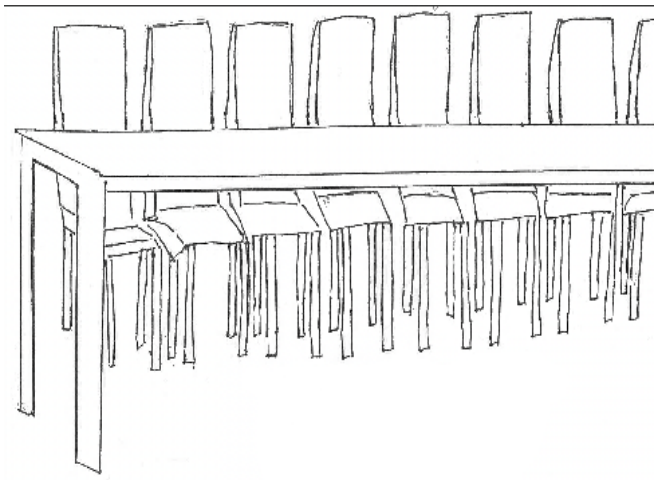
My friend and colleague Nicole Wallack opens her 2017 book, Crafting Presence, with the memory of a shared space in the NYU Expository Writing Program, where we both learned to teach in the mid-1990s. NYU “Expos” (as we called the Expository Writing Program), once conjoined with the English department, now occupied its own space on 4th Street, upstairs from the legendary rock venue The Bottom Line. The program was staffed by graduate students with a small team of full-time faculty as directors. Although the furniture where we met actually comprised three adjoining tables, this space was known as the “center table.” For the most part, it belonged exclusively to the graduate student instructors. Perhaps the table could not have existed in a department of full faculty; we built our coalition through our identities as novices, with all the excitement and fear of that role. We felt comfortable sharing our moments of discovery and learning, as well as our panicky last-minute questions and our painful mistakes.

“Every facet of this writing program radiated from the center table. Nearby, in a second squared ring were our shared cubicles where we conferenced with students and sought some quasi-solitude, and at the periphery (but only geometrically speaking) were the semi-private offices of the directors, which like the conference rooms and the Writing Center cubicles looked out over narrow streets. A lot was half-visible, half-audible in that space. The openness gave us many chances to eavesdrop on one another both on purpose and by accident. There still were mysteries.” (Wallack ix)

Shared Space: An Interlude OR The Center Table.

To create [structural] change, a writing program must have a shared space.

What does this shared space look like?



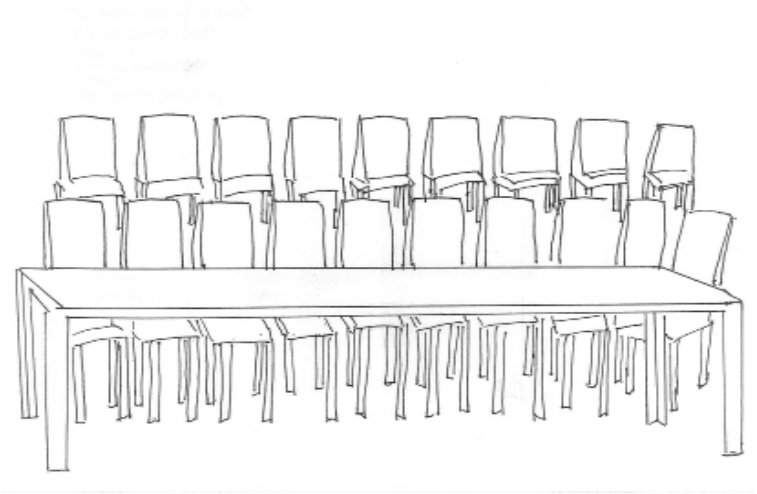
Here at this table, we all believe writing is a place of transformation.

Elbow to elbow, hip to hip, we sit in this shared space.

There were indeed mysteries and also seductions; we fell in love at the center table in multiple ways. I met two romantic partners (Bill, Madeleine), and I found my vocation there. Whenever someone has asked me how I chose the path of teaching writing, I always explain that I found my intellectual home in the “Expos” writing program. Now I realize it was at the center table, where conversations about writing and teaching unfolded. Wallack reflects: “The impetus for this book began in conversations at those tables among my friends, colleagues, and mentors–teachers all–woven through our gossiping, venting, joking, goading, flirting, complaining, and showing off–about essays” (vii).

What happens when there is no center table?

The center of the writing program cannot hold.



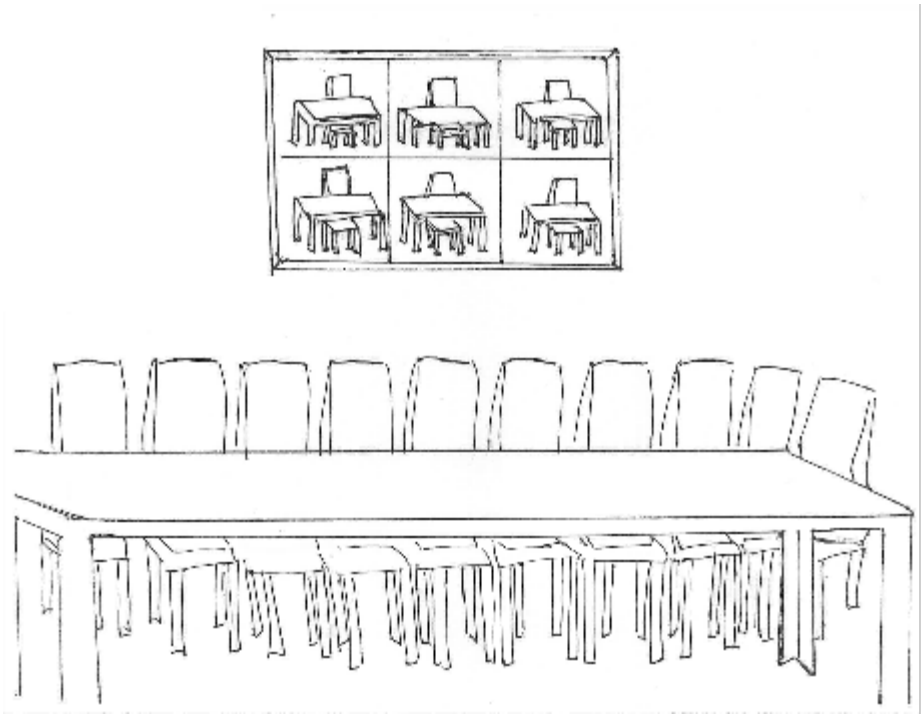
The table is now too small.

Chairs line the walls.

Some sit at the table itself, others line the periphery.

The center table created community not just because it was located in the center of our shared room; community became possible for us because of the circumstances of our lives and the conditions of our labor. As graduate students and teachers-in-training, we led hectic, overfull lives, but as a program, we were not fragmented by institutional differences in status–the academic caste system that stratifies the GW writing program. We were certainly aware that some of us had greater seniority and authority–more funding, for instance, or the title of "mentor." Some of us felt more comfortable speaking out at workshops, while others hung back nervously or listened with a degree of awe. But these differences did not interfere with the center table pursuits Wallack describes (vii). What mattered was that we were learning to read, write, and teach together. It was terrifying and exhilarating.

We don't have a center table in the GW UWP, and not just because it would be impossible to locate a spatial center on our floor of offices. We too live hectic, overfull lives, but mostly they don't feel like an adventure so much as a balancing act. In the aftermath of COVID, as we struggle to care for our families and, at the same time, to give our students—and their writing—sufficient time and energy, we are tired. In the moments between classes, we don't linger in a shared space, but scuttle back to our offices and hastily answer emails. We calculate the time we can allot to each task; falling in love would be an unthinkable luxury.



"We should sit down and address each year… have a moment of reflection on: … here are our labor conditions … Here's who is sitting at the table … This is where we are." - Cayo

"If all come to the table and engage in a conversation in a sincere way to understand each other, change can happen—something gets said and even gets done" - Nabila

"They, regardless of these differences, come together to create a shared space; where all people, all entities, of those sitting at the table, and those who aren't, can engage and create change in their respective spaces…pull up their own seat in the spirit of Shirley Chisholm…or maybe even create their own tables" - Jameta

Obstacles to Coalition: Structural Labor

Multiple conversations focused on the stratification of labor as an impediment to coalition in our department. We are all contingent faculty, and thus subject to feelings of trepidation and precarity, and because of the anxiety about our positions, there is incentive to remain silent in faculty discussions. At the same time, faculty at every level feel overworked–constantly addressing the most immediate demands–and this also impedes our ability to form coalitions. Time, necessary for coalition-building, is scarce for everyone.

As Robin Zheng observes, academic casualization has resulted in an inversion of the ratio of tenure-track to non-tenure-track faculty positions in the U.S. – from 78%:22% in 1969 to 30%:70% in 2011 (Kezar and Maxey). The 70% of non-tenure-track, contingent faculty who are engaged in the "actual work" of the academy also come to discover that their labor has been re-conceived as devalued "care work."

While we may all be contingent, our institution has created multiple layers of contingency. We discovered that the felt-experience of the tiers differs within the Program and outside of the Program. In earlier years, a new faculty member on a renewable reappointment would be renewed for three years the first time and then for five years every time thereafter. However, the University now often reserves five-year reappointment terms for faculty members who they believe have achieved some marker of excellence. "Excellence" often is predicated on successfully moving up in rank, a truly laborious process which comes with a modicum-at-best raise in pay and no greater job security. Thus, colleagues with renewable contracts may come up for review every three years and will be called upon to provide a detailed and persuasive dossier that evidences their success in the areas specified in their contract.[2]

Danika: I see myself as in that middle power group: I'm white, I'm cisgender, I'm able-bodied. So I see myself as somebody who's in a marginalized position in terms of being contingent labor, and because I'm a woman, and yet I'm aware that I have much more access to institutional power than somebody who's trans, who's disabled, who's Black, who's Latina/o, or any other racial, demographic, or religious minority.

Nasreen: I'm contingent faculty. As a result, I'm "here today, gone tomorrow." I just have to make one stupid move or someone has to accuse me of something, and I'm gone. There's no way I can say, "That's not true."

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2 Special Service contract expectations are 90% dedication of one's time to teaching and 10% to service. For a Regular Active Status contract, expectations are 60% dedication of one's time to teaching, 30% to research, and 10% to service.Further, while drafting this piece we learned that anyone hired in 2018 or later (which includes many BIPOC faculty) will only be eligible for three-year contracts, regardless of "excellence" or time served.

Nabila: If I say something and it's misunderstood, my position would be on the line. (...) I speak, but I try to be cautious of what I speak or how I speak.

Cayo: The coalition we seek is constantly undermined by the conditions at the University and our (…) labor conditions.

Jessica: There's an element of overwork that can keep us in our hamster wheel of just getting through the day.

Wade: We have to contend with the surrounding noise of the University – the manufactured emergencies (of the University's making): the budget shortfalls and the taking money back and increasing our course loads.

Sometimes I don't have time to get my response out.

The labor of change is embedded in making coalition.

Something that makes it fragile is bandwidth and energy.

The hamster wheel of overwork is breaking coalition.

Race/ethnicity or Who is a PWI for?

We teach at a Predominantly White Institution (PWI), which means not only that White people constitute the majority, but also that they hold the highest positions of power. Decisions are then primarily based on their ways of being and knowing, which are categorized as "neutral." People who do not share these ways of being and knowing are excluded from positions of power. Just as one participant [Robin] found conversations about race within the program to be "inauthentic," another faculty member of color [Jameta] observed that the university's efforts at diversity and inclusion are largely "performative." She revisited the fact that faculty of color feel isolated here, and as a result, they leave–undermining efforts for the stated institutional and program aims of diversity.

White participants, in contrast, commented on feelings of connectedness and unity that focused on factors other than race and did not always foreground the experience of their colleagues of color. Helene Lorenz and Randi Gray Kristensen wrote about this phenomenon in 1999: we recognize that racism and sexism are present in the culture, but we tend to deny that these problems are present in the rooms we occupy.

> [O]ne could accuse other people on the campus of racist or sexist attitudes, but never, ever, would it be appropriate to consider how our own discourse reproduced sexist and racist relationships. A corollary rule that is even more problematic [involves] a "totalitarian we." Other groups far away can have internal conflict and dialogue… But we can never do it in the room "we" are in because here there is harmony, congruence, and Sameness, and anyone who says there is Difference is breaking unspoken rules. So faculty who are African-American or Native American, Jewish or Buddhist, or from other identity groups whose presence is being erased often sit in rooms where people say things like "we are all comfortable here" or "we are all WASPS here" or even "we are all white here" and try to make choices. If we are silent, it reinforces the "totalitarian we." If we challenge, we risk being called "militant" or "uncollegial" or "judgemental" or even "fascist." (Lorenz and Kristensen 8-9)

The continuities across a quarter century are clear. For most of the program's history, faculty who have raised issues of reconsidering the Eurocentrism of our curriculum or our faculty composition have been rebuked or ignored.

Kylie: That means that people who hold power to make decisions from the top down are overrepresented for a certain [demographic]. They're overrepresented in the way that reflects where the institution originates–which is that it was built for those kinds of people–and so everyone who doesn't fit the assumptions of that way of being and knowing–which is implicitly framed as neutral–gets left out of the institutional power structures.

I think balancing being proactive in creating community and coalition, and also recognizing that my whiteness is the principal axis on which I experience the world–and that includes in higher education–means that I'm presumed competent sometimes, even if I'm not. Or I'm given credibility when I don't deserve it, and I should use that in ways that don't benefit me, but rather benefit coalitional interests which might not always be the things that matter to me individually, but which matter in the long run, for being part of the institution that I'm in.

Jameta: The assumption that's made is that, for communities of color, [specifically, I'm speaking from my perspective of Black communities], we're coming from a place of lack. (...) But I see that in other communities, other diverse communities, whether it's related to sex, gender, race, religion, etc., and that it's not a place of lack, but because that view is there [at] these predominantly white institutions [that] they are saviors. We got there first! We did this! And it becomes more performative work than actual structural change.

Jameta: [Coalition] is not something we're doing well here at GW. This is something we're aiming to do, and we're looking for. How can we do this in a structural way, not a performative way? [Those questions are] so important, because what often happens is you'll throw diversity all

over pamphlets… all over the website. But these folks come to these institutions and feel isolated. Don't feel supported, don't feel safe, and then they end up leaving, and people wonder why and what was their need. And it's more than just making sure that people are adequately paid. It's making sure that people are adequately supported, holistically.

Danika: I see us as having grown in ways and changed in ways that we desperately needed to change over the last eight to ten years. I'm also wary of being self-congratulatory. Looking back, it seems that I, and at least some of the other white folks in the program, thought we were doing really well ten years ago, and it is now clear to me that my experience of being inclusive and welcoming and seeking to diversify the program and listen to outside voices was not what was happening and not what my colleagues of color were experiencing.

Danika: It's easy to let relatively modest things give you an inflated sense of the work you're doing as a white person in a white program in a white school. If you're doing a little better than the other departments, it's easy to feel self-congratulatory in ways that ultimately are going to be counterproductive both in terms of how they make my colleagues who are not white feel, and in terms of what we can accomplish, because as soon as we're like "well, we're doing better than almost everyone else!" you can stop working, and you can stop listening.

I started separating myself from the program's goals.

While my colleagues feared getting it all wrong; it was a fragile coalition.

They paid lip service to the change, to the reframe.

Across our history here we've been uncomfortable; it was not an agile coalition.

Tokenization

Participants observed that at this PWI, white voices tend to dominate; faculty of color feel tokenized, invisible, or isolated. Some participants felt that conversations about race were "inauthentic" and left intact the basic structures and assumptions privileging whiteness.

While ideologically we might expect "institutions of higher learning" to rigorously interrogate systems of oppression, our discussions as a faculty revealed that in our program and at the University level colleagues had experienced feelings of tokenism.

Who belongs here, what voices belong here, what voices are valued here,

What is required of someone I who is seeking to build a condition of coalition?

I don't think we can get at what we're trying to get at if we're not honest.

When white people decide they're no longer willing it's an inhibition of coalition.

You need to leave; that is not a healthy environment for you. When they are afraid

to cross boundaries it's only an exhibition of coalition.

Robin: My whole life, except for a few years in my late elementary school, what we called Junior High, I was never around only or mostly white people,

Randi: And [the UWP program leaders] didn't say anything about 'now that we're at a PWI, what are your concerns?' They didn't have that vocabulary right?

Robin: Ain't heard that yet.

Randi: So you felt tokenized. Can I use that word?

Robin: Oh, absolutely! How could I feel otherwise? But I got to see up close what it looks like when a director of a program [Service Learning] was really interested in diversity and not just in a lip service way… they went looking for people, didn't wait for them to land in their lap.

Robin: But to be honest, to come into a department that was so overwhelmingly white (...) was daunting. (...)

Robin: I realized I had a lot more in common with the Black students than I imagined, in terms of being present but absent. I had students sometimes, Black students who didn't talk in class, and I knew they were engaged. They might roll their eyes at something that a white classmate said but they wouldn't respond otherwise. They might come see me in office hours and chat away but in class they wouldn't talk. And I thought shit, I don't talk in faculty meetings either, for

the same reason. That overwhelming whiteness is silencing. Not just because of its presence but because of its potential to say something offensive.

One of the first year writing directors suggested that I should talk more in our larger faculty meetings during my review conference. And I said, nah, I'm not going to. Because there was always a point in the faculty meetings when I would become hyper aware that I was the only one, that anybody could see it, but no one was doing anything to correct it.

Robin: Well, if you're being honest, across our history here we've been uncomfortable, I was uncomfortable the entire time. Except in those rare moments like, remember, Randi, when Jameta came?

I had a rage in me and I could not, I just could not tamp it down. I simply

can't see any coalition. You want me to ask a different question. You want me to say *coalition.*

Because I have a respect for and interest in and affection for the other women–

maybe that has to do with feminism. Maybe that's the coalition.

There're loud voices and those voices seem tethered to the status quo. Sorry to interrupt.

No, I'm done. Just sighing. And you know, I feel relatively okay, whatever the coalition

Jameta: When you're the only one asked to talk about Black people. That happens to me a lot, right? (...) So you want me to talk about Black people because I'm the person to talk about diversity.(...) [This] is a type of tokenizing inclusion to me. What if you had more than one voice that represents that diversity spectrum? Tokenizing often happens even in our committees. When we say we have our diversity person on the Search Committee, right? I just did that for the [Women's Leadership] Program, [but] I shouldn't be the only diversity person; there should be more than one. There should be more than two. So we have to think it through. What does that look like to change? To reframe (…) how we look at inclusion, not just say, hey, we have someone who's gay; we have someone who's bisexual. It's not that. It's representation in a very structural change type of way.

Jameta: I don't think coalition building is possible when you're the only one down to represent a group trying to build (…) and when people are there who represent that larger power dynamic. In this case, we're talking about white people. When they decide they're no longer willing to work on change, you can't do coalition building. You need to leave. This is not a healthy environment for you.

Visibility/invisibility

Settles, Buchanan, and Dotson, in their survey of faculty of color at a PWI, found that "Faculty of color, as an underrepresented group that lacks power within the academy, may be hypervisible due to their race and other markers that distinguish them from dominant group members (e.g., gender for women faculty of color). At the same time, their marginalized group status may render them invisible in terms of their personal identities, personhood, or work performance. As a result, achievements warranting recognition may be largely unnoticed, whereas potential mistakes and missteps, whether real or merely perceived by dominant group members, may be amplified and receive heightened scrutiny" (63).

In their interviews, faculty of color reflected on these feelings of hyper-visibility/invisibility. Faculty of color also drew attention to the hyper-visibility of white faculty, noting how the experiences and concerns of those faculty members were privileged above their own experiences and concerns.

Class and disability were commented on briefly as factors that may not be seen by others but that nonetheless informed participants' experiences.

I was an invisible woman. And I started separating myself from differences.

I lived with separation and suspicion. Pretense interrupted any vision of coalition.

He said are you coming on Friday and I said No, I feel I'm an imposter

We had a lot of tension, although he was very nice. That's a fragile coalition.

We have to deliberately create. I often have that experience of sending something out

and then being like that was stupid! But that won't grow seeds and cohorts of coalition

Kylie: I'm in a contract position, but (…) I don't really consider myself to be precarious. I don't really like the term "privilege". I think that "dominance" is a little more useful, like a person who has unearned dominance in a space, in academic spaces. I come from a background of having parents without degrees and living in poverty. And those things are invisible. Now, my students don't know that; my colleagues don't know that; it doesn't really shape the way that I'm perceived; it shapes what happens internally, but it doesn't really alter my privilege. I think it's important to not weaponize that version of my background as a way to gain credit for being here.

Nabila: While the program is trying to change its hiring practices, it's not equitable. With the emphasis on hiring faculty and recruiting students from underrepresented communities, hostile environments are further created. Racial or religious visibility should not be the decisive factor in hiring or recruiting. Being visibly white or non-white should not affect how good one is as a teacher. So for me, everyone should receive the same opportunity.

Disability

Pam (via email): I would like to be more open about my disability, which is chronic fatigue. Before the pandemic, I was extremely exhausted and ill all the time, but no one was teaching remotely, and I didn't know it was a possibility. After everybody was forced to teach remotely, my doctor recommended that I continue teaching this way. I started applying for disability exemptions and have been teaching remotely ever since. I would be unable to keep teaching if I couldn't get the disability exemption, so I am grateful for the program support that has allowed me to do this.

That said, we need to have program-wide conversations about access and disability. We have had a couple of professional development sessions on disability, and the Anti-racism Anti-oppression Committee considers ableism to be part of white supremacy and thus part of what we are trying to fight against, but we don't have program-wide discussions about disability. We need to have them, especially after what happened during the last search, when I was almost excluded from attending job talks because my chronic fatigue and complications from it prevent me from attending in-person events and the search committee chair did not want to provide a Zoom option. Wade, Kylie, Danika and others advocated for me, and a Zoom option was provided, but it was illustrative for me about the caste system that operates and allows some of us to be marginalized at any given moment.

I am not trying to say that my experience as a disabled person is in any way comparable to Robin's experience or anyone's, but I wonder if my disability and the marginalization that happened because of it can be used to build coalition. During the meeting where we voted on the candidate for that search, a slide was read which basically said that the candidates were put at a disadvantage because they were forced to accommodate people on Zoom. I experienced this as a microaggression, and it made me want to use my visceral experience of how devastating that felt.

I wondered about talking to colleagues of color and anybody else who has experienced microaggressions in the program, but I didn't know a good way to do that. And I don't mean to say that I didn't care about stopping microaggressions before that, it was just a similar feeling I imagine the Queen of England had when Buckingham Palace got bombed during WW2 and she said, "Now I can look the East End in the eye."

Obstacles to Coalition: Process, Fear, Honesty, and Discomfort

As a program, we have failed to recognize the grief and rage that gripped faculty of color after racist murders, such as the death of Michael Brown. We didn't collectively begin addressing structural racism until after the death of George Floyd (six years later). As a result, these faculty members continued to feel isolated in their suffering. In the round-robin interviews, the authors discussed how discomfort isolated them in some instances and in others, how discomfort might drive us to action.

Danika: I do feel fear that I will say something that is harmful, and I don't necessarily think that I shouldn't feel that fear. There are many things [someone in my position] could say that would be deeply harmful to my colleagues, and I don't want to go into that space. (...) That's kind of the balance: how do you have an awareness, a capacity for fear, without letting fear reduce you to timidity? And [without] it impacting your ability to be honest because you're so afraid that anything you say will be misconstrued. Part of it is keeping the fear focused on what harm might I cause, and not focused on things like fear of repercussions for myself.

Robin: *Intentional obliviousness.* It will interfere with coalition-building. It was not until George Floyd's murder that people seemed to get jolted in our department into having a department-wide response.

Randi: And I just want to point out there's a half a decade between Michael Brown and George Floyd.

Robin: But after Michael Brown's murder I had a rage in me. I could not, I just could not tamp it down. And I had space between when it happened during the summer, and when the semester started. But I just identified too much by that time.

(...) I couldn't do anything I usually did to process that anger, and then on the first day of class, a colleague asked me "how was your summer?" I lost it. It all just gushed.

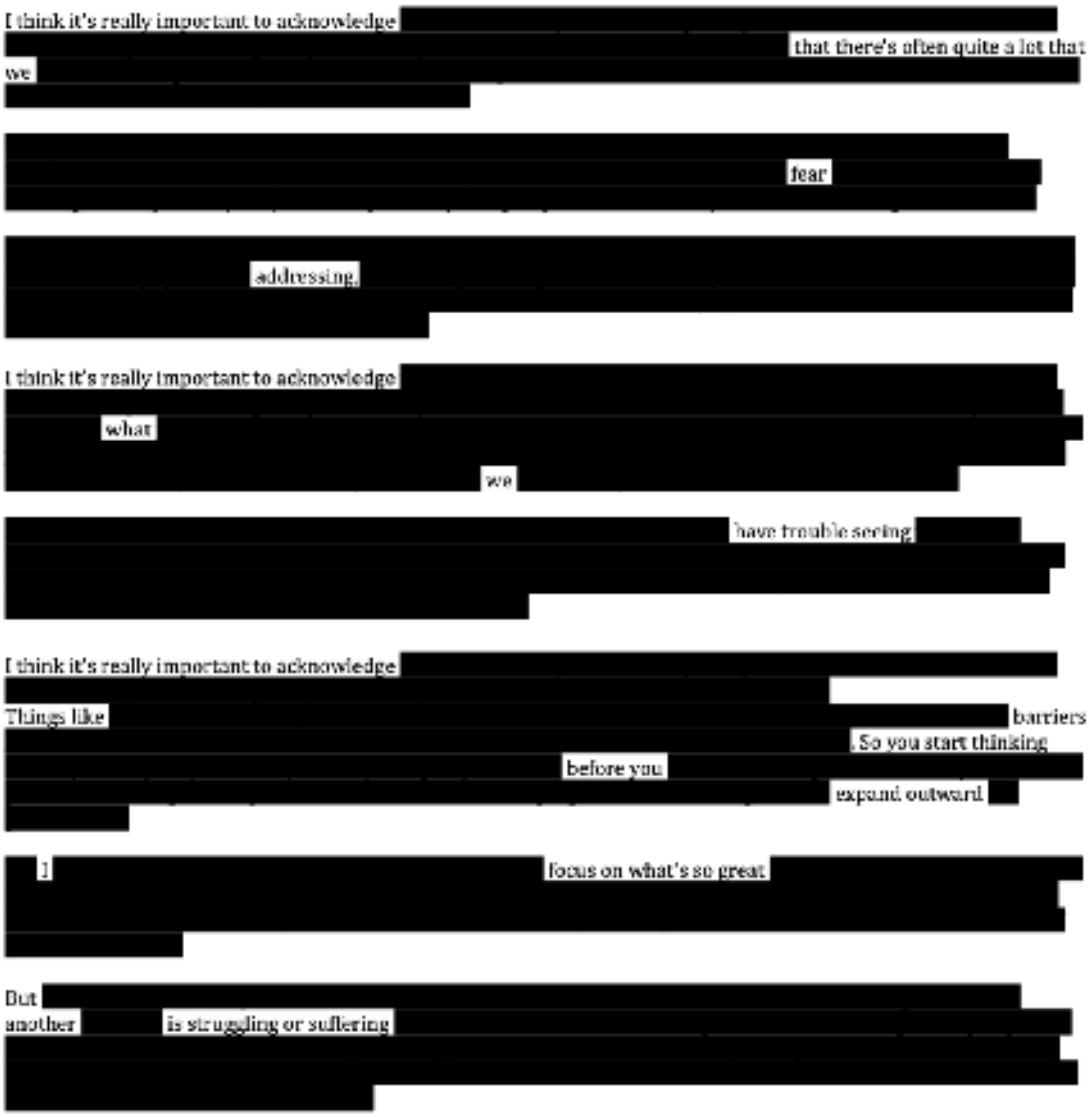
I don't know what I said but I've apologized profusely, and she's cool, but to NOT know? This is the thing that's missing in diversity and inclusion, right? 'Cause to not imagine me having had a tough time, in the wake of that event?

Wade: [Something that] we need to work against in order to be able to come together to make connections is a fear of reprisal. So you start thinking critically about your job security before you sign a petition, or before you attend a meeting.

When you're in an environment where there's a lot of loud voices and those loud voices seem occasionally tethered to the status quo, it could be really hard to speak out, even when you know there are other people in the room that are very close to where you're at. Sometimes I wonder why certain like-minded people are not speaking up. And they probably wonder why I'm not speaking up too.

And then I think, what am I gaining in staying quiet? What do I lose? And, more importantly, what do others lose? I've had many hallway conversations about things that probably should have been addressed in a meeting and those conversations really stay with me.

Interlude - Erasure poem from Jessica McCaughey interview with Wade Fletcher. Fig. 5.



Making Change

In a speech delivered to and critical of a feminist conference in 1979, author and equal rights activist Audre Lorde declared, “The master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house.” This sentiment was one that preoccupied our Writing Program faculty in their discussions with one another. Could we achieve change at the program level? At the university level? And, if so, how? What, or whose, tools would we need to do that work?

Randi: [W]hat could we do to foster social justice and equity?

Robin: You could form a body. A council composed of faculty with a demonstrated track record. And vetting might include a review of their syllabi: who did they include in their syllabi? What did they introduce when they had a chance? What are their affiliations with relevant communities on campus? What has prepared them to be a part of this Council? (...) And then really support that Council with resources. Give it what it needs to imagine what the world of the Writing Program experience could be. Which would mean traveling, maybe zooming, experimenting, just creating a paradigm shift, a new compositionally inclusive world.

Jmeta: When I think about the rise in white nationalism and targeting Black and Brown communities, every day is a day of fear. I would not be able to function if I thought about fear. It’s a constant state but I don’t allow that to rule my life. If I focus on that, I couldn’t focus on creating a better educational experience for my students and a better work experience for myself. And so I think part of what’s going to be so essential is that we recognize how we have to bring that unapologetic notion to the work that we do, not just in coalition building, but as professionals and as humans in this world, showing up with all the authentic human experience, and listening to one another. We might not have that same experience, but understanding the commonalities is key because while throughout the world, oppression looks different, (whether it’s class, gender, religion, ethnicity, etc.) oppression as a system is oppression. (...) Coalition building is hard, but it’s worth it when people are trying to change.

Kylie: I think that inclusion as practiced in PWIs is about getting people into the room, and you’ve [Jameta] said something interesting before that really relates to a broader rhetoric about inclusion, which is, ‘it’s not (...) about changing who’s at the table; It’s about building a totally new house with a new kind of table with a new shape of table, and then figuring out who’s at the table.’

Interlude: Nasreen Abbas on Community

Michael P. Farrell writes in Collaborative Circles: Friendship Dynamics and Creative Work that: “[Henry] James argues that without a community of peers, a writer develops with more difficulty, and he contrasts the early work of such loners with the work of those who develop within a group:

> The best things come … from the talents that are members of a group; every man [or woman] works better when [they have] companions working in the same line, and yielding to the stimulus of suggestion, comparison, emulation. Great things have of course been done by solitary workers, but they have usually been done with double the pains they would have cost if they have been produced in more genial circumstances.
>
> (James 1909, 31)”

However, this phenomenon has been little studied. What are the shared dynamics and values of such collaborations? And why do some flourish while others collapse?

Farrell’s questions offer an ideal framework for our process of round-robin interviews on coalition. The UWP has both newer and more established faculty but is marked by many sites of mutual support and collaboration: not only committee work, but also a number of reading groups, peer support social hours on Zoom, and other places where faculty can vent and share. These efforts prevent a feeling of isolation and encourage a sense of shared struggle. Caroline says it best: “I’m not good in large group settings. So, I think one of the easiest or best ways that I’ve been able to build coalition is in smaller groups on committees,” where a colleague feels more like a friend and therefore, nonthreatening. “I think our program, compared to other departments or programs, really excels at coalition building. We obviously have our weaker points, but I feel like all of us are on the same page about what we want from our classes and the program.”

So, whether other (tenured or more celebrated) faculty may look down on us, the UWP is welcoming. Caroline claims, moreover, that she “can give that spiel [to students regarding the UWP syllabus common load], and actually mean it because I do feel like we all have common goals.”

Another coalition builder is the exposure to diverse groups and attention to intersectionality

here. As Wade says, the "feminist ideology" he was exposed to in the 1990s "informs [his] sense of coalition building. And maybe in the earliest stages, we [feminists and other diverse communities] came together because we each had something to gain and could each help with something."

When I saw the call to participate in this piece for Peitho, I initially had cold feet as I, a Google Doc Dinosaur, had zero experience in writing anything other than literary essays. Thus, for me coalition building is an embracing of others within a community, which we are doing right now.

Outro

Coalition is not forged in the fastest burn. It isn't made within the confines of an academic year or between issues of a journal. As philosopher Isabelle Stengers has pleaded for the deliberative process of a slower science, we now remind ourselves that the kind of coalition we aspire to here requires many months, even years, of deliberation and consultation. Above all, it must include sincere movement toward trust and risk-taking: while the work may be slow, the needs are urgent and overdue. Thus, our mandate is to attend to a mutual ethic of care that draws from the myriad lessons of crip time, both for inclusion of disabled colleagues and for all of us (Samuels). We knew this process would not lead to a utopian place of work and learning. However, the shape of the ways we were able to work with each other was unexpected to some.

Entering into a co-authorship relationship does not necessarily mean *writing together*. We found that cross-referencing viewpoints and achieving multi-vocality is at times merely aspirational. Returning to Tressie McMillan Cottom as in the intro, we are not each equally empowered to speak and be heard. But writing together (in aspirational coalition) must always already involve *listening*. One part of the problem is structural: the knowledge economy of higher education pressures many to publish, to bow to neo-liberal audit culture. With more than a dozen authors here, no one actually stands to gain in publication metrics from this composition. Yet many of us may have carved out space for this effort because of CV-line generating impetuses. We set ourselves on an untenable path, in which the timeline for this project was not conducive to the careful, slow work we very much need(ed).

We do find that crafting a multimodal work like this has led us to unexpected realizations, new forms of transparency with each other, recognition of shared values, and even unwelcome surprises about the gulf between some of us. What we composed here helps us see that consensus is not an achievable or desirable goal; rather *listening* is the process we need. This multi-vocality was a necessary feature of this composition, both as we strived to truly hear each other and where we each come from, and as we now share these thoughts with others.

In a reflection written by Sandie above, she implies that our end goal, the object of our labor, ought to be *building community rather than striving for coalition.* What is structural change for,

if not community? This seems a promising way to frame our process, and echoes adrienne maree brown's sage advice in her "principles of emergent strategy" (41-42). Along with appreciation for small changes, brown emphasizes the value of trust and gradually building community. "There is a conversation in the room that only these people at this moment can have. Find it," brown advises (41-42). Through this project, we discovered a potential community around our diverse experiences and shared visions.

Many of brown's tenets, and the slow deliberation we meditate on, are antithetical to the operations of a modern university. Institutions function in ways that prioritize checking off demographic categories rather than engaging the slow, gradual process of investing in people and their wholeness. (In other words, there are more incentives to tokenize, as interviewees repeatedly noted above.) For similar reasons, institutions also reward intentional obliviousness to systemic inequities, what we have referred to as whiteliness, in channeling the theorizing of Shannon Sullivan. What this all amounts to is that higher education implicitly prevents coalition from growing. And where institutions claim to be forging community, they are more often throwing t-shirts into basketball arena crowds and wheeling popcorn machines onto the quadrangle.

So, it is incumbent on us to continue to work through the discomfort of finding we cannot have consensus. It is incumbent on us to take these generative conversations we had and turn them into realities. Whereas some authors spoke of the feminist tenets they see in the functioning of our writing program, others asked why *have we never heard "feminism" uttered in program meetings? Why do we not explicitly identify as an intersectional feminist program and make our shared values apparent, which would facilitate us holding ourselves accountable to such aspirations?* This process has revealed invisibilities, erasures, structural and interpersonal conflicts and congruences; it has also shown many shared values that took shape under our varied circumstances. We find hope in the continuation of the conversation and seek both optimism and healthy skepticism in the realization of those values.

No act in self-interest; rejection of convenience.

I anticipate the hostility that comes from age-old hierarchist coalition.

People began to think about decentering the power structure.

Where could we find a different structure, an anarchist coalition?

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A Feminist Dwelling in Academic Space

Lydia McDermott, Whitman College

Abstract: Through a series of four personal narratives, I illustrate my own coming to consciousness of the interconnectedness of racism, neo/coloniality, and ableism in academic spaces and suggest that in order to truly build feminist "dwellings" (Ahmed), we must pursue a radical coalitional accessibility, the foundation of which is care-taking. As we come out of Covid-19 shutdowns and online/hybrid education, we should consider what we have learned about accessibility and exclusion and hesitate before returning "back to normal."

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Prologue

The title of this piece is a play on the word "dwelling," and an honest statement describing this writing: I am a feminist dwelling on and in academic space. A dwelling as a noun can be a temporary or permanent shelter in which to dwell. To dwell can be to live and it can be to ruminate and focus on a particular aspect of that living. Sara Ahmed calls her book, *Living a Feminist Life,* a built dwelling, and throughout the book as well as her blog from which it sprung, *feminist killjoys,* she plays with variations on this word and the concepts of building and home. She writes, "Writing the book has been like: trying to build a feminist shelter. I often think of books as houses. They are built out of stuff. They create room for us to dwell" (*feminist killjoys* para. 2). I echo her sentiment, and in general have found myself as a woman and as a feminist looking to the written word for places to shelter, whether I am lost in someone else's words or in my own. Perhaps you can relate to this.

This is a collection of individual stories; stories that are my own struggles to find dwelling-places in feminism, in rhetoric and composition, and in academia. As Aja Martinez says in her book, *Counterstory,*

> I believe that we've *all* been telling stories *all* along, but some stories are elevated to the
>
> status of theory, scholarship, and literature, while, too often, minoritized perspectives

are

relegated to marginalized or overlooked ‘cultural rhetorics’ methods or genres. (Martinez 1-2)

Stories are and always have been a fundamental part of rhetoric and of theorizing rhetoric. As a white woman, I do not want to claim that this is a counterstory as Martinez describes it, but it is a self-exploration that is not in the normative mode of argument that academia tends to value. It is a dwelling.

I’ll start where I currently dwell in multiple senses.

Story 1

The ground on which my house sits, on which my institution rests, on which my livelihood depends is the ancestral, traditional, and contemporary homeland and gathering place of the Cayuse, Walla Walla, Umatilla, Nez Perce, Palouse and Yakima nations. In 1855, a treaty council was held by U.S. government representatives, and against tribal arguments and interests, tribal leaders were coerced into signing treaties that lost them guaranteed access to 6.4 million acres of land. The Walla Walla, Umatilla, and Cayuse nations “secured a reservation of 510, 000 acres in northeastern Oregon,” just south of where I am now located (Trafzer). This acreage was later surveyed as only 245,000 acres by the U.S. government, leading to continued land debates.

Over time the Umatilla reservation became the homeland of several families from diverse

tribes. The Walla Walla Council and the treaty that created the reservation have

significant implications today for the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian

Reservation [CTUIR], guaranteeing the tribe’s legal status and its

government-to-government relationship with the United States. (Trafzer)

What I have just written can be read as a “land acknowledgement,” which it is, but it is also a relationship, another dwelling. I want to recognize this ongoing relationship that several tribes on and off the CTUIR have to this land and the surrounding area, because so many land acknowledgements seem to relegate the relational aspect of the land to the past. The 1855 treaty does not exist as a historical artifact, but as a living treaty. My college and my home stand on this land.

My college is named after the missionaries that came to this region to convert the people already living here, but instead of enlightenment, they brought more white settlers on the Oregon Trail and they brought disease, dis-ease.

I am feeling dis-ease.

The statue in honor of Marcus Whitman, our college's namesake, greets students as they come onto campus from downtown Walla Walla. Periodically some student group "defaces" the statue in an act of protest, and yet it stands.

Fig. 1. Patia, Katilyn. Contributed Photograph of Marcus Whitman Statue "defaced," in student newspaper, *Whitman Wire.* Bronze statue of a presumably white man in frontier clothing and coon cap hat, standing on a rock, bags in left hand, and a large book under the right arm. This hand and book have been spray painted bright red. Beneath the statue is a pedestal with a quotation inscribed, which normally reads, "'My plans require time and distance,' Marcus Whitman." The word "distance" has been crossed out with red spray paint and in large block letters "GENOCIDE" has been written beneath so that the quote now reads, "My plans require time and GENOCIDE."

Stands.

These grounds are not easy to navigate for anyone with mobility impairments, especially the administrative building, the oldest building on campus and the most iconic, which, like many other such buildings on many other such campuses, is flanked by steep stairs to enter the main entrance (Dolmage), unless you go around to the back and enter through a ramp leading to the ground floor. The upper administration is on the top floor.

Fig. 2. Photograph by C.C. Pierce, Memorial Hall, circa 1907, Whitman College. The black and white photograph centers an academic building of three stories made of stone and brick, with a five-story tall clock tower, beneath which is the arched entrance flanked by steep stairs in a pyramidal shape.

We who run writing centers are fond of marking our position in the margins of academia. We are hybrid people, part teachers, part administrators, part scholars. As far as prestige in academia goes (as far as that can go), yes, we tend not to be taken as seriously as some of our loftier literary counterparts. But let's be real. We have jobs in academia. We have advanced degrees. The majority of us are white. It is true that some of us hold contingent or staff positions that do not come with the security of tenure, which is a way that neoliberal higher education exploits us (Valentine), but how many people in the world have the kind of job security offered by tenure? And what are our centers on the margins doing, ultimately? I began my trajectory in Rhetoric and Composition by teaching an activity I love because of a desire to spread this love of writing like an evangelist, like a missionary, like a colonizer; we writing center directors carry forth this mission.

This is an uncomfortable statement and one I am trying to come to terms with, to hold both my position as writing "missionary" and as practitioner of liberatory education in tension together. I sit in dis-ease, as Asao Inoue asked us in his 2019 CCCC address; can those of us who are white just sit with discomfort for a while (Inoue)? Being uncomfortable is radically different from being unsafe. Considering again the historical and contemporary exploitation of the land on which I carry out my "mission," being uncomfortable is warranted. What can it mean for me to hold these two contradictory positions in tension and can I persist within this tension, as a feminist, and as a proponent of racial and disability justice? Sara Ahmed writes, "If we are not exterior to the problem under investigation, we too are the problem under investigation" (94). And so I find myself under investigation.

In a printed symposium, Cody Jackson and Christina Cedillo claim, "Everyone in our discipline performs complicity with/in its structures in some way. Some of us do so to gain access to professional spaces. With that access, we conspire to enact change, a form of resistance to the damage wreaked by policies decided for us without us" (109). I want to conspire in this way. To be honest, I did not enter our discipline with resistance in mind. I entered whole-heartedly and naively as a writing evangelist. I spent my whole life seeking solace from a painful material reality in words on a page. My reality growing up was extremely unstable financially and emotionally; but when there was no money, when I did not feel secure in my home, there were books, and I could feel secure in the imaginary dwellings there. Entering academia as a white feminist with a still invisible disability, I did not yet realize the harm academia, our discipline, and my teaching could inflict, even on me. In the slow process of realization, consciousness- raising, and the gradual visibility of my disability, in my PhD program and then as a faculty member, I have come to question the structures within which I am embedded and by which I receive so much advantage in our society. I have come to feel less safe in academia the further in I get.

Story 2

A few years ago, I took a small group of students to Shanghai for a short-term course on teaching English in China (TESOL China). I had this course approved in part because of its potential appeal to students who might later participate in a program called "Whitman in China," which ships recent graduates (commodities) to China to teach English in universities short-term. In the actual course, we focused on the neocolonial forces that allow such an exchange of intellectual resources to occur, that allow recently graduated students without expertise in teaching a language to travel abroad and widen their "horizons." It is a "great opportunity" for these recent grads, and many are very happy and stay on in China. But there are many highly educated and skilled teachers of English in China already. So why recruit these white American, British, Australian grads (Lan 2021)? On the one hand, they are cheap short-term solutions, and as such they themselves are being exploited by their institutions. On the other hand, there is a persistent and pernicious preference for "native" *white* English speakers as teachers, despite the general linguistic awareness that there are global Englishes. Pause to consider the potential irony of the phrase "native English speaker." Louise Erdrich captures this irony in her 2000 personal essay "Two Languages in Mind, but Just One in my Heart":

> [English] is, after all, the language stuffed into my mother's ancestors' mouths. English is the reason she didn't speak her native language and the reason I can barely limp along in mine. English is an all-devouring language that has moved across North America like the fabulous plagues of locusts that darkened the sky and devoured even the handles of rakes and hoes. Yet the omnivorous nature of a colonial language is a writer's gift. (Erdrich para. 7)

I continue to wrestle with this gift. How can I love the freedom I perceive writing and reading in English to have given me and not be equally omnivorous?

Fig. 3. Photo by author. A group of children and teachers lined up for an assembly in a school courtyard. Above the entrance is a multi-colored slogan that reads, "One never lose anything by politeness." My students volunteered briefly at this school, leading English learning games with huge classes of children. This particular school prides itself on their English instruction, and their promotional materials feature white international English teachers who also were likely short-term volunteers.

One evening, a student came to my room crying. She told me she had believed that education was the path to justice and equity, and I had ruined that myth for her. I am sorry. I'm still digging through the rubble of this myth in my own life. Education has never been a path to justice and equity, except by serendipitous accident, especially higher education (Spring; Loewen; and Dolmage). Education has been a system for dominating and winnowing; like the chaff wheat that is burned every year in this area, those deemed too broken to be either efficient workers or leisurely thinkers are slowly burned away while asked to jump through a series of flaming hoops we call standards. We are burning our students. [1]

The late bell hooks ended her small treatise on feminism, *Feminism is for Everybody,* with these words: "Feminist politics aims to end domination to free us to be who we are—to live lives where we love justice, where we can live in peace. Feminism is for everybody" (hooks 118). What bell hooks describes is what I used to look for in books: freedom to be who I am, but without the feminist politics that seeks to end domination, that freedom is individual and fleeting.

1 Though scholars in our field, in particular scholars of color, such as the authors of "This Ain't Another Statement! This is a DEMAND for Black Linguistic Justice!," have been working on antiracist pedagogy and linguistic justice for quite some time, as they point out, very little has changed at our institutions and in our field more broadly. (April Baker-Bell, Bonnie J. Williams-Farrier, Davena Jackson, Lamar Johnson, Carmen Kynard, and Teaira McMurty.)

Story 3

During an online training of new instructors in the year of online instruction (2020-2021), in which we discussed accessibility in these new online formats and the stresses students were facing that may create new kinds of accommodations in their learning, one new instructor expressed what others felt: that students seemed to be demanding more and more accommodations. How do we know which ones to take seriously? Aren't they just taking advantage of the system and our current circumstances? I jumped in before our disability services coordinator had to explain accommodations yet again to inflexible faculty. I responded that we should take our students at their word and that we cannot legally deny accommodations to any student.

In a training for teachers in our first year program just the other day, a colleague asked if anyone else had noticed that since the pandemic, students have become dependent on rubrics. Before others chimed in, I acknowledged the prevalence of rubrics in student lives, but pointed out that it has always been good practice to clearly share our evaluation criteria. Rubrics are not the only way to do this, but they may be the most familiar to our students. And then I added that I don't like to use the word "dependent," because it implies that there is something wrong with being dependent on assistance and in reality, we are all dependent on assistance in various ways. She disengaged for the rest of the session.

Meg Peters, in her 2022 piece in *Disability Studies Quarterly,* argues for an orientation in academia toward both Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (CSP). She discusses the institutional shifts during the COVID shutdown in response to accommodations and accessibility. To bolster her insight based on her individual positioning in her institution, she cites a tweet from Disability Rhetoric scholar, Jay Dolmage:

> There is a concept in critical race theory called "Interest Convergence" (access: Derek Bell). Basically, it means conditions for the minority will only improve if the changes can be framed as helping the majority. We have a perfect example of how this is happening now. (qtd. in Peters n.p.)

Peters elaborates on Dolmage's observation, saying, "This new conversation and these new policies, around late assignments, final exams, and online classes were completely impossible until they were seen as helpful to the majority, not the disabled minority" (Peters n.p.). I want to resist the current knee-jerk impulse expressed by my colleague to "go back to normal." Normal is not a place we want to go back to. Normal is what we need to dismantle. A feminist dwelling must

be in tension with everything that has been normal in education. We may be “dwelling” here, but only in order to keep moving, continue feminist movement.

If feminism is for everybody, as hooks suggests, then our teaching, our writing, and our institutions need radical change, because they are currently and traditionally set up to exclude most people. We need to dwell and dismantle; to dwell on our lands and institutions, their histories, their peoples, and their violences:

> To build feminist dwellings, we need to dismantle what has already been assembled; we need to ask what it is we are against, what it is we are for, knowing full well that this *we* is not a foundation but what we are working toward. (Ahmed 2)

A feminist dwelling is dynamic and permeable; a feminist dwelling does not have a solid foundation so that it can move. What are we sheltering against? What are we sheltering for? Our “we” must consistently be working toward its we-ness. “We” is an ever-changing intersectional coalition. We cannot remain in the same abodes in the same relationships and expect feminist movement. In order to really act “for” racial, gender, sexual, linguistic, disability and any other justice, we need to “dismantle” the neocolonial assumption that the chosen few have earned their leisure. We need to resist the neoliberal emphasis on individual productivity at the expense of wellness, community, and our land. We must pursue a radical coalitional accessibility, the foundation of which is care-taking.

Hubrig and Osorio challenge us to never settle (yet another dwelling metaphor) for mere reform: “Disability justice is not about mere reform but is invested in dismantling and rebuilding exclusionary institutions, and as such, disability justice may always exist in tension with academic institutions” (91). So, I maintain the tension in my position now as I work at dismantling the house I once entered so enthusiastically.

Like many others, my journey through COVID-19 has been harrowing, and also like many others, I have reexamined my priorities in light of the fragility of life. I want to tell you this next story not because it is unusual, but because it very much is not, and though the difficulties of my situation were heightened by the pandemic, stories like this predate the tsunami that has been the COVID pandemic. I also tell you this story because I think it illustrates why we cannot “go back to normal,” and why we must take care in our dwellings.

Story 4

In fall of 2019, my mother-in-law's dementia had started to progress very quickly. After a panicked night spent on our couch sure that there were men coming to kill her, we moved her in with us to keep her safe. She started wandering away soon after. By the time that COVID had finally become a serious concern in the US, and we were all being sent home from classrooms and workplaces, she was very confused. Explaining the need for face masks to her was a sometimes hourly ordeal. Our three children were also home, each on the brink of an important life transition that would be missed: my eldest about to graduate high school, my middle about to graduate middle school, and my youngest about to graduate from elementary school. My eldest lost his bedroom to his grandmother and after his "graduation," took a gap year where he lived in an apartment with friends while working remotely.

Remotely should be the word of 2020. We worked remotely, we schooled remotely, we played games remotely, we existed remotely, except for where we didn't. Remote from the rest of the world, families were stacked on top of each other in isolation from others and extreme proximity to each other. For many of us in academia, this stacking was an entirely new phenomenon, but for many many others in our country, not to mention outside our country, it was merely an amplification of a persistent living accommodation.

I took up running and ran my first half-marathon in 2021. I was running from the intimacy and claustrophobia of home to someplace in some ways more remote, remote from people on winding country roads, but in much closer relationship to my surroundings. Running by the mountains alone, I felt grounded. Perhaps my mother-in-law was also trying to escape our proximity, or she was trying to walk home to Ohio from Washington. We had to call the police to find her on three different occasions. One of these occasions was after we had moved her into assisted living, where we could only talk to her through a glass window on a smart phone she did not know how to use. After her escape, they could no longer care for her and she moved back in with us.

Dorothy Campbell and her son, Charlie Campbell, talk through a window with her husband, Gene Campbell, at the Life Care Center outside Seattle. David Ryder / Reuters

Fig. 4. Photograph by David Ryder of Dorothy Campbell and her son, Charlie Campbell, attempting to talk via cell phone through a window with husband, Gene Campbell, at the Life Care Center outside Seattle. A tall middle aged man stands next to a hunched elderly woman. He holds a red cell phone to a window with mini-blinds that obstruct any view of the person on the other side of the window.

While teaching remotely, helping my children learn remotely, running the writing center remotely (a completely new modality for our center), I became the primary caregiver for my mother-in-law. This would not have been possible if not for the pandemic. If you do not know what this care-giving means, I will give some highlights. If you do know what this means, feel free to skip a paragraph. Caring for someone with fronto-temporal dementia means learning a new kind of sign language, because they lose the ability to use their words in meaningful ways early in the progress of the disease. So in a way I was re-learning to teach rhetoric at a really fundamental level, using my body and tone to make sure we were understanding each other. But eventually, even these gestures stop working, and the body itself begins to lose track of the brain. This meant sometimes my mother-in-law threw things at me and sometimes she patted me on the head and said, “I love you.” This meant that sometimes when her own son walked into the room she flinched at some past wound inflicted by some past man or men. This meant cooking for her, washing for her, trimming her hair and nails, hiding medicine from her, installing sliding bolts on the doors of the house. This meant cleaning her bedroom of urine and feces every morning. This meant showering a woman 9 inches taller than me and hoping she would not fall, which she finally did on the day she moved to the only memory care facility in our town that could handle “wandering” and takes Medicaid.

I am not writing about this as a tangent. I am writing about this because though COVID brought these kinds of caretaking into high-definition focus, caretaking has always been a separate full-time job for many of us, and our institutions are not designed to facilitate that. For many of us in feminized and marginalized positions, caretaking has also always been a part of our teaching and advising. In many ways I am grateful that my mother-in-law's decline happened during the initial shutdown in our state because it meant I was home. My partner's job meant staying in front of his computer all day, but I had the flexibility to "watch" her while working.

I would not have that now, since our institution has reasserted its commitment to the normal "in-person" learning, despite the fact that in many ways online teaching was better for me at times and I've had at least two students with disabilities who privately have requested a kind of hybrid-online experience because of the physical and emotional difficulty of getting to class. We as members of academia were not trained to think this way. "Educators are not taught to imagine that their students have lives and experiences outside of their classrooms. Even when teaching feminist or disability-related subjects, educators are taught to expect 'academic rigour' in their classrooms, without regard for how that rigour might involve class, race, or ability privilege" (Peters). We need to take care of each other and of our students.

Academia does not value care-giving.

Academia does not take care.

Moral of the Stories

I tell my writing center tutors this anecdote a lot. Once a tutor-in-training said they thought that the center's ultimate goal would be to no longer exist because it would no longer be needed. They actually said, "no longer be a crutch." That particular metaphor is hopefully obviously ableist, but the premise, which is common, is too. To call a mode of learning "a crutch" is to simultaneously devalue the lives of folks with mobility impairments and to reify the notion that the normal is crutch free. What is it that is inherently bad about "needing" feedback on writing, "needing" tutoring or help, needing translation, needing caregiving? In the realm of academia, it is a sign of the Other, the one who should not have scaled the Ivory Tower and may be slipping as we speak. That is not only ableist but deeply neocolonial.

Furthermore "accommodations" as a concept does the same thing as "crutch": To say "accommodation for learning" emphasizes a "normal" or commonplace type of learning from which the accommodation is deviating. The missing premise is that there is some normal, or best, way to learn and that it is solely located in an individual's efforts and innate capability. This commonplace insists on a model of productivity that relies on individual responsibility and that upholds a neoliberal value system, which is an outgrowth and continuation of neo/coloniality.

I am not suggesting that professors refuse to grant accommodations or that students who have a right to accommodations should not demand them! On the contrary, I'm suggesting that the fact that we need to grant accommodations at all should not highlight a deficit in any individual, but a deficit in an institution and in a pedagogy that failed to imagine them in the first place. It highlights a need to dismantle and move the dwelling.

As I work to dismantle this house, to dwell differently, I work against certain commonplaces in academia and in our field. The term common-place is rooted literally in a common place, common ground, as metaphor. I've discussed the ground I stand on at my institution, which is anything but common. What is the ground you read this on? Is it common? A rhetorical commonplace is a seeming truth taken for granted by a certain group of people, and on which many arguments can rest. When we say common sense, we are getting at the essence of this principle. But is sense ever common? Or is it contingent and based on our position in the world and in time? So commonplaces are also just tacitly agreed-upon assumptions by those with the power to frame discourse in that time and place. Commonplaces are useful in persuasion and argumentation, because you don't have to waste time proving and explaining them. But precisely because of this quality, as critical thinkers, we need to uncover and examine them. If we are going to really dwell as feminists, we need to dismantle the metaphorical towers that exist in our languaging too.

Perhaps these commandments resonate with you: You should not attend your doctoral program at the same institution where you attended your master's program, let alone your bachelor's (coming to graduate school with a family does not exempt you); you should be ready to move wherever the job takes you; you should be willing to work 60 hour weeks for your modest salary for love of the students or for love of the research; students should learn to stand on their own two feet; students should become better writers through the writing center and the writing program to the point that they may no longer need to come to the center; tutors should ask questions and not provide answers.

I could go on listing commonplaces that serve as tacit commandments in academia and in our field. The underlying theme in all of these is a neoliberal insistence on self-sufficiency that excludes the majority of people from our grounds. Self-sufficiency is a myth and it does not honor larger kinship systems, cultural values of caretaking, or disability as a lived experience of interdependence (Bost; Foss).

To live lives in peace and to end domination, as bell hooks calls us to, and to build our feminist dwellings, as Sara Ahmed imagines, we need to consistently spend time dwelling, moving, dismantling, and dwelling again. We need to take care as we do so. We need accessibility in the broadest sense, a sense that values care-taking and that demolishes practices and beliefs that harm others. Hubrig and Osorio offer a definition of the kind of access we should strive toward: "We believe that access is dynamic. Access is relational. Access is intersectional. Access is polit-

ical. In the words of disabled women of color Mia Mingus, Alice Wong, and Sandy Ho, 'access is love'" (88). With this dwelling, I will move on and say, "I love you."

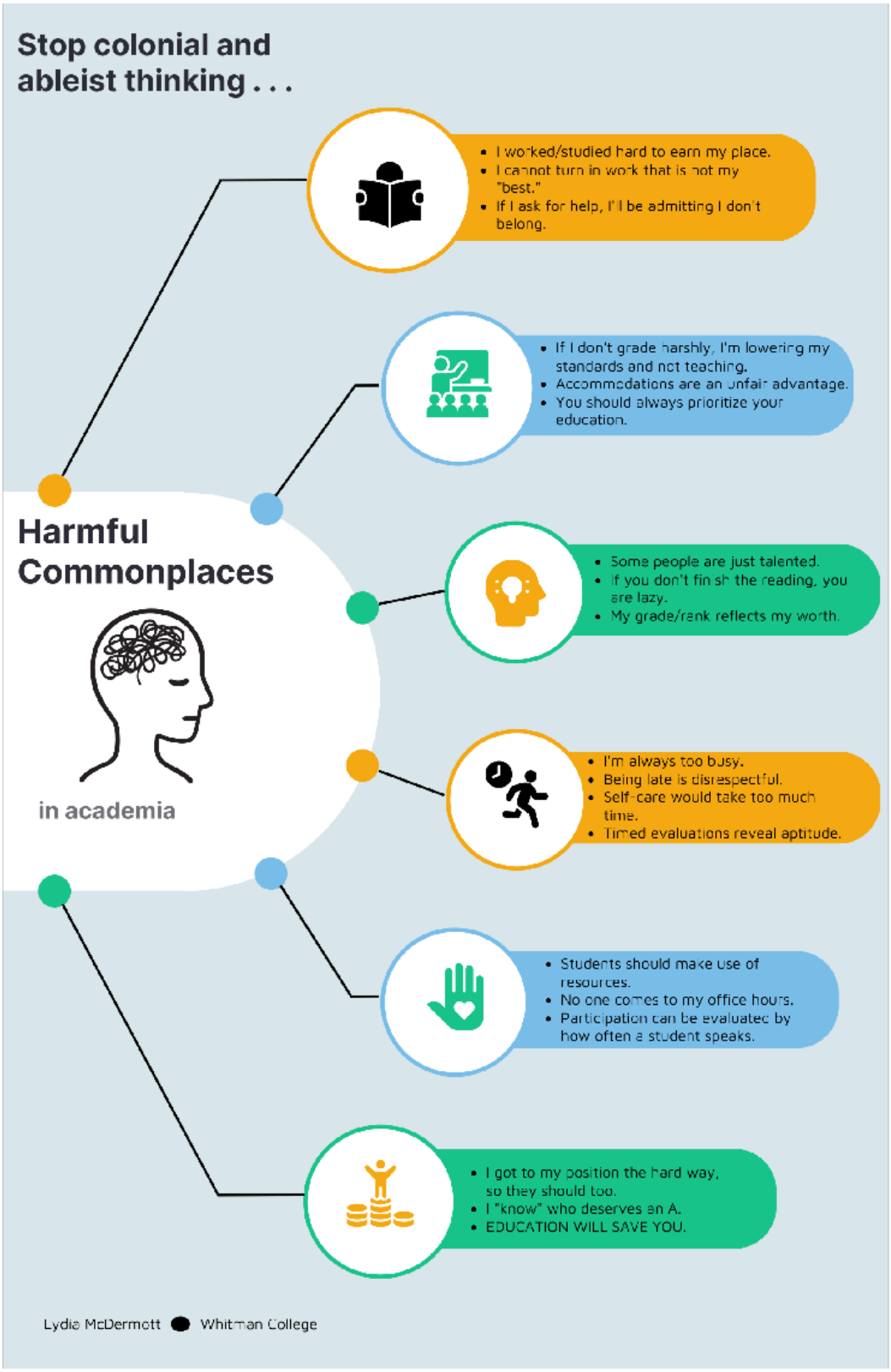

Fig. 5. "Harmful Commonplaces in Academia," infographic by author, OCR optimized. This infographic presents commonplaces overheard in academia that govern student and faculty perceptions and actions. The commonplaces are some of many and are meant to represent the range of colonial and ableist ideas floating through our workplaces and life-places. There are certainly many more than are listed here.

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More Than Empathy: Transnational Feminist Mentoring Practices for Solidarity Building

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Abstract: Drawing on existing research on feminist mentoring in academia, this paper uses personal reflections on our mentoring relationships with one another to explore the challenges and possibilities of transnational feminist mentoring as a solidarity-building praxis. Through these reflections, we conclude that in order to develop a transnational feminist solidarity, we need more than empathy. Instead, transnational feminist relationship-building needs to start with respect and humility built on self-critique, recognition of changing intersectionalities, and consequential vulnerability. As mentors and mentees engage the processes of learning and unlearning, they also must be in solidarity to challenge gatekeepers, even as they become them.

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Elizabethada Wright does work on the rhetoric of memorial place as well as on nineteenth-century women's rhetoric. With all her work focusing on how marginalized people find voice in societies that try to silence them, most recently she has been examining the influence of French Catholic women religious (commonly known as nuns) on writing pedagogy in the United States. Dr. Wright's work outside the academy has similar goals: she has been an activist in many areas of social justice, co-hosted and co-produced a radio show on not-for-profit companies, and owned a fair trade company, Fa La Lo.

We are the victims of our history and our present. They place too many obstacles in the Way of Love. And we cannot enjoy even our differences in peace.

–Ama Ata Aido, *Our Sister Killjoy*

Introduction

Transnational feminist scholars like Uma Narayana, Chandra Mohanty, and M. Jacqui Alexander show the importance of building transnational coalitions via scholarship, research, and relationships. In addition, these scholars are alert to the colonizing potential of academic research, in which scholars are compelled to search for an area to research, which they then pin down and theorize. When that chosen "area" includes sets of knowledge and experiences outside of those of the privileged scholars, the effects, these feminist scholars argue, are too often colonization rather than collaboration.

While we might imagine scholars from different positionalities as equivalent, the ideal of equal exchange of scholarship has long been troubled by the realities of power and inequity across national borders. For example, just as Black feminist scholars in the US like bell hooks have said that they are "made" black, so do transnational scholars like M. Jacqui Alexander come to "know" that they are brown after coming to the US. This experience of racialization, as much as any other research product, is part of what is produced and exchanged in transnational work . And the effects are compounded in the context of other interlocking power differentials, such as those of gender, sexuality, religion and dis/ability. These effects, then, have consequences for transnational feminist scholarship and for the possibilities of feminist solidarity and coalition-building across differences.

Drawing on existing feminist mentoring research (Eble & Gaillet; Ribero & Arellano; Mullings & Mukherjee; Tassoni), this article emerges from our own experiences of the coalition in mentoring–instances in which we shared several eureka moments of learning and unlearning that illuminated the following questions:

1. How can mentors and mentees bring their intersectional selves into their relationships?

2. How can we understand mentor and mentee relationships as relational sites of solidarity?

3. How can intersectional differences between mentors and mentees be negotiated for social justice purposes?

To explore these questions, the three of us–Asmi, Amy and Liz–first provide definitional

clarity regarding transnational mentorship, before we meditate on our roles as mentor, mentee, collaborator, student, and scholar, as they have transformed in different mentoring moments. Through these meditations, we conclude that in order to develop a transnational feminist solidarity, we need more than empathy. While relationship-building is crucial to our feminist praxis, we center on the insight that feminists in majority positions may need to unlearn the idea that they could ever truly empathize with women of marginalized positionalities, because they fight very different battles with the patriarchy.

Instead, all parties might instead benefit from focusing on their own reflective practices as a resource for solidarity building. For us, transnational mentorship is a relationship developed/fostered between and amongst differing, transnational scholars (for us, mentor and mentee). Like Chandra Talpade Mohanty, we define transnational in wider terms by going beyond the locational connotation and referring to the geopolitical and cultural positionality–all of which are important for production of knowledge (Erikson; Mohanty).

The meditation on intersectional complexities produced by our locational experiences that also emphasize geopolitical and cultural positionality remind us that power is not always derived from location of origin–though often that location of origin is implicated in power dynamics. Therefore, such mentoring involves recognition of the fluidity of power dynamics. The impetus for reflective unlearning in relation to mentorship is in recognition of the existing power differentials and the possibilities for violence and discrimination that mentoring may enable. Given the histories of various forms of transnational violence, we urge that differences are not to be "ironed out." They must be discussed, so that trust may be built. Our conversations have led us towards a revised notion of rhetorical empathy, similar to that articulated by Lisa Blankenship, as a potential opening for transnational feminist mentoring praxis.

Blankenship's concept of rhetorical empathy responds to critiques of empathy, such as our own, that have been leveraged in the wake of postmodernism. In particular, Blankenship responds to postmodernism's critiques of the ways power can be seen to complicate (and even confound) the possibilities of empathy across differences. In lieu of empathy as traditionally conceived in Western thought, Blankenship defines four characteristics of *rhetorical empathy*, which we consider here in the context of transnational feminist mentoring praxis:

- Yielding to an Other by sharing and listening to personal stories
- Considering motives behind speech acts and actions
- Engaging in reflection and self-critique
- Addressing difference, power, and embodiment (20)

In contrast to Aristotelian conceptions of empathy in relation to persuasion, which assume the rhetor's ability to understand and influence another, rhetorical empathy is not about accessing the experience of an Other for persuasion but about changing the *speaker* through listening, invoking a response in ourselves that may then be reciprocally invoked in our interlocutor. It is a relational interaction that is grounded in vulnerability.

While we think of rhetorical empathy as a resource for both mentors and mentees, it comes through most forcefully for us in the practices of those in positions of relative power, whether by virtue of professional position (of mentor), geographical origins that are related to global influence, and/or other vectors of relative power and privilege. In a transnational feminist mentoring practice, those with relative power are particularly called to practice rhetorical empathy–yielding, considering motives, engaging in reflection and self-critique, and addressing the salience of difference, power and embodiment in their relations–in order to build solidarity and coalition. For example, mentors in and from power positions in the US might begin by recognizing the cultural specificity of their own location and experiences, disrupting their ostensive normativity in the context of "internationalizing" rhetoric and composition research (Donahue).

In the following, we provide examples of such reflection and self-critique that have enabled us to build a community of shared interests, examples of how explorations of our biases have resulted in collaborative projects that investigate the situations that perpetuate bias. In so doing, we reflect on our relationships with one another and respond to each other's reflections. These ruminations work to surface shared insights, points of tension, and other learnings in the context of our own transnational feminist mentoring experiences.

Ultimately, our narratives allow us to respond to our initial three questions by observing that we must *be aware* of our intersectional selves as well as the ways in which they change in and through our relationships. With such a recognition, we must be in solidarity even as our intersectionalities change. Such solidarity and recognition allow us to work better toward social justice, even as we ourselves take on the role of gatekeepers in the hierarchically structured academic system (Corrigan and Vatz). We must use the recognitions of our positionalities to contest the structural inequity of academia and work toward that social justice.

Our specific context was one in which the mentee experienced a power differential as a brown graduate student from Nepal relative to white faculty mentors in the US. By providing examples of the "messiness" in mentorships, we provide some praxis to make it possible that mentorships developed between scholars sharing different intersectional identities can be leveraged for building solidarity. Mentors and mentees can learn from and be changed by each other when they engage in reflection and honest dialogue, humility, and support.

Reflections: Storying Transnational Feminist Mentorship

The three authors of this text have come together through their shared relationships. At the center of this network of relationships is Asmita, a graduate student of Nepali origin who has worked for the past three years in mentoring relationships with both Liz and Amy, white women faculty in or from the upper midwest. Asmita invited the three of us to come together to reflect on our experiences of feminist mentorship across transnational differences to discover what might be learned from our experiences. Asmita wanted to build on the work of Ana Milena Ribero and Sonia C. Arellano who explore how Latinx mentors and mentees are able to utilize culturally specific mentoring approaches. She wanted to explore how the three of us from different backgrounds find means to mentor–particularly following on Beverley Mullings and Sanjukta Mukherjee, how we can do so within academia's racist and xenophobic environments.

To begin this process, each author individually wrote a reflection on their mentoring relationships with one another. Reading through the reflections of the other authors, we each then composed a second reflection in response. Together, this set of reflections and responses allows us to explore some of the intersections and differences in our experiences.

Asmi: My encounter with Liz and Amy is ushered and shaped by my desire for what I want to term as multiple mentorships (Rockquemore). For me, multiple mentorships is the networking and relationship I earned and developed to fight institutional racism I encountered after my arrival in the US as an international student and to excel in an academic market where excellence is determined by academic labor.

Liz welcomed me as an international student at the University of Minnesota Duluth, an institution that was already fraught by and struggling to get rid of racialized hierarchy in diverse ways. For example, getting to hear remarks such as, "You must be very proud to be here," as I introduced myself to my colleagues, classmates and professors was quotidian for almost the first semester, until I stopped responding to it with a simple, "Oh yes, my parents are really proud of me." Nonetheless being placed in classes to get rid of my accent and to perform everyday English, stripping away from my right to be graduate instructor, and having professors ask me to visit the writing center every time I stumble with grammatical errors were some of my everyday experiences, which (as I reflect now) represent the neoliberal ethos of the institution that I arrived on. In the first week of my arrival, during the time when I was still making sense of what I now come to know as everyday racism, I got an email saying that I cannot be a TA because I failed the English Test. I did not respond to the email; Liz did. Liz replied that Asmita will work as RA for me. Her intervention as a white woman working as a WPA at that time was a powerful and much needed intervention. Reflecting after almost four years, I am wondering if that intervention is to be interpreted as a "rescue effort"–an action of a person from a powerful positionality assuming their benevolence was necessary for the success of another person from a less powerful positionality. Perhaps so!

However, if we want to define such an intervention as a “rescue,” how can we foresee the possibility of solidarity devoid of such interventions? The dual meaning of “intervention” which I illustrated before is important throughout our mentor and mentee relationship. Drawing from this experience, as one of these instances, in this article we are intentionally trying to answer how transnational mentorship–the idea of building solidarity amongst scholars sharing diverse intersectional identities (Mullings & Mukherjee)–is shaped by “messiness” (Pihlaja & Durá) of breaking down the hierarchy, as we are struggling to dismantle the institutional hierarchy that we already behold and represent.

The Coalition of Feminist Scholars in the History of Rhetoric and Composition (CFSHRC) mentor and mentee program introduced me to Amy. I do not remember our first meeting in detail, rather I have vivid memories of how she responded to my first draft of the project on Yogmaya, an important feminist figure in Nepali history. The first draft I shared with Amy was not the draft, but the sharing of my vulnerability secretly asking for support to make it possible that a Nepali feminist be known in academia in the US. In this draft, I really did not know Yogmaya; I did not describe her well because I did not know her well at that time. However, I had a secret belief that “If Ida B. Wells can be a rhetorician, so does Yogmaya but I do not know how to say that…” Amy caught me in the paragraph where I described my mother’s sister’s story of being a widow, and said she valued my experience: “Asmi, this is a great project. I really believe that you have valuable knowledge and experience to talk about it.” She did not look at the details of Yogmaya; rather, she asked me to look inside me, going beyond my discomfort. She pushed me for self-reflection before asking me to research more about Yogmaya, even though I still thought Yogmaya’s story was more important than my own. In the case of recovering the rhetorical history of Yogmaya, my positionality was an asset–the asset that was developed by my academic knowledge of non-western rhetoric, my upbringing in rural Nepal, my family background and my emerging feminist resistance.

More than being a Nepali citizen, what is crucial is my positionality that goes beyond my nationality. In other words, in the case of Yogmaya, her stories of child marriage, being widowed, and fighting for freedom resonate with the story of my mother’s sister. While in the first draft, I mentioned my mother’s sister in a passage. Amy caught this powerful narrative and suggested I focus on amplifying this living data to revive the actual story of Yogmaya whose story was available only through the secondary data like a novel written on her and a dissertation written on her where all the sources are either the novel or the imaginative narratives. As suggested by Amy, by going back to my own memories of my mother’s sister and revisiting my conversations with her, I was able to compose Yogmaya as a rhetorician. While doing this, I feel like empathy is not situated in bodies in hierarchical ways, rather it gets (ex)changed between mentor and mentee; in my case, I did not have to persuade Amy if Yogmaya was a rhetorician; she wants to see if I see/feel/think as a rhetorician based on my cultural and political history. Amy clearly mentioned that she does not know who Yogmaya is and how she is a rhetorician; but she also tells me that she wanted to know

through me how she is. For me, at that time, I was experimenting with ideas and knowledge. Having lived a more privileged history than Yogmaya did and understanding her from the oral tradition only, I had to give voice to Yogmaya by interpreting her actions as rhetorical. And while doing so, I constantly felt that I am distant from her rhetorical practice as Amy is distant from my understanding of the rhetorical practice.

Amy: Asmi and I met through the CFSHRC mentoring program in November 2020. Still in the early months of the pandemic and not yet accustomed to the isolation that would become our new normal, I really enjoyed the opportunity to connect with Asmi as a scholar, but also just as a person.

From our first conversation, personal sharing and relationship building were a major part of how we connected, from my perspective. We talked often about Asmi's sister, who was expecting her first child. Asmi was moving to New York for the summer to help out with the new baby, and I had just had my first child as well, so we had much to share with one another on this front. We also related to one another in our deep connection to our sisters. We were particularly surprised to discover our shared connections to Duluth, Minnesota, where my whole family is from and where Asmi had done her Master's degree, having finished the year before. Now in California myself, with Asmi in Texas at the time, we waxed on about our appreciation of the cold and snow from our sunny desks in the South and West. Asmi doesn't remember these early meetings, suggesting they resonated differently for her. But I wonder how they might have nonetheless staged a relationship of trust for our work together supporting Asmi's research, particularly her project on Yogmaya, the early twentieth-century Nepali feminist activist and rhetorician.

I learned everything I know about Yogmaya from Asmi's passionate descriptions in these meetings. She talked often about her own personal connections to this woman and this story–connections that included national, gendered, and caste-based experiences and identities, among others. As a feminist rhetorician who studies historical women, I offered a set of readerly eyes and disciplinary resources to help draw those ideas out and contextualize them within the field. She brought her own scholarly texts to the interpretive work as well, trying out frameworks, combining them, and transforming them as she cast about for the right approach to do justice to Yogmaya and her contributions.

As we continued to work together to refine Asmi's argument about Yogmaya as a feminist rhetorician, we came to realize the *process* of researching and analyzing this woman was worth thinking about on its own, and we began to develop a version of Asmi's research for submission to *Peitho*'s Recoveries and Reconsiderations section. That piece honored the specificity of Asmi's own lived experiences and research process as part of the work and allowed that to be a contribution in and of itself. This is part of what a feminist rhetorical praxis looks like to me broadly: to explore the ways we are implicated in and connected to the women's histories we research and

narrate. That piece made me more fully realize the importance of the positionality, experiences, and stories of globally diverse feminist scholars. As much as Yogmaya's lived experiences of patriarchy are outside of my own experience, so are the specific resonances of this historical figure within the context of Nepal, where Asmi encountered them. These are important perspectives that add complexity and depth to our discipline's collective understanding of women's rhetorics. Working in solidarity with the keepers of these stories, transnational feminist mentoring is a means by which I can not only learn from but also articulate my own experiences in relation to diverse histories and experiences from global contexts, understanding my own research subjects more deeply from this broadened perspective.

While she awaited word on that piece, Asmi pivoted and began work on another project that provided a different inflection point for these questions, as this next project focused on Afghan beauty parlors as sites of feminist rhetorical engagement, focusing on how these sites have been (mis)represented by Western stakeholders. This project revealed other layers of complex transnational feminist mentoring praxis, as we thought together about how to study and represent a community and experience of which neither of us were a part. While Asmi shared much with the subjects of her research in terms of her positionality as a non-Western feminist, there were other aspects of this culture and experience that were far afield from her own. Was this a project she was equipped to research, given her difference from her research subjects? How might she approach it ethically and reflectively? This additional layer of messiness and difference is part of what we can now explore together in this next research process. Transnational feminist mentoring does not offer a solution to these methodological questions, but instead illuminates and values their complexity as a resource.

Liz: I have little transnational experience. When I met Asmita in 2019, I was a professor in Minnesota who greeted the impressive young woman from Nepal. I was horrified when my university denied her the position she had already been awarded as a GTA because of their assessment of her English-speaking ability. With a background in literacy, I seriously doubted that Asmita, who already had an MA in English and Rhetoric from Tribuwan University in Nepal, was any less capable than other GTAs. Fortunately, the university did not revoke its offer of funding, and Asmita began assisting me in teaching an Advanced Writing section, since she was not allowed to be the instructor of record. As we worked together in a graduate class on teaching writing, I was continually impressed by Asmita's perspectives on rhetoric; I learned as much from her as she did from me, especially as she began research in the graduate class. Asmita's lived experience as a scholar in Nepal taught me how professional texts differ in Nepal from the US, and her extensive research on Non-Native English Speaking Teachers (NNEST) introduced me to an area of our field I knew little of previously.

As a white, straight, North American woman, I am in a remarkable seat of privilege which I have recognized for a number of decades. I also recognize my parochiality: most of my life ex-

periences and education occurred in the northeastern US. Though I yearned to see more of the world, my financial abilities limited the worlds I could experience.

Perhaps because of my background in feminist and African-American theories, I clearly know how little I know. In fact, one of my mantras–one I often relay to students–is that a true sign of intelligence is an awareness of your ignorance. In working with Asmita, as well as with many other young scholars, I remind them that though I might know more than they do about certain academic subjects–because of my age and experience–they may well have far greater critical capacity, and they have enormous experience in all kinds of areas in which I do not–and I can learn from them.

This attitude is perhaps what drew Asmita and me together as writers and scholars who thoroughly enjoy collaborating, because we appreciate each other's differing experiences as we continually learn from each other. Asmita and I both would not acknowledge the power of authority for authority's sake, as we constantly discussed gatekeeping. My attitude partially results from my experiences traveling to Spanish speaking countries. While my Spanish was sufficient to allow me to get by, people always told me that I "needed to work on my Spanish." Bringing my memories of struggling in Spanish speaking countries to the multilingual classroom, I admire the courage, intelligence, and persistence of multilingual students studying in the US, especially at Predominantly White Institutions where a US/British English is considered the norm.

Our differing backgrounds, and a common love of learning, also bring us to an important element of mentoring: trust. I trust Asmita. I may sometimes disagree with her, as she may disagree with me. However, we believe that the other is working to advance critical thinking–about whatever subject we are investigating. For our strong mentorship relationship, there needed to be trust built out of a common love of knowledge, a love that stems from the vulnerability and recognition of how much we don't know, of how limited our experiences are. I want to learn, not just teach. I believe Asmita wants to learn and be given credit for what she knows or has experienced. She knows so much that I don't or haven't experienced.

Asmi: It took resistance and a sort of revolution for Liz and me to trust each other. Liz is a white woman who possessed power that could influence my experiences in American graduate school. I felt I had been betrayed by the American graduate school system that offered me admission and an assistantship, only to inform me after my move across the globe that my abilities were insufficient. I was not sure why I should trust Liz, a cog in this American system. At first I trusted her because I had to; my other options were to leave the system or to trust someone else who I had no more reason to trust. As time passed, we performed forms of trust a lot of times, and there were movements where we would push each other–I challenged her as she challenged me. Our honesty with each other introduced me to the recognition that in the US, people are regarded by color. In other words, I learned that I am a "person of color" only after coming to the

US. After nearly eight months of me being in Minnesota, the relevance of “color” in the US became enormously evident. George Floyd was killed, and his death resonated with my experiences of learning how dangerous it is to be a “person of color” in the US. People have to die for the color of their bodies; let alone be judged, discriminated against, relegated, degraded, and disrespected for the human they are. As I recognized these issues, one of the questions that Liz and I wrestled with is how does Liz’s positionality empower me? How does my positionality empower her? Does she need to be empowered by my position? Or do I need her support to be empowered?

Oftentimes, I have seen, heard and learned how difficult it is for international students to work with privileged white professors in the university. Oftentimes, white professors want to capitalize on the labor, knowledge, and intellect of students–this often happens in most of the STEM fields too, where most of the academic publications are expected to be collaborative. Understanding one’s privileged positionality and leveraging the positionality is very important in mentor-mentee relationships. Liz always prefers to be the second author in the publications that we have done. This is very important for graduate students, especially in collaborative work. The authorial position is power. Empowering the co-author mentee can be done by providing them with an authorial position, especially when the mentor is in a powerful position. But the language of this offer does not have to happen in a gesture of grants or something like a kindness gesture. Giving an adequate and optimum amount of credibility to students and mentees is very important in mentor and mentee relationships.

Amy: It is interesting to me that Asmi recalls my own influence in bringing out the personal connections between her and Yogmaya, as I saw them as an existing strength in her work from early on. As she wrote these stories up gradually, theorizing them as she went, I merely provided a reader’s perspective on where she might elaborate or draw connections for Western audiences, based on my own curiosities and excitement.

This is where rhetorical empathy comes in for me–in yielding to Asmi’s expertise and listening to her experiences as a foundation for our work together, carefully considering my own motives in providing feedback and advice, and recognizing that her motives and experiences will differ from mine based on differences in power and embodiment. One thing that our relationship brought out about the nature of rhetorical empathy in the context of transnational feminist mentoring practices was the particular role of power and privilege in shaping who is most called to practice rhetorical empathy, and the complexity of accomplishing this in the context of career mentorship, where the task is simultaneously to listen and to guide. This was always a delicate balance for me, as I sought to mentor Asmi into new and potentially unfamiliar discourse communities and disciplinary literatures, without suggesting that her own frameworks should change as a result. I was keenly aware of Asmi’s depth of experience and the valuable situated knowledge that she brought to bear, which were key assets in this work of hers. How could I help harness those perspectives and contributions for Western audiences without inadvertently pushing her towards assimilation?

How could we accomplish this work of translation, both within the text and also within our own mentoring moments?

Still, reading Asmi's account of microaggressions and unproductive writing feedback related to English grammar, I admit to pangs of fear: how might I have perpetrated similar violences in my relations with Asmi? How did my responses to her language or experiences in my own comments on her drafts unknowingly contribute to any of these same experiences of deauthorization? As I read her account, I found myself trying to read through the lines to see where my own approaches might be reflected and revealed as inadvertently damaging, in spite of Asmi's assertion to the contrary. All of this is about me and my white fragility, not about Asmi. But it is also part of something more productive, too, at the center of our transnational feminist mentoring praxis: a seeking out of areas for improvement in our interactions, an assumption of growth and change, a desire to face the limitations of our own frameworks and interactions head-on. This drive towards self-reflection and self-critique in recognition of power /differences is rhetorical empathy at work in feminist transnational mentoring.

In writing this piece, we have tacitly committed to examining honestly the ways we have interacted across difference, for better *and* worse. As I'm reading more in the area of cultural rhetorics recently, I see many resonances between that term and what we are here calling rhetorical empathy as a transnational feminist mentoring practice. In particular, what conversations in cultural rhetorics have helped to reveal for me is the utility and necessity of fluidity, change, and contact as resources informing cultural (and transnational feminist) rhetorics (Jackson). That is, it is not the isolation of practices, positionalities, or experiences that animates these discourses as sites of liberatory potential, but the purposeful interaction between and among them–the transrhetorical practices in our mentoring practice, as Rachel Jackson theorizes. I am beginning to see more and more in both Liz's and Asmi's accounts, as well as my own, a common desire to share and learn from stories that are different from our own. To constellate our experiences and perspectives as part of our discrete research projects and scholarly identities (Powell et al.). To be changed. I wonder what thinking of our transnational feminist mentoring praxis of rhetorical empathy in relation to these cultural rhetorics frameworks might afford or enable?

Liz: Reading Amy's introduction, I am struck by the familiarity between Asmita and Amy, an initial familiarity Asmita and I did not have. For example, I never before called Asmita, Asmi, and I feel a bit uncomfortable doing so. As I wonder about my discomfort, I consider whether it's my upbringing that forces the totally professional stance. When Asmita and I first met, before the disaster of the University imposing its not-so-subtle racism, Asmita offered me a gift. A present from Nepal. I told her that I couldn't accept it. There must be rules about accepting gifts from students, I thought, but didn't know. I didn't want to break rules. Am I such a gatekeeper, assimilating Asmita into the rules of North American academic traditions? Perhaps it results from our mutual recognition of my role as mother to children around the same age as her, and as she joins us for dinner,

she is another member of the family, and I treat her as such.

I'm also struck by Asmita's observation that my involvement with her after the University disaster could be perceived as a "rescue" effort. Indeed, it could. As a white, female, full professor, I was in a position of power as Asmita came to the University. My "helping" her could be something for me to cite on merit forms and among my colleagues of what a wonderful person I am. I could assuage any discomfort I might feel about any of my own racial biases. Though I am horrified that I might have such selfish motives, I can't quite dismiss that perspective. How can I avoid such self-serving rescuing as a white woman, I continually ask.

As I contemplate this concept, I also note that discussions of "mothering" are parts of Asmi's and Amy's initial narratives while not part of my own, yet mothering is something that is comfortable to me–and enters all my teaching whether I want it there or not. I have two adult sons, but I still mother. My mothering is now more like mentoring, structuring our relationship in terms of trust and dedication to one another. For those of us comfortable with mothering (regardless of any actual parental roles), we can use those skills to nurture all students, as we simultaneously model that academic success and motherhood can be achieved together. It's messy, for sure, but it can be done.

While recognizing that "the metaphor of the (cis-hetero) family has historically been used to produce whiteness and augment white power as well as paper over deep and irreparable structural trauma," it is also possible, following Lisa M. Corrigan and Anjali Vatz, to imagine an ethic of care "where collaboration is prioritized and where growth is modeled and nurtured through intimate networks of collective solidarity and mutuality" (224, 226). For radical women of color feminists, as well as for myself, "mothering" in these ways may provide a model for this kind of care (Gumbs, Martens, and Williams). It may also take one of the hegemonic roles assigned to women and put it to work contesting hegemonic norms, which is messy business.

While there are no easy answers here, we need to recognize the multidirectional nature of knowledge and empathy, including its relationality to other positionalities we might hold, to better understand each other and learn from each other. Power is complex, and while mentors may sometimes have more privilege than do many of their mentees, the mentees have vast amounts of knowledge that can benefit the mentor.

More than Empathy: Rhetorical Empathy in Practice

An implicit commonality within our discussion is the need for empathy. However, empathy in itself can be dangerous if the vicarious experience that promotes the empathetic reaction appears to substitute for the actual experiences that are empathized. As Ann Jurecic states, empathy can

be complicit with "oppressive practices" (17).

In our work together, understanding the other has been essential, but this understanding has been multidirectional. The "rescue" mission that Liz engaged in with Asmita rescued Liz as much as it did Asmita; as Amy "helped" Asmita with her text on Yogmaya, Asmita helped her just as much. Empathy is not about power, and it is about power. We need to continually stretch our understanding of others, and ourselves, as we work to help each other and our field advances in the direction of social justice.

After writing and reading these narratives, the three of us met to see what we could cull from our experiences and reflections about this work. To this end, we close by returning here to our original three questions and briefly discuss how our narratives collectively respond to them to illuminate our learnings about empathy and solidarity in our transnational feminist mentoring practices.

1. How can mentors and mentees bring their intersectional selves into their relationships?

As numerous mentors and mentees before us have observed (e.g., Okawa; Rowe, "What Actually Works"; Rowe, "Building Mentorship Frameworks"; Rheineck and Rowland), we recognize that both mentor and mentee must know and understand each other's positionality both in and out of academia. Being self-reflective about one's positionality will help to understand one's privileges and challenges.

Mentorship is already a hierarchical relationship. Amy and Liz recognized that in order to produce productive intellectual works and learning out of mentorships, they had to be willing to share the power that comes with their positionality. Power sharing here means willingness to be uncomfortable when it comes to empowering mentees. We must recognize that vulnerability can enhance rhetorical thinking (Marback).

In each of our narratives, we cannot help but to be our intersectional selves: a brown graduate student and two white tenured professors, one at the beginning of her career, the other well into it. But we are also much more than the color of our skin or our roles in the university, and who we are continually evolves. As Asmita's scholarship becomes more established, she will gain power; as Liz's gray hairs turn white, she will lose it. While everyone's positionality changes over time with reversals of wealth and health, with the passing of time in a patriarchal world, women are particularly likely to find their power differentials in a deficit. As women marry, have children, age, and lose ability, they are less likely to maintain power than are men (e.g., Carmel, Miller). If we are serious about positive transnational mentoring relationships, we need to recognize their ongoing and intergenerational natures, as we continue to work and learn together. Amy's listening to Asmi allows her to learn; Liz's collaborations with Asmi teach her to challenge her assumptions;

Asmi is able to negotiate gatekeepers.

2. How can we understand mentor and mentee relationships as relational sites of solidarity?

Throughout these narratives, each of us recognized the value of what the other offered. Such recognition is essential. As in our case, when Asmi had been made to feel that her experiences did not count, Amy and Liz helped Asmi recognize the value of her previous experiences. This does not mean, as Juan Guerra points out, that Liz and Amy told Asmi to only use discourses associated with Standard White English (SWE) and its power to communicate those experiences and insights, but instead that they recognized and encouraged Asmi's "rhetorical sensibilities" developed within her translingual practice as part of what she has to offer to her scholarly work. It also meant that Liz and Amy recognized that Asmi's prior knowledge created thresholds for the development of their new knowledge, as their mentoring created thresholds for Asmi's new knowledge.

The three of us also continually asked each other what role they wanted to be in, as Gesa E. Kirsch recommends feminist collaborators must. They had clear communication about authorship: Liz was explicit about that in their work, Asmi should be the first author. Asmi and Liz also discussed the demands of academic publication in the US and how to work accordingly–without losing confidence. Amy made clear she was not going to offer solutions to Asmi's ponderings about Yogmaya–she wanted Asmi to figure out the answers. Amy told Asmi that Asmi was the sole producer of the knowledge she was creating and that she had the authority to carve the knowledge in the way she wanted. In our relationships, the focus has been less on the teaching and more on learning what role Asmi's expertise had in the material.

3. How can intersectional differences between mentors and mentees be negotiated for social justice purposes?

Recognizing our solidarity and the changing dynamics of our intersectionality, we have continually been challenging gatekeepers, trying to make our field more expansive. As mentors, we have encountered the paradoxes of being both gatekeepers and gate-breakers. However, part of the solidarity found in our fluid intersectionalities requires that, while we may have common goals in challenging the gatekeepers, many mentees from countries outside the US fear challenging gatekeepers because of visa policies and their documents. They do not want to speak against the system to which they are foreign. In such cases, we need to illustrate means of challenging the status quo. For example, after Liz knew that Asmi was not allowed to teach, Liz went to talk with several of the administrators working on the behalf of international students and the school. She asked the exact reason Asmi was not allowed to teach. Liz was told that some decision makers wanted to give a good impression of the school. As a tenured professor, Liz made clear Asmi was

an asset to the university. Such modeling illustrates we can recognize our intersectional selves to create solidarity to take on tasks that work for social justice.

We also have to recognize when we are gatekeepers. As Amy and Liz have worked with Asmi, they have tried to handle differences in language and culture with care, recognizing such differences as resources, and not simply assumed as errors (Lu; Horner et al.). Our own work in this piece recognizes the discomfort with assimilation as well as with "error, " a discomfort Suresh Canagarajah has discussed at length. We want this piece to be published, to be shared; however, we know the syntax here is not always conventional English. We struggle with how much to "correct" and how much to allow to create change and resist assimilation. After all, editors and publishing houses are gatekeepers, too (Corrigan and Vatz). Challenging the gatekeepers means a critical recognition and rejection of policies and practices that have prevented various peoples from moving forward.

Challenging gatekeeping, like each aspect of transnational feminist solidarity we have explored, is a self-reflective practice of asking if our positions, roles, and practices are hampering others from moving forward. These moments do not present easy answers for any of us. However, as mentee and mentor in solidarity with one another, we struggle together.

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Temporal Politics of Coalition

Learning from Student Activists and Responding to Attacks on Critical Race Theory

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Abstract: This article examines student activists' coalitional leadership at the University of Arizona during the civil rights movement. Through a detailed archival study of the university's student newspaper, their case study outlines how two student organizations combatted evasive administrators who maintained white hegemony through "race-neutral" policies and appeals to the "silent majority." In response, student activists in the Black Student Union (BSU) and the Mexican American Liberation Committee (MALC) articulated demands for institutional change and built widening coalitions to support those demands. We argue that these past attempts to silence student-led coalitions mirror the current conservative attacks on teaching Critical Race Theory (CRT). Studying the rhetorical strategies of past student activists from our own campuses can help students in our classes combat attacks on CRT, which are specifically targeted at undercutting the coalitional capacities of BIPOC students.

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Introduction

Histories of student activism within rhetoric and composition have looked at The City University of New York (CUNY) open-admissions policy to demonstrate the foundational influence BIPOC students have had on our profession. In particular, Carmen Kynard's work in Vernacular

Insurrections famously resituated CUNY's open admission policies in "the larger constellation of Black and Puerto Rican activism in New York City" and thereby challenged our discipline's identification of Mina Shaughnessy's role as a founding figure in basic writing and the broader "white integrationist narrative" (150). Revealing how our profession has suppressed the legacy of Black and Latinx student activism, Kynard challenges historians in rhetoric and composition to constitute our discipline based on the coalitional leadership of BIPOC student activists. Responding to Kynard's challenge means researching the institutional contexts impacted by and responsive to student-led social movements and analyzing the archival materials related to those movements. In opposition to the seminal histories of our discipline, which considered the publications of major professional journals (Berlin), the classrooms of Harvard professors (Brereton), the intellectual histories surrounding the first-year writing classroom (Crowley), and the major textbooks used by composition instructors (Connors), Kynard looked to the activism of Black and Puerto Rican students that worked to transform their university to resemble their neighborhoods and communities.

Many scholars have echoed Kynard's call to center histories of our discipline on BIPOC students' activism (Gilyard; Trimbur; Molloy). These studies have coincided with a turn toward the local histories of HBCUs, HSIs, Normal Schools, and high schools (Kates; Gold, Rhetoric at the Margins; Enoch; Mendenhall). Similarly, our goal is to center the student activists on our campus at the University of Arizona who fought to make their institution responsive to the cultures and languages of their communities, and it builds on the movement among historians in rhetoric and composition who research the experiences of teachers and students who worked in institutions responding to the social, political, and economic challenges facing students. For example, the research featured in Donahue and Moon's edited collection, Local Histories, captured the diversity of writing instruction across regional and educational contexts in the US by studying a range of archival material: students' notes, accounts of institution celebrations, teacher's formal writings, annual report, course catalogs, and faculty minutes (5). Ostergaard and Wood's In the Archives of Composition extended Local Histories by featuring research on the sites where a majority of students in the US were taught to write: high schools and normal schools. Ostergaard and Wood argue that "local stories can reveal powerful counter-narratives as well as co-narratives that may productively complicate our sense of our own disciplinary past" (20).

We build on these histories by centering (via Kynard) how Black and Mexican American student activists disrupted white hegemony at the University of Arizona during the 1960s and 1970s. Specifically, we examine two parallel initiatives during the 1969-1970 academic year: (1) the Black Student Union's (BSU) campaign to cancel all athletic events with Brigham Young University because of that institution's affiliation with the Church of Latter-Day Saints, whose racist doctrines at the time excluded Black people from becoming priests, and (2) the Mexican American Liberation Committee's (MALC) campaign to revise the "tokenizing" and "concocted" Mexican American Studies (MAS) program used to "appease the Chicano community at large and the Chicano student body in particular" (Bradford, "MALC Rejects"). The parallel efforts provide critical

examples of how students today might craft their own coalitional tactics among constituents on their campuses and within their surrounding communities to defend the rights currently under attack with the demonization of CRT. In other words, we argue that teaching the history of coalitions on our campuses may promote coalitional thinking among teachers and students now.

Our approach draws from Natasha Jones's concept of coalitional learning. Jones defines coalitions "as relational, dynamic configurations that are attuned to issues of power, privilege, and positionality while actively pursuing options for addressing and redressing inequities and oppressions" (519). This notion of coalition is rooted in the legacy of black feminists who recognize "that the major systems of oppression are interlocking" and require collective and integrative action ("Combahee River Collective"). Jones and a chorus of transdisciplinary scholars in technical professional writing and composition studies build from Black feminist traditions to theorize how "an intersectional understanding of oppression requires a coalitional approach to change" (Walton et al. 12). Importantly, coalitional learning asks teachers and students to work across boundaries of discipline, privilege, power, and difference to address the specific problems they face. In this way, we believe that coalitional learning provides historians in rhetoric and composition with an important call to teach the history of coalitions to inspire coalitional thinking.

We also invite scholars to conduct their own archival research on student activism on their campuses and consider how that activism speaks to current political moments. Our study and others like it encourage students "to show solidarity with a broader transhistorical community" of student activists who have combated white hegemony at their universities (Graban and Hayden 8). We hope our study of the archives of past student activists will help readers consider how they might use such research on their own campuses to combat attacks on school curricula, especially those centered on CRT efforts.

In the following sections, we first explicate how, in 1969-1970, the University of Arizona's President, Richard Harvill, delegitimized Mexican American and Black students' demands for social justice. We, then, outline the coalitional lessons present-day students can learn from studying how BSU and MALC representatives worked together to expose the racism that motivated Harvill and his administration's claims of neutrality and how the BSU and MALC representatives' arguments might be extended to also understand and combat the racism that has continued to motivate educational disparities in Tucson's public schools in 2010 and again in 2022. We also consider the ways these historical BSU and MALC characterizations of Harvill's rhetoric parallel Tom Horne's (superintendent in 2010 and now again in 2022) more current demonization of Tucson High's MAS program. Finally, we highlight the legislation that former MALC student activist (1969-1970) and current Arizona congressmen Raúl Grijalva has now proposed to continue to defend schools from conservative attacks on CRT. Considering these efforts together enables students and educators to examine patterns in coalitional movements and apply those patterns to the ongoing efforts of those engaged in social justice work to create systemic change.

Harvill's Dismissive Rhetoric and Student Activists' Coalitional Lessons (1969-1970)

The president of the University of Arizona, during the 1969-70 academic year, Richard Harvill, underwent drastic measures to ignore and silence the demands of student activists. He employed two main dismissive strategies: 1) he claimed that student activists did not represent the majority of the student body, and 2) he argued that administrators needed to remain neutral on social issues.

The Bear Down Incident

It is important to note that this was not the first time activists found Harvill's rhetoric to be a disservice to the larger student community at UA. In 1968, BSU leaders submitted a list of demands to Harvill that included "the establishment of a non-discriminatory off-campus housing service, the inclusion of a Black Studies Department in the campus academic structure, the recruitment of Black instructors and students, and a full-scale investigation of employment practices" (Kornman). These demands included a one-month ultimatum forcing Harvill to respond publicly. In a series of articles, Harvill explained that he was unwilling to respond to the BSU's ultimatums because they were "improper methods of voicing views regarding policies and procedures in the academic community" (Kornman). In response, BSU organized a broader coalition of students called the "Committee for Students' Rights" (Staff, "Committee"). One of the organizers of this committee, Karen Schwartzman, described the reasoning for the coalition: "All students must become aware of and will be informed about the pressing issues of this time in history. Students at the University have a particular responsibility toward knowing the issues of their own campus…" (Staff, "Committee"). In this way, BSU leaders began to make the work of combating Harvill's dismissive rhetoric an issue for all students.

A detailed reading of the Arizona Daily Wildcat (ADW) from the 1969-1970 school year reveals that the Black Student Union (BSU) continued to dominate the public discourse on campus–a historical fact that previous studies of student activism at UA have not emphasized[1]. For months, student leaders of the BSU wrote newspaper articles and organized public demonstrations that demanded their university and the Western Athletic Conference (WAC) cut athletic ties with Brigham Young University (BYU) because of its affiliation with the Church of Latter-Day

1 These histories do not discuss the leading role that Black student activists played on campus and fall into a larger historical trend to render Black Arizonans "indiscernible" (Glegziabher 347). Meskerem Glegziabher's recent article for the *Journal of Arizona History* outlines the "comparative dearth of scholarship and archival materials about African Americans within Arizona" (347). Glegziabher points out that the Arizona Archives Matrix Project reported "less than 1 percent of archival materials in the state" related to African Americans (347). Despite this lack of Black representation in the archives, Glegziabher traces the "long-standing Black institutions and communities in contemporary Arizona" in order to dispel the "dominant public narrative that persists in characterizing Black people as newcomers and outsiders" to Arizona (355).

Saints. These protests came in response to the Mormon church's racist doctrines that prohibited Black people from becoming priests and culminated with members of the BSU and leaders of Tucson's NAACP chapter staging a protest on the center court of Bear Down Gym during a basketball game against BYU (which came to be known as the Bear Down Incident). at UA have not

These student activists were acting in solidarity with fourteen Black football players at the University of Wyoming who, earlier that year, had protested their game against BYU. The Wyoming football coach suspended these athletes, causing a wave of student support across the Western Athletic Conference. As students from various institutions consolidated support for Wyoming's Black student-athletes, they also called for the WAC administrators to cut ties with BYU. John Heard, a member of the BSU, published an article in the campus newspaper arguing, "Black Athletes should not help support policies held by a church institution which denies his humanity and the humanity of the group to which he belongs…BYU as a representative of 'Mormonism,' degrades the black athlete and his race through financial assistance provided by his athletic endeavors which support the state institution" (Staff, "BYU Investigation"). Heard's arguments represented a consensus among Black activists across the WAC and the student body at UA.

On October 24th, 1969, UA's student senate passed a resolution that asked athletic directors in the WAC to disassociate with BYU (Nathanson, "Senate Asks"). At the WAC's annual council in Denver, Colorado, fifty student representatives from Black student unions at eight different institutions interrupted the council and demanded that the WAC break ties with BYU. Despite these demands, the faculty senate and UA's university president, Richard Harvill, maintained a "neutral" position on the WAC's relationship with BYU. In multiple letters to the campus community, President Harvill explained that the university could not get involved in social issues and that student demands would be better directed toward administrators at the central offices of the WAC. In response, the BSU chairman, Gale Dean, referred to Harvill as "an example of the buck-passing bureaucracy" (Staff, "Racist By").

Program Reform

Harvill used these same evasive strategies to stunt efforts by the Mexican American Liberation Committee (MALC) when they tried to reform the established Mexican American Studies (MAS) program that they had successfully argued to establish during the 1968-1969 school year. The movement to reform this curriculum was led by MALC chairman Raúl Grijalva, who noted that Chicano students felt that President Harvill, when establishing the original program, "concocted" a "token" program used to "appease the Chicano community at large and the Chicano student body in particular" (Bradford, "MALC Rejects"). Unsatisfied with the state of the MAS program, in 1969-1970 MALC presented the Dean of Liberal Arts and the Vice President of the University with a petition signed by 122 of the campus's 250 Mexican American students to revise the MAS program.

MALC leaders Raúl Grijalva, Herminio Rios, and Fausto Alarcon argued that President Harvill's version of Mexican-American Studies was a "Spanish language major program under the guise of Mexican-American Studies" ("MALC Rejects"). Instead, Grijalva called for a program that would "present a true historical, sociological, political, anthropological, cultural perspective of the Chicano presence and experience in the Southwest" ("MALC Rejects"). Joe Molina, MALC's president, presented a series of memorials for reforming the MAS program over the course of the 1969-1970 school year. Molina presented arguments for revising MAS during the same student senate meetings where representatives passed a resolution that asked WAC athletic directors to break with BYU. In the same semester that Harvill ignored the BSU's calls for administrative action against BYU, MALC leaders felt Harvill "blatantly ignored" their proposed revisions to the MAS program (Staff, "University Weighing").

Tactics for Response

The central focus of the BSU and MALC's response to Harvill's dismissive rhetoric was to expose the racism motivating his arguments for political neutrality by elucidating the historical positioning of UA and demonstrating current community relationships and needs. They employed two coalitional tactics to accomplish that task: (1) they framed their critiques of Harvill's politically neutral policies as deliberate attempts to disadvantage minoritized communities on their campus and in Tucson's community, and (2) they circulated those critiques among sympathetic audiences in order to mobilize coalitional action.

Tactic One

BSU and MALC student activists framed their critiques of Harvill by explaining that the university historically only served white students, so remaining politically neutral on social issues impacting Mexican American and Black students meant perpetuating the standard of serving only white students. Importantly, BSU and MALC representatives extended this framing to critique how administrators were unwilling to serve not only Black and Mexican American students on campus but also the predominantly Mexican American and Black communities surrounding the university.

For example, at the start of the 1969-70 academic year, Gale Dean and Raúl Grijalva, the respective spokespeople for the BSU and MALC, explained in an interview with the *Arizona Daily Wildcat (ADW)* that their organizations' main goal for the 1969-1970 school year was to serve marginalized students in Tucson's public schools. They framed their work with high school students as a service to Tucson's community. Dean explained that the BSU wanted to "form a closer unity" with the "minority groups" who made up Tucson's community (Bradford "Campus"). Grijalva called out UA for being "in the center of the Southwest surrounded by Mexican Americans" but being more "responsive to its white community than Chicano community" (Bradford, "Campus"). Both Dean and Grijalva appealed to the larger city of Tucson to expose how Black and Mexican Amer-

icans existed in a government and education system that did not serve or even recognize them. By engaging in public discourse through authoring *ADW* articles and organizing public demonstrations, the BSU and MALC successfully demonstrated how to challenge Harvill's continued dismissive rhetoric–a rhetoric designed to silence and ignore the Black and Mexican American students who constituted the university and the city's community.

While MALC activists worked in coalition with the BSU, they focused on exposing how Harvill's unwillingness to serve minoritized students on campus reflected a larger trend in public education. Raúl Grijalva and Joe Molina criticized Tucson's local government for the unequal educational opportunities it provided to Mexican American students. They called on Tucson's public schools to create spaces where students could learn about the problems facing Mexican Americans in the Southwest. Grijalva and Molina articulated these demands in a series of *ADW* articles addressing a report from the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW Report) documenting racial inequities in Tucson schools and at UA. When interviewed about the report, Grijalva celebrated that someone was investigating the "discriminatory practices by the University against Chicanos, Black, and Indians" (Grijalva). The report condemned the university's mistreatment of minoritized students and was published against the will of UA administrators. Harvill openly attacked this report saying that researchers interviewed "irresponsible" people–e.g., "Chicano, Black, and Indian students" (Grijalva).

At the same time, a similar HEW report was conducted in the Tucson School District, and the similar results caused six hundred Chicano students to walk out of their schools in protest; however, erasure continued in the community, as another member of MALC, Frank De La Cruz argued that the *Arizona Daily Star* and the *Tucson Daily Citizen* celebrated the school district's work without recognizing the Chicano parents who protested the inequities their children were experiencing. The Tucson Commission on Human Relations defended the *Star* and *Citizen* by declaring that "the District is completely innocent of any discrimination" (De La Cruz). De La Cruz explained that Tucson's school district, the *Daily*, and the *Citizen* ignored these disparities, but "la mentira dura hasta que la verdad llega–the lie lasts until the truth arrives" (De La Cruz).

Like the student-led movements at CUNY, which we discussed in the introduction, student activists at UA demanded that their university serve all the communities that surrounded it. Rodrick Ferguson's account of the CUNY protests points out that these demands for universities' responsiveness to local communities are an "epistemological proceeding necessitating the reorganization of knowledge" (97). Ferguson argues that the communities that host our universities "are the material catalysts to epistemic shifts and transformations" within them (109). The BSU and MALC's demands for revising white hegemonic policies on their campus and in their local schools, then, were not simply about admitting or preparing more Black and Mexican American students for college; they were about transforming the epistemological structure of a white education system to better reflect minoritized and the larger local communities experiences and ways of knowing.

Tactic 2

BSU and MALC student activists enacted their second coalitional tactic by circulating their critiques of Harvill's dismissive rhetoric among sympathetic audiences–both within their university and city–mobilizing minoritized students and teachers in local schools, other student organizations on campus, and civil rights leaders in the community. As these coalitions expanded, their critiques of political neutrality engaged with the racism that motivated educational disparities in Tucson's public schools, and they argued that all levels of education should be held accountable for serving all of Tucson's communities, not just white ones.

For example, BSU leaders created a coalition of student organizations, including the main student governing body, the Associated Students of the University of Arizona (ASUA), to organize months of public demonstrations against UA's athletic affiliation with BYU. These ties were so strong that the President and Vice President of the ASUA were leading voices arguing for breaking ties with BYU. After the police violently removed student demonstrators from a UA basketball game against BYU (the Bear Down Incident), President Harvill pursued felony charges against eight students for inciting a riot. In response, the BSU worked with the student governing body to demand Harvill's resignation (Nathanson, "Senate Wants"). A week later, the BSU's coalition with other student organizations, the United Student Front (UFO), organized a campus-wide rally with over 3,500 people in attendance. One report for the *ADW* noted the crowd "was made up of students with long hair and beards, clipped locks and ties, hip clothes and conservative dress and attitudes that ranged from casual detached interest to fervent advocacy" (Gold, "Sampling"). Reverend John C. Fowler and Arizona's ACLU chapter representative, Ted Mote, called on the administration to drop the criminal charges against the eight student activists arrested after the Bear Down Incident (Nathanson, "Harvill Accuse""). These community leaders spoke alongside the BSU president, Gale Dean, and MALC representative, Sal Baldenegro, in solidarity against Harvill's prosecution of the Bear Down protestors. Harvill avoided responding to student demands until two hundred and fifty members of the BSU and UFO organized a "campout on the porch of the Administration building" waiting to talk with him (Nathanson, "Harvill Grants").

Like the BSU, MALC's calls to address the educational disparities that existed at UA and in Tucson's schools were inherently community-based and stemmed from relationships they had built with UA professors, high school students, and college students from across the Southwest. Still, MALC leaders worked hard to build coalitions among Mexican American students on campus by aligning their efforts with the national movement of Chicano students. In the spring of 1968, MALC member Sal Baldenegro attended the first Chicano Youth Liberation Conference in Denver, Colorado. The conference aimed to coordinate efforts among Chicano student organizations across the country by establishing a shared definition of Aztlán–"a proclamation of solidarity with all Chicanos who are oppressed regardless of where they may live" (Baldenegro). Aztlán refers to the homeland of Mexico's indigenous ancestors, the Aztecs and Mexica, and necessitated that all

Chicanos had "a moral obligation" to address problems facing Chicanos on that shared ancestral land. Aztlán would be the guiding "cultural-nationalist ideology" that would inspire activist efforts to achieve their goal of "full equality for" all Chicanos in the Southwest (Baldenegro).

After returning from the conference, Baldenegro and other MALC representatives focused on building coalitions between Mexican American students and Tucson's Mexican American community. Darius Echeverria's book, *Aztlán Arizona,* provides a detailed account of how this coalition of Chicano activists successfully organized an annual Chicano Senior Day for local high schools and established the first La Semana de La Raza (or Chicano Culture Week), an event that "served to inform the larger Tucson community about ongoing discriminatory practices against Arizonan-Mexicans" (98). Consequently, efforts were both local and national, as the organizers combatted the dismissive rhetoric of university administrators and initiated political action on their campus and in their community.

Tom Horne's Dismissive Rhetoric and Tucson High Student Activist Responses (2007-2010)

For present-day educators in Arizona, President Harvill's dismissive rhetoric is echoed in Tom Horne's three-year crusade (2007-2010) to end the Mexican American Studies program at Tucson High School. Fifty years after BSU and MALC student activists fought to make their university and public schools responsive to the lived experiences of Black and Mexican American students, Tom Horne enacted a racist legislative initiative that banned ethnic studies in Arizona schools and employed similar dismissive rhetorical strategies as Harvill to silence student activists that challenged his legislation. Horne justified his dismissal of student activists by claiming that a majority of Arizona voters agreed with his policies and, like Harvill, that the education system should teach color-blind individualism to remain politically neutral.

At the center of Tom Horne's rhetorical attacks against Tucson High's MAS program was the belief that students should see themselves as individuals, not as members of a particular ethnic or racial group. He supported this appeal to individualism by appropriating passages from Martin Luther King Jr.'s speeches, saying King "wanted his children to be judged by the content of their character rather than the color of their skin…and Ethnic Studies teaches the opposite" (qtd. in Cammarota 525). According to Julio Cammarota, Horne promotes "an idealized…vision of race neutrality" that does not align with "the current and real existence of systems and ideologies of oppression" to maintain white hegemony (526). Horne's appeals to individualism promoted colorblind racism in a way that "perpetuates the subordination of racialized groups," privileging "the right of comfort when the topic of social injustice" is invoked (Cammarota 526; Martinez 227). Conversely, we embrace the importance of critique as "the very genuine effort of engagement in coalitional solidarities" and recognize our study of Black and Mexican American student activists' coalitional

leadership as an essential response to Horne's color-blind individualism (Martinez 228).

Horne framed his call for teaching individualism as an appeal to unity. He accused the MAS curriculum of dividing Americans. These appeals to unity were veiled attempts to maintain white hegemony and are born from anxieties around demographic shifts in the US. Horne's strategy is to incapacitate students of color by preempting any attempt to foster the sort of coalitional thinking that could lead to political action. Horne has spent his career enacting legislation meant to undercut the coalitional capacities of BIPOC students just as they are becoming the majority in American schools, and fewer are planning to pursue higher education ("The NCES"; *Class of 2022*). Over his initial time as superintendent of Arizona schools (2003-2011), Horne introduced legislation to ban ethnic studies three times (Cammarota and Romero 55). To be clear, each piece of legislation was directed at Tucson High, because Tucson was the only school district in Arizona with an ethnic studies program. In 2010, Arizona's majority conservative state legislature passed House Bill 2281, which stated:

A school district or charter school in this state shall not include in its program of instruction any courses or classes that include any of the following:

1. Promote the overthrow of the United States government.

2. Promote resentment toward a race or class of people.

3. Are designed primarily for pupils of a particular ethnic group.

4. Advocate ethnic solidarity instead of the treatment of pupils as individuals.

(State of Arizona House of Representatives, Forty-Ninth Legislature)

Many scholars and activists have written about this legislation (see Cammarota; Huizar-Hernandez; Cabrera, "The Fight"; Owens; Santa Anna et al.). This scholarship emphasizes that Horne was "deliberately sabotaging the state's k-12 public education system," because there was precise data that Mexican American students enrolled in Mexican American studies classes were "twice as likely to graduate and three times more likely to go to college" (Sheridan 397). Nolan Cabrara's research demonstrated that Mexican American students who enrolled in MAS classes at Tucson High increased their grades and test scores in reading, writing, and math (Cabrera, "Missing"). Teachers, students, and parents across Tucson's school district repeatedly fought Horne's initiatives throughout those three years. Similarly to BSU and MALC student activists, they organized marches on the state capitol, disrupted school board meetings, and repeatedly wrote editorials combating Horne's fearmongering.

Horne blatantly ignored Tucson High teachers, students, and parents who tried to save the MAS program in 2010. He also repeatedly refused invitations to observe MAS classes at Tucson High. Instead, he hosted news conferences decrying the program as "anti-American," because he believed it fomented resentment towards white people and denied the idea that the US is the "land of opportunity" (Bustamante and Gargulinski). Hundreds of students and teachers from Tucson High protested at these news conferences and public hearings (Bustamante and Gargulinski). White and Mexican American students from Tucson High MAS classes wrote editorials directly confronting Horne's ignorant portrayals of their program. For example, Adrian Laruenzi wrote, "Contrary to the assumptions of Horne…I have experienced only love and respect as a white student" in MAS classes (Laruenzi). Selina Rodriquez explained that the MAS program did not "brainwash" her. It helped her become a "critical and conscious person" and "opened her eyes" to the barriers her Mexican American community faced in Tucson (Rodriquez). These tactics are similar to those also undertaken by BSU and MALC students in 1969-1970.

Despite these protests and public outcries, the conservative majority on Arizona's Education Committee refused to hear testimony from Tucson High's parents, students, and teachers when debating the legislation that would ban ethnic studies programs in Arizona (Cammarota and Romero 56). After the bill passed, district administrators in Tucson stationed over one hundred police officers around Tucson High and ordered a helicopter to monitor the campus to stave off potential protests (56). These intimidation tactics did not work. Immediately following these events, a coalition of teachers and students called "Save Ethnic Studies'' filed a lawsuit against Arizona's state government, challenging the ban's constitutionality, and the student organization UNIDOS "took over" the school district governing board meetings by "chaining and locking themselves" to the board members' chairs (61).

Like Harvill, Horne's appeals to political neutrality were veiled attempts to maintain white hegemony and explicit attempts to undercut the coalitional capacities of BIPOC students. They fly in the face of the transhistorical community of student-led coalitions that have fought for their school curricula to reflect their lived experiences. In response to the conservative calls to teach individualism, we must teach toward coalitions. As Kynard has effectively argued, student activists have been and continue to be the catalysts for social change across educational contexts. Without student-led initiatives, structures of whiteness in education do not change.

Attacks on "Woke Education" are Attacks on the New Majority (Present)

Federal courts deemed HB 2281 unconstitutional in 2017, but advocacy efforts have reignited since Horne recently won reelection as the superintendent of Arizona schools in 2022 (Depenbrock). His first legislative action was to introduce a bill banning CRT. [2] The conservative state

2 Using the same language as the 2010 law, the bill would have prohibited teachers in K-12 schools from creating courses that "are designed primarily for pupils of a particular ethnic group or advocate ethnic solidarity instead of the treatment of pupils as individuals" ("Arizona

legislature passed the bill, but Democratic Governor Katie Hobbs, who narrowly defeated 2020 election-denier Kari Lake in one of the most watched gubernatorial races of the 2022 midterm elections, vetoed the bill. Hobbs noted that "it is time to stop utilizing students and teachers in culture wars based on fearmongering and unfounded accusations" (Hobbs). Horne has since attempted to remove funding for dual language immersion programs throughout Arizona. Graduates of those dual language programs, like state representative Alma Hernandez, and director of Stand for Children Arizona, Georgina Monsalvo, are leading efforts to defend multilingual students' right to their own language (Bootzin).

Horne's attacks on CRT in public schools are only one example of the forty-four state legislatures that have launched a "nationwide anti-CRT crusade" (Schwartz). Forty other state legislatures are working to dismantle diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives within institutions of higher education (Chronicle Staff). The attacks on students and teachers in Arizona mirror those orchestrated nationally by Florida Governor Ron DeSantis and his political strategist, Christopher Rufo (Khalid and Snyder). Rufo has openly discussed his strategy for "unlocking new terrain in the culture war" by demonizing CRT (Goldberg). Rufo's rhetorical templates have been widely circulated among conservative politicians attempting to pass legislation prohibiting CRT in K-12 curricula and DEI programs in higher education. The formula includes two basic strategies: 1) accuse schools of promoting "woke indoctrination" that does not align with the views of the "general public" and 2) implement accountability measures that make sure schools celebrate "individual rights, patriotism, and Western Civilization" (Khalid and Snyder).

DeSantis laid out the next steps in this national movement in his interventions at the New College of Florida, where public accountability now resembles totalitarian state control. In fall of 2022, DeSantis hand-picked six conservative politicians, Rufo being one of them, to implement anti-DEI initiatives at New College. Since then, the conservative-dominated board replaced the college's president, abolished its diversity office, and denied tenure to five professors because their teaching and scholarship did not align with the board's goal to move "towards a more traditional liberal arts institution" (Anderson). These appeals to public accountability assume that conservative politicians speak for a "general public" that is predominantly white and conservative. This assumption does not align with the demographic realities of the US. Using state mandates to silence teachers and students committed to race-conscious education poses a serious threat to our democracy. As educators ourselves who work in Arizona, our response has been to look to the histories of student-led coalitions that have responded to similar attacks on our democracy. This approach invites educators across contexts to research the history of student activism in their contexts and use that research to craft courses that center coalitional work.

House"). If a "violation" was reported by a student or administrator, teachers could have been fined up to $5,000. During Horne's 2022 campaign, he promised that he would not only pass his ban against CRT but also investigate two hundred and fifty Arizona teachers who signed a petition that they would "defy the law" and teach CRT if Horne passed his bill ("News").

Our analysis of the coalition tactics of student activists in Arizona highlights the effective tactic of circulating organizers' arguments among sympathetic audiences. Importantly, former MALC student activist and current Pima County representative to the US Congress, Raúl Grijalva has employed a similar strategy for building support for the Right to Read Act. He does not directly engage with Horne's arguments or evoke Horne by name. Instead, he frames conservative attacks on school curricula as anti-democratic attempts to "erase the representation and histories of marginalized groups" and the role they play in constituting our national imaginary ("Grijalva: Protecting"). By centering the education system's role in constituting our democracy, Grijalva reframes the demonization of CRT as an attack on students' rights to access the histories and cultures that constitute not only their communities but also their democracy.

Present-day activists combating attacks on CRT can also adopt the coalitional tactic of approaching the community. A community frame for critiquing Tom Horne's attacks on CRT exposes how his arguments for color-blind individualism are deliberate attempts to limit students' access to the histories and cultures that constitute their local and national communities. Grijalva has used this appeal to the community to outline how our national education system perpetuates a standard of only teaching the history and culture of white communities. Grijalva frames the demonization of CRT as an attack on liberal democracy by emphasizing that our democracy is constituted by diverse cultures and histories and arguing that students have a right to learn about their community's histories in their classrooms and curricula. In response to recent Republican efforts to "ban books; censor curriculum; restrict students' civil rights; and/or punish teachers for accurately recounting our nation's history," Grijalva has introduced the Right to Read Act ("Rep. Grijalva"). The bill addresses disparities in access to library resources by increasing federal funding for school libraries and protecting students' access to reading materials that "highlight the experiences and histories of these marginalized individuals and groups" ("Grijalva: Protecting").

Conclusion

Grijalva's work rings alongside a symphony of voices in solidarity against conservative attacks on our curricula, but we have more coalitional work to do. In Texas, the lieutenant governor, Dan Patrick, has made ending DEI initiatives and denying tenure his main legislative priority (Surovell). In early May, the Texas state senate voted to oust tenure lines for new faculty hires (Brown). Patrick explains that this legislation ensures that professors can no longer "hide behind" tenure as they "continue blatantly advancing their agenda of societal division" (Patrick qt. in Surovell). These attacks on DEI and tenure discourage new faculty from applying to or "accepting jobs where their research or teaching could be subject to political interference" (Zahneis). Ohio's senate passed legislation ending several diversity efforts in public colleges and disallowing any policy or program "designed explicitly to segregate faculty, staff, or students by group identities such as race, sex, gender identity, or gender expression" (Marijolovic). The bill also stipulates that "students in associate and bachelor's degree programs would have to pass an American history

or American government class to graduate" (Marijolovic). Thirty-four other states have proposed similar legislation (Chronicle Staff).

Students have been and will continue to be the catalysts for change in our schools and on our campuses. As historians, scholars, and, most importantly, educators, we must study the transhistorical coalitions of student activists that have responded to the discourse surrounding attacks on our curricula in order to effectively respond to the present attacks on CRT. As educators, we can teach these histories to learn from the student activists of the past to inspire coalitional thinking in the present. Working in coalition with the legacy of student activists from our local communities means historicizing contemporary discriminatory educational policies. Building on the tactics of student activists, past and present, bolsters our ability to dismantle an education system that perpetuates white hegemony and undermines the promises of our liberal democracy.

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Solidarity in Feminist Iconography: Gloria Steinem and Dorothy Pitman Hughes

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Abstract: The visuality of solidarity in feminist iconography requires viewers to engage in critical and emotional ways that implicate both subjectivity and social change. By engaging intentionally with feminist icons exhibiting solidarity, viewers-as-critical-consumers participate in their own civic education. This engagement brings together the political consciousness and presence of being that exist in the viewer with the political and social ongoings of society that impact communities. This affective phenomena is where feminist icons may assume rhetorical power by circulating justice-oriented narratives in the public/private sphere of popular culture.

Rachel Molko is a doctoral student at Northeastern University. Her research explores feminist rhetorical theory in the context of contemporary popular visual culture. Her dissertation investigates the rhetorical significance of feminist icons, particularly seeking to engage their potentialities for rhetorical agency and rhetorical citizenship. Rachel received her MA from University of Central Florida and her BA from Florida State University.

Introduction

Within the literature on solidarity and coalition, there is a tension between those who claim that identity is a central tool for resistance and those who caution that any identity claim engages otherness and exclusion. That latter suggests that as a political tool, identity may be an obstacle to building solidarity in coalition. To bridge this obstacle, icons can operate as cultural mediators by offering a common ground for building connection in "shifting social and political climates" between individuals at distinct intersections of identity (Roberts 83). According to Lauren Berlantt, icons within women's culture[1] can function to create an *imagined* common ground for viewers of different social, cultural, and economic backgrounds (5). This study draws from Berlant to suggest that feminist icons in an imagined common groundwork by soliciting "belonging via modes of sentimental realism that span fantasy and experience and claim a certain emotional generality among women" (5). In other words, feminist icons may be able to pierce emotional, experiential, and ideological dimensions of culture to build community. Like bell hooks explains in *All About Love*, what we imagine is vital to what we can accomplish. Writing about the definitions, ideas, and examples of love that we are exposed to throughout our lives, hooks questions what it means to belong and how we can mine cultural discourse to chart our way to our desired destina-

1 A "women's culture" is distinguished by a view that women inevitably have something in common and need a conversation that feels intimate and revelatory (Berlant 5).

tion—such as a more just future. Inspired by hooks, then, I venture to ask, if we imagine it, then isn't it real? Can this imagined-real space be more than a fantasy? Can this affective discourse become a community resource? From this space, can we create material consequences that further the vision of feminism?

This article presents a case study of the Gloria Steinem and Dorothy Pitman Hughes photograph from 1971 by Dan Wynn (referred to in this article as the Wynn photograph) as an icon that has the potential to encourage solidarity, even though it doesn't represent the vast array of identity formations within the community of feminists. The Wynn photograph carries historical, symbolic, and ongoing significance, capturing an iconic moment in the women's liberation movement and the broader feminist movement of the 1970s. The black-and-white studio photograph captures the two friends standing side-by-side with their right fists in the air and solemn expressions on their faces. The prominent feminist activists Gloria Steinem and the late Dorothy Pitman Hughes[2] played crucial roles in advancing women's rights and challenging societal norms. Steinem and Pitman Hughes embody intersectional feminist solidarity, which recognizes that individuals can face multiple forms of discrimination and oppression simultaneously based on their race, gender, class, and other intersecting identities. Specifically, Steinem and Pitman Hughes collaborated and advocated for both gender equality and racial justice and continue to serve as sources of inspiration for those working towards social justice.

Historically, the mainstream feminist movement has struggled with inclusivity and adequately addressing the concerns of people from diverse backgrounds, sometimes being conflated entirely with white feminism. However, the image of Steinem and Pitman Hughes together continues to circulate as a reminder of the importance of diverse voices and the need for inclusive activism. While the photograph is from the 1970s, its themes and messages remain relevant today. The fight for gender equality, racial justice, and intersectional feminism continues, and the photograph can inspire and motivate current and future generations of activists. It reminds viewers of the progress made and the work still to be done in creating a more equitable and inclusive society. Focusing on this image as an icon is necessary because it has not been the focus of rhetorical study in the past; it is memorable and oft recreated; and it has maintained consistent relevance in a mainstream sociopolitical and cultural context (transcending the boundaries of 1970s feminism). In what follows, I offer background on Gloria Steinem and Dorothy Pitman Hughes relationship and discuss the significance of rhetorical iconicity. Then, I give a brief overview of the literature on feminist solidarity, often explored through the notion of coalition. I then present three rhetorical moves that the Wynn image, as a feminist icon, makes to communicate solidarity. These moves include emphasizing connection, centering civic responsibility, and circulating visual-emotional resonance.

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2 Dorothy Pitman Hughes passed away on December 1st, 2022 at the home of her family in Tampa. She was 84 years old (Noveck).

Gloria Steinem and Dorothy Pitman Hughes, 1971

Gloria Steinem and Dorothy Pitman Hughes met through Steinem's journalistic work at New York Magazine in 1969. After an interview for Steinem's column, the women formed a friendship and became speaking partners at meetings for women's liberation on college campuses and in communities (Gutterman). Between 1969 and 1973, the women traveled as a team with other Black feminists such as radical feminist lawyer Florynce Kennedy and queer Black feminist and civil rights advocate Margaret Sloan (Baker). After their years on the road, Steinem and Pitman Hughes released the first issue of Ms. magazine in 1972. The magazine became the first national American feminist magazine and is still in print today. A year earlier, in 1971, Steinem and Pitman Hughes posed for the iconic image at the center of this case study. The Wynn photograph first appeared in the October issue of Esquire, an American men's magazine, emphasizing a call to solidarity between the feminist and civil rights movements. Over time, the photograph has also become a representation of solidarity across different marginalized groups in the feminist movement because it emphasizes the importance of addressing various forms of oppression simultaneously.

Figure 1: Gloria Steinem and Dorothy Pitman Hughes, 1971, Dan Wynn.

The photograph itself is visually powerful and conveys a potent message, providing representation for both white and Black women in the feminist movement. The image features Steinem and Pitman Hughes positioned in front of a gray-gradient background. The simplicity of the image is striking, where the lack of excess suggests a desire to eliminate distractions from the message. The color scheme elicits a serious tone, one that is supported by their resolute expressions. The women are centered in the image, side by side, and facing the camera directly. Their gaze suggests a commitment to their message, a shamelessness in confronting the viewers as their audience. Originally, the audience was Esquire magazine's male viewership, which positions the image as an embodiment of a challenge to the male gaze in a literal sense.

The photograph has traveled far beyond the exclusivity of the niche Esquire magazine and sits in residence at the National Portrait Gallery, a Smithsonian institution, that "present[s] people of remarkable character and achievement" (Bagan). Steinem's hair is straight and covers her chest, her "money pieces" (the sections of hair growing from the hairline above the forehead) are dyed light blonde—her signature look. Pitman Hughes wears her hair natural with tight coils, styled as an afro. She also wears large hoop earrings. Pitman Hughes' hair and accessories carry an aesthetic of Black culture and style of the times donned also by iconic entertainer Diana Ross and Black feminist radical professor and activist Angela Davis.[3] Steinem and Pitman Hughes both wear long-sleeve turtlenecks in a neutral color. In front of them is neutral-colored draped fabric meant to resemble a skirt. Both women are holding their right fists clenched in the air above their heads and in front of their face, a gesture referred to as the raised fist.

Rhetorical Iconicity

Before analyzing the image, it is important to discuss the rhetorical significance of feminist iconography. Feminist iconography requires viewers to engage in critical and emotional ways that implicate both subjectivity and social change. As Lauren Berlant implies, imagined common ground is often circulated through aesthetic and emotional narratives found in books, personal testimony, essays, films, television, and other visual genres such as icons. Herein lies the rhetorical significance of icons for feminist solidarity. By engaging intentionally with feminist icons exhibiting solidarity, viewers-as-critical-consumers participate in their own civic education. This engagement brings together the political consciousness and presence of being that exist in the viewer with the political and social ongoings of society that impact communities. Popular culture narratives create and circulate a specific set of expectations that inform the role individuals assume in given interactions, dynamics, and relationships. With these narratives come icons that reference the values and outcomes of the narratives. While these narratives begin to inform an audience's worldview, they also create community by binding members to the same promises—or the same enemy. This affective phenomena is where feminist icons may assume rhetorical power by circulating justice-oriented narratives in the public/private sphere of popular culture.

For example, "Barbie" (the idea, doll, and franchise) has been recently reintegrated into the public imagination as a feminist icon through Greta Gerwig's critically acclaimed box-office hit film of the same name. As a doll, Barbie invokes a continually shifting narrative of women's place in society. At first, she was introduced as an alternative role-playing toy to the common "baby doll." The Barbie doll invited children to imagine themselves as adults with jobs and interests outside of

3 Nicole Fleetwood traces Davis' perspective on the uptake of her aesthetic during the early 70s. She summarizes: "Davis explains how the attack on black radical and progressive thinking and style during the era subjected many, Afro-wearing black women to routine stops and searches by law enforcement. Yet she notes as well how the Afro has become aestheticized and depoliticized as fashion and style for consumer culture" (68).

child-rearing. While Barbie's iconographic narrative begins by shifting public discourse on women's domesticity to women's career diversity and self-expression, Barbie has also been complicit in the unrealistic beauty standards and sexualization imposed on women. Yet, in 2023, Greta Gerwig reintroduces Barbie; living in "Barbieland" means that everyone has a role to play, women make the important decisions without being in competition with each other, and men function as supportive accessories. The new Barbie fantasy may be a caricature of a feminist future, but it attempts to deal with the consequences of hegemony in politics, personal development, and relationships. The film has made feminist ideals a mainstream topic of conversation in the pinkest and most hyper-feminine way possible–without trivializing them. The film seeks to offer a reimagined-real affective space through and for feminist visual culture–and it carries its power through rhetorical iconicity.

Thus, the idea is not for trickle-down empowerment from icons, but for icons to generate conversation over the varying relationships to the images, values, and personas that they offer. Icons, as discursive articulations, allow individuals to imagine their positioning in the world. In *On Racial Icons*, Nicole Fleetwood contends that racial icons can function as "a counterbalance to intentionally demeaning characterization[s of Black Americans]" and that "racial icons can serve to uplift, literally and symbolically, 'the black race' and the nation" (4). While she is speaking specifically in the context of the national Black community, I forward that the simulation of solidarity inherent in engagement with icons is a place from which to draw a morsel of empowerment through feminist narratives as well—connecting through affinity and shared goals. Fleetwood suggests that "these images can impact us with such emotional force that we are compelled: to do, to feel, to see" (4). This process, albeit in reverse, mediated consciousness-raising manifests in the 21st-century through popular culture discourse. Interacting with visually-represented solidarity in feminist iconography *through sigh*t simulates *emotional connection of differently-experienced* (yet shared) narratives among non-men in patriarchy, all with the hope that the connection is strong enough to bring us together in action.

I recognize that this process is an appropriation of an externally provided image and the role that accompanies it. But if this phenomenon is already taking place, let us analyze the apparatus by which this kind of interpellation is imposed. Judith Lakämper suggests that the basis for solidarity is not the "affective attachment to a shared fantasy" but "from an investment in the conversation with others who struggle in similar, yet also different, ways with the genres they encounter" (134; 132). Despite the advancements in women's rights, the changing landscape of media, and the mainstreaming of feminist discourse, communities continue to organize around images from a shared feminist history. The Wynn photograph has endured as a featured visual of feminist activism for over fifty years in various forms including posters at protests, images in social media posts, alluded to in reenacted photographs by people of all ages, races, and backgrounds, and more. In this case study, I argue that the image exhibits solidarity through three rhetorical moves: emphasizing connection between differently positioned women in political discourse, centering

civic responsibility to respond to social injustice, and projecting visual-emotional resonance that transcends generations.

Solidarity and Feminism

I define solidarity as a sense of shared responsibility for the wellbeing of others. Often, a problem arises when theorizing the relationship between individual and community in a politics of equity and change. On the one hand, feminism underscores subjectivity, a perspective coming from a specific body, history, and status, as a place from which to draw knowledge. On the other hand, feminism values systemic change, the fundamental reform of social protocol and procedures that exceed individual circumstances of oppression. These foci, subjectivity and social change, engage a duality of feminism, one which requires attention to the individual as well as the community in achieving feminist goals. Solidarity brings these foci together in considering the self in relation to others in the pursuit of shared goals. More specifically, this study posits that the visuality of solidarity in feminist iconography requires views to engage in critical and emotional ways that implicate both subjectivity and social change.

A particularly *feminist* solidarity refers to a coalitional response to inequitable treatment of minoritized people and communities. Alice Wickstrom et al. suggest that solidarity "emerges from the capacity to affect and be affected, through care, compassion, and empathy with and for others" with the goal of "social transformations that are made possible through 'democratic engagement'" (857). The hinge here is that solidarity is care with a purpose carried out through affective and political encounters of care and advocacy. I'm interested in framing solidarity as an embodied practice rather than a democratic engagement. The affordance here is to be able to emphasize the bodily, and otherwise material, elements of solidarity. Coming from a new materialist perspective, Wickstrom et al. acknowledge that while "discursive assemblages between different bodies" are not inherently aligned, that the "embodied struggles support the emergence of solidarity" through a shared sense of vulnerability, public affirmation, and symbolic resources. In other words, the source and manifestation of oppression, and the language used to identify it, might not be universal. However, willingness to share, responsiveness and recognition, and common references—such as popular culture icons—allow feminists to enact solidarity. In the case of this study, Gloria Steinem and Dorothy Pitman Hughes' friendship and political partnership offers a prolific example of the power of unity in the face of difference.

While feminist solidarity can be founded on personal meaning attached to experience and the commonalities thereof, the presence of power imbalances, ideological differences, and the impact of historical relationships to power and privilege should not be ignored. For example, Linda Berg and Maria Carbin illustrate the damaging effects of "we" rhetorics under the guise of feminist solidarity. After an attack on a Muslim woman in Sweden, Muslim feminist activists started #HijabUppropet (#HijabOutcry), a call for Swedish feminists to post selfies wearing hijab. Berg

and Carbin illustrate how the well-intentioned participation of non-Muslim Swedish women risked "reinstalling the white citizen as the self-evident subject of feminist solidarity" through cultural appropriation (134). The visuality of white women in hijab obscures the racist motives that prompt violent attacks. Rather than condemning racism, prejudice, and hatred, the campaign turned into a conversation about the right for all women to choose to cover. The study illustrates 1) that there are still barriers for women of color to function as agents of feminist solidarity as well as 2) the stumbling blocks in the visual enactment of solidarity.

In the case of the Wynn photograph, similar imbalances became apparent in the rhetorical life of the image. While the women are featured in the photograph in equal measure, the Esquire article that first accompanied the image framed their activism solely in the context of Steinem's contributions to the women's movement. In the years to follow, Steinem's fame and public intrigue overshadowed Pitman Hughes, and other non-white activists, in mainstream coverage of feminist activism. In fact, Gloria Steinem has been referred to as "the world's most famous feminist" despite her consistently collaborative engagement with feminist activism suggesting that she rarely acts alone (Karbo). In any case, the visual harmony represented in the image does not necessarily mirror the public perception of the figures in the photograph, but that doesn't change the complementary nature of their friendship and the work they were able to accomplish together.

Clearly, any attempt to describe membership or belonging also implies a boundary, indicating which groups or individuals are different or "other." Thus, within the literature on solidarity and identity, there is a tension between schools of thought. On one hand, there are those who claim that identity is a central tool for resistance. On the other hand, there are those who caution that identity is an obstacle to solidarity rather than a tool because any identity claim has the consequence of imposing otherness and exclusion. A solution to this tension might be to encourage an active construction of identity rather than assuming identity from fixed categories. Similarly, Elizabeth R. Cole and Zakiya T. Luna discuss how feminists reconceptualize identity as an articulation of how their bodies are controlled by the state, rather than any inherent association with their embodied identity. Their study illustrates how feminists who occupy subordinated identities have developed a complex understanding of the ways that identities are crafted through lived experience, rather than through phenotypic commonalities as sole points of connection.

However, active constructions of identity may not account for the imposition of others' perspectives of that identity. Agnes Varda speaks to this imposition, citing the power of seeing and looking in reclaiming one's subjectivity. In an interview documented in the film Filming Desire, Varda states, "The first feminist gesture is to say: 'OK, they're looking at me. But I'm looking at them.' The act of deciding to look, of deciding that the world is not defined by how people see me, but how I see them" (Mandy). Her assertion underscores the rhetorical significance of paying attention and looking. The starting point for a feminist praxis, according to Varda, is to look, to pay attention, to see from where we stand, to critically consume the world around us, and to construct our world-

view from meaning that resonates with our experience. In a sense, Varda asks us to make peace with being seen and to ground ourselves in the power of looking back. Thus, this project brings a feminist rhetorical perspective to the potentialities of viewer engagement with textual, visual, and material properties of icons that may significantly, but often implicitly, affect citizens' understanding of their own role in the community.

Solidarity in Feminist Iconography

Earlier in the essay, I describe the image from the National Portrait Gallery that hosts the image in its entirety (shown in Figure 1). While it is important to consider the background and context of this image as part of the rhetorical situation within a case study, it is also important to recognize that the context in which the photograph is encountered is oftentimes absent of the photograph's origin story and historical significance—a typical occurrence in the rhetorical life of icons. As the visual dimension of images exists in a constant present, remaining unchanged by and untethered to the passing of time, ideology embedded in the image is often detached from specific context when the image stands alone—or the image may take on the context of other rhetorical situations through circulation. For this reason, I analyze the image as an image, observe the visual and rhetorical presence of solidarity, and draw from Robert Hariman and John Louis Lucaites to pull visual and contextual significance from the image and its history. In doing so, my goal is to illustrate the resonance of solidarity in feminist iconography.

Emphasizing Connection

Minimizing differences maximizes unity in the context of this photograph. The nature of iconic imagery lies largely in its ability to reproduce ideology. Especially evident in the Wynn photograph is a visual phenomenon of icons which "presents asymmetrical relationships as if they were mutually beneficial" (Hariman and Lucaites 9). The racial incongruity between Steinem and Pitman Hughes has been a source of skepticism and, at times, a dismissal of their call to solidarity. However, the composition of the image and the congruity of their styling suggests that both figures are equally important in the frame[work] of their efforts. This marked phenomenon of iconicity suggests that the image "presents a social order as if it were a natural order" (9). Without containing any reference to the contrary, the image omits any notion of misalignment between the figures. In this sense, the image begins from a place of sameness or similarity to emphasize the call to solidarity. The color palette, the framing, and the sameness in stance, gesture, expression, and dress bring the women together in their call to solidarity.

The intentionality of the image in its totality mirrors the intentionality of Steinem and Pitman Hughes activism in a number of ways. First, filtering the image in black-and-white eliminates a stark contrast in skin pigment without obscuring that the women come from different racial backgrounds. This choice is important because ignoring difference can result in erasure of differently

experienced forces of oppression, a pitfall that contemporary feminism is wont to avoid. However, the filter creates a uniform color palette that allows for an overall harmonious visual. Second, no woman is centered in the image. This choice allows for both women to take up as much space as their bodies require without framing any individual as the "subject" or "star" of the image. According to Hariman and Lucaites, "photography is grounded in phenomenological devices crucial to establishing the performative experience" (31). In other words, the camera shapes the viewer's perception and actively involves viewers in constructing meaning, leading to a performative experience where they engage with the photograph on a subjective level. The framing, or boundaries of the photograph, marks the work as a special selection of reality that, in this case, is situated in feminist and civil rights activism of the 1960s and 1970s. Thus, the framing of the image allows that they are both expressing the message of solidarity and action in the image. Had either woman been in the foreground of the image, the message of solidarity would have been associated more so with the foregrounded person. Similarly to the lack of centering, had only one person been making the gesture, the call to solidarity would have been associated with only one person or one cause—and may not have been as compelling.

Third, the fashion in the image strives to create the sense of togetherness. This is where the power of clothing and the composure of dress is utilized. The turtlenecks offer a streamlined, dramatic, and striking silhouette that aligns with the urgency of their call to solidarity. During the 1970s, during which Steinem and Pitman Hughes worked together through their activism, turtlenecks were fashionable for other activism and advocacy groups. For example, Black Panthers and their supporters often wore black turtlenecks. While sporting a different color, the choice in dress for the Wynn image brings together the origins of the raised fist gesture in the fight for racial equality with the feminist aim of securing women's rights. The clothes bring the women together visually as one, most notably in the choice to stand together behind the abstract skirt. The sharing of a skirt suggests that the women are presenting a united front as women, for the skirt in 1970s mainstream America was seen as a predominantly female style. Thus, the photograph speaks to women supporting women in the face of injustice, while demanding audience involvement in, or at least awareness of, the cause.

Centering Civic Responsibility

The women are united in solidarity most overtly through the raised fist gesture, a gesture laden with a message of equality and namely civil rights. When the photograph was taken, the raised fist was also referred to as the Black power salute. Thus, the Wynn image is an interesting space to think about communicating social knowledge. In *No Caption Needed: Iconic Photographs, Public Culture, and Liberal Democracy*, Hariman and Lucaites[4] say that an iconic pho-

4 They also add that photographs are a particularly apt medium for enacting this phenomenon because they are a mute record of social performance

tograph “must activate deep structures of belief that guide social interaction and civic judgment and then apply them to the particulate case” (10). Undoubtedly, the image communicates social knowledge through its historical and cultural significance, but it also contradicts hegemonic ideologies sex and race. Namely, the image communicates the civic responsibility to advocate for and prioritize human rights, racial and gendered. However, this social knowledge does not necessarily come from “deep structures of belief that guide social interaction and civic judgment.” The social knowledge in the image contradicts deep structures that guide belief because the dominant ideology at the time of the image’s creation did not align with the political aims for which Steinem and Pitman Hughes were advocating. Hariman and Lucaites write that iconic images are born in conflict or confusion (36). The raised fist might not have become a powerful symbol if equality and civil rights were already embedded in society’s deep structures of belief. The kind of social knowledge in the iconic image comes from critical thinking, awareness, and a compulsion to move toward more just social practices.

Thus, the exigence of the image is to contradict the status quo through solidarity. However, looking at the image from a contemporary standpoint, the raised fist is more likely seen as a symbol of solidarity and pride specific to the Black community. The Wynn image itself follows another iconic moment that took place at the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City. During the medal ceremony for the track event, Tommie Smith and John Carlos, two Black male Olympic sprinters, held their fists in the air with heads bowed for the entirety of the American national anthem (shown in Figure 2). The gesture was embodied to honor the Black community in America, but also to draw attention to the Olympic Project for Human Rights at San Jose State University, addressing the continued prejudice imposed on Black America. It is worth noting that their demonstration involved more than the raised fist gesture, but other material and symbolic references to racial and social injustice in the United States on a notably apolitical international stage.[5] However, what these historical moments share are the centering of Black activism on the world stage, the signification of solidarity in community, and a demonstration by a pair of activists.

5 For more on the context of Smith and Carlos’ demonstration at the 1968 Olympics, please visit: https://www.zinnedproject.org/if-we-knew-our-history/fists-of-freedom-an-olympic-story-not-taught-in-school/

Figure 2: Photograph of Tommie Smith and John Carlos standing on the Olympic podium, shot in 1968 (Zirin).

There is similar, albeit astonishingly unequal, negative feedback in the reception of the Olympians' and the feminists' political gesture. In Smith and Carlos' case, they received a lifetime Olympic ban and Smith lost his NFL offer, among other unjust consequences[6] (Marinelli 446). In Steinem and Pitman Hughes' case, the Esquire article framed their activism solely in the context of Steinem's contributions to the women's movement, all the while calling Steinem's character into question. In the accompanying article titled "She: The Awesome Power of Gloria

Steinem," Leonard Levitt assessed that Steinem was "good at manipulating the very rich and the very famous" and described her writing as "pedestrian" (87, 202). As evidenced by the title, he dramatically obscured the presence and relevance of Pitman Hughes all the while publishing disparaging commentary on Steinem. Additionally, Levitt ignored the presence of the raised fist gesture in the image, which could reveal a causality between the efficacy of the raised fist and the bodies that wield it. For two black bodies upholding the gesture received condemnation on an international level, while the visuality of resistance from an interracial female pair is at first dismissed

6 It would take decades before their stance would be nationally celebrated and the athletes seen as heroes of racial protest. In 2005, San Jose State University unveiled a 22-foot high statue of their protest titled Victory Salute. In most cases, lasting iconicity takes time to cement itself in the public imagination, where meaning can surface beyond first impressions and the social mores of a given time period.

and, later, exalted as a beacon of feminist hope, history, and solidarity. [7]

There are key differences in the images, to be sure, including the rhetorical situation of each image, the posture and stance of the subjects, and the way they are dressed. The image of Steinem and Pitman Hughes was less extemporaneous in that it was planned for, staged, and studio quality, serving as visual accompaniment to an article about Steinem's activism for liberation. Not to mention that the visualization of women's bodies in a men's magazine drew a different kind of attention to the gesture of solidarity—one that had the consequence of undermining the significance of social justice activism and feminism in general. As alluded to earlier, Steinem and Pitman Hughes appropriate a demonstration of racial power as a demonstration of women's/feminist activism. This gesture embodies a contemporary intersectional feminist rhetoric of solidarity by inserting a visual marker that counters the idea of white feminism. With the origins of the raised fist located squarely in Black counter politics, the fist interrupts a reading of the article that takes-for-granted Steinem's whiteness and beauty as the central draws of her image as a public figure. While the performative stance between the Olympic moment and the Esquire photo are similar, the difference in response and ultimately in rhetorical effect can be traced to the bodies "speaking" and the rhetorical situations in which those bodies exist.

Circulating Visual-Emotional Resonance

Because the outcomes of justice and solidarity discourse are deeply tied to the material conditions of women, people of color, and marginalized communities, there is an element of emotionality that the image evokes. Physical bodies center the humanity of feminist activism in a way that text and caricature do not. Hariman and Lucaites write that the performance trafficked by bodies evokes emotional responses when the expressive body is placed in the social space of the photograph. The social space of the photograph refers to the social nature in which photographs are shot and experienced, creating a network between the photographer, the camera, the figures in the image, and the viewer. In the case of the Wynn photograph, the image deals with deeply personal and socially significant issues related to gender equality, identity, and power dynamics—all of which are relevant to ourselves and our loved ones in one way or another. Combining the social and psychological attachment to these issues with our attachment to our desire for personal and communal well-being is going to bring about an emotional response. These emotional responses form a powerful basis for solidarity and action through the rhetorical situation of icons as still imagery (36).

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7 This is further supported by the caption under the photograph in Esquire's original printing. It reads: "Body and Soul. Gloria Steinem and her partner, Dorothy Pitman Hughes, demonstrate the style that has thrilled audiences on the Women's Liberation lecture circuit" (Levitt 89). The term "thrilled" has a positive connotation.

Alongside the subject matter, the apparatus of the image is involved in an interactive dynamic with the viewer that involves emotional resonance. Hariman and Lucaites explain that one observes social interaction depicted within the frame and by doing so, those in the frame are put into a social relationship with the viewer (36). Steinem and Pitman Hughes, purposefully or not, are utilizing this feature of photography to speak directly to the viewer and bring them into a conversation about change. Particularly, it is important for iconic imagery to situate a message within a particular scene and specific moral context, both of which the Wynn image exemplifies as a visual artifact of justice activism and feminism, more specifically. The clear message embedded in the image, and the emotional resonance associated with humanitarian work, has allowed the image to evolve as "a technique for visual persuasion" in specific rights-related political discourse (Hariman and Lucaites 12). Because it is easily referenced, reproduced, and altered, the image offers a means to tap into the power of circulation and the rich intertext of iconic allusiveness for rhetorical effect through its persuasive emotional efficacy.

Notably, the image is present at high points of contemporary feminist activism such as the Women's March of 2016, the rally against the murder of George Floyd at the hands of police in 2020 (shown in Figure 3), and the Pro-Choice protests of 2022. Not only do the messages in the photograph clearly resonate, but there are layers of historical significance that bring the image into context with leading feminist concerns of today such as antiracism and justice, women's rights, and representation. According to Hariman and Lucaites, iconic photographs are "accessible and centrally positioned…images for exploring how political action and inaction can be constituted and controlled through visual media that tap into public memory" (5, 6). The continued presence of the image within feminist organizing as well as the digital sphere suggests that it is influential in shaping collective memory as well as providing figural resources for communicative action. The emotional impact of the Wynn photograph lies in its representation of unity, empowerment, intersectionality, historical significance, and the ongoing fight for equality. It encapsulates the spirit of activism and the deeply felt emotions that come with advocating for social change. Not only does the emotional resonance of the image come from its association with the progress Steinem and Pitman Hughes helped achieve, but the emotions conveyed in the image are timeless and continue to resonate with people today. The struggle for gender and racial equality is ongoing, making the image relevant and emotionally charged in contemporary contexts. All the while, its reproduction and reenactment evidences the impactful and resonating rhetoric of feminist iconicity.

Figure 3: Photograph of person holding the Wynn image on a protest sign at a rally against the killing of George Floyd, 2020, Kevin Mazur.

The image's role as a tap into the public memory has allowed for its capacity to influence to increase over time. To learn where the image has gone and how it has served feminists, I took to the internet.[8] I was able to trace a plethora of hits that feature the image, including but not limited to: Articles, message boards, social media posts, timelines, captions, art, retail pages, blogs, listicles, press releases, film reviews, event pages, college websites, fundraisers, podcasts, interviews, women's march posters, and online exhibits. The most striking outcome of my search was not that the image has lived in all of the aforementioned rhetorical situations, but that it had been reenacted over the years by all different kinds of people. The specificity of the image creates opportunities for reproductions, demonstrating how aesthetic familiarity factors into iconic efficacy. In fact, the three elements outlined earlier (color palette; framing; shared stance,

8 A limitation of this approach is in the 22-years between the creation of the original image and the creation of the internet for public use in 1993, which did not promise universal access. In addition, the evolution of the internet and computer software has made early communicative platforms obsolete and unreachable. However, I was able to collect 84 meaningful hits (out of 835 total hits) published between 2000 and 2021, searching until I did not come across any new hits. The collection includes hits featuring the image alongside text, all of which refer to the image as iconic and feminist. This collection cannot account for the existence of the image in posters on walls, t-shirts, collages, and other meaningful manifestations.

gesture, expression, and dress) have continued to be present in replications. Aesthetic familiarity stems from "the realm of everyday experience and common sense" that creates a "moment of visual eloquence" (Hariman and Lucaites 30). This again draws heavily from the embodiment of the call to solidarity in the raised fist but also through the visuality of the female body in the simple and visually uncomplicated composition of the photograph.

Figure 4: Photograph of two young girls reenacting the Wynn image, 2021, Shauna Upp Pellegrini.

As demonstrated by the photograph of the young girls recreating the image (Figure 4), icons interpolate a form of citizenship that can be imitated. In "Rhetorical Citizenship: Studying the Discursive Crafting and Enactment of Citizenship," Christian Kock and Lisa S. Villadsen write that the "notion of rhetorical citizenship offers a frame for studying very diverse discursive and other symbolic formations to see how they may either contribute to or alter common conceptions and practices relating to societal identity and cohesion" (582). Icons, as discursive and symbolic formations, can define relationships between civic actors by functioning as a mode of civic performance (Hariman and Lucaites 12, 30). In the case of Wynn photograph, the image offers a civic through an enactment of feminist values of friendship, solidarity, and activism. Both women exude a sense of empowerment and confidence in the image. Their raised fists and assertive gestures convey the idea that they are standing up against inequality and injustice, emphasizing the importance of self-empowerment in the fight for equality.

By posing with their bodies in a confrontational stance, holding a politically charged ges-

ture, Steinem and Pitman Hughes demonstrate that they are women with power to advocate for their stake in the political discourse. While they contradict the dominant ideology in capitalist patriarchy, they are defining an oppositional relationship to the state—and the opportunity to catalyze dissent is powerful for feminist theorizing on a large scale. Viewers who feel represented by the icon are realized not as individuals, but as feminists, dissenters, citizens, or other politically implicated interpellations. However, because representation is always incapable of reproducing the social totality, any political discourse or image necessarily fails to meet all needs while it cannot avoid signifying biases, exclusions, and denials (37). The image itself is not a perfect model or representation of solidarity, equality, womanhood, or anything else, but it offers a visual touchstone in an often abstract political discourse.

Figure 5: Gloria Steinem and Dorothy Pitman Hughes, 2013, Dan Bagan.

In 2013, Gloria Steinem and Dorothy Pitman Hughes reenacted the Wynn photograph themselves at a birthday party and fundraiser organized by Pitman Hughes. According to Dan Bagan, the photographer of the 2013 photograph (Figure 5), someone from the crowd "of hundreds" called out for the women "to do the salute" (Hampton). Referring, of course, to the raised first that is part of their visual legacy as friends and activists. Reenacting a photograph can be a way to commemorate a significant moment in history and reflect on the progress made since then. It

allows individuals to revisit their past activism and the impact it has had on the feminist movement and society as a whole. By reenacting their photograph, Steinem and Pitman Hughes reflect the continued relevance of their message and ideals, reminding audiences of the ongoing struggle for gender equality and social justice and emphasizing that the issues they fought for are still pertinent today. Reenactments of iconic images can generate conversations, raise awareness, and reinvigorate public interest in specific issues. By revisiting the photograph and sharing the reenactment, Steinem and Pitman Hughes can reignite discussions on feminism, gender equality, and social justice, prompting a renewed focus on these topics.

Limitations

While Gloria Steinem's national media presence only grew, Dorothy Pitman Hughes continued to prioritize community activism. Some of her endeavors involved grassroots organizing in Harlem, advocating for Black-owned businesses, and urging the importance of childcare and welfare as tenets of the women's movement. The only biography written about Pitman Hughes features the iconic raised fist photograph as the cover image. Titled *With Her Fist Raised: Dorothy Pitman Hughes and the Transformative Power of Black Community Activism* and written by Laura L. Lovett, the book was published in 2021 (Figure 6). Pitman Hughes shares the cover of her own biography with Steinem. Although Steinem's image appears faded, leaving Pitman Hughes a highlighted figure. This choice begs several questions. Does Pitman Hughes only bear recognition for her proximity to Steinem? Is the image a way for the publishers to profit from Steinem's commodified image? Did the publishers think the biography wouldn't sell without centering the friendship between Steinem and Pitman Hughes? There was certainly an effort to emphasize Pitman Hughes as the "main character" in the image, so why include Steinem at all? Predictably, the culprit here would be racial capitalism, but also white-heteronormative standards of beauty that are universalized in America, and the centrality of white women in the women's movement.

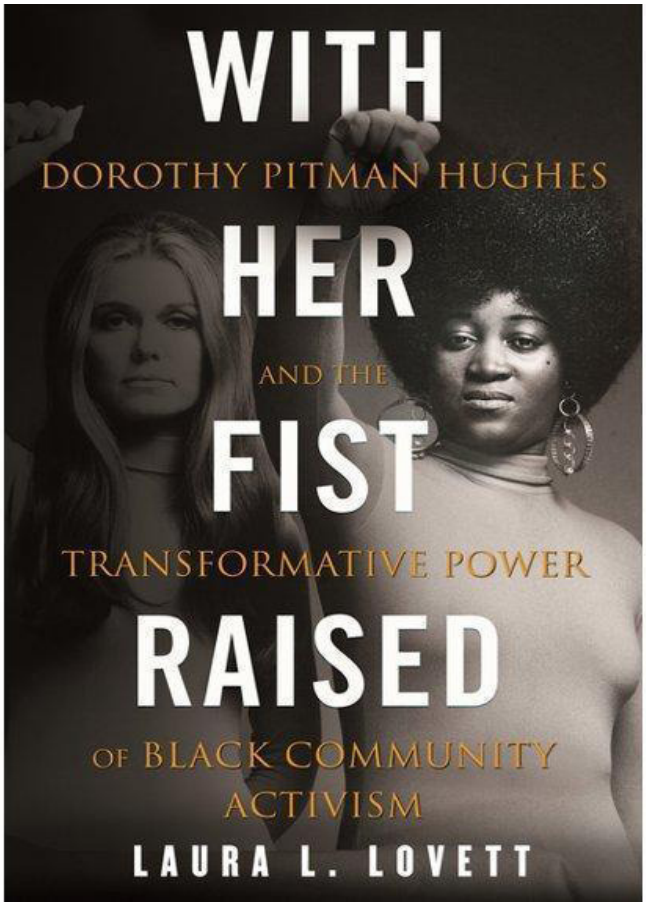

Figure 6: Image of the book cover of *With Her Fist Raised: Dorothy Pitman Hughes and the Transformative Power of Black Community Activism* by Laura L. Lovett, 2021.

While the media's fascination with Steinem brought attention to the causes she championed, it also served to erase the presence of the other valuable leaders of the Women's Movement such as Pitman Hughes. Pitman Hughes' made enduring contributions to feminism, civil rights, and humanitarian welfare, becoming a noted community activist when she began raising money for imprisoned civil rights protesters in the 1960s. Raising three daughters, she took it upon herself to address a lack of childcare services in her neighborhood. In 1966, she founded the West 80th Street Community Child Day Care Center in Manhattan, charging a tuition fee of five dollars per child per week, regardless of income bracket. The day care center became a community resource that offered professionalization opportunities and housing assistance. These efforts are in line with Pitman Hughes' foundation for her feminism, which stems from the need for safety, food, shelter, and childcare, health and safety issues that white feminism has often failed to take up holistically and inclusively.

Conclusion

In this study, I analyzed the rhetorical significance of solidarity in feminist iconic imagery through Dan Wynn's 1971 photograph of Gloria Steinem and Dorothy Pitman Hughes. In doing so, I presented three rhetorical moves that the Wynn photograph makes as a feminist icon to commu-

nicate solidarity: emphasizing connection between differently positioned women in political discourse, centering civic responsibility to respond to social injustice, and projecting visual-emotional resonance that has endured as a featured visual of feminist activism for over fifty years. Steinem and Hughes were not only collaborators but also friends. The genuine camaraderie between them is evident in the image, reflecting the emotional support that can be found in alliances formed through shared ideals. The image has become an inspirational symbol for feminists and activists who seek to challenge systemic inequalities. It reminds individuals of the power of solidarity and the importance of standing up for justice. The photograph was taken during a period of significant social and political change, when the women's liberation movement and the civil rights movement were intersecting.

Serving as a visual representation of the changing landscape of feminism, the photograph's continued relevance to feminist causes of today also serves as a reminder that there is more work to be done. By revisiting feminist iconography as rhetorical scholars, we can continue the work of interrogating the imbrication of racial capitalism in popular culture. A few ways we might take up this challenge would be to examine how capitalist systems co-opt feminist ideals for profit while perpetuating inequality and exploitation; how media portrays women and their agency in relation to consumerism, work, and activism; and how marginalized communities use these icons to challenge racial capitalism and demand justice. This approach can help shed light on the ways in which systems of oppression operate so as to empower individuals and communities to resist and demand change.

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Feminist Resilience at the Heart of Coalition Work

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Abstract: This chapter recounts the author's experiences working within groups as she considers, "How can we work with each other and with other scholars in rhetoric and across disciplines to create coalitions situated in lived experiences and feminist praxis, as we teach, learn, write, and research across different places and positions?" Through the author's membership in feminist professional and community organizations, with an extensive history in coalition work and as a writing teacher, she sees the connections between feminist rhetorical resilience, writing studies, and the buildings of classroom communities, to coalition work. Prevalent to her understanding is the need for a feminist ethic of care and trust in the mission of the coalition to bring goals and events to fruition.

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Introduction

After reading the Call for Papers for the summer 2023 special issue of *Peitho*: *Coalition as Commonplace: Centering Feminist Scholarship, Pedagogies, and Leadership Practices*, I sat for a moment and paused on the question, "How can we work with each other and with other scholars in rhetoric and across disciplines to create coalitions situated in lived experiences and feminist praxis?" (Clark-Oates, Maraj, Matzke, Rankins-Robertson). My initial thought was, "Well, within coalitions we should teach each other, learn from each other, and write together, not just work together." I wondered, "Could writing be the thing that helps us learn from each other?" and also wondered., "Could writing in times of retreat, together and apart, be an answer to helping us get to know how each of us is positioned and the places from where each of us comes?" As I formulated a response to the questions, I imagined the voices of scholars whose works have spoken to me and helped shape me throughout my career.

In a polyphony of voices, I'm reminded of values and lessons that I've clung to regarding community writing (House, Rosenberg) and community listening (Fishman, Garcia, House), difference (Kerschbaum), resistance (Anzaldúa, hooks, Enoch), language and experience (Lu), writing as a feminist (Ede and Lunsford), and as a Chicana (Ruiz, Ritchie), feminist rhetorical

resilience (Flynn, Sotirin, Brady), solidarity and illusions of solidarity (Mohanty, Restaino), hope (Glenn), care (Royster, Kirsch), and storytelling (Cisneros). This is a short but important list of scholars and their work that contribute to the ideas I have regarding coalitions. These are the voices that have carried me to the place where I am now, as a junior faculty and member of The Coalition of Feminist Scholars in the History of Rhetoric and Composition (CFSHCR) and the Coalition for Community Writing (CCW). While it's important for me to focus on why I chose to belong to these coalitions, it's also important to reflect on why I am intent on continuing to engage. I feel that I must also trouble the reasons I may have stayed away. So, I come with my thoughts, hopes, and ideas for ways we might make note of what has been going on in coalitions, what is going well and not so well, and what we might do to begin to see our way forward as we coalesce with each other and others outside our field.

An Offering Wrapped in Chances Taken to Do Something Different

This chapter is an offering, from me, an Assistant Professor of Rhetoric and Composition at a Hispanic Serving Institution in Southern California. In the moments during which I question the value of this offering, I recall Chicana feminist, Gloria Anzaldúa, arguing for the mestizaje to be brought into dialogues on power relations and across disciplinary boundaries (1990). This work done by Anzaldúa and many others to make a space for my work to be included is a path cleared before me. I set off with gratitude and hopeful anticipation of what lies ahead for coalitions and our field, as we do work that guides us toward positive change.

Hesitance becomes encouragement to contribute to a conversation started years ago toward moving us, the field, and coalitions within our field "beyond the perceived patriarchal (hierarchical and competitive) structures of our disciplines and professional organizations and the masculinist practices that had long guided them," as Cheryl Glenn and Andrea Lunsford imagine in "Coalition: A Meditation," written for the 2015 Fall/Winter edition of *Peitho* (11). There are complications still, nearly ten years after Glenn and Lunsford recognized a need for change, as coalitions in our field are "still far too pale" (12). The absence of people of color in coalition is also a challenge brought about by the fact that there is such a small percentage of people of color who have Ph.D.'s in the country, much less in Rhetoric and Composition. Some of the complication with who decides to become a member of a coalition is also brought about by past constructions of coalitions as being built and maintained by white men and women and how this construction has kept others out by way of association with the term "coalition" and what this means to them based on past experiences. I am positive and hopeful that over time, dismantling of past constructions of coalition is possible.

Similar to the concept of mestizaje, what I offer is a mix and blend of story, theory, experience, ideas, and voices that have formed my scholarship and membership in coalition. Blended within, I draw on the concept of feminist rhetorical resilience. Commonplace definitions of resil-

ience are typically applicable to individuals, rather than groups. I take a chance of incorporating the principles of feminist rhetorical resilience into this piece as I see an overlap of issues regarding labor, and needs for relationality, sociality, and agency, as well as a dependence on resources held by those involved with coalitions. In *Feminist Rhetorical Resilience* (2012), Elizabeth Flynn, Patricia Sotirin, and Ann Brady note that "feminist rhetorical resilience includes actions undertaken by rhetors, usually women, who, with varying degrees of success, discursively interact with others, resulting in improved situations despite contexts of significant adversity" (1). When I think of coalition work at present, I often think of it as women's work, although I know this is not always true. This, I assume, is because of a lifetime of associating women with care and community work.

In recent experiences, I see that feminist agency and rhetorical action are at the heart of coalition work in that coalitions within rhetoric and composition often call upon feminist concepts such as social justice, equity, care, and gender, thus complicating conventional rhetorical understandings of terms such as "context, engagement, audience, production, and exigency," similarly to the foci of feminist resilience (7). It is feminist concepts and, often, feminine bodies that connect coalitions and feminist resilience, and it cannot be ignored that "Women carry out at least 2.5 times more unpaid work than men" (www.news.un.org). The more time I have spent in coalition, I have noted that coalitions are "relational, dynamic, responsive in and to contexts," while "creating and animating capacities and possibilities," like the concept of feminist resilience (8). It is for these reasons I argue that approaching the future of coalition work with principles of feminist rhetorical resilience will take the adversities faced at present and offer relational and social answers to some issues we have with making connections and building bridges across difference. One of the ways I posit we do so is through writing. I will expand on this position as the chapter moves forward.

Coalitions have the potential to nurture souls of academics who require engagement in feminist praxis based on personal values, to fulfill communal needs, engage in reciprocal work, and respect for the needs held by some, to nurture others. Coalition work requires that members be resilient in the face of adversity, and also that the coalition as a group be resilient as it "shapes, enacts relationships among selves and others, speakers and audiences, things and dreams, bodies and needs, and so on" (Flynn, Sotirin, and Brady 7). Coalitions can be productive spaces for the building of relationships that allow for the sharing of the "why" of their participation without reservation, which can be done through writing and discussion. Like feminist resilience, coalition work also "enables fresh perspectives on feminist themes of empowerment, growth, health, and transformation," all of which also require care and trust within the relationships (Flynn, Sotirin, and Brady 22). As the chapter moves forward, I will also expand on the need for an ethos of care and the value of taking time to build trust within a coalition. First, I will share some of my story, to help give insight as to my belief in the power in coalition, and recognition that coalition work begins in undergraduate and graduate school and continues with encouragement from respected mentors, and in interactions with esteemed scholars.

Getting Involved in Coalition Work

During my education at New Mexico State University (NMSU), there were two major opportunities that shaped my future interests and visions for coalition involvement. The first was being selected as a Fellow in the Borderlands Writing Project (BWP), a satellite project of the National Writing Project. In BWP, I was taught to help students see the value of their experiential knowledge (Lu & Horner). Also essential to my time in BWP was my own experience of feeling the power that comes from writing together and sharing of that writing. In preparation to hold my first writing classes, I gleaned as much knowledge and preparation to teach writing from listening to teacher's stories from kindergarten through doctoral programs as I did from pedagogical readings, if not more. This is the beginning of my belief in writing being essential to forming the care and trust necessary to see goals come to fruition in groups of individuals who are unknown to each other.

I was also fortunate to spend six years as a research assistant and participant-observer to retired professor Christopher C. Burnham in a History of Rhetoric course focused on an assignment titled "The Advocacy Project." This assignment led students through the rhetorical process of organizing a social justice focused project that they would use to get their peers to act by the final day of class. Being exposed to and part of the organization of more than a hundred advocacy projects helped me to visualize the path of work toward bringing about social change.

The power behind small gestures that reach numerous people became apparent to me through this work and took on a new level of energy in my dissertation research study, as I learned of the role of small gestures as enactments of feminist resilience and their role in change over time (Trujillo). As a research assistant, I repeatedly witnessed the potential of groups made up of like-minded individuals, and non-like-minded individuals who were persuaded to pool their resources to effect change, to take actions of varying degrees, because they believed in something presented to them by a peer. This is not unlike working in coalition toward seeing goals and tasks through, based on beliefs in the work being done. Formation of the topic for the advocacy project, plans toward seeing the project through, brainstorming, troubleshooting, and moving through stasis, or stuck points all took place through writing.

Over the course of the last three years, I have been actively involved in CCW and CFSHRC. Had it not been for the fact that I knew Jessica Enoch was involved with The Coalition of Feminist Scholars in the History of Rhetoric and Composition (CFSHRC), I probably wouldn't have made an effort to join. Having read Jessica's "'Para la Mujer': Defining a Chicana Feminist Rhetoric at the Turn of the Century" and, "Survival Stories: Feminist Historiographic Approaches to Chicana Rhetorics of Sterilization Abuse" while in the master's and doctoral program, I knew that she was aware of the complexities existing in America among mestizaje, and issues faced by Latino communities over many decades (2004, 2005). I knew through her writing that Jessica cared

about how bodies, particularly the bodies of women, are remembered and treated. This helped me to consider that the CFSHRC might have more like-minded members and gave me a push to look into the group and to step up for membership. This reminds me of the importance of the work that I do, of the need to keep writing, not knowing who is going to remember what I have written and those whom I value in my scholarship.

Had I not met Veronica House at the Conference on Community Writing and felt the warmth in her presence and sincerity in her efforts toward inclusion, I wouldn't have become affiliated with the Coalition for Community Writing (CCW). My first interaction with Veronica felt as if she had welcomed me into her home as she made sure I was comfortable, called me by name, and when I showed interest in belonging to CCW, she made a space for me to use what I felt I could contribute. Veronica's actions served as another reminder to me, that it is not just what we write that has an impact on fellow and up and coming scholars, but what we say and how we behave when no one else is watching is equally as important.

To begin, I would not have attended the Conference on Community Writing without the encouragement and invitation of Lauren Rosenberg, my then, dissertation chair and advisor. Lauren's work with CCW and articles, such as "Navigating Difficulty in Classroom-Community Outreach Projects," brought me to think more about the places I wanted to spend my academic time (2017). I could see through her projects and publications how Lauren's relationships with research participants had spanned years, and how important writing in the community and listening in community was to her and other writing teachers. It is essential that we not take for granted that our students know what is available to them in the way of coalition. We must make invitations, and act as attentive hosts to newcomers to our coalitions.

I also know that without the money and time to travel, research, and connections to a network, I might not have ever known these coalitions existed. Unless a faculty member or student has the time, funds, or encouragement, not many are going to find coalitions in the field of rhetoric and composition as existing or as being open to them. It is imperative that coalitions become more present, work to create and maintain community, and once they have members, particularly those who have been excluded, they should work to help those who join want to stay. Coalitions are relational, they are social, and should be attentive to not only the exigencies of the field, but the exigencies faced by their membership at varying stages in their academic careers.

In work I recognize as coalition work, although it was done strictly through writing, I joined many authors to contribute to a Guest Edited Special Issue of *Writers, Craft & Context* titled, "Conferencing Toward Antiracism: Reckoning with the Past, Reimagining the Present." I consider work that I have done with groups focused on bringing about change to fall under three types of coalition work: as an active participant in the role of speaking and contributing through labor, writing, and discussion; in the role of support by contributing ideas and some written labor; and as a

contributor solely through writing.

In a most recent role that involves labor, writing, discussion, outreach, and will require presentation, it has been my pleasure and honor to work with Aurora Matzke toward organizing the Feminist Workshop at the Conference on College Composition and Communication in 2024. While the organizers of this event are not named as a coalition, the work done in this Workshop and the preparation it takes to put on the workshop feels like coalition work, as it brings together like-minded individuals to focus on abundance and center our workshop time on the "rich and vibrant ways differing Feminist Latinx scholars, through their situatedness, scholarship, community work and teaching yield contributions to our field," through discussion and by drawing on the power of written testimonio (Trujillo and Matzke).

While I feel that all three types of work are important, considering feminist praxis, they require different types of action that for me, all are still bound to an ethos of care. In these settings, I consider core feminist values to include, but not be limited to considerations of how power is distributed or shared, to creating and maintaining equitable spaces, to connecting social justice to all teaching and learning, acknowledgement and valuing of experiential knowledge, and the championing of diversity and inclusion.

Challenges Faced by Coalitions

While there are many issues on which I could focus regarding challenges faced by coalitions, I have chosen to discuss only a handful in depth. I will not pause on all issues, but will not ignore that there are general issues within coalitions that cannot be anticipated, and are realities of meetings, so there must be a willingness to allow for mistakes made and for regrouping. These issues could include issues such as inexperienced or disinterested facilitators, the necessity of meeting objectives on the agenda within a particular timeframe and, in the interest of time, not stopping to form working relationships.

I want to note that it can also be jarring to join a coalition and come face-to-face with unknown members and with members with far more experience and history with the coalition than a new member possesses. It is probable that there will be differences of opinions and life experience and sensations of being steamrolled by confident speakers and those comfortable with and accustomed to sharing firm positions. Other issues faced can include imbalances in the labor load, difficulties forming and maintaining trust within the group, behaviors antithetical to equity and inclusion, waning motivations for belonging, conflicting priorities, and hidden agendas.

The challenges listed above are the unfortunate issues of current organization of coalitions and meetings offering few opportunities to build community among participants who are often made up of members from diverse backgrounds, who are unknown to each other, or are only

known through publications, or conference presentations. This can be problematic for graduate students in coalitions who are only beginning to publish, and don't have background knowledge of seasoned academics, or the work that is being done outside their focused areas of interest. The probability of many challenges exists in many groups where different individuals come together to accomplish goals. I return here to my position that much of the imbalance of sharing of voices, themotivations for belonging, the possibilities of membership, experience, intentions, and research interests can be shared through taking time to write and share with each other in retreat once a year. Retreat offers a chance for a coalition to regroup and give members a chance at forming relationships that can be difficult to nurture face-to-face, much less online.

Online Meetings

With the prevalence of online coalition meetings, I think of Stephanie Kerschbaum's *Toward a New Rhetoric of Difference*, and her discussion of perception and disclosure regarding others in shared spaces–paying mind to that which we count as similarities or differences with those with whom we are gathered. Kerschbaum notes in "Signs of Disability, Disclosing" that she "defined markers of difference as dynamic, emergent, and relational rhetorical cues deployed by interlocutors to point to or engage difference between themselves." In her article, Kerschbaum's aim is "to deepen our understanding of the meanings of disability that emerge as people move among material artifacts and environments." I wonder then, how online coalition meetings orient the membership to others in the online space where personal experience is oftentimes not disclosed, nor are there markers through which to make connections other than the physical, visualized in photos, small squares, and names in white font on a black background. Without writing, sharing, or discussion beyond addressing the tasks of the coalition, the field must consider how perception and disclosure are occurring and how this affects the coalition overall.

Accommodation and Overcommitting

It should also be taken into consideration that many newer coalition members, although faculty members, are a few years from having been graduate students and have become accustomed to saying "yes." This, of course, is also true for graduate students who, often by virtue of needing to make money, have been those in groups to take on labor before fully considering the time and energy that will be demanded of the accepted tasks. Coalition members in composition and rhetoric, for varying reasons, come prepackaged with vulnerabilities, memories of marginalization, and a need for the same care and consideration we have worked to give research participants. It's important that established coalition members go out of our way to make sure all members feel safe to say "no," are respected, heard, and appreciated–as coalition work can also turn into uncompensated emotion work. Taking care of membership may be even more difficult, when the members are not known to each other. This difficulty can be compounded when a member does not know their fellow coalition members well enough to feel they can say "no" without reper-

cussion of becoming an outsider or even self-driven anxieties about belonging that come from past experiences and preconceived ideas of who belongs and who does not in coalition.

The White Nature of Coalition Work

Some things just don't feel like they are for a Chicana, and coalitions are one, unless it is a coalition for resistance and racial justice. I find it interesting that the term coalition is daunting, as opposed to group, gathering, organization, alliance, or association. This is not the chapter for interrogating the way certain words conjure images of whiteness and for whom this takes place, but my experience is that coalitions is one of those terms that brings about feelings, similar to those brought about when I walk into a restaurant, or clothing store and know "this place isn't for me." It's not easy to explain exactly why until one takes the time to sit down and deconstruct the feelings of exclusion, they don't realize how often these feelings include details such as color, design, images, text, behaviors, and titles.

While I don't argue that we should call coalitions something else as a field, I do think we can remove some of the ideas that coalitions are only for some, by making ourselves more present, and being inviting to others' whom we notice are not aware that they could become involved. Coalitions could be well served by reaching out to graduate students, to junior faculty, and undergraduates through social media, invitation emails, and through conference presence. Social media presence is growing for coalitions, but it is still not enough. When a student or a new faculty member assesses what is available in their fields, coalition involvement should be front and center. As the field of rhetoric looks to create coalitions across the disciplines, and to extend the relevant work already being done, coalitions should exist as organizations that are welcoming, inviting, and transparent beyond a small group of people.

What Can Be Done

Coalitions present possibilities for advocacy, mentorship, community outreach, creation of activities and gatherings. These positive aspects of coalition work become more likely when approached with a feminist ethos of care. With care, it becomes more likely that mentor type relationships will form in coalition. And as members are added each year, these relationships serve to model how to contribute to, belong, and perform in coalition. In *Feminist Rhetorical Resilience*, Flynn, Sotirin, and Brady write that resilience "begins from a place of struggle and desire," both of which are experiences known to coalitions within our field at present. Resilience is creative, animating the potential of whatever comes to hand as a suitable rhetorical 'resource,' be it music, linen, or family narratives" (7). Within coalition are bodies, stories, experiences, knowledge, foresight, care, effort, organization, resources, and interest. I see in feminist rhetorical resilience the relationality, agency, and sociality that I have seen in coalitions and know that there was strength in numbers, but more so in relationships. These relationships need creating, and nurturing, howev-

er.

In coalition, and as "a group of distinct individuals who come together to cooperate in joint action toward a mutual goal (or set of goals) --not forever, but for however long it takes," I posit that we should be intentional about creating and maintaining community (Glenn, Lunsford). Formation of community can be accomplished through writing, reflection, and sharing by the membership regarding what they hope to offer and gain by belonging. As a community, the coalition can offer a place for work, where members can leave and return as necessary throughout their careers, dedicating "however long it takes" to each fulfill their individual needs for membership. It occurs to me that members join coalition for a variety of reasons, ranging from a need to build a curriculum vitae, to searching for a way to fulfill a need as an academic who is seeking opportunities to bring about change, a combination of the two, and many reasons around and in between. I draw also from Jacqueline Jones Royster and Gesa Kirsch's approach to research with an ethos that involves "care, introspection, and attention to the material conditions of the past and the present. It demands that we pay attention to how lived experience shapes our perspectives" (664). It is these perspectives that I believe will help to shape coalitions over the years, as members join, leave, and with hope, return.

I believe the key to having members return is in members moving beyond joining and accepting tasks, and roles, with an assistance toward thinking, writing, and sharing about how the coalition fits into their career, and what they can contribute as a community member. For me, coalition is a special gathering of people, as it is not just a group, or meetings with people with shared goals, but a community in which members can form alliances, which suggests relationships, association, and benefits. Relationships suggest that we get to know the people with whom we coalesce, and this can be achieved through sharing of experience through writing. Writing, I posit, should take place before joining to express one's intentions and goals for belonging, and during membership in writing retreats.

Retreating Toward Coalition

To think of a coalition as a productive academic community is to commit to the provision of a place where experience inside and outside academia can be stored, drawn from, and replenished, for the sake of the fields of rhetoric and composition, and beyond. This can be accomplished through literal time taken to retreat as a coalition, to write, and get to know one another, as well as to retreat from the group and return when ready, if ever, to offer the experiences they have gathered, once again. I wonder if this is the future of conference gatherings, as we have fewer financial resources, support, and time taken to organize conferences.

Taking into mind the ways that we could work with each other and scholars across disci-

plines, I believe that taking time to form community within the coalition attends to feminist praxis and to strengthening the relationships between the coalition members. Relationality is important to the success of a coalition, as it is reliant upon the resources the members can provide. By taking time to retreat, at a minimum, annually, for the sake of writing and sharing, the membership opens the possibility for reduction of feelings of exclusion, and the hurried nature of meetings where the agenda is longer than the time allotted for the meeting. With consideration of the necessities required of coalitions, such as in material and non-material contributions, we can only know what each member can or wants to contribute by taking time to ask, and then listen to written or verbal responses.

I strongly feel that an ethos of care, trust, and relationality are necessary for a group to function. It takes trust to share lived experiences, dialogue to come to know difference outside of categorization and taxonomizing, as well as reflexivity and reflection to examine where we have been and where we would like to see our fields headed (Kerschbaum; Kirsch; Royster). This behavior is what I advocate for when these groups meet, particularly in retreat. We come up against coalition as a commonplace and can't ignore that we don't always know in these precarious political times who our allies are and that as a commonplace, coming together as a coalition may mean one thing for some, and not the same for others.

Locating Members

In order to work with each other and with other scholars in rhetoric and across disciplines to create coalitions situated in lived experiences and feminist praxis, we must begin by taking time out to share knowledge about ourselves with others. I draw from feminist and composition scholars Gesa Kirsch and Joy Ritchie, as they approach caring as requiring "one to place herself in an empathetic relationship in order to understand the other's point of view" (21). Thus, when in coalition, time must be taken to learn about where the membership is located, to move away from essentializing coalition contributors based on what we can see and to avoid taxonomizing across difference (Kerschbaum, Rich). This can be achieved through writing, discussion, or both. As well, an ethos of care means that we feel responsible for others, respecting differences that exist as individuals and in communities. I envision writing and sharing in response to questions similar to the following:

- Why have I chosen to be a part of this coalition?
- What can I contribute to this coalition?
- What do I hope to receive as the result of belonging to this coalition?
- What change do I hope to be a part of as a member of this coalition?

Members are often pressed for time when gathering, requiring that meetings move directly into the business of coalition rather than sharing the places from which we have come, and what inclusion in the coalition means to each member. This could take place at an annual, online retreat, for instance. Even as Fitzsimmons and Prasad share in this issue, there is a marked difference between being able to contribute and wanting to contribute. Questions such as those listed above can give a coalition member a chance to also ask themselves if their contributions are in response to being accustomed to accommodating, or over committing. These reflections could assist someone with withdrawing from the coalition or keep them from withdrawing in sight of what they can contribute.

While motivations for coalition membership cannot be controlled, taking the time for membership to write about and explore their motivations for participation may prove surprising, as members locate the ways they can contribute, wish to contribute, and may gain beyond what they initially expected. Labor is also an issue in coalition work, as asking members to meet or retreat annually for the sake of community formation requires time and mental energy. I do believe, however, that there is a tradeoff; for the time and labor invested in building a strong coalition, there is the possibility of less turnaround in membership, better considered use of resources, and fewer chances of exclusion or members leaving without sharing the reasons why.

Coalitional Trust

Trust is also necessary for objectives to be met in coalition. This can look like trusting the value of the work that is taking place, trusting the mission of the coalition, or trusting effectiveness of small gestures that come to pass through coalition work. I return here to my position that coalition requires the formation of community through sharing that comes from discussion and writing, as it is through these actions that membership can explore what trust means to them in professional settings. Because coalition work is situated in lived experiences, time is required to build trust for sharing these experiences and rapid turnaround in coalition makes it less possible for trust to form. With consideration to the coalition work I have done, which is predominantly in the Coalition for Community Writing, the meetings take place via Zoom, between classes, meetings, appointments with students, and sometimes during time that has been set aside for writing but pushed aside to do other meaningful work. Coalition work takes place in meetings, as well as outside meetings requiring that the coalition member keep a focus on hope, change, relationality, and reciprocity as motivators for this unpaid labor. This leaves little time for relationship or trust building, and this is not the fault of the leadership, but a reflection on the way that coalition work is organized.

Conclusion

I envision a coalition as a productive space for inclusion that can work to disassemble fictions that challenge oppressive situations caused by and doing harm to teachers, administrators, researchers, scholars, community members, and our organizations. The field of rhetoric holds the potential to exemplify the sustaining of internal coalition work, as well as set the example for other coalitions through that which can be seen in the way of manifestos, mission statements, vision statements, strategic plans, and publications, as well as through the non-material that can be seen through recognition of social change.

In the model of coalition I imagine, and through enactments of feminist rhetorical resilience, I posit that "'personal reflection' becomes a means of enacting more radical forms of belonging" (Hsu 142). Coalescing looks like coming together to care for the self, for others, and as a result, for the whole, which comes to knowledge through taking time in retreat as a coalition to explore the motivations for the work, what can be given, and what might be gained. Participating in coalition requires relationality, a tenet of feminist rhetorical resilience, as it does agency, and sociality, but I argue that we cannot fully offer of ourselves as members until we take the time to reflect on our experiences as we engage feminist scholarship and rhetorical practices, share our positions openly, and discuss our locations in our fields and in our research.

It is all too often that in coalition, positions on topics are rumored, one's scholarship is "understood," and difference is gathered through first impressions and assumed through superficial interaction. As we work to reshape coalitions, it is time that we "change shape to meet the exigencies of…circumstances" faced in our field, in academia, and as a country as these circumstances are important to the work we do (Flynn, Sotirin, and Brady 9). To accomplish this, we must think of coalitions in the same way that we think of our writing classrooms, requiring writing, discussion, and reflection as we discover and share our locations in our research and visions and explore what has come from and been taken away by our experiences. By doing what we already know how to do, and doing it well, we have a chance at serving in coalition in the most meaningful ways and uniting across experiences, differences, and shared goals.

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