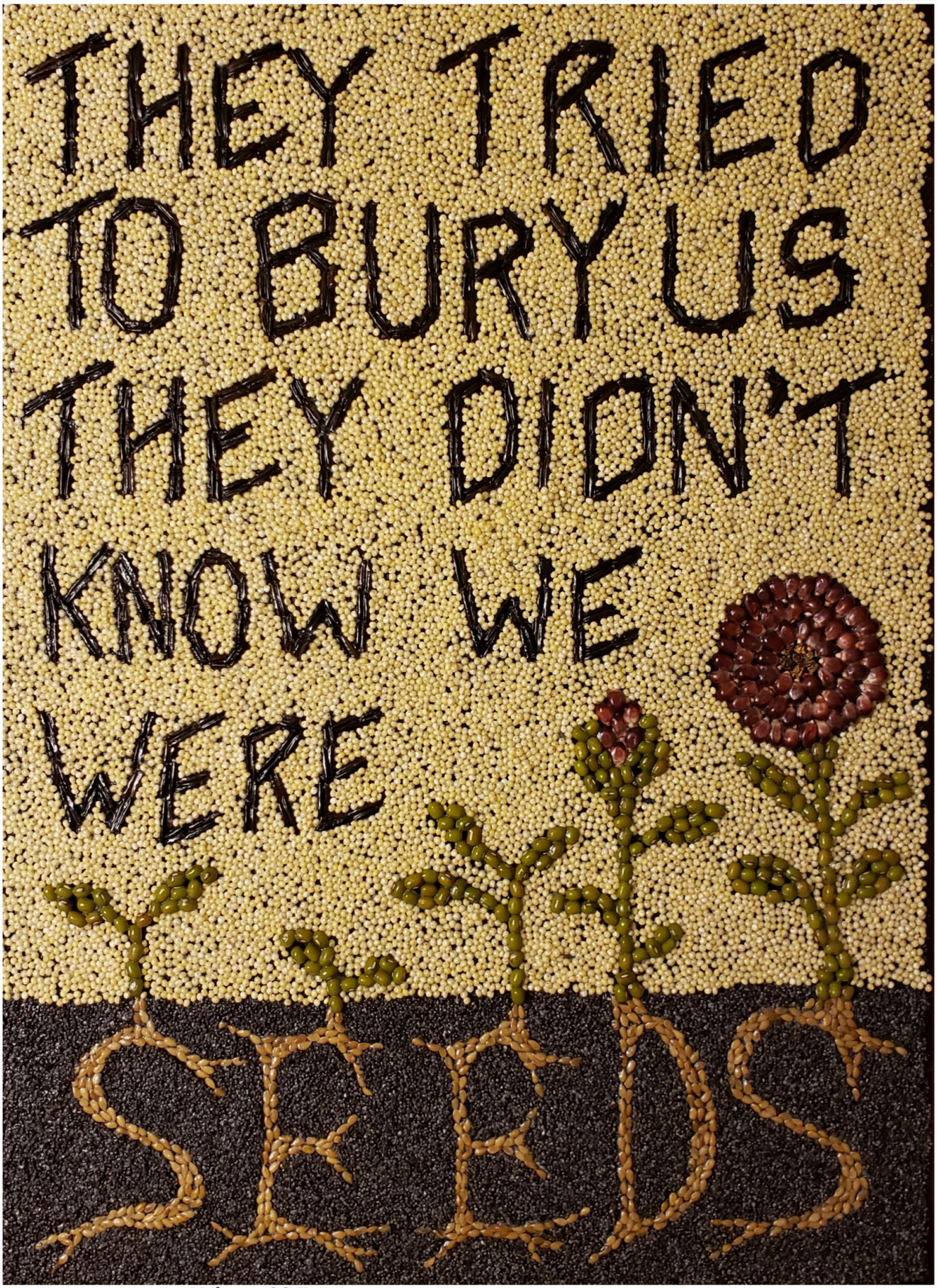

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Cover Art: "They Didn't Know We Were Seeds," copyright 2019 by Marta Shore. We are grateful for the generous permission granted by Ms. Shore to use her crop art and photo for the journal's cover. Crop art is a venerated Minnesota tradition, with many works created to make activist, progressive statements. Ms. Shore has won several recognitions for this and other work at the Minnesota State Fair. The phrase in this work is a derivation of words written by the poet Dinos Christianopoulos. "They Didn't Know We Were Seeds" is currently on display at the Minnesota State Capitol in St. Paul. You can view more of Ms. Shore's crop art and other works at cropart.com.

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Moment of Witness and Sharing Our Feminist Platform

Jamie White-Farnham, Bryna Siegel Finer, Cathryn Molloy

Doi: 10.37514/PEI-J.2026.28.3.01

We have collectively been holding our breaths with many others this winter while watching the horrific disruptions to norms, law, and safety, alongside the displays of heroism, love, and humanity in Minneapolis, St. Paul, and the surrounding metro area in Minnesota. During this time, when we have to turn our attention to academic matters, we have asked ourselves: what are our responsibilities as feminist rhetoricians during this breach of norms, and during other horrific events in other places? Since our positions in this moment are those of observation, we have decided our responsibility is to offer this platform to our feminist rhetorician colleagues from Minneapolis and St. Paul ("the Cities" as they are lovingly called in the Midwest).

Colleagues at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities quickly responded and activated a network of those who can give voice to recent events for this issue of *Peitho* in a contribution entitled: "Dispatch from Minneapolis: On Feminist Rhetorics of Resistance" by Liane Malinowski and Jaclyn Fiscus-Cannaday, with contributing authors Sara N. Beam, Lee-Ann Kastman Breuch, Curtis Ladrillo Chamblee, John Logie, Maddi Melchert, Nicole Montana, Matthew Tchepikova-Treon, Molly Vasich, Allison Vincent, and Marcus Woodman. We are grateful to these colleagues for the urgency and insight with which they have written about their experiences, and we think readers will learn from and be moved by their "ideas about the feminist rhetorics of resistance happening here and how feminist rhetoricians and activists can understand resistance as more capacious."

In this Issue

Within this issue and preceding the "Dispatch from Minneapolis," you will encounter the ongoing excellence we are seeing in the feminist rhetorician scholarly community by writers who use their resources, skills, and voices to evaluate and elevate feminist activists and activist movements, as well as unearth how scholarly and commercial communication practices shape people's lives, with an interest in how we can understand and possibly countermand them to improve material conditions.

The lead article, Olivia Rowland's "Capitalist Rhetoric, Anticapitalist Struggle: Reevaluating Wages for Housework" offers a rhetorical analysis of capitalism and Judith Butler's concept of performative contradiction to archival materials from the Wages For Housework (WFH) campaign of the 1970s to illustrate how aspects of the campaign's rhetoric that have been read as reductionist actually contribute to a larger strategy of turning capitalist rhetorics against themselves. Focusing on multiply-marginalized WFH groups, including Black Women for Wages for Housework and Wages Due Lesbians, Rowland demonstrates how activists reappropriate rhetorics associated with finance capital to draw attention to the limitations of such rhetoric. Through discourses of risk calculation, typification, and credit and debt, WFH campaigners surface and challenge capitalism's contradictory organization of productive and reproductive labor.

Next, "Framing Failure and Success: Retrospective Remembering in Oral History Archives" by Jessica Edens McCrary introduces Feminist Rhetorical Microhistory (FRM) as a methodological approach for examining how activists retrospectively frame their work, particularly around narratives of success and failure. Through analysis of Linda Hallenborg Kurtz's oral history in the Georgia Women's Movement Project archives, the article reveals the dissonance between how individual women in Georgia remembered their experiences advocating for the Equal Rights Amendment and how it was interpreted in historical memory.

Mollie Stambler's "Rhetorical Sandwiches: Appeals to Evidence and Expertise as Ethos-Building Strategies in Epideictic Discourses of Eating, Food, and Health" offers a critical analysis of "healthy lifestyle" articles that demonstrates the persuasive and rhetorical tactics embedded in the capitalist aims of healthy lifestyle magazines and websites. Stambler analyzes the rhetorical strategy by which authors of "healthy eating" advice combine several appeals to ethos—appeals that alone might not persuade their audience but together generate compelling recommendations for health and consumer behavior change.

There are four excellent and timely book reviews in this issue: a review of Mónica Reyes' *Rhetoric and storytelling within the U.S. asylum process: Shelter rhetorics* by Jade Yeen Onn; a review of Laura Elliot Tetreault's *Truth Be Told: White Nostalgia and Antiracist Queer Resistance in "Post-Truth" America*! by Rhiannon Zwieg; a review of Charlotte Hogg's *White Sororities and the Cultural Work of Belonging* by Jo Christian and Anna Sicari; and a review of Alice Braun's *Motherhood and Creativity in Contemporary Self-life Writing: Writers and Mothers* by Caelan Chew.

Invited Piece

Finally, "Dispatch from Minneapolis: On Feminist Rhetorics of Resistance" includes over a dozen creative poems, vignettes, snapshots, and impressions of the disruption, resistance, care, and fortitude occurring in the Twin Cities, framed by a vision of what feminist rhetoricians can learn and do in this moment and into the future.

Biographies

Cathryn Molloy is a professor of writing studies in the University of Delaware's English Department. She is the author of *Rhetorical Ethos in Health and Medicine: Patient Credibility, Stigma, and Misdiagnosis*. Before joining the co-editing team at *Peitho*, she was on the editing team at *Rhetoric of Health and Medicine* for eight years. Currently, she is co-editing the *Routledge Handbook on the Rhetoric of Health and Medicine* with Lisa Melonçon and J. Blake Scott.

Bryna Siegel Finer is a professor of English at Indiana University of Pennsylvania, where she serves as Director of Undergraduate Writing Programs. Her published work has appeared in *Rhetoric of Health & Medicine*, *Rhetoric Review*, *Teaching Writing in the Two-Year College*, *Praxis*, and the *Journal of Teaching Writing*, among others. She has served as the associate editor of *Rhetoric of Health & Medicine* and book reviews editor for *Composition Studies*. She is also the co-editor of *Writing Program Architecture: Thirty Cases for Reference and Research* (2017).

Jamie White-Farnham is a professor in the Writing Program at University of Wisconsin-Superior, where she serves as Director of Teaching, Learning and Technology and the Jim Dan Hill Library. Her work appears in *Peitho*, *College English*, *Community Literacy Journal*, *Rhetoric Review*, *Computers & Composition*, among others. She was previously the associate editor at *Prompt: A Journal of Academic Writing Assignments*. She is also the co-editor of *Writing Program Architecture: Thirty Cases for Reference and Research* (2017).

Together, Cathryn, Bryna, and Jamie have co-edited *Women's Health Advocacy: Rhetorical Ingenuity for the 21st Century* (2019) and *Confronting Toxic Rhetoric: Writing Teachers' Experiences of Rupture, Resistance, and Resilience* (2024) and co-authored *Patients Making Meaning: Theorizing Sources of Information and Forms of Support in Women's Health* (2023). Their current book, *Living Menopause: Rhetorics, Tensions, and Futures,* co-authored with four leading scholars in feminist rhetorics, will be published by Bloomsbury in 2026.

Vol. 28, no. 2, Winter 2026

Capitalist Rhetoric, Anticapitalist Struggle: Reevaluating Wages for Housework

Olivia Rowland

Abstract: The 1970s international Wages for Housework (WFH) campaign has largely been regarded as a strange deviation from second-wave feminism at best, and an essentialist, white feminist movement at worst. In this article, I conduct rhetorical analyses of capitalism and Judith Butler's concept of performative contradiction to archival materials from the WFH campaign to illustrate how aspects of the campaign's rhetoric that have been read as reductionist actually contribute to a larger strategy of turning capitalist rhetorics against themselves. Focusing on multiply marginalized WFH groups, including Black Women for Wages for Housework and Wages Due Lesbians, I demonstrate how activists reappropriate rhetorics associated with finance capital to draw attention to the limitations of such rhetoric. Through discourses of risk calculation, typification, and credit and debt, WFH campaigners surface and challenge capitalism's contradictory organization of productive and reproductive labor.

Keywords: anticapitalism, capitalism, economic rhetoric, labor, Marxist feminism, Wages for Housework

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"It is still not clear whether campaigners for wages for housework really want what they are asking for." – Ellen Malos, 1978

"The Wages for Housework Movement assumes that if women were paid for being housewives, they would accordingly enjoy a higher social status. Quite a different story is told by the age-old struggles of the paid household worker, whose condition is more miserable than any other group of workers under capitalism." – Angela Davis, 1981

"But, as with the downsides of Universal Basic Income, the reality is that in developed, Western, capitalist societies, the numbers just don't stack up. Where exactly the state would get this money does not appear to be a question interrogated … by the activists." – Lucy Denyer, 2025

Although the Wages for Housework (WFH) campaign spanned several countries and decades, it is often relegated to the sidelines of feminist history. As the name implies, WFH mobilized in support of wages for women's work. Feminist groups in countries including Italy, Germany, the US, the UK, and Canada worked together on WFH through the International Feminist Collective, which continues today through the Global Women's Strike (Toupin, 2018, p. 1). This collective encompassed an international body, the International Wages for Housework Campaign; city-based WFH Committees, such as those in New York City and Los Angeles; as well as allied groups organized around particular identities, like Wages Due Lesbians and Black Women for Wages for Housework. At a time when mainstream feminists sought paid employment, WFH was often perceived as counterproductive, since waging housework seemed as though it would keep women in the home. However, WFH feminists conceived of both housework and wages broadly—they argued for payment for socially reproductive labor of all sorts, including "sexuality and emotional labor," and they fought for direct payments like welfare as well as social services and healthcare (Rousseau, 2015, p. 366). Ultimately, rather than "extol the virtues of domestic work," WFH activists intended to show that such work is not a naturally feminine activity, but something imposed on women (Weeks, 2011, p. 123). In doing so, the campaign aimed to open space for women to refuse housework and collectivize reproductive labor. This article suggests that WFH activists work toward accomplishing these aims by using rhetorics associated with finance capitalism to problematize the capitalist organization of housework and reproduction.

The rhetorical strategies of WFH, in addition to being largely overlooked, have contributed to charges of economism, essentialism, and white feminism against the movement. As Marxist feminist theorist Kathi Weeks (2011) put it, WFH "is frequently portrayed in histories of feminism as a misguided movement and, when discussed in feminist anthologies, is typically represented as a rather odd curio from the archives of second-wave feminist history" (p. 114). Scholars remain uncertain how to interpret the demand for wages. Was it, as Weeks asked, "presented as a concrete policy objective or a critical ploy? Was it intended to be an end in itself or a means to other ends?" (p. 128). The demand for wages, especially when interpreted literally, has often been a focal point for critique by liberal and socialist feminists alike, who saw inclusion in the workforce as the path to women's liberation (Malos, 1978; Dyer, 2025). In response, Silvia Federici (2020), a leading activist with the New York WFH group, noted that money has functions aside from being "a form of remuneration," like an increase in power and collectivity (p. 4). More damaging to the present-day reception of WFH, however, are accusations of essentialism, especially those coming from feminists of color. Some of the movement's claims, including especially their contention that "all women are housewives," have been seen as "universalizing" (Weeks, 2011, p. 126). Angela Davis (1981), for example, questioned whether "women in general, regardless of their class and race, can be fundamentally defined by their domestic functions" when Black women have always worked outside of their own homes (p. 235). However, other scholars, including feminist historian Christina Rousseau (2015), have argued that WFH recognized different oppressions and that "there was no attempt to claim an essential 'female' identity" (p. 367). While I do not intend to absolve the movement of these charges, I suggest that a rhetorical analysis attuned to the WFH campaign's performative rhetoric can shift our understanding of the group. Rather than a strange deviation within feminist politics that should not be repeated, WFH, I suggest, points to the possibility of reappropriating capitalist rhetoric for anticapitalist ends.

In this article, I argue that features of WFH rhetoric that have been read as essentializing and reductionist contribute to a larger strategy of turning capitalist rhetorics against themselves. Building on and contributing to recent scholarship on economic rhetoric (Sharp-Hoskins, 2023) and feminist rhetorics of work (Gold & Enoch, 2019; Hallenbeck & Smith, 2015; Smith, 2021; Smith & Hallenbeck, 2024), I analyze archival materials from the WFH movement to show how activists use rhetorics of finance capital—risk calculation, typification, and credit and debt—to problematize capitalism's contradictory organization of productive and reproductive labor. Reading these rhetorics through Judith Butler's (1997, 2007) "performative contradiction" allows me to explain how WFH reappropriates capitalist terminology to draw attention to the limits of that terminology and, ultimately, of capitalism itself. I discuss, first, how WFH mobilizes risk and typification to reveal the contradictions that emerge from the capitalist separation of production and reproduction. I then explain how activists mobilize the language of credit and debt to point out capital's inability to properly compensate all reproductive labor. In doing so, I follow Michelle C. Smith (2021) in aiming to "loo[k] beyond success and failure" (p. 45) when evaluating WFH and focus instead on the possibilities that WFH opens for refiguring work and gender.

My analysis also aims to answer Michelle C. Smith and Sarah Hallenbeck's (2024) recent call for intersectionality in rhetorics of work. Smith and Hallenbeck noted a need for "more explicit commitments to

the intersectional analysis of work-related rhetorics," given that intersectionality is central to "decoding the complex negotiations through which different forms of work are valued at particular moments in time." Especially because WFH is often portrayed as a movement of straight, middle-class, white women, my analysis aims to highlight the contributions of multiply marginalized women to the campaign, including Wages Due Lesbians and Black Women for WFH. These activists' work in particular holds lessons for contemporary feminist activism, as they demonstrate how we might strategically use the language of the capitalist economy to wage an intersectional campaign against it.

Rhetoric, Capitalism, and Women's Work

In analyzing the WFH movement, I join a growing body of work within feminist rhetorical scholarship on gender and labor. According to Hallenbeck and Smith (2015) and Jessica Enoch and David Gold (2019), a feminist rhetorical approach to the study of work means understanding both work and gender as rhetorically constituted. Not only is work itself gendered, as certain types of labor become "feminine" or "masculine," but work also functions as a technology of gender, shaping larger ideas about gender—which are, of course, inseparable from race, class, sexuality, disability, and other aspects of identity. As Enoch and Gold (2019) argued, rhetorical studies of work have the potential to illuminate "how women have fought for wider work opportunities and better working conditions, how they have expanded understandings of what work is, and how they have contended with dominant perceptions of the kinds of work women may do and the kinds of workers they may be" (p. 3). Given the ongoing "erasure and invisibility of much women's work," Hallenbeck and Smith (2015) further contended that "rhetorical studies of women's work can help reveal the ideological and rhetorical maneuvers that gender all work and render some women's work natural, invisible, or inconsequential" (p. 201). It is this dominant perception of women's work as "natural" and "invisible" that WFH aims to unsettle through their appropriation of capitalist terms.

More specifically, through their redefinition of "women's work" as "housework," WFH activists forward new ways of understanding socially reproductive labor. The work of social reproduction is defined by Weeks (2011) as "the production of the forms of social cooperation on which [capitalist] accumulation depends" (p. 29). In simpler terms, social reproduction encompasses the labor of (re)producing and sustaining human life and labor power. This work, which is usually un(der)waged, coded as "female," and assigned to multiply marginalized women, more concretely includes tasks like cooking and cleaning, education, caretaking and healthcare, raising children, and biological reproduction. Although distinctions between productive (commodity-producing) labor and reproductive labor have blurred following the transition to neoliberalism[1] in the 1970s, a point to which I return in my conclusion, it is important to note here that a Marxist feminist perspective insists on understanding social reproduction as existing in contradiction with capitalist accumulation, or the production of surplus value. Weeks (2011) explained: "Capital requires, for example, time both to 'consume' labor power and to produce (or reproduce) it" (p. 27). Western capitalism has traditionally managed this contradiction via the nuclear family, which becomes responsible for workers' reproduction. This has

1 I follow David Harvey (2005) in understanding neoliberalism as an ideology and economic system that aims to expand market logics to all areas of life, including social reproduction. Despite its prefix, neoliberalism is not wholly new and is better understood as an intensification or "speedup" of capitalism (Nadasen, 2023, p. 10).

meant, however, a further contradiction in the fact that reproductive labor can be waged or unwaged. WFH leverages these "fault line[s]" (Weeks, 2011, p. 27) to unite women against the exploitative organization of reproductive labor under capitalism.

Feminist rhetoricians have recently begun investigating the ways in which women challenge dominant perceptions of reproductive labor and fight to reorganize this necessary but undervalued work. Jennifer Keohane (2019), for example, demonstrated how Claudia Jones, a Black woman organizer with the Communist Party of the USA, drew attention to Black women's work in the home to make this labor visible and "sho[w] how labor rendered the experiences of black women distinct from those of white women" (p. 217). Jones accomplished this by applying "workplace terms" (Keohane, 2019, p. 215) to both Black women's underpaid domestic labor in other women's homes and their unpaid domestic labor in their own homes—a strategy which, as I show below, WFH also uses. Smith's (2021) study of nineteenth-century utopian communities further explored the possibilities and constraints of efforts to recast women's reproductive labor using the framework of the market. Particularly relevant is Smith's analysis of the Brook Farm community, which attempted to overcome the marginalization of domestic labor by awarding it a wage. As Smith (2021) showed, however, this experiment failed to inculcate a perception of housework as "real work," largely because "work" continued to be defined by "proximity to the market" and because the most grueling domestic tasks were offloaded to working-class women and women of color (p. 107). This example plainly demonstrates that waging reproductive labor is not enough—feminists must attend to differences among women and, I would add, to the contradictory capitalist logics that govern production and reproduction.

I argue that WFH works toward this end by appropriating the vocabularies and discourses of capitalism. To do so, I draw from Butler's (1997, 2007) notion of the "performative contradiction," which she described as the reappropriation of political terms to draw attention to their limitations. For Butler (1997), performative contradiction occurs when "Language takes on a non-ordinary meaning in order precisely to contest what has become sedimented in and as the ordinary" (p. 145). An example of this concept, according to Butler, lies in the activism of disenfranchised groups who lay claim to rights they do not currently have. In "claiming to be covered by that universal," they "expos[e] the contradictory character of previous conventional formulations of the universal" (1997, p. 92). Similarly, although WFH's fantastical and seemingly impossible claims have contributed to confusion and critiques of the movement, reviewing their rhetoric through the lens of performativity suggests that WFH resituates the language of capital in a new context, that of women's reproductive labor, to highlight capitalism's limitations.

Capitalist Rhetoric in Wages for Housework Materials

My analysis focuses on WFH rhetoric produced during the 1970s. Although WFH continues today through the Global Women's Strike, this decade contains some of the most radical slogans and demands, which have not only contributed to negative perceptions of the movement, but which are particularly ripe for rhetorical analysis. The 1970s also saw significant changes in women's employment status—while around 30% of married American women were homemakers in 1970, that percentage dropped to about 23% by 1980 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014). In the same time period, the rate of white women's participation in

the labor force rose from about 43% to 51%, with Black women's increasing from around 49% to 53% (U.S. Department of Labor, 2025). WFH materials from this decade take advantage of these shifts to call capitalist logics into question.

The materials I analyze in this article are primary documents from WFH groups. I limited my scope to materials from English-speaking countries—the US, the UK, and Canada—excepting one translated speech from the Italian movement.[2] In addition to Federici's (2020) personal archive published in *The New York Wages for Housework Committee 1972-1977* and open-access materials available online, I cite materials from Barnard College's Christine E. Bose Wages for Housework Research Collection, which I was able to view digitally thanks to the generous help of the Barnard archivists. Maintaining a commitment to intersectionality, I intentionally sought out archival materials from Black Women for WFH and Wages Due Lesbians, which are often less visible in mainstream histories of the movement. Tacking between the archives and existing scholarship on economic rhetoric, I came to understand risk, typification, and credit and debt as central not only to WFH activism, but also to capitalism itself. Thus, my tripartite analysis makes the case that WFH activists use discourses of risk calculation and typification to support their argument that reproduction is central to capitalist production and to draw attention to capital's internal contradiction of separating productive from reproductive labor. The campaign ultimately uses the language of credit and debt in a performative contradiction to highlight the impossibility of appropriately valuing all reproductive work under capitalism.

Risk Calculation

The production, management, and circulation of risk is a central function of finance capital. Capitalism, owing to its insatiable need for expanding markets, its reliance on speculation, and its disregard for "externalities" like workers' health and reproduction, is inherently risky (Baucom, 2005; Beck, 1986). Crucially, this risk is distributed unevenly along lines of difference, such that communities marginalized by race, gender, and class pay the price for capitalist wealth accumulation that benefits predominantly white elites (Sharp-Hoskins, 2023). As feminist historian Premilla Nadasen (2023) illustrated, however, the risks offloaded onto reproductive laborers are obfuscated by perceptions of the household as a haven from the ills of the market: "The gendered ideal of the domestic sphere as a site of leisure," she wrote, "also obscured the physical strain and economic contributions of household labor" (p. 52). It is in this context that WFH intervenes. Like Claudia Jones decades earlier (Keohane, 2019), WFH uses language typically associated with waged, productive work to refer to women's un(der)waged work in the home to make home visible as a workplace—one that has always posed risks for women, especially for women of color working in other women's homes.

Many WFH materials reframe the negative aspects of housework as workplace hazards to position housework as work. The Los Angeles WFH Committee, for example, wrote in a newsletter: "A woman's home is her factory. The more cramped we are, the worse the plumbing, the more polluted the neighborhood—the more housework we have to do" (1977, p. 3). By referring to the home as a "factory," the newsletter portrays the

2 The translated speech appears in Louise Toupin's (2018) *Wages for Housework: A History of an International Feminist Movement, 1972-1977*. I include this speech because it is the clearest example I came across of WFH activists casting physical reproduction as a workplace risk.

home as a place of work for women. In doing so, it dispels the myth of the family as a refuge from capitalism, or a "freely invented site of authentic and purely voluntary relations" (Weeks, 2011, p. 129). Like the factory, the home contains workplace risks. In this example, the newsletter frames poor housing conditions like inadequate space, failing infrastructure, and pollution as hazards that women encounter not merely as residents but as workers. Using the language of workplace risks allows the newsletter to enact the WFH campaign's central argument that housework is work. Framing the home as a site of work also supports the campaign's demand for a wage. In their "Wages for Housework Notebook," a more theoretical publication, the Montreal Power of Women Collective (n.d.) argued, "The cost—which up to now we have borne entirely alone—of running this domestic labor power factory should all be unloaded onto the system" (p. 8). If women have been made to "to absorb the cost of the risks" taken by capital (Berg, 2014, p. 167), recognizing them as workers can compel capital to bear its own risks. The problem is not that women exist outside of the capitalist system, but that their labor often goes unrecognized as work and is therefore un(der)waged.

Black women's experiences as mothers and domestic workers are particularly crucial in positioning the home as a workplace. As US Black Women for WFH (1977) recognized in their regular bulletin, not only have Black women had to care for their families and homes in deplorable conditions, as in the case of "the ghettoes of South Africa … where Black women work for no wages, with no electricity or running water," but "Black women have always worked outside the home" in *other* women's homes (pp. 3–4). Black women's labor allowed wealthy white women the freedom to view the home as separate from the market, and to escape the need to perform drudgery in the home. As Nadasen (2023) indicated, historically, "the most difficult and backbreaking tasks … were outsourced to other women," namely "Black domestic workers" (p. 52). UK Black Women for WFH (1978) added in their newsletter that Black women also face "racist attack[s]," which are their own form of "extra housework" in the shape of an "emotional burden" (p. 2). From this standpoint, the home does not appear as a refuge from capitalism, but as fully imbricated with its racist and sexist logics. For Black women, then, the household has been a site of both paid and unpaid labor, both of which brought unrecognized and uncompensated risks.

Sexuality and biological reproduction, which WFH includes in their understanding of "housework," also pose danger, especially for multiply marginalized women. As Italian WFH activists claimed in a speech, "Making love is housework, and doing so under these conditions without safety provisions (laws, contraceptives that are safe and not harmful), is also very risky" (Toupin, 2018, p. 149). They went so far as to argue that "getting pregnant against our will is a work-related accident" (Toupin, 2018, p. 149). While sex and pregnancy are not normally considered as akin to productive work, WFH activists position this reproductive labor as work by putting it in terms of "work-related accidents." The International WFH magazine (1976) emphasized that this work is particularly dangerous for women of color: "We are expected to undergo agonizing and dangerous induced births, be forced to have coils fitted by untrained doctors, and sterilized when they decide they need us to have less children, especially if we are black or Indian women" (p. 11). This passage implies that safe birth control and guaranteed abortions are necessary for women's workplace safety, which supports WFH's advocacy for reproductive justice as a part of the "wages" women should receive for housework (Capper & Austin, 2018, p. 448). It also suggests that the embodied risks of reproduction, from

birth to forced sterilization, connect women's bodies to capitalism—women may not receive a wage for getting pregnant and giving birth, but they are made to bear the health risks of reproduction. Defining reproductive labor in terms of risk therefore demonstrates how reproduction is shaped by capital.

Indeed, WFH ultimately uses the framework of risk to problematize the devaluation and separation of reproduction from production within capitalism. If it seems strange to refer to unwanted pregnancies as "work-related accidents" (Toupin, 2018, p.149), that is because it is strange—or rather, because capitalism has *made it strange* by partitioning productive and reproductive labor, such that applying market-like risk calculation to reproduction seems nonsensical. However, the very strangeness of these claims serves to make visible the capitalist ideology applied to reproductive labor. By removing the language of workplace risk from its commonplace referents and situating it in a new context—the home—WFH gives this terminology "a nonordinary meaning" in order to promote "deconstructive thinking" (Butler, 1997, p. 161). This performative contradiction opens capitalist logic up for critique, as it asks readers to question why it is that the risks associated with un(der)waged reproduction are not considered in the same way as the hazards faced by waged workers. What is actually nonsensical is not WFH's use of risk to frame reproductive labor as work, but the fact that capitalism often does not recognize this labor as work. Why, for example, should women of color domestic laborers be paid to take care of other women's children, but not their own? In drawing attention to inconsistencies like these, WFH aims not to subsume reproduction to market logics, or to integrate all women into the labor market, but to free women from necessarily having to perform housework. As US Black Women for WFH (1977) put it: "We don't need more work. We need more money to work less" (p. 3). By challenging the distinction between reproductive and productive labor under capitalism, WFH aims to allow women to choose what kind of work they want to do, rather than having reproductive labor imposed on them.

Typification

WFH rhetoric further draws from the language of capitalist risk calculation by mirroring actuarial logics. Legal scholar Jonathan Simon (1988) defined "actuarial practices" as "techniques that use statistics to represent the distribution of variables in a population" (p. 771). Actuarial science purports to produce knowledge about an individual by referring to demographic or other groups to which that individual belongs, including race and gender (e.g., the assumption, in health insurance calculations, that a given woman will live longer because women, on average, live longer than men). For postcolonial literary theorist Ian Baucom (2005), actuaries' "invention of the average and the typical" can be understood as a process of "typification," which reduces people into certain "types" (p. 105). I locate typification in WFH's provocative, seemingly essentializing claims about women, including their well-known assertion that "all women are housewives." In making these claims, WFH draws attention to the fact that, as Marxist theorist Beverly Best (2021) stated, capital requires "the necessary evacuation of all concrete specificity of laboring subjects . . . even as it emerges from concretely specific modes of oppression (including gender) and takes social form in them" (p. 898). WFH's categorization of women as "housewives" and "welfare mothers" plays with this contradiction to suggest that gender, race, and sexuality are produced, in part, through capitalism—or, to be more precise, through the un-(der)waged reproductive labor assigned to gendered and racialized subjects. These abstractions allow WFH

to unite women around their shared experiences of exploitation as reproductive laborers under capitalism.

Many WFH materials use the figure of the "housewife" to denaturalize the assignation of reproductive labor to women on the basis of gender. A flyer from the Los Angeles WFH Committee (1975) proclaimed: "Housework … all women do it. Whether or not we're mothers, whether or not we have a second, paid job, we are all housewives." This statement reduces all women, regardless of their differences, to the position of housewife. It does not, however, suggest that all women are *literally* housewives, as the flyer notes that many women are not mothers and that still many others work outside their own home. What this claim does suggest, then, is that "all women" are responsible for some form of reproductive labor. As such, the flyer points not to some essential gender identity but to the gendered "type" that follows from women's reproductive labor. WFH wanted, of course, to reject this role and, as the same flyer puts it, "to stop working for nothing" and "to take time for ourselves" (Los Angeles WFH Committee, 1975). Reading the claim that "all women are housewives" in this context illustrates how the flyer adopts typification to challenge gendered capitalist oppression. Women may be reducible to the housewife "type" under capitalism, and housework may be considered a naturally feminine activity, but WFH wanted a future where this was not true.

Lesbian organizers further elaborate on the ways in which capitalism produces the "housewife" through compulsory heterosexuality. The Wages Due Collective in Toronto[3] opened their position statement by writing: "We do not think that lesbians are special cases. We think that all women are special cases in the definitions of the state. … We recognize that all women are houseworkers" (Agger et al., n.d., p. 2). The collective identified compulsory heterosexuality as a core aspect of the housewife's situation, as "all women are socialized to be heterosexual and to get married" (Agger et al., n.d., p. 2). Ultimately, Wages Due held that "Women who are called lesbians and women who are called straight are all existing for the same purpose in the eyes of the state—to serve capital through serving men. This is what we mean when we say all women are straight" (Agger et al., n.d., p. 2). This statement does elide differences among women that do not relate to sexuality, most notably the fact that women of color are made to serve not only men, but also white women. At the same time, the position statement aims to unite straight and queer women by suggesting that they share an experience of heterosexuality following from the type of work that women are expected to perform under capitalism. Here, "heterosexuality" takes on a capacious meaning beyond simply sexual orientation to encompass the patriarchal organization of labor under capitalism, in which women perform reproductive labor that benefits men.

Wages Due Lesbians (1977) further identified un(der)waged reproductive labor as the source of women's vulnerability. Referring to violence and exploitation against women in their 1977 organizing packet, they said, "we all know, being women, that [violent crimes] are not just happening to someone else, that they could all potentially happen to us, because we are all fundamentally in the same position. The problem has been to locate what the foundation is so we can attack it" (p. 9). This excerpt suggests that the specifics of one woman's situation do not matter so much in determining her fate as her "type" as a housewife, someone who is or can be made to engage in reproductive labor for little to no pay. Women certainly do not all ex-

3 I am fairly certain, but cannot confirm, that the Wages Due Collective and Wages Due Lesbians, both based out of Toronto, are the same organization.

perience violence in the home—though, as Black Women for WFH groups acknowledged, too many Black women face racist violence in other women's homes—but any woman *could* have this experience in the future by virtue of her gender. This logic is eerily like the workings of insurance, which insists "that the real test of something's value comes not at the moment it is made or exchanged but at the moment it is lost or destroyed" (Baucom, 2005, p. 95). Tautologically, the fact that women could experience violence owing to their un(der)waged vulnerability is both what categorizes them as housewives and what follows from their identity as housewives.

A similar logic underwrote the type of the "welfare mother" or "working mother." Like the housewife, the working mother/welfare mother figure applied to all women for WFH because all women perform some type of housework. But the welfare mother has power that the housewife lacks—she has already won a wage for her reproductive labor. UK Black Women for WFH (1978) affirmed that "Black mothers have been in the lead not only in the U.S.A. but in Britain too—in demanding Welfare benefits" (p. 2). Although the "wage" welfare mothers received was low and constantly vulnerable to changes in government policy, it symbolized success for all women, according to the US Black Women for WFH collective (1977): "By their demand for money in their own hands for themselves and for their children, Black welfare mothers established once and for all that EVERY MOTHER IS A WORKING MOTHER. They won the first wage for housework. In claiming their money, they staked everyone's claim" (p. 2). Because welfare mothers received pay for mothering their children, they became proof that the state recognizes mothering one's own children as work worthy of a wage, thereby making plain the arbitrary nature of what work is paid under capitalism and what work is not paid. Every woman is, then, a welfare mother, because every woman deserves a wage for housework: "WE'RE ENTITLED TO THE MONEY BECAUSE EVERY WOMAN IS A WORKING MOTHER" (Black Women for Wages for Housework UK, 1978, p. 4). What was aspirational for white, middle-class housewives was already achieved by the Black, working-class welfare mother.

WFH's use of the welfare mother and housewife "types" can therefore be understood as a performative reclamation of these traditionally pejorative terms. In particular, WFH's use of the welfare mother as a positive persona challenges the racist and sexist "welfare queen" trope (Nadasen, 2007, p. 52). As WFH recasts the "welfare mother" as a powerful figure who exposes fault lines in capitalism's treatment of reproductive labor, the harmful terms with which women are addressed are "taken up" and "turned, becoming the occasion of speaking back and speaking through" to power (Butler, 1997, p. 95). In the case of Black women, the welfare mother stood as a particularly revolutionary figure because she engaged in "demanding money for the work of raising Black children and being the support and comfort of Black men in the ghettoes of America" (Black Women for Wages for Housework US, 1977, p. 2). Before the implementation of workfare, which emerged from backlash to Black women's receiving welfare, the welfare mother further challenged the fact that Black women were "more often seen as laborers than mothers" (Nadasen, 2007, p. 56). Instead of caring for other women's children, the welfare mother got paid to take care of her own family, asserting the importance of Black mothering and demonstrating that women could win a wage for housework.

Both the welfare mother and housewife types ultimately held power in their ability to unite women

against capitalist exploitation. Women faced a great many barriers to collectivizing on the basis of housework, including isolation and social stratification (Toupin, 2018, p. 3). The Boston WFH Committee (1977) recognized this challenge in their newspaper, writing, "By calling welfare women 'cheats' and 'chislers,' by terming prostitutes 'whores' and 'sluts,' the state seeks to convince us that there are two kinds of women: the 'bad women' who demand money for their work, and the 'good women' who—they hope—will be content to work for free" (p. 4). Similarly, Wages Due Lesbians (1977) identified sexuality as another dividing line: "We are separated off from other women when we're forced to organize separately as lesbians, around 'lesbian issues' which are supposed to be different from 'women's issues'" (p. 8). In the face of the intentional divisions sowed among women by the ruling class, WFH's typification provided a shared position around which women could unite. If all women are housewives, then their common cause is organizing against un(der)waged housework and the capitalist system that imposes it upon them—and the welfare mother, who has won a wage, provides motivation to organize. In this way, WFH's typifying claims lay the groundwork necessary "to constitute a feminist and anticapitalist political collectivity whose ultimate aim was the radical transformation of the institutions of work and family" (Weeks, 2011, p. 136).

Credit and Debt

The WFH movement's ultimate tactic for challenging the un(der)waged nature of reproductive labor was, of course, the wage demand. Although the demand is usually framed in the language of wages—and it is this language that WFH is known for—it is also figured in terms of credit and debt. While systems of credit and debt took shape far before finance capital, they helped capitalism emerge (Baucom, 2005; Graeber, 2011). According to anthropologist David Graeber (2011), our contemporary understanding of debt "has been so shaped by the market" that it is almost impossible to speak of obligation without using capitalist logics (p. 13). Rhetorician Kellie Sharp-Hoskins (2023) further revealed that debt's appearance as "an ahistorical, arhetorical fact" emerges through rhetorical maneuvers that position debt as "individual, volitional, and moral" and "numerically and mathematically calculable and quantifiable" (pp. 6–7). For Sharp-Hoskins, these premises mask how debt actually circulates and adheres to certain bodies in racialized and gendered ways; debt is positive when in the hands of wealthy white elites, for example, but becomes a moral failing when attached to marginalized groups, especially the working class and people of color. WFH challenges these logics by reappropriating the language of debt while breaking apart its major premises. In WFH materials, debt is not individual but collective, representing wealth owed to women and communities of color by the capitalist class. WFH ultimately posits that women's reproductive labor cannot be quantified, thereby rejecting the entire capitalist system of valuation.

WFH activism often casts the demand for wages due in terms of wealth owed to women, particularly women of color. As US Black Women for WFH (1977) wrote, they "refus[ed] ... to be satisfied in a ghetto of poverty in the midst of plenty," because "no one had a bigger claim to that plenty than the daughters of the 400 years of slavery that made Europe and America great" (p. 2). Here, these Black women activists draw attention to a contradiction of racial capitalism and imperialism in the fact that white elites lay claim to the wealth that enslaved and formerly enslaved people generated. UK Black Women for WFH (1978) added a transnational understanding to this phenomenon: "We have ALWAYS worked for Britain in the Third World

where we produced, first, wealth and workers for the British Empire, and now wealth and workers for Britain" (p. 4). This statement broadens the international scope of the WFH campaign by demonstrating how Western capitalists benefit from the labor of women of color not only in the Global North, but also in the "Third World" or Global South. In pointing to the wealth capitalists glean from forced and coerced reproductive labor, these publications counteract what Sharp-Hoskins (2023) termed "colonial amnesia," or the "forgetting" of credit's origins in racialized violence (p. 11). Further, UK Black Women for WFH activists return to the type of the welfare mother as leading "the whole working class in demanding that the wealth we have created come back to us" (p. 2). In this way, the wage demand figured as a wealth transfer that allowed WFH activists to fight for racial justice.

WFH also described women as creditors for capital in order to put women in a position of power relative to capitalists. Italian activists said, "We demand compensation from the state for all the times we got pregnant against our will, in addition to money and damages and interest for each abortion that we are forced to suffer!" (Toupin, 2018, p. 149). The mention of "interest" here stands out because interest is not usually attached to wages but to loans. If "debt and wages impose relations of dependency" (Dowling, 2016, p. 15), the housewife as creditor makes capital dependent on her. Indeed, WFH suggests that the housewife could require payment of her loan by no longer providing the contracted services. New York WFH (n.d.) activists threaten to "serve notice" to the government and write that "If we don't get what we want, we will simply refuse to work any longer" (p. 44). They concluded with the following demand: "WE WANT IT IN CASH, RETROACTIVE AND IMMEDIATELY. AND WE WANT ALL OF IT" (New York WFH Committee, n.d., p. 44). Here, WFH women speak as creditors threatening a borrower in danger of defaulting, as they require that all the wealth they are owed—all the wealth women have ever created—be paid back immediately. The narrative WFH constructs here is the opposite of the dominant narrative in which actual financial debt and an imagined social indebtedness to the family compel women to work (Berg, 2014). Rather, WFH demands that capital not only "recognize the debt as its own" (Berg, 2014, p. 167) but also pay it back in full. Just as the housewife and welfare mother types turn women's weakness under capitalism—their obligation to perform reproductive labor—into their source of power, the woman as creditor holds power over capital by threatening to refuse to perform.

Importantly, WFH's use of the language of credit and debt through the wage demand is not meant to be taken completely seriously. As I mentioned earlier, some aspects of the WFH campaign, like struggles to preserve welfare payments, did truly advocate for women to be paid, whether through a wage, increased social services, or welfare, for their domestic labor (Weeks, 2011). Some materials, notably UK Black Women for WFH's publication and a 1978 International WFH special bulletin, do also attach dollar amounts to women's reproductive labor. Far more common, however, are demands that seem incalculable and functionally impossible to meet. For example, a New York WFH Committee (n.d.) pamphlet entitled "The Women of the World Are Serving Notice!" demands "wages for every dirty toilet, every indecent assault, every painful childbirth, every cup of coffee, and every smile" (p. 41). Although this pamphlet lists different activities for which women want compensation, it offers no guidance as to how much money they are owed. Similarly, the "Wages Due Song" printed in the Wages Due Collective position statement on lesbian women contends that

"If women were paid for all we do … there'd be a lot of wages due for every time we smiled" and "every time we've been raped" (Agger et al., n.d., p. 5). The lack of specific demands suggests that WFH activists do not literally want to be paid for smiling, or for making coffee, but to draw attention to and transform the un(der) waged conditions of their reproductive labor. Perhaps the most absurd claim comes from the New York WFH Committee's (n.d.) demand that they "immediately" receive "cash" for all the wealth women have ever produced (p. 44). Who, exactly, would pay? Who is to say how much value women have produced for capital? And even if someone could come up with such a number, how would every woman's individual contributions be tabulated?

The point, of course, is that they cannot. As the Toronto WFH Collective (1975) noted in a student magazine, "There is never any end to our work because it encompasses our entire role as women—and that is not a quantifiable thing" (p. 21). Indeed, Best (2021) affirmed that reproductive activities cannot fully "'count' for capital, because none can be quantified by capital," and "capital is a system of domination by math" (p. 901). WFH activists therefore do not demand a literal wage, but a mass transfer of wealth and an end to the exploitation of women's un(der)waged reproductive labor. As such, WFH complicates Sharp-Hoskins' (2023) contention that the claim that reproductive labor "cannot be adequately *represented* in terms of money simultaneously denies any claims for financial compensation" (p. 160). If we view WFH's appropriation of the language of credit and debt as a performative contradiction, one which makes seemingly impossible claims to point out the limits of capitalism's ability to properly value and reward reproductive labor, then we can understand the demand for wages as akin to the demand for reparations, which "subverts logics of debt and accounting by dramatizing their failures" (Sharp-Hoskins, 2023, p. 161).

It is here that the most radical potential of the wage demand emerges. By calling for all reproductive labor to be properly rewarded, WFH calls for an end to capitalism. If reproductive labor cannot be fully quantified, it follows that the capitalist value form will no longer suffice. Not only is it impossible to calculate all the wealth that reproductive labor contributes to capital, but it is likely not possible for all reproductive labor to be fairly waged within the capitalist economy.[4] As Federici (2020) put it, "capitalism requires unwaged labor in order to contain the cost of labor power," such that waging all housework would mean "break[ing] the process of capital accumulation" (p. 4). Asking for all reproductive labor to be waged can therefore be considered functionally equivalent to asking for the end of the profit-driven capitalist economy and of the separation of production from reproduction. In this way, I would suggest that WFH gets beyond the limitations of the Brook Farm approach to literally waging housework, as described by Smith (2021), by forwarding a perspective in which it is impossible to achieve a wage for housework within the capitalist system. What WFH fights for instead is a system in which reproductive labor would be well supported, removed from its seemingly natural attachment to women, and collectivized—in short, a socialist system.

4 Scholars who study reproductive labor do not agree on whether capital can afford to pay for reproduction; Best (2021), for example, suggests that commodifying reproductive labor might benefit capital by allowing it to subsume more value. However, WFH theorists subscribed to the position expressed by Federici.

Toward Anticapitalist Feminist Rhetorics

I have argued that WFH activists reappropriate capitalist rhetorics in order to highlight the limitations of how reproductive labor is understood and organized under capitalism, thereby pointing to the need for a new political economic system. By playing with the meaning of work and risk, WFH situates women's reproductive labor firmly within capitalism and troubles the divisions between productive and reproductive, and waged and unwaged, labor. Through the figures of the welfare mother and the housewife, WFH unites women around their un(der)waged condition, which, they suggest, is both the source of women's lack of power in capitalist society and the source of their revolutionary potential. Finally, WFH uses the language of credit and debt to illustrate the impossibility of fully compensating women for their reproductive work and therefore the necessity of anticapitalist resistance. What underwrites all these strategies is a performative politics (Butler, 1997, 2007) that makes capitalist ideology strange by resituating its terms in the context of women's work. Workplace risks occur in the home because of the absence of a fair wage, not its presence; "welfare mother" refers not only to women receiving welfare but to all women who deserve a wage for their reproductive labor; and the wealth women produce for capital is a loan that is impossible to repay. By extending, shifting, and tearing apart the referents of capital's terms, WFH critiques the contradictory treatment of reproduction within capitalism.

Reading WFH materials through the lenses of performativity and capitalist rhetoric also allows us to rethink some of the movement's supposed faults and shortcomings. The claims that "all women are housewives" and that "all women are welfare mothers" can be understood as performing typification that links the gendered and racialized risks women face to their un(der)waged condition. In this way, these "types" provide a basis for women to organize around this shared condition. This is not to say that this strategy is without fault—as I mentioned earlier, it can flatten differences between women that occur due to intersecting oppressions—but that it should not be wholly discounted as essentialist. Similarly, it is certainly true that the conflicting expressions of the demand for wages, with some serious calls for compensation on the one hand, and outlandish demands for wealth redistribution on the other, contributed to confusion about the campaign. But it is also true that the seemingly nonsensical demands expose a key weakness of capital: its inability to properly value and compensate reproductive labor. These demands and the typifying claims made by WFH activists are therefore not something to try to hide or explain away as indicators of the datedness of the movement. Instead, they should be considered as integral to its performative strategy, even if, like all strategies, they are imperfect.

In particular, as Butler (1997) explained, in order for performative resignifications to function, terms must be distanced from their original contexts and understood in new ways. WFH's rhetoric only makes sense in the context of activists' redefinitions of concepts including "wages," "housework," "welfare mother," "housewife," and even "women." Interpreted through the dominant lexicon, slogans like "wages for housework" and "all women are housewives" are certainly reductive and exclusionary. When we understand "housewife," for example, as a woman who performs unpaid labor in the home, the term excludes the many women who work for a wage; however, an expansive understanding of "housewife" as any woman who may

be called upon to perform reproductive labor can unite women. The question becomes, then, how activists can help audiences understand their reappropriation of terms. One partial answer may lie in context itself—while the demand "wages for housework" communicated in isolation, on, say, a sign at a protest, is provocative but likely confusing, a different, more nuanced picture emerges when activists explain the demand in a flyer or pamphlet. Ultimately, however, it is worth remembering, as Butler (1997) did, that all communication risks miscommunication. At the same time, the very possibility of miscommunication is what makes resignification possible. And if, as Butler (2007) argued, "there can be no radical politics of change without performative contradiction" (p. 66), we must not allow the potential for failure to prevent us from engaging in performative politics.

Indeed, I would assert that, considering economic changes under neoliberalism, WFH's performative rhetoric remains highly relevant for feminists today. The growth of the service economy has waged more forms of reproductive labor, and traditionally productive forms of work are "increasingly reproductive" in that they, too, generate "social landscapes, communicative contexts, and cultural forms" (Weeks, 2011, p. 141). Women of color, immigrant women, and women from the Global South continue to perform a significant proportion of the world's un(der)waged reproductive labor (Federici, 2020; Nadasen, 2023). What's more, the contingency and precarity that has always characterized women of color's reproductive work is expanding to larger sectors of the working class (Nadasen, 2023). Given the recent resurgence of anti-work politics (Alexander, 2024), there remains an opportunity for feminists to reappropriate capitalist rhetorics for anticapitalist ends. Following WFH, contemporary activists might use discourses of risk and credit and debt to ask why only certain forms of reproductive labor are waged, and why risk and debt are distributed unevenly among women. If one of today's "types" is the precarious service worker, we might come together around the fact that in one way or another, we all serve capital. Similarly, activists can draw from Black Women for WFH and Wages Due Lesbians in centering multiply marginalized women, like migrant domestic workers, who are at the forefront of the fight against capitalism's exploitation of reproductive labor. So long as capitalism continues to exist, there will be a need and an opportunity for feminist movements to point out its contradictions and collectivize against it. And, as Butler (1997) has reminded us, "within political discourse, the very terms of resistance and insurgency are spawned in part by the powers they oppose" (p. 40). Capitalism, in other words, produces the possibility of resistance through its own language and practices. It's up to us to take advantage of it.

Biography

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Framing Failure and Success: Retrospective Remembering in Oral History Archives

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Abstract: This article applies feminist rhetorical microhistory (FRM), a methodology combining feminist rhetorical listening practices with microhistory, to the oral history of Linda Kurtz, a women's rights activist and Equal Rights Amendment advocate in Georgia. Drawing on the Georgia Women's Movement Project archives, McCrary examines how Kurtz retrospectively frames the ERA's failure in Georgia as part of a longer trajectory of feminist progress. FRM enables a renegotiation of the scholar-subject relationship, positioning oral history narrators as co-authors of recovery scholarship and restoring rhetorical complexity to historical narratives flattened by grand narratives of success and failure. Through close attention to Kurtz's retrospective remembering, McCrary argues that Kurtz's oral history offers not merely a personal account but a theory of feminist historical memory that extends and complicates rhetorical recovery scholarship.

Keywords: recovery methodologies, microhistory, rhetorical listening, women's movement, Equal Rights Amendment, Linda Kurtz, oral history, feminist rhetorical microhistory

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On the afternoon of January 20, 1982, Linda Hallenborg Kurtz sat in the gallery of the Georgia State Capitol in Atlanta, GA watching as state legislators voted on whether to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). This constitutional amendment would guarantee women protection from discrimination on the basis of sex, and the activism that had become part of Kurtz's daily life was at unprecedented levels—with women mobilized on both sides of the debate. The proposed amendment was set to expire that year, and only three more states needed to ratify to achieve the two-thirds required for an amendment to be added to the U.S. Constitution. With this deadline looming, Georgia could be one of those three remaining states. Along with other community organization leaders in the state, Kurtz spent nearly five years mobilizing women in Georgia towards this goal, and now she sat waiting for the results. She turned to her colleague Sharon Hannon and said,

"Sharon, we will always remember that on this day, at this time, for this event, we [sat] next to each other."

The day remained vivid in Kurtz's memory, but not for the reasons she had hoped. On that winter day in 1982, with Kurtz and thousands of others watching, Georgia legislators voted 116 to 57 against ratifying the ERA. In an oral history recording in 1998, Kurtz recalls the minutes and hours after the vote:

> It was devastating to see…how easily [the ERA] was defeated—how no one stood up—how all of our work seemingly—and I underline seemingly—had no effect […] Everybody was disoriented and upset. I just knew that I had to be really clearheaded, and I had to present an approach to the defeat that would be giving a hopeful message. (p. 39 of transcript)

In that moment of defeat, Kurtz had to focus on a longer-view fight for equality. Amid camera crews and reporters that afternoon, she spoke directly to those feeling discouraged, assuring everyone listening that this loss was one "in the overall progression of the human spirit" and that eventually, women would achieve equal rights.

Later that year, on June 30, 1982, the ERA expired and was not added to the Constitution. The national debate over the ERA in the 1970s and early 1980s was a galvanizing experience in the lives of many women and is remembered in macro narratives as part of the significant and flawed women's movement of the mid-twentieth century. The goals of what is sometimes called "second-wave feminism" were thwarted by the movement's emphasis on equality with men, which favored white, middle-class, Protestant women and excluded the very many women who faced additional disenfranchisement due to race, class, religion, and/or sexuality (Hewitt, 2010; hooks, 2000; Cobble et al., 2014). During the ERA debate, tension arose for the women in that privileged group, between "their desire for diversity and their need to moderate increasingly heated and emotional accusations from amendment opponents" (Aaron, 2012, p. 1). As the debate became codified in historical memory, two "sides" seemed to emerge: the conservative anti-ERA faction who embodied traditional southern values—set in Christian and American "family values"—and feminists who were perceived as "anti-religious" "women's libbers" (Aaron; Morris, 2010; Spruill, 2017). After the amendment failed, the conservative right became the victors in this political battle that left little room for historical nuance, further hardening established stereotypes of the American South. By the 1990s, many women in Georgia felt that 1) the tag of "failure" vastly undersold their experience of this important era and 2) the labor they invested to make feminist inroads in a racist and homophobic social fabric were already being dismissed or discredited based on the limits of second-wave feminism. Women like Linda Kurtz did not see their labor nor their feminist values represented in what emerged as the grand narrative of second-wave feminism and a post-WWII South.

How we have come to understand the murkier, more complicated, parts of grand historical narratives may be the victory of applying feminist theories of rhetoric to the present case study and to many other crevices within twentieth century history. The dissonance between how individual women in Georgia remembered their experiences advocating for the ERA and how it was interpreted in historical memory provides the central tension I explore in this article. Kurtz's retelling of the legislative vote in 1982, of her excitement and then quick move to speak to the press to center long-term goals, is part of an archival collection established to ensure work by Georgia activists to have the ERA ratified would be part of the history of the state and could be studied. The founders of the collection understood that adding an oral, narrative component to written and physical records of their activist work would expand the historical record. I encountered the Georgia Women's Movement Project (GWMP) archives during my doctoral studies; I had questions loosely centered on how women in mid- to late-twentieth century Georgia felt about work—paid or unpaid. As I read transcripts and later listened to the audio recordings of the oral histories, I learned not only about efforts to ratify the ERA in Georgia, but also about the very intentional actions taken to preserve the history and the ways in which women like Kurtz were speaking to contextualize their activities. The added complexity, however, is itself constrained by what the collection contains; the GWMP oral histories, while an extraordinary act of recovery, largely preserve the voices of women with the social and financial capital to build an archives[1]. The experiences and labor of Georgia's Black women, women of color, and queer activists remain largely absent from this collection, a gap this study can name but not fill.

1 Editors' note: "archives" is taken as a singular noun throughout this piece.

I am weaving numerous strands together in this article. First, I briefly introduce the ERA battle in Georgia, the archive inspired in its wake, and the role Kurtz played in both. Then, I outline feminist rhetorical microhistory, a methodology that builds on the feminist practice of rhetorical listening combined with components of microhistory. I establish the symbiotic strengths of feminist rhetorical listening practices and microhistory, especially their ability to disrupt the scholar-subject relationship. Next, I apply feminist rhetorical microhistory to Linda Kurtz's oral history as a case study to contemplate the intentional acts of remembrance she uses throughout her oral history and to figure her experience of the women's movement in Georgia. I suggest through this process that Kurtz defined her work within a broader understanding of "failure" that becomes significant for feminist scholars of both history and rhetoric.

Another goal of this article is to call attention to the complexities and value of oral histories for rhetorical feminism and encourage scholars to sit in the rich intersection of feminist rhetorical practice and microhistory when approaching oral history sources. Oral history sources are a fruitful location for insights, for new knowledge creation and complication of macro narratives of history, and perhaps even for locating hope. For those of us doing archival work, realizing the "conversational" component of our research subjects presents challenges; an oral history recording affords reflexivity when subjects are no longer living. Oral history—both engaging existing records and collecting new ones—places conversation squarely within rhetorical and historical research. In my experience, passionate community archivists are collecting valuable stories and are excited to partner with scholars willing to listen.

Opening this essay with Kurtz's voice instead of mine is intentional. Because the women who created the GWMP archives were so aware of their representation in historical record, even to the point of enabling women to expressly *say* what they felt in a literal recording, I was inclined to challenge the scholar-subject relationship when I began this research. I was looking for methodologies that invited a disruption. While I have used FRM to facilitate that disruption to analyze oral history archives specifically, I see potential for its application with other archival materials; I am excited to see what other scholars might discover with its uses.

The Georgia Women's Movement Project Archives as Intervention

In the early 1990s, several women who had been deeply involved in the women's movement and ERA activism in Georgia recognized that history was already misremembering the work they had done. In fact, by the '90s, younger generations seemed to be forgetting the ERA struggles altogether, and the divisive role it played in second-wave feminism and the advancement of economic, professional, and personal rights for women. The ERA had "mobilized women to political activism at levels not seen since suffrage six decades earlier" (Morris, 2010, p. 163) and yet, less than two decades later, it faded from national consciousness. As Margaret Miller Curtis recalled in her self-published memoir, "women will continue to be ignored in historical records unless feminists [intervene]" (p. 101). The small group of women who came together to form an archival collection of their work in the women's movement was responding not only to the exigency to get their story right, but to be included in history at all.

Curtis and others, calling themselves "Founding Mothers," began the process of collecting and preserving documents and narratives of their experiences. Activist and long-time organizer-collector Lucy Hargrett Draper led the effort, approaching numerous universities to determine where they might establish an archive, after ruling out independent archives (due to financial sustainability and community access concerns). Her collecting was motivated by the recent unexpected deaths of two important Georgia feminists (Margie Pitts Hames and Martha Wren Gaines) and the conviction that "future feminists might learn from [their] experience" (Curtis 101) and carry the torch. The archives, established in 1995 at Georgia State University, serves as a permanent collection preserving what the leaders of this charge saw as the "unsung heroines of the women's movement in Georgia from 1967-1997" and is today the Donna Novak Coles Georgia Women's Movement Archives: Georgia Women's Movement Project (GWMP). Draper, Curtis and a full advisory board of women worked for nearly a decade to see the collection become a reality.

Early in the process of collecting materials for this new archives, the GWMP Oral History Project was created as part of the collection. Between 1995 and 2004, oral histories from dozens of women and a couple of men were recorded and archived, as both transcript and audio file. I initially examined the oral histories of the three women listed as its "Phase I" leaders, which included Kurtz. I was struck by the intentional acts of remembrance she maintains throughout her narrative, which seemed to claim important restorative aspects of the ERA battle in Georgia—capturing what the work meant for so many regular women and its meaning in larger human rights contexts.

The GWMP collectors and interviewers were responding to the coupled exigencies of an unfinished feminist movement and historical narratives that rarely frame "failure" like that of ERA ratification in Georgia accurately or completely. Given their location in the U.S. South, where macro narratives reinforce conservative cultural stereotypes of women, the activists who advocated for and advanced women's equality in Georgia risked erasure. Indeed, the flattened historical record suggests minimal women's movement activity in Georgia. The drive to form community archives is based on the founders' "real or perceived failure on the part of mainstream heritage institutions to collect, preserve, and make available collections that accurately represent th[eir] experiences" (Sheffield, 2017, p. 366). Like mainstream nineteenth-century women activists, the GWMP founders were intentional about documenting the history of their movement (see Mattingly, 2002); Kathleen T. Leuschen and Risa Applegarth's (2021) comparative study on activist memory illustrated how some activists—particularly 1960s–1970s feminists—face 'narration fatigue' from repeatedly defending against cultural amnesia and misrepresentation (p. 191–2) which highlights the ongoing complexities of "memory texts" and that contestation itself can function as a stabilizing force in collective memory (p. 181; p. 190). These examples illustrate the rhetorical richness of feminist activist archives over time. GWMP founders feared more "effective" rhetoricians like Phyllis Schlafly and her STOP-ERA organization would stand as the assumed position of all southern women. Lest their hard work be forgotten, the formation of an archives was a final extension of the work: remembering the ERA battle and imagining what it might mean for future listeners. That so few people today know this history is a testament to their urgency. Those who recorded an oral history were consciously staking a claim to their individual and collective histories, as the "losing" side of a very difficult and time-consuming state political battle. Understanding the full weight of Kurtz's rhetori-

cal framing of failure, however, requires stepping back from these specific campaigns to consider the broader political and personal context she brought to her 1998 oral history.

Feminist Rhetorical Microhistory

I use Feminist Rhetorical Microhistory (FRM) both to understand Linda Kurtz's activist work and to study how she chose to characterize and engage that work nearly two decades later. I apply feminist listening practices and microhistory together in my analysis, arriving at feminist rhetorical microhistory as a productive methodology. Feminist rhetorical microhistory draws on and advances scholarship in two disciplines, overlapping in productive ways that renegotiate the scholar-subject relationship. Combined, microhistory and feminist rhetorical theories that center listening invite a deeper and more complicated understanding of events in history viewed through an individual's normal and exceptional lived experiences. FRM encourages a renegotiation of the scholar-subject relationship by establishing the subject(s) as coauthor of recovery scholarship; thus, it works especially well with recollective sources like oral history and memoir. FRM operates like other feminist rhetorical methodologies that center individual experiences that highlight how their subjects' rhetorical activity runs counter to prevalent social and/or historical narratives. FRM weaves in microhistory where it productively overlaps with feminist rhetorical recovery methodologies, enabling scholars to study movements past and present that have remained occluded in the tendency to narrate simpler, grander stories of success and failure.

Methodologically, microhistory demonstrates possibilities for establishing more complicated historical understandings when we consciously engage sources as *biased* and *rhetorical* rather than an impossible—and uselessly bland—objective. Microhistory grew out of 1970s Italy, where dissatisfied Marxist historians viewed an abstract, decontextualized historical narrative as not only overly simplistic but inaccurate. Early microhistorians sought "to negotiate a methodological middle ground," emphasizing "contextualized lived experience over lifeless abstractions and isolated events" and frequently beginning their work in the archives (McComiskey, 2016, p. 15). Microhistory offers a new way of looking at personal stories connected to larger historical events. Bruce McComiskey (2016) argued that microhistory brings together "a full collection of related methodologies, all of which together reduce the scale of historical analysis and increase the complexity of our current historical knowledge" of a subject of study (p. 14). His effort looked to me a lot like the recovery work that has been conducted by feminist rhetorical scholars. Microhistory enables researchers to adjust their scopic levels, engaging both individual experience and larger historical context. Contrary to its name, however, microhistory does not engage close-up historical study at the expense of larger context. Rather, practitioners recognize the role social, political, and economic factors can have on individual decisions and experiences, and that studying one without the other provides a stunted, simplistic interpretation of complex conditions. Engaging microhistory enables the researcher to ask different questions and potentially uncover new knowledge of historical moments that have been well documented in history and popular memory.

Such potential new knowledge includes both what we can ask of archival records and the unexpected/unsettled responses from the voices those records contain. Microhistory, then, is not unlike Cheryl Glenn's "remapping" metaphor, which she uses to complicate our view of rhetorical history, to "look crookedly" to

see what is "less inevitable, less familiar" in standard locations of historical documentation (1997, p. 7). Feminist rhetorical microhistory is less concerned with singular, linear narratives and more concerned with the moves, experiences, and remembrances of individuals, for what those actions may contribute to our understanding of larger historical events. In other words, I am less concerned with documenting factual accounts of historical events and far more concerned with subjects' experience of and relationship to those events as recounted in archival materials.

FRM allows interrogation of how women have been recovered and remembered—in this case in the self-reflexive context of their own memories and storytelling; encourages deeply listening to oral histories to discover their means of remembrance, especially related to their retrospective view of political activist work and legacy of success and failure; and reveals the rhetorically rich, reflexive nature of oral history sources. Although FRM is especially useful to study oral histories, I have also used it to conduct research on the self-published memoir of another GWMP founder that is part of the archival collection. While nascent, FRM could be applied to other source material that shares self-reflexive and/or recollective qualities in which practices of rhetorical listening are valuable.

Kurtz's narrative offers as much memory—recounting the events and details of her work—as it does reflection and framing. In other words, using rhetorical listening practices paired with microhistory, I can consider and complicate the rhetorical moves Kurtz enacts in the act of remembering activist work to understand the larger context of the women's movement in Georgia. Recent scholarship in these fields centers the subject and their lived, flawed, everyday experience, and establishes the value of their *experience of* larger historical events. For scholars engaging archival materials for historical rhetorical analysis, FRM enables us to "confront, reveal, and amend the epistemic privileges of a proper Memory and History that remains responsible for the marginalization of other histories and memories" (García et al., 2023, p. 14, capitalization in original). Archivists and/or collection creators' decision to include oral histories alongside other historical material suggests an awareness of the value of oral personal narrative to disrupt traditional forms and sources of historical record. Adopting feminist rhetorical microhistory restores complexity to the experiences of interviewees sharing their stories, the realities of which are frequently excluded from macro narratives of historical events.

The methodologies central to feminist rhetorical microhistory have roots in the same era when activists like those in Georgia were working to preserve their own voices from historical erasure. In the same decade that feminist scholars like Jaqueline Jones Royster (2000) and Cheryl Glenn (1997) were recovering the rhetorical lives of women from the past, a cohort in Georgia was working to ensure their own voices wouldn't suffer the same historical erasure—establishing an archives to preserve their stories for future recovery work. Feminist scholars have expanded the definitions of rhetoric and their value to understand women throughout time, especially when speaking required tools beyond those used by men (Kohrs Campbell, 1989; Goggin, 2002). With this expansion, methodologies that center listening, empathy, and a slow and intentional relationship with rhetorical subjects have enabled decades of recovery work. It is within this tradition of expanded rhetorical definitions and listening-centered methodologies that my approach to studying women like Kurtz emerges. Studying women like Kurtz through the records she chose to leave in the GWMP ar-

chives extends recovery work on misunderstood regions, events, and individuals in U.S. history; in this case, on how activist work to codify women's rights played out in a southern city by women who continue to be flattened in macro narratives of second-wave feminism.

Kurtz's narrative operates in strong contrast to dominant narratives that suggest that many southern women opposed the ERA. Instead, via feminist rhetorical microhistory, experiences like Kurtz's enable a deeper understanding of social movements in the U.S. South. Building on this strong scholarly tradition of recovery work and drawing from my training in history, I observed that microhistory—with its attention to the lived experience often flattened in macro narratives—has been underutilized as an aligned tool. I also noticed that oral histories remained understudied as rich locations of rhetorical intention and recovery of twentieth-century feminist rhetors. Thus, in this article, I use feminist rhetorical microhistory to observe Kurtz's rhetorical intention in the act of recording an oral history; her case study demonstrated the many revelations oral history as a site of study might hold for scholars in feminist rhetoric. I have found this methodology advantageous in answering research questions that straddle rhetoric and history, concerning how historical movements are remembered on both large (state, nation-state) and small scales (community, individual).

Across generative research on the nature of remembrance of women, scholars in feminist rhetoric challenge accepted narratives of known women and recover individuals and stories previously absent or not properly historicized (Lunsford, 1995; Royster, 2000; Glenn, 1997; Gaillet & Bailey, 2019; Gold & Enoch, 2018; Ramírez, 2009; Greer, 2023; Enoch, 2019; Hallenbeck, 2018; Goggin, 2002; Wilde, 2019; Prior, 2024). Central to this body of work is the interruption of prevailing narratives of women's rhetorical agency. Scholars in history and critical archival studies have also complicated, over the last few decades, the nature of women's agency and subjectivity in and as historical record (Caswell and Cifor, 2016; Cifor and Wood, 2017; Cifor et al., 2018; Eichhorn, 2013; Hughes-Watkins, 2018; Kumbier, 2014; Moseley, 1973; Voss-Hubbard, 1995; Hartman, 2019; hooks, 2000; Schuller, 2021). This body of reframing, recovering, and "re-collecting" (Guglielmo, 2019) invites me to collaborate with the subjects of my research—something possible by listening closely and centering the person and their literal voice.

Rhetors like Kurtz emerge, as Royster acknowledged, "not just as subjects of research but as potential listeners, observers, even co-researchers, whether silent or voiced, in the knowledge-making processes themselves" (p. 274). By recording an oral history, Kurtz is performing the role of co-researcher. Microhistory is feminist to begin with—acknowledging complex and multiple experiences of the same events, valuing and centering lived experience—but pairing microhistory with feminist rhetorical listening practices adds a level of engagement with the research subjects that allows them to speak—as co-authors via their remembrance of experience. Allowing the subject to speak, to be heard, while withholding or suspending the urge of the researcher to respond and interpret is central to feminist rhetorical practice, and combined with microhistory becomes a valuable methodology for understanding the actions and experiences of actors in history.

Engaged in a slow research process based in both rhetorical listening (Ratcliffe, 2006) and strategic contemplation (Royster & Kirsch, 2012), this work engages the tangled reality of memory—and its siblings

misremembering and erasure—within rhetorical activity. Within FRM, memory and remembrance are not discounted, and individuals' memories constitute the complexity we seek to collect, listen to, interpret, and contextualize. Letizia Guglielmo's premise of "re-collecting," helps us to better understand "the plurality of the term 'remembering' and its role in feminist historiography" (p. 2). Emily Legg's work (2023), listening to the voices of her Cherokee ancestors in colonial archival locations, also suggested the value of expanding our definitions of and relationship with both memory and storytelling.

The act of listening forms the weft—critical to the integrity and structure of any weaving—stabilizing the theories woven into my analysis. Rhetorical listening (Ratcliffe, 2006), rhetorical empathy (Blankenship, 2019), invitational rhetoric (Foss & Griffin, 2020), and strategic contemplation (Royster & Kirsch, 2012) emphasize a restored logos, *sitting with* another (an Other) as the goal of rhetoric, and suspending my voice to instead center the speaker (see Fig. 1). Each of these practices helps me listen deeply to how women like Linda Kurtz used the location of their oral history narrative to understand success and failure within their life's activist work. Feminist rhetorical theories, focused on listening, paired with microhistory's affordance to adjust the scopic lens on a specific person and/or historical experience, work especially well for understanding and analyzing oral history collections.

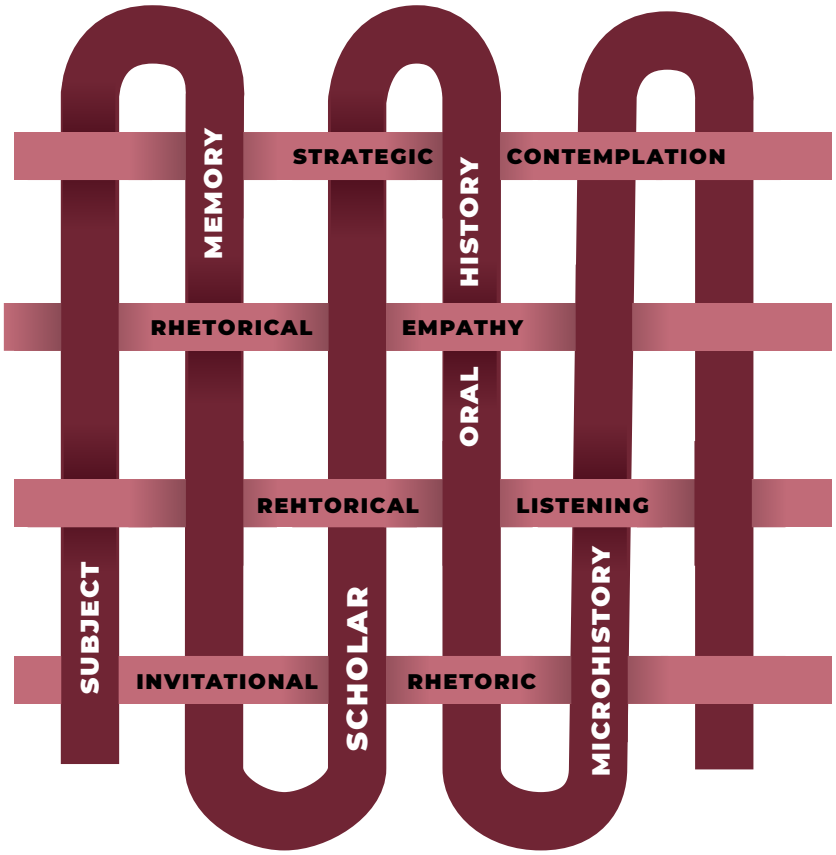

Figure 1: A warp and weft as visual representation of the interwoven aspects of feminist rhetorical listening practices alongside microhistory and the scholar-subject relationship.

The highly subjective nature of oral history has always made it a controversial location for tracing the historical agency of individual people. Oral histories are often recorded months or years after the events they recount, and are thus mediated by memory, and malleable based on subsequent life experiences and the social and political context of when they are recorded. For example, many of the GWMP oral histories were recorded in the mid- to late-nineties, and the subjects directly address 1990s feminism and late-twentieth century social issues. Those who defend oral history as a medium for historical documentation counter that any form of human history contains some mediation; given this baseline, valuing and using oral history sources enables more voices to be part of the historical record. Oral histories, as unabashedly subjective, reveal "truths" expressed in memories that then force us to look more closely at what the narratives represent (Frisch, 1990).

Using FRM to study oral history sources embraces the dissonance between the individual experience of leading a coalition of ERA supporters in Georgia and the vast opposition forces that "won" when the amendment failed. This dissonance is the "exceptional normal" that McComiskey described—normal because it happened to women like Kurtz, exceptional because experiences like hers did not become part of the grand narrative of the women's movement in the South. Oral history can be a source documenting "an inner reality very much at odds with the public image of historical events" (Frisch, 1990, p. 163). In other words, oral histories are an incredible archival location for conducting feminist rhetorical microhistory, as the subject's agency in storytelling invites consideration of the ways those experiences align with or contradict macro narratives. How the subjects understand and frame their experiences, and how they *feel* about those experiences, are just as important to "the facts" of history—especially for rhetorical study. FRM enables restored historical rhetorical complexity.

Rhetorizing Success and Failure: Applying FRM to Linda Kurtz's Oral History Remembrance

Kurtz's oral history narration provides a fruitful location for understanding, through feminist rhetorical microhistory, the meaning of her actions during major events, and the intentional framing of successes and failures upon reflection. As I illustrate, Kurtz was intentional both at the time events occurred and especially upon remembrance years later, in how she framed success and failure. Vanessa Kraemer Sohan (2019) noted that studying "failed" action in social and political movements is not only worthwhile, but overdue for more expansive means for scholars to define and understand it. It is important for scholars of rhetoric to understand "the seemingly ordinary means and materials available" to women in social and political movements—including and especially when those movements or their efforts may fail (Sohan, p. 3). Agents might "deliberately reform, reinvent, and reconstruct the languages, media, and modes available to them" (p. 3), and Kurtz was doing so retrospectively using oral history as the media and mode to appeal to her audience—intended future listeners.

Rhetorizing the Failure of the Equal Rights Amendment

For Kurtz, advocating for women's rights in Georgia during the 1970s and early 1980s was already an uphill battle, especially in the context of a "good ol' boys" state legislature and coming on the heels of Civil

Rights legislation that white, male southern lawmakers saw as a threat to the social system. As her oral history illustrated, the momentum she and others built toward the ERA was already a victory in that social and political context. When Kurtz moved with her husband to metro Atlanta in the mid-1970s, she was writing her dissertation. She would not ultimately complete the degree but was surprised to find no women's studies programs (the relatively new field in which she had been teaching and studying at University of Pennsylvania) in Georgia. Instead, after a year cloistered and toiling on the dissertation, she looked for ways to channel her energy into political activity, interested to see "what was happening in the women's movement here." She said she was "constantly discouraged from becoming involved" and assured that "there's nothing happening here. There's no possibility of passing the ERA. Just don't even put your energy there." The mobilization, leading up to the vote in 1982 and in the wake of its failure, was monumental for the state, representing a push toward the advancement of women's rights in the U.S. South that many thought impossible. This shift is part of the reason Kurtz confidently recalled that while the Georgia legislature didn't take up the banner of women's rights "at this moment in time," they would someday, and they would in other ways. In another oral history narrative, Cathey Steinberg, a member of the Georgia General Assembly who voted for the ERA on that fateful day, reveals that many of her colleagues said as much to her: their constituents wouldn't stand for this vote, but they would be sure to back other bills she put forth, on other inroads for women.

After the Georgia legislative vote in January 1982, Kurtz framed the failure in a way that she hoped would motivate and inspire. She spoke to news cameras and reporters outside the capitol, reminding her audience "we had lost the battle but had not lost the war." In her oral history narrative, she characterized this setback as "merely one" battle in "the overall progression of the human spirit towards equality and justice for all." In her memory of the day, she framed her response to this failure as "a greater educational opportunity for more people." She canceled travel related to her leadership role in the National Women's Political Caucus, feeling that those reeling from the vote results needed her optimistic leadership and affirmation that their effort hadn't been in vain.

To build support for the ERA in the mid 1970s, ERA Georgia, Inc. (referred to as simply ERA Georgia) was established as a coalitional organization bringing together aligned groups like the National Organization for Women (NOW), American Association of University Women (AAUW), People of Faith for the ERA, and some labor unions. Other women whose oral histories are included in the GWMP held leadership positions in ERA Georgia, while some worked alongside their volunteer staff in other capacities. The eventual breakdown of the organization after a crisis of leadership merits its own study to learn about organizing for social change even today (McCrary, 2023). Organizers with ERA Georgia built momentum at the grassroots level, but the work "became limited because ERA Georgia could not, under law, undertake lobbying," Kurtz recounted. She saw this as a major limitation to the coalition's power, so with others, Kurtz started the Georgia Women's Political Caucus (GWCP) and was elected the organization's first president. ERA Georgia and GWPC representatives fought side by side to support the ERA in the state, but the Caucus had more far-reaching goals. The distinction between the organizations was contentious at the time, but Kurtz maintained that the Caucus was not a "break" from ERA Georgia, it was "a logical step in the evolution of the process itself, the political process and consciousness of women." As ERA Georgia faded, its mission moot

after the ERA expired, leaders of the Caucus could fully focus on other aspects of legal and social change that impacted women's lives in Georgia. The failed vote was also a wake-up call for women who had not yet been mobilized either for or against the ERA. When the ERA was not ratified, "the [Georgia Women's Political] Caucus took off completely," Kurtz recalled. "Women all across the state [became] irate. We formed eight local caucuses within the next two years."

Kurtz emphasized that the most effective advances for women in Georgia came after state legislators voted against ERA ratification. The vote's failure mobilized a whole new collective energy towards a different goal: electing more women to office. In the wake of the failure, activist women observed with renewed clarity that without representation in elected spaces—city councils, mayoral offices, state legislatures—advancement of women's rights would remain stagnant. This unifying moment made many women sit up and realize they needed to do something to see change in their state, Kurtz said.

Kurtz reframed success metrics here; instead of defining success as passing the ERA, the goal shifts to improving the legal status of women through achievable reforms. As a transplant to the South, Kurtz was conscientious of what it took to lead a lobbying organization in a southern state: "There was no way to present these ideas if you were going to be a flag-waving person. Your credibility would be shot before you… started." Instead, she spoke in a "non-threatening, non-confrontational, non-judgmental way." She advocated for real women, with varied lives, supporting legislation on domestic violence, the establishment of battered women's centers, prison reform, economic equity, and financial access. Kurtz viewed her job post-ERA vote as "defusing the total misinformation, fear, and ignorance that had been perpetuated upon the ERA and some of these other organizations" to garner support for state-level legislation that *could* "improve the legal status of women" and make a difference in their lives.

Kurtz wasn't just reframing failure rhetorically; she was reconstructing the entire mode (in Sohan's framing) of feminist political action—from constitutional amendment to electoral strategy. Kurtz's belief in the lobbying goals of the Georgia Women's Political Caucus illustrated her political strategy and philosophy of feminism. The Caucus's "baseline mission" was to elect more women to office. Kurtz recalled: "All across the state we were pinpointing women who were [political] candidates, who were thinking of being candidates, who could be candidates, and moving them up. In the Atlanta City Council, we started getting more and more women [there] to the point where they were in the majority." With a focus on supporting women candidates and men who were supportive of women's issues, the GWPC shifted their work to making sure any future vote on the extensive list of issues that affected women would not face landslide opposition as it had with the ERA vote in 1982. As Kurtz put it: "The strategy was and is at the national, state, and local level to get more women elected to office because the whole philosophy is that only women are the bearers of the feminine vision that can bring in a sense of balance to the male vision that is there. And that is the only way we can hope to have a healthy balance in life and in the legislature." Her leadership in Georgia was informed by her work with the National Women's Political Caucus (NWPC), and she would eventually serve as vice chair from 1983-85. By the mid 1980s, the GWPC was "becoming mainstream," she said, giving her the confidence to shift her labor to the national branch.

Placing the ERA and Post-ERA Advocacy in Context

When Kurtz recorded her oral history in 1998 framed around her involvement in the women's movement, she expressed disillusionment with the state of activism at the end of the twentieth century. At 50, Kurtz was by now reflecting on decades of work that had started as a college student at Brandeis University. Kurtz is a white, Jewish woman from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, who moved to Atlanta due to her first husband's work. She represents the majority of the oral history collection's narrators who identify as white, middle-class, and college educated. She narrated a collection of personal experiences following the failed ratification of the ERA, comprising a lifetime of political and activist work. Throughout, she maintained a strong position that failure is a short-term understanding of longer-term goals, that every professional failure she experienced was part of a shift forward—progress she characterizes as a victory. That stance is maintained throughout her oral history narrative, informed by her evolving ideas on women's and human rights as her career progressed. The movement was not over, she answered—rather, "its energy is shifting" and "its focus changes." The anecdote at the start of this essay illustrates how quickly she articulated a long-range vision of success in the immediate aftermath of Georgia's failure to ratify the ERA. Examining how Kurtz rhetorically constructed this narrative of failure-as-progress requires the kind of attentive, reflective listening central to feminist rhetorical microhistory—paying attention not just to what she accomplished, but to how she frames and remembers that work.

The interview questions guiding Kurtz's narrative invited reflection, though of the many oral histories I studied, Kurtz was the most focused on refiguring failure and success. The oral history interviewers had a bank of questions they asked every subject, that started with childhood influences and education, continued to the women's movement in Georgia (especially the ERA) and culminated in several questions that seemed to invite reflection. The last few questions also suggest the creators' awareness of critiques of the women's movement and aims to complicate its meaning in public memory:

- What do you feel the women's movement has accomplished?
- What do you think the biggest obstacles to the movement have been?
- Has there been a time when you felt that the women's movement was over?
- What do you think about the relationship of younger women to feminism these days?

Each question provided an opportunity for Kurtz to rhetorically engage success and failure in a way that recognized her labor and framed a longer trajectory for audiences to consider when measuring both constructs. Building on the momentum of her work as vice chair of the National Women's Political Caucus, Kurtz ran for chair in 1985. She embarked on a "massive… nine month, twenty-two state campaign" against her opponent, New Yorker Irene Natividad. Eventually, she lost by 50 votes, she recalled. She framed this endeavor as a "very growth producing, a very interesting experience" that ultimately led her to "to look at a broader view of change in the world." She noted:

> What I say in my life now, and I said at the time—this was the best thing that ever happened to me because I did absolutely everything in my power, everything I could, to manifest my vision. There was not one stone that was left unturned. But when I lost, it released me back into my life in

a different way.

Kurtz came to see many of the destructive patterns of human behavior as inextricably linked to patriarchy, which is deeply ingrained into social, political, and economic structures: "What the women's movement in America has done is foster this massive global awareness of women's right for potential to be manifest and to balance the male energy in the world." This perspective informed her shift to grassroots action as the more effective means to solving humanity's larger issues—a marked shift from her stance during her years in political advocacy. The future of feminism, to Kurtz, is a "female presence at the lowest grass roots level to affect change." Kurtz's career after the events central to the oral history collection informed her arrival to this philosophy of feminism and is not widely repeated or shared across other GWMP oral histories. She noted the way we (collectives, individuals) measure success can impact our ability to observe real change: we must measure things on a different scale than simple or obvious progress. She insisted, "we have to measure it in the way that we can measure global, slow political change."

Through the rhetorical listening practices central to feminist rhetorical microhistory, we can hear how Kurtz unquestionably established that, at the time, and especially two decades later, the ERA battle was not a loss. As with any social movement, large and small actions taken by many women were not viewed as failures to them, at the time or in retrospect. Kurtz's detailed and reflective account of her work to advance the ERA in Georgia, as well as afterward to improve conditions for women in Georgia and then throughout the United States, illustrated the value of individual actions and motivations set against the flattened backdrop of macro historical narrative. If we prioritize neat, logical storytelling of social movements in Georgia, or specifically of years of work by activists in coalition to ratify the ERA in the state, experiences like Kurtz's are outliers. But personal stories of activism and effort allow scholars and other listeners to witness the humanity and normalcy of people who become enshrined as historical characters (or worse, weren't ever included) for the imperfect people they are/were. These stories, Sohan suggested, "underlin[e] the value of taking action and fighting for a cause, even when the challenge of collaboratively imagining a better future seems insurmountable" (p. 69). This goal has perhaps long been central for scholars whose research illustrates how activist work has real impact on policies, practices, and our current realities. However, it remains crucial that audiences like the ones Kurtz imagined can listen, sit with, critique, and reflect on her experiences.

Kurtz continued, to the very end of her narrative, to frame issues of the women's movement as not only ongoing but just getting started:

> I disagree with the people who don't think the Women's Movement has accomplished a lot. It has changed the face of our country and the world. Period. And that's… only the very beginning, because we are in the process of creating the most massive change that we only now see the very, very tip of. Look at just the time between [where] we are here now in this moment [1998] and the time that our grandmothers lived. The reason why women might not say they belong to the women's movement is that we have already done so much of what, seemingly, is obvious.

Kurtz's final framing is not optimism for its own sake—it is a rhetorical argument about the problem of measuring political change on too short a timeline. She does not hold this belief abstractly; she applies it directly to the movement itself, distinguishing between the "obvious" progress that is already visible and the

deeper, slower cultural transformation still underway. Through feminist rhetorical microhistory, we can hear in this closing statement not just confidence but a theory of feminist historical memory: that what looks like stagnation or failure may simply be progress at a scale our inherited metrics aren't built to capture.

The Value of the Exceptional Normal

Kurtz's oral history is significant because she was a relatively minor player by the measure of history; she was not an elected official and would not typically appear in histories of the ERA battle. One well-known ERA-era leader whose work *is* documented is Kathryn Dunaway, chair of the Georgia STOP-ERA campaign (nationally led by Phyllis Schlafly). This is where McComiskey's suggestion of the individual's "normal exceptional" lived experience becomes important. Kurtz illustrated this concept—a relatively minor player whose story nonetheless reveals the complexity that macro narratives obscure. It is valuable to consider the role and impact of one person in a movement in a place that is typically flattened into its cultural and historical stereotypes. It is easy for scholars to "ignor[e] the complexity of the feminist movement in order to focus on a discrete moment that is easier to study" (Fredlund et al., 2020, p. 9-10). Events that took place in Georgia, involving several "minor" actors, are more nuanced when we adjust scopic level. That each oral history in the collection is specific to an individual's experience of organizing for the ERA, how they felt organizational shifts within that movement, and their perceived outcomes afterward becomes valuable as a set of records that complicate events in history. Discrepancies among accounts make clear that past events are highly mediated and situated at the time they occurred and remain malleable in our memories afterward. For a meaningful microhistorical analysis of action and meaning, "the most important thing is to understand what action means for the actors themselves" (Magnússon & Szijártó, 2013, p. 27). It is not my job, nor would it be epistemologically useful, to define the women's movement on a large scale. Instead, by listening rhetorically, I can understand the complexities of real, flawed people pushing for social and political change. The oral histories of Kurtz and others in the GWMP archives invite—and directly narrate—those compelling nuances.

The initial unifying cause for the women who founded the archives—to ratify the ERA and thus see women's equality codified in the U.S. Constitution—was not successful. Yet, the nature of the women's movement as a "failure" or "success" depends as much on the local contexts, livelihoods, and other outcomes of the movement's goals and the people driving it forward. In addition, rhetorical success for historical women is often measured in ways beyond "persuasion," as for most of history, patriarchy prevented that as a reasonable goal (Campbell, 1989). In a larger historical context, it can be distressingly easy to lose sight of the smaller battles, negotiations, and successes enacted throughout a large movement like the U.S. women's movement between roughly 1962–1982. Defining success, likewise, becomes a moving target informed by political landscape, local context, religion, race, class, and many other factors.

In Kurtz's narrative and throughout the GWMP oral histories, the subjects are expressly concerned with their audience—sometimes it manifests verbally with a mention of "future generations" listening and the imagined inspiration or confusion their stories might elicit. Frequently, both subject and interviewer are aware of real and imagined, present and future audiences. Krista Ratcliffe suggested that rhetorical listening allows us to "mak[e] meaning via language via others" (2006, p. 31). The women who sat and recorded

their oral history for the GWMP had the express goal of contextualizing their activist work, viewed from the 1990s, with an imagined twenty-first century audience. They sought to remember, to be listened to, to stake their claim in larger historical forces, and to make meaning of that claim. Such listening may help the audience (scholar, student, activist, community member, and other identities) invent, interrupt, and ultimately judge actors in history differently.

Kurtz's intention, her message to her imagined audience, was to contextualize perceived failures in the larger, longer timeline of progress. She is consciously defining parameters for success and failure, "[exposing] the complexity," as Sarah Hallenbeck (2018) suggested, "of what it means to 'succeed' or 'fail' as a rhetor, in the first place" (p. 71). Hallenbeck suggested that scholarly focus on only women's rhetorical successes limits not only what we learn about these actors in history but also what we can understand about rhetorical failures. In listening to Kurtz's narrative while resisting my own response, I identify her awareness of what she was up against historically—if even rhetorical scholars are quick to pass by stories of "failure" and focus on examples of women's success in activism movements. Instead, she demands that we hear her, interrupting expected interpretations of failure, and forcing us to observe localized activities she took part in from a wider angle. The outcomes of her work, she said in no uncertain terms, were not failure and had a meaningful impact *despite* perceived failure. Using tools of feminist rhetorical microhistory—rhetorical listening, rhetorical empathy, invitational rhetoric, and strategic contemplation—I can view her decisions and activities during the women's movement, as well as those of other narrators in the collection, as successes too, especially those aspects of her work that shaped subsequent activist movement, advocacy work, and legislative actions in the state. Kurtz's rhetorical moves in her oral history narrative enabled *interrupted* interpretation of large-scale historical events. Those same moves also interrupted my proclivity as the researcher to interpret and explain—for example, resisting the urge to write off her reflections as a positive "spin" on failures by both Kurtz and the women's movement.

Kurtz reflected throughout her oral history recording, typical of the genre. Other women's oral histories also illustrated their contemplation over time of the failures that ultimately held the movement back—namely exclusion of women of color and LGBTQ+ communities, and the lack of understanding of the intersectional realities those communities faced as well as the role that socioeconomics and race played in the fight for women's rights. This dissonance across even a small segment of oral histories reiterates the complexity of the "number of sometimes conflicting social movements," including the women's movement (Fredlund et al., p. 10). Our understanding of rhetorical actors within social movements must include their dynamic and fallible selves. What makes Kurtz's narrative distinct is the way she sat comfortably in the conversation of "failure," as though she's had decades of time to consider her work against the work she did subsequently and how her philosophical approach has evolved. She is not quick to defend or change the subject, or to gloss over critiques of the tactics that didn't work. In fact, listeners might interpret her language as positive rhetoric, having an almost over-optimistic stance. Her characterizing of progress as forward and upward may feel dissonant and even disrespectful to audiences in the 2020s (see Ratcliffe, 2019). As I listen, and resist a presentist interpretation of feminism, women's rights, and notions of "progress," it becomes valuable to learn from Kurtz's rhetorical framing of failure rather than critique her positive rhetoric.

Oral History as a Location for Rhetorical Study

I found advantages applying feminist listening practices and microhistory—together as feminist rhetorical microhistory—to the GWMP oral history archives and in this example, to Kurtz's narrative. I am buoyed by scholarship like Emily Legg's, that affirms oral storytelling as the epistemological equal to written storytelling (2023). The reflexive nature of the oral history medium is unabashedly subjective and emotional, both aspects appreciated within feminist rhetoric. Listening to Kurtz's recording as opposed to only reading the transcript became critical to hearing her—the energy and emotion as she recounted her experiences and interpreted them for the record.

At times when her words feel toxically positive to my ears, I resist the urge to dismiss her perspective. Other times, I am buoyed at all that has been done before, that activist movements with all their weaknesses can also enact meaningful change. Both responses are valid, and I think, Kurtz anticipated them. She was highly intentional with her framing of failure as ultimately, part of the work on the way to longer-term change. Sohan reminds us that even in their failure, social movements "contribute to ongoing sedimented change, enabling composers to redefine how they identify and position themselves in relation to dominant structures" (p. 34). Kurtz composed, through her oral history narrative, her relative success set against dominant forces working against her, in different modes and degrees, throughout her activist, educational, and professional life.

FRM, by combining feminist rhetorical practice and microhistory provides the tools of inquiry to continue recovery work, allowing for adjustment to the scopic levels that add further complexity to the sources and subjects we study. If we are to understand historical actors in their often-unknowable complexity, then using FRM can help us consider those actors' individual experiences. Historical figures are often "performing highly personal and individual acts and other times participating in highly overdetermined and institutionalized acts" (McComiskey, 2016, p. 18). There is often dissonance between individual experiences and grand narratives of history, abstraction of what it was like to *live* during "history." In order that we might understand any one lived experience against the backdrop of historic events, microhistory and feminist rhetorical theory approach the challenge with symbiotic overlap. The agency afforded to individuals when I use FRM is a renegotiation between the rhetor and the audience. I am conducting an analysis of lived experience as history and as interruption, with an intentional view to the individual's everyday experience.

As oral history is a highly subjective, messy record of human action and experience, feminist rhetorical microhistory provides a tool that applies to other oral history narratives and collections. I think this methodology has specific strength for oral sources. However, in the larger study I conducted in the GWMP archives, I was also able to effectively use FRM to examine written sources donated by some of the same women who recorded an oral narrative. While my work is just one initial project explicitly working at the productive intersection of feminist rhetorical listening practices and microhistory, much of the recovery work in feminist rhetoric is already utilizing aspects of microhistory without naming it as such. Combining those methodologies creates a tool for embracing messiness, humanity, and a suspension of the scholarly urge to respond and interpret.

I am aware of the irony of writing so many words centered on the premise that I am listening to others—have I failed by even attempting this research? Recently, Cheryl Glenn and Krista Ratcliffe spoke to a standing-room crowd at CCCC about *listening*. Glenn discussed the dissonance of being the speaker in work that centers her role as listener. I resonated with this tension, because as scholars, our job *is* to speak, to share our ideas. Ratcliffe's premise of a restored logos cedes *half* the floor—typically dominated by speaking—to listening. The energy of the audience and panelists in that session suggests that I am not the only one grappling with these unresolved questions.

An additional limitation to FRM is one that plagues archives—logistical and systemic biases that continue to exclude many voices from the historical record. These voices remain occluded in a study centering the oral histories of women who at least had enough social and financial capital to create an archival collection to ensure their stories were not lost. Even though this is an incredible act of intention and recovery, many voices are absent from the GWMP oral histories, ones that would further complicate this story. What victories and failures did the women's movement achieve according to the lived experiences of Georgia's queer women, or of Georgia's Black and women of color? I hope future studies can elucidate those stories, too.

The actions of women before me were not fated and often came with risks. Many GWMP subjects expressly note that they were not necessarily the best, smartest, or most prepared person for the situations and challenges they were dealt. They were regular people who decided that, despite the odds, they would take action to improve their lives and the lives of those around them. Real people act in the spaces they inhabit and with available tools. This reality is frequently diminished in personal and cultural memory over time. Linda Kurtz's story reminds me of Glenn's hopefulness in the potential of rhetorical feminism (2018), its ability to keep us moving, doing, thinking, pushing on—even and especially when that feels harder than ever to do. I can listen to Kurtz and feel hopeless and cynical, or I can consider the hope in her confidence, in her evidence that what looks like a failure has more to offer. There is hope in actions that, from first glance, are labeled failures, but which accomplish all sorts of things we may miss if we don't look again—and listen closely.

Biography

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Rhetorical Sandwiches: Layering Ethos and Epideictic Appeals as a Persuasive Strategy in Public Discourses of Healthy Eating

Danielle Mollie Stambler

Abstract: Drawing on interdisciplinary scholarship anchored by feminist rhetorical theory and rhetorics of science, health, and medicine, this essay presents findings from a critical rhetorical analysis of 21 healthy lifestyle magazine/website articles. The findings demonstrate how authors who provide healthy eating advice use a rhetorical strategy of sandwiching together multiple appeals to ethos that alone might be unconvincing to their audience, but when combined present motivating recommendations for health and consumer behavior change.

Keywords: Feminist ethos, epideictic, food, public health discourse, rhetoric of science, health, and medicine

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> "I always say that chronic inflammation is the root of all evil because many of the health issues we face in the 21st century can be tied back to inflammation," says Dr. Kara. "Research has suggested that dandelion can reduce inflammatory markers in the body." (Hickman, 2023, para. 14)

Under a brightly colored photo of dandelions against a perfect blue sky, "7 Benefits of Dandelion Tea, According to Medical Doctors" opens with the clickbaity lines: "some of us think of the dandelion as a nuisance that's necessary to pluck. But what if we told you that dandelions hold some powerful effects for your health?" (Hickman, 2023, para. 1). At first glance, this listicle[1] published on *The Healthy*, a Reader's Digest-owned magazine/website,[2] seems to be well-supported with quotes from two featured MDs and citations in the format of hyperlinks to external sources. For example, the phrase "Research has suggested" in the epigraph's quote from Dr. Kara appears in listicle item four, "Dandelion tea can reduce inflammation," and links to an article in the research journal *Food and Chemical Toxicology* hosted in the PubMed database titled "TOP 1 and 2, polysaccharides from Taraxacum officinale [common dandelion], inhibit NFκB-mediated inflammation and accelerate Nrf2-induced antioxidative potential through the modulation of PI3K-Akt signaling pathway in RAW 264.7 cells" (Park et al., 2014). In this linked study by Chung Mu Park et al., the authors found promise in the anti-inflammatory and anti-oxidative effects of certain polysaccharides in dandelion; however, the study was done *in vitro*, or outside a living organism in a laboratory environment, which cannot replicate the conditions that occur inside a living body. While the hedge phrase "has suggested" helps qualify Dr. Kara's presentation of the researchers' findings, the listicle includes multiple rhetorical moves like this that layer or "sandwich" expert advice and scientific evidence to increase the credibility or ethos of the

1 Article with a series of items written in list format. Typically, each item on the list is accompanied by a brief explanation and/or commentary.

2 In this essay, I use "magazine/website" as a descriptor because of the hybrid nature of these sites; many have roots in print publishing (and some still publish print issues as well) and thus they have magazine-like articles, yet leverage the affordances of digital spaces to meet the expectations of contemporary online audiences through integration of interactive features, social media presences, newsletters, regular updates, and more.

article's central claims around the health benefits of drinking dandelion tea.

The introduction to "7 Benefits of Dandelion Tea" spotlights its two featured experts in the first paragraph along with hyperlinks to their websites: "Dr. Peter Michael, MD, MBA, a doctor who specializes in the science of aging and chief medical officer at VUE [vitamin teas]—along with Dr. Mahmud Kara, MD, a former physician at The Cleveland Clinic and founder of KaraMD [health supplements]." The short paragraph then concludes that "Between all the long-term and day-to-day dandelion tea benefits, it may be worth tossing a box into your shopping cart." Highlighting quotes from two credentialed physicians who work in the realm of health supplements and nutritionally engineered foods presents a dual ethos appeal: they carry credibility as medical experts, as well as experts in the health and wellness industry, which is often positioned as an alternative to the dominant biomedical establishment (Derkatch, 2018), potentially increasing the article's perceived trustworthiness both with audiences who trust medicine and those who might not. The phrase about tossing a box into your shopping cart links to a specific brand of dandelion tea on Amazon.com, a clear call to action for the reader. In addition to sandwiching appeals to expertise and evidence throughout its seven items, the listicle is sprinkled with value-laden comments or epideictic appeals as an additional persuasive move, like inflammation being the "root of all evil" in item four. There is an important irony to the unreflexive use of "root of all evil" in an article whose health advice offered in good will is a thin veneer over the capitalistic nature of affiliate shopping links, as the phrase originates from a passage in the Bible about the love of money being the root of all evil (i.e., 1 Timothy 6:10). Articles like "7 Benefits of Dandelion Tea" tend to adopt hyperbolic epideictic narratives of praise about science and medicine reminiscent of the shifts Jeanne Fahnestock (1986) found in the adaptations of scientific research into popular science magazines in the 1980s (p. 281).

"7 Benefits of Dandelion Tea" highlights how dietary advice articles in popular healthy lifestyle magazine/websites sandwich together different types of credibility, or ethos, appeals aimed at driving health behavior change, often through direct suggestions about readers' consumer decisions. The sandwich metaphor is salient because a sandwich is typically some sort of bread (or bread-like substitute) with some sort of filling, where the function of the bread is to facilitate quick preparation, portability, and easy consumption (tools like silverware are not required for a hand-held item) (Wilson, 2010). While the act of layering different forms and sources of information to support claims is a practice important in argumentative writing (e.g., synthesis), so too is the ethical and appropriate use and representation of those sources in reasoning. In the rhetorical sandwiches I found in articles like "7 Benefits of Dandelion Tea," there is a clear pattern of expert commentary used as the "bread" around a "filling" of scientific evidence adapted to a general audience in the public sphere, with the goal of driving health consumer behavior change in an ostensibly palatable, portable, and easy-to-consume package.

At play in the rhetorical sandwiches are two key ingredients: the presentation of expertise, typically through inclusion of quoted diet, health, and medical professionals; and evidence, usually through the presentation of accommodated scientific findings. In studying the accommodation of scientific research in popular science magazines in the 1980s, Fahnestock (1986) found shifts from more speculative language in the scholarly research to more certain in the magazines, concluding that they were "an inevitable consequence of

changing the audience for a piece of information and thus the purpose of relating it and thus the genre of the discourse that conveys it" (p. 291). For the purposes of this essay, two of Fahnestock's findings are particularly useful in highlighting how such shifts are more than an issue of translation to a non-expert audience.

First, in science accommodated to a broad public audience an important "genre shift" occurs from deliberative discourse to celebratory or epideictic discourse (Fahnestock, 1986, pp. 278–279). Writing that accommodations "must usually be explicit in their claims about the value of the scientific discoveries they pass along," Fahnestock (1986) argued, "They cannot rely on the audience to recognize the significance of information. Thus … science journalism requires the adjustment of new information to an audience's already held values and assumptions" (p. 279). In the case of "7 Benefits of Dandelion Tea," this even includes the stray reference to a Biblical proverb in the "root of all evil." Further, Fahenstock (1986) wrote:

> Science accommodators who attempt to bring things down to the level of the *National Geographic* or *Newsweek* or one of the science magazines have, at bottom, only two basic appeals to make in their epideictic arguments. For convenience I will call these "the wonder" and "the application" appeals corresponding to the deontological and teleological appeals in ethical argument. A deontological argument attempts to praise or excoriate something by attaching it to a category that has a recognized value for an audience. In science popularizations, all references to the amazing powers and secrets of nature or of the breakthroughs and accomplishments of the scientists themselves are basically deontological appeals. A teleological argument claims that something has value because it leads to further benefits. (pp. 278–279)

In health discourse incorporating accommodated scientific research, according to Fahnestock, "the wonder" and "the application" appeals take on an additional element: the value of the breakthroughs *for the benefit of you and your personal wellbeing*. Second, drawing on stasis theory, which defines and orders the types of questions that can be used in a deliberation, Fahnestock (1986) demonstrated how scientific reports usually operate in the realm of identifying and defining the scope of problems while maintaining a certain level of objective uncertainty through linguistic features like hedging. In contrast, when accommodated in the public sphere, claims from scientific reports increased in certainty and actionability (Fahnestock, 1986). Put simply, in moving from the technical sphere to the scientific sphere, accommodation shifts arguments from "what did they find?" to "what should you do about it?" That said, the texts Fahnestock (1986) examined were early 1980s accommodations of articles from the journal *Science* to its popular print magazine version aimed at the general public. In the decades since, the complexity of digital spaces, genres, and audience expectations and the rapid growth of the health and wellness industry have driven the proliferation and clickbait-ification of healthy lifestyle and eating advice. And while a recommendation to drink dandelion tea might seem (and probably is) innocuous, the "7 Benefits of Dandelion Tea" listicle items invoked dominant norms about health and eating habits through content about the tea's nutrient density, "natural diuretic" effects, and evidence that it helps lower blood pressure, a "leading risk factor for cardiovascular-related health issues—which is currently the leading cause of death in America" (Hickman, 2023, para. 16).

Dominant norms in food- and diet-related discourse in the U.S. are rooted in a hegemonic nutrition model criticized by feminist and critical food studies scholars as one that: relies on the idea that the food-body relationship can be standardized and quantified (a calorie is a calorie to everyone) (Mudry, 2009); re-

ductively views food as a conglomeration of nutrients and their specific roles in the body (Scrinis, 2013); de-contextualizes food from culture, bodies, and the environment (Hayes-Conroy & Hayes-Conroy, 2013); and privileges expert knowledge that is disseminated through biomedicine, the diet industry, social institutions, and the media (Hayes-Conroy & Hayes-Conroy, 2013). This hegemonic nutrition model underlies nutrition and health standards in the U.S.; for example, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Dietary Guidelines for Americans' (DGA) delineates what counts a healthy in the context of eating habits, which influences food- and diet-related discourse and practice from nutrition labels to diet plans to social media spaces to healthy lifestyle magazine/websites. Further, the DGA and similar standards like those promoted by the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics are predicated on the values of upper-middle-class experts in the U.S. (mostly white men) and are largely driven by food industry lobbyists (politics and capitalism) rather than being spurred by conclusive scientific discovery (nutrition research) (Carriedo et al., 2022).

Hegemonic nutrition widely reinscribes dominant norms around physical health and nutrition. This is an especially crucial factor when taking into consideration the power of trends based on science that are translated to the public sphere and proliferated through popular discourse, such as the anti-fat movement in the 1980s and 1990s that encouraged people to eat large amounts of carbohydrates and led to low-fat, high-sugar versions of foods (Scrinis, 2013), practices which have since been linked to increased fatness and a rise in weight-related health problems (Biltekoff et al., 2014; Levenstein, 2012). Hegemonic nutrition and much of the science behind so-called healthy eating can be especially pernicious in commercialized spaces where capitalist interests are the central driver behind health communication, as opposed to a primary goal of improving public health. If high blood pressure is the top risk factor for cardiovascular disease, and Dr. Kara says that's the number one killer in America, then of course one should make efforts to reduce their risk by clicking that affiliate shopping link for dandelion tea.

To unpack how articles like "7 Benefits of Dandelion Tea" work rhetorically, in this essay I examine how dietary advice articles in popular healthy lifestyle magazine/websites sandwich together evidence- and expertise-based appeals to ethos that might be unconvincing to their disparate audiences alone, but when combined present more persuasive health and consumer behavior change recommendations. To explore this, I conducted a close rhetorical analysis of articles from five healthy lifestyle magazine/websites that center health and diet advice: *The Healthy*, *EatingWell*, *Fortune Well*, *Health*, and *Everyday Health*. My analysis revealed how these articles weave expert advice, invocations of scientific research, and praise and blame together to advocate for health behavior change. I selected these five magazine/websites[3] because of their history and extensive reach. *The Healthy* claims 2.2 million visitors per day and 500,000 newsletter subscribers and is a Reader's Digest Lifestyle Group publication, tying it to the over 100-year history of Reader's Digest print magazines (Trusted Media Brands, n.d.). *EatingWell*, which began in print in 1990, claims to be the "largest magazine in the epicurean lifestyle category," "reaching an audience of more than 10 million monthly viewers as well as more than 5 million fans through its social media channels" (*About Us*, n.d. para. 5). The Everyday

3 I focused on the website versions because of the increasing shift to digital-only publications in the magazine world. While *Reader's Digest* and *Fortune* still produce print magazines as of this writing, and they often feature health-related stories, the dedicated spaces of *The Healthy* and *Fortune Well* only exist online. *EatingWell* and *Health* both ceased print publication as of 2022, and *Everyday Health* has always been an online publication.

Health Group suite of brands and publications—which includes *EverydayHealth.com* and the *Cleveland Clinic* medical center and website—has an "audience of over 67 million health consumers and over 890,000 U.S. practicing physicians and clinicians" (*Everyday Health Group*, 2024, para. 1). *Health* claims to reach "over 120 million people annually" (*Find out about Health.*, n.d., para. 1). And, while it does not break down viewership by section, *Fortune.com* has "47 million monthly pageviews" (*Fortune Media Kit*, n.d., n.p.). While Fahnestock and scholars following her approach specifically examined paired articles, or ones where a single original scientific report was accommodated as a new popular article, I did not select paired articles because I am examining layered appeals of which one is accommodation of multiple scientific reports. Rather, to select articles, I used searches and nutrition-specific landing pages within each magazine/website to locate diet- and nutrition-related articles published between 2022 and 2025, briefly reviewed all relevant results, and identified a sample of 21 articles for close reading and thematic coding that demonstrated multiple, layered appeals to ethos (through scientific evidence and expert opinion) and epideictic claims about living a better, healthier life.

Complex and Value-Laden Contexts Require Flexible Ethos-building Strategies

While much scholarship on ethos draws from Aristotle's *Rhetoric*—where ethos refers to the credibility of a speaker based on practical wisdom (phronēsis), virtue (aretē), and good will (eunoia) as displayed in a speech (Aristotle, 2007)—feminist scholars have critiqued this conception as deeply rooted in a patriarchal, oppressive time and place. Much feminist work on ethos examines ethos-building strategies used by women and people in racialized and marginalized communities in order to move definitions of ethos beyond a narrow, Aristotelian model of a rhetor finding the best means available to demonstrate their good sense, good moral character, and good will to a passive audience who needed to be guided correctly.[4] For example, Krista Ratcliffe (2005) concluded that traditional conceptualizations of ethos as a thing cultivated by an individual are linked to the reductive idea of the "rugged white male individualist" (p. 124). Rather, as Cheryl Glenn (2018) pointed out, "ethos does not reside in individual rhetors but in the ways they reflect the characteristics and qualities that are valued by their audience, culture, or community" (p. 84). In an expanded ethos, credibility "emerges as a result of rhetorical negotiation in which speakers and writers are active agents, albeit with discursive and cultural limitations, in the dance of bodies, tropes, and cultures" (Ratcliffe, 2005, p. 126). Further, understanding ethos as something embodied surfaces the relationship of ethos to behavior patterns and "better accounts for the [intersectional] layers of oppression that certain individuals might face" (Shellenberger, 2020, para. 4). Contemporary scholarship has also brought nuance to ethos to better fit digital rhetorical contexts, such as Barbara Warnick's (2004) finding that the credibility of websites relies on factors like

4 In *On Rhetoric*, Aristotle seems to separate the expression of ethos in the context of a rhetorical speech from actual good sense, good moral character, and good will through liberal usage of hedges like something "seems to be" or "appears" a certain way in terms of cultivating ethos with an audience. Additionally, he seems to have been relatively critical of the "uncultivated mind of the audience," arguing that "people are pleased if someone in a general observation hits upon opinions that they themselves have about a particular instance" (2007, p. 168). Aristotle also proposes that "most people are rather bad" and that "human beings usually do wrong when they can" (2007, p. 129). Whether it was misanthropy or thoroughness in his taxonomy, Aristotle seems to have written *On Rhetoric* predominantly focused on appearing good rather than being good. In this sense, the articles I examine are building their ethos in a very Aristotelian manner; I use a feminist approach to surface and critique the problematic nature of their strategy.

easy navigation, frequent updates, and site ownership, in addition to assessments of authorship and information trustworthiness. A feminist approach "situates ethos as constructed, relational, agentive, interconnected, nonlinear, and resistant to overstabilization" (Stambler, 2022, p. 313; refer also to Glenn, 2018; Ratcliffe, 2005; Reynolds, 1993; Ryan et al., 2016; Skinner, 2014; Wright, 2019) and is especially useful as a lens to examine how ethos is negotiated around slippery and contested ideas about health and health expertise in digital spaces.

In complex contexts like health discourse and practice, multiple value frameworks present a rhetorical landscape requiring flexible ethos-building strategies. Studying the approach of women physicians in nineteenth-century America, Carolyn Skinner (2014) wrote that ethos "is not crafted in response to a coherent and identifiable set of audience values but instead is composed in a dynamic context that includes multiple competing ideas about the 'best' virtues" (p. 175). While traditionally, rhetors are expected to analyze their audience and context to formulate the best strategy for building their ethos, "audience members may disagree on priorities, creating a situation in which the ethos a rhetor conveys shapes audience values rather than simply demonstrating virtues the audience already admires," which "can create space in which rhetors can promote the value structure most conducive to their social position and their purposes for speaking" (Skinner, 2014, p. 176). Skinner argued that the existence of multiple value frameworks means rhetors must demonstrate "a great deal of flexibility in ethos construction rather than a narrow focus on identifying and demonstrating one set of ideal virtues" (p. 177). In spaces like health/healthcare where value-based ideals are contested, a rhetor must flexibly develop their ethos, potentially using multiple strategies, in order to influence the values and behavior of disparate audiences; however, there is also a danger in using expertise to build ethos in health-related contexts. Celeste Condit and Lisa DeTora (2021) discussed how a disconnect in "authorship" and "authority" can lead to a situation where "the state of the facts are too likely to be mistaken when someone with high *ethos* puts their name on a research report that they do not know to be true because they have not invented the claims in that document" (p. 96). Recall how the phrase "research has suggested" in the epigraph's quote from Dr. Kara was hyperlinked to a scientific report; the link implies to a reader that Dr. Kara based their argument on that specific article, when there is no explicit way to know if that is true or if it was added by the author or editors.

Value-based or epideictic rhetoric can also have a role in enhancing ethos. In examining the rhetoric of a nineteenth-century French-American Catholic Sister, Elizabethada A. Wright (2019) demonstrated how the epideictic can both "fortify a rhetor's ethos" and "work in various media to shift hegemonic structures by heralding certain shared communal values while damning accepted practices that violate those virtues" (p. 283). Traditionally, epideictic rhetoric is that of praise and blame, often typified as ceremonial speech such as a funeral oration extolling the virtues of the deceased, the end of which is "the honorable and the shameful" (Aristotle, 2007, p. 49); however, contemporary theorists have linked the function of praising and blaming to the instantiation of cultural values (Burke, 1969; C. M. Condit, 1985; Hauser, 1999; Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969; Sullivan, 1993). In other words, epideictic rhetoric can both enhance one's ethos and contribute to the inscription of dominant societal norms and values through the celebration of virtues and condemnation of vices.

Examining epideictic rhetoric in the realm of health and medicine, Judy Segal (2005) argued that it "is a culture's most telling rhetoric, because, in general, we praise people for embodying what we value, and we blame them for embodying what we deplore" (p. 61). Importantly, Karen Kopelson (2019) argued that because the persuasive force of epideictic rhetoric "(re)constitutes what is praiseworthy and blameworthy in human conduct to (re)shape the basic codes of value and belief by which we live, epideictic [medical] rhetoric is inherently normative, and its practitioners invested with special authority and influence" (p. 286). In this way, epideictic rhetoric makes a statement about "the moral capacity of the person being praised or blamed" (Mirhady, 1995, p. 406; refer also to Sullivan, 1993), and value-laden health discourse invites us to notice where we deviate from dominant cultural values and reshape ourselves in order to be worthwhile individuals.

In communicating science and medicine to the public, epideictic strategies are used to engage audiences (Bloomfield & Tillery, 2019; Fahnestock, 1986; Luzón, 2013). Especially in online spaces, authors blend rhetorical strategies from different genres—such as personal narrative and scientific writing—to better engage with a multiplicity of audiences (Luzón, 2013, p. 453). Alan G. Gross (1994) argued that "what counts as a Fact's significance is not the significance science bestows, but the significance the public bestows on scientific knowledge" (p. 18). Ethos-building strategies are therefore critical in terms of gaining readers' trust and epideictic strategies are critical in terms of moving readers to action.

Together, feminist scholarship on ethos and epideictic rhetoric provides a lens that helps foreground how authors of popular healthy lifestyle magazine articles sandwich multiple appeals to ethos with epideictic discourse about hegemonic nutrition, eating habits, and health in order to motivate behavior change.

Appeals to Evidence and Expertise as Ethos-Building Strategies

It is accepted practice in science and health writing to support claims with appropriate, reliable evidence to demonstrate credibility. This is true even in public-facing science and health discourse, though the types of evidence and methods of incorporation into the text differ from norms in the technical sphere (Luzón, 2013), echoing science publication practices meant to support claims with rigorous evidence for a highly technical audience. In popular health writing, providing evidence is an ethos-building strategy; however, as scientific discourse shifts from a technical sphere to a public sphere and more general audience, the assumptions and standards by which claims and evidence are interpreted shift as well (Lyne & Howe, 1990). Less technical audiences are less well-equipped to evaluate scientific claims and evidence against the disciplinary standards for knowledge creation (Kolodziejski, 2014; Lyne & Howe, 1990), especially when the reliability and quality of evidence in public-facing science and health discourse can be less than sufficient. For example, in a small study of dietary advice articles in U.K. print newspapers, Benjamin Cooper et al. (2012) found that most claims made had "no credible scientific basis" (p. 669). In digital spaces that provide affordances like hyperlinking, science accommodations allow greater intertextuality by linking to original research sources (Luzón, 2013), a move also meant to bolster ethos.

If a general audience is less well-equipped to interpret scientific claims and evidence, what better way to

shore up the credibility of technical health discourse in a public sphere than with expert input and review? Expertise is about both specialized skills and a role negotiated within specific rhetorical situations (Hartelius, 2011; Majdik & Keith, 2011; Mehlenbacher, 2022). Ashley Mehlenbacher (2022) argued that "Because judgment about one's expert status is challenging for those who exist outside a narrowly defined group capable of assessing a full range of expert competencies, a great deal of expertise is adjudicated not by technical knowledge, but by character" (p. 46). Thus, inclusion of expertise is both a move to enhance ethos and, in the public sphere, ethos evaluations by audiences are at the core of expertise along with its three aspects: practical wisdom, virtue, and good will. Carolyn R. Miller (2003) argued that in technical discourse, when ethos becomes narrowed to expertise, practical wisdom becomes the strongest element (how the rhetor presents facts and reasoning) and virtue and good will are curtailed; however, this can lead to an "impersonality of an ethos of expertise [that] runs the risk of being persuasive to no one" (p. 202) due to lack of trustworthiness. This peril emphasizes the necessity of the moral components of virtue and good will (Mehlenbacher, 2022) in the situational negotiation of ethos. In that negotiation, "the expert is not only a repository of knowledge, but also a pivot point for exchanges between discourse communities" (Lyne & Howe, 1990, p. 135). The role of pivot point contributes to experts' ethos with general audiences, as quoted health and medical experts can be seen as sharing practical wisdom with general audiences, which, alongside epideictic appeals to helping people live their best lives, may be interpreted by audiences as demonstrative of their virtue and good will.

The inclusion of expert credentials is meant to bolster ethos (Lyne & Howe, 1990; Mehlenbacher, 2022), yet the articles I analyzed often identified experts with an often-lengthy mix of common and uncommon credentials. For example, in "7 Surprising Antioxidant-Rich Foods" (Thomason, 2024), experts are introduced with credentials like "RDN, CGN, CLT," "M.S., RDN, LDN," and "M.S., RDN, LD, CLEC." Notably, the article does not elaborate on what these lists of abbreviated credentials means beyond including them under the umbrella of "dieticians" in the article title; without explanation, the lists of letters after names communicate expertise in a somewhat slippery way. For a public sphere audience likely less capable of evaluating those credentials (I had to look up what half of them were), their rhetorical function is to indicate expertise: someone with so many letters after their name, who is also being presented as an expert and positioned as sharing their practical wisdom in order to help others (virtue and good will), must be a trustworthy source of information.

While trust and ethos are not the same, they are deeply connected. Sociological theories on trust are useful in explicating the relationship between ethos and trust (Bakke, 2019; Gurak, 2018). Prior to the proliferation of the Internet, scientific discourse communities employed strict gatekeeping methods via inaccessible scientific journals and controlled editorial translation to non-expert versions for popular publications (Gurak, 2018), much like the articles Fahnestock studied in the early 1980s. The digital age has removed these barriers, and non-experts now have broad access to raw data and jargon-heavy scientific and technical information, likely without the expertise to appropriately interpret them. Complicating this, credibility evaluations in digital spaces incorporate factors beyond source citations and expert opinions, including user experience factors like usability, usefulness, and meaningfulness, and the frequency with which information is updated (Keshavarz & Esmaeili Givi, 2020; Warnick, 2004). Likewise, we are in an age with a greater level

of information access than ever and a concomitant escalation of misinformation and disinformation leading to a so-called "credibility crisis" (Ksiazek et al., 2023, p. 308). Concepts like "fake news" and "alternative facts" are connected to confirmation bias, or the preference for selecting information that matches one's existing beliefs, which "underscores the dark side of information democratization and flattened discourse hierarchies in digital rhetoric and writing" (Gurak, 2018, p. 125). In sociology, Guido Möllering (2001) advanced a theory that "trust can be imagined as the mental process of leaping - enabled by suspension - across the gorge of the unknowable from the land of interpretation into the land of expectation" (p. 412). In online settings, information travels quickly and widely, and readers spend little time on critical examination of content before making a leap toward trust (Gurak, 2018). While expertise is frequently being leveraged *as* evidence in the healthy lifestyle magazine/websites I examined, what is most interesting is how scientific findings are often sandwiched between comments from unrelated experts as part of both accommodating them and moving the audience to action.

Sandwiching Appeals

Each of the magazine/websites I analyzed positioned itself at a high level as an authoritative source of health and diet information, often gesturing to scientific research as underpinning their work. For example, *The Healthy*'s "About Us" page tells readers that they provide "science-backed and expert-approved answers for pressing health topics that resonate in your life" in order to "to equip you with up-to-the-minute clarity, and to enhance your authority in the ways you take care of yourself and the people you love" (*The Healthy*, n.d., paras. 2–4). Prominent in all of the magazine/websites' claims was an ethos appeal: to helping readers (demonstrating good will) live a good life (virtue) through prudent interpretation of scientific evidence (practical wisdom). These high-level appeals help to reinforce science- and good will-based ethos appeals throughout the website/magazines' entire online presence. In contrast, "7 Benefits of Dandelion Tea," right beneath the subtitle and an ad banner and just above the sunny photo of flowers is a small-print disclaimer stating, "Our editors and experts handpick every product we feature. We may earn a commission from your purchases" (Hickman, 2023). The disclaimer and the affiliate link to Amazon.com tell readers another story, one not about getting "honest, informed takes on your health questions" (*The Healthy*, n.d., para. 3), but about marketing and consumerism instead. With obvious and conflicting stated and implicit goals, articles like "7 Benefits of Dandelion Tea" employ sandwiched expertise- and evidence-based appeals to ethos that might be unconvincing to their disparate audiences alone, but together present more persuasive health and consumer behavior change recommendations. Specifically, the move of sandwiching brings together scientific accommodations, a degree of hedging aimed at maintaining credibility, and credentialed expert advice or commentary in order to present a practical takeaway the audience is encouraged to put directly into action.

Within the sandwiches, expertise is frequently leveraged in the framing of scientific evidence in a way that transforms the expert opinion into its own form of ethos, which is reminiscent of Miller's (2003) finding that "in a technical discourse like risk assessment expertise stands in for ethos" (p. 201). Importantly, risk has become a defining factor in our society (Beck, 1992; Lupton, 2013; Miller, 2003) and much of our dietary discourse is a discourse of risk (Biltekoff, 2013; Lupton, 2005). Increasingly, responsibility for health and body

size has been shifted from the state to the individual (Biltekoff, 2013; Derkatch & Spoel, 2020), and the 'good citizen' takes responsibility for their health by being informed about risks and practicing a healthy lifestyle according to hegemonic norms (Biltekoff, 2013; Derkatch & Spoel, 2020; Petersen et al., 2010). In examining the field of risk analysis through the 1972 *Reactor Safety Study*, Miller (2003) argued that ethos had been narrowed to expertise and utilized as factual evidence, in essence blending ethos with logos. It follows that some elements of this rhetorical blending of ethos and logos would appear in risk-based dietary advice in healthy lifestyle magazine/website articles.

For example, in the *EatingWell* listicle "7 Surprising Antioxidant-Rich Foods, According to Dieticians," all of the list items include quotes from at least one of the four multi-credentialed experts featured in the article (Thomason, 2024). Their expertise is layered with citations to studies in scholarly journals, which are presented as hyperlinked superscript numbers at the ends of sentences, reminiscent of some footnote citation styles. The "Beans" list item begins with discussion of how they can help reduce health risks:

> Beans are a potent source of antioxidants, including flavonoids, phenolic compounds and vitamins like vitamin C, Alyssa Simpson, RDN, CGN, CLT says. These nutritious compounds work together to help fight inflammation, reduce the risk of cancer, alleviate oxidative stress and may also promote heart health.[6] (Thomason, 2024, para. 9)

Here, the superscript [6] links to a 2020 study in PubMed, published in *Current Pharmaceutical Design*, titled "Antioxidant Phytochemicals in Pulses and their Relation to Human Health: A Review" (Ciudad-Mulero et al., 2020). As a recent review article, which should aim to capture current thinking on a topic in a scientific community, it appears to be a credible source, but it is not a full-text free access article so readers without access to the full version would be unable to evaluate it themselves (even as a faculty member with access to a university library, I do not have access to the full text). With logos incomplete, therefore, the expert quote does the bulk of the ethos-building work.

In online discourse about health and medicine, expertise and ethos are manifested in complex ways when professional medical knowledge and personal narratives or recommendations work hand-in-hand (Bakke, 2019). As Miller (2003) found in risk analysis discourse, the "assumptions, interests, values, and beliefs of experts are deployed to answer public questions" in a way that conflates ethos with logos and substitutes for evidence (p. 168). For example, an *Everyday Health* listicle titled "5 Rules for a Healthier Breakfast Sandwich" uses a mix of citations to USDA data and fact sheets, scientific reports, self-citations to other *Everyday Health* articles, and experts presenting both factual data and personal narratives (Lawler, 2025). List item five, "Go for Whole Eggs," reads:

> Eggs are central to the breakfast sandwich and aren't an ingredient you'll want to skip. Each egg adds 6.2 g of protein to your morning meal, according to USDA data. "Eating protein first thing in the morning will help you to have more energy throughout the day and avoid a sugar crash from the typical sugar-laden breakfast foods," Best (RD, MPH) says. One small study of 27 men who were obese or overweight found that overweight individuals who followed a high-protein diet (25 percent of energy coming from protein) experienced greater fullness during the day than those on a normal protein diet (14 percent of energy from protein). Many restaurant menus offer egg whites only; don't assume that's a better option. "Unless you're otherwise directed by your

> healthcare team, whole eggs can be a healthy choice for a breakfast sandwich," Klamer [(RDN)] says. Eggs have gotten a bad reputation as being bad for heart health, but a meta-analysis published in the Journal of the American College of Nutrition found that eating up to one egg a day is not associated with an increased risk of heart disease and may even reduce the risk of stroke. (Lawler, 2025, paras. 12–14)

In this excerpt, evidence is incorporated via links to USDA data, the two studies mentioned, and a link in the phrase "risk of stroke" to another *Everyday Health* article. The research-based evidence is largely sandwiched between the two dieticians' quotes and the self-citation link, which add actionable recommendations to the scientific and nutritional data.

Even simply invoking the idea of scientific research without providing any source information can be an ethos-building strategy by gesturing generally toward evidence. In the 2025 *Everyday Health* listicle "8 Healthy Reasons to Eat Dark Chocolate" (Brooks, 2025), item two, "The Treat May Improve Cognition, Prevent Memory Loss, and Boost Your Mood," begins "No, it's not your imagination—studies show that eating dark chocolate with high percentages of cacao, such as 70 percent, may benefit your brain" (para. 10). No evidence is provided to support this statement beyond the implication that studies have found *what you already know is true*, which is an appeal to confirmation bias dressed up as proof. The item continues, "there is research indicating that chocolate stimulates neural activity in areas of the brain associated with pleasure and reward, which in turn decreases stress and improves your mood, says Joy DuBost, PhD, RD, a food scientist and global director for regulatory affairs and health science at Lipton Teas and Infusions in St. Petersburg, Florida" (Brooks, 2025, para. 10). Similar to the "7 Benefits of Dandelion Tea" example, an expert's credentials are presented both on the medical side of things (as a registered dietician) and in the food industry. DuBost's comments are part of a large rhetorical sandwich around carefully hedged discussion of two scientific reports and a science news article whose results indicate that dark chocolate may have positive effects on memory, learning, cognition, and mood (Brooks, 2025).

Hedging is often used in scientific writing to qualify claims as tentative in order to avoid absolute statements open to criticism. Utilization of rhetorical features like hedging is one of the norms of scientific writing, and when combined with passive voice and strategic word choices, it can "create an ambiguous text open to conflicting interpretations" (Kolodziejski, 2014, p. 179) 179). Left out in the example from "8 Healthy Reasons to Eat Dark Chocolate" are important details like one of the studies having been conducted *in vitro* and another being based on data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) between 2007 and 2014. The NHANES is administered by the USDA and is the data source for the DGA, which in addition to critiques about its hegemonic nature, has also been criticized methodologically due to its memory-based assessment method (Archer et al., 2015, p. 911), as human memory is notoriously unreliable. The listicle item concludes "before you go run out and stock up on chocolate bars, keep in mind" that "studies with larger sample sizes need to be conducted" (Brooks, 2025, para. 13), implying that of course the action you should take is to run right out and buy some, or perhaps follow the inset link complete with a yummy photo to an *Everyday Health* nutritionist's recipe for "healthy" avocado brownies.

In the healthy lifestyle website/magazine articles, hedged evidence was frequently sandwiched between

expert opinion in order to bolster calls to action. Consider, for example, "Snacking on Fruit Could be Good for Your Mental Health" (Mikhail, 2022), which begins with discussion of a scientific study published in the *British Journal of Nutrition* that found an association between frequent fruit consumption and reduced rates of depression. "Snacking on Fruit" provides a one-sentence summary of the findings then presents the hedge "while a myriad of factors contribute to mental health outcomes, the study suggests nutrition could play a role" (Mikhail, 2022, para. 3). This is followed by a comment about the importance of vitamin C for brain health attributed to Liz Weinandy, "a registered dietician at The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center" (Mikhail, 2022, para. 4). Following the Weinandy quote, the article winds through a quote from the lead author on the *BJN* study and highlights another scientific report with quotes from its author before ending on a direct quote from Weinandy. Notably, the two scholars quoted in the article liberally hedge their statements with words like "may" and phrases like "doesn't prove," but they are sandwiched between the two quotes from Weinandy, who ends the article arguing that "it's exciting to think that even some small changes like replacing cookies or chips with fruit can impact our health. … It's just another reason to eat an apple a day" (Mikhail, 2022, para. 14).

"Snacking on Fruit" also demonstrates what Fahnestock (1986) called the "wonder" claim by touting new possibilities for whole fruits based on scientific research, then later including an "application" claim that the study indicates "more research needs to be done to determine the ideal frequency and portions for mental health" (Mikhail, 2022, para. 10). It is worth noting that the latter claim indicates a logical leap: the study found correlations, and in its own conclusion indicates that the research needing to be done is on determining causality (Tuck et al. 660), not dosage. Jumping to frequency and portions of fruit is an example of what Fahnestock (1986) found in claims shifting from *what is* to *what ought to be done* when moving into the public sphere, a shift that is especially pernicious in health discourse.

All of the articles I analyzed incorporated a multitude of links as part of their sandwiching strategies. While links often led to scientific articles or information from sources like the USDA or Harvard Health, every article also engaged in self-citation, or linking to other articles in their own magazine/website. In general, source attribution strategies in health writing, including self-citation, are ethos-building moves designed to make the claims and calls to action more persuasive to readers (Stambler, 2022). Incorporating linked evidence typically involves making complex technical information digestible for a non-expert audience, as in the MD's explanation of findings from the jargon-laden article in "7 Benefits of Dandelion Tea."

Sometimes, though, science is mobilized in problematic ways. For example, consider the following excerpt from a listicle titled "9 Foods That Are Secretly Hurting Your Brain" that invokes science and research in each item:

> A 2017 study in the journal *Stroke* looked at diet patterns and incidents of stroke and dementia in more than 4,300 participants. Over ten years, those who drank the most artificially sweetened—but not sugar-sweetened—beverages were most likely to be diagnosed with dementia. Because it's impossible to prove the link was caused by the beverages and not another source—for instance, those with diabetes might have been more likely to reach for artificial sweeteners—the study should be taken with a grain of salt (or sugar). Still, paired with these unhealthy effects of soda

> (including diet), the study is just one more reason to swap your soda for sparkling water. (Blumberg & Laliberte, 2023, para. 2)

The list item supports claims with what appears to be compelling evidence, as in the phrase "2017 study," which links to a PubMed article; however, when digging in further, the inclusion of the sources presents problems to readers who might be familiar with medical research. The cited studies in the sugar and salt entries were conducted on rats and mice, which have been critiqued in relation to correlation with human health outcomes in various areas including nutrition (Zimmerman & Zucker, 2020; cf. Atkins et al., 2020; Baker, 2008; Bracken, 2009; Even et al., 2017; Van Norman, 2019). The rest of the cited studies in "9 Foods Secretly Hurting Your Brain" are correlative rather than causative. Despite acknowledging the limitations of cited studies with hedges like "because it's impossible to prove the link was caused by the beverages" (Blumberg & Laliberte, 2023, para. 2), the article goes on to suggest swapping soda for unsweetened beverages with another piece of supporting evidence: a self-citation to another *The Healthy* article titled "8 Reasons to Avoid Soda, and That Means Diet Too" (The Editors of *The Healthy*, 2019). Whether or not the recommendation to ditch diet soda is valid, "8 Reasons to Avoid Soda" follows a similar pattern of presenting claims with a mix of rhetorically sandwiched advice from the authors with links to scientific articles and self-citations. As a listicle that did not feature expert quotations, "8 Reasons to Avoid Soda" relied instead on speaking from the author's place of expertise, listed as "The Editors of *The Healthy*," a byline followed immediately by one stating the article was "Medically reviewed by Elisabetta Politi, CDE, MPH, RD," further attempting to improve credibility.

Lastly, to belabor the metaphor a bit, like a sandwich wrapper branded with the logo of a famous deli, nearly all of the magazine/websites I analyzed included some form of medical board or review process to vet some or all of their articles as a move aimed at bolstering their overall ethos: right away, you are told something about the quality of what's inside. For example, on their "About Us" page, *The Healthy* describes their medical review process:

> When creating health content it's crucial to use authoritative experts and to back up claims with references to medical studies published in peer-reviewed journals and science-based facts. *The Healthy* articles are written by staff editors, qualified writers, and subject-matter contributors. Content with serious medical claims is vetted by a team of consulting doctors and medical professionals that make up our Medical Review Board. (The Healthy, n.d., para. 7)

By wrapping their evidentiary standards and one about an expert review only for "serious medical claims" around their staff credentials, the description here shores up the ethos of both articles with the "Medically reviewed" byline and without, as those latter are still produced by "qualified writers" backing up their claims. Like *The Healthy*, *EatingWell, Everyday Health,* and *Health* all use some form of medical review board or process. While *Fortune Well* does not have a published editorial policy about medical review, the *Well* division of *Fortune* magazine was launched as a collaboration with CVS Health, the owner of CVS pharmacy and Aetna health insurance that provides healthcare and insurance in many thousands of U.S. locations and to millions of Americans (*Fortune Media Kit*, n.d.). Although this is different from the medical review process, partnering with a major healthcare company with significant brand recognition is likewise an ethos-building move.

The Healthy, EatingWell, *Everyday Health*, and *Health* all indicate medical review of articles with an additional byline for the expert. The latter three also use a checkmark icon next to the byline that is visually similar to the X (formerly Twitter) "blue checkmark" authenticity verification system; while *EatingWell* and *Everyday Health* use a green checkmark (Brooks, 2025; Rizzo, 2023), *Health*'s is a nearly identical blue to X's (*Nutrition Resource Hub*, n.d.). This adoption of a common rhetorical move in social media is a demonstration of how, as Jenny Edbauer (2005) wrote, "*the elements of rhetorical situation simply bleed*" (p. 9). The healthy lifestyle magazine/websites I analyzed promote their articles on social media and include buttons to facilitate sharing by readers, indicating the overlap in audience expectations. Blending together citational and review practices reminiscent of those in scientific writing with credibility-enhancing strategies used in social media helps reinforce the appeal to ethos with a general audience in an online space. That said, like a local, small-town deli that claims to be "world famous," the medical review label does not really mean much beyond reproducing an ethos-building move that will feel familiar to consumers of social media.

Across the articles I analyzed, authors supported their claims with ostensibly science-backed research that lost a significant amount of hedging and qualifications while being accommodated to a public audience, shifting the argument toward value-laden calls to action to "do this, eat that, buy this" while embracing an authoritative voice. In the accommodation of science to the public, epideictic appeals play a critical role (Fahnestock, 1986) and have been shown to "work in various media to shift hegemonic structures by heralding certain shared communal values while damning accepted practices that violate those virtues" (Wright, 2019, p. 283). In dietary discourse, epideictic rhetoric and hegemonic nutrition ideas abound. "Good" versus "bad" sugars or fats, "clean" eating, "optimized" nutrition—even calling something "healthy" invokes the idea of "unhealthy"—all highlight how praise and blame are at the core of food- and diet-related discourse. Hegemonic ideas about nutrition have become pervasive across social systems and discourse spheres (Scrinis, 2013); they are equally present in the food pyramid, the MyPlate model that replaced it, fad diets, school lunches, and dietary advice provided by healthy lifestyle magazine/websites.

Epideictic discourses of food invoke epideictic discourses of eaters, with individual choices like "healthy" dark chocolate tied to being a good person and, likewise, drinking "unhealthy" diet soda tied to being a bad person. Such discourses incorporate embodied epideictic rhetoric—or "textual depictions of embodied behavior that invite or articulate an attitude of praise or blame" (Applegarth, 2019, p. 130)—at multiple levels: praising and blaming foods like dandelion tea or diet soda by extension implies praising and blaming the people consuming them, respectively. For example, the article "Do Carbs Make You Gain Weight? Here's What a Dietitian Has to Say" invokes the audience by addressing the reader in the second person: "there's a good reason that you need so many carbs" so "let's chat" (Rizzo, 2023, paras. 2–3). The article showcases embodied epideictic rhetoric throughout, praising carbs as a good source of nutrition "the body needs to thrive" and blaming a lack of them for poor health and overeating. Importantly, it's not just carbs to blame, it's *you* and "the type of carbs you choose" (2023, para. 10). Further, phrases like "weight goals" and "skimping on carbs … could potentially cause you to eat more" (Rizzo, 2023, para. 10) invoke diet culture ideas about body size, that thinness is good and fatness is bad, that you should be following your weight goals and not fall into gluttony. In this way, food- and diet-related discourse helps to instantiate dominant societal norms around

body size. And, importantly, through their carefully curated and ostensibly science-backed advice, the healthy lifestyle magazine/website articles I analyzed work to persuade readers about what "healthy" means and that they can live a better life simply by making their recommended choices, especially around the right practices and products to purchase to achieve that ideal.

Conclusion

The healthy lifestyle magazine/websites I analyzed leveraged appeals to evidence and expertise as ethos-building strategies blended with epideictic rhetoric aimed at driving health behavior change, often sandwiching expert opinions around carefully hedged scientific research findings. These rhetorical sandwiches layer multiple appeals to ethos with epideictic rhetoric with the aim of increasing persuasiveness to audiences. Such appeals become especially pernicious in digital spaces where ideas about health and wellness are slippery and contested. The healthy lifestyle magazine/websites are part of the sprawling wellness industry, and in wellness discourse, there is a simultaneous impulse to turn to the latest scientific and medical research, to embrace holistic models and practices, and to legitimize influencers and wellness companies like Gwyneth Paltrow's goop (refer to Derkatch, 2022). The mix of ethos and epideictic appeals and uses of evidence and expertise in the healthy lifestyle magazine/websites I analyzed creates a complex cultural and rhetorical space where readers must constantly navigate assessments of credibility and trustworthiness.

Additionally, health behavior change suggestions often came from experts whose professional or commercial websites were linked to, and sometimes included direct links to recommended products like the Amazon.com link in "7 Benefits of Dandelion Tea." Experts quoted in articles were often also entrepreneurs, book authors, or employed by specific brands. Even self-citation links within a magazine/website leading to related articles can be associated with consumerism: keeping a visitor moving through one magazine/website increases the number of advertisements viewed and potential sponsored links engaged with, which increases revenue. Thus, experts are incorporated in consumeristic ways, which should complicate their ethos by undermining their virtue and good will; yet the prevalence of the practice demonstrates it must achieve what the magazine/websites aim for, which is engaging readers and, ultimately, driving *consumer* behavior change. In many ways, what my analysis revealed is that rhetorical sandwiches and related moves like self-citation are genre conventions in this type of online healthy lifestyle advice article. In an attention economy (Lanham, 2006), keeping people's attention is the way to make money, and rhetorical situations drive genre as social action (Miller, 1984, p. 151). Emma F. Bloomfield and Denise Tillery (2019) argued that in online science communication, "A powerful message is meaningless online unless it gets views, clicks, shares, and links" (p. 25). In some ways, the health behavior change goal is irrelevant, as the bottom line is that the magazine/websites, which do not require a subscription or payment to view articles, are in the business of selling—advertisements, sponsored products, and more—and the idea of pursuing better health is very persuasively wrapped around the capitalism.

Because this essay is a critical rhetorical analysis, and not an audience reception study, I can only gesture anecdotally at the persuasiveness of rhetorical sandwiches. In a recent "Writing in the Health Professions" class activity during a week on health literacy gone slightly awry, I asked students to consider how authors

used both hedging language and evidence to support and nuance their claims, using the example of "7 Benefits of Dandelion Tea." First, I asked students to skim the article "Purification, Preliminary Characterization and Hepatoprotective Effects of Polysaccharides from Dandelion Root" (Cai et al., 2017) to try and figure out what the authors did in their experiment and what they found out from it. Then, I asked them to carefully read "7 Benefits of Dandelion Tea," paying special attention to the listicle item that used Liangliang Cai et al. (2017) as a source. Students were encouraged to explore links, click around, and think about whether and how any claims might have shifted from the scientific reports to the healthy lifestyle magazine/website article. While we had an excellent, generative discussion, what surprised me was that—in the context of a class activity about popular health writing, hedging, and health literacy—about a third of the students in class revealed that they were still so persuaded by the "7 Benefits" article that they added dandelion tea to shopping lists or carts, with one student admitting she texted the affiliate link to her mother during the activity saying they should start drinking it.

Lastly, the healthy lifestyle magazine/websites in my analysis leveraged ethos and epideictic rhetoric in order to advance dietary advice anchored in nutritional science, and thus, their discourses of "healthy eating" reinscribe problematic hegemonic ideas about bodies, food, and health. This is especially consequential given the readership of healthy lifestyle magazine/websites I noted earlier and their extended reach through social media platforms. The sheer reach and pervasiveness of the type of healthy lifestyle discourse these outlets promote speaks to their importance as an object of study. While the rhetorical work I identified in this essay was pervasive across the articles and magazine/websites I analyzed, further research with larger datasets with computationally-assisted analysis or from an audience reception standpoint could provide rich insights. Understanding how authors aiming to be both persuasive and authoritative to general public audiences use sandwiched ethos-building strategies to promote behavior change has implications for understanding layered digital, science, and health literacies and how elements of the rhetorical situation—such as appeals to evidence and expertise interlaced with praise and/or blame that reinforces dominant cultural values—may "bleed" into spaces like #FitTok and Instagram and be taken up in the spread of health information, misinformation, and disinformation.

Biography

Danielle Mollie Stambler (she/they) is Assistant Professor in the School of Writing, Rhetoric, and Technical Communication at James Madison University. Stambler studies wellness, body size, neurodiversity and disability rhetorics, and literacy and digital life, and has scholarship in publications including *Technical Communication Quarterly*, *Rhetoric of Health and Medicine*, and more.

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Review: *Rhetoric and storytelling within the U.S. asylum process: Shelter rhetorics.*

Jade Yeen Onn

Reyes, M. (2025). *Rhetoric and storytelling within the U.S. asylum process: Shelter rhetorics.* Routledge.

Keywords: U.S. asylum process, forced migration, storytelling, participatory research, advocacy, border, third space, spatial rhetorics, cultural rhetorics, transnational rhetoric, feminist methodologies

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In *Rhetoric and Storytelling within the U.S. Asylum Process: Shelter Rhetorics* (2025), Mónica Reyes' project emerges through the voices of La Posada Providencia (LPP), an emergency shelter for displaced people located in the Rio Grande Valley (RGV) of South Texas, where it is a part of the broader border community that Reyes calls home. As Reyes points out in Chapter 1, which introduces the premises of this book, the U.S. asylum process demands asylum-seekers to convince the U.S. government that they have been displaced by a "credible" fear of persecution. Functioning as "the welcoming of the foreigner other as a friend, but on condition that the host…remain the proprietor, the master of the house" (Derrida, 2023, pp. 4–5), this legal asylum process demonstrates the hostility inherent to the "universal" hospitality purported by the right to asylum, which Jacques Derrida famously articulated as "hostipitality". Instead, by turning to the everyday, mundane, practices which nonetheless shape peoples' lives in shelters like LPP, Reyes calls attention to the stories that displaced people tell on their own terms, highlighting the variety of narratives that exist beyond state-required "'credible' fear-based accounts." In doing so, she demonstrates how feminist rhetorical and forced migration scholars, in particular, are especially well-positioned to revise and expand support for displaced people by engaging beyond the *legal* structures of asylum and offering interventions that make the process more *livable*.

Chapter 2 dives into Reyes' methodologies and research methods, which are guided by three (often overlapping) tenets. Firstly, drawing on the work of Chicana feminist scholars, Reyes engages with LPP as a "Third Space" situated in the RGV that makes resistance possible. Secondly, using rhetorical ecology as her primary framework, Reyes traces agency, knowledge building, and the asylum system itself as distributed and emergent across the relations and intra-actions of human and nonhuman agents. Lastly, Reyes aligns herself closely with the participatory research models and priorities of cultural rhetorics scholarship, emphasizing the ethical and scholarly necessities of "[researching] with communities in which we already have established an accountable relationship" (p. 20). This last tenet is perhaps the most central to this project, as Reyes makes clear that she is positioning both herself and this project—first and foremost—as active contributors to these community knowledges. Reyes then proposes "located-listening" as her own approach to helping tell the story of knowledge-building at LPP, grounded in four key axioms: materiality, equitability, permeability, and diversity. These axioms of located-listening function as the primary concepts that guide the remaining chapters of the book, which draw on critical discourse analysis of interviews conducted with LPP staff, interns, volunteers, and clients/residents in the asylum process.

Chapter 3 parses out the spatial logics of shelter rhetorics and LPP as a Third Space. Reyes identifies how

displaced people are criminalized through the use and enforcement of labels like "migrant," "refugee," and even "asylum-seeker," which are fundamentally space-bound to specific geopolitical contexts, and rhetorically fix people within a hierarchy of rights overdetermined by specific nation-states, like the United States. However, drawing on the work of scholars like Gloria Anzaldúa, Nedra Reynolds, and Jenny Edbauer, Reyes emphasizes how engaging with the RGV as a "felt site" re-orients attention to the way communities' cultures of daily practices complicate and subvert the spatial conventions of RGV as a border space. Reyes demonstrates this through stories of local advocacy in the RGV, ranging from advocacy groups like "Angry Tías and Abuelas" to the work of individual "dragtavists" like Beatrix Lestrange. In doing so, she highlights the way advocacy efforts around displaced people in the RGV cultivate a culture that welcomes ambiguity as resistance against space-based labels.

In Chapter 4, Reyes points out how "credibility" in the U.S. asylum process is primarily measured in terms of persuasiveness, based on Western narrative norms that expect certain forms and content that rarely fit neatly with the lived experiences of displaced people. Contrary to the standards of persuasion and domination set by the U.S. asylum system, Reyes points, instead, to the importance of silence in asylum narratives, as exemplified by the "echoes of displacement" in LPP clients' stories. Understood as part of a displaced person's "narrative reactions," she argues that silences are "fresh resonances— echoes—of…lived experiences" that can only be understood within the specific, transnational contexts that it emerges from (Reyes, p. 59). Borrowing from feminist rhetorical scholar Krista Ratliffe's concept of rhetorical listening, Reyes argues for the need to deeply listen and "stand under" narratives composed by people in the asylum process, guided by their individual needs and lived experiences rather than the systemic demands for persuasion and domination.

Chapter 5 further disrupts the fixity of asylum narratives in the U.S. asylum system by turning to routines within LPP as alternative rhetorics of displacement. To do so, Reyes borrows from Kelly Medina-López's concept of "rasquache rhetorics," which she grounds in three key narratives that emerge from LPP stories of routine. The first narrative, "I am useful," centers the story of LPP client, Esther, whose routinized practice emerging from a crocheting group demonstrates the nuances of economic utility and culture formation around crafting, thereby complicating mainstream, disempowering victim narratives. Re-introducing a spatial dimension to this engagement with routine in LPP, Reyes then articulates the second key narrative of "I Have a (Temporary) Family," through stories of routinized, communal housework in LPP. These practices enact a feminist architecture (Anzaldúa) of home that composes a sense of ownership to this temporary space through "the material assemblage of routine" (Reyes, p. 94). The third and final key narrative of this chapter is "I Am Patriotic without Citizenship," which deviates quite noticeably from the previous two in that it most directly engages with the nationalist ideologies that underpin the U.S. asylum system's narrative frameworks discussed in Chapters 1 and 4. Reyes traces this narrative of patriotism without citizenship through the routinized practices of singing in the daily language and U.S. culture classes that take place at LPP. This section highlights the way Esther's and other LPP clients' daily practice of singing is co-constituted by other normalized practices of translating/transforming lyrics to the patriotic and religious songs that are typically used in these classes. These layered practices invite clients to "contextualize themselves materially" in the imaginaries

of songs such as "God Bless America" or "He's Got the Whole World in His Hands" (Reyes, p. 96), therefore resisting the exclusion and marginalization of dominant U.S. citizenship narratives.

Chapter 6 closes this book by returning to Reyes' methods and methodologies and provides two examples of how she has pursued advocacy initiatives beyond the scholarly work of this project. The first is a writing consultation program that she initiated, which partners faculty and students from the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV) with LPP clients and staff. Named *Rhetorica del Refugio*, Reyes emphasizes how this program is very much a collaboration between LPP staff and UTRGV faculty and students, tapping into invitational rhetoric practices that are *already at work* in LPP. In this manner, the program intervenes in the rhetorical ecology of the U.S. asylum system while resisting structures of persuasion and domination. Reyes' second initiative is a first-year writing course, in which she fostered routinized exchanges between her students and LPP contacts, through both student-visits to LPP and LPP contacts' visits to her classroom. In addition to further demonstrating the re-centering, collaborative, and networked approach to engaging with the rhetorical ecology of the U.S. asylum system, this second example is also especially important because it highlights how intervention in this ecology also involves actively challenging dominant narrative structures in the U.S. writing classroom.

In my own process of researching transnational activist networks, a recurring question for me is what the role of my work is/can be beyond academic study, especially when based in a U.S. university. It is an uncomfortable question to ask, made even more difficult by the way answering it requires one to engage with the enduring inhospitability of formal academia, its institutions, and scholarly traditions. However, this book is a timely reminder that, while critically reflecting on one's positionality within such formal academic systems is necessary, one should also seriously contemplate how to "exit the [scholarly] project when that time [comes]" (Reyes 106). In her conclusion, Reyes reflects on how her "long path out" of this project does not simply mark the end of her research but reflects her continued "path *into* the community" (106). By making clear how she is personally embedded in the material situation of this project, not only as a scholar but as a shelter volunteer, teacher, and advocate, Reyes positions herself as always-already situated in the broader ecologies of LPP, RGV, and the U.S. asylum system, beyond the university. Hence, this book is relevant not only to scholars working on forced migration but also in the broader field of feminist rhetorical studies, as it invites its readers to (re)position the function of research as but one part of a broader, communal effort to enact bridges that make our shared ecologies more hospitable and livable for all.

Biography

Jade Yeen Onn (she/her) is a PhD candidate in composition and rhetoric at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, where she is also pursuing a graduate certificate in decolonial global studies. Alongside her graduate studies and research, she also teaches college writing and introductory literature courses at UMass Amherst and serves as a writing associate at the Amherst College Writing Center. Her research is centered on the archipelagic imaginaries and decolonial rhetorics of transnational Southeast Asian activist networks and their anglophone literatures, which she explores through the lenses of transnational feminist rhetoric, decolonial studies, and Southeast Asian studies.

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Review: *Truth be told: White nostalgia and antiracist queer resistance in "post-truth" America.*

Rhiannon Zwieg

Tetreault, L. E. (2025). *Truth be told: White nostalgia and antiracist queer resistance in "post-truth" America*. The Ohio State University Press.

Keywords: activism, activist literacy, book review, composition and rhetoric, cultural rhetorics, digital cultural rhetorics, digital rhetoric, feminist rhetoric, Lgbtq, queer rhetorics, white supremacy

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Hot off the press: Laura Elliot Tetreault's *Truth Be Told: White Nostalgia and Antiracist Queer Resistance in "Post-Truth" America*! Tetreault's debut book, published in September 2025, is situated at the crossroads of intersectional rhetorics, digital and cultural studies, and gender & sexuality studies. For such a little book, it covers a lot of ground. This text focuses on and encourages the use of narratives, community relationships, and critical analysis in order to resist oppressive rhetorics and their regimes. Tetreault wastes no time getting into the depths of analysis, and neither should we.

Truth Be Told is a collection of case studies, and each chapter is dedicated to a critical sociocultural moment from 2016–2024: Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement and protests; the Women's March national organizing body; Unite the Right March in Charlottesville, VA; the January 6 insurrection; and anti-trans legislation. *Truth Be Told* boasts an alluring blend of rhetoric and technical communication due to Tetreault's focus on digital dis/misinformation, digital activism, and different means of organizing online. Intending to arm the reader with means of fighting rhetorical exhaustion and disinformation, Tetreault utilizes racial rhetorical criticism through a queer lens. Ultimately, this text uses and provides oppressed groups with strategies to resist dis/misinformation.

We are familiar with Make America Great Again (MAGA)— the fascistic motto that relies on nostalgia for an imagined time when white supremacy reigned without pesky left-wing questioning and outcry. Tetreault, however, does not let the criticism of white nostalgia rest there—well-meaning, white, liberal nostalgia is called into question, too. Tetrault pairs these nostalgias with their critique of post-truth and civil discourse, as both become spokes on white supremacy's wheels. Before launching their readers into criticisms of political rhetoric, they encourage us to engage with crisis rhetoric—that taunting voice in the back of everyone's mind, whispering, "it wasn't always like this. *beforebeforebefore.*" In facing this political/rhetorical moment, disinformation is not a static example. Instead, each instance of disinformation is an "evolving rhetorical [act] that [carries] racialized and gendered logics" (p. 27); this distinction allows Tetrault's analysis to hone in on activist responses to disinformation events.

Chapter one centers on the early BLM movement and the narrative activism that propelled the movement's resistance to public misrepresentation and villainization of BLM's leaders and participants. For Tetrault, narrative activism represents lived experiences and employs Black queer feminist storytelling

methods. Here, narrative activism wrestles with white supremacy's fixation with monolithic, violent criticisms delivered to marginalized groups and the effort made to undermine organizations' reputation. Digital systems and responses, made visible by algorithms, are paramount; if violent imaginaries seek to limit perceived possibility, algorithms disseminate this further. Any interaction propels dis/misinformation due to the algorithm's inability to differentiate between positive and negative engagement. We return to a discussion of who is/is not perceived as civil; namely, how this dichotomy has been positioned within white supremacy and the perpetuation of "civility" through algorithmic biases.

Chapter two centers activists' response to foreign infiltration and the resulting spread of disinformation in online organizing spaces, specifically concerning BLM and the Women's March on Washington national organizations. The narrative foundation of the previous chapter extends to relational activism, exemplified by Ella Baker's imperative question: "Who are your people?" (p. 55) The rhetorical practices outlined here provide examples of community members relying on the integrity of their community to verify the validity of unfamiliar actors. After the 2016 federal election, the Russian Internet Research Agency's manufactured social media propaganda made foreign influence over critical online communities clear. As such, the focus given to relationality becomes increasingly important. While disinformation spreads, it is necessary to understand *who* is speaking to *whom*. As rhetoricians, this is something that we are familiar with. Tetrault's emphasis is a framework for less familiar readers and clearly demonstrates the dialectical importance of subject and speaker. The response time and integration of relationality separate tightly bound organizations from others: BLM was well-equipped to respond to Baker's question and was prepared to ward off bad actors, whereas the Women's March on Washington was forged in a fire that gave them no time to actually organize in a meaningful and longstanding way.

In chapter three, Tetrault focuses on the nationwide response to the Unite the Right March in Virginia. In 2017, the country was reconciling with the first Trump administration and the accompanying proliferation of far-right rhetoric. For many, the visible virulence of this march acted as the first example of mainstream white supremacy. After the blatant demonstration of white supremacy, President Trump released his first of many "both sides" statements; in his estimation, bad actors incited violence on either side of the protest. This phrase became a quick favorite of Trump's, and a simple way of siding with white supremacy without raising excessive concern from the public. It also became an effective means of wasting activists' time, and opened up a door to cry "incivility" in the event that activists resisted at all. Wasting time is important here, because it accumulates into rhetorical exhaustion—a state reached when the sheer amount of extremely polarizing news provides no reprieve— and this is exactly the point Tetrault raises. The onslaught of polarizing headlines serves as a distraction tactic; inversely, activists refusing to waste time with the obvious ploys or attempts to rage bait allows us the energy to organize and mobilize.

Chapter four brings readers to the January 6 insurrection to analyze the rhetorical gaslighting spouted off by the Trump administration and public media. The extension of disbelief and skepticism from the individual to others' experience of the same event—gaslighting— relies upon the public's (rhetorical) exhaustion. It acts as yet another way to divide civility along the lines of perceived emotionality, creating further ruptures between people rather than directing criticism to the Trump administration. Rhetorical gaslighting provides

an avenue for a "both sides" type of rhetoric before turning around and blaming the people it affects for having an opinion regarding the consequences on their lives. When the public response to an event is as divisive as this was, the repeated news coverage becomes a ploy: each headline must one-up the last, at the expense of viewers.

The final chapter brings us to queer rhetoric and returns to narratives; specifically, trans negotiations of joy and spite in the face of discriminatory regulations and laws. The increasingly common "unreachable standard for evidence" (p. 115) acts as a barrier to attaining care because assumed cis-identification challenges the lived-experience of individuals—you cannot unequivocally prove someone's identity in the way that you can prove their blood type. Further, puppeting the burden of proof can act as a moving benchmark; this is complicated when white liberalism doubles down on the medicalization of individuals and gives new life to harmful perceptions of what does (not) count as a trans person and body. While this runs the risk of further codifying anti-trans legislation by playing into their hand, it simultaneously leaves non-white and non-wealthy trans folks out of the equation. If transness is reified through a medical diagnosis, what becomes of those without medical insurance, or those who cannot take prolonged leave from work to recover from gender affirming surgery? Once again, Tetrault directs readers to narratives as a means of resisting oppressive rhetorics.

I assert that *Truth Be Told* is a pedagogical tool as much as it is a scholarly one. Tetrault poses many important case studies, which allow readers across many levels to engage with, question, and analyze several contemporary and critical political moments. Further, the text serves as a kind of introduction to critical frameworks and communities. While there is a common thread and position throughout the communities that Tetreault is analyzing, each chapter focuses on a different aspect or subset of these communities; we ruminate, but don't languish in the oppression or violence of one group, and there are many points of entry for people to be represented. The confluence of perspectives gives readers a community-centered, counter-knowledge, and intersectional approach to dismantling white supremacy's dis/misinformation tactics and effects.

As a young queer scholar, Tetrault's text homes in on many of the issues that shaped my political and scholarly awareness. I was a bright-eyed high schooler in 2016, and, as such, this text engages with some of the most formative moments in my maturation; these sociocultural moments construct the zeitgeist that shaped many of our young academics. *Truth Be Told* has become something that I point people to—whether they are my first-year writing students looking for approachable academia, people outside of the academy, or other scholars looking to bolster their citations regarding dis/misinformation studies. This is one of this text's greatest strengths; it is applicable to a variety of readers and does so without assuming much of anyone at all, so long as they are prepared to interrogate the connected systems of oppression within complex narratives.

Biography

Rhiannon Zwieg (they/them) is a first-year graduate student in the Department of Writing Studies at the University of Minnesota. Their research focuses on the intersection of queer and feminist rhetorics, theories, and pedagogies, with a particular emphasis on archival practices, digitality, social media, and identity and/or subject formation.

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Bringing a Non-binary Nuance to the Personal & the Academic: A Review of Charlotte Hogg's *White Sororities and The Cultural Work of Belonging*

Jo Christian & Anna Sicari

Hogg, C. (2023). *White sororities and the cultural work of belonging.* Routledge.

Keywords: review essay, sorority rhetorics, epideictic rhetorics, ethics of care, feminist research

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In *White Sororities and the Cultural Work of Belonging* (2023), Charlotte Hogg investigates the rhetorical work of belonging as a key motivation for "what drives so much of what humans do" (p. 2) by interrogating Greek Letter Organizations (GLO) utilizing ethnographic methods. Hogg writes from the perspective of a rhetorical scholar who belongs to a GLO, Alpha Delta Pi, sharing personal experience of rituals and traditions during her time at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (p. 15). She writes against the "monolithically" depicted culture of GLOs, yet maintains a level of academic nuance that seeks to move beyond the celebratory and damning binaries her academic and sorority audiences potentially expected (p. 15). Hogg's (2015) article, "Including Conservative Women's Rhetoric in an Ethics of Hope and Care," explored moving past binaries. Similarly, this text asks readers to interrogate the cultural work of belonging among sororities with the openness that she approaches, through Jacqueline Jones Royster and Gesa Kirsch's (2012) "ethics of hope and care," recognizing that we must pay attention to women whose values differ from ours. This book is timely for feminist rhetoricians seeking to do feminist work during politically contentious times, as Hogg calls for both accountability and forgiveness among communities working within different institutional systems to create more just spaces for everybody.

In Chapter 2, Hogg illustrates the way the National Panhellenic Conference (NPC) has continued to perpetuate "dominant norms of gendered and raced behaviors by invoking sorority founders and histories" to educate the future generation of members (p. 20). In this chapter, Hogg expounds on her use of epideictic rhetoric and why it is so necessary for rhetorical scholars to study: "Epideictic is everywhere…[and] contains features that can work in straightforward or subtle ways, strategically drawing upon the past to shape the present" (p. 32). Hogg shows how NPC sorority belonging happens throughout three key moments of sorority membership—as potential new members [PNMs], as collegians undergoing new member education, and as alumni through commemorative events and celebrations. Hogg utilizes her own lived experience with Alpha Delta Pi and leans into institutional critique by analyzing the sorority's websites, new members' education, and the way they create and facilitate events with alumni. Through these methods, Hogg demonstrates the way sororities like Alpha Delta Pi perpetuate gendered and raced norms by constantly referencing heritage and tradition.

Chapter 3 defines and illustrates the way epideictic rhetoric is deployed through embodied performance as well as space and objects (like sorority badges), which work to create homogenized members, as well as who does and does not get to belong (p. 57). Hogg sees the objects and embodiments as being coupled with efforts by women to perpetuate values of propriety and standards (p. 57). These standards and propriety develop a kind of everyday rhetorical performance that reinscribes membership. Hogg draws on her own experience as Rush Chair but also interviews several other members who both followed and broke from membership. In this chapter, Hogg's personal narrative is particularly compelling, as she uses her story to show the power of embodied epideictic, a term she expands on from Risa Appelgarth, which combines the traditional understanding of epideictic with "a feminist focus on embodied performances" (p. 57).

Chapters 4 and 5 map up to the larger NPC at the national level and the way sorority messaging simultaneously attempts to cultivate belonging for members while not appearing to be too exclusive. Through this mapping, Hogg argues that sororities and NPC are mimicking behavior women are all too accustomed to: for example, pleasing all audiences, including those in and outside of sororities (p. 20). Chapter 4 specifically addresses anti-fraternity sentiment in the 1990s and the way NPC publications, like their national magazine, rhetorically address tradition and belonging while trying to appear positive (p. 89). This kind of navigation requires members to maintain a kind of "noblesse oblige," which puts the responsibility of membership portrayal on the members instead of being addressed by the larger system (p. 90). Chapter 5 moves towards a focus on feminism and the way that members of the fraternity evoke certain elements of feminism for "individual gain" as well as empowerment that assuages the collective and maintains "white privilege" (p. 117).

The powerful concluding Chapter 6 addresses how GLOs, as well as the institutions that house them, respond to racist incidents, analyzing the "Samford Shirt Incident," where the Kappa Chapter of ADPI went viral on social media for ordering a shirt with a Vintage Alabama Map containing a racist image of a Black man eating a watermelon (p. 140). Hogg uses epideictic rhetoric to analyze how the NPC is just now attempting to "carefully" reveal their sordid histories and traditions in national magazines and publications in an effort to boost diversity and inclusion efforts (p. 144). Specifically, epideictic rhetoric is useful because it allows her the possibility to "create a new awareness that transcends an immediate knowledge" regarding the tackling efforts of belonging and helps to rethink and revise the lineage, instead of whitewashing or cloaking them (p. 144).

Jo's response:

As a writing studies PhD student, Hogg's use of the personal and her methodological approach of institutional critique were extremely valuable to me in 1) affirming that personal experiences can be valuable as a lens and invaluable as an example of embodied theoretical knowledge for scholarship and 2) illustrating non-binary, nuanced ways of critiquing the institutions we find ourselves in. First, as a nonbinary PhD student in writing studies about to enter dissertation work and taking first steps to enter a field that has traditionally been hostile to queer and trans voices, Hogg's book is imperative in helping me see the value in my own personal experience and the way it can provide an embodied kind of knowledge, which if handled carefully, can offer invaluable knowledge to the field of writing studies as a whole. Additionally, leading with the

personal allows Hogg to address several audiences at once and to make her language accessible to all. Lastly, Hogg strives, in several parts of the piece, to push for a non-binary and more nuanced look at institutions like sororities, which have historically been problematic in many ways. However, Hogg's nuanced perspective is imperative, as her work demonstrates a love ethic that seeks to critique an institution she belonged to—and valued—in an effort to not dismiss it outright, but to make it better, which is what all good scholarship should aim to do.

Anna's response

As a scholar invested in feminist rhetorical practices and research, and an assistant professor who is keenly aware of the institutional systems she works in, Hogg's use of epideictic rhetoric, specifically embodied epideictic rhetoric, is extremely useful to explore and study how people perpetuate dominant norms, such as patriarchal practices, through everyday routines and procedures. Hogg's focus on the epideictic of the everyday—rhetorical identification repeated in private and public rituals and habits (p. 32)—to explore a rhetorical sense of belonging is particularly important for those of us interested in transforming the institutional spaces we work in, as it asks scholars to slow down and examine the practices and performances we all participate in daily, that do not receive the attention they need. Hogg's work specifically on sororities, a community that does not receive scholarly attention due to often conflicting values of academic scholars (especially feminist scholars) and/or being deemed as "trivial," is of deep interest to me, particularly as I am interested in the ways women, both "regular" and public figures, navigate matrixes of domination and systems of exclusion throughout their everyday embodied experiences.

While we both have our own responses to *White Sororities and the Cultural Work of Belonging*, we believe this text is valuable to multiple audiences: any scholar and/or academic interested and invested in feminist rhetorical practices and research, as well as those wanting to better understand how to cultivate belonging and what it means, to those wanting to approach discourse communities that often go under-looked and not taken seriously, to those looking to examine spaces that continue to privilege white practices and norms. This book can and should be assigned in any rhetorical theory course, as well as any class looking at research methodologies in writing studies. Further, this book is also a compelling text for a more advanced undergraduate to study, especially if they are familiar with the sorority systems. In short, Hogg's seamless blend of qualitative research and narrative inquiry, along with her sophisticated grasp of rhetorical theory, makes this an accessible yet rich read for a wide audience.

Biographies

Jo Christian is a PhD student in writing studies and the assistant director of the writing center at Southern Illinois University Carbondale. Jo is also a nonbinary, southern writer, with an MFA in poetry, who has published two poetry chapbooks: *Unerased: Trans Lives in Southern Illinois* (Alien Buddha Press, 2025), which was the winner of the Emma Smith Hughes Library Research Scholarship as well as *Post-eclipse:A queer home* (Bottlecap Press, 2023). Their poetry and nonfiction has also appeared in *Gulf Coast, Vita Poetica, Transom*, and other literary magazines.

Anna Sicari is an Assistant Professor in Writing Studies at Southern Illinois University. She has edited two collections/volumes, *Out in the Center: Private Struggles and Public Controversies* (2019) and *Our Body of Work: Embodied Writing Program Administration* (2022), both with Utah State University. *Out in the Center* won the IWCA Best Book Award and *Our Body of Work* was runner-up for the CWPA Best Book Award. Her work has been published in *College English, College Composition and Communication, Peitho, Composition Forum, JAEPL, Praxis: A Journal of Writing Center Scholarship, The Writing Center Journal, Composition Studies*, as well as several edited collections.

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Review: *Motherhood and Creativity in Contemporary Self-life Writing: Writers and Mothers*

Caelan Chew

Braun, Alice. *Motherhood and Creativity in Contemporary Self-life Writing: Writers and Mothers.* Routledge, 2025.

Keywords: motherhood, maternal studies, women's education, women's rhetorics, writing studies, academia

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With the rise of maternal studies as a distinct field over the last several decades, scholars of rhetoric have attended to the figure of the mother on the landscape of discourse in a variety of contexts, from pregnancy to parenting and from politics to health care. Lindal Buchanan's foundational work on American maternal discourses in *Rhetorics of Motherhood* (2013) suggests that such discourses can alternately grant women ethos *and* position them with social disadvantages. More recently, Dara Rossman Regaignon (2021) has explored the emotions and anxieties that are rhetorically "written into motherhood[']s…script" through maternal advice literature and fiction (p. xii). Further, the rhetorics of reproduction have been considered in Kim Hensley Owens' *Writing Childbirth* (2015)—which investigates how female autonomy is or is not reflected in discourses of childbirth—and in Shui-Yin Sharon Yam and Natalie Fixmer-Oraiz's (2025) examination of these concepts in the context of trans and nonbinary individuals.

Yet fascinatingly enough, the position of the mother specifically as *writer*, as producer of rhetoric in her own right, remains oddly underdeveloped within writing studies—perhaps reflective of the reality that motherhood is still considered by many "the central unfinished business of feminism" (Bueskens, 2018, p. 3). The most recent book in writing and rhetoric scholarship to examine the figure of a writing mother is *Women's Ways of Making It in Rhetoric and Composition* (2008), by Michelle Ballif, Diane Davis, and Roxanne Mountford, following Eileen Schell's *Gypsy Academics and Mother-Teachers* (1998). Both of these texts studied mothering women primarily in the position of current or aspiring writing instructors. While this is a role that certainly involves writing—from dissertation work to job applications to research—the writing itself is not necessarily the primary focus of either work. Speaking back to *Women's Ways* several years later, Loren Marquez (2011) and Christine Peters Cucciarre et al. (2011) alluded to writing while juggling children as among the difficulties of working in rhetoric studies, amongst discussions of other important aspects of tackling academic work as a mom. Yelizaveta Renfro (2013) has similarly examined writing guides for mothers from the mid 2010s that emphasize similar practical challenges, and Kate Pantelides (2013) noted positive overlaps between her identities as a mother, dissertator, and writing-center-director.

Into a space, then, which has been explored but not wholly unveiled, Alice Braun's *Motherhood and Creativity in Contemporary Self-Life Writing: Writers and Mothers* (2025) enters as one of the first book-length studies to foreground a population that composition studies has yet to fully take into consideration: the mother considered primarily *in her role as writer*. Braun's focus on writing mothers is clearly relevant to

women working in the field of composition and rhetoric studies, many of whom have children (or intend to) and for whom writing is a regular part of the job. But I would suggest further that given the positionality of a significant number of female undergrad and graduate *students* as parents,[1] Braun's insights—while not specifically directed towards studies in college composition—are also worth considering for any instructor of rhetoric who wishes to be aware of the material, social, and emotional barriers facing student mothers in their writing and the ways they can empower such students.

Dovetailing with parts of Lydia McDermott's work (2016) where she reflects on problematic reactions to her own maternal writing during a graduate seminar, Braun's examines both the socio-cultural and practical realities and challenges of being a writer and a mother simultaneously, a problem she approaches through an interdisciplinary lens which draws on such fields as literature, psychology, women's studies, sociology, philosophy, and anthropology. While her frequent reference to other writers occasionally obscures her own voice, in doing so, she provides an impressive synthesis of decades of scholarship related to feminism, motherhood, and the creative process. This makes her text an invaluable resource for anyone new to maternal studies and seeking a digestible overview, but scholars specifically interested in maternal creativity or writing will especially appreciate certain contours of her work.

After a brief introduction, Braun's first chapter, "The Impossible Subject," emphasizes the "minefield" (12) that constitutes the discourse surrounding motherhood with which women writers will contend. She explores concepts from maternal studies, such as maternal guilt, intensive mothering, and mother-blaming, that exert social pressure on writing mothers, and introduces several key tensions: if mothers are by definition self*less*, how can they write with a self or voice of their own? How do mothers counter the prevailing cultural framework of "male artist as isolated genius" (39)? What makes a text "maternal"?

The second chapter, "To Have and Have Not," explores women writers struggling at the inflection point of deciding whether or not to have children. Braun amply highlights women's fears regarding whether they will lose their creativity or if "being a mother [is] compatible with the idea we have of what being a writer entails" (p. 55); she also considers the reflections offered by Turkish author Elif Shafak and Canadian writer Sheila Heti in their memoirs as they wrestle with the potential encroachment of children upon their writing. The third chapter engages with "pregnancy and childbirth"—why women writers lack adequate models of writing on such experiences within literature and why they feel the need to write them themselves, challenging "the formerly constituted body of knowledge of obstetrics" with new words and metaphors (p. 92).

Perhaps most relevant to those interested in writing studies will be chapter four, "Mother Writing," which gets to the heart of considering what maternal writing looks like as a distinct practice. Braun explores material challenges in a mother's writing process, including experiencing the home as "prison" (p. 122) and finding the time not only to write but to achieve a state of fruitful "flow": "that mental space in which the author's thoughts are free to roam…[in] a long stretch of uninterrupted, focused activity" (p. 119). Such limitations,

1 According to an American Council on Education 2024 report, 18% of undergraduate students in the U.S. have children, and 74% of that population are women (Yates). This means that approximately 2.3 million students in the U.S. alone are learning and writing while also filling a maternal role. Close to a third of graduate students have children as well, with the majority of those being women (Anderson, 2022, vi).

she proposes, can impact the "form and…structure" of maternal writing, as well as its themes (p. 138). Braun also wonders whether maternal writing takes on a distinct nature or aesthetic. While skillfully threading the needle to avoid "essentializing" maternal writing, she suggests it might participate in the work of *forming* the maternal subject and her "plurality of positions" (p. 129) rather than proceeding in a defined way *from* her identity as a mother.

Braun finishes with a consideration of "Bad Mothers," having already mentioned many times oft-reproached figures like Sylvia Plath and Doris Lessing, both of whom struggled to reconcile writing and mothering—which may have contributed to their abandonment of their children and subsequent suicides. Braun suggests that self-life writing by mothers can be a useful way to work through feelings of ambivalence that arise from the mothering/writing tension and to combat societal binaries surrounding "good" or "bad" mothering practices. Ultimately, Braun demonstrates through the memoirs she considers that while hurdles exist, motherhood and writing need not be mutually exclusive.

Motherhood and Creativity should be brought into the ongoing conversations among teachers of rhetoric and composition. Her style is engaging and accessible, providing an easy entry to considering motherhood in relation specifically to writing—a perspective many in writing studies have not fully developed. Braun doesn't explicitly consider the implications of her research for writing instruction, but while the omission of this field is surprising—given her expansive interdisciplinary approach—it does not detract from the overall effectiveness of her work or its potential use for composition studies. Her thorough and multi-faceted consideration of mothers who write could act as a starting point to inform further development of pedagogical best practices for empowering student-mothers in their writing at any level. Through such research, student writers who are also mothers can be taught more inclusively and effectively, and motherhood need not be the "unfinished business" of writing studies.

Biography

Caelan Chew is a PhD student in English at The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., where she has worked as an instructor in the writing center and currently teaches writing and rhetoric. Her research interests focus on representations of community and family relationships in British and Irish literature, and she most recently published "When the Private Becomes Public: Involuntary Disclosure in The *Tenant of Wildfell Hall*" in *Brontë Studies*. Her current project focuses on depictions of motherhood in modern and contemporary Irish fiction and memoir.

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Dispatch from Minneapolis: On Feminist Rhetorics of Resistance

Liane Malinowski, Jaclyn Fiscus-Cannaday

Contributing Authors: Sara N. Beam, Lee-Ann Kastman Breuch, Curtis Ladrillo Chamblee, John Logie, Maddi Melchert, Nicole Montana, Matthew Tchepikova-Treon, Molly Vasich, Allison Vincent, and Marcus Woodman

Keywords feminist rhetorics, resistance, ICE, Minnesota

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Nothing has felt normal since December 2025, when the U.S. government launched an immigration enforcement campaign in Minneapolis they called "Operation Metro Surge," hundreds of miles from any national border. Most Minnesotans have rejected the language of "Operation Metro Surge," a title more apt for a video game tagline rather than a violent occupation. Instead, we have considered the presence of federal agents an unlawful takeover, one that has reshaped daily life and left many living in fear. During the ICE occupation, ICE officers have deployed violent tactics against immigrants, protestors, bystanders, and journalists—using intimidation, chemical agents and deadly force to terrorize Minnesotans. They've carried out arrests that have bypassed due-process protections and conducted raids that have made immigrant families afraid to leave their homes. Some of ICE officers' most egregious criminal acts have been captured on film and shared (Chen, 2025). ICE officers shot Julio Cesar Sosa-Celis in a car chase, and they murdered two Minneapolis residents, Renée Good and Alex Pretti. They arrested, detained, and held a five-year old boy, Liam Ramos, and his father, Adrian Conejo Arias. They deployed tear gas at Roosevelt High School in Minneapolis while students and teachers were outside during dismissal. They have caused car crashes, destroyed property, and arrested journalists. Minnesotans have responded to this reign of terror with public moments of resistance: ICE out protests, protests outside Henry Whipple Federal Building where ICE has detained many Minnesotans, and noise-making outside hotels where ICE agents are staying.

So much more has happened that isn't part of this broad outline and that exists outside the frame of what mainstream and social media have captured about this time in Minnesota. It's not just Minneapolis that has been affected by "Operation Metro Surge." ICE officers are in Minneapolis, yes, but they are also in St. Paul, the metro area around the Twin Cities, up north in Duluth, south in Rochester; they are in rural areas, suburban areas, and urban areas. They are not here to detain undocumented immigrants, though. They are here as a fear-mongering tactic for the immigrant populations that are welcomed in our state. They are here as a political attack on Minnesota.

Many outside the Twin Cities have seen the resistant response to ICE in Minnesota on social media. In *Persuasive Acts: Women's Rhetorics in the Twenty-First Century,* Sheri Stenberg and Charlotte Hogg (2020) argued that "contemporary protest and resistance are dramatically altered in the twenty-first century by

the proliferation of social media platforms" (p. 165). This is true in Minnesota: resistance efforts are aided by social media, especially in countering the narratives of the federal government. Minnesotans are asking the world to bear witness to what's happening here with first-hand accounts in video format. Resistance in Minnesota goes beyond a social media response, though. Savvy activists are making do, mixing analog and emerging technologies to adapt to evolving situations beyond sharing moments of resistance through social media. Residents have been surveilling and coordinating efforts to oppose ICE through encrypted messaging and creating electronic databases to track ICE's movements. People are filming citizen/ICE agent interactions. What has been striking is the use of analog texts to share information and mark private/public boundaries. In our Writing Studies Department on the University of Minnesota Twin Cities campus, for example, there are signs on both building and office doors saying ICE is not welcome. The break room holds zines informing people of their rights, multilingual instruction cards about what to do if ICE comes into our spaces, and whistles free for use (see Fig. 1). Of all the modes of communication that people across the state have taken up, the one that is perhaps most iconic is the whistle; it is used to indicate the presence of ICE and alert people to danger.

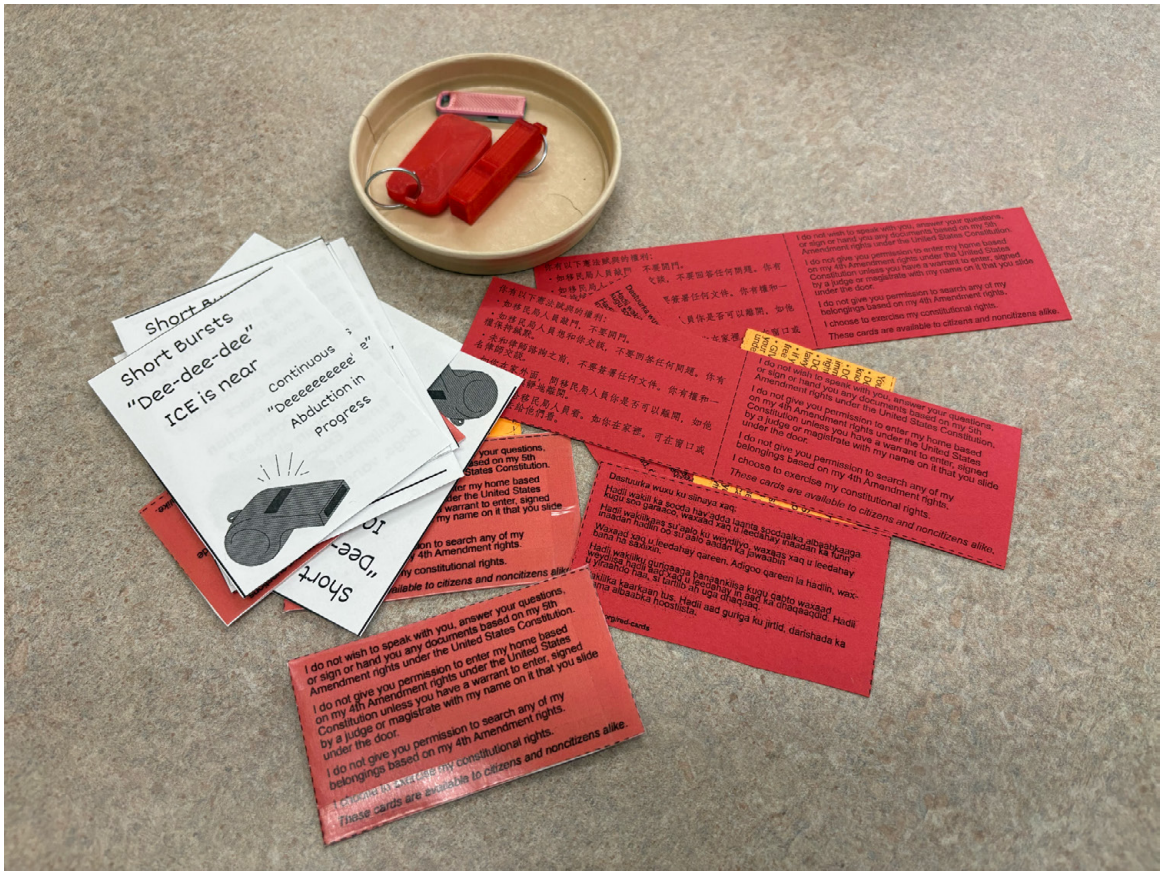

Figure 1: Whistles, zines, and instruction cards in several languages, Writing Studies Department kitchenette,

Photo Credit: John Logie, February 2026

As feminist rhetoricians, we have to pay attention to this moment. Lives depend on it. Once ICE leaves Minnesota, they may terrorize somewhere else. We need to understand what was rhetorically effective in Minnesotan response to a federal occupation—and also what wasn't. It is our hope that this article will give some preliminary ideas about the feminist rhetorics of resistance happening here and how feminist rhetoricians and activists can understand resistance as more capacious. Through this article, we offer examples of what our colleagues have shared when asked to consider what the resistance response has looked like here in Minnesota. Each contributing author chose the genre of response, and included here are responses: narrative vignettes, impressions, musings, drawings, and photos. We offer these responses to highlight the resistance that has happened here as care, as solidarity, as risking safety, as showing up. We offer our accounts of what has happened because it is instructive for what can happen elsewhere, a blueprint for a critical imagining of what resistance is and can mean.

A Feminist Response to an ICE Occupation

In February, we (Liane and Jaclyn) decided to email our colleagues in the University of Minnesota's Writing Studies Department, asking them to respond to the prompt: "How are you engaging in resistance in this moment?" We knew their responses would capture what has been happening for those who have been teaching, researching, and learning during what we see as an organized, long-term effort of resistance. We wanted to hear from a variety of contributors to acknowledge that while we are sharing an experience; we know we are all impacted differently based on our perspectives and positionalities. We recognized that asking colleagues to share publicly about resistance work is inherently fraught. For some colleagues, it could put them in a potentially unsafe position to share because of their legal status or the status of family members. For others, sharing about resistance—when it potentially includes resisting the policies of the institution at which we all work—is dangerous. These are serious concerns, so we tried to mitigate them by offering the option to contribute anonymously.

Upon receiving our email, some colleagues approached us to say how excited they were to have a "push" to write about their experiences. Others said that while they oppose ICE and were actively working to support their colleagues and neighbors, they did not see themselves as engaging in resistance. Resistance, in other words, was what they saw others doing when they were protesting and organizing. Other colleagues—knowing *Peitho* is a feminist journal—wondered if their stories about how they were engaging in resistance were feminist, or were feminist *enough*. They asked: Did what they were doing to help their neighbors, their students, and each other count as resistance? And if so, was their resistance in Minnesota feminist?

Our gut reaction to both questions was "yes." As Mikki Kendall (2020) has reminded us in *Hood Feminism: Notes from the Women That a Movement Forgot*, all issues that affect women should be addressed by feminism. And as we turned to feminist rhetoric literature, we saw so much evidence of a more capacious understanding of resistance in intersectional feminist theories. Resistance can be taken up in traditional venues of protest and agitation, but also as rest (Hersey), healing (Carey, 2017), rage (Cooper, 2018), bearing witness (Ahmed, 2021), teaching (hooks, 1994), and love and care (Durham, 2017). As feminist rhetoricians, we have the unique perspective of being able to use a feminist rhetorical framework: we can take on a "critical imagi-

nation" of what rhetorics of resistance can include—and offer a more capacious understanding of how people resist (Royster & Kirsch, 2022).

In the edited collection *Unruly Rhetorics: Protest Persuasion and Publics*, Jacqueline Rhodes offered feminist rhetoricians with a working definition of "what might most characterize an emerging antiracist, critical feminist consciousness in the early twenty-first century" (p. 90). The framework has three tenants: "(1) attention to performance, (2) use of viral technologies, and (3) serious attention to a constitutive intersectionality that takes theory into practice" (p. 90). Minnesotans have responded to the ICE occupation with resistance in ways that map onto Rhodes' definition of an emerging antiracist, critical feminist consciousness. We have seen embodied, performed anti-ICE protest incorporated into annually offered community events, such as a cardboard sled rally in Powderhorn, the art shanties on Lake Harriet, and the ice sculptures in Stillwater. We have seen Minnesotans become firsthand reporters of resistance across every digital platform (social media, news outlets, etc.). We have seen how today's response grew out of lessons learned in the years after George Floyd's murder; Minnesotans who once organized against and protested state violence in 2020 find themselves again organizing against new threats—leaning into intersectional, grassroots activist approaches.

In the next section, we offer responses from contributing authors who answered the question, "How are you engaging in resistance in this moment?" Contributing authors offer firsthand experiences; they give examples that counter official narratives from the federal government. While acknowledging that feminism is not a unitary category, we see feminism as inclusive of the contributions we share in this piece because they all arise from a motivation to transform domination. Doing so with accounts that offer firsthand experiences seems especially feminist in a moment when the government has truly tried to say that people shouldn't trust their own eyes.

Contributions

How a City Continues to Breathe

by Curtis Ladrillo Chamblee

When "Metro Surge" arrived in Minneapolis–St. Paul, it was described as precise enforcement. On the ground, it felt like saturation. ICE vehicles moved through neighborhoods where families were already bracing against winter. People began texting one another. Signal threads formed overnight. Locations were shared. Warnings circulated.

My resistance began there, not in a march, but in a group chat.

Students posted sightings of ICE agents moving through the city. Faculty checked in on one another. Churches quietly organized meal deliveries for those afraid to leave their homes. One colleague became a constitutional observer. Another volunteered for neighborhood patrols. Businesses closed on a subzero day so employees could stand outside together in protest.

I kept asking myself: what is peace?

Peace did not arrive.

But something else did.

Hope moved through the city in small acts of resistance. Resistance looked like food dropped on porches. It looked like teach-ins held in living rooms. It looked like singing at protests and memorials when grief felt too heavy to hold alone. It looked like students choosing joy at community events even while federal agents circulated nearby.

What I witnessed in Minneapolis-St. Paul was care as infrastructure. bell hooks reminds us in *The Will to Change,* that love is a practice of freedom, a collective ethic that sustains life in the face of domination.

Peace still feels distant. But I learned that resistance does not always roar. Sometimes it cooks, texts, sings, watches, teaches, and waits together.

And sometimes that is how a city keeps breathing.

***

Open the Door?

by Lee-Ann Kastman Breuch, Professor

This year, I am serving in a faculty leadership role in our Center for Writing. "Operation Surge" impacted our service in that we closed the main door to the center and shifted our in-person services to virtual consultations. But we were still concerned. What if ICE agents came into our Center and demanded to speak with specific students or employees? We became familiar with resources that informed us of our constitutional rights and made those resources available. We built safety protocols and used official signage to identify "private" spaces that were restricted to university students, staff, and faculty. We plastered signs all over our Center that said "Private Spaces—restricted to students, staff, and faculty only."

Four weeks later, when announcements were made about the surge ending, we debated what to do next. Should we open the door? We asked our staff. We ultimately opened the door, keeping our safety protocols in place, returning to our typical distribution of consultation modalities. But the damage was done, and students were still a bit hesitant. Campus was quiet. This moment made the 2020 COVID emergency feel quaint.

Outside of campus, I became keenly aware of vigils; protest marches; donation campaigns; food drives; increased communication with our legislators; trustworthy news reporting; concerts in support of resistance. One incredible event was the Luminary Loppet, an annual winter festival held on the top of a frozen lake—and symbols of resistance were apparent everywhere, including on this ice sculpture with a picture of the Minnesota Loon with wings up—a sign of Minnesota resistance.

Figure 2: A loon with its wings up rises above flames.

Photo credit: Lee-Ann Kastman Breuch, February 7, 2026.

***

We Keep Us Safe

by Anonymous

This photo is from the day Alex Pretti was killed. I live on 27th Street, a couple blocks off Nicollet, so our street became a main artery for folks gathering. Lots of neighbors put supplies, snacks, old winter gear, etc. out on our stoops that day

. Figure 3: Mutual Aid Sign. Photo Credit: Author, January 24, 2026.

***

Carrying On

by Sara N. Beam

I wait at my bus stop
On the way to campus
from South Minneapolis
Whistle hanging at my neck
Brutal cold wind seeping in
A masked man (coward) pulls up
Next to the 4-way stop sign

In a *plateless black SUV*
White male, 20s or 30s
Northbound
He speeds off (bully, murderer, terrorist)
Hands shaking I snap pictures of the vehicle
From behind
My fingers bounce off the screen
While I type out the details, jittering with
adrenaline
And hit send
To alert my block and a rapid response group

Then I wait for the bus
Board it
And ride to work

My students are hunted
But we still have class

***

Mothering in an ICE Occupation

by Anonymous

There's supposed to be a pro-ICE rally today. A gross attempt, organized by Jake Lang, to terrorize my community. All over social media, all over the politician speeches, it's the same: don't give them what they want. Stay inside. There's a big part of me that just wants to join the counter-protest, screaming alongside my

neighbors. I decide not to. Maybe I'm selfish, but I can't get shot today. I have two girls. Little girls. One who still relies on my body for nourishment and comfort.

So, I cry about it. And then, I pivot. I think, "Can how I choose to do motherhood during an occupation be an act of resistance?"

With that framework in mind, I make plans for the weekend. A busy day to keep us out of harm's way. We go to the Art Sled Rally (a joyful event that celebrates neighborhood artists by inviting them to create sculptures to send sledding down a hill in a local park). Our daughters enjoy the raucous crowd, not quite being aware of the not-so-subtle themes of "ICE OUT" in the art, but enjoying the laughter and joyful cheers all the same. We leave from there to head to the Ice Sculpture World Championships in Stillwater, MN—a competition where the U.S. team later gets disqualified for their seemingly innocuous "call to arms" sculpture that used ASL to spell "ICE Out." We're on our way home, when my daughter, five, says, "Mom, I wish I was white."

The conversation we had next breaks me. Fuck Ice. Fuck Trump. Fuck white supremacy. Motherhood should never have to be resistance.

***

On to the Next One Tomorrow

by Nicole Montana

One block across city lines and into a first ring suburb, the restaurant is dark, but the mercado remains open. It smells like my grandmother's kitchen. Guisados and tamales that rival hers fill the store's hot case. Then my bag. On to the next one tomorrow.

Lake Street. Blocks of taquerias. All closed. On to Nicollet Avenue. A mercado with takeout. Reduced hours. I order their chilaquiles, smoky and too spicy, like my grandmother's. On to the next one tomorrow.

Bloomington Street. Deliveries only. On to Nicollet Avenue. A cantina with a doorbell, seemingly down to three employees, whose refried beans remind me of my great-grandmother's. The taste and texture. The secret of how she made them lost years ago. On to the next one tomorrow.

Nicollet Avenue. A large family restaurant. Their doors are locked. Staff lets me in. I sit looking onto the street crunching tostadas like the ones I made as a kid and spooning pozole into my mouth. It warms my throat that's been slowly tightening. Only yards away, the memorial for Alex Pretti fills the street. When I leave, my server tells me "*thank you for supporting us*." I cry when I'm out of view. On to the next one tomorrow.

Lake Street. The largest mercado. My first date place. Security lets me in. Once a crowded indoor plaza, traffic is a trickle. Multiple family food vendors down to a few. Rents unpaid. A gofundme. On to the next one tomorrow.

Again, one block across city lines and into a first ring suburb. The restaurant is back open. The menu reduced to taqueria basics for "*probably a few weeks more*" offers me the opportunity to try their quesadilla with carne asada. As I wait, I see a restaurant frozen in time. A poinsettia that has grown to an abnormal size. Evergreen garland, ornaments dangling from it, frames the doorway. On to the next one tomorrow.

***

Collective Sparks

by Marcus Woodman

Figure 4: Original artwork by author

In 2020, a dead eagle was discovered in Maine. A thorough necropsy revealed that the eagle had not been shot, but had been stabbed through the heart by the knifelike beak of a loon. Near the eagle's remains, a dead loon chick was also found. The story wrote itself: The eagle, in search of an easy meal, took the chick, and the loon's parent took revenge. A serendipitous metaphor to describe the ongoing occupation of Minnesota by federal agents; I took advantage of that story here. But in our case, the federal eagle is not hungry. The flagrant brutality in the name of white supremacy hurts our most vulnerable, but we resist, however mismatched. The resistance networks built here operate in dynamic, decentralized ways, creating sparks of collective power in every neighborhood, in every block. Crucially, support in all of its forms—financial, emotional, legal, interpersonal, intellectual—are part and parcel of these networks. The recognition that everyone has a contribution, and that we all rely on each other, only makes us stronger and far more capable.

***

An Occupation in Minneapolis, December 2025 — February 2026

by John Logie

Shortly after Christmas, 2025, a friend gives me a cloth gift pouch holding a small multi-tool accompanied by a whistle, with instructions for how to effectively use the whistle to signal to neighbors when Federal agents are in the area. I start carrying the whistle with me wherever I go.

- On January 7th, the afternoon of the day Renée Nicole Good was shot to death, my daughter, Shane—a senior at the University of Minnesota—runs into an ICE operation at Roosevelt High School. The ICE action is unfolding two blocks from the house where she grew up. She sees students and staff being surrounded by Federal agents, with some being tackled by agents. She tells me she was surprised by how much rage filled the words she shouted at the agents, and that she felt powerless as the chaos unfolded.

- On January 20th, the first day of classes, I share my decision to pursue a dual-modality approach to teaching the class with the students: I will be teaching my previously scheduled in-person class both in person and online via Zoom. No other choice feels ethical given how unsafe Twin Cities streets often feel. I find the risk of a student being harmed—while traveling to the university at my insistence—unbearable. Students seem palpably grateful for the Zoom option being offered.

- The decision to teach via Zoom and in person has costs for all of us. While I have experience in online and in-person classes, teaching in both spaces simultaneously is challenging. There's a learning curve, and I face technical hiccups from the jump. My syllabi are knocked around by these changes. I am frustrated at times. Both in class and privately, students signal their strong support for this approach.

- I often need a nap after teaching. (I am not a napper.)

- Days after I make my final determination that Federal agent activity in the Twin Cities metro will *not* change soon enough for my students to feel relatively safe until *at least* the end of the semester, the University's higher administration begins directing students to return to in-person instruction by February 16th. Many people throughout the metro do not feel they can safely leave their homes. I resolve to continue teaching my "in person" class in person *and* online, and I let my students know this will be my policy, regardless of significant university pressure to return to in-person instruction. If there are consequences for me for doing so, so be it.

Throughout the first five weeks of the semester, students have thanked me for checking in with them as people. These students survived COVID. They have muscle-memory for crisis response. They have approached my sometimes wobbly attempts to navigate two modalities with patience and generosity, and above all, care for their fellow students. I owe them no less.

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A Day in the Life

by Allison Vincent

Fuck, I left breakfast on the counter.
I'll grab something on campus.
All the doors are locked now.
I have my U card, right?

Phone, keys, wallet, whistle.
Yes, yup.

What's NPR have to say?
Walz is doing his best
I think? What do I know?
Honk for the protestors on the bridge.

I should be up there with them on my days off.
I should be doing more.
Shit, I'm supposed to get an oil change soon.
10 minutes to class, okay, need to hustle.

Shut the door behind you. Don't hold it for anyone.
Before we start, ask how everyone is doing.
Nice and open ended.
Be friendly. Kind eyes. Soft smile.

Silence.
Hold strong for the wait time.
Hold.
Hold...

Okay, be merciful. Just start the lesson.
Quick scan of breaking news while they transition into small groups.
Huh. The kids are chatty in small groups. Some even smile.
They need community.

More kids said "Thank you" at the end of class than usual.
Maybe they know I'm doing my best.

I should be doing more.
I should be doing more.
I should...
Go to bed?

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My google searches, january & february 2026

by Maddi Melchert

what does a cat need

cat tail posture meanings

why a cat sits in its litter box

street Renée Good was killed on

Renée Good family donations

minneapolis neighborhood rent donations

egg free chocolate cake recipe

heated rivalry original soundtrack

Liam Ramos school

Liam Ramos family donations

cat spay incision day by day

what to do after licked spay incision

kristi noem impeachment proceedings

trump impeachment proceedings

bisalp surgery doctors minneapolis

Alex Pretti memorial ride

epstein files update

dhs minneapolis update

this place is a freaking hellscape chosen gif

cat puts nose on my mouth

signs that cat is bonded with me

This piece was written on the ancestral and current homelands of the Dakhóta Oyáte and Anishinaabemowin; it is dedicated to life that has been forcibly removed from its deserved place on our shared planet, and to dignity practiced and justice served.

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Fear is Not a Barrier

by Matthew Tchepikova-Treonr

Figure 5: Screen-printed posters for *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*. Photo Credit: Matthew Tchepikova-Treonr, 2026.

From January 30 to February 1, the Cult Film Collective—a South Minneapolis-based nonprofit dedicated to preserving, archiving, and publicly exhibiting films—partnered with the repertory theater, Trylon Cinema, to host seven sold-out screenings of Hayao Miyazaki's *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* (1984). In harmony with the many acts of communal resilience taking place across Minneapolis, we produced and sold these original screen-printed *Nausicaä* posters (designed by Mando Madetzke) to raise funds for The Food Group, an organization that works to feed the most vulnerable members of our city and support community-oriented, culturally-connected Minnesota farmers. Hundreds of neighbors showed up to support, but also celebrate, the strong-footed beauty of our city's collective response to wanton terror. Printing as many posters as time and materials allowed, all proceeds from that weekend went to help, as a banner atop The Food Group's website boldly proclaims, "ensure fear is not a barrier for communities to access food."

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Writer's Note

by Molly Vasich

After spending a February afternoon reading my students' work and giving them feedback, I had an hour before my own kids returned home from school. I opened a fresh document, thinking maybe I'd be able to get something on the page—something that had eluded me since Christmas. I'd been using spare pockets of time to scroll neighborhood signal threads, donate, join actions, check on friends and neighbors, monitor school pick up. My eyes, baggy and red, couldn't look away from the countless stories of families being torn apart, my community members detained and deported without due cause. Adrenaline seeped through my body as my attention turned toward my community and away from my children and home. I reasoned with myself that this was the current state of things and my children were watching (even if I was not watching them). Still, I felt guilty; I wasn't doing enough in any sphere of my life. All of this spilled onto the page when I surrendered and sat down on the kitchen stool to write. I described our backyard chickens who had just laid their first eggs in the immediate wake of Renee Good's murder. The eggs' surprise appearance on a single digit January afternoon pulled me out of my anxious rage, reminding me to not lose sight of what we are fighting for. As I typed, I rearranged words and images until the daily rituals of my mothering collapsed into Renee Good's last morning with her child before she was murdered. It was only then that I could fully feel, to connect with Renee's impulse to act in accordance with what she believed in. In writing, I renewed my own commitments—in motherhood and activism—as my page became a repository to uncover and hold them both.

***

On Feminist Rhetorics of Resistance

Rhetoricians have already taken up various "rhetorics of resistance" that we see at play in Minnesota: protest and activist rhetorics have a home in our field. In the edited collection *Unruly Rhetorics*, Johnathan Alexander and Susan C. Jarratt (2018) turned rhetoricians' attention to the "contemporary practices of protest": "a lively mix of bodies, technologies, and historically proven practices" (p. 6). As we collected examples of resistance, we were struck by moments that speak not only to traditional forms of protest or resistance, but what we might consider feminist rhetorics of resistance. Yes, there have been massive, public protests in the dead of winter. But just as significant has been the emergence of resistance in many forms that might fall outside of that scope. If rhetorics of resistance sometimes tends to signal actions like protests, civil disobedience, or lobbying lawmakers, "feminist rhetorics of resistance" might give us an opportunity to account for the things that are happening on the ground here: working as a constitutional observer, doing neighborhood patrols, showing up and finding joy in our community events, gathering and distributing food and supplies to those in hiding, participating in teach-ins, singing at memorials, and more.

Furthermore, these feminist rhetorics of resistance are often built on top of historically existing and often

feminized networks. Rhetoric has traveled through mutual-aid networks, seemingly created quickly, but in actuality built on top of already existing networks made up of people who belong to neighborhood associations, churches, school PTAs, and workplaces like restaurants and shops, and have mobilized to support those too afraid to leave their homes.

The rhetorics of resistance in Minnesota are built both on existing social movement traditions and local routines. Owners at Minneapolis pizza favorite, Wrecktangle, had lived through the George Floyd community crisis and were quick to step in as community organizers; they delivered donated pizza to neighbors in need and raised over $200,000 (Askinasi, 2026). Major hubs of mutual aid coalesced at repurposed community gathering places like trans-owned, sex-positive sex shop Smitten Kitten and women-owned, queer-owned A Bar of their Own. Parents often took up heavy lifting of neighborhood-led initiatives: PTAs organized fundraisers, food and clothing collections, and school patrols; lactating people created an underground breast milk bank for people who were unable to leave their homes to access the established milk banks; parents brought neighborhood kids to school and/or practice when other parents could not leave their homes. Churches organized laundry exchanges amongst parishioners, donation delivery services, and large-scale protesting outside of Minneapolis–St.Paul airport with clergy. Neighbors turned to handmade "ICE OUT" signs in windows; dog walking services arranged on group chat; and shoveling the driveways and sidewalks of neighbors in hiding so they can leave quickly if need be. Care work, which has always been gendered, was central to what resistance looked like in Minnesota.

As Brittney Cooper (2018) noted, there's a time for eloquent rage. We see no better time than an occupation sponsored by the federal government to stand up and say: this is time for protest; it's time for us to boycott; it's time for us to agitate; it's time for us to lobby lawmakers; it's time for us to voice our anger loudly. We've seen moments of rage here; protestors have been known to throw teargas canisters back at ICE when the government tried to shut down protests. We've also seen protest done differently, as an invitation to love, care, and joy—the most viral of which was of the singing resistance groups gathered outside hotels where ICE agents were staying singing a protest song written by Annie Schlaefer:

> It's okay to change your mind. / Show us your courage / leave this behind! / It's okay to change your mind / and you can join us / join us here any time.

Singing resistance is not new; many activists have gathered to sing songs made popular during prior liberation and civil rights movements. This song in particular, though, seemed to embody something that we feel has been such an integral part of Minnesotan's resistance: it has felt like a love and care response to our neighbors has been the primary goal of our resistance.

We see what has happened in Minnesota as intertangled in a Black feminist view of love and care. While ruminating on "Love Day" in an essay for the Crunk Feminist Collective, Aisha Durham reflected that "Love—rooted in a unique, emotive, empathetic ethic of care—is the hallmark of Black feminist thought" (p. 311). In her introduction to *All About Love*, bell hooks (2001) explained how "all the great movements for social justice in our society have strongly emphasized a love ethic" (p. 18). Love has been central to the resistance in Minnesota. Minnesotan's love and care work humanized the Minnesotan response to ICE's violence.

Alex Pretti's last words, during an altercation with ICE officers, were to his neighbor whom he tried to help: "Are you okay?" Minnesotans have been reaching out to each other to ask that question again and again: through the lawn signs with Monarch butterflies, to the Hearts in Minneapolis where we've left Valentines to each other and the city (especially in neighborhoods targeted by ICE), and to the candlelight vigils that have brought together neighbors in driveways and atop frozen lakes. Love and care are political; they are resistance.

Looking Forward: Writing Resistance

At times it has felt odd to write an article about feminist rhetorics of resistance when we could be out contributing to mutual aid efforts, visiting memorials, protesting at Whipple, or walking our neighborhood patrols. But here's the thing we kept coming back to: writing is a form of resistance, too. An important one. Bryan Trabold (2018) has documented the way that writers did resistance work during the South African Apartheid, arguing that writing space is a crucial piece of resistance rhetoric. Our field has a responsibility to capture the feminist rhetorics of resistance—especially because journalists have already been attacked for their coverage of this very phenomenon. We encourage feminist rhetoricians to continue writing resistance. The resistance that we've seen here has drawn on long-standing community values in Minnesota, where social welfare systems and mutual aid have a cultural foothold. We therefore encourage feminist rhetors to situate resistance in its context; resistance always emerges from the community values of the resistors.

Resistance, along with the consequences of ICE's presence, have changed here day by day and will continue to change. At the time of this writing, fewer than 1,000 ICE agents remain in Minnesota, a number well below the over 4,000 ICE and U.S. Customs and Border Protection agents who occupied the city in January ("Federal Officials"). Still, 1,000 agents remain and threaten the safety of residents. We're not through the ICE occupation, nor will the city ever be the same, but we're grateful to have been able to come together to try to start making sense of it. Nothing has felt normal, so teaching and learning conditions have not been happening under normal conditions. We have, each in our own way, questioned how to stay safe and protect loved ones, students, and strangers, and navigated shifting messages and guidance about whether it is safe to gather on campus and elsewhere. Despite resistance, and to varying degrees, we have experienced losses: of safety, food security, housing stability, and a version of a city that no longer exists. Some have experienced the more devastating loss of friends and neighbors during this time. Making meaning from these experiences—of resistance, and of loss—is part of creating new forms of community and solidarity. We are grateful to write about what happened here, and what is continuing to happen, to our feminist colleagues. We are grateful to collectively bear witness to the feminist rhetorics of resistance. We know there is going to be more to say later; for now, this is a glimpse of what it looks like to do resistance here in Minnesota.

Biographies:

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