Training a Nation: The General Federation of Women’s Clubs’ Rhetorical Education and American Citizenship, 1890-1930

DISSERTATION

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By

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Abstract

Historical scholarship in the field of rhetoric and composition has flourished in the last thirty years and developed a rich and diverse picture of the history of American women’s rhetorical practices. Much of the recent research surrounding women’s clubs has focused on written documents and an analysis of rhetorical strategies to demonstrate how nineteenth-century women advocated for political and social change. Scholars like Karen Blair (1980), Theodora Martin (1987), Anne Meis Knuper (1996), Anne Ruggles Gere (1997), and Jacqueline Jones Royster (2000) have focused on the civic accomplishments and reading and writing practices of African American, Jewish, Mormon, working-class, and white middle-class clubwomen. My dissertation, “Training a Nation: The General Federation of Women’s Clubs’ Rhetorical Education and American Citizenship, 1890-1930,” extends existing scholarship to include a focus on how white-middle class clubwomen developed and sustained their own programs of rhetorical education during a historical era in which women were still excluded from educational institutions, barred from most professions, and lacked any formal training in rhetoric in the United States.

Existing scholarship has not focused on the connection between the seemingly less significant activities that occurred in individual women’s clubs and the public efforts of the General Federation of Women’s Clubs to educate and train better American citizens. These internal and external programs of rhetorical education established the
General Federation as an influential cultural institution. My study focuses on the concrete and self-conscious pedagogical tools that women used to educate one another and develop a model of social change rooted in education, which had mixed results. My archival research demonstrates how the white women’s clubs of the General Federation advocated structured pedagogical techniques, such as prescribed reading lists for children and adults, uniform club programs and discussion questions, and patriotic plays and pageants, to contribute to the dialogue surrounding citizenship and thus the formation of American identity in the progressive era. The General Federation’s rhetorical campaign for promoting American citizenship both reinforced racist notions of an idealized white citizenship and, at the same time, attempted to invite immigrants, newly naturalized citizens, and young adults into the conversation.

The General Federation of Women’s Clubs promotional materials and pedagogical techniques reveal how its members were a product of the ideological heritage in the Progressive movement of the early twentieth century with its focus on the cultivation of a particular kind of good American citizen that was rooted in ideas of obedience and mass education. The club movement also represents a site of rhetorical education which can show us how clubwomen in the General Federation were learning and teaching each other the politics of rhetoric in very public but non-academic sites. Ultimately, I argue that it is important to study sites where women created and supported rhetorical education to develop civic consciousness because these sites reflect evidence of clubwomen’s contributions to rhetorical theory and history.
Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother, Deborah Moorman White, who would have been so proud to see me finish, and to Robert and Christopher White who have always believed in me. Finally, I dedicate this dissertation to my grandmother, Mary Lou Stark, because her faith and generosity made it possible to write, and her liveliness encouraged me to research other strong and independent women who changed the world we live in.
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I wish to express gratitude to all of my dear friends who have supported and encouraged me throughout this journey. Finally, thank you to Matt for moving to Indiana with me.
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Introduction

Historical scholarship in the field of rhetoric and composition has flourished in the last of the history of American women’s rhetorical practices. Much of the recent research surrounding women’s rhetorical accomplishments has focused on expanding or rewriting traditional definitions of Western rhetoric which often privilege spoken or written oratory in the public arena. Scholars like Karlyn Kohrs Campbell (1989), Andrea Lunsford (1995), Cheryl Glenn (1997), Shirley Wilson Logan (1999), and Jane Donawerth (2002) have been dedicated to recovering women’s rhetorical activities which took place in a variety of locations in an effort to enrich our definitions of rhetoric and our knowledge of rhetorical theory. Additionally, much of the extant scholarship on recovering women’s clubs has focused on written documents and an analysis of rhetorical strategies to demonstrate how nineteenth-century women advocated for political and social change. Scholars like Karen Blair (1980), Theodora Martin (1987), Anne Meis Knuper (1996), Anne Ruggles Gere (1997), and Jacqueline Jones Royster (2000) have focused on the civic accomplishments and reading and writing practices of African American, Jewish, Mormon, working-class and white middle-class clubwomen. My dissertation, “Training a Nation: The General Federation of Women’s Clubs’ Rhetorical Education and American Citizenship, 1890-1930,” extends existing scholarship to include a focus on how white-middle class clubwomen of the General Federation
developed and sustained their own programs of rhetorical education during a historical era in which most women were still excluded from educational institutions, barred from most professions, and lacked any formal training in rhetoric in the United States. In *Man Cannot Speak for Her* (1989), Karlyn Kohrs Campbell recovers the rhetoric of the early woman’s right movement that emerged in the United States in the 1830s, which eventually focused on woman’s suffrage after the Civil War and ended in the mid-1920s. Her work focuses primarily on individual women’s accomplishments like Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Frances Willard, and Ida B. Wells. Campbell’s overall argument is that most traditional histories situate rhetoric in the public arena which constructs a definition of rhetoric which privileges citizenship. For most of Western history women have been denied citizenship rights and have not been allowed to participate in public life. By definition, Campbell points out, women have been shifted to a realm outside of rhetoric and their rhetorical activities have been ignored and in some cases erased.

Additionally, *Reclaiming Rhetorica: Women in the Rhetorical Tradition* (1995), edited by Andrea Lunsford, recovers women rhetors ranging from the classical and medieval times to the contemporary. Like Campbell’s work, this anthology primarily addresses the accomplishments of individual women including Christine de Pisan, Mary Wollstonecraft, and Sojourner Truth; however, it also includes groups of women at the Seven Sisters Colleges. The essays in the collection attempt to disrupt the seamless narrative reincribed about the rhetorical tradition in order to open up possibilities for multiple rhetorics. Importantly, this book suggests that the realm of rhetoric has been almost exclusively male, not because women were not practicing rhetoric, but because the tradition has never recognized the forms, strategies, and goals used by many women
as “rhetorical.” *Rhetoric Retold: Regendering the Tradition from Antiquity Through the Renaissance* (1997) is another example of a feminist history that seeks to alter the traditional and familiar rhetorical landscape. In the book, Cheryl Glenn recovers women’s rhetorical practices from classical antiquity, the Middle Ages, and the Renaissance. Her project focuses on individual women’s contributions to rhetorical history or theory including Sappho, Julian of Norwich, and Margaret More Roper among others. Glenn’s primary goal is to “remap” the history of rhetoric in order to locate women’s rhetorical activities and to illustrate the different criteria involved for women who played a public role. She argues that we must broaden the definition of rhetoric to include women’s rhetorical practices, but at the same time points out that as long as scholars continue to use classical rhetoric as a reference point, the “new” recovered rhetoric is “rendered as a marker of decline, reduced to a flawed or inadequate version of the tradition” (15). Additionally, Shirley Wilson Logan’s *We Are Coming: The Persuasive Discourse of Nineteenth-Century Black Women* (1999) extends the efforts of previous scholars to include African American women. Her work offers a groundbreaking look at African American women’s public rhetorical practices in the nineteenth century including individuals like Maria Stewart, Frances Harper, and Ida B. Wells as well as the collective efforts of black women’s clubs and church groups. Logan draws on rhetorical theory from Kenneth Burke and Chaim Perelman, among others, to interpret new archival letters, essays, and speeches. Her work revises the traditional canon by establishing the presence of African American women speakers both before and after the Civil War. Importantly, Logan also points out that African American women often had different motivations than their white counterparts. More specifically, they
were more concerned with racial uplift whereas speakers like women like Elizabeth Cady Stanton refused to advocate for racial equality because they feared it would cost them the vote. Logan, along with the other pioneering scholars discussed above, offers historical proof of women’s rhetorical activities which show us how women practiced effective and persuasive communication that influenced the world around them every day.

Feminist rhetorical and historical scholarship have also dramatically increased our understanding of the importance of the work done by women in other Non-Western cultures as well as the collaborative work done by women. For instance, the anthology *Rhetorical Theory by Women before 1900* (2002) edited by Jane Donawerth presents a broad selection of little-known women rhetorical theorists before 1900 including Pan Chao from China, Sei Shonagon from Japan, and Bathsua Makin from England. Her anthology aims to present a great diversity of women’s rhetorics across many cultures, instead of a “narrow selection of Britons and Americans.” In the preface, Donawerth claims that her goal is to offer more women to teach in rhetoric courses and to get people to think more broadly about the history of rhetoric. Her goal stands in contrast to the classical criteria of influence, public oratory, and persuasive argumentation. Anthologies of nineteenth-century women as well as books with chapters dedicated to individual women’s accomplishments like Donawerth’s offer an important contribution both to the literature on women’s rhetoric and to rhetorical theory, however; some scholars have argued that these current historical narratives run the risk of constructing canons of knowledge that establish individual heroes while simultaneously erasing the collective accomplishments of the “ordinary” women involved in rhetorical activities. In the prologue to *Listening to Their Voices: The Rhetorical Activities of Historical Women,*
Diane Miller warns that “a continuing focus on individual subjects may reinforce, rather than undermine, accepted principles of canon formation, in particular the focus on individuals at the expense of collective contributions” (364). Wendy Sharer’s *Vote and Voice: Women’s Organizations and Political Literacy, 1915-1930* (2004) responds to this call by researching the collective contributions by women’s organizations. Her work demonstrates how collective women’s reform efforts and attempts at persuasive communication have been overlooked by scholars and historians. Sharer explores how two women’s organizations, the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom and the League of Women Voters, used collective rhetorical practices to participate in active citizenship. Her work demonstrates how traditional models of citizenship are based on a civic discourse and political activism that has historically excluded much of the collaborative political work done by organized women. Sharer’s work attempts to fill this gap by exploring how large groups of women used extensive communicative practices to create pressure for public change. Sharer highlights the rhetorical tactics through which women in the United States entered into and challenged existing structures of political discourse. Scholars like Donawerth, Miller, and Sharer have helped the field of rhetoric and composition reach beyond the Western tradition of rhetoric and pay attention to the more ordinary efforts of women whose collective contributions shaped the world(s) they lived and often improved its condition.

Feminist scholars like Catherine Hobbs (1995) and Jacqueline Jones Royster (2002) have also done work to recover and interpret the literacy practices of women. The goal of the Catherine Hobbs’ edited collection *Nineteenth-Century Women Learn to Write* (1995) was for scholars to reconsider history and thought from an interdisciplinary
feminist perspective using literacy as a lens. The text argues that studies of literacy have rarely built considerations of gender into their analyses and many have generalized from elite male experience and records. In *Traces of a Stream* (2000), Jacqueline Jones Royster argues that literacy emanates from lived experience; therefore, she sees making meaning with language as an intrinsically social and political act. Central to her study are themes of literacy, social change, and African American women at the turn of the century. The pivotal idea of her work rests on the notion that what human beings do with writing is an expression of self, of society, and of self in society. Royster uses the Black Woman’s Club Movement as a primary example of how socially conscious African American women in the nineteenth century produced work in many genres and used clubs as a formal training for rhetorical practice. Importantly, her exploration of black women’s clubs provides a historical example of a collective quest for literacy and a complex illustration of how elite black women used language to facilitate social change and intervene in a predominantly white and patriarchal world. Importantly, Royster also argues that scholars must continue to research women’s rhetorical activities if we are to carry on a sense of tradition. Using literacy as a lens to interpret women’s rhetorical accomplishments has enabled rhetoric and composition scholars like Hobbs and Royster to link literacy and social change which has allowed us to recognize literacy as a form of civic and rhetorical action.

Collectively, the body of feminist scholars and historians discussed throughout the introduction, who have worked diligently to recover a diverse spectrum of women’s rhetorical accomplishments and literacy practices, have created a broader umbrella for rhetoric and redefined what is considered persuasive and rhetorical in nature. Their
efforts have made huge strides in redressing women’s long-standing absence from the masculine canon of rhetors and rhetoric. As opposed to measuring the influence of a speaker or writer, feminist histories attempt to document diverse women’s rhetorical contributions over time and expand the definition of what counts as rhetorical. This scholarship helps us better understand how diverse women and other marginalized groups were using rhetorical strategies to navigate, resist, and change the worlds they lived in.

Increasingly, feminist scholarship has also focused on nineteenth and twentieth-century women’s rhetorical education in both institutional and non-institutional settings. Scholars like Barbara Sicherman (1989), Carol Mattingly (1998), Nan Johnson (2002), and Shirley Wilson Logan (2008) have written about the ways in which women have engaged in learning and applying rhetorical skills outside of formal institutions. In “Sense and Sensibility: A Case Study of Women’s Reading in Late-Victorian America” (1989), Barbara Sicherman argues that reading was central to women’s self-education and exploration at the turn of the nineteenth century. In her case study, Sicherman found that women’s intense engagement with books suggests that historically women have used reading rhetorically as a way of understanding the world and the act of reading enabled them to overcome certain confines of gender and class. Reading was a central activity for many middle-class, white women and it allowed them a way to engage a variety of ideas and identities. Sicherman’s work provides a missing piece in terms of women’s rhetorical education, which shows that reading was a rhetorical act and integral to women’s self-education. Because until the end of the nineteenth century, women were still almost completely excluded from university education and were barred from the professions of law, religion, and political office for which university training in rhetoric
prepared men. As a result of the lack of formal rhetorical training, Carol Mattingly’s *Well-Tempered Women: Nineteenth-Century Temperance Rhetoric* (1998) offers evidence of the ways in which women sponsored their own education in the Women’s Christian Temperance Movement by developing effective rhetorical strategies and producing a large quantity of educational materials used to recruit and train members. Mattingly argues that temperance reformers successfully spoke to the culture of ordinary nineteenth-century women by using particular rhetorical strategies to appeal to them. With skillful tactics, conservative action drew women out of the home into politics, reform, self-improvement, and self-confidence. The temperance movement provides a unique site of rhetorical education which gives us insight into the methods that women used for teaching one another.

In *Gender and Rhetorical Space in American Life, 1886-1910* (2002), Nan Johnson points out the “highly gendered” nature of rhetorical practices including reading and writing in the nineteenth century. Young men had access to training in rhetorical education and public speaking, while women learned little or nothing about it. Additionally, professional positions as politicians, lawyers, and ministers were available to men while nineteenth-century women were denied entrance into formal institutions of learning and possessed few opportunities to address the public. Johnson’s study shows how nineteenth-century women used spaces like dinner meetings, lyceums, and parlors for their rhetorical education; however, she argues that texts on rhetorical performance were also designed at the same time to keep women in the domestic sphere. Shirley Wilson Logan’s most recent work on rhetorical education, *Liberating Language: Sites of Rhetorical Education in Nineteenth-Century Black America* (2008), also examines
several sites of rhetorical education: early African American rhetorical traditions, self-
education in rhetoric, literary societies and lyceums, and the black press. Her study
focuses primarily on non-school settings to show how a marginalized group of people
developed the rhetorical abilities to negotiate a hostile environment and simultaneously
establish a common language in order change it. Logan’s study increases our
understanding of the ways in which African Americans, who were faced with
enslavement and prejudice, acquired rhetorical prowess during the late eighteenth and
nineteenth century.

Other scholars like Mary Kelley (2006), Susan Kates (2001), Karyn Hollis (2004),
and Jessica Enoch (2008) have written about women’s rhetorical education inside of
institutional settings. By the end of the nineteenth century, American women did have
some access to higher education, both in the few coeducational schools, such as Oberlin,
Iowa, and Cornell, and in women’s colleges such as Mount Holyoke, Vassar, Smith, and
Wellesley. Women in these schools could study rhetoric devoted in the classical spirit to
public address on issues of civic importance. As women’s education improved, women
increasingly began to speak in public and to reflect on their rhetorical practices. Mary
Kelly’s Learning to Stand and Speak: Women, Education, and Public Life in America’s
Republic (2006) argues that women’s literary societies, reading circles, and mutual
improvement associations laid the foundation “for women’s claim to the public voice and
intellectual authority necessary for the making of public opinion” (14). Her archival
study draws on a wealth of manuscript and print materials to document the intellectual
lives and civic engagements of women over a span of approximately fifty years. A
significant achievement of Kelly’s book is her recovery of academies and seminars that
served as institutions of higher learning for young women and had a curriculum that was equivalent to the intellectual rigor of colleges for men.

Additionally, Susan Kates’ *Activist Rhetorics and American Higher Education, 1885-1937* (2001) documents three women’s educational practices in teaching at the separatist institutions Brookwood Labor College and Smith College that were founded to serve students who could seldom gain access to more elite colleges and universities. Kates also highlights the climate during the nineteenth century which affected women’s rhetorical education. In addition to limited opportunities to pursue education, the majority of rhetoric textbooks were written by men like Jon Franklin Genung, Barrett Wendell, and Adams Sherman Hill. However, she explores Mary Augusta Jordan who taught at Smith College from 1884-1921 and wrote the textbook *Correct Speaking and Writing*, which was aimed at and used by white women’s clubs. Kates argues that this text, contrary to its title, considers how women might feel inadequate due to their lack of formal education and how “correct” rhetorical practice has historically been defined by men. As a result, Jordan’s textbook argues that there is no one correct way of writing and speaking correctly. In her study, Kates comes back to the classroom to investigate our current focus on “multiculturalism” and calls for more research on gender and communication in order to learn about the lives of female students and their education.

In *Liberating Voices: Writing at the Bryn Mawr Summer School for Women Workers* (2004), Karyn Hollis also explores writing pedagogy and rhetorical instruction at a separatist institution for women. She examines women’s rhetorical education at the Bryn Mawr Summer School (1920-1954) through a close reading of archival and historical texts as well as memoirs of teachers and students. She devotes chapters to instruction in
composition, autobiography, drama, and poetry. Her agenda is to recover the writing of working-women and to add to a developing body of working-women’s fiction and poetry. Because much of the work in the Summer School was done collaboratively, women negotiated content and rhetorical features as they planned their work together. The students often used this exposure to new rhetoric to demand better working conditions and more respect on the job. The women also began to argue for the inclusion of their own experience as workers because they believed it was an appropriate subject matter for literature. The Summer School students used their rhetorical education to expand the power of their own discourse. Additionally, Jessica Enoch’s *Refiguring Rhetorical Education: Women Teaching African American, Native American, and Chicano/a Students, 1865-1911*, (2008) studies the relationship between rhetorical education and civic engagement. Enoch writes about how women educators like Child, Zitkala-Sa, Idar, Pena, and Villegas invented new forms of rhetorical education that attempted to reshape existing power structures by considering how race, language, and culture permeate all aspects of pedagogical instruction. While the scholars discussed above have continued to challenge classical definitions of rhetoric by demonstrating how women were writing, reading, and speaking in both traditional and non-traditional sites, collective rhetorical education is an area where we still have little idea how women helped each other to learn and apply rhetorical skills in organizations, voluntary associations, or social movements.

Although ubiquitous in America’s past, women’s organizations have remained virtually invisible to scholars for some time. However, in recent years, the history of women’s voluntary associations has become a more commonly researched subject, including scholars who study literary clubs, social service organizations, and political and
social advocacy groups. Scholars such as Karen Blair (1980), Theodora Marin (1987), Anne Meis Knupfer (1996), and Anne Gere (1997) focus on written documents and an analysis of their rhetorical strategies to demonstrate how nineteenth-century clubwomen advocated for political and social change. Karen Blair’s *The Clubwoman as Feminist: True Womanhood Redefined, 1868 to 1914* (1980) provides the first in-depth study of the culture of middle-class white women’s clubs. She argues that the experience of women in clubs eventually allowed them to assert their rights and responsibilities in the public arena. Additionally, Theodora Martin’s *The Sound of Our Own Voices: Women’s Study Clubs, 1860-1910* (1987) offers a comprehensive look at how nineteenth-century study clubs formed and spread throughout the United States. In addition, she discusses the kinds of papers clubwomen presented in great detail. Martin outlines the features of a study club in addition to providing valuable information about what nineteenth-century women read and how their study groups functioned. She also dedicates one chapter to the reading and writing practices of clubwomen. Anne Meis Knupfer’s *Toward a Tenderer Humanity and Nobler Womanhood: African American Women’s Clubs in Turn-of-the-Century Chicago* (1996) fills a significant gap in scholarship on clubwomen by providing details about the growth and demise of women’s clubs in Chicago from 1890 to 1920. She examines recorded speeches, club minutes and personal letters, and debates to discern the complex ideologies and strategies used by African American clubwomen to work toward racial uplift and respond to the needs of the poor. Knupfer also argues that literary clubs and lyceums functioned as a form of self-education for these clubwomen. Her book also offers an extensive list of prominent clubwomen and offers a short biography on each woman along with a list of African American women’s clubs and a
description of their activities. Another often cited work is Anne Gere’s *Intimate Practices: Literacy and Cultural Work in U.S. Women’s Clubs, 1880-1920* (1997). In great detail, she explores many diverse clubs such as Mormon women’s clubs, Jewish women’s clubs, and working class women’s clubs. Gere’s use of literacy as lens to understand clubwomen’s practices is helpful and she, too, dedicates one chapter to clubwomen’s literacy practices which functioned as a form of collaborative education.

Existing scholarship on clubwomen has not focused on the connection between the seemingly less significant activities that occurred in individual women’s clubs and the public efforts of the General Federation of Women’s Clubs to educate and train better American citizens. These internal and external programs of rhetorical education established the General Federation as an influential cultural institution. My study focuses on the concrete and self-conscious pedagogical tools that women used to educate one another and develop a model of social change rooted in education, which had mixed results. My archival research demonstrates how the predominantly white women’s clubs of the General Federation advocated structured pedagogical techniques, such as prescribed reading lists for children and adults, uniform club programs and discussion questions, and patriotic plays and pageants, to contribute to the dialogue surrounding citizenship and thus the formation of American identity in the progressive era. The General Federation’s rhetorical campaign for promoting American citizenship both reinforced racist notions of an idealized white citizenship and, at the same time, attempted to invite immigrants, newly naturalized citizens, and young adults into the conversation.
The General Federation of Women’s Clubs’ promotional materials and pedagogical techniques reveal how its members were a product of the ideological heritage in the Progressive movement of the early twentieth century with its focus on the cultivation of a particular kind of good American citizen that was rooted in ideas of obedience and mass education. The club movement also represents a site of rhetorical education which can show us how clubwomen in the General Federation were learning and teaching each other the politics of rhetoric in very public but non-academic sites. Ultimately, I argue that it is important to study sites where women created and supported rhetorical education to develop civic consciousness because these sites reflect evidence of clubwomen’s contributions to rhetorical theory and history. Women were working in the public sector to construct and deploy images of patriotic citizens, lists of appropriate reading recommendations, and a multitude of original pamphlets to influence the larger public on policy issues and civic responsibilities. In this case, clubwomen viewed the public they targeted as middleclass members of society like themselves or individuals who aspired to attain the same status and American lifestyle. It is important to study sites where women created and supported rhetorical education to develop both self and civic consciousness because these sites reflect an alternative to our traditional history of rhetoric which privileges formal educational institutions. Collective education offered clubwomen an opportunity to develop public opinions and policies about pertinent civic issues like improved citizenry in the United States during the Americanization era. The history of rhetorical education is more varied and complicated than we have previously understood which leaves us with the following questions: In what ways have women worked together to develop and sustain their own rhetorical education? How did/does
woman sponsored education relate to the development and deployment of civic consciousness? How can a better understanding of woman sponsored rhetorical education give us a more inclusive definition(s) of civic action and rhetorical agency?

Only by searching and rethinking historical evidence can we become more aware of the relationship between gender and education and perhaps even begin to address the current imbalance of male and female participants in governmental affairs.

I have organized this project into four major chapters. Chapter One, “Every Club a Training Camp for Citizenship: Tracing the Roots of the General Federation of Women’s Clubs’ Self-Sponsored Rhetorical Education” documents the organization’s internal club activities that trained clubwomen across the United States to become effective American citizens and eventually enabled them to influence the larger public through the development of a comprehensive rhetorical campaign that promoted particular tenets of good citizenship during the Americanization era. This chapter specifically examines the pamphlets The Women of the Bible, Adopting Parliamentary Procedure, Getting Out the Vote, and the One County Illiteracy Survey that were produced and circulated by the General Federation of Women’s Clubs along with state-federated club reading programs, which together provide evidence of clubwomen constructing and contesting historical definitions of citizenship before suffrage was officially granted. In this chapter, I argue that the General Federation’s rhetorical activities from 1890-1930 redefined the principles of American citizenship making it more inclusive and rooted in mass education. Chapter Two, “Let Literature Serve Life: The General Federation of Women’s Clubs’ Reading Recommendations as Rhetorical Education for the Public,” shows how the organization promoted a unified nation by
providing recommendations for American literature, guiding the selection of children’s literature, and exposing the public to powerful immigrant testimonies about the process of becoming an American citizen. This chapter argues that reading recommendations are evidence of women sponsored rhetorical education that took place in public but outside of any sanctioned, formal institutions. The General Federation of Women’s Clubs ideology of citizenship included a belief in the power of mass education, so club members reached out to different segments of the population including soldiers, children, and immigrants in order to educate the larger public on the principles of effective American citizenship. Specifically, this chapter examines the General Federation’s public campaigns including the Earn a Book Campaign for children and the Ninety Days of Opportunity aimed at new citizens. It also looks at the sheer volume of reading recommendations provided in the pamphlets Studies in American Literature, American Poetry and Prose, Frontier in American Literature, One Nation Indivisible, and Americans All produced and circulated by the organization and made available to the public through libraries and other outlets. Chapter Three, “An Equal Opportunity for the Citizenship of all Americans: Drama and Pageantry as Visual Representations of Citizenship,” argues that as a part of a broad and innovative rhetorical campaign for mass education and improved citizenship, the General Federation of Women’s Clubs promoted visual representations of citizenship through drama and pageantry. Both art forms opened up the possibility for cultural exchange and inclusiveness because it offered multiple ways for community members, native and non-native, to participate in important civic rituals and responsibilities. This chapter examines how popular patriotic pageants for adults and children provided a way to communicate complex ideas about citizenship
including loyalty and obedience to the nation. Specifically, the chapter focuses on the pageants recommended in the General Federation’s pamphlet *A Bibliography of Pageants, Masques, Plays* including *The Makers of America: A Civic Ritual, The Gifts They Brought*, and *Citizenship Day*. By promoting, penning, and producing pageants in communities across the United States, the General Federation of Women’s Clubs claimed for itself a significant role in defining the nation’s identity and principles of citizenship.

Chapter Four, “A History of Pioneering Spirit: The General Federation of Women’s Clubs’ History in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Century,” looks at the General Federation’s current mission and dialogue about women’s civil responsibilities in the twenty-first century. The General Federation continues much of the same cultural work today and modern day club activities share some similarities with their earlier counterparts. This chapter examines how the twenty-first century General Federation uses internal club activities and external campaigns to continue the education of its members and to promote an ideology of citizenship which is still rooted in the belief that citizenship requires an informed public, nonpartisan politics, better social and educational conditions, and inclusion. The first section of the chapter examines internal club activities aimed at reading for self-improvement and preserving clubwomen’s historical accomplishments. The second section shifts to the General Federation’s external activities and campaigns aimed at connecting with the public in order to educate people, particularly youth, about women’s role in shaping the nation’s identity. By examining the organization’s parallels throughout the twentieth century, it becomes evident that the General Federation has maintained its original mission and remains dedicated to the idea
that women’s organizations are crucial to creating and sustaining models of good
citizenship.
Chapter 1

Every Club a Training Camp for Citizenship: Tracing the Roots of the General Federation of Women’s Clubs’ Self-Sponsored Rhetorical Education

Faced with the need to educate and inform women collectively about politics and government, Jane Croly created the General Federation of Women’s Clubs in 1890. The General Federation of Women’s Clubs was founded when Croly, founder of New York Women’s Club Sorosis, extended an invitation to women's clubs throughout the United States to attend a ratification convention in New York City. Sixty-three clubs attended on April 23-25 and took action to form the General Federation of Women's Clubs. The collective rhetorical practices and tactics of civic engagement established in nineteenth-century women’s clubs like Sorosis served as the foundation for the establishment of the General Federation of Women’s Clubs, which was chartered by Congress in 1901 and remains headquartered in Washington, D.C. The General Federation represents one of the largest and oldest nonpartisan women’s volunteer service organizations. Eventually, each of the fifty states elected representatives to the General Federation of Women’s Clubs, which provided regional and ethnic diversity. The General Federation strived “for unity, but unity in diversity” and believed that varied experiences from the representatives would benefit the collective organization. This mission was challenged
early in the organization’s history with the debate over whether or not to admit clubs with African American members over which there was no universal consensus. The General Federation carried out a similar mandate to other women’s voluntary organizations in the late nineteenth century, including the National Association of Colored Women, which was established to encourage civic involvement and promote collective action for social and political reforms.¹ Some of the major contributions of both organizations include improving child labor laws, developing the juvenile court law, establishing public libraries, and working for food and drug regulation. The General Federation of Women’s Clubs continues to operate as an international women's organization dedicated to community improvement by enhancing the lives of others through volunteer service. The organization is one of the world's largest and oldest nonpartisan, nondenominational, women's volunteer service organizations. Currently, with members in all 50 states and more than a dozen countries, clubwomen work locally in their own communities in order to create global change. Members of the General Federation are “mothers, sisters, wives, daughters, doctors, teachers, and community leaders who are dedicated to enhancing the lives of others through volunteer service” (GFWC website). What distinguishes the General Federation from other service organizations is the span of their outreach efforts; they continue to support departments in the following areas: arts, conservation, education, home life, public affairs, and international affairs.

¹ The earliest history of the GFWC is chronicled by Jane Croly in The History of the Woman’s Club Movement in America (1898) which provides chapters on representative clubs like the Chicago Women’s Club and also talks about the efforts involved in establishing the GFWC. Mary Wood’s The History of the General Federation of Women’s Clubs for the First Twenty-Two Years of its Organization (1978) provides the next major study of the organization. Finally, Mary Jean Houde’s Reaching Out: A Story of the General Federation of Women’s Clubs (1989) provides the most recent history of the organization and charts the organization’s changes and continuities between the 19th and 20th centuries.
Existing scholarship does not connect the General Federation of Women’s Clubs’ seemingly less significant pre-suffrage club activities (1890-1920) with the organization’s more public post-suffrage efforts (1920-1930) to train better American citizens. The General Federation’s internal club activities trained clubwomen to become good citizens which eventually enabled them to influence the larger public and develop a comprehensive rhetorical campaign to promote tenets of good citizenship. As the title of this chapter indicates, every woman’s club became an individual training camp for producing more educated citizens which allowed the General Federation to develop collective rhetorical practices aimed at improving the state of citizenry in the United States during the Americanization era. This chapter explores how the General Federation’s rhetorical practices and activities from 1890 to 1930 expanded to address clubwomen’s changing needs and continued to advance innovative methods of civic engagement and promote clubwomen as model participants in national and international politics. I argue that General Federation of Women’s Clubs pre- and post-suffrage activities are evidence of self-sponsored women’s rhetorical education that led directly to the development of an ideology of citizenship that recognizes women as essential and active citizens of the nation. Moreover, the General Federation’s rhetorical campaign for citizenship redefined the notion of American citizenship making it more inclusive and rooted in mass education. Re-examining the internal club activities of the General Federation of Women’s Clubs proves the vote was only the beginning of rhetorical activism for clubwomen. Specifically, this chapter examines how the General Federation used club meetings, reading programs, and internal campaigns as part of a broad and innovative rhetorical campaign to promote an ideology of improved citizenship during
the Americanization era.

As early as 1890, the General Federation of Women’s Clubs viewed citizenship as a critical component of increasing women’s participation and influence in national affairs. Within the context of the suffrage debate and other shifting expectations for women, the General Federation of Women’s Clubs sought to elevate clubwomen’s participation in civic affairs by developing an agenda for American citizenship in clubs across the United States. The General Federation’s ideology of citizenship included the belief in the following: members believed that citizenship required mass education to achieve a more informed public, nonpartisan politics, better social and educational conditions, inclusion, and perhaps most importantly, citizenship required action. In order to support their ideology of citizenship in club meetings across the country, the General Federation developed the reading programs *Women of the Bible* and *Know Your Own Country*; the internal *Get Out the Vote* campaign; and the public campaign *One County Illiteracy Survey*. The General Federation of Women’s Clubs’ rhetorical campaign circulated uniform club programs, reading recommendations, and pamphlets clubs across the nation which allowed clubwomen to shape public policy, to educate the public, and to pass reforms. The first half of this chapter considers the General Federation of Women’s Clubs internal club activities before suffrage as a form of rhetorical action based on collaborative reading and self-education. Designing and adopting reading programs have not traditionally been considered forms of rhetorical action. The second half of the chapter explores the General Federation’s more public campaigns after 1920, which were designed to persuade a larger audience to adopt their ideology of citizenship.
Reading programs designed to promote the study of the Bible as literature provide one site where rhetorical education occurred inside of clubs and shaped the General Federation’s conditions for citizenship before suffrage was officially granted. As early as 1910, individual clubs that studied the Bible and adopted the General Federation’s reading programs began to participate in a statewide conversation about the nature of women’s citizenship. In September 1919, the General Federation Magazine printed an article on “The Study of the Bible as Literature” by Carolyn E. Whitney. Whitney was the chair of the Francis Squire Potter Memorial for the Study of Bible as Literature, which was a sub-committee of the General Federation’s Department of Literature in 1914. Under the direction of Whitney, the committee prepared booklists and reading programs specifically for the use of state federated women’s clubs. The General Federation Magazine lists sixteen available outlines that clubs could use for studying the Bible as literature, which were available from the General Federation’s Headquarters for five to ten cents each (29). These included: “Old Testament Literature, Syllabus I and II,” “Study of Saul,” “Outline Study of the Book of Job,” “Hebrew Poetry,” and “Women of the Bible” which were available from the General Federation’s Headquarters for five to ten cents each (29). What is most interesting about these outlines is that they cover diverse subjects of the Bible from “Old Testament Literature” to “Hebrew Poetry.” Clubwoman Whitney explained the purpose of the reading programs, “The idea was to prepare outlines which could be followed by classes or clubs composed of women of different denominations and various creeds, all studying together in harmony” (29). The one reading program that likely provided this harmony was “The Women of the Bible” because it was directly relevant to all club members’ shared identity as women. These
reading programs provided one of the foundational elements of their developing collective vision of citizenship: cooperative dialogue among diverse members.

The reading programs demonstrate how the General Federation approached the Bible as a literary text to be studied for its narrative genres, stylistics forms, and characters. For instance, the committee offered programs on “The Story of Ruth and Esther” and “The Story of Joseph,” which both approached the Bible as a set of stories with different characters worthy of in-depth character analysis. The General Federation of Women’s Clubs was not interested in advocating a particular religious orientation but wanted to use a text that held immense cultural authority. For instance, the committee developed a program “The Bible as Inspiration in Art,” “Music of the Bible,” and “Poetry of the Bible.” The Bible served as a cultural instrument that allowed clubwomen to connect their ordinary civil concerns to one of the most influential and foundational texts available to them.

The abundance of topics and format for discussions surrounding the Bible demonstrate the ways in which the General Federation’s structure provided a generous space for creativity and imagination among the individual state federated clubs. Club programs reveal a wide range of paper presentations, topics, debates and roundtable discussions which demonstrate a remarkable sense of “imagination and literary receptivity” of women and the Bible (Moulton xi). These traits were fostered and developed by clubs as an important part of the General Federation’s culture of citizenship. Individual club reading programs indicate that the majority of state federated clubs often adopted the General Federation’s reading suggestions and discussed the Bible along with critical sources and book reviews. Many clubs specifically focused
on the General Federation’s study program *Women of the Bible*. For example, when the Quest Club of Claremore, Oklahoma discussed the Bible during a club meeting, Mrs. Wortman presented a paper on the “Old Testament: Deborah, the Judge, Hannah, the Praying Mother, Mariam, the Prophetess, and Ruth and Naomi, the Friends.” This particular club designated the Bible as their yearlong program of study from 1915-1916. During another meeting, Mrs. Hill presented, “New Testament: Mary, Mother of Jesus, Mary Magdalene, Mary and Martha, and Phoebe.” All of these Biblical women were highly influential in their communities and their positions inspired debate. For instance, Phoebe appears in Romans 16.1-2, where Paul gives her a comparatively lengthy introduction. She was an important leader to Paul and has been considered an international diplomat, deacon, and patron.\(^2\) Adopting a sacred and revered text allowed them to find historical examples of women who had been active citizens and participated in shaping their communities. It was not uncommon for clubs to engage in an extended study of the Bible. For instance, the Senior Literary and Lyric Society of North Baltimore, Ohio’s reading program for 1916-1917 covered the topic of the Bible. Clubwomen also discussed more minor women and their importance within the community and as citizens. Subjects included “The Wooing of Rebekah,” “Reading—Jeptha’s Daughter” and “Other Women in the New Testament.” In the story of Jeptha, he must honor his promise to God by sacrificing his only child. Many scholars have read the daughter’s response as one of submission while feminist scholars have debated the

\(^2\) Until recently, scholars thought the role of patron was beyond the scope of women’s social position in first century Greek and Roman societies; however, recent scholarship has shown women can and did fulfill the role. Scholars continue to debate whether Phoebe was merely a servant or whether she held the office of deacon. The Bible provided clubwomen with many rich examples of women who were engaged in a range of civic affairs from a recognized ministry or position of responsibility to an established office.
gender implications. Clubwomen engaged both the major and minor women of the bible as a way of exploring issues of gender, their identity as women, and as evidence of women’s participation in civic affairs. The program for 1917-1918 continued the Senior Literary and Lyric Society of North’s study of women and the Bible. Many women’s clubs tended to go through cycles of studying the Bible every few years. These continued discussions allowed clubwomen a way to begin articulating the importance of women’s historical involvement in civic action.

The Bible remained a popular topic even after suffrage was granted because its issues and characters allowed clubwomen to negotiate their new status and changing social conditions. The General Federation advocated a focus on the Bible that allowed clubwomen to identify with ancient women, debate conditions of their citizenship, and define their qualities. The popular reading program *Women of the Bible* explored concepts of citizenship for women from multiple points of view through a variety of recommended readings.

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Many scholars have questioned why God does not intervene to stop Jeptha’s horrific action as He did with Abraham’s son Isaac. Why God did not send an angel to stop a female sacrifice is much debated.
Figure 1. General Federation of Women’s Clubs’ Women of the Bible Reading Program

Taken as a whole, the booklist demonstrates an intricate relationship between women and citizenship over time. Some books on the list reinforce the construction of woman as docile, caring, and domestic. Several books recommended by the General Federation of Women’s Clubs convey a traditional sense of womanhood. For instance, *Women of the Bible: Their Services in Home and State* (1923) lists the stereotypical feminine qualities of woman: “She is alluring and persuasive; she is curious and ambitious for knowledge and possession. She is guided by intuitions, not by reason” (3). The characterization of women as “alluring” and guided by intuition echoes earlier arguments against suffrage
and citizenship for women. Anti-suffragists and other critics argued that women were too physically weak to participate in voting and too emotional to engage in politics.\(^4\) However, this passage also characterizes women as “persuasive” and “ambitious” which were typically masculine traits. It is important to remember that while we do not have access to transcripts of club meetings and debates in which clubwomen engaged, the contradictory and varied reading list from the General Federation of Women’s Clubs represents a fuller and more complicated picture of how clubwomen struggled to understand and define their roles in both domestic and civic spheres. Isabella Reid Buchanan’s *The Women of the Bible* (1924) reaffirms “women’s spiritual nature” which required them to be of service to others; to minister to the poor, to serve the church, and to train their children to pass on its teachings. Books like *God’s Great Women* (1910) by Mrs. Jennie Fowler Willing reinforce typically feminine character traits including piety, domesticity, and benevolence.\(^5\) In the chapter “God’s Model Woman,” she argues “a good wife is God’s best gift” whose primary duty is to tend to domestic affairs with a sense of benevolence and gentle manners (97). On the other hand, Willing promoted a model citizen who was industrious, a producer rather than a consumer, and an acute

\(^4\) In the 1908 *New York Times* article, “Leading Men Take up the Question of Women’s Right to Vote: Presidents of colleges, Senators and Members of Congress Discuss the Question of Woman Suffrage,” Senator Money from Mississippi argues against women’s suffrage on the basis that the vote was already too far extended for the good of the country and that woman’s “strong position in the community might be weakened should she enter into politics as a voter.” Senator John W. Daniels from Virginia also argued that women’s suffrage would harm women and the nation because “every good woman ought to have a man to fight and vote for her.” Arguments against women’s suffrage and other civic activities can generally be divided into two categories: physical and/or moral weakness.

\(^5\) Coventry Patmore’s poem “The Angel in the House” came to represent the popular Victorian image of the ideal wife/woman who was expected to be devoted and submissive to her husband. The Angel was passive, self-sacrificing, pious, and pure. For Virginia Woolf, the repressive ideal of women represented by the Angel in the House was still so strong that in 1931 she wrote, "Killing the Angel in the House was part of the occupation of a woman writer."
business woman. Overall her book argues for the importance of recognizing women’s “civic and public rights” as sanctioned by God (101). Willing claims the devices of evil have worked to “padlock the lips of half—or two thirds—of the race” and “sneered at a woman’s tongue till it has come to pass that women do very little of the public talking” (100). Her argument is that God’s model woman “has the chance to speak, and she does it well” (100). Additionally, the General Federation of Women’s Clubs advocated books about women and the Bible that painted a complicated portrait of women: they were to have industrial, oratorical, domestic, and spiritual privileges along with civic and public rights.

While some of the recommended texts on the General Federation’s *Women of the Bible* reading program reinforce domestic roles for women, they also offer alternative ways of interpreting history and constructing roles for women. For instance, in *The Women of the Bible* (1924), Buchanan points out that Bible includes a paltry one hundred and fifty women, and “as their records are brief one must read between the lines to form mental pictures of their lives and to realize their achievements” (13). Buchanan and her audience of clubwomen were aware of the gaps of women’s presence in historical texts. Club meetings allowed women to address the gaps and visualize a legacy of civic action based on their interpretations of biblical women. Buchanan also requests a “word of tribute” for the “unnamed women martyrs of the early church” (115). Clubwomen did not interpret women’s omission as an obstacle but rather an opportunity to interpret the

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6 Jennie Fowler Willing was self-educated to such a level that she was appointed the Professor of English Language and Literature at Illinois Wesleyan University in 1874. From 1875-76, Willing operated as the managing editor of *The Woman’s Temperance Union*, a monthly paper for the growing Woman’s Christian Temperance Union. She also opened the New York Evangelistic Training School and Settlement House in New York City in 1895.
historical influences of women in education, household management, prophetic
inspiration, and industry for themselves and the world around them. The General
Federation of Women’s Clubs resisted traditional male-centered interpretations of the
Bible which were often used to justify women’s exclusion from civic affairs. Twentieth-
century clubwomen countered dominant interpretations of the Bible and instead used
reading a strategy to develop their own ideas, opinions, and a sense of “themselves as
selves” (Hunter 89).7

The General Federation of Women’s Clubs’ booklist on Women of the Bible
enabled clubwomen to research critical sources to find evidence of women’s participation
in civic affairs. For instance, Annie Russell Marble’s The Woman of the Bible: Their
Service in Home and State (1923) considers women of the Old Testament and New
Testament in order “to vitalize women who are mentioned in biblical literature, as fully
as is possible from historical sources and sympathetic imagination” (vii). Her book also
includes an extensive bibliography of sources dedicated to poetry, drama, fiction, music
and art portraying women of the Bible. Some recommended resources include Women of
the Bible: Rebekah to Priscilla by H. E. Lewis, “Jephthah’s Daughter” by Lord Byron,
and “Esther” by Handel. Margaret Sangster’s The Women of the Bible: A Portrait
Gallery (1911) also endeavors “to follow the results and conclusions of the latest
scholarly criticism” on the Bible as literature (8). Clubwomen approached their study of

7 In Jane Hunter’s How Young Ladies Became Girls: The Origin of American Girlhood (2002), she quotes a
historical account of “reading rules” for young women. Texts were to contain no include vulgar slang, no
explicit references to sex, and no unhappy endings for any work of fiction. Nineteenth-century women
were constantly warned about the dangers of inappropriate reading—novels and illicit fiction were said to
weaken the mind, to diminish rational thinking, and to breed discontent and selfishness. Most striking and
useful in Hunter’s study is the power attributed to the act of reading and the palpable fear of nineteenth-
century women reading.
the Bible as a way to study how historical women entered into civic society. Sangster’s introduction states, “In reading the Bible we are constantly impressed by the frequent mention of women, by the reverence paid to motherhood, and by the part women had in affairs of the church and the nation” (4). Sangster and her audience trace women’s rhetorical presence in civic affairs as far back as possible. Likewise Annie Russell Marble observes that multiple women in the Bible “bore a large share in political and religious crises” (3). It was important for clubwomen to find historical evidence of their participation in the church, nation, and other political affairs. Several books on the Women’s Reading Hour list reflect the same the sentiment. For instance, Alice Winter Ames argues “the women of the past, our friends, are really not so different from us now” (4). Her book, The Heritage of Women (1927), conjures Sappho, Aspasia, Joan of Arc, and Mademoiselle de Stael to remind clubwomen to write their own history from a woman’s point of view. The booklist is also forward looking in terms of charting a new course for women. The purpose of A Short History of Women (1927) by John Langdon-Davies is to provide a more complete account of women’s historical accomplishments in order to affect the future. In the introduction, he poses the question, “What can we say of the future history of women?” (vii). The individual states’ reading programs and the General Federation’s booklists are evidence of how clubwomen performed a historical analysis of the Bible in order to locate women’s rhetorical practices and promoted an ideology of citizenship which included them. The General Federation saw the Bible as one possible framework for understanding the world around them and articulating their burgeoning citizenship.
Another pre-suffrage internal activity that provides a rich site of rhetorical action(s) is clubwomen’s focus on how legislature functioned in the United States and other countries. The General Federation of Women’s Clubs addressed how women could become more effective citizens through an in-depth study of parliamentary procedure. Throughout the process of adopting parliamentary procedure, state federated clubs across the nation began to aggressively study systems of government and put this new knowledge into practice. Before 1910, women’s clubs functioned individually as study clubs designed for self-education and culture (Martin 3). No uniform organization existed before the General Federation, thus clubs across the nation lacked a singular focus and means of communication. The General Federation of Women’s Clubs encouraged all state federated clubs to adopt parliamentary procedure which helped unify the organization and give it credibility. For example, Mrs. John C. McClintock, President of the State Federation of Kansas, stressed the importance of parliamentary training to all statewide club members:

Recognizing the necessity for exact business methods in the conduct of the annual meeting, and that a correct knowledge of parliamentary usage would be an important factor in gaining time to carry out the work and ideals of the State federation, and that readiness in routine proceedings lightens the work of the officers and increases the interest of the members at large, and gives pleasure and enthusiasm to meetings that might be otherwise tedious, I venture to recommend that every club (unless already proficient in that practice) shall, from time to time, resolve itself into a
parliamentary meeting, until its members are trained in parliamentary rules. (Croly 491)

In addition, the Colorado Federation of Women’s Clubs “conduct[ed] their meetings according to parliamentary law. Each club has a well-considered, systematically arranged programme of study to which it strictly adheres.” By 1895, the vast majority of literary clubs in Colorado enlarged their curriculum to include the study of political economics (Croly 261). The General Federation of Women’s Clubs promoted the study of politics and parliament because the organization believed that knowledge of these subjects helped build a good foundation for clubwomen’s citizenship.

Members of the General Federation of Women’s Clubs actively participated in systems of government during their own club meetings which allowed for increased future civic action. For example, reading programs from women in the Twentieth-Century Club from Eufaula, Oklahoma indicate that members spent an entire year from 1909-1910 studying the subject of “Parliamentary Law” with a specific focus on understanding and drafting motions. Their readings came from a book called *Robert’s Rules of Order* which provided information about duties of officers as well as constitutions and by-laws. In the guide’s preface, H. M. Robert states the purpose: “A work on parliamentary law has long been needed, based, in its general principles, upon the rules and practice of Congress, but adapted, in its details, to the use of ordinary societies” (13). Sections include information on the general differences between the English Parliament and American House and Senate, motions, committees, debating, voting, and officers and minutes. The serious study of both the history and methods of parliamentary procedure in England and America by the General Federation suggests
they consciously modeled their organization after two of the most important democracies in the world.

The study of government also reflects the General Federation’s desire to move from an insular club to broader levels of social organization by adopting sanctioned practices. From 1908-1909, the Coalgate Edelweiss Club studied Logan’s Parliamentary Rules from beginning to end. The Hawthorne Club of Shawnee, Oklahoma chose another popular guide, Miss Fox’s Rules of Order, when studying parliamentary law. The Middlesex Woman’s Club of Lowell, Massachusetts, which was founded in 1896, added a parliamentary section along with a course of ten lessons in parliamentary law given by Mrs. H. R. Shattuck (Croly 637). Some clubs like the Lewiston and Auburn Parliamentary Club of Maine, founded in 1894, were dedicated solely to the study of parliamentary law (Croly 553). The Post-Parliament Club of New York, established in 1892, grew out of classes in parliamentary law and considered “a knowledge of parliamentary law indispensable to the club woman who could crystallize her opinions, demonstrate her ideas, and extend her influence” (Croly 901-902). Parliamentary training was instrumental in teaching clubwomen how to speak in public and conduct public meetings.

Overall, the General Federation’s studied both the process of self-government and democracy as a program of self-training in citizenship. Club members across the nation

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8 From Detroit, Michigan, Emma A. Fox was an acclaimed author and teacher of parliamentary practices for women’s organizations. While Fox did not belong to a particular club, she was involved in club activities for state federations of women’s clubs. She dedicated Parliamentary Usage for Women’s Clubs to the clubwomen of America for whom the book was primarily written. Fox’s preface states, “These articles were written especially to meet the needs of club women. The illustration of certain forms is given by a representation of a supposed meeting of a woman’s club, and the model constitution and by-laws are framed as for a woman’s club.”
participated in on “Parliamentary Drills” on how to write and interpret motions, a common practice for the majority of state federated clubs. For instance, the Enid Study Club (1910-11) stated: “We recommend the individual ownership and perusal of Mrs. Emma A. Fox’s *Parliamentary Usage for Women’s Clubs* and Mrs. Lillian Cole Bethel’s *Compendium and Question Book of Parliamentary Law*. Their parliamentary discussions included topics such as the “Necessity of Rules,” “Debating and Voting,” and “Understanding Motions.” In 1898, the Boston Political Class studied politics and “made a systematic study of parliamentary law under the guidance of its president, Mrs. H. R. Shattuck, who is the author of the *Woman’s Manual of Parliamentary Law*” (Croly 603). Clubwomen also held mock presidential nominating conventions and organized a “Senate” who introduced and decided upon reports, bills, and petitions. For example, in 1892, the Pro-Re-Nata club of the District of Columbia proclaimed:

> For the purpose of studying the proper method of introducing bills into Congress, Pro-Re-Nata practically resolved itself into a mock Congress for a season during which time the following bills were introduced, referred to the proper committees, reported, and acted upon: A bill to grant suffrage

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9 Many different women’s organizations adopted Lillian Cole Bethel’s *Compendium and Question Book of Parliamentary Law* including the Texas division of the United Daughters of the Confederacy and members of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union. Bethel was from Columbus and a member of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union herself. One review of Bethel’s *Compendium and Question Book of Parliamentary Law* said, “This book is timely. Women in this day hold meetings, make speeches, deliberate, and transact business, and they should know how to do these things decently and in order. This little book will give them the necessary information” (*Ohio Educational Monthly* 239).

10 Mrs. H. R. Shattuck was President of the woman’s club Boston Political Class. As a clubwoman, her manual was very popular in the General Federation of Women’s Clubs. Both the New York and New Jersey State Federation of Women’s Clubs adopted Shattuck’s *Woman’s Manual* as the authority in all parliamentary matters. An 1894 article in *The New York Times* stated, “Mrs. Shattuck understands official and legislative red tape as most women do chiffons.”
to women in the District of Columbia [and] a bill to secure women on
tory. (Croly 343)

Some parliament guides provided sample dialogues to help the presiding officer and
members move confidently through the process. Several clubs established parliamentary
classes for club members. For instance, the Woman’s Club of New Hampshire began a
class in 1895 with twelve members to study parliamentary law. Members prepared a
constitution and by-laws and meetings were conducted under strict laws modeled after
those governing the legislature (Croly 803). In 1894, the Woman’s Club of Denver
offered a special class to study parliament which 200 women attended along with several
elocution classes to train members to use their voices as to be heard by the seven hundred
members of the club (Croly 266-267).

The majority of clubs that belonged to the General Federation of Women’s Clubs
created positions, committees, and classes dedicated to parliamentary training. Many
clubs had Parliamentarians. For instance, Mrs. Lawton served as the leader of
parliamentary law from 1911-1912 in the Mistletoe Literary Club of Cleveland,
Oklahoma. Mrs. Hohl served as the Parliamentarian for the Quest Club of Claremore,
Oklahoma from 1915-1916 and was responsible for conducting monthly “Parliamentary
Drills.” It was common for clubs to participate in parliamentary drills on a daily, weekly,
or monthly basis. As early as 1894, the Progressive Club of Golden, Colorado decided
“to take up the study of civil government of the State, and supplement it with a
parliamentary drill at each meeting” (Croly 290). Additionally, the Women’s Reading
Club of Walla, Walla featured a parliamentary drill in every meeting, as did the Woman’s
Court Club of Arkansas by 1898. For the Mistletoe Club, parliamentary law was also a

Clubwomen treated knowledge about systems of government as an important duty of citizenship, which they believed should rotate among club members. One Iowa club even established an elocutionary department so each member could take her turn in giving a recitation (Croly 475). The General Federation of Women’s Clubs encouraged the federated clubs to uniformly adopt the rules of parliament in order to govern club meetings. It is clear that clubs respected the authority of the General Federation. In 1896, one clubwoman writes, “Among the progressive steps of the present administration are the adoption of “Roberts Rules of Order,” the introduction of open oral discussions…the revision and amendment of the constitution and by-laws, and the cooperation with sister clubs to organize a State Federation” (Croly 218). Reading about systems of government played an important role in the General Federation of Women’s Clubs’ desire to move from individual study clubs to a civic organization which offered clubwomen training in citizenship. As early as 1894, clubwomen had the opportunity to put their knowledge into practice by debating issues such as “The Necessity and Advisability of Observing Parliamentary Rules,” “The study of parliamentary law and its value to club women,” and “Is it wise for a parlor club to maintain strict parliamentary rules?” (Croly 1114, 133, 973).
The General Federation of Women’s Clubs encouraged women to debate and discuss the necessity and purpose of parliamentary procedure rather than simply requiring clubwomen to adopt it.

Another significant pre-suffrage activity was clubwomen’s focused study of civil government which was uniquely tied to their interest in parliamentary procedure. In addition to studying parliamentary usage, the General Federation of Women’s Clubs encouraged individual clubs across the United States to focus on learning as much as possible about forms of American government in order to become more effective
citizens. Some clubs like the Society of Political Study in New York, which was established in 1886, started their club for the sole purpose of studying the science of government and dedicated a series of reading programs to different forms of national government and state and municipal government (Croly 911). Beginning in 1894, the Urban Club of Brooklyn’s object was “to stimulate local patriotism, and educate members in the science of municipal government” (Croly 938). During the same year, the Current Events Club of Hyde Park formed and avowed to gain a broader understanding of good government (Croly 611). Other clubs dedicated meetings to presenting papers and discussing local and national government often as it pertained to clubwomen’s interests. For instance, from 1895-1896, the Monday Afternoon Club of Louisville of Kentucky studied civil government and clubwomen presented papers on “Relation of Federal to State Government,” “Relation of State to Municipal Government,” “Present Local Government,” and “What Share have Women in the Government of this and Other States?” (Croly 505). During 1896-1897, the Ladies’ History Club of Sioux Falls, South Dakota discussed the subject of “Our General Government,” “The Government of South Dakota: Its Officers, Its Laws,” and “Laws of the State Affecting Woman as Wives, Mothers, and Owners of Property” (Croly 325-326). From 1897-1898, the Woman’s Club of Norwalk, Connecticut discussed “State Constitution and State Government,” “The Laws of Connecticut as They Affect Women,” and “Patriots and Statesmen” (Croly 308). Club members were concerned with the government at large, but specifically in how it affected and applied to women’s interests including marriage, property ownership, and child guardianship among others. The Belmont Literary and Historical Society of New York discussed the following topics in
1898: “Functions of Local Government,” “Early State Government,” and “Executive Power in Provincial Government” (Croly 866). The General Federation of Women’s Clubs frequently encouraged clubwomen to address the different levels of government through individual presentations and roundtable discussions by circulating discussion questions in their national publication aimed at generating interest in municipal government, such as “Have partisan politics helped or hindered good municipal government?” and “Study labor organizations and its relation to government” (General Federation Magazine, April 1919, 26). Clubwoman Mrs. Priddy provided the following suggestion for all state federated clubs: “Have a day in which a symposium of short discussions is given on assigned subjects of civic advancement possible in your community” (General Federation Magazine, April 1919, 26). The General Federation also encouraged state clubs to use their knowledge to teach others in local communities. For instance, in the article “The Social Program of the General Federation of Women’s Clubs,” the Division of Training in Citizenship suggests “local clubs form citizenship classes for the study of national and state constitutions, town and county government with special attention to questions of taxation.”

The General Federation of Women’s Clubs promoted an in-depth study of government on local, state, and national levels so clubwomen could understand how reform happens at all levels.

By 1920 and the passage of the 19th Amendment, clubwomen had moved from individual study clubs across the United States to a centralized and structured organization which allowed for a collective focus on citizenship. The General Federation of Women’s Clubs reminded clubs, “At least one meeting in every club year should be
dedicated to the subject of citizenship” (Report, 1926-1928). Citizenship meant more than knowledge of the parliament and national government; it included knowledge about state and municipal governments to teach clubwomen how to be active citizens on all levels. The General Federation Magazine circulated tenets of citizenship to state federated clubs. In 1920, the magazine announced: “Study of citizenship presupposes, or includes, a knowledge of the Constitution of state and nation, the departments of government, the functions and powers of each, and the application of these powers to the development of the state and nation (April, 11). It is significant that the General Federation is promoting the discussion of citizenship after suffrage because clubwomen were now in a position to engage in a wider range of civic duties. With suffrage came new responsibilities for clubwomen and a unique interest in the conditions and quality of citizenship in the United States following World War I.

From 1924 to 1926, the General Federation of Women’s circulated a series of pamphlets that emphasized the study of the American government system. The series called Know Your Own Country included three pamphlets, Know Your Own County, Know Your Own Community, and Know Your Own State. The pamphlets were designed to help state federated clubs organize regular courses in citizenship by using the outlines prepared by the General Federation of Women’s Clubs. Each of the General Federation’s pamphlets contains an extensive set of research questions (more than one hundred per pamphlet). The pamphlets offer outlines with broad categories such as “General Features of the County in the United States,” “The Functions of the County” and “Criticisms of County Government.” The General Federation paid special attention to county government because they believed “county government is the most backward of all our
political units, the most neglected by the public, the most boss-ridden, the least efficiently organized and the most corrupt and competent, and, by reason of constitutional complications, the most difficult to reform” (6). Beneath each subheading in the pamphlets is a series of questions meant for individuals to research and answer. Local knowledge became rhetorical knowledge in the sense that clubwomen’s understanding of local civic affairs functioned as a persuasive skill. Questions in the pamphlets range from “What is a city ordinance?” and “What are you doing to improve your city?” to “Do all the counties in your state have the same form of government?”

Figure 3. General Federation of Women’s Clubs’ Know Your Own Country Pamphlet
These questions reveal a very active model of citizenship, which helped shape the identity and rhetorical agency of the General Federation of Women’s Clubs. Clubwomen learned about criticisms of their county governments and were asked to suggest remedies. For instance, the Know You Own County pamphlet poses the question, “Would a system of optional county charters be a solution to defects of uniformity?” and subsequently instructs clubwomen to “Devise some other plan to improve county government of your state in this respect” (11). These questions are specific and complicated which demonstrates clubwomen’s serious interest in using their detailed knowledge of government in order to participate in reform. The General Federation of Women’s Clubs supported a program of collective education and promoted a connection between knowledge and rhetorical action. The pamphlets persuaded clubwomen to become more personally involved in their communities by conducting research and imagining solutions for issues of American government and judicial systems. Through the detailed series of pamphlets about county and state government, the General Federation of Women’s Clubs not only requires clubwomen to gather information, but more importantly it asks clubwomen to individually form their own opinions and to collectively devise a plan of action for reform.

More specifically, questions from the General Federation’s pamphlets represent different kinds of rhetorical education. Questions such as: “The average citizen is disinterested and uniformed about his county’s government. Are you an average citizen in this respect? What is your personal attitude toward the government of your county?” (12), expect clubwomen to form an opinion and take a stand on a civil issue. These types of questions anticipate the development of an informed and defensible opinion, which
would eventually form a critical part of clubwomen’s ideology of citizenship for the public. In the pamphlet *Know Your Own County* under the subheading “County Government in the United States,” the General Federation asks: “How do you account for the different types of local government in the various sections of the United States? Trace historically the development of county government in your state” (6). Opinion questions also encouraged debate as a principle of good citizenship. For instance, under the heading of “Education” the pamphlet asks clubwomen: “Does the [Board of Education] provide free textbooks?” and then directs them to formulate “Arguments for and against” (4).

The General Federation of Women’s Clubs’ questions also required action and participation in civil reform. For instance, under the heading “The Functions of the County,” the General Federation asks: “Is there a duplication in the functions of any of these city and county officials?” The General Federation is not simply interested in knowledge for knowledge’s sake, but rather the organization is committed to putting knowledge into practice, or what I am calling rhetorical action. The pamphlet asks clubwomen to “devise a workable plan to eliminate such duplications” (7). The General Federation of Women’s Clubs promoted action as a key component of citizenship. Under the heading “Criticisms of County Government” the pamphlet poses the question: “Would a classification of counties with a uniform plan of government for those of the same class be a better arrangement than the one in vogue?” and then suggests clubwomen should “Devise some other plan to improve county government of yours state in this respect” (11). The *Know Your Own Country* pamphlet series covered a broad range of subheadings including “Health,” “Commerce,” and “Education” that required each
clubwomen to learn about exactly how her town and community functioned compared to others. For instance, under the subheading of “Health,” the pamphlet instructs clubwomen: “Find out the four diseases which cause the greatest number of deaths on your community. What can be done in the way of education and the better of local conditions to reduce the mortality from these causes? Study this question with great care” (4). These questions make it evident that the General Federation of Women’s Clubs’ mission was to train clubwomen to become model citizens who could then effectively train other Americans. The movement from internal education to civic action reflected in the General Federation of Women’s Clubs series of government pamphlets mirrors the organization’s efforts to move from self-contained clubs to a collective platform.

Questions from the General Federation of Women’s Clubs’ series *Know Your Own Country* also exhibit an awareness of the rhetorical situation. For instance, the pamphlet instructs clubwomen to: “Make a list of government offices in your community” and then asks them to consider: “How are the officers chosen, elected, or appointed, when, by whom, and under what conditions?” “Who are the present incumbents? Look up the personal history of each, including nationality” (2). Additionally, under the “History” heading, the pamphlet encourages clubwomen to “bring together the facts of [their city’s history]: church, educational, military, industrial, political. Study the local history in connection with the history of your state and section of country. Make a list of the famous sons and daughters of your city” (6). Clubwomen

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11 In the article “The Rhetorical Situation” (1968), Lloyd Bitzer, argues that the rhetorical situation consists of three main elements: an exigence, audience, and a set of constraints.
also paid special attention to issues concerning women directly. For instance, one pamphlet poses the question: “Are women eligible for jury service in your state?” “How many women are on state boards and commissions?” and “Does the enforcement of the state venereal disease law discriminate against women?” In addition to researching the government, the General Federation of Women’s Clubs recommended daily periodical reading including *The Woman Citizen, The American City,* and *The National Municipal Review* (16). In the post-suffrage era, reading and education remained a critical component of the General Federation of Women’s Clubs’ ideology of citizenship and an important form of rhetorical action for the organization.

The General Federation of Women’s Clubs multi-layered approach to understanding citizenship was explicitly connected to gaining the right to vote in 1919 and their continued interest in it in the 1920s. While nineteenth-century middle-class white women had always been citizens of the Republic, they had previously lacked “full citizenship” without suffrage. As roles for women continued to change in the early twentieth century with the advent of World War I, more opportunities for middle-class, white women continued to emerge. In *America’s Women* (2003), Gail Collins points out that women occupied more than one third of government jobs by 1900. More women worked in factories and joined volunteer organizations to raise money for war efforts.

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12 Citizenship has been a contested site since the early republic. In the article “‘Persuasion Dwelt on Her Tongue’: Female Civic Rhetoric in Early America” (1998), Eldred and Mortensen note that while women were denied “full citizenship” until the passage of the nineteenth amendment in 1920, they were still engaged in political rhetoric and issues of governance in the early republic. However, according to Gretchen Ritter, women in the nineteenth century were regarded as different from men and “the main marker of that difference was the absence of the vote” (345). In *No Constitutional Right to be Ladies, Women and the Obligations of Citizenship* (1998), Linda Kerber explores how nineteenth-century women and men experienced the rights and obligations of citizenship differently in terms of both social and legal institutions.
The changing cultural conditions coupled with the right to vote not only raised new questions about traditional gender roles, but also raised questions about conditions of citizenship. In club meetings across the nation, members of the General Federation of Women’s Club addressed issues surrounding the “woman question” so that woman could, as Olive Schreiner put it, “readjust herself to the new conditions of life” (19). For instance, on December 5, 1922, Mrs. June Redding of the Senior Literary and Lyric Society from North Baltimore, Ohio presented a paper titled “The Woman Question.” After women won the ballot, the Ladies’ Literary Club of Sylvania, Ohio debated “The Woman of Today and Yesterday” and held a roundtable discussion on “The Woman of the Twentieth Century.” Conversations about the New Woman continued to emerge which indicated the growing need clubwomen felt for adequate training to become effective citizens.  

Club records and reading programs show that members of the General Federation of Women’s Clubs felt compelled to address the changing nature of citizenship. For instance, the 1923-1924 program for the Senior Literary and Lyric Society of North Baltimore, Ohio addressed the topic “Our Own Country,” which included a round table discussion of “a) Who is a Good Citizen? [and] b) Women in Civic Affairs.” In club meetings, women worked to define and implement good citizenship because they were concerned with becoming model citizens and how others would perceive them. For instance, in 1926, at the second annual meeting of the Oklahoma Federation’s Clubs,

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13 In *The American New Woman Revisited: A Reader, 1894-1930*, Martha H. Patterson traces the development(s) of the “New Woman” through cultural artifacts published from 1894 to 1930. Patterson’s book represents a variety of women including “the New Negro Woman,” “La Mujer Nueva,” “the New American Jewish Woman.” These diverse women addressed multiple issues including suffrage, prohibition, birth control, capitalism, eugenics and changing technology.
clubwomen listened to a paper entitled “What Constitutes Good Citizenship?” followed by a discussion on the best training for citizenship. Reading programs like these from dozens of other state federated clubs illustrate how the General Federation of Women’s Clubs promoted a “more intelligent citizenship” that involved self-education and action (Munro vii). The Ladies of the Leaf Club of Ardmore, Oklahoma presented on “Some of the New Occupations for Women debated the “the Status of Women in Modern Society” from 1927-1928. Issues surrounding the modern woman ranged from work outside of the home to new household technology. Clubwomen addressed these issues as part of their discussions on women and citizenship. For example, the Ladies of the Leaf read Thomas Hardy’s *The Woman of Tomorrow*, and discussed:

1. Laws for the protection of women in the industry
2. Why women seek work outside of the home,
3. How shall we solve the problem of motherhood and income service for women?

These three questions reveal a growing concern about how clubwomen would balance new duties like wage and work with effective citizenship. The General Federation of Women’s Clubs advocated the idea that women’s clubs represented the thoughtful, earnest, and educated women of the community whose active civic participation enabled them to become better wives and mothers for future citizens.

Gaining the right to vote coincided with the organization’s shift from self-education to a public campaign centered on the duties of citizenship. Members of the General Federation of Women’s Clubs discussed the relationship between citizenship and voting in the *General Federation Magazine* in April of 1920:
Our civic work thus changes from programs of information getting and discussion to programs of action. During this spring and summer, wherever a women’s club exists we should see a series of mass meetings for all women in which the organization of and platform of the political parties; the machinery of the different elections; local, state and national problems, and the duty to vote are explained and discussed. (6)

In addition, from 1922 to 1923, the Ladies’ Literary of Sylvania, Ohio covered the topics “New Responsibilities and Duties of Women” and “the League of Women Voters.”

Beyond discussions and intellectual growth, clubwomen used their knowledge of rhetorical action to influence the larger public. One prominent Maryland clubwoman stated:

Organizations of women have long been a force in moulding [sic] public opinion and this will continue to be one of their avenues of service. They should remember this is a natural order in which the effort to influence public opinion should proceed; first the explanation of existing conditions; then an appeal to the emotions, and lastly the presentation of a reasonable plan of action. (General Federation Magazine, April 1920, 6)

Along with discussing issues of voting and rhetorical action, the General Federation of Women’s Clubs initiated their own “reasonable plan on action” aimed at getting every member of the public to exercise their right to vote. Between 1924 and 1926, the General Federation of Women’s Clubs initiated the campaign “Getting Out the Vote” which encouraged clubwomen to exercise the franchise and inspire others in an attempt to build equal participation in governmental affairs for women and men. Members of the General
Federation were reminded: “The importance of getting out the vote cannot be overestimated. The indifferent voter must be roused from sleep; the uniformed voter must be informed on matters pertaining to citizenship and the uninterested must become interested in matters of public welfare” (Biennial Report). The General Federation of Women’s Clubs targeted the ideology of citizenship in the status quo, which they saw as anti-democratic. Clubwomen attempted to reach a diverse audience using all of the available means of persuasion to ensure more women voted in future elections. They wanted to influence those citizens who were indifferent and uniformed in order to direct public energy towards the importance of voting. The General Federation of Women’s Clubs printed the slogan, “Every club a training camp for citizenship and every clubwoman qualified to vote,” on all of their promotional materials. The General Federation wanted to use “club leadership to inspire ALL women citizens to register and vote” (“Getting out the Vote”). The organization’s end goal was to have one hundred percent of their club members voting in the United States. The General Federation for Women’s Campaign “Getting Out the Vote” campaign is significant because club members attempted to include a wider population when promoting the duties of citizenship to Americans.

The General Federation of Women’s Clubs promotional materials pointed out that in 1925, nearly one-half of the American citizens of legal age failed to vote. The external campaign made clear that “club women (and men) must accept as their responsibility the rank and file outside of organizations and co-operate in vigorous “get-out-the-vote’ campaigns” (17th Biennial Convention). The General Federation of Women’s Clubs encouraged state federated clubs that could afford it to establish a central headquarters to
monitor registration and voting progress. Many clubs poured all of their available resources into the campaign. Reports circulated by the General Federation highlight the campaign’s success. The Biennial Report for 1924-26 also contains an extensive list of suggestions for clubwomen to get out the vote. At the 17th Biennial Convention, Mrs. Pennybacker announced:

Hopeful as we are for the future, we must not neglect the present, and the immediate task facing us is how shall we inspire women (and men) to exercise their right of suffrage. This is the second main point stressed by this division. Early this spring, Getting Out the Vote pamphlets were sent to all state chairmen of citizenship training urging intensive campaigns and the use of every means at hand, radio, telephone, automobiles, schools, churches, and from the reports we are convinced that club women are voting as never before. (17th Biennial Convention 478)

Mrs. Pennybacker’s comments demonstrate just how far clubwomen had come in the post-suffrage era: their skills included organization, creativity, awareness of the rhetorical situation, and most importantly, commitment to action and reform. Another clubwoman’s account demonstrates the popularity of the General Federation’s promotional materials. In the General Federation News Magazine, Mrs. Holloway announced, “The entire supply of Getting Out the Vote has been exhausted.” From 1923 to 1924, the external suggestions to encourage voting prepared by the General Federation of Women’s Clubs remained in contest demand.

The General Federation of Women’s Clubs biennial report also reported individual states’ status with regards to increasing the number of active voters. For
instance, in Michigan ninety-five percent of the clubwomen voted, in Mississippi ninety percent, in Vermont seventy-five percent, and in Nevada eighty percent of clubwomen voted in 1924. Alabama, Oklahoma, Montana, and New Hampshire reported “active efforts to get out the vote.” It is significant that the General Federation held each state-federated club accountable for their individual and collective role(s) in the voting campaign. Arkansas participated in Vote and Poll tax campaigns while Iowa reported a “vigorous 1924 vote campaign.” Nebraska claimed they “stressed active vote campaigns for primaries and elections.” New Jersey claimed more specific results, “Through efforts of club women, polling booths are now in school houses and community buildings.” Publishing the poll and campaign results was one way the General Federation created and encouraged model citizens. The biennial report also reveals clubwomen’s awareness of the rhetorical significance of a campaign’s slogan. For instance, South Carolina’s slogan was “Get out the vote and make that vote intelligent.” Tennessee’s slogan was “Every club woman in Tennessee a voter and a vote-getter.” By making voting the primary focus of citizenship, the General Federation of Women’s Clubs enabled more women to fill public offices and participate in important civic activities such as jury duty, which was an important facet of American citizenship.

Voting as a platform for good citizenship was rapidly becoming a way for the General Federation to increase clubwomen’s overall participation in public affairs. In September 1925, the General Federation News reprinted a pamphlet from the American Citizenship Department which outlines the General Federation’s major concerns for women: “Creating public opinion which shall realize the importance of women in elective and appointed offices.” Women were particularly needed on the Board of all
State welfare and corrective institutions. With so many active club members across the United States, members of the General Federation launched a rhetorical campaign that could potentially reach millions.

At the 17th Biennial Convention, one club member directly addressed women’s civic standing:

The increased number of women on election boards is encouraging, and while we regret so few women are willing to accept the responsibilities of office-holding, we are able to report the number is increasing. Many municipal offices are held by women. We commend jury service to women who wish an enlightening course in citizenship training, and urge acceptance of the duty as opportunity offers. (477)

Mrs. E. C. Rumpler, the Division of Citizenship Training chairman reminded members of the General Federation of Women’s Clubs, “Now, I hope you all value your vote so well that when the election day comes, you hurry to the polls, lest you might die before the day is over, and would not have done your duty as an American citizen” (18th Biennial Convention 175). Members of the General Federation of Women’s Clubs were eager to form a civic foundation for citizenship which required action. As newly defined citizens, clubwomen were ready to increase their participation in national and local affairs and they viewed an increased focus on the vote as one way to accomplish their goals.

The General Federation of Women’s Clubs gained national recognition for their external activities in 1926 when the Commission of Education asked them to survey illiteracy in every state. This request truly represents the credibility of the organization in the eye of government officials. During the years of 1926-1928, the General Federation
initiated a campaign to eradicate illiteracy in the United States. This began when the Commissioner of Education, the Honorable John J. Tigert, requested the organization’s help to carry out a survey of illiterates in each state. The organization agreed to assist the government in the ambitious and far reaching task of listing the illiterates of the United States with the understanding that clubwomen would also help develop plans for teaching those who could not read or write. The General Federation’s Department of Education “laid the task of formulating plans adapted to a country-wide campaign in which each state federation could co-operate, and of carrying forward the work to the goal of eliminating illiteracy in the United States, so far as humanly possible, before the taking of the next census in 1930” (Illiteracy Report 1). It is significant that the government recognized the General Federation as a legitimate organization with the power and influence to carry out this much-debated task. Clubwomen were actively shaping government policy. Before attempting a nation-wide survey, the General Federation asked for a trial survey of a single county in each state which would list the names of the illiterates. The goal of the One County Illiteracy Survey was to gain concrete statistics on the number of illiterates in the United States. The General Federation believed the survey results would inspire a community wide effort, including state authorities and civic organizations to address, the problem. As the survey progressed, the General Federation saw a great need for training individuals to work with adult illiterates. The organization’s solution was to offer a series of workshops called the “School of Methods and Workers with Adult Illiterates” during the Biennial Convention in San Antonio, from May 28 to June 7. The General Federation of Women’s Clubs also offered intensive education through night and day schools, neighborhood teaching, and individual instruction
necessary. Members of the General Federation were involved in tracking the problem, but more importantly, they were responsible for providing viable solutions to illiteracy. The organization’s conception was clearly linked to literacy, which makes sense given their original focus on self-education. Their ideology of citizenship included mass education aimed at protecting democracy. The Illiteracy Report stated:

Both the Government and the officers of the General Federation consider this campaign against illiteracy a most important measure in the interest of world peace and international understanding in view of the fact that we have practically every nation in the world represented, and that today, ignorance is the greatest menace to the preservation of the greatest of democracies—the Republic of the United States of America. Surely the women will not fail their country in this emergency.” (Illiteracy Report 2)

The General Federation of Women’s Clubs reported great success and interest in the One County Illiteracy Survey. For instance, Mrs. Alex Caldwell, Chairman of the Committee on Illiteracy,” wrote, “Hundreds of news clippings and numbers of strong editorials which have come to us from leading journals in every corner of our country, commenting upon and highly commending this work of the federated club woman, testify to the interest which this movement has created, and ought to impress us with the sense of our responsibility to ‘carry on’ to a successful finish the work we have begun” (Illiteracy Report 3). The General Federation also published individual state results in the Biennial Convention program. The effort served the dual purpose of encouraging more clubs to participate and to showcase the success of the illiteracy campaign—both for club members and the larger audience, which included members of the United States
government. Alabama report a survey of Covington County revealed seven hundred illiterates. The governor of Arkansas appointed an Illiteracy Commission, which was also responsible for distributing the General Federation’s pamphlet “Suggestions for Workers in the Illiteracy Campaign.” Georgia clubwomen reported the survey of Macon County followed by teaching “with such success that it is asserted that not an illiterate remains in the county” (Illiteracy Report 5). Fulton County also adopted the slogan “each one teach one.” The General Federation not only defined a new type of citizenship, but also advocated one that became essential to the American government. The General Federation’s nationwide illiteracy survey never passed out of the initial phase which asked each of the fifty stated-federated clubs to attempt a trial survey of a single county in each state. The only available details about the survey include the following information from the General Federation’s Department of Education Chairman Mrs. William F. Blackman who wrote a memo to be circulated across clubs:

The State Federation President will first of all secure the sympathy of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction and his acceptance of the plan for a survey of one county in the state…the county to be selected in conference with him. This should be an average county, typical of the state, and one in which the women are well organized. The method by which this survey will be made must be left largely to the state and county authorities. The survey should be followed immediately by an intensive campaign of education which should reach every illiterate on the list. (Program Records 1926-1928)
This time consuming effort was carried out by certain states; however, the initial project never materialized into a nationwide survey. The success of the project was the organization’s efforts to focus on adult education as a permanent part of its mission.

The General Federal of Women’s Clubs internal activities which began in 1890 sparked their initial interest in citizenship and contributed to the development of their post-suffrage rhetorical practices which were concerned with creating a national voting campaign and an illiteracy campaign that would train all Americans to become better citizens. Pre-suffrage club activities like reading the Bible, studying parliamentary procedure, and studying government laid the foundation for General Federation’s focus on mass education and literacy as a crucial component of American citizenship. These early activities made the more public campaigns possible.
Chapter 2

Let Literature Serve Life: The General Federation of Women’s Clubs’ Reading Recommendation as Rhetorical Education for the Public

During the early twentieth century, the General Federation continued to extend their focus on citizenship from internal club activities to public outreach which contributed to a shift from self-education to mass education. This chapter examines the General Federation of Women’s Clubs’ reading recommendations for the general public as well as for different segments of the population including soldiers, children, and immigrants. The General Federation’s efforts fit into a larger framework of an American nationalist agenda which aimed to place the United States on a world stage with the showcasing of American literature as a key cultural factor. The General Federation formed the Division of Citizenship Training to answer the nation’s call and reach the public through the circulation of educational materials including approved booklists, pamphlets, magazine articles, and advertisements. In this chapter, I argue that the General Federation of Women’s Clubs’ reading recommendations are evidence of rhetorical action(s), which according to James Fredal are actions “voluntarily and deliberately undertaken in the face of significant risks or moments of crisis for the
purpose of winning fame and political power” (24).\textsuperscript{14} Fredal’s definition of rhetorical action is useful because it allows us to recognize the General Federation of Women’s Clubs’ twentieth-century reading campaign as rhetorical in nature. More importantly, it allows for a way of understanding women sponsored education as a form of rhetorical action. Clubwomen promoted patriotic rhetoric through reading recommendations and mass education which actively shaped the nation’s identity and conception of citizenship in the twentieth century. The General Federation worked to inform the general public by advocating American literature and detailed knowledge of the government. Significantly, clubwomen in the General Federation believed reading could safeguard democracy by increasing civic participation.

The General Federation of Women’s Clubs’ interest in American citizenship had earlier roots in nineteenth century women’s literary clubs that met across the United States. In *The History of the Woman’s Club Movement in America* (1898), Jane Croly discusses clubwomen across the nation who were reading American literature and debating its importance. At the turn of the nineteenth century, The Woman’s Club of Fargo, North Dakota discussed “Have we an American literature?” while the Senior Literary and Lyric Society, of North Baltimore, Ohio deliberated “What American Novels Will Find a Permanent Place in Literature?” The Denver Fortnightly Club studied the development of American literature and the ideal American citizen (Croly 273). The

\textsuperscript{14} Aside from Jim Fredal, few scholars actually define the term rhetorical action. However, in Michael Salvo’s article “Rhetorical Action in Professional Space,” he uses the term to differentiate between rhetorical analysis and the ability to move into social change, which he refers to as rhetorical action. Fredal’s definition is more useful to my project because it allows for a wider range of activities to be considered as examples of rhetorical action. As discussed in the introduction, traditional histories of rhetoric have made particular assumptions about what constitutes rhetoric that have excluded women as well as other minorities.
Thursday Literary Club from Selma, Alabama spent one year on American authors (233). During 1876, The Progressive Club of Golden, Colorado studied four American poets: James Russell Lowell, Henry Longfellow, John Greenleaf Whittier, and William Cullen Bryant (Croly 290). The Ladies’ of Literary Club of Duluth studied American literature in the following order: William Cullen Bryant; William Hickling Prescott’s life and histories; the rise, the growth, and power of the American press; Henry Wadsworth Longfellow; the life of John Lothrop Motley and his *Rise of the Dutch Republic*; and the life of George Bancroft and his *History of the United States* (Croly 746).\(^\text{15}\) In 1894, the Woman’s Literary Club of Caribou, Maine studied American history and Brander Matthew’s *Introduction to American Literature* (Croly 574). In 1898, members of the Quid Nune of Tyler, Texas studied American literature and the development of the American college (Croly 1098). The President Woman’s Book Club of Everett, Washington discussed “The Development of American Literature” while the Titusville Woman’s Club of Pennsylvania presented on “American Essayists” and “American Poets” during 1895-1896. (Croly 142, 1040). In 1897, the Woman’s Literary and Scientific Club studied James Bryce’s *American Commonwealth* and discussed the topic the “Rise and Growth of the American Nation” (Croly 1173). Other popular American authors included Nathaniel Hawthorne, Walt Whitman, Edgar Allen Poe, Oliver Wendell Holmes, James Fennimore Cooper, and James Whitcomb Riley. During the mid to late nineteenth-century, women’s clubs in the United States possessed more similarities than

\(^{15}\) Prescott, Motley, and Bancroft were famous historians and all of them were natives of Massachusetts and graduates of Harvard.
differences in terms of reading and discussing American authors and American history and literature.

Whereas women’s clubs began with an inner desire for self-culture and education in the nineteenth century through reading American literature, their purpose shifted outward at the turn-of-the-century and continued after World War I with a focus on training Americans to become better citizens. During this period of economic growth and prosperity for the United States, the club movement became more centralized with the founding of the General Federation of Women’s Clubs. Both of these factors contributed to the changing focus of clubwomen throughout the United States. Years of experience participating in club activities led clubwomen to place an emphasis on the importance of reading in American culture. Beginning in 1920, the General Federation for Women’s Clubs advocated “for a more serious consideration of literary topics” in club meetings across the United States, which resulted in their “Let Literature Serve Life” campaign. The campaign mandated a “return to reading literature,” in order that Americans might find out what literature could teach them about life and how it could better equip them for civic duty. Mrs. L. A. Miller, Chairman of the Division of Literature in the General Federation of Women’s Clubs, proclaimed the campaign’s benefits:

Let literature serve life. It will strengthen the fellowship of family life and make us wiser to meet the dangers that menace the American home, create better ideals of American citizenship, serve Applied Education, interpret racial relations, make clear the problems of Legislation and Public Welfare, preserve the perishable message of the Press, make articulate the wistful quest of the younger generation and help through its ministry of
beauty to make a fine art of that difficult and most-to-be-desired end of all culture—the art of fine living. (18th Biennial Convention, 263)

Clubwoman Miller’s statement highlights the General Federation’s faith in the power of reading American literature to counter all of the post-war problems. The return to literature campaign sparked the interest of state federated clubs who began to add more literary texts to their study programs, often focusing on American literature in particular.16 By 1923, more than one-half of the federated clubs joined the campaign. The campaign encouraged clubs to read more American authors and set aside more time to discuss literature in club meetings in order to preserve the family, home, and race relations.

Not only did reading American literature produce a base of shared knowledge in the women’s clubs across the country, it also enabled clubwomen to articulate a relationship between reading and social action.17 The clubs began to connect reading American literature to the civic work they performed. For instance, a reading program reveals the Ladies of the Leaf Club from Ardmore, Oklahoma read American poet Walt Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass*. Club members explored Whitman’s purpose in writing, the ideals of poetry expressed in the volume, and whether or not the poems lacked art. While clubwomen debated the nature of Art and Whitman’s poetry, they also discussed topics...

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16 Beginning in the early to mid-twentieth century, the General Federation of Women’s Clubs also focused on adding more American subjects to their programs, including “the words of our great statesmen, proclamations, poems, plays, essays, [and] history,” which increased the demand and rate of publication of American texts (15th Biennial Convention, 170).

17 Elizabeth Long’s *Book Clubs: Women and the Uses of Reading in Everyday Life* (2003) also argues that nineteenth-century women’s book clubs served as a foundation for women to create a broader level of social organization and participation in civil society in the twentieth century.
such as “Art in Ardmore schools” and “What Oklahoma is doing to develop the aesthetic in its citizens” (Oklahoma Historical Society). To direct the growing literature movement and oversee its emerging connection to civic activities, the General Federation’s Division of Literature began to publish reading programs dedicated solely to American literature. State federated clubs used the reading programs for preparing their yearlong programs of study. For instance, between 1920 and 1928, the General Federation’s Division of Literature created the series “Studies in Literature” with programs including “American Poetry and Prose” and “Frontier in American Literature” for women’s clubs across the nation.
These programs included a range of American authors including Harriet Beecher Stowe, Nathaniel Hawthorne, John Greenleaf Whittier, and Bret Thomas Hart. The new programs were made available through state chairs of literature and from the General Federation Headquarters in Washington, D.C. At the 17th Biennial Convention in Los
Angeles, the chairman of the Division of Literature, Mrs. L. A. Miller, reported publishing 13,000 programs and distributing 8,500 through Headquarters and state chairmen. During the first half of the twentieth century, state federated club records and calendars reveal a unified focus on American literature.  

The General Federation of Women’s Clubs used their reading programs and “Studies in American Literature” booklists to promote their definition of an ideal American citizen. The organization’s internal focus from self-culture shifted to a focus on mass education for the larger public. One of the primary qualifications of being a good American citizen was to read American literature in order to learn how to become one. Clubwomen treated reading as an important part of one’s civic duty. On the “Frontier in American Literature” booklist, George Edward Woodberry’s introduction to America in Literature (1903) argues that individuals become “citizens of a wide world of letters” by reading about history and spirit captured in American literature (211).  

Another textbook on the General Federation’s approved list, William J. Long’s American Literature (1913) argues that citizenship started and ended “with the liberal reading of good books, with the joyous appreciation of the prose and poetry that reflect the brave American experiment in human living” (ix). Both Woodberry’s and Long’s texts assume, along with the General Federation, that reading American literature represents the essence of being a true American and plays a crucial role in training American citizens.  

The General Federation of Women’s Clubs promoted American “literature [as] the foundation of all true patriotism” (Long vi).

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18 Club programs in the majority of states reveal certain similarities. For example, almost every club program I examined included local color selections represented by writers like Thomas Nelson Page and selections from transcendentalists including Ralph Waldo Emerson.
The General Federation of Women’s Clubs operated as a “mother of the nation” who was responsible for overseeing standards of citizenry for the general population.\textsuperscript{19} In order to direct the public’s reading selections, the General Federation provided lists of textbooks on understanding American literature which, in turn, were requested by libraries, foundations, and universities throughout the nation (\textit{General Federation Magazine}, April 1925). The organization was particularly concerned with offering beginning and advanced booklists for organizations and general readers that worked to ensure reading selections were properly appreciated. The General Federation of Women’s Clubs’ reference books on American literature paint a portrait of the ideal American citizen as one who embodies the qualities of optimism, individualism, and ingenuity. On the “American Poetry and Prose” booklist, William J. Long’s \textit{American Literature: A Study of the Men and the Books that in the Earlier and Later Times Reflect the American Spirit} (1913) defines Benjamin Franklin as a representative American citizen. In his description of Franklin, Long describes the ideal characteristics of citizens:

\begin{quote}
In many ways this one citizen was typical of the new American nation. He was a self-made man, who had risen by his own effort from poverty to wealth, from obscurity to world-wide honor; he was an epitome of the shrewdness and practical sense that win reward in the business of life; and when he had signed the four notable documents of our early history, and
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{19} In \textit{Managing Literacy, Mothering America} (2004), Sarah Robbins points out the narrative of guided literacy acquisition and visions of American motherhood from 1780-1920 provided middle-class white women with “influential avenues into a political culture” from which they had been previously excluded. Robbins also argues that middle-class white women gained social power at the expense of other groups while claiming to protect the national welfare.
represented us with marked success in the courts of Europe, he became a bond of unity among the people. (99-100)

Long’s *American Literature* was meant to be used as a textbook that provided guided discussion questions, bibliographic information, and sample paper topics to help readers understand and develop the qualities of a good American citizen. Long’s textbook promoted a version of American citizenship that included a chance for anyone to succeed. Suggestive questions were intended “to stimulate thinking and arouse patriotic interest in American literature and history” (165). Sample questions included “How do patriotism and national enthusiasm aid literature?” as well as “What is meant by citizen literature?” and “What are its qualities?” (83, 166). Paper topics ranged from “Permanent Characteristics in American Literature” to “The Moral Tendency of American Literature” (85, 446). Long’s *American Literature*, along with other books found in the General Federation’s series “Studies of American Literature,” served as an instructional guide for the model American citizen who should be invested in American literature.

Members of the General Federation of Women’s Clubs believed American literature could provide a touchstone for democratic values, and more importantly, a common language for discussing them. Reading exposed citizens to new knowledge and allowed them to develop a common language. In some ways, the practice of reading was relatively easy to teach and individuals could then self-educate and perform valuable civic duties all by reading, thus they could Americanize themselves. The General Federation sought to foster a community of American readers who shared the same knowledge by virtue of reading the same texts. In addition to reading for self-education, the majority of reference books recommended by the General Federation of Women’s
Clubs reveal another aspect of civic duty is to acquire shared knowledge. Reading American literature afforded citizens unifying traits and experiences which fostered a community of like-minded readers and thinkers. For instance, the underlying point of Bliss Perry’s *The American Mind and American Idealism* (1913) is to “define and interpret American literature as it reflects the characteristic qualities of the American” (viii). His introduction reflects a common theme of the Americanization era, the search for an American identity and the process of defining American citizenship. In addition, the purpose of Van Wyck Brooks’ *America’s Coming-of-Age* (1915) is to demonstrate how a survey of American literature will reveal important facts or truths about American life. Both Perry’s and Brooks’ guides to American literature typify the kinds of texts recommended by the General Federation of Women’s Clubs which assumed that reading American authors offers the best possible understanding of American affairs.²⁰ While it is not surprising that Americans were searching for a sense of stability in a time of massive change, it is significant that the General Federation was advocating a communal reading experience to achieve unity and consensus among native and foreign-born inhabitants. Reading native writers enabled citizens to develop a body of shared knowledge, which in turn, would help establish a national tradition and character.

The General Federation of Women’s Clubs also advocated reading as a way to promote nationalism and patriotism. The best way to understand American values and politics was to read American literature because it encapsulated the history of national

²⁰Not all critics agreed that great American literature existed at this point in time. Lucy Lockwood Hazard’s *The Frontier in American Literature* (1927) begins with the argument that American literature had not yet been able to capture “the unique factor in American life” (xv). In addition, George Edward Woodberry’s *America in Literature* (1903) ends with a call for “new champions” in a time of halted literary genius (252).
traditions and provided a communal foundation for understanding democracy and patriotism. In *American Literature*, William Long argues that reading native writers is central to American nationalism:

So deeply did [American writers] implant their moral and political ideals in the American mind that the man or the book that now departs from them is known, almost institutively, to be untrue to his own country and people. To know these men and women is to have the pride and the strength of noble ancestry; it is to have also a deeper love and veneration for America; and the only way to know them, the founders of our nation and pioneers of our precious liberty, is through their own writings, which furnish the human and intensely personal background of their history.

(Long vi)

This quote illustrates the General Federation’s fear of Americans neglecting their own literature. Clubwomen saw American literature as a unifying force which could impart American values like patriotism, individualism, and democracy to newcomers as well as the larger public. Members recommended Bliss Perry’s essay “The American Mind” (1912) because it explained how American literature was characteristically a citizen literature that was uniquely responsive to civic concerns and to questions affecting the interests of everyone (36). Clubwomen treated American literature as a way to embody the principles of citizenship and devotion to the nation; it literally represented fundamental American characteristics such as genuineness, kindness, humor, and effectiveness. The General Federation also recommended Robert Ramsay’s *Short Stories of America* (1921) which provides a reading list and study questions aimed at “showing
how each section of America has reached self-revelation through the national American form of the short story” (viii). Reading American literature helped transfer and spread American pride and undefeated faith in democracy. The General Federation of Women’s Clubs had faith that the simple act of reading would lead to an understanding of Americanism that would help the nation achieve lasting peace in a time of unrest.

While members of the organization remained concerned with “enduring literary excellence” and “appropriate” American texts, they did not attempt to offer a comprehensive list of the best writers or texts. The General Federation of Women’s Clubs’ reading program on the “American Short Story” states to the reader: “There has been no attempt to select from the mass of creditable work the best stories, many others, just as representatives in forms and substance, might be substituted. All of those chosen have received recognition as types or been included in carefully selected anthologies of the year’s best magazine work” (emphasis in original, Studies in Literature, “Short Story,” 7). Additionally, the General Federation’s Booklist for 1924 notes: “This list makes no pretense to completeness. It is a list of recent books from which a club may select titles for review without disappointment” (Program records, 1922-1924). While many of the recommended texts suggest a unified vision of America, the General Federation also believed in approaching literature with a sense of adventure and open-mindedness. On the “American Frontier” reading program, clubwomen declared, “We do not read or study to find the confirmation of our own opinions, but to enlarge our horizons or formulate our defenses.” Clubwomen’s approach to citizenship is reflected by this sentiment of education. Instructions for writing a book review contained the following advice: “Approach the book with an unprejudiced mind. Avoid reading
criticisms until you have formed your own impressions” (Program records, 1922-1924). “Form your own opinions and give them fearlessly. Invite discussion.” The General Federation helped the practice of reading become an aspect of civic duty that ensured citizens would adjust to life after World War I and prepare for a new and expanding nation.21

In their campaign for effective American citizenship, the General Federation of Women’s Clubs also reached outside of their organization in an attempt to connect with the larger public. With close to two million members, the General Federation of Women’s Clubs found themselves in a unique position to influence the public’s reading habits and change the face of American citizenship. At the 16th Biennial Convention, the General Federation pointed out that in 1922 women bought ninety percent of books sold in the United States. The following year, the General Federation urged clubwomen to boycott certain books:

If the two million clubwomen of the General Federation of America would refuse to purchase, take from a library, or review any book of questionable merit, confining their reading for a period of two years exclusively to works of enduring literary excellence and spiritual significance, they could change the standards of the publishers and bring about a revolution in American letters. (Program records, 1922-1924) 22

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21 The General Federation of Women’s Clubs did not advocate any singular criterion for determining appropriate American literature, rather they often suggested clubs make their own reading programs based on current periodicals.

22 The General Federation recommended boycotting certain types of books including dime novels.
The General Federation of Women’s Clubs’ focus on identifying good books underscored the relationship between good citizenship and reading; good citizens buy good books. The General Federation assumed responsibility for regulating publishing companies and the distribution of “salacious material” in an effort to standardize acceptable reading practices for the general public. An article in the General Federation News highlights the fact that the General Federation saw its role as an arbiter of cultural standards in determining acceptable reading practices. The chairman states, “Do not call salacious publications ‘literature.’ Do not give publicity to salacious publications by listing their names. Do not advertise the wrong angle in your campaign for better publications” (Jan-Feb 1925, 10). Additionally, in 1924, the General Federation of Women’s Clubs sponsored an essay contest designed to take “a strong stand for better books” where clubwomen from across the country wrote essays on the topic “What 2,000,000 Women Want From the Publisher” (General Federation News, June, 6). The essays addressed the need for “better books, better reviews of books, and better salesmanship of good books, with fair advertising.” In the General Federation of News in September of 1925, clubwoman Mrs. Miller wrote: “There is a class of writers today who could not qualify as creative artists, who are deliberately exploiting youth, reading into the minds of youth their own degenerated ideas and taking refuge behind what they call modern spirit. Investigators must proceed cautiously, swiftly and silently” (2). The General Federation of Women’s Clubs was invested in developing and protecting standards of literature for American citizens. Clubwomen considered it their duty to act as “investigators” and guide the public’s reading practices.
In addition to determining what constituted good American literature, the General Federal of Women’s Clubs encouraged the public to buy more books. They offered a free service which allowed individuals to order books through the General Federation rather than contacting publishers. The General Federation of Women’s Clubs ran a half-page advertisement in several issues of their magazine from 1917 to 1919 titled “To Help You Buy Books,” which states:

The buying of books is often an annoying process. You may not know the exact title. The author, or the publisher’s name and address [sic]. On account of the vast number of books published you may be compelled to call at several bookstores before finding the book desired. Or if you want a number of books you may have to order them from as many different publishers, which means a duplication of correspondence, postage chargers, etc. To relieve our readers of this inconvenience and expense, we have organized a special book service department which is prepared to fill promptly large or small orders for books of all kinds and of all publishers, especially those advertised or given as references by the Department Chairmen in this magazine. Send us a single order for all the books you desire. They will be delivered in a single shipment, and billed collectively. This service is rendered without charge.” (General Federation Magazine, March 1918, 43)

The General Federation of Women’s Clubs promoted the idea that good citizenship included buying books. Not only does this popular advertisement reveal the importance of reading and buying books to the General Federation of Women’s Clubs, but it also
reinforces the organization’s critical role in the process. The General Federation
presented themselves as a cultural arbiter between publishers and the public.

In addition to reading American literature, the General Federation of Women’s
Clubs treated knowledge of the government as the one of the most effective tools for
training ideal citizens. They advocated reading as a way to promote their nation-building
agenda. Members from the General Federation recommended more than a dozen texts in
their promotional materials geared toward the general public between 1920 and 1936.
The majority of books mentioned in the Know Your Country series of pamphlets
highlight the urgent need for Americans to “realize their duties as citizens” by reading
about American government at the local, state, and national level to prepare for future
civic affairs (James and Sanford vi). Along with the General Federation of Women’s
Clubs, authors supported the idea textbooks provided much needed “practical training” in
politics (Williamson vii). The textbooks covered a wide range of subjects including
public education, taxation, powers of the President and Congress, U. S. Constitution, and
international relations. Members from the General Federation recommended more than a
dozen texts through the Know Your Own City, Know Your Own Town, and Know Your
Own County pamphlets. There seems to be two general audiences for the recommended
texts: the average citizen and the student. Local Government in the United States (1921)
argues that we need to focus on conducting a more in-depth study of local government
because the “average citizen” interacts with it on a regular basis (James vii). Post World
War I attitudes toward American government acknowledge a need for a new way of
thinking because “a new world is upon us.” Training required a new knowledge and
understanding of American institutions, relations, and principles. Munro and Ozanne’s
Social Civics (1922) also suggests that studying civics will allow citizens to break down “old lines of demarcation” and usher them into “modern civilization” (v). Typical citizens needed an understanding of the powers of Congress and President, local, state, and federal government, the judicial system as well as a broad knowledge of topics including economics, sociology, and international relations.

Some of the textbooks the General Federation of Women’s Clubs recommended were designed to prepare students for their future duties as citizens. On the Know Your Own Country booklist, the introduction to Thames Ross Williamson’s Problems in American Democracy (1922) clearly states the purpose of the book: “There is an increasing demand for a textbook which will bring the student into direct contact with the great current issues of American life” (vii). The goal was not only to engage students in politics and service but to also train them to be the nation’s “best citizens” (Capen). Beyond instilling patriotism in students, books like American Problems (1923) and Community Civics (1921) suggest that studying American government is necessary to teach “the vocabulary of social relationships” and to encourage “harmony and cooperation between different groups of people and classes” (Morehouse and Graham v).

Analytical thinking and the ability to debate were also necessary skills for good citizenship in the twentieth century. Haines and Haines’ Principles and Problems of Government (1934) reinforces the idea that modern day citizenship required students to develop “independent investigation” and “open-minded judgment” to fulfill their future civic duties (Williamson viii).

As more universities, libraries, and local clubs requested the General Federation of Women’s Clubs reading recommendations between 1924 and 1926, the organization
began to see itself as the literal gatekeeper of American culture and standards of
citizenship. Making the most of their expertise in American literature and reading
recommendations, the General Federation began to work with different segments of the
population to help increase the standards of citizenry in the United States. The
organization focused on soldiers, children, and immigrants during the interwar period as
economic growth in America continued and attitudes toward citizenship continued to be
influenced by the General Federation’s emphasis on the value of reading.

The General Federation of Women’s Clubs supported efforts to supply soldiers
overseas during World War I with donations of books. In the article “A Reading Army,”
clubwoman Mrs. True Worthy White, chairman of the Department of Literature,
declared: “This citizen army of ours is a reading army. It carries its civilian habits of
reading for recreation and information even into the trenches” (General Federation
Magazine, October 1918, 10). The General Federation responded to the army’s
increasing demand for books, which clubwoman White explains:

A captain came into the Newport News and told of a wireless message he
had received from a passing hospital ship. They signaled for books.
When he cleared that port his ship carried a well-selected library. I hope
he met the hospital ship again. But one can see that books might be
needed in the training camps and on board hospital ships. How can an
army active in service have time to read? Yet it is General Pershing
himself who stated to the American Library Association, ‘The scheme
which is proposed [by the General Federation of Women’s Clubs] is
commendable and the service welcome.’ And he backed his opinion by
sealing from Washington the grant of fifty tons per month on
transports—enough for over a million volumes a year, and the
Quartermaster erects for books, a warehouse of 2,000 feet. (General
Federation Magazine, October 1918, 10)

The General Federation provided soldiers with reference materials like dictionaries and
newspapers along with books on commercial art, geometry, and poetry. One lieutenant
claimed, “But when the men get hold of a book they remain in camp at night and read
these books. What is of more importance, they talk about them and the things they have
learned. A man, who can get hold of a book and stays at home and reads it, soon
improves in matters of dress and military conduct and shows improvement in morals and
self-respect” (General Federation Magazine, October 1918, 11). The lieutenant’s
comment highlights the general public’s belief in reading as an opportunity for
intellectual development and moral growth.

In line with the responsibilities of the mother of the nation who guided soldiers’
reading practices, the General Federation’s American literature booklist offered guidance
for children’s books as well. For instance, the program outline in 1922 titled “American
History and Ideals Reflected in Prose and Poetry” contained separate recommendations
for children’s literature. “Colonial Studies for the Young” and “Books for Young People
on the Revolutionary Period” are examples of topics the General Federation considered
important. During this time, the production of children’s literature and illustrated books
also expanded. In response to the new market, publishers created juvenile departments
with special editors who created new booklists year round. In 1918, the Education Act
was passed and the first Children’s Book Week was established. With so many improvements and new excitement, attitudes toward children and reading shifted. The early twentieth century was also marked by efforts to protect children by forming special welfare agencies, juvenile courts, and juvenile prisons. During this time, laws and schools treated children as individuals capable of independent thought, creating a new focus on education and its relationship to civic duty. Mothers and teachers became responsible for cultivating the right kind of reading habits at home and in classrooms for the children who were seen as citizens-in-training. A newfound sense of urgency swept the nation connecting reading to citizenship and reinforcing the values of moral sense, patriotism, and service.

The Education Act of 1918 eliminated fees for attendance at all elementary schools and changed the age requirement for leaving school to fourteen. National Children’s Book Week began in 1919 as one of the first family-centered reading initiatives in America. It continues to be celebrated today with the same mission statement: “Book Week brings us together to talk about books and reading and, out of our knowledge and love of books, to put the cause of children's reading squarely before the whole community and, community by community, across the whole nation. For a great nation is a reading nation” (Children’s Book Council, online). See Appendix A for the illustrated poster for Children’s Book Week in 1926.
During the interwar period from 1918-1939, the rise of Americanism permeated approaches toward children’s education and reading. The General Federation of Women’s Clubs assumed responsibility for overseeing children’s literature in order to ensure healthy habits of reading for future generations. Clubwomen had already begun promoting the idea that great literature created great culture within their clubs by focusing on American literature. Members of the General Federation treated the importance of cultivating good reading habits for children as a logical extension of their internal club efforts. They believed that children needed literature as much as an adult; good literature reflected life and would provide children with a mirror of life and model for living. In the article “Wartime Reading for Children,” published in the General Federation’s magazine, clubwoman Alice M. Jordan discusses what constitutes

Figure 5. Children’s Book Week Poster
educational reading and list examples of books thought to “enrich the lives and widen the sympathies of our children” (December 1918, 7). The General Federation of Women’s Clubs believed the practice of reading would prepare children to be moral and patriotic citizens committed to serving America. The article goes on to argue, “No better way can be imagined for stimulating the best traditions and ideals of our Democracy than putting these and other books like them into the hands of young people” (8).

Through the General Federation’s reform efforts during the Americanization era, a new focus on the connection between reading and good citizenship emerged. Members of the General Federation of Women’s Clubs saw themselves in a unique position to ensure a prosperous nation by recommending appropriate children’s literature to schools, public libraries, and family households. The General Federation of Women’s Clubs promoted the idea of children as citizens-in-training in several ways. Members disseminated books lists, served on nationwide reading committees, and developed citizenship campaigns and contests to emphasize the value of children’s reading and to ensure democracy in an uncertain era. Through the extensive circulation of approved booklists, the General Federation of Women’s Clubs endorsed the idea that guided reading was necessary during childhood to produce better citizens. The organization believed that choosing suitable books for children required “a guide to help in making proper selection” (General Federation Magazine, December 1918, 7). The introduction to The Children’s Reading (1912) by Frances Jenkins Olcott echoes this sentiment: “For childhood is without question the impressionable period, the time for educating the imagination to normal action, for instilling good habits, for teaching the distinctions between rights and wrong, and laying the foundation of the spiritual life” (3). Lewis
Terman and Margaret Lima’s guide *Children’s Reading* (1925) suggests that children receive their “knowledge of life” and ways of seeing the world from verbal instruction, personal experience, and reading (3). Other texts also suggested childhood was the period where children developed political beliefs and a sense of civic duty. In *New Roads to Childhood* (1923), Anne Carroll Moore argues that a child must first learn “how to read for one’s self” before patriotism can be understood (135). The majority of texts on the General Federation’s booklist present reading as the “master key” needed to unlock effective citizenship. Without informed reading practices, children are destined for corruption, ignorance, and criminal behavior. The General Federation of Women’s Clubs worked to ensure the future of democracy by treating children as citizens-in-training. The ideal citizen was to be well read, knowledgeable, and devoted to civic affairs.

Working with the larger public on both state and nationwide committees enabled the General Federation of Women’s Clubs to reach a wide audience. In 1926, representatives from the General Federation of Women’s Clubs served on a “Year-Round Recreational Reading Committee” in Los Angeles with members of the public library, parent-teacher associations, school librarians’ association, and booksellers in order to encourage children’s appreciation of “better” books (Program records, Sherman). The General Federation’s *Promotion of Children’s Reading* pamphlet reports the results from the Los Angeles Reading Committee:

The committee meets monthly throughout the year and has had a great influence on the reading habits of Los Angeles boys and girls. Among its accomplishments are much closer relations between the public library
branches and the classrooms in the schools, widespread distribution of approved booklists, more frequent programs on books and reading at club meetings and school assemblies, and increased interest in the service local bookstores and libraries offers parents in the selection of books for home.

(Program records, Sherman)

The General Federation asked state federated clubs to sponsor their own year-round promotion for children’s reading and adopt the Committee’s overall program in hopes of achieving similar results nationwide. Because the General Federation operated on both nation and statewide levels in conjunction with other major institutions, they were able to produce and circulate information about reading practices across the United States in newspapers, pamphlets, and periodicals.

The General Federation of Women’s Clubs’ Earn-a-Book campaign offered another way to promote children’s reading. The purpose of the campaign was to encourage children’s ownership of books within the community. The General Federation designed an essay contest for grade and high schools, which offered a prize to the child who wrote the most compelling account of how he or she earned money to purchase a book during Children’s Book Week in 1926. The General Federation believed that the “investment of hard-earned funds [would] have greater educational value [for children] than any mere talks about books.” The Earn-a-Book campaign made a concerted effort to help children who could not otherwise afford to have any books of their own. The General Federation worked closely with schools, newspapers, and agencies like the Y. W. C. A. to advertise the contest and get children involved in reading. The General Federation also issued a public statement on the value of the campaign: “No other
community project undertaken by a club can have more far-reaching results than a plan for emphasizing the importance of providing children with the right books and encouraging them to love reading” (Program records, Sherman). Reading offered a way to teach children the English language and a way to learn American heritage. Reading campaigns also encouraged a new generation of literate individuals who would value family life, the American home, and citizenship.  

In cooperation with Children’s Book Week in 1926, the General Federation of Women’s Clubs produced a pamphlet titled Suggestions for Children’s Reading that recommended more than a dozen books for parents and their children. In the introduction to The Three Owls: A Book About Children’s Books, Anne Carroll Moore writes: “The recent adoption of programs devoted to children’s reading by the National Federation of Women’s Clubs is one more evidence that the subject has become one of country-wide interest and significance” (64). Her comments reveal the organization’s authority and widespread influence on developing standards for acceptable reading practices. Each of the titles listed on Suggestions for Children’s Reading assumes that reading is a necessary practice for children to develop moral sense, cultivate taste, and instill character. The booklist also reflects the importance of guided or directed reading practices for children. Several common trends emerge from the General Federation’s suggested reading material. Texts on the booklist generally support the following beliefs about...  

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24 Schools also played a critical role in guiding children’s reading practices. In Songs of Ourselves: The Uses of Poetry in America, Joan Shelley Rubin points out that twentieth-century grade schools also emphasized the connection between reading American poetry and developing civic pride.

25 The Basic Book Collection for Elementary Grades (1922) is a good example of a recommended book on the General Federation’s list that tells parents, teachers, and librarians which texts to accept and reject for children’s reading.
children’s reading: 1) reading allows children to develop a sense of morals and imagination; 2) children should read a wide-range of subjects and genres of literature; 3) mothers should oversee a child’s reading, and (4) reading is a necessary part of education and citizenship.

The General Federation’s booklist advocates the home as the primary place of influence on a child’s reading habits and the mother as responsible for “the guiding of reading” and for keeping children from “weak and vicious books [that] undermine character” (Olcott 14). Orton Lowe’s book *Literature for Children* (1922) perpetuates the eighteenth-century idea of Republican Motherhood; the belief that it is mother’s duty to select appropriate reading material and oversee books read in the home. Clara Hunt’s *What Shall We Read to the Children* (1915) affirms the tradition by placing the mother in the role of selecting appropriate reading material. Hunt writes, “The mother herself, from her familiarity with her child and the book under consideration, must decide when the right time has come to introduce a new story” or when there is a need to omit one (106). The general public also accepted the idea that it was a mother’s responsibility to act as a guiding light by directing her child’s reading. *The Publishers’ Weekly* printed the following comment in 1920:

> By dint of continuous publicity in women’s magazines, in clubs and organizations of all kinds, it has become a common thing for mothers really to know and understand the problems of a diet for children. Is it not

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26 According to Catherine Hobbs, in colonial America, the majority of women were taught to read without being taught to write. In the economic and social transformations that followed the American Revolution of 1774, women came to play a greater role in literacy as participants in and circulators of a new ideology of literacy. They became Republican Mothers and claimed responsibility for the basic education of their children, which often meant preparing their sons to be future citizens of the new Republic.
possible to make it equally the fashion to know about their intellectual diet?  

Publishers’ Weekly, along with Lowe’s and Hunt’s books on children’s literature, show how the ideology of Republican Motherhood continued into the twentieth century, reaffirming the belief that women were naturally suited to be caretakers and moral safeguards of society. An article written in July 1919 in the General Federation Magazine underscores the popular cultural view of the importance of women’s involvement in protecting children: “No more urgent work faces the women of America in the reconstruction period than the safeguarding of our child population” (11).

Additionally, texts on reading children’s literature took on a new importance after World War I as the rise of Americanism directed the nation’s attention to issues of citizenship. Reading guided by the church, school, and public library played a role in molding children’s character; however, reading in the home was said to exert a more powerful, direct, and daily influence on children.  

Many of the books recommended for children by the General Federation contain themes of patriotism and also suggest the importance of understanding other cultures and

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27 Members of the General Federation also treated reading as a necessary practice for good health much like diet and exercise. For instance, the General Federation’s pamphlet The Reading Hour states “the habit of daily reading is as essential to a normal individual as the habit of regular eating, sleeping, exercise, work and play” (Program records, Sherman). The Child’s First Books (1925) also uses the metaphor of “physiological digestion” when discussing the importance of cultivating proper reading habits for children. It states, “Books for the pre-school child, like his diet, must be selected with discretion and a sense of balance and ration” (3). Many of the General Federation’s recommended texts compare the practice of reading to other “habits of health” necessary for “mental hygiene” (4).

28 The General Federation of Women’s Clubs developed and circulated a “model home library” where it was suggested that at least one-fourth of the shelf space be dedicated to children’s literature.
stress the need for reading about a wide-range of subject matter in different genres. For instance, Florence W. Barry’s *A Century of Children’s Books* (1923) offers a history of children’s literature grounded in a historical context beginning with eighteenth-century and ballads and ending with nineteenth-century poetry. While *Books to Grow On* (1916) groups books under a broad range of divisions including, “Romance and Poetry: Hero-Stories, Wonder-Tales, Myths, and National Fairy-Tales”, “Religion and Behavior,” “Citizenship and Education,” “History and Biography,” and “Travel and Adventure.” The majority of guides to children’s reading advocated by the General Federation of Women’s Clubs recommended a host of books under diverse categories such as physical activity, occupations, amusement, science, and nature. Examples of specific children’s books thought to be acceptable range from Lucille Gulliver’s *Friendship of Nations: A Story of the Peace Movement* (1912) to J. R. Chitty’s *Things Seen in China* (1922).

While guidebooks for children’s reading used words like “acceptable” and “appropriate,” the booklists themselves provide a diverse array of children’s texts. *The Child’s First Books* (1925) by Elsa Naumburg argues for the importance of recognizing foreign publications because it is only through seeing a diverse array of pictures and hearing tales from around the world that “the child learns how the work of the world is done” (4).

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29 Donna Norton’s contemporary study of twentieth-century children’s literature suggests that children’s books from 1856-1903 contained the most overt themes of patriotism with conventional gender roles—men joined the military and women volunteered to help wounded soldiers.

30 In the introduction to *The Child’s First Books* (1925), Naumburg argues children need good literature because it is “a mirror of life” (3). In order to represent a complicated and rich view of the world, children need to be exposed to foreign publications. *The Three Owls: A Book About Children’s Book* (1925) by Anne Carroll Moore warns against children’s books that “are being devised for quick sales rather to fit the book or to please the child for whom the book was intended” (64). Additionally, Mary Graham Bonner’s *A Parent’s Guide to Children’s Reading* (1926) included blank pages at the end for children to add their own favorite books to the list. Overall, the reading guides recommended by the General Federation of Women’s Clubs offer informed suggestions for children’s literature rather than requirements.
The General Federation of Women’s Clubs was interested in promoting a proper course of citizen training for children through reading, but part of the process of becoming a citizen also involved an awareness of other countries and an appreciation of other cultural customs. Naumburg’s text *The Child’s First Books* (1925) also poses the question, “Is it not possible even at the pre-school age to develop an appreciation of other people and other ways, so that a new generation may grow up ready to join in a league of world peace and co-operation?” (10). Overall, the booklists make an effort to introduce cross-cultural texts and address the cultures of other countries.\(^{31}\) The General Federation of Women’s Clubs saw children as the future citizens of the United States. Far from adopting an exclusive or limited construction of citizenship, clubwomen promoted an ideal type of citizenship which started by encouraging children to read and become life-long readers.

In addition to reading books, the General Federation of Women’s Clubs also considered oratory an important aspect of performing citizenship. The skill of oratory functioned as another facet of the General Federation’s campaign for active citizenship. The purpose of speech is “that of convincing and persuading, exciting and swaying, the particular multitude expected or assembled.” In 1924, the General Federation of Women’s Clubs advertised an “Oratorical Contest for Young Citizens” in the *General Federation News*. The purpose of the national contest was to generate an increased interest in American history, specially the United States constitution, among students in public, private, and parochial secondary schools. Mrs. W. R. Alvord, chairman of

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\(^{31}\) It is worth noting that at least two of the recommended reading guides point to a dearth of American children’s literature and history.
Citizenship Training in the General Federation, explains the goal of the project to the public, “This contest will provide citizenship background for our young people, creating in them a respect for the fundamental law of the land and awakening an intelligent interest in national ideals and problems” (General Federation News, May 1924, 9). In addition to providing young people with valuable information about good citizenry, the General Federation of Women’s Clubs advocated the medium of oratory as a “democratic art” in which anyone could participate. The skill of oratory taught children about the persuasive function of language and how to generate change or rhetorical action in their audience. Clubwomen believed that oratory was one of the most important principles of effective citizenship.

Soldiers and children as well as the General Federation of Women’s Clubs extended their citizenship campaign to foreign-born citizens. The trend of increasing immigration before the United States entered World War I in 1917 led to a nationwide focus on immigration that often advocated prescriptive frameworks whereby non-Americans would be somehow transformed into Americans. By the mid-1920s, Americans became increasingly intolerant toward foreigners and unwilling to consider educating new immigrants. Instead, the official emphasis in dealing with immigrant groups shifted to restriction and enforcement of exclusion. The larger public and the General Federation of Women’s Clubs differed in their approaches on how to assimilate

32 It is striking to note that this emphasis on enforcement and exclusion still holds sway in official immigration policy today. We are still debating the question of who should be considered a modern day citizen. USA Today cites immigration as “highly divisive issue” in the presidential election. As of now, Congress has failed to enact any new immigration legislation because of the split between supporters of more stringent enforcement to curb illegal entry into the U.S. and supporters of amnesty for illegal immigrants (Online 2008).
immigrants and educate them about American citizenship. In a speech given at the General Federation of Women’s Clubs Los Angeles Biennial Convention in 1925, Oswald Ryan argues that the United States should fear increasing immigration:

Thousands of [immigrants] are being bootlegged into America, the vast majority being malcontents from other countries, war-ridden countries where they have learned to disrespect all law. The language of these people is not our language; the heroes of these people are not our heroes; their traditions are not our traditions; their banners are not our banners.

(General Federation News, July-August, 1925)

Ryan’s speech at the General Federation of Women’s Clubs’ convention reflects a prevalent negative and fear-driven attitude toward the growing population of foreign-born citizens. In sharp contrast to Ryan’s attitude, the General Federation promoted an inclusive ideology of citizenship by advocating that native and foreign-born citizens should share the same rights and civic relationships. This sentiment is echoed in the General Federation Magazine and other promotional materials. Clubwomen publicly argued, “the right of the immigrant is opportunity for the same normal human and civic relationships we enjoy” (General Federation Magazine, March 1919, 21).

As an organization that received government support for its projects, the General Federation was in a position to influence the development of public policies aimed at foreign-born citizens. In the General Federation’s pamphlet Ninety Days of Opportunity, the Commissioner of Naturalization endorsed the organization’s outreach efforts:

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33 The immigrant response(s) to the Americanization movement is beyond the scope of this paper. However, several studies have revealed that immigrant women in particular were resistant to Americanization efforts. See John McClymer’s article “Gender and the ‘American Way of Life’” for a useful critique of the movement.
There is no phase of the fine, constructive work which the General Federation of Women’s Clubs is doing that stands out as of greater importance than that of aiding in the preparation of our foreign-born friends for the duties and responsibilities which accompany the acquisition of the privilege of citizenship. I would be glad to have you inform those of your organization who are especially interested in this phase of the work that I will be pleased to offer all possible help in connection with work of the character which has been mentioned and which they are in such an advantageous position to support and make successful. (emphasis in original)

The General Federation of Women’s Clubs’ reform efforts in the twentieth century received both public and governmental support, which allowed the organization to reach a wide audience by circulating their propaganda concerning foreign-born citizens. Through the organization’s rhetorical campaign for citizenship, club members had an opportunity to participate in shaping the nation’s civic identity.

The General Federation saw raising the standard of citizenry across the nation as one of their primaries duties. They approached foreign-born citizenship with the same ideology of mass education for improvement as with children and soldiers. As early as 1920, the General Federation of Women’s Clubs required that state federated clubs study naturalization and immigration laws so club members would be considered “legal” experts on the subject. In conjunction with the clubs’ directed course of study, the General Federation launched the “Ninety Days of Opportunity” campaign which was designed to help immigrants prepare for the citizenship examination during the ninety
days following their petitions for naturalization. The campaign encouraged clubwomen to select review materials and conduct citizenship classes covering subjects ranging from the American government to the rights and obligations of American citizens. The General Federation did not believe the process of naturalization alone qualified an individual for citizenship, rather they viewed citizenship as a process that required explicit training. The *Ninety Days of Opportunity* pamphlet demonstrates the General Federation of Women’s Clubs desire to improve the standards of citizenship across the United States by providing adequate training. The pamphlet reminds clubwomen of their responsibility and role in supporting the education of citizenship: “By concerted action, earnest co-operation, and an insistent demand that the examination be on vital principles and live appreciation not only of benefits and privileges bestowed but of obligations and responsibilities imposed, you may very materially aid in raising the standard of our naturalized citizenry.” As opposed to the general public, the General Federation of Women’s Clubs firmly believed that citizenship was an acquired trait rather than an inherent one. Individuals were not born as citizens; citizenship must be taught. The organization’s *Americans All* pamphlet published in 1928 states:

One of the most valuable results of Americanization programs has been the reaction upon the consciousness of the more thoughtful and patriotic citizen. We had come to accept the rights and privileges of American citizenship without considering our responsibilities. We assumed that American ideals were inherent, forgetting both the eugenic and associate effect or great foreign-born population with its different political, moral, and spiritual standards. A deeper realization of the duties of citizenship,
and a revival of interest in the study of the Constitution of the United States and of those gems of literature which laud America are most helpful signs of the renaissance of American patriotism.

The General Federation’s ideology of citizenship included efforts at mass education for which they assumed responsibility and expected the public to follow suit. These pamphlets were primarily designed counter the general public’s attitude toward immigration and further educate Americans on assimilation policies.

The General Federation’s of Women’s Clubs rhetorical campaign also included efforts to engage the growing immigrant population. The “Ninety Days of Opportunity” campaign also suggested that clubwomen be present in court during immigrant examinations and set up a program for community fellowship and celebration after the examination. Clubwomen invited newly naturalized immigrants to bring their families and give a brief talk. Suggested topics for the new citizens were “Why I came to America,” “What I bring to America,” or “What America means to me.” In a time of relentless nativism in the United States, members of the General Federation worked to extend civic opportunities and benefits to newly naturalized immigrants across the United States. Members were especially prominent in organizing national efforts to help immigrants gain increased access and opportunities in U.S. society through Americanization citizenship programs. The General Federation attempted to develop alternative ways to promote citizenship with new immigrants and oratory provided a democratic way for the majority of new citizens to participate in the discussion by supporting speaking and reading opportunities.
Part of the General Federation of Women’s Clubs’ cultural work regarding citizenship from 1920 to 1928 included nation-building through community development. The General Federation of Women’s Clubs’ pamphlet *One Nation Indivisible* was widely distributed and revised between 1926 and 1928. The document was designed to foster a sense of duty in clubwomen to reach out to immigrant women. Although club members were clearly part of and participated in a larger context of xenophobia and underlying imperialism present during the Americanization movement, many of their reading initiatives suggest they wanted the public to learn more about the lives and histories of immigrants entering the United States in order to facilitate a more positive posture toward immigrant assimilation. In order to persuade members of the public, the General Federation encouraged the development of local community programs as vehicle to contest racist and marginalizing definitions of citizenship. For instance, *One Nation Indivisible* encourages clubwomen to “Establish classes and recreation centers for youths who must work [and] encourage such movements as the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts.” The pamphlet highlights the important relationship between community development and good citizenship. More specifically, it underscores the need for “converting knowledge into action.” The “Ninety Days of Opportunity” campaign, the along with promotional pamphlets including *Americans All* as well as *One Nation Indivisible* all advocated a continued focus on action and community outreach. The Chairman of the Americanization Division, Mrs. Pennybacker, reminded club members: “A successful club woman finishes her job. Our assistance in preparing the foreign-born for citizenship and in arranging welcome ceremonies has proven so valuable that the work should be continued and extended.”
The General Federation of Women’s Clubs emphasized the role of community in developing good citizens. The organization also asked club members to help immigrant women in particular learn English by providing childcare while they attended citizenship classes, visiting their neighborhoods and schools, and assisting women in forming clubs. Members of the General Federation believed that a broader, shared view of citizenship would solve world problems such as prevent war, truancy, low wages, and child labor. This new type of citizenship was promoted with the idea that collective action in communities could reach new citizens, immigrant women, and other native-born people who were not participating in local or national affairs. Clubwomen’s efforts toward community building included assisting at naturalization ceremonies, speaking to the public about citizenship, teaching citizenship classes, throwing neighborhood parties, and helping other women start new clubs. For example, the Santa Barbara Club of California developed a “truly neighborly spirit” by giving parties, but also by allowing other organizations who were interested in giving parties for Americanization classes to use their clubhouse rent-free (“Report of American Citizenship, Sherman program records, 1924-1926). In Connecticut, women’s clubs recruited immigrant women to attend citizenship classes while providing childcare for mothers who received instruction. In Pennsylvania, clubwomen remained active in aiding Naturalization Courts and financing adult education while in South Dakota, clubwomen attended courts to present a token to new citizens (“Report of American Citizenship, Sherman program records, 1924-1926). Delaware’s citizenship report echoes the General Federation’s focus on creating good citizens through a focus on unity and community. The report reads,
The outstanding feature of the work in the state is the completeness of the program and the feeling of good fellowship that is being slowly and solidly built up between the different national groups represented in the foreign-born population of the state, and the old native-born residents through participation in community enterprises.

The *Americans All* pamphlet also illustrates the General Federation’s efforts at defining citizenship in an inclusive manner because it advocates the “inclusion of the foreign-born woman in all community activities” (4). The *General Federation Magazine* also contains the article “What Women’s Clubs Can Do” that highlights the ways in which clubwomen can participate in local community activities in order to assist new citizens. The article instructs clubwomen to develop community centers and activities in order to increase the participation of foreign-born citizens:

> The development of community life means putting an end to exclusiveness and preferential social groups for the benefit of the community and of the nation. Americanization cannot be imposed from the top down. It must be a getting together of all elements [to achieve] mutual understanding and harmony which will serve the best interests of America. (March 1919, 10)

In a time of great confusion for the nation, the General Federation of Women’s Clubs sought to formulate their own efforts toward nation building through increased community development.

In response to anti-immigration sentiments, the General Federation of Women’s Clubs developed several reading initiatives aimed at increasing tolerance towards immigrants and educating the public on the shared obligations and characteristics of
American citizenship. The General Federation of Women’s Clubs advocated reading short biographies of immigrants as a strategy to promote identification between immigrants and native-born citizens. In the pamphlet *Americans All*, the General Federation offered several suggested programs to help immigrants embrace American citizenship. The first part of the program was dedicated to patriotic readings including Abraham Lincoln’s “The Meaning of the Declaration of Independence,” Henry Ward Beecher’s “The American Flag,” Edward A. Steiner’s “Essentials of Americanism,” and Bayard Taylor’s “America” (6). The second portion of the program suggested reading short biographies of famous immigrants including Augustus Saint-Gaudens, Walter Damrosch, Carl Schurz, and Theodore Thomas.\(^3\) The final part of the program suggested open discussions on immigration as it affected American ideals and traditions, industry, international relations, and the immigrant himself (7). Another program found in the pamphlet *Ninety Days of Opportunity* suggests reading “The American Flag” by Joseph Rodman Drake along with singing the Star Spangled Banner followed by a social hour for newly naturalized citizens. In terms of educating themselves and the wider public, clubwomen worked to generate feelings of empathy, cooperation, and harmony. Each of the biographies recommend on the General Federation’s pamphlet assumes that reading about the conditions surrounding immigration and Americanization will combat public indifference and the limitations of prejudices. The suggested programs reflect the General Federation of Women’s Clubs’ belief in the ability of reading to create a union of native and foreign-born citizens.

\(^3\) Augustus Saint-Gaudens was an Irish-born American sculptor. Walter Damrosch was a German-born American conductor. Among many accomplishments, Carl Schurz was the first German-born American elected to the United States Senate. Theodore Thomas was a German-born American violinist and was the founder of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.
The General Federation generally recommended books on immigration and Americanization that supported the following beliefs about citizenship: immigrant citizenship is an act of choice, national life is expanding, and knowledge can promote peace unity among “citizens of the world.” Common themes also highlight empathy toward individuals, a desire for common understanding, and struggles of racism. Members of the General Federation of Women’s Clubs hoped that reading would change the public’s attitude toward immigration. Specifically, they believed that reading immigrant narratives could create identification and understanding in a rapidly changing nation. In the process, clubwomen lobbied for a more broad-minded conception of citizen that included previously disenfranchised individuals like themselves. For instance, the General Federation of Women’s Clubs recommended *From Alien to Citizen* (1914) where Edward A. Steiner states his purpose in writing is to “allay prejudice” and to impress upon native and foreign-born individuals the importance of citizenship that has been “too lightly held” (17, 249). The General Federation believed that reading personal narratives like Steiner’s offered a different perspective on American citizenship that could help the nation grow.

For the General Federation of Women’s Clubs, an emerging aspect of civic duty was knowledge of immigrants’ histories, institutions, and politics. To direct the public’s reading, the General Federation recommended reading a range of materials from biographies to qualitative studies to increase awareness. For instance, the pamphlet entitled “Americans All” recommended reading short biographies or personal narratives of well-known “adopted Americans” like Jacob A. Riis, Edward A. Steiner, and Mary Antin to learn more about individuals who chose to become Americans citizens and their
experiences of adapting to different laws and customs. The General Federation’s pamphlet also provided extensive bibliographies of acceptable sources to libraries, universities, and state federated clubs. For instance, clubwomen recommended books other autobiographies including *The Soul of an Immigrant* (1922) by Constantine M. Panunzio, *An American in the Making* (1917) by M. E. Ravage, and *Caste and Outcast* (1923) by Dhan Gopal Mukerji. Personal narratives written by immigrants themselves offered a way “to see the alien as a potential citizen and treat him as such” (Steiner 17).

Other recommended texts draw attention to the “soul struggles” and humiliating experiences of immigrants in order to generate “more sympathy toward the foreigner” (Panuzio x). In other words, the texts function as way of creating identification with the immigrant. For instance, in *The American Immigration Collection* (1928), Constantine M. Panuzio writes, “For after all my only desire is that this little book may help Americans to understand, a little more fully perhaps, what fire the immigrant passes

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35 Jacob Riis was a famous Danish immigrant best known for his pioneering work in journalism and photography. He was one of the first photographers to use “flash” to document the slums of New York City and advocate for other poor migrants and immigrants. The General Federation of Women’s Clubs recommended his autobiography *The Making of an American* (1901). Edward Steiner’s *From Alien to Citizen: The Story of My Life in America* (1914), which was also recommended by the General Federation, documented his immigrant experiences from Austria to the United States. Steiner was the Rand Chair of Applied Christianity at Grinnell College in Iowa in 1903 and was accused of being unpatriotic during his tenure because he advocated peace and would tolerate no hate toward the Germans. Mary Antin was a well-known author and immigrant rights activist. Born to a Jewish family in Polotsk, she immigrated to Boston with her family in 1894. The General Federation recommended Antin’s autobiography *The Promised Land* (1912) which described her assimilation into American culture.

36 The General Federation of Women’s Clubs recommended personal narratives in order to generate sympathy and understanding of immigrants in America. They believed the public would find the autobiographical stories more engrossing and realistic than the impersonal facts and statistics often printed about issues of immigration. Constantine Panunzio was an Italian immigrant who wrote about his personal experiences of being a “stranger” in America as he was unable to speak the language and ignorant of American customs when he first arrived in Boston. M. E. Ravage emigrated from France and his book attempted to assuage native-born anxieties about a foreign invasion. Dhan Gopal Mukerji is considered the first successful man of letters from India. In his autobiography, Mukerji wrote about his experiences living in India and America and provided a rich description of life and responsibility in the Brahmin caste.
through as he lifts his face toward the real America” (xiii). Certain texts also remind the larger public of America’s promise of democracy and equal opportunity. In *Americans by Adoption* (1920), Joseph Husband argues that the United States, above all other countries, should offer “the equality of opportunity for achieving distinction which has always been the theory of this democracy” (xii). The reading recommendations also reveal clubwomen’s concern regarding international relations and treat education and awareness as critical components for lasting peace following the war. In a pamphlet re-issued by the General Federation’s Division of Americanization, Chairman Lola Clark Pearson states:

> Five million people living among us owe allegiance to a foreign flag and one hundred and sixty-five thousand more may come legitimately each year. Our attitude toward these and the ten million other foreign-born who, though loyal Americans, cherish kindly memories of the land of their birth, must enkindle love and respect; then peace and goodwill will radiate from them to the far corners of the earth. (*One Nation Indivisible*, 1926-28)

Members of the General Federation took a wider view of the twentieth century and considered the future status of citizenship in the United States. Clubwomen saw collective reading as a way to “quiet all fears of divided allegiance” and a means to creating a common language in an expanding nation (Husband, xv).

The General Federation of Women’s Clubs’ multivalent campaign for citizenship was to “quite fears of divided allegiance” and to promote a unified nation through reading American literature, guiding the selection of children’s literature, and exposing the public
to powerful immigrant testimonies about the process of becoming a citizen. The General Federation played a critical role in shaping the nation’s goals in terms of the future of citizenship and although imperfect, club members were promoting a degree of inclusivity that was missing from the status quo. The organization’s reading lists and pamphlets represent evidence of a sophisticated campaign designed to promote patriotism in particular ways and persuade the American public to follow act on their recommendations and guidelines for effective citizenship in the post-World War I era, which was a time of fear and confusion about what America stood for and who could be counted as an American.
Chapter 3

An Equal Opportunity for the Citizenship of All Americans: Drama and Pageantry as Visual Representations of Citizenship

America is a land of but one people, gathered from many countries. Some came for love of money and some for love of freedom. Whatever the lure that brought us, each has his gift. Irish lad and Scot, Englishman and Dutch, Italian, Greek, French, Spaniard, Slav, Teuton, Norse—all have come bearing gifts and have laid them on the altar of America...All brought art, fancies of the mind, woven in wood and wool, silk, stone or metal—rugs and baskets—each brought some homelike, familiar thing. And all brought hands with which to work. And all brought minds that could conceive.

Elizabeth Hines Hanley, *The Gifts They Brought*, 1922

Coercion, as much as liberty, has been intrinsic to our history and to the process of becoming American.


As part of a broad and innovative rhetorical campaign for mass education for improved American citizenship, the General Federation of Women’s Clubs promoted visual representations of citizenship through drama and pageantry. The organization promoted what they saw as healthy civic habits and goals to individuals and the nation through these sophisticated art forms. This chapter argues that there is a distinct visual rhetoric in the symbolic and cultural representation of American citizenship in the early to mid-twentieth century that can be seen in the patriotic plays and pageants promoted by clubwomen. The immediate postwar years marked the pinnacle of the Americanization
movement, as it had grown into one of the largest social and political movements in American history (McClymer 18). In the emotionally charged atmosphere of World War I, the United States government endorsed dozens of Americanization campaigns in schools, at settlement houses, and at workplaces which were designed to teach immigrants English, the essentials of American citizenship, employment skills, and faith in American values and institutions. Even conservative estimates calculate that thousands of Americanization programs existed and that during this time the United States Bureau of Education’s list of public and private agencies that engaged in some kind of Americanization work contained over 108 entries (McClymer 3). While many of these programs were intolerant of cultural and political difference, others felt that national unity should develop within a democratic process and that immigrants must participate in the shaping of national culture. The Americanization movement reflects both a complicated and contradictory time in history where much of the nation engaged in creating a public understanding of what it meant to be a “true” American. The General Federation of Women’s Clubs was no exception and did not escape the era’s cultural imprinting. Their rhetorical campaign for citizenship reveals both a desire to involve immigrants in the process of constructing a model of improved American citizenry as well as a wish to view Americanization as a process of emancipation for immigrants. Clubwomen of the General Federal and their visual campaign for citizenship represent both the inventiveness and constraint involved in creating an American identity during the Americanization era. While the Americanization era primarily endorsed an idealized notion of white American citizenship, the nature of visual representation promoted by clubwomen attempted to open up the possibility of cultural exchange and inclusiveness.
because it offered multiple ways for community members to participate. The first part of this chapter looks at the General Federation of Women’s Clubs’ pre-suffrage activities and how state-federated clubs promoted drama as an early visual mode of citizenship in club meetings before advocating pageantry for adults and children in the post-suffrage era, which is discussed in the second part of the chapter.

The General Federation of Women’s Clubs’ interest in drama initially began as an internal activity for state-federated clubs in the United States. In *The History of the Woman’s Club Movement in America* (1898), Jane Croly demonstrates how clubwomen across the nation studied the history of the drama and how it applied to American life. Along with studying literature and parliament, clubs often formed a specific committee dedicated to recommending the best dramatic literature and observing the best plays presented during the season. For instance, in 1888, the Des Moines Woman’s Club created a standing committee as did the Woman’s Club of Fargo, North Dakota in 1894 (462, 321). The drama committee was often responsible for creating a syllabus of plays and criticisms to be read in club meetings. Members of drama committees often attended drama productions in the community and advised club members on the best ones to see. Many clubs across the United States established drama, music and art programs with frequent productions of plays starring club members. The “Drama Groups” formed in many clubs offered members of the club and the community an opportunity to learn directly from the directors, actors, producers, and set designers of the drama department. In 1897, the New Century Club celebrated its eighth anniversary by performing a short play and song titled “The Song of the Years” written by two club members (Croly 329). In 1898, the Drama Committee of the Central Club of Norwalk, Connecticut put on a
play—“the first of a series of ‘dramatic teas,’ which were found to be very popular” (Croly 311). It was common for women’s clubs to perform reenactments of Shakespeare’s plays as well, often dressing in elaborate costumes.37 Clubs also sponsored guest speakers to lecture on different aspects of drama. In 1893, the Lawrence Woman’s Club selected Mr. H. M. Ticknor, Professor of Elocution at Boston University, to address the club on matters of “The Drama” (Croly 630). The New Orleans Quarante Club chose “Drama” as a topic in 1896 to be lectured on and discussed by select members of the club. The subjects chosen for lecture and debate occupied public attention at the time (Croly 521). The same year the Arena Club of New Orleans invited Joseph Jefferson to speak on “The Drama” (Croly 519). The lecture was given at Tulane University and five hundred members and guests were present to hear Jefferson speak. After reading Shakespeare’s Henry V in 1897, the New England’s Woman’s Club attended a public reading of the play by a university professor. Members were proud that “they [did] not simply read; they [studied] the great dramas, using various commentaries and critiques” (Croly 50). Typically clubs spent four to six months studying each play in club meetings, preparing presentations, and listening to public lectures before moving on to another drama in order to “get out of a play all possible knowledge” (Croly 798).

The General Federation of Women’s Clubs’ focus on drama in clubs across the United States shaped their initial interest in visual rhetoric as a way of understanding Greek and Roman history and eventually contributed to using Shakespeare as a lens for complicated social and cultural issues such as women’s education and feminism before

37 In Carol Mattingly’s Apropriate[ing] Dress: Women’s Rhetorical Style in Nineteenth-Century America (2002), she points out that it was common in early club meetings for women to perform Shakespeare’s plays dressed as the male characters. Mattingly argues that cross-dressing for nineteenth-century women represented an opportunity to adopt power through the visual rhetoric of dress.
suffrage was passed. Founded in 1885, the Women’s Literary Club on Dunkirk of New York developed the following method to study drama: “Its method was to first become familiar with a play and then study it analytically, afterward making it the subject of comparative study” (Croly 890). The Dallas Shakespeare Club, which first organized in 1886, provided a different model for understanding drama which many clubs later adopted. Dallas clubwomen thoroughly studied each of Shakespeare’s plays for six months. Each play was taken act by act, scene by scene during club meetings. Club members also wrote and answered a series of analytical questions for each play. For instance, the club read Love’s Labor Lost and discussed simple questions ranging from “How old was Shakespeare when this play was written?” to more complex ones such as “Mention some of the books with which Shakespeare shows himself familiar” (Croly 1099). Reading programs indicate that women’s clubs focused broadly on drama, however, as Elizabeth Long notes, Shakespeare’s influence was disproportionate and “accounted for more than half of the programs of Texas reading groups in 1902-1903” (Seaholm as qtd in Long 45). This was also true for dozens of clubs throughout the United States. Many adopted Shakespeare’s moniker for their club names, such as the Shakespeare Club of Idaho Springs and the Shakespeare Sunshine Club of Claremore, Oklahoma. Some clubs devoted their entire course of study to Shakespeare like The Woman’s Shakespearean Club of Barnesville, Georgia. Other clubs, like The Pleiades Club of Idaho, committed two years to the study of Shakespeare. Many literary clubs originated as Shakespeare societies before expanding to include other interests like American literature, history, fine arts, and cultural geography. As early as 1883, New Hampshire Shakespeare societies formed the first literary organizations of women (Croly
Additionally, the Kansas Lebanon Shakespeare Class started in 1882 as an informal organization of women who met to study Shakespeare and by 1893 broadened its interests to American history and literature (Croly 755). The Shakespeare Study Club of Grand Rapids, Michigan also originated as a Shakespeare study group in 1891 in the Ladies’ Literary Club before changing its name (Croly 694).

The popularity of Shakespearean drama in women’s clubs reflected how popular and widespread Shakespeare was in America. In *Highbrow / Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America*, Lawrence Levine demonstrates how performances and parodies of Shakespeare represented a prominent form of entertainment across the United States. He makes the argument that Shakespeare’s popularity with the general public shifted to a more genteel audience in the twentieth century. Increasingly, Shakespeare was appropriated by the cultural elite and became a staple of polite society or high culture and was read for education as opposed to entertainment. By appropriating high culture, clubwomen could also appropriate its cultural authority. Long before suffrage was officially granted, reading Shakespeare legitimized clubwomen’s desire to address subjects such as women’s education, women’s role in public life, and power relations between the sexes in society and marriage.

Club reading programs from the Oklahoma Federation of Women’s Clubs reveal how clubwomen used their reading of Shakespeare to address the ideal(s) of womanhood. While reading Shakespeare’s tragedies like *Othello* and *King Lear* from 1909-1910, members of the Quest Club of Claremore, Oklahoma presented on the topics “Shakespeare’s Finest Type of Woman Shakespeare’s Finest Type of Woman” and “Changes in Shakespeare’s feminine types in earlier and later plays.” Other scholars
have found historical evidence that women found it natural “to turn from a discussion of *Othello* to questioning how far the rule of father over daughter can be justified, or from a discussion of the *Merchant of Venice* to regretting the lack of professional opportunities for women” (Thompson and Roberts 5). During 1915-1916, the Fortnightly Club of Durant, Oklahoma read representative comedies including *As You Like It* and *The Winter’s Tale*, and clubwomen discussed “Rosalind, Shakespeare’s Ideal Woman” and “The Women of Shakespeare.” Other popular topics included “Contrast Shakespeare’s Women with his Men.” Clubwomen used Shakespeare’s heroines to examine the moral, intellectual, and emotional capacities of contemporary women like themselves. In 1918, members of the Clionian Club in Altus, Oklahoma read Shakespeare’s history play *Henry IV* and presented papers on “The Women of Shakespeare’s English Histories” and “The Female Element in Henry the Fourth: Why Introduced and How Pictured?” Starting as early as 1882 and continuing well into the twentieth century, clubwomen engaged their female counterparts in Shakespeare’s plays. It was common for clubs to read Shakespeare’s plays and then explore the roles of women, both historical and contemporary, within the plays.

The drama movement in the early twentieth century was primarily led by clubwomen. In 1910, members of forty-one women’s clubs in the Chicago area organized the Drama League of America, which was designed to create “a Dramatic Renaissance, Nation-wide in its scope.” The call states:

> We no longer prate about the possibilities of a renaissance of the drama; we believe it is at hand. From every part of the country has come to us news of an awakening on the part of the public toward the art of drama.
All that is needed now is the turning of all these streams of influence into one deep channel. With such a might torrent of public opinion using its power for worthy plays and better stage conditions, surely the theatre in America will receive practical benefit. (New York Times, March 1910)

With the launch of the Drama League of America by clubwomen from Illinois in 1910, the General Federation of Women’s Clubs placed its Department of Drama under the direction of the League and advised every woman’s club in the country to join the organization (Hamilton 163). So common was clubwomen’s participation in the twentieth-century drama movement that in 1912 Drama critic Clayton Hamilton wrote, “Any movement to improve the theatre-going public, any movement to uplift the audience, must therefore be directed toward the women of America; and it is logical and fitting that the campaign of education and the campaign of the organisation should be conducted by women and by women’s clubs” (164).

State-federated women’s clubs across the United States began with internal activities that promoted self-culture and education by studying drama in the nineteenth century, but their purpose shifted outward after World War and continued after suffrage toward a focus on training Americans to become better citizens. Years of experience participating in club activities led clubwomen to place an emphasis on the importance of reading drama in American culture and for developing a unique form of America drama. In 1923, the General Federation of Women’s Clubs produced and circulated a series of study programs or outlines on the subject of drama for the use of women’s clubs.

As of 2009, the Des Moines Women’s Clubs still sponsors a drama scholarship for graduating seniors. Illinois General Federation of Women’s Clubs also offers performing arts scholarships for graduating students interested in pursuing drama during college.
and other voluntary associations across the nation. The first outline in the series *The Drama I: Historical Development and Modern Movements* was divided into three parts: 1) Development of the Drama, 2) Modern Movements of the Drama, and 3) Planning the Club Program. The pamphlet also included a list of reference books, suitable plays for a variety of occasions, and magazines for up-to-the-minute information on drama and theater in the United States. The study outline aimed to provide at least three year’s worth of material for clubs across the country. The first page of the outline states: “Of all the arts the drama is most closely related to life since the material it uses is life itself. Born of the ‘ballad-dance’ of primitive people, the drama has been one of the chief sources of entertainment and education for the human race over a period of three thousand years.” The General Federation of Women’s Clubs promoted the idea that drama offered a way to understand America as an emerging nation. Clubwomen treated drama as a form of education and as a way of improving citizenship by translating the new social sympathy into political action. “Part One: Development of the Drama” started with Greek tragedies from Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. Clubwomen sought to articulate “the conditions of Greek life and citizenship” that allowed them to perfect the genre of tragedy. The pamphlet also treats Roman tragedy and comedy, along with medieval drama, English drama, Shakespearian comedy, and Spanish, French, and German drama. “Part Two: Modern Movements of the Drama” covers inherited traditions, the stage of the nineteenth century, and great actors and directors. Starting with Isben, the pamphlet directs clubwomen to the following themes: “Rise of Modern Realism,” “Realism of France,” “Naturalism in Germany,” “Romanticism,” and recent
Irish, Spanish, and Russian dramas. The pamphlet provides more than a dozen suggested readings under each subject or theme.

PART TWO: MODERN MOVEMENTS OF THE DRAMA
(Arranged for a Year's Study)

"While the drama of thought flowered first in the Northern Countries it has been a definite world-movement, felt sooner or later in England and in Russia, in Japan and in Germany, in America, in Italy, in France, in Spain."—Sheldon Cheney, The New Movement in the Theater (Kennerley).

The modern movements of the drama may be considered as the second in a trilogy of the ages, of which the third remains to be written. It may come with surprising swiftness or require centuries in the unfolding and its importance can only be estimated in retrospect.

1—Prologue: Inherited Traditions.
   The Stage of the Nineteenth Century.
   Great Actors and Directors.

1—The First Great Episode: The Theater of Ideas
   The founding of a new school of drama. The old time conflict between the will of men and the divine order of things gives place to the more common, but not less tragic, struggle with brevity, environment and social conventions. It is a drama of revolt, of protest; often taking the form of the individual pitted with all his puny defiance against a relentless social order.

2—Rise of Modern Realism: Ibsen
   What is Realism? How does it merge into Naturalism?
   Ibsen's contribution to the drama.
   His progress from Romanticism through Realism to Symbolism.
   What is Symbolism?
   (Individual reading of at least three plays)

   Suggested Plays: "Brand"—Romanticism.
   "Doll's House"—Realism.
   "When We Dead Awaken"—Symbolism.

   Group reading and study of "The Doll's House" (Individualism in marriage).

Figure 6. General Federation of Women's Clubs' History of Drama Pamphlet
The General Federation of Women’s Clubs’ extended drama pamphlet was also meant for the larger public. Similar to the American literature pamphlets distributed by the organization, the General Federation Clubs’ drama committee hoped to educate the public and recommend appropriate dramas for viewing in an attempt to create a unified audience.

“Drama in America” was the final subject to be studied by the General Federation
of Women’s Clubs in 1925. As with their support of the study of literature, the General Federation saw American drama as linked to democracy and citizenship. Club members were interested in promoting a genre of drama unique to the United States and the American public. The last section of the club pamphlet *Drama I: Historical Development and Modern Movements* recommended American dramatists including: Percy MacKaye, Eugene O’Neill, Josephine Preston Peabody, Percival Wilde, Susan Glaspell, Alice Brown, Alice Gerstenberg, and Zona Gale. The report from the General Federation’s 11th Biennial Convention indicates that the Drama Department of the General Federation of Women’s Clubs circulated a special edition pamphlet of drama courses which helped them obtain a larger selection of American publications (374). The purpose of the “Drama League” was to create an “audience for indigenous American plays” (375). The General Federation of Women’s Clubs recommended several texts which highlighted the importance of improving American drama including *Plays of the 47 Workshop* (1918) edited by George Baker who observes in the prologue: “the conditions which most speedily will give us American drama able in the number and quality of its plays to hold its own with the drama of other nations” (xxii). The General Federation of Women’s Clubs promoted the idea of the democratic workshop which offered a place to try out plays written at Harvard and Radcliffe. Workshops provided a lab to train young dramatists and create a place in the community for future generations to value the spoken word and produce better American drama. One-act plays were not uniquely patriotic, however they were seen by the General Federation as evidence of

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39 Along with the General Federation of Women’s Clubs, twentieth-century critics saw the emergence of the one-act play as a uniquely American genre linked to a democracy. Some twentieth-century scholars saw one-act plays by MacKaye, George Middleton, Wilde and Eugene O’Neil as the foundation for an American approach to drama and the elevation of theatre to an important social institution.
America’s emerging prominence in drama. The post-suffrage era brought a thin but constant stream of plays about Washington, Lincoln, and other American heroes into popular American culture which were promoted by the General Federation of Women’s Clubs.40

While the influence of drama and theater was widespread starting in the early twentieth century, the General Federation of Women’s Clubs encouraged another visual and dramatic mode of encouraging citizenship and rhetorical education—community pageantry. Members of the General Federation of Women’s Clubs shaped the vision of ideal American citizenship through the publication, circulation, and performance of pageants. In November 1918, one clubwoman wrote: “I know of no way to bring people together and build into them a sense of lofty emotions shared, of political idealism, of noble patriotism, more effectively than through the enactment of a pageant (General Federation Magazine, 26). The General Federation’s involvement in community pageantry represents one historical instance where clubwomen’s focus on self-education transferred outward in an effort to educate and involve the public in the responsibilities of civic duty. During the first half of the twentieth century, pageantry was wildly popular in America for people of all ages. In 1913, William Chauncey Langdon, President of the American Pageant Association, proudly announced: “North and South, East and West, from the cities and from the hay fields, from the mountains and from the seashore—everywhere—the word ‘Pageant’ is heard more and more every year—even every month. The ordinary bystander might well say, ‘It is a craze!’ And so it is” (New York Times 1913). A pageant existed to celebrate almost every occasion: Halloween, Flag Day,

40 For instance, the General Federation of Women’s Clubs promoted Constance D’Arcy Mackay’s Pageant of Patriots (1911) which dealt with the childhoods of several American heroes including George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, John Smith, Daniel Boone, and Abraham Lincoln.
Washington’s Birthday, Columbus Day, Armistice Day, and Christmas are a few examples. Club mothers and workers, elementary and high school teachers, and librarians searched for the right pageant to commemorate holidays unique to Americans. The pageantry movement spanned 1905-1925 and reached its peak with the founding of the American Pageant Association in 1913. Although the history of pageantry is vast, this chapter will focus on patriotic American pageants beginning in the early twentieth century used by the General Federation of Women’s Clubs use of visual rhetoric to educate the public about a more active and informed citizenship. This section also illustrates the ways in which clubwomen’s leadership role in the pageantry movement has been overlooked. The General Federation of Women’s Clubs displayed vigorous leadership during the pageantry movement. For instance, clubwomen were writers, directors, producers, and heads of civic committees (Prevots 49). A great number of women also wrote books with extensive bibliographies and directions for pageant production including musical and costume suggestions. By penning, promoting, and performing patriotic pageants, the General Federation of Women’s Clubs claimed for itself and for American clubwomen a very active role in shaping the vision of American

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41 However, it is important to acknowledge that a long history and tradition of pageantry existed in order to see how the General Federation of Women’s Clubs chose a historic civic ritual to create a modern vision of the nation and to promote a particular kind of citizenship. For books on Medieval pageantry see Heraldry, Pageantry, and Social Display in Medieval England edited by Peter Cross and Maurice Keen. For a discussion of Renaissance pageantry see Jacobean Civic Pageants edited by Richard Dutton. For information on Native American pageantry see Blood Narrative: Indigenous Identity in American Indian and Maori Literary and Activist Texts by Chadwick Allen.

42 In 1994, Karen Blair argued that the “still sparse scholarship [on pageantry] too heavily emphasizes the male contribution and obscures the key role women played in its development” (118).

43 For example, Mary Russell’s How to Produce Plays and Pageants (1923), Josephine Thorp’s Pageants of Today with Full Directions for Costuming (1918), Constance D’Arcy Mackay’s How to Produce Children’s Plays (1915) and Costumes and Scenery for Amateurs; A Practical Working Handbook (1915), and Mary McSorley’s How to Produce Plays and Pageants: A Guide to Their Preparation and Production for the Church and Community (1923).
national identity through pageantry.\footnote{While Janet Banet-Weiser’s work on beauty pageants differs from my work on citizenship pageants, we both believe that as a genre “pageants reveal the constantly changing and always complicated stories about the nation itself” (Barnet-Weiser 2). Beauty pageants are also examples of civic rituals which reflect a particular vision of the nation’s identity.} While scholars agree on the continuous presence of pageants throughout history and their widespread pervasiveness during the twentieth century, we have not yet considered how patriotic pageants for adults and children functioned as a form of rhetorical education which affected different aspects of citizenship from definitions of citizenship to tensions between native and foreign-born individuals.

In 1925, the General Federation of Women’s Clubs circulated their pamphlet *A Bibliography of Pageants, Masques, Plays* which advocated patriotic pageants and guides to educate the public on their ideology of citizenship and civic duties through visual rhetoric. In the last decades of the nineteenth century through the middle of the twentieth century, the term “citizenship” often meant the mold of the “ideal” citizen or “real” American was essentially someone who was White (Anglo-Saxon) and Protestant. However, it is important to remember that the goal of the General Federation of Women’s Clubs was not to stamp out immigrant culture and identity, but to use pageantry to gain the full participation of immigrants in what clubwomen saw as the hope and promise of American life. The General Federation saw pageantry as both a way to assimilate immigrants into American culture and as a way to showcase their enormous contributions to America. Pageantry allowed for a visual representation of citizenship that provided a new rhetoric surrounding citizenship, often without words. Pageants included a cast of anywhere from one to five hundred people and lasted anywhere from one to two and half hours. The General Federation’s recommended guide *The Makers of*
America: A Civic Ritual (1920) by F. Louise Nardin argues, “There is a growing demand for ways and means by which the principles of Americanism may be crystallized and presented to the American public through dramatic representation and public celebration.” For instance, the recommended civic pageants The Torch: A Pageant of Democracy (1918) and The Answer: A Patriotic Festival (1918) by Josephine Thorp both deal with the themes of protecting American ideals: justice, freedom, and democracy. People of different nations (i.e. France, Spain, Portugal) are welcome in the United States as long as they promise to abide by American laws and to serve the nation. In The Torch, the entire cast sings, “Side by side we come for service/ At thy call, Democracy./ Serving in the fields or trenches/ On the land or on the sea./ Joining hands across the oceans,/ Till mankind shall be free” (55). Thorp’s pageant responds to fear surrounding World War I with images of unity and highlights commonalities among citizens of the United States. Although pageantry promoting Americanism has been considered racist and hegemonic, some evidence indicates that the General Federation of Women’s Clubs believed civic pageantry was “in no sense an entertainment or a device for exploitation,” but rather a way for local communities to participate in the construction and reproduction of a particular national identity.45 The General Federation of Women’s Clubs adopted The New Citizenship (1915) in which Percy MacKaye argues for an urgent need to symbolize to both the eye and ear the historical background and living tradition of America. The selection of lighting, music, and costumes in pageants rendered abstract concepts such as liberty, patriotism, and nation more concrete. For instance, the

45 Some scholars like Gayle Gullet have pointed out the homogenizing effects of pageantry. She points out that businessmen in 1910 were anxious to control a labor force that was sixty percent immigrant so many adopted Americanization programs. For example, Ford Motor Company required immigrants to participate in an Americanization pageant where they were to walk into a “melting pot” in native costumes and come out wearing identical suits and waving identical American flags.
pamphlet recommends Elizabeth Hines Hanley’s *The Gifts They Brought* (1923), in which the cast of characters includes Loyalty, Freedom, National Prejudices, and Intolerance among others. The character Freedom is to wear a “tunic to the knees in silver gray” while Intolerance is to wear “various shades of flaming reds and blacks cut in pointed effects, uneven in length.”

Pageantry provided historical continuity in the post World War I and post-suffrage era because it offered a way to bring past symbols and civic rituals into the modern context of increasing immigration and fear of the loss of democracy: “In times of national crisis we take refugee in the visual construction of citizenship in order to imagine ourselves as part of a larger, cohesive, national American community” (Creef 9). While pageantry offered a simple way to perform citizenship by acting out American civic rituals, participation in these pageants and rituals created an illusion of consensus and community building through mass participation. Visual representations of citizenship, or what noted pageant designer Hazel MacKaye called “graphic,” made it easier for some native and non-native speakers to identify with American history and traditions. 46 The pamphlet *A Bibliography of Pageants, Masques, Plays* also lists Rosamond Kimball’s *The Coming of the Mayflower* (1920) which offers a visual narrative of the adventures of the Pilgrims in the New World. The concept of religious freedom is illustrated in Kimball’s pageant. Early in the pageant, the character of Governor Carver tells the audience: “And here, with thy guidance, we do covenant to set up in this wilderness the Kingdom of Christ, and a state where men shall be free to

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46 Hazel MacKaye was a famous pageant designer who created all of the pageants used in National American Woman Suffrage Association's movement during the early 1900s. She was also married to Percy MacKaye, an acclaimed writer of pageants and masques.
worship as their conscience doth dictate” (11). During the peak of the pageantry movement, clubwomen used pageants to provide visual representations of American history to illustrate the principles of American citizenship to diverse audiences. The majority of immigrants could not yet read in English, so the pageant offered a symbolic and visual interpretation of American culture. In the pageantry era, patriotic pageants helped meet the perceived need for a unified America; they created a visual rhetoric or narrative of citizenship, loyalty, and obedience to the nation.

Pageantry offered a safe and inexpensive way to confront and address the complicated issues surrounding citizenship during the interwar period. The General Federation of Women’s Clubs recommended pageants that could be easily modified based on the numbers of groups included and the length of the musical and dancing features. As opposed to other Americanization efforts, the General Federation’s selection of pageants reveals an attitude of inclusion and expansion in terms of constructing a new definition of citizenship. An overall examination of the civic pageants endorsed by the General Federation identifies several recurrent themes: desire for unity, struggle between the old and new world, national prejudices against immigrants, and American imperialism. F. Louise Jardin’s The Makers of America: A Civic Ritual (1920) aimed to crystallize the principles of Americanism for the American public through dramatic presentation and celebration. It also served as a way to welcome new citizens into the privileges of American citizenship. Rather than an elaborate spectacle, Jardin wished the pageant to be “a solemn ceremonial which, if done with sincerity, cannot fail to impress upon all who witness it the blessings and privileges of American life” (4). The pageant supported the goal of the General Federation of Women’s Clubs to include both native
and foreign-born citizens in an attempt to improve the standards of citizenship within the United States. The foreword states:

One unique and, in the opinion of the committee, important aspect of this ceremonial is that it does not limit the induction into citizenship of aliens only, but provides an equal opportunity for the welcoming into citizenship of all American youth who have, during the previous year, attained their majority. Among our native born there is quite as much of the necessity for the development of respect for law and familiarity with American institutions as among the foreign born. (4)

Like *The Makers of America*, many pageants were designed to become an annual occurrence and promoted as inclusive community affairs. Jardin’s pageant resonates with the same themes and structure of many others—the pageants begins with the arrival of the early settlers, then moves to battles from the Revolutionary War, followed by the reception of new citizens. This pageant, like others recommended by the General Federation of Women’s Clubs, attempted to envision tenets of American citizenship like freedom, industry, and fellowship. It also performed traditional American pastimes such as saluting the flag and singing the Star-Spangled Banner.

Nina Lamkin’s pageant *America, Yesterday and Today* (1917), recommended by the General Federation of Women’s Clubs, aimed to make history “come alive” in a local community.
In terms of organizing a pageant, Lamkin’s guide suggested forming a “Pageant Council” with one or two representative from different groups including women’s clubs (45). In the foreword she explains how pageantry can build a sense of solidarity and unity: “American History, Patriotism, Loyalty, Community Interest and Play, whether of yesterday or today, are themes which strengthen community life anywhere and which build a stronger patriotic loyalty through binding together groups of people who have
common interest” (x). Lamkin’s pageant begins with the “Spirit of Indian Days” which attempts to capture gratitude toward the earth and abundant resources.

The first scene features a “Corn Dance.” Participants dance and chant: “Kitchemanedo,/ Master if Life,/ Kitchemanedo/ Sent us the corn” (8). The next episode of the pageants titled the “Spirit of the Wilderness” which was represented by natural elements including characters dressed as Butterflies, Daisies, Poppies, and Bluebirds. The final episode “Spirit of Patriotism” ends in the emergence of pioneer men, women and children from the wilderness. Lamkin’s pageant attempts to unify the audience through nature and by presenting historical events in a way that illustrates the diverse range of influences on American traditions. Lamkin argues the end result of a community pageant like hers is
“greatly increased civic pride,” “splendid co-operation of the several factions in the town,” and “a new joy in life” (47).

Another important theme for the General Federation of Women’s Clubs was cultural unity. For instance, Fannie R. Buchanan’s *Daughters of Freedom: A Patriotic Ceremonial* (1919) illustrates the importance of cultural unity and exchange among native and foreign-born citizens. The purpose of the pageant is to show how daughters from all nations assemble and celebrate the advent of World Freedom. The union of daughters, Daughters of Freedom, is represented by a mosaic that attempts to blend many world characteristics into a singular design that promotes peace. The pageant begins with and the English Country Dance, French Vintage Dance, and Belgian Traditional Dance Song. Represented countries include Japan, Italy, Portugal, Balkans, Poland, Zion, Czechoslovakia, and America. A girl dressed in the country’s native attire represents each nation. For instance, Portugal is represented by a girl in “a costume of deep green and silver, with draperies of marine blue, and holding a large Portuguese flag she sings the stirring Portuguese hymn” (11). The pageant ends with a display of all of the flags of the Allies grouped around America’s stars and stripes while each person holds their neighbor’s hand. Another example of a pageant focused on cultural unity and eliminating prejudices is Elizabeth Hines Hanley’s *The Gifts They Brought* which includes a large cast of characters such as America, Loyalty, Patriotism, Freedom, National Prejudices, Intolerance, and Old Hates. Suggested groups include Italian, Irish, Scotch, Russian,

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47 In an email exchange, Gail McCormick, the director of the General Federation’s Women’s History and Resource Center, informed me, “GFWC had an Indian Welfare Committee as early as 1921, whose mission was to advocate for education of Native Americans and preservation of their culture. GFWC’s first president with Native American heritage was Roberta Campbell Lawson (1932-1938) of Oklahoma. This committee continued for many years and we have a lot of information about its projects in our magazine and in our program records in the archives. Over the years, the magazine has highlighted clubs made up of Native American women and also clubs with notable women of Native American descent.”
French, and German. The theme of the pageant deals with how the “Peoples of Many Nations” bring gifts from their native lands to America. “Dark Forces” invade America but she protects the many peoples and their gifts. Evils including “Hate” and “Fury” are driven back by “Loyalty” and “Patriotism.” The end result the end of definite groups of people replaced by everyone joined together as “One People.” The prologue sets the tone of the pageant:

America is a land of but one people, gathered from many countries. Some came for love of money and some for love of freedom. Whatever the lure that brought us, each has his gift. Irish lad and Scot, Englishman and Dutch, Italian, Greek, French, Spaniard, Slav, Teuton, Norse—all have come bearing gifts and have laid them on the altar of America…All brought art, fancies of the mind, woven in wood and wool, silk, stone or metal—rugs and baskets—each brought some homelike, familiar thing. And all brought hands with which to work. And all brought minds that could conceive. (4)

The primary purpose of the pageant is to show the audience that foreign-born citizens bring “priceless gifts of love and beauty” to their adopted country. The General

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48 In “Women Progressives and the Politics of Americanization in California, 1915-1920,” Gayle Gullet writes about how Mary Gibson became an officer of the California Federation of Women’s Clubs in 1915 in order to direct Americanization activities statewide and in 1919 served a similar function as the chair of the Americanization Department for the General Federation of Women’s Clubs. Gullet believes that Gibson’s “Homeland Exhibit of Art and Crafts” in California, which was designed to feature the arts, songs, and dances of immigrants, failed to promote a message of pluralism. Gullet also argues that Gibson, along with advocates from the General Federation, failed to create a pageant that would teach both immigrants and native-born individuals the value of creating a new national consensus shared by all citizens. Instead, Gullet believes the clubwomen established themselves as gatekeepers or cultural arbiters who would decide which immigrant gifts to accept and who would determine the worth of those gifts for the larger society.
Federation of Women’s Clubs hoped to bring the groups closer together and demonstrate the unity of their work in building America.

_My Lady’s Shawl: A Pageant of the Shawls of Many Countries_ (1931) by Irene Jean Crandall is another pageant recommended by the General Federation that typifies the theme of inclusiveness and was performed for many organizations across the United States such as women’s clubs, Daughters of the American Revolution chapters, and the Illinois Women’s Press Association. Crandall’s popular pageant emphasized diversity and unity, which aligned with the General Federation’s mission statement. At the beginning of the pageant, the narrator explains its primary purpose, “In this pageantry of shawls from the orient and the occident, the past and the present, we see that with different customs and costumes, nevertheless the women of all countries are united.” The pageant included seventeen episodes and was designed to be easily adaptable allowing for a range of participants from a dozen to one hundred depending on the number of shawls used and countries represented. The characters were women wearing the costumes and shawls of their native lands while each scene included music, songs, and dances of the different countries. The General Federation of Women’s clubs believed the pageant offered a visual interpretation of the domestic and social history of diverse women throughout the ages.

The Department of Literature and Library Extension of the General Federation of Women’s Clubs urged women’s clubs everywhere to take a leadership role by producing pageants for communities, not necessarily assuming the parts, but taking responsibility for their historic truth and proper production. Moreover, the General Federation believed that clubwomen were meant to play a critical role in the pageantry movement to
determine the future of American citizenship. Members advocated pageants as a way to promote democracy, which meant participation by all of the individuals in the community. While pageantry reified some paternalistic and hegemonic visions of America, it also represented a process of social reform whereby the General Federation hoped to break down ideological differences and barriers of race and class (Prevots 2). The premise was that better American citizenship depended upon an educated or informed democracy which required an effort to bring people together.

Another way the General Federation of Women’s Clubs promoted pageantry and its relationship to citizenship was to establish a nationwide holiday and a public way to celebrate citizenship on the fourth of July. Archival records indicate the General Federation promoted Citizenship Day from at least 1915-1923. One article written in the General Federation Magazine in August 1916 encourages “every federated club…to initiate or promote the celebration of July Fourth in each community as a public citizenship day” (38). Another article “A Public Citizenship Day” advised clubwomen, “Many civic organizations throughout the country are earnestly desiring the women to take up this piece of patriotic endeavor” (General Federation Magazine, June 1918, 38). The primary purpose of the holiday was to celebrate American citizenship and build national solidarity. In 1922 the General Federation established a national “Citizenship Day” to take place on July 4th. They proposed an annual celebration of the holiday including the performance of pageant by fellow club member and reformer Mrs. Albion

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49 It is impossible to judge the success or failure of the General Federation’s attempt to eliminate ideological differences or break down racial barriers. In American Pageantry, Naima Prevots argues that social reformers who used pageantry as a vehicle for social and artistic change had a mixed record of success.
Fellows Bacon, who was commissioned for the project. President Warren G. Harding supported the organization’s efforts to increase pageant performances from three hundred to several thousand communities in future years. In a signed letter to the General Federation of Women’s Clubs, President Harding writes, “I cannot but feel that the cause of civic betterment and of larger and truer appreciation of citizenship obligations, would be splendidly served by the general adoption of your proposal” (Citizenship Program 1922). The proposal provided a way for the General Federation to promote citizenship through performance, which meant more people could participate.

The General Federation of Women’s Clubs’ Division of Citizenship Training endorsed the holiday for several years by circulating Citizenship Day Programs which included an explanation of Citizenship Day, two suggested programs for the day, and Mrs. Albion Fellows Bacon’s special pageant, which was dedicated to Mrs. Percy V. Pennybacker, past President of the General Federation of Women’s Clubs and Chairman of the Department of American Citizenship. The pageant and Citizenship Day were designed to consecrate “the old ideals of honor, patriotism, and courage that have always lived in the pages of [American] history—[to be] a great Citizenship Day, for all classes of Americans, those born on American soil as well as those who have come from foreign lands” (Supplement to Citizenship Day Program 2). The General Federation of Women’s Clubs promoted an inclusive celebration that emphasized a great need for a unified America. Bacon’s ceremonial pageant uses songs to represent each abstract idea. For

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50 Albion Fellows Bacon was born into a middle-class family in Evansville, Indiana and eventually became a social reformer who was responsible for organizing the men’s Circle of Friendly Visitors, the Flower Mission for poor working girls, a Working Girls’ Association (which is now the YWCA), the Visiting Nurses Circle (now the Visiting Nurse Association, an Anti-Tuberculosis League, and the Monday Night Club of influential citizens interested in charitable work. In 1914, she published Beauty for Ashes which was a record of her public housing campaign aimed at improving substandard housing conditions.
example, the pageant contains “The Song of Justice,” “The Song of History,” and “The Song of Liberty.” Each song was meant to reinforce the abstract concept of an American ideal. For instance, “The Song of History” encourages the audience to learn the history of American heroes: “Attend, ye people, unto what I show you./ Gaze upon the visions of the past./ Behold these great ones whom our country honored,/ And learn the glorious lessons of their lives” (Citizenship Day Program 6). The patriotic pageant’s purpose was to illustrate American history in order to bring it to life to large groups of people across the United States. Music, allegorical characters, and actual pictures helped the General Federation of Women’s Clubs achieve their goal. While Liberty is singing, “It was for this your fathers gladly died,/ More than all else the world could give beside,/ Dearer than any treasure that may be/ Is Liberty, is Liberty,” the crowd is simultaneously watching “living pictures,” “historical tableaux,” or “copies of great paintings” are displayed to depict events such as the pilgrim’s landing, historical scenes from early colonial times, signing the Declaration of Independence, Betsy Ross sewing the American flag, and local heroes or patriots. (5-6). Bacon’s pageant relied heavily on symbolism and personification, as did the majority of pageants. The cast of characters included Columbia, Justice, Liberty, Opportunity, and History. However, in a departure from standard pageantry, Bacon’s Citizenship Day created a scene with “responsive reading that engaged the entire audience in a ritual affirmation of patriotism” (Barrows 165). At the end of the pageant, the newly naturalized foreign-born citizens take an oath to support the Constitution, laws of the United States, and to give their true allegiance to country. They are asked by the Magistrate, “Do you solemnly swear to support the Constitution of the United States, and pledge allegiance to your flag and your country.” The new citizens
answer, “We do. One country. One language. One flag. One God, to whom be praise forever more” (Citizenship Day Program 12). The Citizenship Day pageant closes with Columbia proclaiming, “We welcome you, our new foreign-born citizens, who bring us gifts of song, of literature, art and invention, gifts of industry and thrift, of high purpose and noble achievement” (13). It is significant that the General Federation of Women’s Clubs sponsored a patriotic pageant about citizenship that attempted to include and honor new foreign-born citizens which was well received and widely seen. A 1918 article published in The American City titled “A Public Citizenship Day on July Fourth” supports the General Federation’s proposed program:

> It is hoped that such an occasion will promote patriotism, increase the understanding of American ideals and impress each new citizen with a sense of his civic responsibilities. Such a day participated in by the whole community will also be productive of greater social solidarity and a more conscious community spirit. The club movement is so extensive and the women are so interested in civic enterprise and that their adaption of a resolution to urge every federated club to promote a public Citizenship Day in each Community, should make it quite certain that July Fourth of this year will see a nation-wide celebration in honor of American citizenship. (Grant and Buttenheim, 553)

Pageantry offered a means to express lofty ideals and real tensions by personifying subjects like fear, culture, and prejudice as characters dressed in varying colors and costumes. When these issues are presented visually, it allowed for a dialogue or conversation about citizenship in which more people can participate.
Along with plays for adults, the General Federation of Women’s Clubs’ Drama pamphlet (1925) provided a list of *Plays for Special Occasions* which included patriotic plays aimed at children. For instance, Ursula Payne’s “The Victory of the Good Citizen” visually illustrated the struggle between a young citizen and evils that threaten the vitality of his or her city. The character of the “Good Citizen” is represented as a graceful knight dressed in armor while the “Bad Citizen” is dressed in dirty and disheveled clothing. Other characters consisted of the abstract ideas “Cleanliness” and “Health” along with the concrete objects “Newspaper,” “Banana Skin,” and “Nutshell.” The purpose of the play is to teach children how to be effective citizens by drawing their attention to good acts of citizenry. The prologue reinforces this idea by stating, “Just little deeds of every day/, Just little actions right/, Determination to obey/, Will make a child a knight” (Payne 174).

The purpose of the play is to visually demonstrate the role of children in good citizenship through music, dance, and dialogue. The short play begins with the Good Citizen posing the question to the audience:

Now that I have my armor on, I wish that I could do some noble deed.

The knights in the olden days could fight for the honor of their country, the American soldier in France, could fight to make the world safe for democracy, but what can the knight of the [classroom or church] do to show his good citizenship?” (175).

In the play, the good citizen is challenged to fight dirt and disease by keeping the streets clean. The play shows how children can become good citizens by actively throwing away trash and setting a good example and it allows them to take part in building America. The General Federation of Women’s Clubs believed invoking imagery in the
minds of children was one of the most powerful ways to communicate complex ideas about citizenship.

As the General Federation of Women’s Clubs sponsored, performed, and wrote pageants, they also focused on the future of children as a mutual meeting ground for immigrants and native-born Americans. Clubwomen believed children represented the future of American citizenship and sought to educate and train them to be better citizens. As discussed in Chapter 1, the market for children’s literature expanded in the early twentieth century alongside an increased cultural focus on children’s rights, which resulted in the creation of child-centered institutions and organizations like juvenile courts, prisons, hospitals, and reading rooms. In addition to these changes, the public school system began to emphasize children’s drama and its relationship to civic duty. Pageants and plays during 1905-1925 embodied many of the social reforms of the early twentieth century (Prevots 1). For instance, in 1903, the Children’s Theater was established in Boston and New York City and the first children’s patriotic pageant given in America was “Pageant of Patriots” in 1911 (How to Produce Mackay 25). Mothers and a growing number of teachers became responsible for instilling the essence of democracy, love of the country, and history of the nation’s heroes at home and in the classroom. Patriotic dramas, pageants, recitations, drills and exercises offered an easy and effective way to train younger citizens who were still considered impressionable. At the General Federation of Women’s Clubs’ eleventh biennial convention in 1912,

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52 According to Esther Bates, one of the earliest formal pageants with adults took place in Marietta, Ohio in 1888 and was designed to teach history by the objective method (13). Clearly, the focus on children’s pageantry came into being after the movement first became popular.

53 While the emphasis remained on the mother’s duty to instruct her children as with reading literature, the primary focus shifted from the actual home to the theater as a home circle for children (Mackaye). In addition, critics often compared the need to train children’s literary taste to an equal need to train his or her dramatic taste (Mackay, Bates).
clubwoman Decker stated: “It is always through the children that the best work is to be done for the uplifting of the community” (379). Part of the General Federation of Women’s Clubs’ rhetorical campaign for citizenship included the narrative of children as citizens in training and the General Federation as a “Citizen Mother” of the nation. Clubwomen continued to advance their ideology of citizenship by promoting patriotic plays and pageantry as an opportunity for children to serve their country through education and drama. In Pageants and Pageantry (1912), Esther Bates writes:

American pageantry will be ordered as to possess a constructive influence on the people. There will entertainment with splendid effects in color, form, and music to both please and improve the popular taste; the spectacle will stimulate pride in town, state, and nation; a broad sympathy for all lands and peoples will underlie and dominate the scenes; and finally there will be a definite educational aim to make real the deeds of the fathers and to quicken the aspirations of the sons for right living and devotion to the country. (18)

While the general public had widely divergent perspectives on American identity during the period surrounding World War 1, the General Federation of Women’s Clubs focused on improving the standards of citizenry through education. At the General Federation of Women’s Clubs’ Eleventh Biennial Convention in 1912, one clubwoman claimed that success of the development of civic patriotism “is dependant upon the education, of the child, the club member and the public” (19). With its broad membership base, the General Federation of Women’s Clubs influenced public schools, the American Pageant Association, and other organizations. The General Federation developed its own agenda
for America’s future and formed different committees, including the Drama department, to achieve their goals. The General Federation focused on the “educational aim” of pageantry as a way to instruct and incite action among future citizens. Bates’ comments, along with the General Federation’s of Women’s Clubs’ sentiments, illustrate a widespread belief that pageantry offered a viable way to solve some of the nation’s most pressing problems; it could uplift the community, unite diverse citizens, and educate Americans about democracy.

The General Federation of Women’s Clubs promoted the school classroom as a logical place for educating children about their role in patriotism and citizenship. By 1915, some critics believed that America led the world on employing drama as an educational force in public schools (How to Produce Mackay 28). According to twentieth-century critics, there was an increasing need for children’s plays and pageants. In New Plays for Red Letter Days, the authors claim there was a “round-the-calendar demand for holiday material” for children during the first part of the twentieth century (X). To address this need the General Federation of Women’s Clubs wrote and produced pageants for public schools and encouraged their performance across the nation. At the twelfth annual Biennial Convention in 1913, Miss Mary Gray Peck, chairman of the General Federation’s Drama Department discussed the committee’s role in the process:

[Members of the drama committee] have devised pageants and masks, serious and comic. Our public schools have taken up the movement…That the drama has entered into our school is plainly seen in the demand for juvenile pageants and plays which pours into our committee and the headquarters of the Drama League and the American
Pageant Association. It is seen also in the accounts in the daily press of spontaneous dramatic entertainments arranged by school children all over the country. (203)

The General Federation saw pageants, plays, and recitations as an engaging way for young people to learn about American history and values through drama. Dramatizations of historical events allowed children to visualize and understand abstract concepts like freedom and democracy. In conjunction with the public school system, the General Federation of Women’s Clubs also devised “Play Week” to recognize children’s patriotic activities like games, exercises, and pageants as service to the country. The organization sought support for Play Week by advertising in their official magazine, *General Federation Magazine*. The General Federation of Women’s Clubs suggested the first week in September as the official date for patriotic play week. Club members published an article in 1920 titled “Patriotic Play Week” which encouraged teachers, parents, and community leaders to take part in Play Week by saying, “Many communities will devote the last day of the celebrations to a patriotic pageant, showing the contribution to be made by children to the nation and to the cause of democracy” (*General Federation Magazine*, August, 20). The General Federation’s article also promotes the idea that it is young boys’ and girls’ patriotic duty to keep themselves well and strong through exercise and play. “Play Week” offered another visual and physical way for children to participate in celebrations of the nation and learn about democracy.54

54 Nina B. Lamkin was both a pageant writer and proponent of children’s “play” and exercise. In *Play: Its Value and Fifty Games*, she defines play as “the connecting link between the mental, the moral and the spiritual growth” for children (19). Lamkin advocates directing a child’s energy through various games like “Leap Frog Relay” and “Follow the Leader” to shape ambitious and healthy children. During the early twentieth century, texts on the importance of physical education for children abounded. For instance, Maude Jackson’s *The New Idea Speaker* contains a section called “Child Culture—Vocal and Physical”
The General Federation of Women’s Clubs also circulated the *Pageants and Plays* pamphlet (1925), which recommended suitable pageants for children that varied by theme, age group, and number of suggested participants. As with children and literature, drama served as a tool to train future citizens. The majority of pageants emphasized patriotism, good citizenship, honor, and duty to the country. The pamphlet lists pageant titles along with short annotations that summarize the pageant’s theme and number of children required. For example, it lists “The Truth for a Day,” followed by a brief explanation: “A play for girls for Washington’s Birthday. 5 girls” (9). The pamphlet also gives the following instructions for the recommended pageant “Signing the Declaration of Independence”:

This [pageant] is made up of chief incidents which occurred in the debate and signing of the Declaration, being a vivid facsimile, as it were, of that glorious band who placed their signatures to the Declaration. It is admirably adapted for schools on national occasions. The tableaux are inexpensive and easy, and the speeches are just the things for oratorical practice. Any number of characters may be used.

There were some pageants specifically designed for boys or girls, respectively. In some pageants, the parts were interchangeable. For instance, in “The Rose of Plymouth Town,” the pamphlet says the play is a charming romantic comedy in four acts that calls for four women and four men, “or can be played by all women.” The pageants were designed to be simple and easily adapted to available costumes, number of children, and other resources.

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that emphasizes posture, breathing, and control of the vocal chords. *Boys and Girls Own Speaker and Reciter* includes information on positions for breathing, nostril exercises, and correct attitude.
A closer examination of several of the General Federation of Women’s Clubs’ recommended pageants reveal a specific rhetorical vision of citizenship and narrative of the nation’s identity. Each of the pageants suggested by the General Federation’s Pageants and Plays pamphlet centers around the idea that children will become effective citizens through individual service and sacrifice to the country. The unified vision of citizenship emerges through the repetition of the same ideas in each one the pageants and plays and works to subvert potential crises by presenting the illusion of mass consensus. The plays and pageants functioned as a way to instill certain values in children and create a unified vision of America. For instance, “The Crowning of Columbia” by Kathrine Carlyon (1918) highlights the fact that children and adults must learn the lesson of unselfishness and to “think of their fellow countrymen” before America can rise to power (5). The cast of characters for the pageant includes Columbia as the narrator, children, foresters, farmers, miners, pleasure-seekers, Red-Cross workers, and soldiers. The pageant’s plot revolves around the different groups individually approaching Columbia to ask her to be their queen. For instance, two girls appear in the first scene and proclaim, “We are the children of America. We have come with our off’ring, asking you to become our gracious queen” (4). Next, the foresters ask Columbia to cease warfare upon their beautiful trees and become their sovereign queen. However, Columbia declines and says, Your request would bring joy to you alone. You would make me the queen of selfishness. During this period of storm and stress you must think of your fellow countrymen. Your request would be sorrow and privation to many, for people are depending upon your beautiful trees for

55 The figure Columbia represented a feminine personification of America’s identity as early as 1738 and the word “Columbian” was often used as an alternative to the term “American” during the nineteenth century.
warmth and comfort. No, I cannot be your queen until you have learned the lesson of unselfishness. Go among the people, and when you have learned this lesson, come again, but not until then. (5)

This theme repeats itself as each group entreats Columbia to become their queen. Columbia denies each one—the children, foresters, farmers, and miners—because they all ask to be recognized for their work; each group is self-interested. As the narrator, Columbia, repeats several times: “You must be willing to sacrifice not only much, but all for your country” (6). Later, Columbia says, “Until you are willing to give up your friends and brothers, nay, even yourselves, should I call you, I cannot be your queen” (6, 9). The message of the children’s pageant is one of absolute sacrifice to protect the nation’s identity. Children learn that they must be willing to do whatever is needed for their struggling nation because America does much for them. The children should be willing to give up their homes, pleasures, and even their lives. The pageant concludes as the people give Columbia a flag, rather than a crown, to represent all that is good and right in America.
Another text recommended by the General Federation of Women’s Clubs, Marie Doran’s “The Liberty Thrift Girls” (1918), also deals with the absolute necessity that each individual sacrifice for the good of the nation. The play includes four girls as central characters: Mrs. Norris, Amy Norris, Lillian Schuman, and Maud Maxwell. The play functions as an exploration of opposing Mrs. Norris and her daughter Amy represent ideal citizens who sacrifice money and volunteer time to war efforts and recovery, while Lillian and Maud represent excess, indulgence, and selfishness. Early in the play, Amy says, “[Girls] can’t fight in the trenches, I wish we could, but we can fight at home” (18). Part of the play’s message is to define “women of the country’s work,” which is caring for sick and wounded soldiers. Amy mends clothes for orphans of the war, wears old dresses, and the saves money to purchase war bonds, while Lillian spends all of her
money on new hats and jewelry, goes to the opera instead of volunteering for the Red Cross. Lillian protests, “I don’t know why I have to bother with the war” (14). By the end of the play, Amy and her mother have convinced Lillian to stay and help mend jackets for American soldiers. Lillian learns the lesson that every individual has a duty to support the army and larger nation. The play concludes with a happy ending where all of the characters are helping their country. The play teaches children by presenting a series of binaries such as profit/sacrifice, conservation/waste, greed/selflessness, and indulgence/self-control. By emphasizing unity and teamwork, Doran and the General Federation of Women’s Clubs provide the “right propaganda” to counter “the selfish, grab-and-hold doctrine” of the status quo.

The General Federation of Women’s Clubs also recommended Patriotic Plays for Young People (1918). In the introduction, Virginia Olcott says her plays were “written with the object of giving to children a practical, and at the same time imaginative interpretation of the vital movements of our Country to-day (v). Olcott also believed that cultivating children’s interest in drama can teach them valuable ethical lessons as the child becomes absorbed in the character and “becomes finer through the expression of helpfulness and human sympathy” (v). In “Dora, Her Flag” the main characters are Dora, a lame young child, and a nameless deserter from the American Army. The play revolves around the idea that Dora’s simple faith in America and patriotism awakens the deserter’s love of the country. Dora, riddled with back pain, and left to entertain herself while her mother mends jackets for the army, has a strong faith in America based her grandfather’s courage and success in battle. She keeps his small American flag on the mantle alongside his framed picture. Because of Dora’s bad health, she can’t sew for the army. She
laments, “All the other boys and girls are busy making their gardens and drilling and learning to do clever things for their country, while I—I cannot even knit—because my back hurts me so!” (27). Olcott’s play clearly emphasizes each person’s individual duty to serve the country. The play demonstrates how Dora must find her own unique way to be of service. Like the majority of children’s plays, Olcott’s play has a happy ending—Dora serves the country through her strong patriotism and inspires the jaded deserter to serve his country once again.

The General Federation of Women’s Clubs also believed in the need for guides for children and adults who were in charge of selecting appropriate material for children’s development. Children’s readers were increasingly popular and widely circulated beginning in the first half of the nineteenth century. The General Federation agreed with the sentiments voiced in Boys and Girls Own Speaker and Reciter by Laura Augusta Yerkes (1909). Yerkes begins with the preface “Practical Suggestions for Training and Assisting Boys and Girls in Speaking and Reading,” in which she says, “Much depends upon the preparation of a selection for recitation, but of still greater value is the choice of the selection…Early impressions have great influence upon the mind of a child” (xi). Another reader, The New Idea Speaker for Children (1901) intends the volume to be used by children, but its primary function is to serve as a resource for parents and teachers (Jackson xv). It contains programs for patriotic holidays like “Washington’s Birthday,” “Lincoln’s Birthday,” and “Arbor Day.” Other popular readers for children such as Class Day Programs (1937), Nina Lamkin and Edna Florence

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56 While the section on children’s literature in Chapter 1 demonstrates how reading was often linked to metaphors of children’s diet and health, some of the children’s patriotic readers and reference books on pageantry argued that drama the and elocution movement offered superior methods for training healthy citizens.
contained the following subjects for class orations: “Being and American,” “Youth Serves the Community,” and “Great Americans.”

The General Federation of Women’s Club considered patriotic recitations, drills, and pageants as an effective way to train children. For instance, Maude Jackson’s *The New Idea Speaker for Children* (1901) reminds parents of their duty to aid in the development of their children. Jackson writes, “There is no such work which includes greater pleasure in greater honor or richer reward than the training of very young children. Your child is what you (its parents) make it; and the work of training and developing cannot be begun too soon” (272). Some critics, along with the General Federation of Women’s Clubs, assume that children need specific instructions on how to become better citizens. Another text recommended by the General Federation of Women’s Clubs, argues that young people “are seldom given to critical evaluation of their actions,” thus they need the guidance and direction that pageantry can provide (*Community Drama*, Mackaye 8). Additionally, in *How to Produce Children’s Plays* (1915), Constance D’arcy Mackay believes that the forum of drama offers a way to possess “tremendous power over children” to teach them life lessons (4). In the preface to *Patriotic Readings and Recitations* (1902), the editor Josephine Stafford explains the primary purpose of the General Federation approved collection: “It is part of our inheritance to preserve the utterances of the men and women who have by their voice and pen done much to advance the spirit of truth, heroism and patriotism—the chief characteristic of our American manhood and womanhood.” Many of the selections of readings, orations and recitations contain stories about historical figures like George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and Daniel Boone. The General Federation endorsed the
idea that these exercises preserved a unified memory and served as an example for children to follow. Boys were often expected to recite the parts of presidents, soldiers, and adventurers. For instance, in Maude Jackson’s collection *The Idea Speaker* (1901), the recitation “The World Remembers Washington” calls for a boy speaker to say, “The whole world, and not America alone, is indebted to this noble patriot for an example of pure patriotism and nobility of life” (108). In *Patriotic Celebrations* (1910), Marie Irish includes the recitation “Love of Country,” which proclaims, “Let the examples of patriots, in deeds of heroism and self-sacrifice, be our theme of meditation and discussion” (75). Her reader, which was recommended by the General Federation of Women’s Clubs, includes “Our Country” which reminds children of their duty to the country, “Your country calls you to come forward and bear your share of the public burden; to take part in the civic life of your town, your country, your state, and your nation. Only as you perform this duty do you show your love for the land of your birth or your adoption” (26). The General Federation of Women’s Clubs advanced the notion that dramatic pageants could help form children’s character by requiring them to read and recite the words from historical speeches (Stevenson, iv). For instance, *The Boys and Girls Own Speaker and Reciter* includes part of George Washington’s address to his army before they began the battle of Long Island in 1776. The speech highlights the soldiers’ duty to serve the country in a time of crisis that will determine if Americans are freemen or slaves. Washington reminds his soldiers of their duty to the nation: “Upon your courage and conduct rest the hopes of our bleeding and insulted country” because “Liberty, property, life and honor are all at stake (163). Through repetition and constant expose in school and home, the General Federation believed children should be required
to study patriotic events so they could develop into responsible citizens who would serve the future republic.

The General Federation of Women’s Clubs use of visual modes of citizenship beginning with drama in the pre-suffrage era demonstrates how clubwomen strived to create an opening for an exchange of ideas, rituals, and customs. The organization formulated an optimistic posture towards immigration, and one that was more nuanced and constructive than many other organizations. The General Federation stressed the importance of understanding the cultural gifts that immigrants bring and created a sense that both native and foreign-born individuals should participate in creating the terms of a new citizenship. The General Federation of Women’s Clubs endorsed patriotic pageants that allowed for a new rhetoric of citizenship that hoped to include multiple voices and participants. Clubwomen believed that various groups of new citizens played a large role in building the American nation and that the process should be reflected by everyone contributing material to the pageant. The majority of pageants included on the General Federation’s bibliography contain elaborate directions and details concerning the inclusion of traditional music, dance, and attire from different countries. The General Federation saw how pageants allowed for the exchange of certain international ideas and rituals. Because pageants remained inexpensive and easily accessible, they were a powerful way to influence notions of citizenship and provided a platform to reach a wide and diverse audience. The General Federation of Women’s Clubs promoted inclusivity, patriotism, and unity in order to build better citizens of the home, the school, the town, the nation, and the world. From 1905-1925, the General Federation of Women’s Club used pageants to create a national field of shared symbols and practices to promote a
particular ideology of educated citizenship in the twentieth century and to present a unified America to the public. Club members played a critical role in shaping the nation’s conception of citizenship during a period of social and cultural change. Members of the General Federation of Women’s Clubs worked collaboratively to unify the population, instill patriotism, and provide citizenship education to all community members. For instance, the General Federation took responsibility for guiding pageantry practices as well as upholding standards of American literature. Club members advocated both practices because performing pageants and reading American literature offered practical training for individuals to become better citizens. Performing pageantry and reading American literature both created an ideal construction of citizenship and they offered ways to achieve it. Good citizens read American literature and participated in community pageants as sponsors, players, audience members, or directors. Like reading American literature, the General Federation of Women’s Clubs saw pageantry as a form of social and civic action. They also advocated pageantry as a way to cultivate healthy habits, interpret racial relations, address postwar problems, and create a common language for all Americans. Although pageants are now read as trivial and patronizing, they functioned in complex ways during the twentieth-century.57

57 In Intimate Practices Anne Gere states, “To the extent that clubwomen have been credited with participating in Americanization projects, they have been portrayed as white middle-class women paying ‘friendly Americanizing visits to immigrants homes’ or mounting patriotic pageants or supporting the war effort by raising money, knitting, or sewing, and providing entertainment and support services for soldiers (57). Her statement makes it evident that women’s efforts in the Americanization movement have been trivialized and our current view of pageantry is dismissive.
Chapter 4

A History of Pioneering Spirit: The General Federation of Women’s Clubs in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Century

The greatest need in this country today is greater participation of women in public affairs. Women struggled for the privilege of the vote before 1920; they served jail sentences and went on hunger strikes for the cause. We need more of that pioneering spirit now. Many believe that there are no more frontiers to cross, but we haven’t even touched upon the most important frontier for women—public affairs.

Mrs. Sara A. Whitehurst, General Federation of Women’s Clubs president, 1942

It is an exciting and challenging time to be members of the General Federation of Women’s Clubs…Let us take pride in our heritage, and commemorate the great moments of our history. GFWC’s century of volunteerism is the story of brilliant, courageous, far-sighted women who undertook projects and spearheaded legislation that changed the entire course of life in this country and internationally as well.

Alice Donahue, General Federation of Women’s Clubs president, 1988

When Jane Croly established the General Federation of Women’s Clubs in 1890, she and other clubwomen laid the groundwork for future activism and contributed to a social climate in which other groups like the Women’s Christian Temperance Union, National American Woman Suffrage Association, and National Association for the Advancement of Colored People could flourish.
Both before and after the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, women lacked significant access and clout to participate in the established political system. As the founder of the General Federation of Women’s Clubs, Croly created the national organization in an attempt to address the problem by providing rhetorical training and education for members within the clubs themselves that allowed for informed, careful, decision-making about the issues of the day. The previous three chapters have established the ways in which the General Federation of Women’s Clubs’ internal and external activities can be read as evidence of self-sponsored rhetorical education. The General Federation’s rhetorical campaign for citizenship led directly to the development of an ideology of citizenship that recognizes women as essential and active citizens of the nation. The final chapter examines the modern day General Federation of Women’s Clubs to better understand how the organization constructs citizenship today and how it
continues to promote both internal and external programs that support women as active citizens.

In the twenty-first century, the General Federation of Women’s Clubs is still active and strongly committed to promoting women’s interests through volunteer outreach work and a variety of ambitious social programs designed to improve living conditions throughout the world. The modern day organization has expanded the term “woman” to include a diversity of races and includes an international focus. The present day General Federation reflects this sentiment by making this statement about the history of its philosophy:

Since it was founded in 1890, the General Federation of Women's Clubs has been a unifying force, bringing together local women's clubs from around the country and throughout the world. Although there is considerable diversity in the ages, interests, and experiences of GFWC clubwomen, all are united by a dedication to community improvement through volunteer service…During its second century, the Federation has pledged to maintain its commitment to working for a better world. With "Unity in Diversity" as its motto and a strong umbrella of programs that clubs may adapt to suit the needs of their communities, GFWC encourages the flexibility that has enabled it to expand its reach in a rapidly changing society.

(General Federation of Women’s Clubs’ website, 2010)

Difference as well as similarity has marked the groups clustered around the umbrella term “women’s clubs” which created a diverse and complex social movement. While the leadership of the General Federation of Women’s has primarily included white, middle-
class women, there were and still are exceptions. During the twentieth century, there were African American clubs and clubs of Native American women as well. There was also significant ethnic diversity in the Generation Federation’s clubs around the world. Clubs were admitted on the local and state level, so clubs with African American members would have been part of the federation from the late nineteenth century. The

58 One of the most often cited controversies in the General Federation’s history occurred around the turn of the last century. The accounts vary but generally support the fact that in 1900, when the General Federation’s executive committee approved the admission of the Women's Era Club of Boston headed by African American activist Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin, southern women forced the convention to rescind the admission. Member clubs such as the Chicago Women's Club, which in 1894 had admitted African American clubwoman Fannie Barrier Williams, objected to the convention's decision. This was widely reported in both the local press and in the General Federation magazine, including letters from clubwomen, and there was by no means complete support in the South for not allowing existing clubs with African American women into the General Federation of Women’s Clubs. In Reaching Out: A Story of the General Federation of Women’s Clubs (1989), Mary Jean Houde discusses the much cited debate over whether or not to admit “colored” clubs into the organization. The General Federation faced this internal conflict in 1899 early in the organization’s history which caused turmoil between clubwomen in the North and the South. After the Woman’s Era Club of Boston was admitted to the General Federation, there was backlash after it was revealed that Boston’s club membership included African Americans. The debate between Northern women who wanted to admit women regardless of color, creed, or nationality and Southern women who wanted to honor traditional customs that prohibited the mix of clubs continued until 1902. At the Los Angeles convention in 1902, two plans were proposed to be voted on: the Massachusetts plan opposed introduction of the word “white” into the bylaws as a race qualification for membership and the Georgia plan which advocated bylaws to limit membership to white women. After two days of discussion, a compromise plan was agreed upon which stated, “Resolved, that clubs containing colored women shall be eligible to the General Federation in those states and territories in which they are eligible to membership in their state or territorial federation, and that where these organizations do not exist, race eligibility shall be declared by a three-fifths vote of the clubs” (Houde 98). Gail McCormick, the current director of the General Federation’s Women’s History and Resource Center, had this to say in email to me about the event, “We continue to strive for increased diversity in our clubs. This kind of early sectional dispute may also show up in other international service organizations with a long history. Scholars of women’s history have written about this early episode in GFWC’s history—some more accurately than others.” However, African American women continued to organize themselves and work through the National Association of Colored Women (NACW) rather than the General Federation of Women’s Clubs. Led by Josephine Ruffin and Mary Church Terrell, the NACW organization shared a similar progressive mandate and made parallel efforts to promote women's suffrage, improve education, and to increase resources for both children and the elderly. The NACW was also involved in protesting lynching and Jim Crow laws.

59 The General Federation of Women’s Clubs established an Indian Welfare Committee as early as 1921, whose mission was to advocate for education of Native Americans and preservation of their culture. The organization’s first president with Native American heritage was Roberta Campbell Lawson (1932-1938) of Oklahoma. Additionally, there would have Native American club members in the General Federation as early as 1908. Clubwomen from the Oklahoma Territory and the Indian Territory voted to unite in 1908 to form the Oklahoma State Federation of Women’s Clubs (Houde 108).
General Federation continues much of the same cultural work today and modern day club activities share some similarities with their earlier counterparts. While there are no available demographics about age, income level, race, or ethnicity for current members of the General Federation, the organization does provide a basic chart of how many clubs are in each state and how many members belong to each club.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>General Clubs</th>
<th>General Members</th>
<th>Junior Clubs</th>
<th>Junior Members</th>
<th>Juniorette Clubs</th>
<th>Juniorette Members</th>
<th>Total Clubs</th>
<th>Total Members</th>
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<tr>
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<td>9014</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>48</td>
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<td>15</td>
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<td>84</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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Figure 11. The General Federation of Women’s Clubs’ Membership Report for 2010
This chapter examines that ways in which the General Federation has continued to support internal club activities and external campaigns throughout the twentieth and twenty-first century that extend the education of its members and promote an ideology of citizenship which is consistently rooted in the belief that citizenship requires an informed public, nonpartisan politics, better social and educational conditions, and inclusion. The first section of the chapter examines internal club activities aimed at reading for self-
improvement and other adult education and literacy initiatives. The second section focuses on the General Federation’s external activities and campaigns aimed at connecting with the public in order to educate people about women’s role(s) in shaping the nation’s identity and encourage participation in civic affairs. By examining the organization’s parallels throughout the remainder of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century, it becomes evident that the General Federation has maintained its original mission and remains dedicated to the idea that women’s organizations are crucial to creating and sustaining models of good citizenship.

Reading for self-education and self-improvement also continued to be a central part of the General Federation’s mission and its conception of good citizenship. The organization consistently provided internal reading recommendations for clubwomen. In 1930, the General Federation of Women’s Clubs became officially affiliated with the honorary society, Epsilon Sigma Omicron (ESO) which offered a planned course of reading for clubwomen (Houde 208). The purpose of ESO was to encourage clubwomen to read and study systematically and collaboratively. In *Reaching Out: A Story of the General Federation of Women’s Clubs*, Mary Jean Houde describes how the honorary society initially functioned within the context of the organization:

Groups consisting of clubwomen were eligible to take ESO courses; supervision was provided by an authorized educational agency such as a state university, a college, or a state library. Credits were given for courses, and full membership in the sorority could be achieved after completion of four courses. In 1938, ESO
was accepted as part of the Adult Education Division of the GFWC Education Department. (208)

ESO originated in 1928 as an adult education project of the Indiana Federation of Clubs which was designed to encourage individual study. For clubwomen who were not exposed to explicit rhetorical training in rhetorical theory or direct instruction in rhetorical performance, reading programs like ESO have allowed clubwomen to develop and apply rhetorical skills in a variety of ways.

Over the years, the honorary educational society has continued to grow and flourish. ESO gradually expanded to include a wider focus for clubwomen and multiple types of adult education programs for which they could receive points or credit. The GFWC Woman’s Century Club of Nampa, Idaho (which joined the General Federation in 1916), allows women to participate in ESO as a part of a reading group or on their own. Each month, clubwomen choose a book from the organization’s official list. Some years the club held formal meetings to discuss the book; during other years, club members were encouraged to read the books on their own and write a short review of the book. Members of the Woman’s Century Club believe that ESO offers “a framework in which to pursue continued self-education through reading” (website). The club’s current reading selections include Donna Gehrke-White’s *The Face Behind the Veil* from the General Federation’s Women’s Studies category, Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* from the Fiction category, and Harper Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird* from the Classic Literature/Drama category. Additionally, the General Federation of Women’s Clubs of Massachusetts, founded in 1893 by Julia Ward Howe, has participated in the ESO
program. They encourage members to continue “lifelong learning” through participation in reading groups, independent study, book fairs, book reviews, as well as reading with children and the elderly (website). The GFWC Junior Women’s Club of Charlotte, North Carolina, which joined the General Federation in 1947, cites seventy clubwomen who are currently involved with ESO. The Massachusetts state federated club also awards points for clubwomen who take an online or extension course, complete a course in parliamentary law, or become a literacy tutor. The interest in parliament and continuing education mirror the earlier efforts of newly formed clubs in the 1860s. The significance of reading, both individually and as a part of a group, has remained a constant theme in the General Federation’s history of rhetorical education.

According to the most recent Epsilon Sigma Omicron (ESO) Handbook: Reading List and Guide for the General Federation’s Reading Group (2008), clubwomen currently support libraries, develop summer reading programs for children and adults, bring library books to homebound seniors or individuals living in nursing homes, and hold discussion groups. For instance, members of the California Federation of Women’s Clubs division state that the “ESO is a disciplined reading program with specific levels of achievement designed to read broadly across our American Heritage.” The General Federation acts as an umbrella providing particular topics and structure, but the individual clubs have the freedom to adapt the program to meet their specific needs. For instance, clubwomen in the California federation meet monthly at a bookstore to discuss a wide range of books, topics, and even music. Book club president Donna Shackel described her clubs’ reading activities in an interview:
We read all kinds of books. We all are working our way through the levels of ESO, and we have members at every level. But our monthly topics are not necessarily from the list. Our club is more topic-driven and so we all can share different books at the meetings. It is uncanny how we never duplicate a book. Some months we will pick a specific book to discuss. Other months it may be a specific author, and everyone chooses their [sic] favorite book by that author. And other times it is a subject or topic. For example, October was mythology --- we shared different books of mythology and different cultures in mythology, including Chinese, Norse and Native American, as well as the commonly known Greek and Roman. In January, we will be reading cookbooks. We are looking forward to this. One of our members collects specialty cookbooks, so she will have a lot to offer. One month was music and the books reviewed ranged from folk music to Victor Borge to the Grateful Dead. (“Reading Group Guides Interview,” 2003)

The General Federation’s ESO Fall Booklist for 2008 contains forty-four pages of reading recommendations organized by categories such as American History, Drama, Fiction, and Religion. The books are divided into 23 subject categories. Other relevant headings include Education, Parenting and Families, Reading to Children, Volunteerism, and Women’s Studies. The sections for clubwomen also include Social Science, Sports and Recreation, as well as Travel and Geography. These sections are very similar to the ones mentioned in reading programs from the early twentieth century in Chapter Two and Chapter Three such as American Literature, Poetry, Children’s Reading, Women of the
Bible, Health, Education, and Government. The organization’s modern categories for Volunteerism and Women’s Studies are interesting additions. The Women’s Studies lists offers titles ranging from Catherine Allgor’s *A Perfect Union: Dolley Madison and the Creation of the American Nation* to Eve Ensler’s *The Vagina Monologues*. The reading lists are still generated by the General Federation but state-federated clubs are free to make adjustments. The list is updated by each administration based on selected best sellers lists, American Library Association lists, Pulitzer, and General Federation related topics (ESO Handbook 20). Clubwomen continue to be dedicated to reading for self-improvement as well as for erudition. The organization still supports internal club activities that allow clubwomen to read collaboratively and promotes discussion forums for its members. The contemporary organization educates its own club members from within, much like in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, and continues to connect with the larger public in order to affect social change.

Historically, the General Federation of Women’s Clubs continued to use club meetings, reading programs, and internal campaigns to promote an ideology of improved citizenship for clubwomen. Throughout the twentieth century, the General Federation of Women’s Clubs acted as an important school of citizenship for millions of American women. It emphasized training for citizenship; they promoted a public voice for women and historically they identified their purposes as educational and civic rather than political. In the 1940s, the General Federation’s handbook *The Twentieth Century Handbook for Organization Leaders* declared “The primary function of a Club or federation of clubs is education—to educate the homemaker who would like to keep up
with the trends of the day, who would like to learn something about international relations, legislation, fine arts, etc., but who cannot leave the home to enter an educational institution” (Laville 59). The General Federation continued to support numerous internal club programs designed to use reading and adult or continuing education to improve clubwomen and their relationship to civic participation. On September 22, 1942, Mrs. Emerson T. Dean, Chairman of the Ohio Federation of Women’s Clubs, delivered a radio talk over the Ohio State University’s Station WOSU aimed at clubwomen statewide. In her radio broadcast titled, “Study Spanish This Year,” Clubwomen Dean stated:

In deciding what the Division of Adult Education will recommend to the clubs of the District, I like to give them something that is not so impractical and visionary that they ignore it. I am suggesting this year that the presidents urge their members to take the Spanish course broadcast from this station. I am not asking them to do anything that I would not do myself, for I have done it. I began studying Spanish seven years ago, when it was broadcast from this station. That was the first time I had studied that language, so I know that even though you have never studied Spanish, you can begin on September 29 and learn enough of the language to give you a great deal of satisfaction. When you have club programs on South America, as many clubs did last year and others are planning for this year, you will not be confused and embarrassed because you can not pronounce the names correctly. (Hispania 78)
This is another example of women sponsored education in a nonschool and nontraditional setting. Members of the General Federation were actively learning how to receive information through listening and how to communicate effectively to avoid outside criticism.

The General Federation believed in promoting adult education and at the same time furthering the purposes of the organization’s Department of International Relations by encouraging the study of the Spanish language and the history and culture and customs of the people of the Spanish-speaking countries in Latin America. According to the article, the General Federation purposefully did not limit the study group to club members in an attempt to make it more inclusive. Clubwomen Dean urged advised members: “Put a notice in the local newspaper inviting any one who cares to come, to these discussion-groups. That is a practical way of sponsoring adult education. Our clubs should be community leaders in all education of adults in forming study-groups and conducting forums” (80). For clubwomen, adult education has consistently been defined as voluntary, long-time learning. Members of the General Federation treated adult education as a necessity, an inseparable aspect of citizenship, and, therefore should be both universal and lifelong. Clubwomen viewed education as an integral component of citizenship in a democracy and they felt obligation to help prepare individuals to make informed and educated decisions. After the General Federation of Women’s Clubs’

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60 The General Federation of Women’s Clubs played a significant role in making radio broadcasting successful. The NBC president solicited the organization’s support: “I come here as an humble symbol of this great, magnificent new discovery of radio broadcasting, and I ask you to put your wheels of the club right back of this machine and push with your shoulder against the wheel, and we will have a permanent institution that will carry forward” (Houde 199). As a result, the General Federation of Women’s Clubs formed a radio committee for their organization.
convention in 1942 in Fort Worth Texas, internal activities like studying Spanish
motivated some individual clubs to travel to Mexico on a “Good Neighbor Tour” and
others to attend the following forums: 1) Latin America and its International Relations; 2)
The Economic Problems of Latin America; 3) Women in the National and International
Life of the American Republics; and 4) Education and Inter-Cultural Relations (Houde
253). Clubwomen Dean’s radiobroadcast, attending club conventions, and traveling to
countries like Mexico all represent sites of rhetorical education for members of the
General Federation of Women’s Clubs.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, the General Federation continued to focus on
education as a critical component of citizenship by developing materials internally to
promote adult education and teach literacy in order to address problems of illiteracy. The
organization eventually published a book of material titled *Teaching Adults the Literacy
Skills: A Manual for Clubwomen and Other Leaders who are Interested in Planning and
Carrying Out Literacy Programs* (1963) which provides a variety of literacy activities,
instructions in how to teach English, and chapters dedicated to improving reading and
writing skills. In the foreword, Mrs. Dexter Otis Arnold, President of the General
Federation of Women’s Clubs, states,

The General Federation of Women’s conceives as one of its special tasks that of
lending support to the nationwide effort to eliminate illiteracy in the United States
and to give assistance toward the solution of this major problem at the international
level. In this administration, we have chosen our theme, ‘To Strengthen the Arm of
Liberty.’ We believe one way we can strengthen the Arm of Liberty is through direct
efforts to reach and teach the 8.3 million adults in the United States, age 25 and above, who have less than five years of schooling. These men and women are severely handicapped as workers, as heads of families, and as citizens because they cannot read, write, and figure at a functional level. (Brice i)

Historically, the General Federation of Women’s Clubs has been invested in issues of literacy including their original survey which was intended to eradicate illiteracy statewide. Although unsuccessful in that ambition, the organization continued to develop both internal programs and materials designed to help educate Americans and better equip them for citizenship. One state federation lobbied the legislature to increase its budget by $50,000 for the adult illiterate and another state federation conducted 200 literacy classes. Six state federations held state workshops to train local people how to teach literacy skills (Houde 322). After developing the manual for United States citizens, the General Federation extended its illiteracy efforts from 1962 to 1964 internationally through the Cooperative for American Relief Everywhere (CARE) program, and developed a new literacy initiative in eight countries: Costa Rica, Guatemala, Hong Kong, India, Iran, Mexico, Pakistan, and Turkey (Houde 322). The General Federation contributed $135,000 which enabled the kits to be sent to the countries.\footnote{While the General Federation of Women’s Clubs was working internally to elevate clubwomen’s participation in civic affairs domestically and internationally by developing and exchanging education materials, the National Association of Colored Women’s Clubs was also promoting literacy initiatives of their own. Created in 1896 by the merger of the National Federation of Afro-American Women, the Women’s Era Club of Boston, and the Colored Women’s League of Washington, D.C., the National Association of Colored Women’s Clubs (NACW) is the oldest organization of African American women in the United States. With members in 40 states, the promotion of literacy is still one of the major aims of the organization.}

Literacy initiatives have also allowed clubwomen the opportunity to direct
their collective social efforts toward improving communication and learning for outside members. The second part of this chapter looks at the General Federation of Women’s Clubs’ external programs which demonstrate the organization’s commitment to rhetorical education for the larger public which eventually included an international focus. Historically, clubwomen have integrated literacy practices from their own internal club agendas to develop an external curriculum that aims to prepare active citizens in the world. Beginning in the nineteenth century, a large number of voluntary associations, including women’s clubs, contributed to the rise of the Adult Education and Literacy System in the United States (AELS). Historically, the General Federation of Women’s Clubs has continued to promote a range of educational activities related to citizenship for adults. During the 1920s, adult education was designed to meet the needs of this wartime period. For instance, the content moved from general knowledge to several specific fields such as civic and social reform along with citizenship (Knowles, 1962). Government in this period greatly participated in the development of adult education by providing financial aid and establishing, in the departments of education, programs for adult education. Many women’s clubs throughout the United States mirrored government efforts. During this time, the Tennessee Federation supported literacy and adult education courses and a “Teacher of the Year” award. Additionally, as the Texas Federation's representative, Fannie Bellows Potter worked in the Joint Legislative Council lobbying the 1927 and 1929 state legislatures for educational measures. She

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62 The Joint Legislative Council was an outgrowth of the woman suffrage movement in Texas which lasted from approximately 1921-1929. It represented a consortium of organizations that promoted Texas women’s interests in the state legislature for five sessions. Once members set their agenda for each session,
considered her greatest contribution to the women's club movement to be promoting education, particularly adult literacy programs, which was a federation theme throughout the 1920s and 1930s (Handbook of Texas Online). Another example of club support for the General Federation’s literacy initiative came from Alabama. Mrs. C. C. Adams, state federation president, worked on a statewide committee with twenty citizens to reduce illiteracy and became part of the National Advisory Committee on Literacy from 1929-1931 (Houde 200). During the Americanization era, many evening school programs developed into general adult programs and the General Federation offered many of these types of programs which later played a role in influencing future policies toward adult education.63

In addition to literacy efforts, the General Federation of Women’s Clubs also continued to support legislation that helped to protect the health of women citizens in the United States in the early twentieth century. Clubwomen promoted the work of the Women’s Bureau within the Department of Labor and in 1921 backed the passage of the federal Sheppard-Towner Infancy, and Maternity Protection Act to promote the health and welfare of mothers and infants.64 The purpose of the legislation was to reduce council representatives, referred to as the Petticoat Lobby, approached legislators in pairs and presented their arguments which shocked some male legislators who were unaccustomed to women engaging in politics and in public forums (Handbook of Texas Online).

63 In “Americanization as an Early Twentieth-Century Adult Education Movement,” Robert Carlson points out that the “extreme social control phase” or “citizenship management” aspect of Americanization programs primarily aimed at immigrant education eventually resulted in a better approach to adult education in general because it led to an emphasis on meeting individual needs, voluntary participation, and establishing the involvement of the client in evaluating programs.

64 The Women’s Bureau was officially organized within the Department of Labor in 1920 for the purpose of investigating and reporting on the conditions of working women. As a government office, the Women’s Bureau promoted equal pay, minimum wage, and maximum-hours legislation. They also worked toward
maternal and infant mortality. At the time the bill was introduced, childbirth remained the second leading cause of death for women. Family income was an important factor in these mortality rates, and the Sheppard-Towner Act was designed to encourage states to develop programs to serve women at lower income levels. The General Federation along with other progressive groups like the League of Women Voters worked for its passage. It shows one of the ways that the clubwomen continued to advocate for women as citizens after the right of suffrage was won in 1920. National Association of Colored Women (NACW) President Mary McLeod Bethune and other African American clubwomen also supported the Sheppard-Towner Act because it provided funding for maternal and child health and welfare.

Additionally, in 1921, the General Federation of Women's Clubs created the Indian Welfare Committee to work for the enfranchisement of Native Americans, improvement of educational and health facilities, and the preservation of Native American culture. Although Native Americans are largely absent from the historical literature examining the proliferation of women's clubs in the late 1800s and early 1900s, Indians figured prominently in this movement. Gertrude Simmons Bonnin, better known as writer Zitkala-Sa, worked as a research agent for the Indian Welfare Committee and the General Federation of Women’s Clubs. She is responsible for the creation of the General Federation of Women’s Clubs’ Indian Welfare Committee, which investigated eliminating work at night and in hazardous conditions. The Women’s Bureau is still in operation today. Historically, the General Federation of Women’s Clubs and the Woman’s Bureau supported many of the same initiatives and legislation including the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, the Equal Pay Amendment of 1963 and the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1933.
the governmental treatment and abuses of Indians. Bonnin also attended the General Federation of Women's Clubs’ conventions in Atlantic City and Salt Lake City in 1921.

In 1922, Bonnin traveled around the South to speak to women's clubs in order to stress the need for granting citizenship to Native Americans. After the General Federation of Women’s Clubs placed Indian welfare on its national agenda, local clubs responded to the organization’s mandate by studying about Indians, donating clothing and holiday gifts to reservation families, and writing to legislators for increased resources and protest over government involvement in Indian affairs. Other Native Americans also participated in the women's club movement as club organizers themselves. For instance, Elizabeth Bender Cloud was named chair of the Indian Welfare Committee of the Oregon State Federation of Women's Clubs in 1940. In 1950, the General Federation of Women’s Clubs elected her to be the first Native American to head its Indian Affairs Division; this division and its agenda influenced the activities of thousands of women's clubs nationwide. Elizabeth Bender Cloud used her position to advocate that Indians should attend school and get a mainstream education. Other Native American women such as Roberta Campbell Lawson and Ida Collins Goodale remain largely unknown.

Further research done to recover their stories will contribute to a more complete picture

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65 Some scholars criticize women’s clubs for targeting American Indians as a “disadvantaged” population who they perceived as needing their wisdom and guidance. In “Elizabeth Bender Cloud: ‘Working For and With Our Indian People,’” Lisa Tetzloff argues this and points out that Native American women are largely ignored in the history of the club movement.

66 In 1903, Roberta Campbell Lawson served as president of the Nowata's Women's Club of Oklahoma. From 1917 to 1919, she served as the president of the Oklahoma State Federation of Women's Clubs. In 1935, Lawson was elected president of the General Federation of Women’s Clubs. Ida Collins Goodale, a prominent Cherokee Indian, played a role in forming the Oklahoma State Federation of Women’s Clubs which was founded in 1908.
of the complex racial, class, and gender dynamics of indigenous clubwomen. Along with
the Generation Federation, Native American women such as Gertrude Simmons Bonnin
and Elizabeth Bender Cloud advocated for education and sponsored it themselves.

The General Federation of Women’s Clubs also continued to extend their interest in
women’s work and fair wages as citizens. In 1933, the organization protested the
provisions of the New Deal’s National Recovery Act that allowed lower wage rates for
women workers and exempted handicapped and home workers from its protections. On
the other hand, the National Association of Colored Women (NACW) continued its
political activism by supporting the National Recovery Act during the Depression. The
NACW continued to address the discrimination that blacks experienced in the public and
private sectors. The organization supported the National Recovery Act, but called upon
the government to cease its support of racial discrimination in employment. The National
Recovery required women who held government jobs to received twenty-five percent less
pay than men in the same jobs. In 1934, the General Federation of Women’s Clubs
began a ten-year study to review the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). First purposed in
1923, the ERA was a bipartisan resolution proposing an Amendment to the Constitution
of the United States relative to equal rights for men and women.67 Between 1934 and
1944, four state federations—in Michigan, Maine, Arizona, and the District of
Columbia—took a stand in favor of the Equal Rights Amendment before the General

67 The Equal Rights Amendment was re-written by Alice Paul in 1943. Her amended language is still used
today: "Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state
on account of sex." Paul is best known as an American suffragist leader and founder of the National
Women’s Party in 1916. The radical organization borrowed tactics from the British suffrage movement
including hunger strikes, parades, and picketing which garnered worldwide attention.
Federation endorsed it in 1944 and continues to support it today.\textsuperscript{68}

The General Federation of Women’s Clubs continued to lobby for more women in office throughout the twentieth century. Just as they had with the “Get Out the Vote” campaigns in the 1920s, clubwomen continued their interest in encouraging women to vote in order to increase the number of women in government positions and as their involvement in public affairs. Historically, scholars have argued that the General Federation, along with other voluntary associations, joined in postwar idealizations of women’s homemaking duties and championed women’s return to the domestic sphere following the war. However, the organization also recognized the necessity of paid employment for many women and the need to have more women in public life. In 1937, Mrs. Lawson, the president of the General Federation at the time, wrote to President Roosevelt and explained that “invention and the new economic order” necessitated women working in the public sphere for wages and stressed the need for their compensation. She wrote:

Invention and the new economic order have lifted household drudgery from the shoulders of homemakers. But in turn it demands of the continued contribution to family support—a contribution which can no longer be made ‘in kind’ as formerly. It must now be made in cash. Neither now nor in the discernible future...

\textsuperscript{68} The General Federation of Women’s Clubs continues to promote legislation promoting economic and political equity for women. Their current website states, “Despite significant advances, women still lag behind men in earnings by nearly twenty-five percent, and only twelve of the Fortune 500 companies are run by women. GFWC has multiple resolutions supporting the advancement of women, including on the topics of the ERA and pay equity.”
can the earnings of the head of the average American family support its adult women in idleness. (Houde 214)

The General Federation signed on to support the Equal Rights Amendment in 1944 and joined with other women’s groups in pressuring Presidents Truman and Eisenhower to appoint more women to their administrations. The organization dismissed concerns that running for local office was too political for clubwomen, asserting “it is citizenship” (Meltzer 60). During World War II, General Federation President Sara A. Whitehurst lamented the absence of women in office. “We need hundreds of women in Washington,” Whitehurst declared: “our qualified women are so superior to the men down there [in Washington, DC] that if we had women in office, I don’t think we would have wars to fight right now” (Meltzer 61). Clubwoman Whitehurst represented the General Federation on thirty-four major boards and committees including the Advisory Committee for the Citizens Committee for the Army and Navy, the Advisory Committee for the Citizens Council of the United Nations, and the National Advisory Committee for the Women’s Land Army. In many cases, Whitehurst was the only female member on the board, and she told clubwomen,

The lack of women in key positions, both in and out of government, has been disturbing leaders of women for some time. Even during this war period when more than 16 million in the United States are working, of whom 2 million are producing the munitions of war, when women are serving as WACS, WAVES, SPARS, Marines, and nurses, no great leaders of women have been given places on the outstanding policy-forming boards. (Houde 252)
The General Federation of Women’s Clubs acquired and developed the rhetorical ability to negotiate a sometimes unfriendly and unreceptive climate for women and at the same time worked to develop a common language with which they used to communicate and advance their own agenda.

In 1944, the General Federation of Women’s Clubs established the “Buy-a-Bomber” campaign. Women played a prominent role in promoting the sale of war bonds to fund defense production. The General Federation of Women’s Clubs “Buy a Bomber” campaign funded production of 431 planes. Below is a "Buy a Bomber" plane, a fundraiser sponsored by the General Federation of Women's Clubs who funded the plane in September 1943.

Figure 12. The General Federation of Women’s Clubs’ “Buy a Bomber” Campaign
According to the organization’s website, through the General Federation’s “Buy a Bomber” campaign during World War II, state federations sold war bonds worth $154,459,132 which was enough money to purchase 431 planes. State federations worked individually to raise money the project. For instance, the Maryland Federation sold $10,991,775 worth of United States war bonds which was the largest amount sold by any federation. The Texas Federation was in second place for selling $10,643,812 worth of war bonds. The Indiana Federation sold more than $6 million worth of bonds to buy bombers, followed by the state federations of North Carolina and New York with approximately $4 million worth, and the following states federations raised more than $3 million in war bonds: Pennsylvania, Florida, Massachusetts, Oklahoma, Kansas, and Ohio (Houde 245). While now in the public arena, the General Federation continued to use its rhetorical education in order to raise money for efforts they saw as related to good citizenship and loyalty to the country.

Clubwomen became increasingly dedicated to taking these internal educational humanitarian initiatives from inside of the club, to reaching out to the general public, and finally broadening their context to include more international efforts. In 1948, the General Federation had more than doubled its membership by bringing in 5,102,000 foreign members (New York Times 1948). Mrs. Whitehurst told a session of junior club members that this reflected the determination of the General Federation to promote democracy to the women of the world. During this time, the organization “engaged in a letter-writing campaign between its members in this country and women abroad; in sending food and clothing to the needy in foreign countries; in furnishing scholarships to
graduate students abroad; and in extending clubs to create focal points throughout the world in order to work with foreign women” (New York Times 1948). The General Federation emphasized “world consciousness” to increase public awareness of international issues and to help develop closer bonds between clubwomen in the United States and international clubwomen. This is a prime example of how club members turned their efforts at rhetorical training outward and attempted to connect to a larger audience.

The General Federation encouraged clubwomen to assume responsibility to take an active part in international affairs and seek to build a better understanding among people throughout the world. According to the pamphlet, “General Federation of Women’s Clubs world co-operation tour,” forty members of the organization participated in a tour of Europe in 1950. They named the program “To Help Build the Ramparts of Freedom” and worked in cooperation with the American government to help rebuild countries in Western Europe. Clubwomen’s pride in the methods and successes of their organization led them to promote membership in voluntary organizations as the ideal form of citizenship. Scholars have consistently criticized clubwomen for their imperialistic attitudes and actions. In Cold War Women, Helen Laville argues, “Armed with their model of political participation and assuming, in common with their countrymen, a national superiority, leaders of American women’s organizations threw themselves into an international mission to make the world more like them” (59). While there is truth to this statement, members of the General Federation also seemed genuinely interested in helping others with rhetorical education along with promoting Americanism.
Through the 1940s and 1950s, the General Federation continued to expand its work into the international arena when it supported the founding of the United Nations. At the end of the twentieth century, the General Federation had affiliated clubs in twenty countries. Its international programs concentrate on issues of special concerns to women and children, on literacy campaigns, and on human rights and environmental issues. The formation of the United Nations was important to women’s associations because historically they had been removed from meaningful participation in national political institutions and hopeful that an international arena might offer them greater legitimacy (Mathews-Gardner 553-554). “The day of the sewing circle is past,” the GFWC president declared in The New York Times in 1948. At this point in time, the General Federation was also interested in modernizing its identity: they by collected statistical data, appointed observers to the UN, and maintained roll-call voting records at their national headquarters (Mathews-Gardner 549). As the president of the GFWC wrote in 1948, club life was “an excellent training ground for women as citizens” (Buck 1948).

In the 1950s, the General Federation membership reached 826,000 (Mathews-Gardner 556). By 1955, the General Federation had more than 800,000 dues-paying members and claimed an additional ten million through affiliated women’s organizations at home and overseas (Meltzer 57). In the postwar era, program departments included, among others, the American Home, Community Affairs, International Affairs, Fine Arts,

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69 The General Federation of Women’s Clubs continues to support the United Nations. The organization’s current object for the UN is stated on their website, “Educate members about United Nations programs concerning women, children, literacy, human rights, and the environment and support GFWC’s status as a UN Non-Governmental Organization Observer.”
Public Affairs, and Public Welfare. Within each program department were specialty divisions with their own division chairs: the Public Affairs department, for example, contained divisions on citizenship, the status of women, and legislation. It was a complicated hierarchy but it allowed for quick dissemination of information and quick mobilization at critical moments (Meltzer 57). In 1951, the General Federal participated in the “Radios for Iran” to spread American ideals and promote capitalism in particular. Clubwomen raised funds to purchase five loudspeaker systems to be placed in public squares in Iran over which the State Department would broadcast its “Voice of America” program (including one broadcast from General Federation president Dorothy Houghton) designed to create counter communist and anti-American propaganda (Meltzer 60). Additionally, the General Federation continued its “Get Out the Vote” campaign, restored Independence Hall in Philadelphia, made U.S. History a requirement for all high schools and colleges, and sponsored the “What America Means to Me” essay contest in high schools. Clubwomen continued to sponsor naturalization ceremonies for immigrants, trips to state capitals, and “Americanism Days” in small towns across the country (Meltzer 59). These events represent different site of rhetorical education and instruction for clubwomen.

In the 1960s, the General Federal of Women’s Clubs embarked on another illiteracy initiative aimed at adults. Statistics in the United States indicated that ten percent of the adult population eighteen and over was “functionally illiterate” which prompted the General Federation, in cooperation with the U. S. Department of Education, to produce manuals which were distributed to state federated clubs. Over 7,770 used the
manuals to create different programs to help address the problem of illiteracy. For instance, twenty-seven states promoted a television classroom program called “Operation Alphabet” to help improve literacy skills (Houde 321). According to an article published in *Billboard Magazine* in 1964, the Philadelphia based station WFIL-TV received a national citation from the General Federation of Women’s Clubs for “responsibility to fellow men in aiding the cause of literacy and thereby helping to bestow one of the basic humans rights” through the Operation Alphabet series which first aired in 1960. The program was subsequently made available to stations throughout the world to help teach people how to read and write.

In the 1970s, the General Federation of Women’s Clubs remained committed to electing more women to government offices. Clubwomen Mrs. Louise Bushnell of New York, status of women chairman for the General Federation, told clubwomen:

> The more women we get into the halls of government, at all levels, the more advocates we will have for the things we deeply care about…Do something about it. Talk with other women. Test other women. Work with other women. Train other women. Urge other women to work with you in your community, so that government becomes as important as a good life. You cannot truly have one without the other. (Houde 362)

Clubwomen Bushnell’s attitude is reflective of the organization’s desire to promote rhetorical education outside of their clubs.

In 1966, Congress established an American Revolution Bicentennial Administration to plan and coordinate observances of activities commemorating historic
events associated with the revolution. The General Federation of Women’s Clubs created their own Bicentennial Committee to aid the administration and encourage clubs to develop creative programs for the event. The U.S. administration asked clubs to develop activities and programs surrounding three approved themes: Heritage ’76, Festival U.S.A., and Horizons ’76 (Houde 373). Clubs restored historic sites, planned pageants and festivals, and developed other scholarly and cultural projects. Clubs purchased books on American history and studied flag etiquette. At the 1976 General Federation Convention in Philadelphia, John Warner, Administrator of the American Revolution Bicentennial Administration, told clubwomen:

  Probably the single most valuable legacy of the bicentennial was the unifying force it has been. When all the parades and festivals are over, America will have learned how to pull the nation together…and the advantages of working in unison. Diversity is a magic key from which we’ve derived our strongest unity. Your organization’s motto is ‘Unity in Diversity.’ You know its effectiveness. (Houde 381)

The General Federation continued its interest in pageantry as a visual means of rhetorical education designed to be promoted in any and all local communities. They also supported a resolution that urged clubs to study the U.S. Constitution, to promote its study in schools, and to assist in planning projects and programs to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the Constitution. For example, the Mississippi Federation helped a class of sixth graders dramatize the Constitutional Convention where students portrayed delegates to the convention. The club wrote and directed the play and created programs.
As a result of club programs like these, the General Federation was officially recognized for its involvement in promoting the 1987 celebration of the Bicentennial of the Constitution. The organization continued to promote what they deemed healthy civic habits and goals to individuals and the nation through these rhetorical art forms.

In the 1980s, the General Federation continued to advocate literacy initiatives that supported adult education. They worked closely with national groups in literacy campaigns such as Project Literacy U.S. (PLUS) which included efforts to inform the public about the plight of adult illiterates. During this time, the General Federation of Women’s Clubs was a part of an unprecedented collaborative effort that focused on raising national awareness of the problem of adult functional illiteracy in the United States and developed and encouraged volunteer action to address illiteracy. Supporting literacy efforts, education, and local libraries continues to be a Federation priority today. Through America’s Promise Libraries 2000 program, the General Federation raised and donated more than $13.5 million in books and materials to public libraries and public school libraries. While, in 1984, the General Federation opened the Women’s History and Resource Center which President George Bush dedicated. The primary objective of the center was to document and promote women’s volunteer efforts in an historic archive. Plans for the center included conference space, lectures, exhibits, and research activities (Houde 413). The General Federation’s goal was to make club history accessible to the larger community and encourage the development of similar community projects throughout the world.
Paying attention to the General Federation’s specific rhetorical practices and viewing the organization as one site of rhetorical education can help scholars better understand how groups of women acquired and applied rhetorical skills both to interact with and to challenge and the change their environment. While this project presents compelling archival evidence of clubwomen’s involvement in both training each other to become model citizens and of extending that training to the larger public, there is still further research to be done on the General Federation of Women’s Clubs and other major organizations like it. Future research questions might be: To what extent did regional location influence the context of an individual club’s civic actions? In what ways did members of the General Federation of Women’s Clubs interact with other major organizations of the time like the National Association of Colored Women, the National Council of Jewish Women, the National Council of Negro Women, and the Women’s Christian Temperance Union? How will the modern day General Federation of Women’s Clubs continue to support and/or resist definitions of citizenship for clubwomen? This study in rhetoric and literacy practices also gives scholars the opportunity to reflect on how the General Federation’s mission and dialogue about women’s civil responsibilities can help us as teachers of rhetoric in the classroom. In the article “Teaching the Women’s Club Movement in the United States History,” Christine Woyshner argues that we should use “women’s clubs as a prism” to teach race, class, and gendered struggles in the twenty-first century (Social Studies 2002). The club movement is one model of women’s achievements and rhetorical education that could help mentor female students and demonstrate the presence and agency of women in history. As other
scholars have pointed out, and I agree, history is not simply a study of the past as an end in itself, but rather a way of providing perspectives on and possible solutions to the current struggles of our time. More research on the history of women’s education and rhetorical training will benefit the lives of future female students and impact their education.

As a researcher and scholar, I have meticulously documented the General Federation of Women’s Clubs’ historical efforts to promote citizenship and its ties to reading and civic duty with an emphasis on the organization’s activities between 1890 to 1930. As it stands now, the significance of this study is to locate clubwomen’s involvement in dialogues about literacy, women’s involvement in politics, and rhetorical education through a collective institution such as the General Federation on the feminist, historiographic landscape of rhetorical tradition. In line with scholars like Cheryl Glenn, Andrea Lunsford, and Nan Johnson, the major contribution of my study of the General Federation of Women’s Clubs is to not only recover but to preserve the rhetorical accomplishments and evidence of rhetorical training which has been hidden in archives and absent in histories of rhetoric among others. In addition, this study fits into more contemporary studies by Shirley Wilson Logan, Jessica Enoch, and David Gold by also examining a site of rhetorical education which has been previously overlooked or ignored. Starting with small-scale investigations of a diverse array of rhetorical sites like the General Federation allows us to both question and inform broader histories of rhetoric in the future.
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