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ABSTRACT

CHANGING THE SUBJECT: A THEORY OF RHETORICAL EMPATHY

by Lisa Blankenship

This project explores the concept of empathy as a rhetorical stance and strategy of engaging across marked social differences. It contributes to Krista Ratcliffe's call for scholars in rhetoric and composition studies to "map more theoretical terrain and provide more pragmatic tactics for peaceful, cross-cultural negotiation and coalition building" (*Rhetorical Listening* 72). I define *rhetorical empathy* as a trope characterized by narrative and emotional appeals and as a *topos* or attitude interlocutors adopt to engage with socially marked difference, building on Susan Miller's conception of rhetoric as emotion-based trust (*Trust in Texts*).

This dissertation also addresses a gap in studies on empathy within cognitive science and psychology that typically focus on bodily responses to attempt to measure someone's level of empathetic engagement within staged scenarios. Such studies often do not take into account the social position of research subjects or the role of motivations in empathetic responses.

My research methodology for this project involves an analysis of three rhetorical exchanges involving marked social difference: in Chapter Three I focus on *class* in two late-nineteenth labor rights speeches of Jane Addams; Chapter Four centers on the intersection of *sexuality/gender and religion* in the rhetoric of two contemporary gay rights activists; and in Chapter Five I focus on constructions of *race* in the online, multimodal response of a minority student group to a racist Twitter incident at a midwestern U.S. university. I identify the following recurring and recursive moves as characteristic of rhetorical strategies based on empathy:

- Appealing to the personal within discourse systems: experience and emotions
- Considering motives behind speech acts and actions
- Confronting difference and injustice
- Situating a rhetorical exchange as part of an ongoing process of mutual understanding and (ex)change (including vulnerability and self-critique on the part of the rhetor)

Rhetorical empathy functions as a way of forming connections and shifting power dynamics among interlocutors within a complex web of rhetorical exchange. By combining rhetoric and empathy, I highlight aspects of each: *rhetoric* as a strategic use of symbol systems using various modes of communication—language, still and moving images, and sound—and, after Wispé ("Distinction" 318), *empathy* as involving both a volitional, deliberate attempt to understand an Other and the emotional elements involved in such attempts.

CHANGING THE SUBJECT:
A THEORY OF RHETORICAL EMPATHY

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Faculty of
Miami University in partial
fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Department of English

by

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Miami University
Oxford, Ohio

2013

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2013

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Dedication

To Genevieve, who taught me about the Other.

There are no words except that this is yours as much as mine, and always will be.

Acknowledgements

So many people were part of this longtime goal becoming real.

The two subjects of Chapter 4, Kathy Baldock and Justin Lee, were generous with their time and willing to open up about how they do the difficult work of engaging other Christians on one of the most divisive topics of our generation. Kathy opened up her home to me for three days during our interview process, and Justin gave me his time during the release of his first book in the midst of talk show appearances and other press engagements. The subject of Chapter 5 and primary author of the Asian American Association response to the @OxfordAsians Twitter feed at Miami University, Suey Park, also has been kind and generous in her willingness to provide feedback on the chapter and in allowing me to re-print the students' discursive response in its entirety.

On a personal level, I'm fortunate to have a family who has supported me not only through the difficult journey of graduate school but throughout my life. Nema, who passed on to me her love of words and books. Sally, my second mom, and Alex, my second brother, whom I'll always love and be thankful for. Larry, my father, my rock, my hero, and my friend, always asking questions, and who all my life has shown me—by his actions—what empathy is. Beverly, my mom and a lovely, precious soul, who eight years ago asked me when I planned to quit my corporate job and go back to school to become a teacher. She knows me as well as anyone ever will and usually is right. Craig, my little brother who over the past year has turned into a big brother and who anchors me and reminds me of what's most important, one of the best people I've ever known.

Janet Williamson, my high school science teacher who convinced me to be an English major and who taught me what it means to be intellectually curious and open to the world. Mary Ann Merz and Linda Thornton, who left this world too soon. Thank you both.

My friends and now colleagues at the University of Oklahoma and beyond: Catherine Hobbs, Susan Kates, and Chris Carter. And the iconic and lovely Larry Frank, who believed in me. Sandy Dolan, who introduced me to Rogerian rhetoric. My cohort and friends who got me through my Master's program and more: Rhonda, Lynn, Justin, Alyssa, Mary, Wendy, Alex, Laura Grace, Amanda, Norm, Christina, Fred, Tonya, Darin. I'll never forget the first day of TA training the summer of 2005, and here we are.

My Ohio State University friends and colleagues who are like sisters to me now: Lauren Obermark, Katie DeLuca, and Paige Benaji. What a journey we've been on together.

And my Miami family, amazing people who helped me pull through. My wise and dedicated committee members, the incomparable Cindy Lewiecki-Wilson, Heidi McKee, LuMing Mao, and David Cowan. The fabulous Abby Dubisar, feminist of the finest sort and fellow peace lover who took me in from the first and whom I've missed terribly after

she moved on from the little town of Oxford. Gina Patterson and Mandy Watts, and Jenise Bauman and Erin Douglas, who saved me last summer and many moments since.

My writing group and dear friends Dom Ashby and Ann Updike, *without whom* on so many levels, truly. Caroline Dadas, who for the past five years has listened and believed and been the one I called to tell whatever it was. You make this all worth it. And Kate, faithful committee chair and friend who makes me laugh and pushes me when I need it, and who is the reason I came to Miami in the first place. Thanks, Kate, for the talk that day in the courtyard when I was deciding, and thanks for always being there. After everything I still believe.

Chapter 1:

Changing the Subject: A Theory of Rhetorical Empathy

[T]his feeling of becoming is always synonymous with a weakening or renunciation of the self, while in its expansive form...it is synonymous with a strengthening and liberation of the self.

— German philosopher Robert Vischer,
*On the Optical Sense of Form: A
Contribution to Aesthetics (1873)*, in the
first usage of the word and concept
“*Einfühlung*”/ “empathy”

[I]f we are to approximate empathy, we must undo any belief that empathizing affects only the one receiving the empathy.

—Dennis Lynch, “Rhetorics of Proximity:
Empathy in Temple Grandin and Cornel
West,” *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* (1998)

In his editorial introduction to the September 2011 volume of *College English*, John Schilb points to *empathy* and *citizenship* as “two terms now blazingly hot in our discipline” (9). The concept of empathy and emotion more broadly have been explored a good deal recently in literary and cultural studies (Keen, Kulbaga, Ahmed, Berlant, Sedgwick, Greiner, Jurecic, Falzetti). Scholars in rhetorical theory also have taken up the study of emotion as a rhetorical concept in recent years (Miccichi, McLeod, Fulkerson, Langstraat, Miccichi and Jacobs, Worsham, Gross, Miller), some of whom explore empathy in particular within the writing classroom (Lindquist, Richmond, DeStigter, Leake), in public discourse and deliberation (Lynch, Fleckenstein) and in relation to Rogerian rhetoric (Teich, Peary).

Despite the rich work in the articles above, the field of rhetoric and composition has yet to produce a full-length study of empathy as a rhetorical concept. Dennis Lynch makes the case that empathy’s tendency to erase or gloss over difference and the role of power within discourse has led to its being “scrutinized, critiqued, and all but abandoned by rhetorical theorists” in recent years (6). He calls for scholars in rhetoric and composition to revisit the question of empathy’s usefulness to our discipline despite (and more importantly, in light of) the justified critiques the concept has undergone by theorists writing from poststructural, postcolonial, and postmodern perspectives.

In his *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* piece Lynch makes the case that while empathy was once the centerpiece of modern rhetoric, it has been critiqued—and rightly so—in light of postmodern rhetorical theories that foreground the body and power struggles. Whereas modern theorists emphasize similarities, connections, and identifications between interlocutors, postmodern theories have focused on the embodied subject position, on difference, and on the role of discourse in creating and perpetuating existing power structures (Foucault, Fuss). In its emphasis on understanding and finding common ground, modern rhetorical theories have been criticized for simply perpetuating existing power structures that favor people in dominant subject positions (Ratcliffe, Lunsford and Ede, Jarratt, Lassner, Fraser, Benhabib, “Introduction,” Mouffe). In modern theories, the minds of interlocutors are, for the most part, disembodied, universal and decontextualized, much as in the Enlightenment theories of David Hume, Adam Smith, and George Campbell grounded in psychology. Postmodern, postcolonial, queer, and feminist theories are to a large degree a critique of modern rhetorical theory’s lack of attention to the place of the body and difference as vital epistemological factors. One of the hallmarks of feminist theory is its focus on difference and the body.

Lynch identifies two major ways empathy has failed to withstand postmodern critiques: *epistemological and ontological*—try as we might, we simply cannot fully understand the mind or experience of an Other. “Walking in someone else’s shoes” suggests empathy is “dependent on the physical, bodily displacement of the other” (10). Second, *social and political* power differences problematize an empathetic stance, whether assumed by one in a greater or lesser degree of power; less powerful voices can become silenced and existing power structures can be reinforced. There is, however, a caveat to these critiques. Lynch argues that the very obstacles empathy presents also have the potential to create an atmosphere of mutual change among interlocutors.

The promise of empathy remains despite (and, he argues, because of) its constraints: the multiple, shifting, and intersecting identities constituted in the “I” of discourse can connect with those that constitute the Other to a degree that both experience identification and are changed in some fashion, not *despite* but *because of* the highlighting of the body and difference. In the midst of his qualifiers for empathy’s potential, Lynch argues that because of its ability to open up new avenues for rhetorical invention, we should at least “make the effort to empathize” and to “approximate empathy” (20). In his view, empathy’s epistemological and political constraints render it unable any longer to stand as “the master concept” or “foundation” of rhetoric, as he argues it was in modern rhetorical theory (7), but in his clear-eyed consideration of empathy’s constraints he calls for further theorizing of its role in rhetorical praxis. He points out the need for further work in developing theories that “thicken our understanding” (7) of the concept of empathy while incorporating the insights of postmodern theory with “the body squarely at the center of rhetorical exchange” (10).

Despite its constraints and the difficulty of exploring such a wide-ranging, slippery topic with a great deal of cultural coding, in this project I explore the topic of empathy from the perspective of rhetorical theory within three sites of public discourse. I position

rhetorical empathy as a trope characterized by narrative and emotional appeals and as a *topos* or attitude interlocutors adopt to engage with socially marked difference (class, gender/sexuality, race). Rhetorical empathy functions as a way of forming connections and shifting power dynamics among interlocutors within a complex web of rhetorical exchange.

Within postmodern theories and cultural studies, the use of solidarity or empathy by those occupying a dominant subject position has come to be suspect as at the very least patronizing and at worst manipulative. In *Language and Power*, Norman Fairclough argues that whenever an individual or group occupying a dominant subject position in a rhetorical situation uses rhetoric characterized by empathy, it's only because that person or group has been forced to by those with less power. In other words, no one would willingly give up power or privilege unless it were in her or his best interests to do so.

Fairclough's argument is persuasive to a certain degree. It's true that people don't willingly let go of strongly held beliefs or ideologies that reinforce their identities and social positions unless they're convinced (or persuaded to use Aristotelian language) to do so. However, such shifts do happen. What interests rhetorical theorists, of course, is when such occurrences happen and why. If we accept the idea that rhetoric entails some sort of connection or identification between individuals that results in a shift of subjectivities and identifications from one group or set of beliefs and practices to another, then we're compelled to explain as scholars of rhetoric the explanations for such shifts.

Postmodernism is in some respect a reaction against the idea that agency and rhetorical identification are actually possible. The tension between highlighting difference and the very real consequences of injustice, and yet maintaining the possibility of rhetorical agency is, I believe, crucial at this juncture to pursue. Lynch describes this tension as "the desire to discover and assert one's self or position, and the need to be open to others and open to change" (6). We can't afford to err too far in one direction or another in this important tension: on the one hand the danger is ignoring very real power differences that affect the production and circulation of discourse, and on the other is what Paul Ricoeur calls the hermeneutics of suspicion, which Eve Sedgwick argues has become "synonymous with criticism itself" (Jurecic 16). In her qualified and careful defense of empathy as one of the goals of literary study, Ann Jurecic points to Ricoeur's belief that "hermeneutics [...] seems to be animated by [a] double motivation: [a] willingness to suspect, [and a] willingness to listen" (16), and to Sedgwick's reading of Ricoeur's argument as it bears on discourse theory: a willingness to suspect often translates into critics expecting to see how narratives are shaped by discourse. Narratives then become hopelessly over determined by power struggles to the degree that no personal agency is possible and any sort of sincerity is read with suspicion.

Jurecic argues that Raymond Williams's cultural studies perspectives influenced such hermeneutics more than any other stream of criticism, an argument borne out by Fairclough's argument that solidarity extended by someone with greater power toward someone with less is manipulative and deceptive. While his argument may hold true in certain contexts, such theories face the constraints of removing theory from everyday

realities and over determining the role of discourse to the degree that rhetorical practice can seem pointless. Jurecic points out that “Williams’ position has been taken up and reaffirmed by critics for four decades” (17)—the terministic screen of suspicion accepted without, I would add, a healthy degree of suspicion.

Like other theories in our field such as LuMing Mao’s *interdependence-in-difference* (“Returning”), Hephzibah Roskelly and Kate Ronald’s *romantic/pragmatic rhetoric*, and Krista Ratcliffe’s *rhetorical listening*, rhetorical empathy attempts to find a third way between the binary, hierarchical thinking in postmodern theories, and a balance between theory and practice and between idealism and cynicism. Mao uses the metaphor of the yin and yang symbol to represent the simultaneous presence of interconnectedness and difference; the dark and light in the symbol are separate and yet part of one another.

Roskelly and Ronald attempt to intervene in the theory/practice split in rhetoric and composition, arguing for a pedagogical theory that combines the reflective practice of historicizing theories while taking into account the practical consequences of our theories in real life—in classrooms and in our own lives and the lives of our students. Their approach is grounded in pragmatic philosophy in that it insists on consequences and action rather than de-contextualized, non-reflective theory, divorced from everyday realities; its basis in romanticism offers hope that individuals are important and change is possible. Like *interdependence-in-difference*, *romantic/pragmatic rhetoric* relies on mediation, the premise of which is that “ideas can move beyond their unique or opposing characteristics and toward relationship” (25).

Ratcliffe positions rhetorical listening as “a trope for interpretive invention and as a code of cross-cultural conduct” (1). Like Ronald and Roskelly, her work in *Rhetorical Listening* is (among other things) an attempt to balance between idealism and cynicism, and like Mao she foregrounds interconnectedness and difference simultaneously: “This performance of rhetorical listening fosters a rhetorical stance of humility (not weakness), a stance that recognizes interdependency among subjects” (73). She relies on both metaphor and metonymy¹ to explain the relationships among rhetors, metaphor relying on similarities and metonymy highlighting similarities and differences.

Like rhetorical listening, rhetorical empathy precedes conscious identifications; they both must be present for any sort of understanding to occur within troubled identifications involving differences such as race, class, or gender/sexuality. Rhetorical listening as Ratcliffe constructs it can lead to “deep empathy,” as I explain below. Like a decision to listen rhetorically, adopting a deliberate, conscious stance of performative empathy can lead to shifts in perspective in the rhetor and influence a rhetorical exchange. Following Ratcliffe, I focus both on identifications and differences between interlocutors and acknowledge that struggle and rhetorical negotiations are always already present in

¹ In chapter five I analyze Twitter messages as an example of a metonymic relationship. “Miami University”—with all of its visual signifiers associated with its brand—is present in and on the bodies of the Asian and Asian American students in the photos of the students holding protest signs. They both “become” Miami University in symbolic terms and yet their difference from White-coded students also is foregrounded by their bodies.

discourse. As I'll discuss later in this chapter, I don't pretend for a moment that power is not always present and that the nature of rhetorical praxis is rooted in the effort to change others or circumstances in some way. My point is not to ignore this reality but to stand within it and argue for a different way of negotiating, contributing to Ratcliffe's call for scholars in our discipline to "map more theoretical terrain and provide more pragmatic tactics for peaceful, cross-cultural negotiation and coalition building" (72). Although our projects are similar in many respects, rhetorical empathy differs from rhetorical listening in that it foregrounds the role of the personal and the emotions, as I discuss in detail below, building on Susan Miller's conception of rhetoric as emotion-based trust.

For Ratcliffe, rhetorical listening is (primarily) a stance for those in dominant subject positions to assume toward those in non-dominant positions. In contrast, the examples of rhetorical empathy in this project all are in non-dominant subject positions of some sort, and all use the strategies I associate with rhetorical empathy as a way of both connecting with and resisting dominant discourses. How a rhetoric based on empathy can be useful or justified given the uneven power differences between various groups and agents is another salient question about this theory. As I discuss throughout this project, the use of rhetorical empathy is strategic in that it's contextual and contingent; that is, such an approach is not always *kairotic* or successful, but as Lynch argues, the use of empathetic rhetoric has the benefit of changing both the rhetor and the audience. It is a peace-based rhetoric focused on mediation that mitigates anger and (therefore) provides perspective to rhetors in non-dominant subject positions.

Linda Flower (2003) lays out a spectrum of efforts to engage with difference in her community literacy work that provides another good point of comparison to rhetorical empathy in terms of the role of power and subject positions. Although her intercultural work focuses primarily on differences in race, her synthesis of competing theories for engagement among critical race theorists is useful for thinking about how rhetorical empathy operates within power differentials. She writes that "intercultural rhetoric...is a place of multiple—and inevitably contradictory—agendas, from self-expression to advocacy to collaborative understanding" (44). Relying on Catherine Prendergast's discussions of critical race theory, Flower defines *self-expression* as an in-group form of resistance and identity formation, the creation of a "special voice" that becomes "the distinctive expression of a postcolonial double consciousness" (44). An example would be using one's own language and not attempting to use the language of the dominant mainstream or even engage with the mainstream.

A second form of resistance that builds on self-expression is what she calls a *discourse of disruption*, characterized by activist and advocacy work in which a marginalized group protests the mainstream in a way that would be understandable to those outside their own group, intended to change the mainstream in some way toward greater justice. She cites the example of Gwendolyn Pough, who in a 2003 *College Composition and Communication* article describes her activist work at Miami University to highlight the lack of diversity, building on Eric Dyson's work using disruption, intervention, and disturbance.

The third, *collaborative understanding*, includes border-crossing rhetoric intended to form new kinds of knowledge and (thus) formulations of identity and ways of being in the world. She cites Jacqueline Jones Royster as an example of wrestling with the tensions of trying to speak in one's own voice and to one's own community and yet trying to be heard by the larger, dominant culture. Flower writes that "[w]ithout losing the edge of critique, [Royster's] sense of negotiating doesn't seem to depend on the adversarial power moves associated with the discourse of advocacy" (47). This kind of productive tension that "asks people to put aside privileged and/or familiar ways of talking to one another in order to enter a far less predictable rhetoric of inquiry" (49) is the kind of middle way I associate with rhetorical empathy.

Definition and Function of Rhetorical Empathy

As LuMing Mao points out (*Reading*), following Hall and Ames, our tendency in the West to foreground our arguments and definitions is itself a relic of our Aristotelian rhetorical tradition. A search instead for a contextualization of a concept—the *where* and *how* a concept has circulated and to what consequences—characterizes what Hall and Ames associate with more indirect, analogy-based epistemologies as in Chinese rhetorical traditions. However, in the case of a familiar concept such as empathy, it seems important to establish which definition(s) of the word "empathy" I intend to signify in this project, and then what exactly I mean by the term "rhetorical empathy" in order to clarify how I interpret the texts and rhetorical exchanges in chapters 3-5. In the process of providing (and selecting) definitions, though, I intersperse contextual applications and examples of how rhetorical empathy functions.

I did not begin this project with definitions but rather with a vague idea of what I was looking for: a mediating rhetoric based on empathetic principles as a way of engaging with difference. My first exigence in terms of difference was sexuality/gender in intersections of gay rights and religious discourse. I did what seemed to make the most sense at the outset: I (re)searched rhetorical theory in the Western canon and in traditions beyond the Western canon. As I discuss in chapter 2, the term "empathy" did not even begin circulating until 1909 in English, via the work of British psychologist Edward Titchener, who completed his doctoral work at Oxford and in Germany and also was fluent in Greek and Latin. He coined "empathy" from the German *Einfühlung* ("to feel one's way into understanding") and the Greek *empathia* ("to cause to be in" *pathos*) (Wispé, "History" 21).

Einfühlung was coined by the German philosopher Robert Vischer in his 1873 doctoral thesis as a way of accounting for the role of emotion and identification in the study of aesthetics. The significance of the origins of empathy in both its original German and English iterations is that the term signified the relationship between art—both language and visuals—and the feelings, words, and images produced in the minds of those experiencing them. Such significations draw heavily, in Titchener's conception, on the imagination and memory. So while empathy began to circulate in English through the field of psychology, the concept originated in philosophy and art history within the study of aesthetics. I discuss these significations and their importance to rhetoric more

thoroughly in chapter two in relation to George Campbell's concept of *vivacity* in *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*.

Since every translation is in some sense an interpretation, and since definitions themselves are rhetorical—a negotiation and struggle to signify—the way the word empathy has circulated in its one-hundred-year history is as important as how I choose to define it within this project. For every piece of scholarship on empathy in English in the last century—most of it within psychology and philosophy—there seems to be a different signification for the term: “a cognitive process analogous to cognitive role taking or perspective taking”; “a primarily affective process (having some cognitive components)”; “an affective response more appropriate to someone else’s situation than to one’s own”; “other-oriented feelings of concern, compassion, and tenderness experienced as a result of witnessing another person’s suffering”; “sharing the perceived emotion of another—‘feeling with’ another” (Eisenberg and Strayer 3-5). As Lauren Wispé notes, the “trails back” to the original rhetorical contexts and struggles over definitions have become “overgrown with redefinitions [and] reinterpretations” (“History” 17). Kristie Fleckenstein points out that “sympathy, pity, compassion, empathy are slippery terms made even more slippery as usage shifts within and between disciplines” (715).

I discuss the similarities between sympathy, pity, compassion, and empathy and what the similarities mean for a study of rhetorical empathy in chapter two by tracing these concepts through the history of rhetoric in the Euro-American tradition. I choose empathy rather than its various similar alternatives for a number of reasons. Pity and sympathy are even more culturally loaded terms than empathy in their associations with patronization, colonization, and a somewhat removed experience of an Other’s plight. From its beginning empathy has signified an immersion in an Other’s experience through verbal and visual artistic expression. This element of immersion that results in emotional experience in return, and the associations of empathy with altruism and social justice (Hoffman), possibly explain its continued linguistic cache over terms such as pity and sympathy.

In my definition of empathy, I focus on the *topoi* of empathy in terms of how the subject positions her/himself in relation to the object. Rhetorical empathy becomes both a *place* and a *stance*. I situate rhetorical empathy as “coming alongside” or “feeling *into*” the experiences of an Other rather than “feeling *for*” or displacing an Other, usually associated with pity or sympathy. As I discuss in chapter two, George Kennedy uses “pity” to translate Aristotle’s treatment of the emotion *eleos* in *On Rhetoric* (2.8.12-15), the closest concept to “empathy” in Aristotle. However, *eleos* often is translated as “compassion” or “mercy” in the Christian New Testament², a more fitting signification for the kind of work I’m associating with rhetorical empathy in this project.

² *Eleos* appears 27 times in the original Greek New Testament, including Luke 10:37 in the parable of the Good Samaritan, wherein Jesus tells the Jewish religious leaders that the racial, ethnic, and political Other was, in fact, their neighbor, whom they were to care for despite their differences (“*Eleos*” / ἔλεος).

In my definition of rhetorical empathy, it's important to note that in placing "rhetoric" and "empathy" together, I do not intend to create an oxymoron, as if by association with the popular concept of rhetoric, the concept of empathy somehow becomes strategic to the point that it is entirely performative, although as I discuss below, there certainly is a deliberate, performative aspect to rhetorical empathy. Neither do I want to take away from the strategic and social aspects of rhetoric by placing it with the term empathy, as if empathy is something located solely in the individual, an emotional connection unrelated to social codes and beliefs constructed, circulated, and maintained through language systems. By combining the two, my intention is to highlight aspects of each: *rhetoric* as a strategic use of symbol systems using various modes of communication—language, still and moving images, and sound—and, after Wispé ("Distinction" 318), *empathy* as involving both a volitional, deliberate attempt to understand an Other and the emotional elements involved in such attempts. Empathy, just as rhetoric, is an epistemology, a way of knowing and understanding, a complex combination of intention and emotion.

In this project I define *rhetorical empathy* as a trope characterized by narrative and emotional appeals and as a *topos* or attitude interlocutors adopt to engage with socially marked difference (gender/sexuality, class, race). Rhetorical empathy functions as a way of forming connections *and* shifting power dynamics among interlocutors within a complex web of rhetorical exchange. My research methodology for this project involved identifying recurring rhetorical strategies within public rhetoric characterized by marked difference: in chapter three I focus on class, chapter four centers on sexuality and gender, and in chapter five I focus on race. I then used these recurring (and recursive) characteristics to analyze the texts and rhetoric in these three sites. The characteristics I associate with rhetorical empathy are:

- Appealing to the personal within discourse systems: experience and emotions
- Considering motives behind speech acts and actions
- Confronting difference and injustice
- Situating a rhetorical exchange as part of an ongoing process of mutual understanding and (ex)change (including vulnerability and self-critique on the part of the rhetor)

Figure 1 represents a visual description of the recursive nature of the strategies and characteristics of rhetorical empathy.

Figure 1: Recursive process and characteristics of rhetorical empathy

As an inventional stance, rhetorical empathy offers a way “in” to challenging discursive engagements between polarized groups, offering possibilities for engaging with cultural, social, and political differences that often result in polarization and rhetorical impasse. It does this through personal, emotional appeals that make people within a group to which an interlocutor is an outsider seem more “real” and identifiable rather than a stereotyped member of a group. As a rhetorical strategy, it focuses on the embodied subject position of both the rhetor (the subject) and the Other (the audience) in the form of lived experiences, and may result in changes in both the subject and the audience—obviously a risky endeavor. Rhetorical empathy involves a choice to become vulnerable to an Other in the form of divulging personal experiences and constructing narratives that implicitly solicit emotional engagement. As a somewhat conservative rhetorical strategy, i.e. non-confrontational in its initial stance, rhetorical empathy can open doors of discussion and address fears and threats one or more stakeholders in a rhetorical situation may face.

Rhetorical empathy functions as a conscious choice to connect with an Other—an inventional *topos* and a rhetorical strategy or *pisteis*—that can result in an emotional response in the rhetor and/or interlocutors. In Euro-American epistemology, specifically within psychology, empathy often is associated with either cognition/thought or affect/emotion: *cognitive empathy* and *affective empathy* (Eisenberg and Strayer). It is difficult to parse out the distinction between thought and emotion or, in other words, empathy as a deliberate, cognitive function or as a subconscious response that we might associate with emotion. Recent work in cultural studies (Ahmed), rhetorical theory (Gross), and neuroscience (Decety and Meyer 1074) has complicated the degree to which emotions (including empathy) are considered hard-wired components of our biological make up or cognitive functions highly dependent on context and learned behavior.

Julie Lindquist touches on the complex relationship between a conscious, deliberate, and strategic use of empathy and the often unconscious responses emotions can create in us.

In her 2004 *College English* article, “Class Affects, Classroom Affectations: Working through the Paradoxes of Strategic Empathy,” she uses an example (among others) of her own explorations of assuming what she calls *strategic empathy* in a first-year writing course focused on working class rhetoric and informed by critical pedagogy. She describes her dilemma of being in a position of more power as the instructor, yet wanting to approach her students fairly and without simply imposing her own views. Building on the work of Roskelley and Ronald’s romantic/pragmatic rhetoric, she argues the work of such a course—and our pedagogy regardless of our theoretical influences—should take into account the very real effects theories have within the classroom. She describes a scenario that happened in the course in which she “performed empathy,” and what happened as a result.

She analyzes her performance with her students and their responses using the concepts *surface acting* and *deep acting*, based on the work of sociologist Laura Grindstaff and her appropriation of Arlie Hochschild’s *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*. Both are deliberately assumed, affective displays. In surface acting, Lindquist explains: “You remain in control of your emotions by consciously structuring the impressions you produce,” and in deep acting, “you relinquish the possibility of emotional control” (197). Surface acting can come across as disingenuous: seeming to be empathetic rather than actually becoming empathetic. Deep acting happens when someone isn’t trying to seem happy or sad, but these emotions occur spontaneously as a result of surface acting, “a real feeling that has been self-induced” (197). Deep acting involves, then, an emotional component that cannot be faked or controlled—entirely. Both surface acting and deep acting involve on a certain level a purposeful choice to display emotion, but deep acting includes an element of change within the rhetor: “When you deep act, in other words, you work, through acts of will and imagination, to open yourself to the possibility that you might *persuade yourself* that the emotions you are presenting are real. You risk *becoming* the thing you are performing. Deep acting is, paradoxically, the process of exerting control in order to relinquish control” (197).

Lindquist compares deep acting to the writing process: experiencing it is the goal of empathetic rhetoric, “but one moves toward it through the rhetorical work of surface acting” (198). This description of how rhetorical emotions function is, in many respects, a “fake it til you make it” approach. An empathetic approach may not be deeply ingrained, but through habit and attempting to approach a rhetorical situation and an Other empathetically, effects of the sort she associates with “deep acting” can occur: we’re changed in the process. Like Lynch’s “approximating empathy” and Racliffe’s rhetorical listening, Lindquist’s strategic empathy becomes a deliberate attempt to resist what she calls “postmodern paralysis,” a rhetoric that is “simultaneously empathetic and critical” (198).

She describes the scenario in the course in which these concepts played out. The Iraq War had just started, and she felt it was odd in the context of their class discussions to not bring up what was then the elephant in the room. She writes that neither of the two former approaches she had taken in such cases, “neutrality (taking no position) or ‘honesty’ (communicating my real feelings about the ethics of the war directly)” had

worked very well, so she decided she needed “another way to be with students, one that would enable the emotional responses that discussion of this issue was likely to invite” (202). She became vulnerable. She decided to learn from them what they wanted and needed from her:

I told them that, given our very different positions on the war (they were generally pro, I was fervently con) and my position of relative power over them, I was having trouble imagining how to negotiate the discussion responsibility. I asked them to consider a scenario in which they were teachers in precisely my situation, teachers trying to figure out how to respond ethically and productively to a political issue about which they had strong feelings—keeping in mind that they (as teachers) had the power to silence students whose views were different from theirs. (202-03)

They responded that if they were in her shoes they would share their own views but as one of other possibilities. The result was that she created an atmosphere of trust in which they felt they could share their stories and views without being judged, yet they knew where she stood as well. In hearing their stories, the *why* behind them began to emerge for her; in other words, their motivations began to be clearer to her and they became real people. In *staging empathy*—performing empathy even though at the initial stages she was highly resistant to their views—she began to move toward *deep empathy*. She writes that:

what made this strategy work, I think, was my willingness to make myself strategically naïve in two moments: first, in seeking advice about *how* we should conduct discussions about the war, and then later, when (working hard against my own emotional need to negatively evaluate some of the perspectives I was hearing about the war) I worked to communicate empathy for their positions as *affective responses*. (204)

Affect is wrapped up in cultural discourses and ideologies, not (just) an individual response. Yet in hearing them relate their stories (some had friends and partners in the war, some were from conservative families, etc.), she gained the perspective she needed to see them as individuals and real people—and as members of larger groups with motivations that clearly informed and constructed their positions to a large degree. In performing empathy toward them, and in asking them to do so in return to some degree, she began to have deep empathy for them as people, even though they continued to disagree about the Iraq War and war in general.

Lindquist’s account draws attention to the relationship between our emotional responses, social discourses, our (emotional) connections or disconnections to an Other and their motivations, and our will. Emotions and empathy are rhetorical. Whether functioning on a deliberate, strategic, conscious level or on an affective level influenced by experience—and I argue in this project that rhetorical empathy involves both—empathy is encompassed, created, and expressed within and through language and cultural codes. Below I elaborate further on the four overlapping, recursive moves I associate with

rhetorical empathy and then discuss the three discursive sites I analyze in this project to show examples of how these moves play out.

The Personal within Discourse Systems: Experience and Emotions

Rhetorical empathy relies heavily on the use of personal, embodied experience in the form of stories that evoke *pathos*.³ Unlike empathy, the concept of *solidarity*, which Habermas associates with the public sphere, suggests a neglect of the *personal*—of the body, and of difference—vital factors in decision-making and deliberation, and important concepts in feminist theory. Like Richard Rorty, who argues in *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* that we have a moral obligation to feel a sense of solidarity with others, Habermas's notion of solidarity is founded on what Benhabib calls "the generalized Other," characterized by universal respect for all as moral persons (*Situating*). While Benhabib does not use the term empathy to describe her vision of the self constructed within a network of relationships, using the term empathy more closely relates to the feminist philosophy that the personal is political, with empathy implying a connection to personal relationships, to intimate and familial relationships, and to epistemologies grounded in inductive reasoning, all characteristics of feminist critical theory.

Benhabib's theory of ethical relationships focuses on public sphere ethics as "preserv[ing] ...empathy derived from and fostered in small-scale, face-to-face interaction" (*Situating* 286). She argues for a deconstruction of the public/private binary, which she suggests has been "one of the chief contributions of feminist thought to political theory in the western tradition" (12). Her project is to create an alternative public sphere theory that includes private morality and feminist voices and concerns, unlike Nietzsche, Foucault, and Rorty, who all to some degree—in very different ways and for different reasons—argue for a separation of the private sphere from the public. Benhabib's theory centers around a continuum, not a binary, between the public and the private spheres.

In the public sphere in the liberal tradition, out of which Habermasian discourse ethics emerged, is the "generalized Other," in which the values of formalist rules govern and which is characterized by the discourse of justice, rights, and universal respect for all as moral persons in the tradition of John Stuart Mill's utilitarianism.⁴ In the private sphere is the "concrete Other" and the values of care that are demanded of us and shown to us by those with whom we are in closest relationship. According to Benhabib, the private sphere is governed by contextual, contingent codes of conduct and is characterized by relationships ideally grounded in empathetic values. She compares the public sphere to Carol Gilligan's ethic of rights and the private to her ethic of responsibility and care.

³ I rely on classical Greek circulations of *pathos* signifying narratives that evoke a sense of compassion and other emotions through identification. I also pay close attention to the role of cultural coding and discourse in how identifications happen within pathetic appeals, as well as how they can be disrupted.

⁴ These features of Benhabib's "public sphere of the generalized other" are characteristic of modern rhetorical theories such as Rogerian rhetoric, which see the Other as an equal without fully taking into account power differentials.

Both Vetlesen and Benhabib take Carol Gilligan's theory of moral development⁵ into account in ways that are non-essentialist and important to consider; they acknowledge ways in which Gilligan's theory of moral development has been used against women as a form of essentialism, but both point to the importance of recovering valuable aspects of her theory that offer new ways of formulating and enacting public sphere discourse ethics and theories.

Vetlesen resists rationalist, Enlightenment epistemologies, arguing that detachment prevents understanding, and that receptivity to others—their perceptions, their emotions, and their motivations—takes the form of empathy (18). For him empathy is critical for interpersonal relations to be extended to the public sphere, as in the relation between *I* and *Thou* (Buber, Levinas, Butler), always constituted by difference but also interconnected (Mao, *Returning*, Butler, Ratcliffe). Empathy for Vetlesen is a faculty, a cognitive ability, a conscious choice that disposes the subject to develop concern on an emotional level. This concern *changes the subject*; it is not removed from the object at a distance and acting only out of duty or respect for the rights of the object. This definition relates to empathy as “feeling into” rather than sympathy or pity’s construction as “feeling for.” When we feel “for” an Other we remain unchanged; we colonize, we subsume. When we feel “into” another, we begin to experience the Other’s world and it changes our own; this kind of empathy becomes a mutual exchange regardless of how the Other responds.

The personal for Vetlesen is political; it involves power, ideology, and language: “At the heart of fostering moral space is a social, indeed a political issue. And politics means power: the power relations at work between people, and often invisible to them, and the forces of repression at work within the individual” (9). Like David Hume, Vetlesen argues that empathy is a necessity for morality⁶; he resists a cognitive understanding of moral perception and judgment in the tradition of Kant and Habermas. He values “connected” over “detached” epistemologies and emphasizes, like pragmatists, the importance of experience. He argues that moral (rhetorical) deliberation consists of an interplay of emotional and cognitive components involving perception, judgment, and action. Most relevant to a theory of rhetorical empathy is what happens prior to perception. Connection and embodied experience, including emotions, form our perceptions, and those in turn inform our judgment, which influences our words and actions, in a recursive process.

Rhetorical empathy involves a personal connection between subjects, and as such often includes an emotional response. In exploring the complex relationship between empathy and emotion, my intention is not to conflate the two, yet it’s impossible to think about how empathy functions without paying attention to the role of emotion. Rhetorical

⁵ Gilligan’s theory focuses on the intervention of women’s experiences into theories of moral development that had, until the time of the publication of *In A Different Voice* (1982) focused on the experiences of middle to upper middle class males. She argues for an epistemology based on connectedness and experience (an “ethic of care”) rather than generalized principles (an “ethic of justice”) (173).

⁶ Hume uses the term sympathy, as I discuss in chapter two, although his account of the function of sympathy is similar to how I conceive of empathy’s function in terms of its connection to ethical reasoning.

empathy functions as a place of contingency and shifting agency, a deliberate stance with a greater degree of agency than we typically would associate with the emotions. Emotions are rhetorical (Miller, Gross, Ahmed), the result of social situatedness and the *habitus* of the rhetor⁷ and thus are a motivating force behind our decisions (including our decision to assume a stance of empathy or not).

As another example of how rhetorical empathy functions, the subject in chapter 4, gay rights activist Kathy Baldock, has relationships with people on the other “side” of the argument in the conservative Christian community, and these relationships and personal connections inform and construct the feelings she has toward the topic, her motives, and the arguments she makes. These relationships and her background form not only her ideas but her stance toward those she disagrees with. Even though she has moments of anger and despair at the differences between the two communities she straddles, she chooses ultimately to assume a stance based on empathy toward those on the conservative, even fundamentalist side of the gay rights divide. The fact that she often chooses to assume the best of her audience affects the feelings or emotions she experiences as a result of rhetorical exchanges. Her choice becomes a terministic screen that forms the emotional response she experiences during her rhetorical exchanges. Because of her own connection to Christianity and the degree to which conservative Christians have fueled the oppression of gay people, she is highly motivated to engage this community and to assume rhetorical strategies that get her in the door and keep her in the discursive house.

Motives Behind Speech Acts and Actions

In psychology, Jean Decety and Meghan Meyer (2008) point to the complexity of empathy and the role of motives in the function of empathetic responses:

[E]mpathy is a complex construct and [our] model does not account for all that empathy entails. The phenomenological experience of empathy and its role in initiating prosocial, empathic reactions likely draws on several interacting factors (and complicated distributed brain networks) not mentioned in our review. For example, motivation likely influences empathic accuracy: people who are motivated to produce empathically accurate responses to another’s predicament are less susceptible to social inference biases such as the fundamental attribution error (Fletcher, Reeder, & Bull, 1990; Tetlock, 1985). (1074)

⁷ Sharon Crowley in *Toward a Civil Discourse* includes an account of Bourdieu’s notion of the role a rhetor’s *habitus* plays within rhetorical exchanges: “In Latin *habitus* signifies a stable condition or situation, but the word is also related to terms meaning ‘aptitude’ and ‘dwelling,’ both of which uses survive in English as ‘habit,’ ‘inhabit,’ and ‘habitation.’ ... The *habitus* includes cultural representations such as history, memory, ideology, fantasy, myth, and lore, and it also includes culturally habituated practices, what Bourdieu refers to as ‘bodily *hexis*’—‘a durable way of standing, speaking, walking, and thereby of feeling and thinking’” (62).

As Decety and Meyer point out, empathy is complex, and one of the mitigating factors not covered in their study on empathy is that motives play a role in how empathy functions—certainly pointing toward implications for rhetorical theory that can bear on increasingly complex cross-disciplinary theories on empathy.

Our lack of understanding of the motives of the Other often fuels our decision not to identify let alone empathize. Kenneth Burke points out that identifications are associated with ethics, motives and irrational elements in human relations. His theory of dramatism in *A Grammar of Motives* attempts to ascertain motives of agents in communicative acts (of the five components of his dramatistic pentad: *Act, Scene, Agent, Agency*, and *Purpose*, the latter asks *why* the agent acted as she did and *what the agent wants* from the rhetorical act). In my discussions of rhetorical empathy in the chapters and specific sites to follow, I focus on “ground level” interactions between rhetors—real people and concrete situations rather than on theoretical scenarios. While I grant that we cannot separate the personal from the public, nor can we claim some sort of agency apart from the discourses and *habitus* from which we are formed and in which we operate from moment to moment, we can attempt to understand motives of an Other who operates within networks of power and certain ideological frameworks.

As I discussed earlier, rhetorical empathy functions on both the level of analogy and metonymy: a goal of rhetorical empathy is understanding the motives of an Other (on the individual and group level) and connecting with an Other to the degree that some sort of understanding occurs. However, rhetorical empathy as a strategy does not stop with analogy and similarities in what becomes a form of strategic essentialism. Undoubtedly, the most important and challenging facets of rhetorical empathy include finding points of connection while maintaining a sense of self-identity and asserting agency; in the case of the rhetors in this study and others in non-dominant subject positions, this entails addressing injustice and power differentials. Using an invitational stance that considers the motivations of others—seeing them as individuals and as part of larger discourses that shape them—in an attempt to genuinely understand them as fellow human beings with hurts and fears of their own does not equal acquiescence, naivety, or a lack of power. The rhetoric of the subjects within the three sites I focus on suggests that such a stance can become a source of rhetorical agency.

Power Differentials and the Body: Confronting Difference and Injustice

My interest in how empathy functions rhetorically arose initially out of my experience of coming out and dealing with the intersections of gender/sexuality and religious discourse. I had few models for how to engage with conservative arguments on the subject; it seemed most of my friends on the left and right simply chose to disengage rather than try to have any sort of productive dialogue with one another. Around this time I entered graduate school and encountered Sharon Crowley’s *Toward a Civil Discourse: Rhetoric and Fundamentalism*, in which she argues for the value of classical rhetoric to help address the polarization in public discourse. I was compelled by the fact that she took up such a difficult subject, but I felt more work needed be done to engage with the topic of “civil discourse.” Can rhetoric help bridge divides so that people in different social

groups go beyond simply being civil (though that would be a good starting place) and actually understand one another on their own terms, given what's often at stake in contentious issues and the very real power differentials and ideologies involved?

As I approached this project I was looking for a theoretical framework that takes into account power dynamics and the intersectional subject positions of rhetors but also the personal within the system—stories and relationships—and the role of embodied, experiential epistemologies. The concept of empathy implied for me then, and continues to imply for me now, a way of approaching difference, whether difference in the form of marked social identities such as race, class, gender, religion, ableness, sexuality, or any other identity that both defines and separates us from one another, or the differences that occur as a result of experience and enculturation that form our ideologies and create the need for rhetoric and engagement in the first place. Rather than eliding difference, as Lynch refers to in his account of critiques of empathy, a rhetoric based on empathy is especially needed and relevant for engagements involving marked differences.

Rhetorical Exchange as an Ongoing Process of Mutual understanding and (ex)Change: Vulnerability and Self-critique

Traditional Euro-American rhetorical theory has most often been about how to gain power over or persuade an audience. Rhetoric = change, and that change lies within your opponent, not within yourself. Otherwise why engage in rhetorical exchanges; why open yourself up to the possibility that your enemy has anything worth listening to? And in terms of the subject position of someone with greater agency or power in a discursive situation, why give away power willingly?

Beginning with Gertrude Buck in the early twentieth century, feminist rhetorical theories have focused on a more nuanced role of rhetoric as producing greater understanding and a mutual exchange of views. Although women have engaged in public rhetoric for centuries and practiced elements of rhetorical empathy, women's contribution to rhetorical theory began to emerge as late as the early twentieth century in the Euro-American tradition.⁸ As women gained access to higher education in the late nineteenth century in greater numbers, they began writing about how to deliver effective speeches and write effective prose rather than exclusively arguing for the right to do so in the public sphere (Ritchie and Ronald 211).

Women's giving speeches and writing for public audiences up to the turn of the twentieth century was news itself. When in 1900 we hear the first sounds of women's voices beginning to break in on the academic scene, it should be no surprise that the perspective we get in Gertrude Buck's "The Present Status of Rhetorical Theory" is worth noting for its differences from the dominant rhetoric of the time. In an age of theory that had begun to be dominated by myopic concerns with grammar in composition, she wrote about

⁸ Two examples that come immediately to mind, though undoubtedly an extended version of this study could include many other examples, are Lucretia Mott (1793-1880), who delivered and co-wrote the "Declaration of Rights and Sentiments and Resolutions" at the Seneca Falls Women's Rights Convention (1848), and Ida B. Wells in her speech "Lynch Law in All its Phases" (1893).

ethics and community and the purpose of rhetoric, arguing a half century earlier than Kenneth Burke and a century earlier than Wayne Booth that when rhetoric is tied to war it becomes a form of manipulation and is not really rhetoric at all. She compared two strains of rhetoric from classical Greece: one she characterized as socially focused on the good of the community, and the other as an individually focused form of verbal combat and war, “purely predatory—a primitive aggression of the strong upon the weak” (214). She argues that ethical rhetoric helps “level conditions” between parties and that the goal of rhetorical exchange should serve the interests of everyone involved.

Sonia Foss and Nancy Griffin in “Beyond Persuasion: A Proposal for an Invitational Rhetoric” (1995) also advocate a peace-based approach to rhetoric that involves mutual change. They argue that the definition and function of rhetoric as persuasion is a consequence of “the patriarchal bias that characterizes much of rhetorical theorizing” (2). In response they propose “an alternative feminist rhetoric” that resists “the traditional conception of rhetoric [...] characterized by efforts to change others and thus to gain control over them,” rhetoric in which “self worth [is] derived from and measured by the power exerted over others, and a devaluation of the life worlds of others [...], reflecting values of change, competition, and domination” (3). Rhetorical empathy builds on such valuable work of feminist theories, based on mutual listening and understanding, the use of personal narratives, and a willingness to yield in a stance of self-risk and vulnerability. As in Wayne Booth’s listening rhetoric, which I discuss in chapter two, Foss and Griffin situate rhetoric as an ethical way of negotiating difference rather than an attempt to win a battle or gain power over others through manipulation.

I argue in chapter two that there is merit in using Kenneth Burke’s metaphor of identification rather than war as a foundational warrant—not because, as he points out, war and conflict and power are not ubiquitous parts of our existence, but because we choose to see war as a perversion of peace and strive for peace as normative (*Grammar*). The idea that we would adopt the *topos* of empathy as a way of being with others may seem naïve in some cases, but I argue it’s a strategic choice that offers possibilities within certain contexts. The subjects in this project not only use rhetorical empathy as a way of engaging with others; they embody it. Empathy becomes more than a “strategy” but a way of life that forms a vital part of their identity.

Sites of Study

My inquiries within this project focus on how rhetorical empathy functions within sites of pronounced difference and intersectional relationships: analyses of labor rights rhetoric in the Gilded Age and Progressive Era in the speeches of Jane Addams (chapter 3), gay rights rhetoric and its intersection with conservative Christian discourse (chapter 4), and the intersections of gender and race in a case of racist social media discourse at Miami University in the Spring of 2013 and the online, multimodal response of the Asian American Association at the university.

In Chapter Two I discuss the history of the term “empathy” in English beginning in the early twentieth century, its roots in late nineteenth century German aesthetics, and its

circulation within psychological discourses in the twentieth century. I consider how empathy and related concepts have been constructed and functioned from the classical to the modern period in Euro-American rhetorical theories and in rhetorical theories beyond the Western tradition.

In Chapter Three I examine how rhetorical empathy functions within the site of labor rights rhetoric in two of Jane Addams's earliest speeches, focusing on rhetorical empathy as the ethical and epistemological basis of Addams's rhetoric. Her embodied rhetorical praxis of empathetic rhetoric is as relevant now as it was over a hundred years ago during the Progressive Era, despite her relative obscurity in the U.S. public today beyond small pockets in the academic world and in Chicago, where she helped establish the social settlement Hull House in 1889 and where the bulk of her life's work occurred. As the Occupy Wall Street protests of 2011 highlighted, income disparity between top earners and the rest of the U.S. population has grown exponentially over the past few decades, drawing comparisons to the Gilded Age (1875-1900). I focus on two of her first speeches on labor rights: "Domestic Service" (1893), delivered at the World's Columbian Exhibition in Chicago, and her speech on the Pullman Strike, "A Modern Lear" (1895, published 1912). Although I'll touch on a number of her texts, taken together these provide representative examples of her mediating rhetorical style and suggest the limits and affordances of rhetorical empathy within class and labor struggles.

In Chapter Four I highlight the function of rhetorical empathy within intersections of Christian conservative rhetoric and gay rights discourse. I build on Sharon Crowley's argument in *Toward a Civil Discourse* that reason alone is not able to engage with the various ways we make meaning and construct our realities. I complicate her arguments about fundamentalism as I look at the rhetoric of religious insiders within U.S. evangelicalism who are fighting to redefine how the religious right constructs gay people, particularly gay people who identify as Christian. I build on her argument that insiders, and particularly the subaltern within groups, are the most able to have enough agency to enact change within groups. Considering the degree to which fundamentalists and evangelicals in the U.S. have opposed equal treatment of gay people, the topic of how conversations between the religious right and gay people might move forward is *kairotic* and much needed in our current cultural moment.

In Chapter Five I discuss the connection between rhetorical empathy and race, focusing as my site of analysis the discursive response of the Asian American Association (AAA) at Miami University to a Twitter feed designed by a white male senior at the university. The Twitter account, entitled "Oxford Asians," garnered 1,000 followers in the student body over a six-month period in 2012-2013, and included dozens of posts constructing international students, particularly the rising number of students from China at the university, in racist terms. I examine the public, multimodal response of the AAA that circulated on social media platforms in the weeks following the public outing of the Twitter feed and discuss the implications of the students' rhetorical choices.

My concluding chapter provides a discussion of my findings and conclusions, implications of rhetorical empathy for pedagogy within rhetoric and composition and for public sphere rhetoric, and avenues for further research.

Chapter 2:

Empathy's History and Circulation in Rhetorical Theories

Confucius's disciple Zigong asks him, "Is there one expression that can be acted upon until the end of one's days?" / "The Master replied, 'There is shu: do not impose on others what you yourself do not want.'"

— *Analects* of Confucius (Ames and Rosemont, 15.24)

Being frank, then: Because of our choice, we can treat 'war' as a 'special case of peace'—not as a primary motive in itself, not as essentially real, but purely as a derivative condition, a perversion.

— Kenneth Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives*

In this chapter I explore how empathy and related concepts have circulated in canonical rhetorical theories in the West and others beyond those in the Euro-American rhetorical tradition. In order to highlight the function of rhetorical empathy as a strategic, non-patronizing form of engagement, I highlight the semantic distinctions between how the signifiers *empathy*, *sympathy*, and *pity*⁹ have circulated historically.

Empathy first appeared in English in the early twentieth century in the work of Edward Titchener (1867-1927), a British experimental psychologist who served as professor at Cornell and authored widely circulated psychology textbooks. Fluent in Greek and Latin, Titchener based *empathy* on a translation from the German *Einfühlung* via the Greek *empathēia* (Wispé, "History" 21). Lauren Wispé speculates that Titchener's focus on metaphor and imaginative thinking led him to adopt the German phrase over the more commonly known sympathy, which at that time signified a more passive stance of "feeling with" the emotions or experience of another.

As I discussed briefly in Chapter One, *Einfühlung* was originally coined in 1873 by Robert Vischer in the context of late nineteenth century philosophical and psychological studies of aesthetics. In its original context of Vischer's *On the Optical Sense of Form: A Contribution to Aesthetics*, the concept signified "feeling one's way into," as does the Greek *empathēia*, literally "into" (*em-*) "emotions" (*pathē*). Though the German words are similar, Vischer chose not to use the term for "identification" (*Eisnühlung*), or

⁹ Definitions of empathy, sympathy, compassion, pity, and similar concepts vary widely both between and among disciplines such as rhetoric, communication, psychology, philosophy, and neurosciences.

Nachgefühl, “vicarious feelings.” He saw the experience, which he described by coining the word empathy, as surpassing the significations of mutual feeling and emotion associated at that time with the word “sympathy” (*Mitgefühl*) (Vischer 109). In their introduction to Vischer’s work, Mallgrave and Ikonomou write that he developed the term in an attempt to account for “the role that subjective feeling plays in conditioning the perception of form” (17). Vischer led a countermovement against formalism in the study of art and argued for the role of emotion and experience in artistic interpretation, pointing back to romanticism. In doing so he was attempting to find a middle road between formalism and content, bringing the focus on the viewer/reader/audience rather than the object itself, “considering the subjective content that we—the viewer—bring to aesthetic contemplation” (21).

Although empathy in its circulation since his first use of term has come to be associated with both sentimentalism on the one hand and the highest form of ethics on the other (via its connections with compassion and altruism), in its original context in Vischer’s work it was more closely associated with the latter. He saw *Einfühlung* as “a pervasive attitude, an openness that we maintain with the world” and in its highest sense, as our desire to be connected or in union with all things (25). In this process, rather than a narcissistic projection of the self onto the Other or a text or image, the self is diminished in a transcendent experience. He associates empathy with motion and change, both a contracting and expanding of the self:

[T]his feeling of becoming is always synonymous with a weakening or renunciation of the self, while in its expansive form [...] it is synonymous with a strengthening and liberation of the self. (Vischer 105)

The instinct for happiness discovers that the only magical secret of satisfaction is care for the general human welfare. Thus we rise from the simple love of self to a love of family and species (race) and from there to absolute altruism, philanthropy, and the noble sentiments of civic awareness. It is the intimation of the good that enriches love. For this reason concepts such as value, power, and meaning no longer suffice to characterize the mental stimulus concerned [...] I feel myself in my own and in another’s body but only as a worthy representative of the whole species. This advance is actually nothing other than an intellectual renunciation and volatilization of the feeling of self, which now exists only in relation to the whole. (109)

Vischer’s original idea of empathy, grounded in aesthetics and spiritual union with art and others—with the universe as a spiritual idea—came to mean in Titchener’s work in the early twentieth century in the U.S. and England the idea of actively, imaginatively attempting to understand the mind (the experiences and the emotions) of another in the early decades of modern psychology. In the decades to follow, the study of empathy would be taken up by those studying the individual psyche and identification¹⁰, and by

¹⁰ Wispé points out that during this same period Freud also took up the study of empathy, though his focus primarily lay with identification and failed identifications of the subject with the object; he wrote that

social psychologists in the context of social codes and interactions rather than as a phenomenon of the mind. In many respects this early research resonates with social theories of the emotions now emerging in rhetorical theory—and, significantly for rhetoric and composition—with the foundational treatment of emotion in Aristotle.

Within the Euro-American rhetorical tradition Aristotle remains strikingly relevant in his arguments about the social currency of emotions in rhetoric.¹¹ Mary Garrett points to the preeminence of logos or logical appeals in the *Rhetoric*, and it is true that Aristotle's lengthier treatment of logos precedes that of pathos and ethos in *On Rhetoric*, and that in the *Nicomachean Ethics* he constructs reason as the central and most important ability among members of the polis. However, Barbara Koziak argues that Aristotle's notion of *thumos*—the general capacity to experience emotion and a desire for social relationships—lies at the center, not the margins of deliberation and politics.

His most famous description of emotion, in Book II of *On Rhetoric*, contains a section on the emotion most closely resembling empathy—the Greek *eleos* (“pity”) in George Kennedy's translation. His social conception of pity, as with other emotions such as pride and anger, hinges on who is likely to feel pity and for whom and in what circumstances. Those who do feel pity he argues include:

- Those who have also suffered and escaped
- Older people because of their practical wisdom and experience
- The weak and the cowardly
- The educated “for they are discerning”
- Those with family members who also could suffer and therefore cause suffering to the subject

Those who do not feel pity include:

- Men (women and slaves were not considered human) who are “utterly ruined feel no pity—they think there is nothing left for them to suffer”

empathy provided a way of understanding “what is inherently foreign to our ego” (“History” 25). In *Civilization and its Discontents* he describes the experience of being in love, in which the boundary between ego and object threatens to melt away, as a pathology (13) and he admits that he had never experienced the sort of connectedness to all living things that people had described to him as “a sensation of ‘eternity,’ a feeling as of something limitless, unbounded—as it were, ‘oceanic’”—although he did not rule it out as a source of motivation based on “feelings,” which, he admits, “are not easy to deal with scientifically” (11). Similar to spirituality within Zen Buddhism, Freud describes this sense of connectedness “a purely subjective fact, not an article of faith; it brings with it no assurance of personal immortality, but it is the source of the religious energy which is seized upon by the various Churches and religious systems, directed by them into particular channels, and doubtless also exhausted by them” (11).

¹¹ Aristotle's construction of the emotions as socially situated connects with Sara Ahmed's argument that emotions do not reside “in” subjects or objects but are produced as effects of circulation and are inherently relational; therefore, emotions should not be seen as psychological but as social and cultural practices, similar to Aristotle's conception of *pathos*, more accurately seen as *values*. She points out that the Latin root of emotion, *emovere* (“to move”) connects to emotion's movement between people and groups. That emotions involve “being moved,” however, also ties to the idea that language offers the potential to make us feel or experience the world of another or of an object vicariously.

- Those who are “enormously happy” because they think it beyond them to suffer evil and they lack a sense of vulnerability
- Those experiencing certain emotional states such as anger or confidence (because they do not consider the future); violent insolence (they do not care if something happens to them or others); and fear (they are taken up by their own suffering)
- Those who do not believe good people exist in the world and that therefore everyone is worthy of suffering
(2.8.4-7)

Those for whom pity is felt include:

- Friends
- People like themselves (in age, in character, in habits, in rank, in birth because people pity in others things they think might also happen to them)
- People who suffer from events or circumstances that seem realistic or imminent to the subject
- People who do not deserve to suffer
(2.8.12-15)

In his descriptions of the motives or causes for someone experiencing *eleos*, he focuses on the fear of a similar suffering or fate happening to the self, and thus he links the appeal to *eleos* primarily with self-preservation.¹²

The degree to which the emotions, in this case *eleos*, are socially and culturally encoded becomes clear through contemporary examples such as gay rights. Much of the rhetoric surrounding gay rights from conservatives, especially religious conservatives, hinges on their belief that LGBTQ people choose their sexual orientation (in defiance of God-given rules) and therefore suffer numerous psychological, social, even physical (in the case of AIDS) consequences as a result. Decisions about who deserves and does not deserve to suffer become highly politicized debates grounded in emotional attachments to social discourses.

Edward Corbett argues that rhetoric in the centuries between ancient Greece and Rome and the Enlightenment era was largely focused on logical appeals:

Although the Renaissance humanists adopted the full panoply of persuasive strategies—the logical, the emotional, and the ethical—they certainly placed the greatest emphasis on the cognitive approach to invention. In none of the Renaissance rhetorics do we find as much attention paid to emotional appeals as Aristotle paid in Book Two of his

¹² Aristotle associates appeals based on *eleos* to acting (pg 154 Kennedy), referring in this context to the *hypokrisis*: “...Necessarily those are more pitiable who contribute to the effect by gestures and cries and display of feelings and generally in their acting [*hypokrisis*].” The association of empathy to manipulation and acting relates to the distinction between *surface empathy* and *deep empathy* that Lindquist appropriates in her discussion of strategic empathy.

Rhetoric. It is not until the third quarter of the eighteenth century, with the appearance of George Campbell's *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, which coincided with the growth of interest in faculty psychology, that we find increasing attention being paid to the strategies of the emotional appeal. (288-289)

However, it could be argued that an emphasis on style in Renaissance rhetoric¹³ represented an attempt to move an audience in ways that resonate with George Campbell's notion of *vivacity*. For Campbell in *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (1776), rhetoric—and the emotions—were not contingent on social situatedness or on inventing ideas to best persuade an audience based on commonplaces but on four purposes: enlightening the understanding, pleasing the imagination, moving the passions, and influencing the will (Campbell 1). The boundaries between persuasion and moving an audience's emotions and stirring the imagination with discourse become blurred, however, in his discussion of *vivacity*—the ability to stir an audience with words that make ideas and experience become real to them, as if they are experiencing them in their imagination. He writes that “[t]he connexion [...] that generally subsisteth between *vivacity* and belief will appear less marvelous, if we reflect that there is not so great a difference between argument and illustration as is usually imagined. The same ingenious writer says, concerning moral reasoning, that it is but a kind of comparison” (76).

The greater the ability of a writer or speaker to cause an audience to identify with an experience he (certainly a he) describes, the greater chance of moving them to ends he wishes, a kind of “reasoning by experience.” He writes that “[t]he ideas of the poet give greater pleasure, command closer attention, operate more strongly on the passions, and are longer remembered” than “a cold but lively historiographer” (76). The link between emotion, personal experience, and rhetorical persuasion converge in *vivacity*, with implications for rhetorical empathy.

Although David Hume's work focuses on the operations of the mind as “natural,” universal functions, a great deal of resonance exists between Aristotle's conception of emotion as socially situated and Hume's theory that our experience of emotion, specifically sympathy, results from our social position and relationships. In what has become a canonical work on sympathy, *A Treatise on Human Nature* (1740), Hume argues that sympathy¹⁴ is the basis for morality. Hume has become well known for his theory of concentric circles¹⁵ and levels of relationships that influence our emotions and actions. It holds in essence that we have greater emotional attachments to those in our close circle and thus a greater potential to experience a feeling of loss or shame if we disappoint them, for example, than people for whom we have no affection. As I stress throughout this project, the idea that social situatedness affects our emotions and forms

¹³ Erasmus's *copia* is a prominent example, “an abundantly varied flow of speech that impresses with its energy and inventiveness and wrings assent from the audience” (Bizzell and Herzberg 583).

¹⁴ Hume defines/uses sympathy as “feeling with” rather than what we think of as pity or “feeling for” and is, I argue, closer to current significations of empathy.

¹⁵ Hume does not use the term concentric circles but rather discusses “the diminution of sympathy by the separation of relations (2.1.11).

our ideas and ways of being in the world is foundational to our current understanding of rhetoric.

Like Campbell, Hume adopts Francis Bacon's appropriation of faculty psychology¹⁶ that in order to change someone's mind a rhetor must appeal to various parts of the mind (in Campbell's case the understanding, the imagination, the passions, and the will). Hume argues that the passions (or the emotions), not reason, motivate us to action (2.3.3). In fact, Hume goes so far as to argue that sympathy/empathy is the link between emotion and understanding/thought (what he calls "ideas" and we may now call ideology), and that passions/emotion and ideas have equal weight, so to speak, epistemologically. They differ only in terms of their power or vivacity in the mind, and this vivacity, he argues, comes from the social proximity of two people, the relationship between them:

In sympathy there is an evident conversion of an idea into an impression. This conversion arises from the relations of objects to ourself. Ourself is always intimately present to us. Let us compare all these circumstances, and we shall find, that sympathy is exactly correspondent to the operations of our understanding; and even contains something more surprizing [sic] and extraordinary. (2.1.11 sec. 8)

The "surprizing and extraordinary" function of sympathy/empathy, he goes on to argue, is its ability to transform ideas into something more real and epistemologically relevant (i.e. persuasive) to us. Empathy is powerful and transformative because of its proximity to our bodies (i.e. we experience empathy bodily in the form of sensory impressions and also as a secondary impression in the form of an emotion), and to the degree to which we can relate or identify to the one with whom we empathize.

Rhetorical empathy builds on aspects of modern, twentieth century rhetorical theories in the West, which shifted the emphasis from persuasion toward understanding, identification, and finding common ground. The most important rhetorical theory after Aristotle in the Euro-American tradition—Burke's identification—has clear implications for rhetorical empathy. Burke repeats Aristotle's definition of rhetoric as the art of persuasion, or a study of the art of persuasion, but he starts prior to persuasion with identification, as he argues all persuasion must begin with some form of identification of the subject with the object of language, of the rhetor with the audience. For Burke, rhetoric is necessary because of divisions and is used to bring about connection and cooperation; he defines rhetoric in *A Rhetoric of Motives* (1950) as "the use of language as a symbolic means of inducing cooperation in beings that by nature respond to symbols" (43). Identification of the self with another person or group must occur in some fashion for any sort of cooperation to take place. While he points to the "tyrannous ubiquity" of power struggles, conflict, and their associated separation of human beings as

¹⁶ Bacon's theory of discourse and the role of rhetoric was based on the concept of faculty psychology, which constructed the mind as a collection of sections, each of which served a certain function, including understanding, reason, imagination, memory, appetite, and will (Zappan 61). Faculty psychology bears striking resemblance to current research in cognitive science in which empathetic responses are "located" in the prefrontal cortex of the brain (Shamay-Tsoory).

motives for rhetoric and as existential metaphors, Burke argues that identification is a larger, more overarching metaphor, a “terministic choice” we have the ability to make, “justified by the fact that the identifications in the order of love are also characteristic of rhetorical expression” (20). In making the choice to shift the perspective from war to peace, from power to love, he argues that we should (and at this juncture we would at least say we “must”) keep power and war always in mind as we make this choice to use identification as an epistemological framework:

We need never deny the presence of strife, enmity, faction as a characteristic motive of rhetorical expression. We need not close our eyes to their almost tyrannous ubiquity in human relations; we can be on the alert always to see how such temptations to strife are implicit in the institutions that condition human relationships; yet we can at the same time always look beyond this order, to the principle of identification in general, a terministic choice justified by the fact that the identifications in the order of love are also characteristic of rhetorical expression. We may as well be frank about it, since our frankness, if it doesn’t convince, will at least serve another important purpose of this work: it will reveal a strategic resource of terminology. Being frank, then: Because of our choice, we can treat ‘war’ as a *‘special case of peace’*—not as a primary motive in itself, not as essentially real, but purely as a derivative condition, a perversion. (20)

Richard Young, Alton Becker and Kenneth Pike developed Rogerian rhetoric in the 1960s as a response to what they felt was a weakness in classical rhetoric: an emphasis on persuasion and defeating an opponent rather than an attempt at learning, connecting, and understanding. In Rogerian rhetoric, the goal of rhetoric is to reduce an audience’s sense of threat so they will be open to what the writer has to say and willing to consider alternatives to their own beliefs. They relied heavily on Burke’s theory of identification (their epigraph for chapter one is from Burke’s *Rhetoric of Motives*: “Rhetoric is concerned with the state of Babel after the Fall”) as well as his theory of rhetoric as “the use of language as a symbolic means of inducing cooperation in beings that by nature respond to symbols.” Cooperation, not persuasion, was for them the primary focus of rhetoric, and listening and empathy are cornerstones of their rhetorical theory.

Young, Becker, and Pike were responsible for incorporating the principles of psychotherapist Carl Rogers into written composition studies. The core of Rogerian strategy is connecting with an audience, letting them know you understand their beliefs and values. In “Dealing with Breakdowns in Communication,” Rogers defines “understanding” as:

seeing the expressed idea and attitude from the other person’s point of view, to sense how it feels to him, to achieve his frame of reference in regard to the thing he is talking about. It requires empathy, requires getting inside the other person’s skin and seeing the world through his eyes, or, to speak less metaphorically, it requires considering the beliefs and perspectives of the reader in context of his attitudes, values, and past experiences. (331)

Rogers's underlying theory was that we hold our beliefs because of a sense of threat to our identity and that the first requirement for changing beliefs is to eliminate this sense of threat.

Wayne Booth's listening rhetoric also makes use of empathetic principles. Influenced by I.A. Richards's theory of rhetoric as a study of misunderstandings and their remedies, Booth argues in *The Rhetoric of Rhetoric* (2004) for what he calls "listening rhetoric" rather than "rhetickery," or the way rhetoric has come to be commonly known in public discourse. He creates a taxonomy of rhetoric that includes: 1) win-rhetoric: rhetoric as persuasion and win at all costs; 2) bargain rhetoric: rhetoric as mediation, diplomacy, win-win rhetoric for both sides; and 3) listening rhetoric: rhetoric as a deep probing for common ground. Booth was an optimist who believed that finding common ground is possible through listening rhetoric:

At its best listening rhetoric is the quest by the listener for some topics, topoi, warrants, to be shared with his or her opponent—agreements from which they can move as they probe their disagreements. It is the rhetor practicing rhetorology in the effort to discover, in the "other," some ground or platform where, as a community, they can move from some understanding toward some new territory. (50)

Booth's focus on the communal or social nature of rhetorical agency echoes Burkean identification: "I never think of 'communication' without thinking of its ultimate perfection, named in such words as 'community' and 'communion'" (76). For Booth, rhetoric is an "I" needing to join a "we."

Empathy and Emotion in Rhetorical Traditions Beyond the West

In *Anticipating China* (1995), Hall and Ames argue that the shape of the Euro-American intellectual culture has been "importantly determined" by ideas invented or discovered in the period beginning with the Greeks in 500-300 BCE and culminating with Augustine in the fifth century CE. They create a heuristic through which to analyze Chinese and Euro-American rhetoric that bears highlighting for its implications for a theory of rhetorical empathy:

- ***First problematic thinking (China)***: characterized by analogical or correlative thinking, listening, harmony, open-endedness, subjectivity, vagueness; metaphorical, experiential, relational; metonymic; focused on change rather than fixity and on contexts, localized meanings, particulars rather than generalities or universals; no determinant or causal structure
- ***Second problematic thinking (Euro-American)***: characterized by causal thinking, first principles based on unified source of being (God/personified agency or source), abstractions, definitions, logic, rationality, Enlightenment-influenced philosophies based on quests for origins, patterns, regularity; focused on being, resting, hierarchies, taxonomies; "being" valued over "becoming"

While they argue that both China and the West have elements of both first and second problematic thinking, they argue that first problematic thinking is “importantly present” in Chinese culture, and second problematic thinking is dominant in the Western philosophical tradition, “present in such a way that it significantly qualifies, defines, or otherwise shapes the culture” (xv). While they do identify, very briefly, aspects in each cultural tradition that are not dominant (such as the “counterdiscourse” of the Sophists), their purpose is to identify the dominant thinking in each culture in order to highlight differences in Western and Chinese thought. Despite this focus on differences, their purpose in *Anticipating China* is, in their words, to “promote understanding between China and the West” (xvi) and to “encourage strategic and tactical reflections that serve to abet intercultural conversations” (xxiii). More importantly for the purpose of this project, they stipulate that one of their primary aims also includes the recovery of “novel elements within our own cultural resources that resonate with aspects of the classical Chinese sensibility” (xxiii).

What Hall and Ames call second problematic thinking has, of course, come under much scrutiny over the past century, and especially over the past few decades by postmodern and poststructuralist philosophy, especially Foucault and Derrida. Hall and Ames discuss the fact that postmodern philosophy is similar in many respects to prominent strains of Chinese thought. For example, postmodernist and poststructuralist theories have critiqued Enlightenment rationality, the quest for “origins” and first principles, the supremacy of logic and the linear progress of (Western) civilization—all characteristics of Hall and Ames’s second problematic thinking.

The Enlightenment-influenced tendency of modernism to find solutions, common ground, and to erase difference in the light of rationality and cultural homogeneity has been rightfully challenged by Edward Said and other postcolonial and postmodern theorists, as I argued at length in the introduction. However, in the wake of the overthrow of the assumptions of Enlightenment / modern philosophy, critics in cultural studies increasingly are calling for an attempt to find a middle ground and to deconstruct the relativism / essentialism binary. Yuan Shu, for example, believes that “if we can find common ground and common good in terms of ‘progressive humanism’ in our study of multiculturalism, we will be able to transform our culture and society into better ones in the new millennium” (101).

Rhetorical empathy and its accompanying characteristics of multiple viewpoints and dialogue as rhetorical foci are in stark contrast to what George Kennedy describes as the “contentiousness” of the dominant Euro-American rhetorical tradition: “The Greeks were contentious from the beginning, and acceptance and indulgence of open contention and rivalry has remained a characteristic of Western society, except when suppressed by powerful authority of church or state” (198). Kennedy characterizes the canonical Euro-American rhetorical tradition, handed down by the Athenians, as eristic, focused on rivalries and winning. “Life was regarded as a contest” (198) in which debates and athletic events became popular forms of public expression and entertainment. He

compares this tradition to the rhetorical traditions of the Middle East, India, and China, where he argues consensus and avoiding conflict have traditionally been valued.¹⁷

Although no single character in Chinese “corresponds” directly with a Western notion of rhetoric as we understand it in classical Greek terms, one important character representing the idea of rhetoric in ancient China (of several outlined by Xing Lu and Hall and Ames) is *bian*, translated loosely in English as “argument.” It is significant that the practice of *bian* itself is associated with interdependence rather than contention and polarity. Xing Lu in *Rhetoric in Ancient China: Fifth to Third Century BCE*, describes *bian* as “a spontaneous activity capable of bridging opposites and achieving the *dao*. The activity of *bian*, accordingly, was not polarizing; nor did it consist of imposing one’s view on others. Instead, *bian* was a process for connecting and transcending apparent differences and polarized positions” (291). Although multiple definitions and representations of the Western term “rhetoric” appear in classical Chinese texts, the fact that *bian* is one of the most prominent and has been characterized by leading scholars of Chinese rhetoric as non-contentious bears highlighting in comparisons with rhetorical empathy. And while Chinese rhetoric cannot be reduced to simply a non-agonistic exchange, the fact that characteristics such as those described above in *bian* are, in Hall and Ames’s terminology, importantly present in Chinese rhetoric, also bears emphasis for this project.

The influence of Confucius (551-479 BCE) on Chinese thought and culture at every level, even up to the present day, cannot be overstated. An important concept in Confucian rhetoric that I want to underscore for the purposes of comparison to rhetorical empathy is the notion of *shu*—or “not imposing on others what you yourself do not desire” (Hall and Ames 199). *Shu* in Confucian thought is a method of determining right conduct in relation to others, as described by Hall and Ames, citing Lau: “In morals, it is by means of the method of *shu* that we can hope to be able to practice benevolence, and *shu* consists in using ourselves as analogy to find out about the likes and dislikes of other human beings” (199). *Shu* is central to Confucian right conduct and moral thinking. In the *Analects* of Confucius, Confucius’s disciple Zigong asks him, “Is there one expression that can be acted upon until the end of one’s days?” / “The Master replied, ‘There is *shu*: do not impose on others what you yourself do not want’” (Ames and Rosemont 15.24).

The Confucian disciple Xunzi is, according to Hall and Ames, the most closely aligned of Chinese thinkers with the Sophists in the Western tradition, and elements of his thinking and approach to rhetoric closely align with principles of feminist theory and rhetorical empathy. Hall and Ames argue that for Xunzi:

[i]deally, dispute is a cooperative exercise among responsible participants that leads to a search for alternatives upon which all can agree. There is a fundamental disesteem for coercion of any kind, since aggressiveness or

¹⁷ Scholars in comparative rhetoric have complicated the notion that rhetoric within Chinese rhetorical traditions leans toward indirect approaches focused on maintaining harmony (You), yet Kennedy’s analysis points to elements within discourse beyond the Euro-American tradition in which such approaches are importantly present, in Hall and Ames’s terms.

violence threatens to disrupt rather than reinforce or improve upon the existing social order. After all, the goal of protest is not victory in contest, which is necessarily divisive, but the strengthening of communal harmony. (209)

Robert Solomon argues that how often discourse on emotion circulates and how a culture talks about emotions form what he calls the “emotional portrait” of that culture. He points out that in Chinese epistemology the emotions often are associated with *chi* (power or energy), one of the most important concepts in Chinese philosophy. In “Confucian Silence and Remonstrance,” Arabella Lyon points to ways in which Chinese epistemology stresses community over the individual, noting that in Chinese rhetoric, the Cartesian mind/body and emotion/reason split emphasizing the individual self, “I think therefore I am,” becomes the communal “We relate, therefore we are” (136). Like Ahmed, Gross, and Miller, Solomon argues that emotions are judgments, always based on a certain perspective, defined in part from one’s physical embodiment, one’s place in the world, and one’s cultural context and roles. Judgments / emotions are culturally taught, cognitively framed, implemented by the individual, and intrinsic to experience (276).

Mary Garrett also points to the association of energy and motivation in classical Chinese psychology with both heart/emotion and mind/cognition, and argues that in the Chinese tradition hierarchical distinctions between the two were not pronounced as in Euro-American classical psychology. She suggests that comparative rhetorical studies of *pathos* outside the Euro-American tradition constitute rich sources of understanding alternative rhetorics in the West. Two examples are Keith Lloyd’s study of the epistemology and rhetorical reasoning in the Nyaya Sutra, an ancient Indian text on argument (200 BCE – 450 AD) and Catherine Lutz’s study of emotions in the Pacific Ifaluk atoll peoples. Lloyd argues the goal of rhetoric in the Nyaya is discussion, inquiry and consensus, contributing toward the goals in Hindu philosophy of harmony and self-abnegation (375). He suggests from a study of the Nyaya that the rhetor’s goal is not self-expression, persuasion, or winning but a “seeing together.”

Lutz’s study of the Ifaluk word “fago,” a combination of compassion, love, and sadness, suggests that in Atoll culture, caring is a form of hope centered not only in the emotions but indicates an understanding of how to connect socially. She found the Ifaluk have a singular word for thinking and feeling, *nunuwan*, that she argues is treated as a form of intelligence and is valued more than any other emotion. For the Ifaluk culture, nurturance signifies intelligence, maturity, and power (248). She concludes that “perhaps only in a society in which autonomous action to ensure individual survival is neither socially encouraged nor ecologically or economically feasible that nurturance will become central to the definition of power” (249).¹⁸

¹⁸ Gerda Lerner in *The Creation of Patriarchy* points to Frederick Engel’s theory concerning the link between the rise of private property and the subjugation of women as property, and between the development of the state and the rise of the patriarchal family structure. In U.S. culture, feminist scholars have cited the degree to which nurturance and caring became associated with women in the patriarchal family “separate sphere” theories predominant in the nineteenth century. That such theories were

As Hall and Ames point out, studying rhetorical traditions outside the dominant Euro-American canon can help students and scholars of rhetoric enlarge not only our knowledge of the value of such traditions in their own right, but also can help us see our own practices with new eyes, making the familiar unfamiliar and helping disrupt the dominance of what is importantly present.

I next turn toward the three sites of public discourse in which I analyze how rhetorical empathy functions as an embodied discursive practice and stance, the first of which involves the rhetorical praxis of Jane Addams.

strategically used by early women's rights advocates to argue for women's moral superiority and were resisted then as now by women when framed as essentialist arguments rather than culturally determined traits based on traditional roles does not negate the value of "nurturance" traits for women and men on individual and institutional levels. Following Arne Vetlesen, I suggest the argument for the value of empathy and related concepts be distanced from the framework of gender to attempt to avoid associations with gender essentialisms.

Chapter 3:

Affectionate Interpretation:

Jane Addams's Labor Rights Rhetoric and Rhetorical Empathy

Already there is a conviction that we are under a moral obligation in choosing our experiences, since the result of those experiences must ultimately determine our understanding of life. We know instinctively that if we grow contemptuous of our fellows, and consciously limit our intercourse to certain kinds of people whom we have previously decided to respect, we not only tremendously circumscribe our range of life, but limit the scope of our ethics.

—Jane Addams, *Democracy and Social Ethics* (1902)

In her memoir *Twenty Years at Hull House*, Jane Addams recounts a story that exemplifies her rhetorical practice and philosophy. It was the summer of 1894 and the Pullman Strike was at its height, with Addams in the center of the storm as a mediator between the Pullman Palace Car Company and its workers. In the elevator of a posh Chicago hotel and office building she ran into a wealthy acquaintance. She had come to meet with Thomas Wickes, Pullman Vice President, to try and arbitrate a deal between the company and workers in what would become one of the largest strikes in U.S. history. The Auditorium Hotel, built after the great fire of 1871 to much fanfare, was one of the preeminent buildings in Chicago and home to the Pullman corporate offices. Jane Addams was among her own class in this setting; her father was a wealthy businessman and Illinois State Senator who at his death 13 years earlier had left each of his four children \$50,000, roughly \$1.2 million today.

In the elevator that day her acquaintance told her angrily that “the strikers ought all to be shot” (143). She recounts her reaction to his outburst:

As I had heard nothing so bloodthirsty as this either from the most enraged capitalist or from the most desperate of the men, and was interested to find the cause of such a senseless outbreak, I finally discovered that the first ten thousand dollars which my acquaintance had ever saved, requiring, he said, years of effort from the time he was twelve years old until he was thirty, had been lost as the result of a strike; he clinched his argument that he knew what he was talking about, with the statement that “no one need expect him to have any sympathy with strikers or with their affairs.” (143)

Rather than respond with anger toward him she chose to try to understand him. Her philosophical and rhetorical practice of attempting to understand all sides of an issue and

trying to discern motives behind rhetoric characterizes her way of being in the world. For her, focusing on what is held in common and interpreting the Other with empathy are crucial elements in a democratic society and moral components of rhetorical exchanges. Her speeches and public writing contain examples of empathetic rhetoric and attempts at mediation between groups of people who would never sit around the same table literally or figuratively.

In her memoir she describes her own and her family's struggle to not resent the strikers during the Pullman affair. Her oldest sister Mary, like a second mother to Addams after their mother died when Jane was a young girl, had fallen deathly ill during the strike, and Addams had been able to make it her bedside via railway with the help of striking workers. Mary's husband and children were unable to secure transportation, however, because of the national shut down of rail lines. Addams describes in her memoir listening to her sister asking for her family and fearing her sister's last moments would be filled with bitterness toward the strikers:

She must have divined what was in my mind, for at last she said each time after the repetition of my sad news: 'I don't blame any one, I am not judging them.' My heart was comforted and heavy at the same time; but how many more such moments of sorrow and death were being made difficult and lonely throughout the land, and how much would these experiences add to the lasting bitterness, that touch of self-righteousness which makes the spirit of forgiveness well-nigh impossible. (*Twenty Years* 144)

The ability to let go of anger and bitterness would be for Addams a formidable struggle throughout her life. In her role as the founder and driving force behind the social settlement Hull House in the heart of Chicago's west side immigrant settlements, she would see the results of poverty and Guided Age greed first hand.

Building on Louise Knight's history and analysis of Addams's intellectual formation in *Citizen*, I argue that Addams's philosophy of peace-based rhetoric was formed by her experiences at Hull House and her incorporation of non-violence and the communal practices and doctrines of love for one's enemies in the teachings of Christianity. Addams's ethical philosophy and in turn her practice of rhetorical empathy were undergirded by her belief that love/peace rather than anger/division formed the basis of all social progress. She writes in "The Subjective Necessity for Social Movements":

If love is the creative force of the universe, the principle which binds men together, and by their interdependence on each other makes them human, just so surely is anger and the spirit of opposition the destructive principle of the universe, that which tears down, thrusts men apart, and makes them isolated and brutal. (19-20)

Knight writes that this passage "stands as the most cogent statement Addams ever made of her philosophy of Christian nonresistant, loving cooperation. Generally when she

mentioned Christ in her speeches or writings—and she did this only to distinctly Christian audiences—she invoked him as an example of someone who lived among the common people and knew how to combine thought and action” (254). Addams’s rhetorical practices came from her sincere belief in a profoundly spiritual impulse, common among religious faiths, of the deep unity with something larger of which she was a small part.

Knight points to the influences of philosophers and spiritual leaders whose writing profoundly affected her and formed her practice, the most important of which were the teachings of Christ on non-violence and love for one’s enemies, Giuseppe Mazzini’s *Duties of Man* (1860), in which the activist and political leader describes his belief in democracy as a way of living out Christ’s command to love all humankind, and Leo Tolstoy’s *My Religion* (published in the U.S. in 1885), which she describes in an article in the *Christian Century* as “a book that changed my life” (Knight 145). Tolstoy incorporated the teachings of Christ in his belief in non-violence and engaging with one’s enemies with love rather than hatred.

While Addams never called her own framework such, the phrase that most closely captures her ethical and rhetorical lens, appearing twice in “A Modern Lear,” is what she calls “affectionate interpretation.”¹⁹ The practice of affectionate interpretation included a commitment to understanding rather than persuasion at any price; it entailed the hard work of seeing the best in one’s enemies rather than focusing on their worst; and, for the purposes of formulating a theory based on Addams’s rhetorical practices, it meant at least attempting to discern an Other’s motives using an interpretive lens based on forgiveness rather than judgment. Affectionate interpretation formed her moral compass. As Jean Bethke Elshtain points out, Addams balanced moral relativism on the one hand and moral absolutism on the other by “her dual commitment to empathetic understanding as the surest route to social knowledge and to a form of compassion linked to a determination not to judge human beings by ‘their hours of defeat’” (xxxiii).

While Addams did not formulate a rhetorical theory in a formal sense, her praxis blurred the lines between theory and practice. Joy Ritchie and Kate Ronald point out that praxis is “a central feature of women’s rhetorical practices” (xxviii) and that we should look to praxis as theory (xxvii). Characteristics of rhetorical empathy appear throughout Addams’s public rhetoric, forming more than a strategy for her but rather constituting her embodied identity. Her embodied philosophy/rhetoric²⁰ of empathy influenced her engagement with what she called the “common life” of working people at Hull House,

¹⁹ Kate Ronald first drew my attention to and sparked my interest in Addams’s use of affectionate interpretation. Ronald draws connections between the term and the development of what Addams calls in “A Modern Lear” a *new code of ethics*, based on the widest possible experience. Such an ethical framework helps foster an understanding of others’ experiences and reflects Addams’s belief in mutual cooperation rather than top-down government or what served as philanthropic or charity work in the Progressive Era (“Philanthropy”).

²⁰ I resist the separation of rhetoric and philosophy common in the Euro-American intellectual tradition. Scholars of comparative rhetoric have pointed out that in rhetoric beyond the Western canon, rhetoric and philosophy were not separated to the extent they have been in the Greek/Aristotelian tradition (Lipson and Binkley, Lu).

resulting in her use of an empathetic rhetorical style focused on solving social problems using cooperative methods. In crucial ways Addams's experience at Hull House formed her epistemological framework. As a pragmatist who held that theory should come from experience, Addams formed her beliefs as a result of what she experienced first-hand in working class neighborhoods.

Addams and her companion Ellen Gates Starr founded Hull House in 1889 in the working class nineteenth ward just west of downtown Chicago. They based the settlement house, the first in the United States²¹, on the model of Toynbee Hall in London, designed to foster cross-class relationships and "proselytize the humanities" rather than saving souls (Knight 170). Addams's philosophy for Hull House was that it would provide an opportunity for women and men with social capital (Bourdieu) to work alongside residents in working class neighborhoods to develop literary, cultural, and practical skills.

From the beginning of the settlement Addams wanted to avoid the idea that the people working at Hull House, "residents," were "helping the poor" in the vein of nineteenth century charity or benevolence. Rather, the residents would work with those in the neighborhoods, learning from them as much as the other way around. Ellen Gates Starr described Addams's philosophy for Hull House in a letter as "more for the benefit of the people who do it than for the other class" (Knight 182). Her cross-class work at Hull House was characterized by what Addams called "cooperation with all good which it finds in its neighborhood" ("Settlement" 187), grounded in and motivated by relationships with people and focused on mutual change rather than top (class) down work on others' behalf. Addams was insistent throughout her life that her work at Hull House had given her more than she gave it.

First and foremost, her role and that of Hull House itself was based on mediation, on bringing people together. Addams enacts a form of rhetoric based on the idea that peacemaking leads to productive change. She saw the role of Hull House as "interpret[ing] opposing forces to each other," as "unsatisfactory and difficult as the role often becomes" (*Twenty Years* 151). Her rhetorical theory and practice can be situated squarely in a feminist tradition of rhetoric as non-violent and invitational, as Gloria McMillan points out in her analysis of Addams's rhetorical practices.

Her rhetorical style is informed a great deal by her belief in mutual exchange rather than overt persuasion, a belief that undergirded her philosophy at Hull House. Paralleling the idea that empathy involves feeling *with* rather than *for* an Other, Addams believed in *being with* people rather than *doing for* them. In this sense she resisted popular, late nineteenth century notions of the role of what was commonly known as benevolence. Rather than trying to persuade people of her own beliefs, Addams tried to forge greater understanding and connection between people in different social classes and ethnic groups. In this process she realized that the greatest good came from gaining the

²¹ The College Settlement Association (CSA), comprised of women educated at the seven sister colleges (Smith, Wellesley, Vassar, Bryn Mawr, Mount Holyoke, Radcliffe, and Barnard) established a settlement house in New York City two weeks after Hull House opened (Knight 192).

perspective of the Other, and that within that learning process change occurs, both in the form of persuading the Other to accept a new perspective and within the rhetor in listening to the perspective of the Other. Addams's engagement with working class struggles at Hull House changed her, and her public rhetoric advocating reform was a result of this change.

In her first book, *Democracy and Social Ethics* (1902), Addams writes: "...We are under a moral obligation in choosing our experiences since the result of those experiences must ultimately determine our understanding of life" (9), and that "most of the misunderstandings of life are due to partial intelligence, because our experiences have been so unlike that we cannot comprehend each other" (93). She believed that empathy resulted from not only reading about others' suffering but experiencing them firsthand:

We are learning that a standard of social ethics is not attained by travelling a sequestered byway, but by mixing on the thronged and common road where all must turn out for one another, and at least see the size of one another's burdens. To follow the path of social morality results perforce in the temper if not the practice of the democratic spirit, for it implies that diversified human experience and resultant sympathy which are the foundation and guarantee of Democracy. (6)

Her belief in the power of experience in forming individuals and creating our ideological frameworks was the main lesson Addams learned in her years at Hull House.

It is impossible to separate Addams's rhetoric from her embodied experiences at Hull House in Chicago or to separate her philosophy of pragmatism from her rhetoric of empathetic peacemaking. In order to highlight her use of rhetorical empathy, I analyze in this chapter her embodiment of empathetic practices through her involvement with labor reform via Hull House and her rhetorical practices in two of her early speeches/texts on labor rights: "Domestic Service and the Family Claim" (1893), delivered at the World's Columbian Exhibition in Chicago, and her speech on the Pullman Strike, "A Modern Lear" (1895, published 1912). My analysis is grounded in the characteristics and recursive practices I associate with and define as rhetorical empathy:

- Focusing on the personal within the system: experience and relationships
- Considering motives behind speech acts and actions
- Confronting difference and injustice, and
- Situating a rhetorical exchange as part of an ongoing process of mutual understanding and (ex)change (including vulnerability and self-critique on the part of the rhetor)

The Personal Within the System: Embodied, Experiential Rhetoric

Addams's first two speeches on labor issues provide good examples of an emphasis on the personal within the system and the role of experience and relationships in her rhetorical style. These personal aspects of rhetorical empathy center on embodied rhetoric

and on experience as an epistemology. In her work at Hull House Addams occupied the dual subject positions of both the daughter of a wealthy capitalist and a member of a working class neighborhood. She could relate to the perspectives of capitalists, having been raised by a wealthy merchant who benefitted from the rise of the railroad industry in northern Illinois after the Civil War. Although she inherited a substantial sum after her father's death just before she began Hull House, within the first decade of her work there she had funneled the majority of her substantial inheritance into its operation and had to rely on speaking engagements and publishing royalties.

Her life at Hull House brought her into close contact with the people she advocated for in her labor rhetoric, working class immigrants who were being crushed by industrial capitalism in late nineteenth century Chicago. To the degree that such perspective taking is possible, Addams came to embody the thinking and arguments of poor immigrants, people whose upbringing and social class were radically different from her own, after listening to their stories and being part of their lives for many years. *The Long Road of Woman's Memory* is an extended example of the role of stories in the formation of working women's epistemology of suffering and survival and of Addams's own embeddedness in the world of immigrant experiences.

The personal and the individual within systemic poverty formed a crucial part of Addams's rhetoric. Her pioneering role as social worker began with forming relationships with working people and experiencing life in their neighborhoods, including the squalid conditions of daily life in the nineteenth ward in Chicago. Her first taste of fame on a national scale came in 1895, just after the Pullman Strike, when she took a job as trash collection inspector. Although Addams considered her work at Hull House as having given her more than she gave it, the reality was that she was a wealthy, privileged white woman who for a time got up daily at 5 a.m. in her role as trash collection inspector the nineteenth ward. This job entailed Addams and a friend from Hull House following closely behind horse-drawn trash wagons in the filthy unpaved streets to ensure the workers employed by the famously corrupt alderman actually collected the trash, which they had failed to do on a consistent basis up to that time. Although Hull House itself was relatively lavish compared to the surrounding homes in the ward, Addams was not sitting inside a comfortable building from a distance writing about corruption and poverty; she was living it. For her the work was intensely personal, and the people she advocated with and for in her rhetoric on labor issues were real people—neighbors—not faceless, nameless causes.

Personalizing the Impersonal: "Domestic Service"

Her speech "Domestic Service," relatively short and obscure as it is, provides a rich example of Addams's reliance on the personal and on experience in her appeals for reform on labor issues. She was 32 when she delivered the speech on May 19, 1893, at the Chicago World's Fair, four years into her work at Hull House.²² She'd been invited to

²² Addams spoke on a Friday morning at 10am, delivering a fairly brief address, a summary of which, entitled "Domestic Service and the Family Claim," was published in the proceedings of the Congress (626-31). A fuller version of the speech, "A Belated Industry," was published in the *American Journal of*

speak at a panel on what was beginning to be known as home economics; the respondent to her talk was Mary Hinman Abel, a pioneer of the movement. It's unknown how many people attended the panel, but other panels at the eight-day, unprecedented World's Congress of Representative Women drew as many as 3,000, including 73-year-old Susan B. Anthony, who spoke the following day advocating labor unions in the main evening session.

The context of the World's Columbian Exposition that year in Chicago was electric. Twenty-seven million people visited Chicago during the exposition, held May 1 - October 30, 1893. It spanned 600 acres, with representatives from 46 nations taking part. Over two hundred congresses or conferences were held, by far the most popular of which was the Women's Congress, featuring 81 sessions and drawing an estimated 150,000 people, mostly women.²³

In the speech she describes the working conditions of domestic servants, most if not all of whom the women at the congress and in her audience likely employed in their homes. By 1870 one in five Chicago families employed live-in domestic workers, who comprised 60% of wage earning women (Stigler 5). Immigrants and African American women composed the majority of domestic workers prior to 1900 (more than half), with the number of African Americans rising after World War I. Between 1870-1902, domestic work was the leading occupation of women in Chicago and the nation. Workers usually were young, single women from working-class families, often newly arrived Irish, German, Scandinavian, or Polish immigrants in the last half of the nineteenth century, and often were among the most desperate for employment.²⁴

The speech marks the beginning of an evolutionary chain for Addams on labor reform: in "Domestic Servants" she tries to create awareness of the poor conditions of domestics' lives for her middle and upper middle class audience, advocating for change on an individual (family) level; in 1898 she would deliver a speech to the General Federation of Women's Clubs in Chicago making many of the same arguments but also arguing for government intervention; in 1901 Addams would help working women form the Working Women's Association of America union to help improve working conditions and raise wages; and in 1903 Addams and Mary McDowell assisted in founding the first union for

Sociology three years later. The version included in the congress proceedings is almost identical to the journal article but is approximately one third as long. For the purposes of analysis I use the lengthier piece, "A Belated Industry," but my analysis focuses on the rhetorical context of the speech as it was delivered at the World's Congress for Women.

²³ The Women's Congress was held in what is now the Art Institute of Chicago, built specifically for the World's Fair and only one of two buildings (the Field Museum the other) that survives; the rest of the 200 temporary structures constructed for the Fair burned to the ground during the Pullman Strike the next summer.

²⁴ A notable example of an ethnographic exposé on working class conditions written by an educated member of the middle class is Lillian Pettengill's *Toilers of the Home* (1902), a precursor of work such as Barbara Ehrenreich's *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By In America* (2001). Pettengill was a graduate of Mount Holyoke who in the late 1890s was unable to find employment as a journalist and so went to work as a live-in domestic servant for one year, partly to pay the bills and have a roof over her head and partly as participant-observer research. Katzman calls her monograph on her experience one of the most extensive accounts of a domestic worker in the U.S. during the late Gilded Age (5).

female workers on a national scale, the Women's Trade Union League (Knight 391). While Addams would move toward greater government intervention to address social injustices, she maintained her belief that true social change could only be accomplished as people were moved in their emotions on a personal level to see the Other as equal within a democracy. She would write in *Twenty Years at Hull House* in 1912 that "social change can only be inaugurated by those who feel the unrighteousness of the contemporary conditions" (393).

In "Domestic Service" and its fuller version "A Belated Industry," Addams personalizes what had become a considerably impersonal commonplace of middle and upper middle class families employing young women to live full-time in their homes as servants. Faye Dudden makes a compelling argument that prior to the 1830s, young women employed by families for domestic work were considered in many cases as part of the family, as "help," eating in the dining room with the other members of the family rather than in a back room or basement, and often for temporary seasons such as during a family illness. Furthermore, most domestic workers were native born women whose families lived in the same community as their employers.

Dudden speculates that a shift toward viewing and treating domestic workers as impersonal employees began around mid century. As industrial capitalism began to take hold, work began to shift away from the home, men began working outside the home, and rising middle class women began to be seen as the keepers of the home exclusively. In order to preserve "family time" in the evenings, undisturbed by domestic chores such as cleaning and cooking, the woman of the family would hire and supervise one or more servants. Dudden argues that the shift from workers as "help" to "servants" was "demanding and demeaning, prompting the withdrawal from service of many of the native-born daughters who had been willing to help" (7).

The result was an occupation that required young women to live full-time with a family, often without any companionship or social outlets, and often treated with disrespect or worse by the woman of the house. Dudden points to Gerda Lerner's argument that "the 1830s first saw the lady and the mill girl exemplify the drastically different life courses for women of different classes" and that "the lady's opposite was more apt to be the domestic" (46). Dudden also points out the inherent conflict between "the triumph of domesticity, of a sentimental association of the hearthstone with the center of the universe and the foundation of society" and the notion of employing "a strange woman to sweep up the ashes from it" (54).

At the same time, a common complaint among middle and upper middle class women was the "lack of good help," a response precipitated in part by the low level of education and the differences in cultural backgrounds of workers, who often were Catholics serving in Protestant households. Immigrants became scapegoats for what middle class people saw as wrong with society. In popular publications such as Catharine Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe's *The American Woman's Home* (1869), women referred nostalgically to better times in which "mistresses and servants lived together in harmony as equals" (Dudden 4); Beecher and Stowe argue for a greater sense of egalitarianism among

employers and domestic workers in a democratic society. However, the drive toward status and the maintenance of an ideal of domesticity among the growing number of middle class women virtually required the employment of domestic help. Having a domestic servant who was treated as an equal did not lead to status; in fact, the treatment of domestic workers as “Other,” as a separate class, was one of the ways people constructed themselves as middle class.

In “A Belated Industry,” Addams refers to the shift from a more egalitarian relationship between employer and domestic worker to one of “mistress and servant,” reflecting the larger issue of unequal class status of employers and workers as a result of industrial capitalism and the rise of immigration in the late nineteenth century:

The isolation of the household employee is perhaps inevitable so long as the employers hold her belated ethics; but the situation is made even more difficult by the character and capacity of the girls who enter this industry... There are many noble exceptions, but it follows that on the whole the enterprising girls of the community go into factories, and the less enterprising go into households. It is not a question of skill, of energy, of conscientious work... She is belated in a class composed of the unprogressive elements of the community, and which is recruited constantly from the victims of misfortune and incompetence, by girls who are learning the language... The distracted housekeeper struggles with these unprogressive girls, holding to them not even the well-defined and independent relation of employer and employed, but the hazy and constantly changing one of mistress to servant. (539-540)

Addams goes on to describe the frustration and conflict middle class women faced with the commonplace notion that hiring domestic help was necessary to adhere to social expectations of industrial capitalism, combined with mass immigration and the social stratification and lack of education that forced women on the lower rungs of society to take on domestic work.

With some exceptions—Addams being the most notable—the most prominent voices for women’s rights in the Progressive Era failed to include or represent working class women.²⁵ Even otherwise progressive women took for granted the employment of domestic workers and expressed exasperation over the lack of “good servants.” In her memoir *Eighty Years and More* (1898), Elizabeth Cady Stanton attributes her discontentment with the conditions of domestic work and the “lack of faithful, competent servants,” among other factors, to her involvement with the women’s suffrage movement and the Seneca Falls Convention of 1848 (139).

Stanton was a featured and honored speaker at the World’s Congress of Women in Chicago as Addams and others advocated for changes in the conditions of working class

²⁵ The same failure could be said of second wave feminism and current feminist struggles, although transnational feminist scholarship and activists such as Eve Ensler have brought greater awareness of the effects of sexual violence, poverty, and globalization on women throughout the world.

women. In fact, the push for reform of domestic work had begun twenty-five years earlier with the idea of cooperative housekeeping first forwarded in the late 1860s by Melusina Fay Peirce (Dudden 187-88). In Peirce's vision groups of 15-20 women would form a co-operative designed to aggregate household labor into a collective, thus relieving individual women/households from the drudgery of domestic labor and replacing unskilled domestic workers with skilled workers who would run the co-operative. Her idea was deemed too radical and impractical to be implemented on a large scale, requiring large amounts of capital to implement among other challenges, but other reform ideas began to circulate in the early 1890s using capitalist models, namely that of "industrializing" domestic workers, ideas Addams articulates in "A Belated Industry." Charlotte Perkins Gilman, for example, forwards such a model in her novel *What Diantha Did* (1910), focused on leaving domestic work in the hands of individual households but with greater training and organization among domestic workers (191).

Even though Addams argues in "A Belated Industry" that "it is not the object of this paper to suggest remedies," she forwards a number of reform approaches based on a capitalist model, including: allowing household employees to live with their own families and have social and family lives through reduced working hours, or in the case of women with no family ties, the "formation of residence clubs, at least in the suburbs, where the isolation [of domestic workers] is most keenly felt; providing organized training for domestic workers (which Hull House would eventually do); and eliminating live-in domestic workers altogether "at least during the period of transition," a period during which middle and upper class women "go back...to the original office of 'lady,' that of 'bread giving' to her household'" (546).

She concedes that shifting away from employing women as domestic workers, especially as cooks, would drive food production toward the factory model as had occurred with the production of many household goods within industrial capitalism. As it was, in the late nineteenth century, a huge segment of the population in the form of lower class women provided the labor for cooking and cleaning for the remaining segment of the population in the middle and upper classes. Laundry, for example, was an arduous process that consumed the better part of a day to complete. Addams points out to her audience in "A Belated Industry" that as difficult as they found managing the demands of household work, they should imagine the plight of working class women:

...Those difficulties increase and grow almost insurmountable as they fall altogether upon the mother of the family who is living in a flat, or worse still, in a tenement house, where one stove and one set of utensils must be put to all sorts of uses, fit or unfit, making the living room of the family a horror in summer, and perfectly insupportable in rainy washing days in winter. (547)

Addams makes clear that her arguments for worker reform had come from her personal knowledge of the perspectives of women employed as domestics. At the beginning of her speech she announces that "an attempt is made to present this industry from the point of view of those women who are working in households for wages" and that

the opinions in [this talk] have been largely gained through experiences in a Woman's Labor Bureau, and through conversations held there with women returning from the 'situations,' which they had voluntarily relinquished in Chicago households of all grades. These same women seldom gave up a place in a factory, although many of the factory situations involved long hours and hard work. ("Belated" 536)

She points out that she "has seen a tenement house mother pass by a basket of green peas at the door of a local grocery store, to purchase a tin of canned peas, because they could be easily prepared for supper and 'the children liked the tinny taste'" (547). The young women for whom Addams advocates and whose perspectives she tries to represent in "A Belated Industry" become in her rhetoric real people—those living and working in the homes of the women in her audience and suffering under the current system.

While Addams had never worked as a domestic, she attempts in her rhetoric to reflect the fact that she had listened to the stories of women working as domestics. She constructs them as marginalized members of a democratic society that had become increasingly stratified into classes over the past fifty years, a product of the worst aspects of capitalism that Addams argues is "tinged with feudalism" (536). Most importantly she tries to drive home the idea that seeing and treating domestic workers as inferior is part of what she calls a "belated" ethics, just as she argues in "A Modern Lear" that Pullman's treatment of his workers is a relic of an outdated ethics associated with feudalism rather than a democratic society. She employs rhetorical empathy by compelling her audience of women who employ domestic workers to view them as individuals with lives and histories and desires similar to their own.

"A Modern Lear" and The Pullman Strike

In her essay "A Modern Lear" (1912), Jane Addams writes that in the midst of the discussions following the Pullman Strike about its causes, "the writer found her mind dwelling upon a comparison which modified and softened all her judgments" (164). A year earlier Addams had been in the middle of what would escalate into the largest strike in U.S., a conflict over workers' rights and Gilded Age capitalist excess. Both time and the act of using an interpretive lens based on her empathetic philosophy had caused her to "soften all her judgments" toward all those involved in the strike.

The comparison she refers to is the "modern Lear" of the piece—the reviled figure of George Pullman, owner of the Pullman Palace Car Company and one of the richest men in the U.S. She attempts in the piece to see the conflict from both sides and to argue for a new social ethic based on mutual good for workers and capital holders, reached collaboratively, rather than an ethic based on what was then known and widely practiced as benevolence. Addams began framing her ideas for "A Modern Lear" shortly after the Pullman Strike ended in the summer of 1894. She delivered an early version to the Chicago Woman's Club and the Twentieth Century Club of Boston in the fall of 1894, to a settlement worker conference in May of 1895 (Brown 142), and at a Chicago conference on social economics in early September 1895 (Knight 351).

In the speech Addams compares the Pullman Strike and its main characters, George Pullman and the Pullman workers, to Shakespeare's Lear and his daughters. She takes up a familiar theme in her rhetoric: a comparison of the family/personal circle and the larger social, political and economic realm. By using Lear's tragic response to his daughter Cordelia as a metaphor through which to interpret the Pullman Strike, Addams takes a political and economic event of tremendous proportions and personalizes it, infusing it with pathos and putting a face on the larger than life, sinister character of Pullman. Writing the speech became for her a way of processing what was up to that point the most jarring experience of her adult life. The strike set the upper class of which she was part against the working classes, with whom she had begun to identify since her first visit to London's Toynbee Hall, the first settlement house and model for Hull House, in 1887. During her visit she had seen firsthand the effects of the British Industrial Revolution on working classes, suffering which she'd only read about previously in the work of Charles Dickens. Her literary metaphor for the Pullman Strike took the events into a larger, ethical realm. She was not only interpreting the strike itself; she was commenting on labor issues more broadly, including the effects of industrial capitalism on capitalists and workers.

In the case of the Pullman Strike, as with the circumstances surrounding her delivery of "Domestic Service," the striking workers were people she had spent time with. In the midst of the strike in the summer of 1894 she visited the town of Pullman to listen to the grievances of the workers in her role as a member of the Chicago Civic Federation. Before the strike reached national proportions, Addams attempted to mediate between the workers and company officials. She visited the homes of workers, ate with them, listened to their perspective and attempted to take that perspective to company officials. George Pullman, however, had left town shortly after the workers began striking in May of 1894, and remained ensconced in his New Jersey summer home throughout most of the strike. Although workers at the Pullman Company had gone on strike in 1886, this strike came on the heels of what came to be known as the Panic of 1893, the worst economic crisis in U.S. history up to that point. The New York Stock Exchange crashed in May 1893, and by the end of that year over a half million businesses had failed, with millions of workers laid off. In New York and Chicago unemployment rates hit 40%, and many workers endured the brunt of the recession with wage cuts. In Chicago, one third of factories closed, and at the Pullman factory the normal workforce of 4500 was reduced to 1100 between July and November 1893.

The immediate cause of the Pullman worker strike was the lowering of worker wages by an average of 30%. Even when the economy began recovering in 1894 and many of the original 4500 workers were rehired, rates remained at the lower level. The lower wages alone were not the cause of the strike; the company refused to lower rents in the town of Pullman, where two thirds of the workers lived. It was perceived at the time and confirmed later in Congressional hearings that the company had refused to lower rents to recover lost revenue on the backs of the lowest paid company workers. Throughout the recession and the strike, the company did not reduce the 8% rate at which stockholders received dividends, nor did it reduce executive pay. The Congressional commission

report on the strike disclosed, in fact, that the company had a 25 million surplus at the time of the strike, amassed since its charter in 1867 (Papke 82).

By April 1894 the workers were becoming desperate, unable to pay rent and in some cases starving. Before the strike occurred workers from a grievance committee met with company officials, including Pullman, but the company would not agree to their request for lower rents. On May 11, 1894, the company fired three members of the committee, and 2500 of the 3100 workers walked off the job, the remaining 600 laid off the same day. The Pullman Strike reached national proportions after Eugene Debs and the new cross-trades railroad union, the American Railway Union (ARU) became involved. The ARU was convening in Chicago while the Pullman Strike was occurring, and the delegates voted to strike nationally in solidarity with Pullman workers, a major victory for the fledgling union movement at the time.

On June 26, 1894, the national boycott of Pullman cars began. Within three days one hundred thousand men had stopped working and twenty railroads were frozen. The boycott eventually spread to twenty-seven states and involved 200,000 workers—the largest work stoppage in the nation’s history and the most significant exercise of union strength the nation had ever witnessed. President Grover Cleveland was eventually involved, sending one thousand federal troops to Chicago on July 4, 1894. The strike was soon shut down after violence erupted between workers and federal troops in the railway yards south of the city. Several thousand more troops were sent in and Chicago became the equivalent of a police state for a short time.

Knight points out that although the Panic of 1893 and the wage cuts and exorbitant rents precipitated the strike of 1894, these issues “were merely short-term manifestations of long-term grievances, all of them tied to company president George Pullman’s philosophy of industrial paternalism” (310). Addams’s judgment in “A Modern Lear” that the Pullman Strike had resulted largely because of the stubbornness of a single man resonated with the public at the time and with the findings of the Congressional commission. He was admonished for his refusal to negotiate with workers even by his fellow industrialists. Mark Hanna, a business leader in New York, said of Pullman on record: “The damned idiot ought to arbitrate, arbitrate, arbitrate!...A man who won’t meet his men half-way is a goddamn fool” (Arthur and Broesamle 43). The *Chicago Times* called him a “cold-blooded autocrat” with “small piggish eyes” and an expression of “supercilious contempt for the world at large, mingled with traces of self-satisfaction at his own comfortable state” (43).

Pullman had come from relatively humble beginnings. He made his way in business by helping with his father’s profession of raising and relocating houses and commercial buildings and then rose to national prominence after Abraham Lincoln’s body was transported from Washington, D.C., to Springfield, Illinois, in a Pullman sleeping car. At his death in 1897—his health deteriorated after the Pullman Strike and he died three years later of a heart attack—his estate was valued at \$17.5 million, nearly one half billion dollars today. He is listed at #65 on the Forbes List of the wealthiest Americans (Bill Gates is #31 and Warren Buffet #39) (Klepper).

For Addams in “A Modern Lear,” Pullman the man becomes a tragic figure. While I’ll discuss the issue of motives in the next section, it’s important to note that Addams treated Pullman as a person in her speech, not a caricature, despite the fact that she vehemently disagreed with his actions during the strike. He refused to meet with her when he finally agreed to talk with members of the mediating Chicago Civic Federation well into the strike, despite (or more likely because of) the fact that she had played the most prominent, concerted role in mediation attempts. His pretense for not including her is that he did not wish for any females to be present; clearly he was incensed at the relatively young woman causing him so much trouble and who had the ear of the striking workers.

She argues that just as Lear mistreated and misjudged his daughters, requiring in a fit of pride that they declare their love for him to inherit their portion of the kingdom, Pullman patronized his workers, refusing to try to understand their motives or allow them a place in decision-making. She calls Pullman’s treatment of them and his creation of the Pullman company town “feudal” and out of touch with the new consciousness growing among working people, materializing in the form of the fledging union movement. She also, however, compares the workers to Cordelia, trying to find a new way of relating to power and neglecting to acknowledge the sacrifices Lear/Pullman had undergone to build the kingdom/company that had sustained them up to that point.

She uses her comparison of the two sides of the conflict to argue for a new ethical code for a new industrial age, one in which the old ethics of paternalism, benevolence, and philanthropy would no longer suffice. Again, rather than *doing for*, the new ethics Addams argues for in “A Modern Lear” involve *doing with*—the epitome of an egalitarian democracy and the basis on which Hull House itself functioned. She argues that the philanthropic enterprise Pullman had set out to accomplish in his company town became for him a source of pride and control—and ultimately profit. In the latter sense, she points out, he was a good capitalist, but his method of dealing with his workers was outdated and could not survive in the next phase of social consciousness arising with growing unionization.

The old ethics that Knight points out Addams had inherited from her father focused on individual virtue—a bootstraps philosophy of the Great Man succeeding through hard work and character—was being replaced with a social impulse, a focus on the betterment of society as a whole and not just one’s own place within it. Her message in “A Modern Lear” would echo the social and political movements of the Progressive Era and the New Deal. Socialist philosophies would rise in the early decades of the new century in response to frustration with the Gilded Age coupling of capitalism and corrupt government representatives and officials.

Whereas the drive for personal power and ambition fueling and resulting from industrial capitalism could be a destructive force, as in Pullman’s case, so a focus on the individual within systems and groups could, Addams argues, help resist the depersonalization and oppression of workers within capitalism. Her argument that those within conflicts “look one another in the face” echoes Buber’s *I/Thou* relationship between Self and the Other—

an ethic based on concern for others because of their intrinsic value as equals within a democracy.

Connecting the Personal and the Political

In “Domestic Service” and “A Modern Lear,” as throughout her work, Addams conflates David Hume’s concentric circles. Hume held that we feel the greatest degree of empathy for those closest to us, and Addams repeatedly in her rhetoric argues that what she calls the “social claim” was as great as the “family claim.” In other words, the middle and upper class women of the Progressive Era who were relegated to the home and domestic issues (of their own families; working women were of necessity working outside their own homes and families) could rely on arguments that they were compelled to address societal injustices and care for people well beyond their own households. Her argument became an extension of the Biblical “I am my brother’s keeper” emphasized in the parable of the good Samaritan, the idea that loving one’s neighbor extends beyond family and close friends or those like us and includes the Other, the stranger, those who pose threats to us.

Addams’s rhetoric also contains echoes of Aristotle’s and Hume’s theories on the relationship between how we experience empathy and our social positioning. Addams’s ability to engage in rhetorical empathy came from her embodiment of it: the fact that she knew the people others were vilifying helped with her attempts to mediate between groups alienated from one another. Her ability to relate to some degree to both the workers and to the capitalist Pullman informed her empathetic framework for interpreting the strike. Empathy became her way of inventing arguments and formed the lens through which she interpreted an incredibly complex situation that had divided the nation.

Echoing Benhabib’s ethic of care on an individual / personal level as a foundation for morality versus Habermas’s ethic of rights in the public square, Addams argues in “A Modern Lear” that what she calls individual virtues should inform actions within the public square. Her new code of ethics in “A Modern Lear” involves applying the concern we feel for those closest to us to a wider social sphere, to the Other. In the midst of the greatest rise of capitalist industrialism in history, she claims the cause of the strike was George Pullman’s lack of personal connection and empathy for his employees.

While her harshest condemnation is directed at Pullman himself for his lack of understanding during the strike, she also points to the tendency within social movements of those without power taking on the same destructive attributes they are resisting. She stresses the need for empathy for all sides of social issues:

That a newly acquired sense of possession [among workers] should result in the barbaric, the incredible scenes of bitterness and murder, which were King Lear's portion, is not without a reminder of the barbaric scenes in our political and industrial relationships, when the sense of possession, to obtain and to bold, is aroused on both sides. The scenes in Paris during the

political revolution or the more familiar scenes at the mouths of the mines and the terminals of railways occur to all of us. (174)

She points to the violence resulting from the French Revolution to argue against returning violence against violence. Her doctrine of non-violence held that even those with less power act with a sense of empathetic connection to those with more power runs in the same vein as Martin Luther King Jr. and Nelson Mandela's peace-based responses to oppression in the Civil Rights movement in the U.S. and in the resistance against apartheid in South Africa.

Considering Motives Behind Speech Acts and Actions

In "A Belated Industry" Addams approaches and constructs her audience of middle and upper middle class women generously and appeals to their values of tradition and family. Despite the fact that they employ live-in domestics and participate in a system that exploits workers, she addresses them as people who care about being progressive in their ethics, reminding them of how their mothers and grandmothers, with "conscientious struggle," adjusted to a new way of operating as manufacturing shifted from the home to factories. Change is hard, she tells them, but necessary to stay up with the times.

She argues that the process of "industrializing" the functions of the home to outsourced professionals is mostly complete with the exception of hiring live-in domestic workers, specifically cooks. The difficulty in finding "good help" and the often heard complaint that, in their frustration, women would prefer "never to have a servant in [the] house again," should, Addams argues, drive her audience to actually follow through with the impulse and join the movement toward a social ethic versus an individual (family) ethic, just as she urges of employers in "A Modern Lear." Get rid of your servants, she urges them, and allow them to gain training and live with their own friends and families, and go with your better instincts to follow the ethical imperatives of a new time: "Were she [the woman frustrated with her domestic employees] in line ethically, she would have to believe that the sacredness and beauty of family life do not consist in the processes of the separate preparation of food, but in sharing the corporate life of the community, and in making the family the unit of that life" (540).

Her praise for "the sacredness and beauty of family life" becomes her primary appeal to the motives of her audience, but this argument turns immediately to the irony that in their zeal to create the perfect household they rob another woman of having the very thing they value so highly:

The employer of household labor, in her zeal to preserve her family life intact and free from intrusion, acts inconsistently and grants to her cook, for instance, but once or twice a week such opportunity for untrammelled association with her relatives as the employer's family claims constantly.

The woman within their household has no social or family life, essentially, and the very act of taking on work as a domestic renders her in the eyes of possible husbands as lower class than many of them were willing to associate with:

A woman who has worked in households for twenty years told me that when she was a young and pretty nurse girl, the only young men who “paid her attention” were coachmen and unskilled laborers. The skill in the trades of her suitors increased as her position in the household increased in dignity. When she was a housekeeper, forty years old, skilled mechanics appeared, one of whom she married. Women seeking employment understand perfectly well this feeling, quite unjustifiable I am willing to admit, among mechanics, and it acts as a strong inducement toward factory labor. (546)

She praises the motives and efforts of employers to provide a semblance of social life for domestic workers they employ but goes on to argue that even their best efforts are not working within a system designed to privilege their lives completely over the life of someone who must devote her entire existence to serving the employer’s family:

There are suburban employers of household labor who make heroic efforts to supply domestic and social life to their employees, who take the domestic employee to drive, arrange to have her invited out occasionally, who supply her with books and papers and companionship. Nothing could be more praiseworthy in motive, but it is seldom successful in actual operation.

Addams describes an instance in which an employer she knew had a special room constructed for her cook at the back of the home but “naturally felt aggrieved when the cook refused to stay in her bay. Viewed in an historic light, this employer might just as well have added a bay to her house for her shoemaker, and then deemed him ungrateful because he declined to live in it” (538). Such an incident Addams calls a “misunderstanding” on the part of the employer: “She did not realize that the desire to live with one’s kinsfolk is stronger in most of us than the desire for the comforts to be found in a bay” (538).

Addams’s characterization of her audience’s motives could be described as generous and deliciously ironic at the same time, laced with humor and sarcasm as I’ll discuss below. Under the surface of her attributing the clueless and even cruel actions of employers as “misunderstandings,” she clearly is frustrated by middle and upper class women who exploit women on the lowest rungs of society living in their back rooms and serving their meals.

She reserves her most passionate appeals for her construction of the motives and emotions of domestic workers themselves, pointing out that domestic workers she knows often complain of loneliness and frequently become scarred permanently by their time as a domestic:

The writer has known the voice of a girl to change so much during three weeks of “service” that she could not recognize it when the girl returned to the bureau...When she leaves her employer her reasons are often incoherent and totally incomprehensible to that good lady, who naturally concludes that she wishes to get away from the work and back to her dances and giddy life, content to stand many hours in an unsanitary factory. (548)

She constructs domestic workers as fellow human beings, describing their emotions and telling their stories, reminding her audience in stark terms that the women they employ have similar desires as the women they work for. They are isolated, lonely, and have little human contact other than with people who often treat them as inferior; they lack education or the ability to improve themselves.

Although Addams focused on the individual and the personal in the context of social issues, she emphasized that individuals are part of larger systems, a fact that helped explain, at least in part, their motives for speech acts and actions. She argues in “A Modern Lear,” for example, that changing sociological conditions brought on by industrial capitalism and the unionization of workers formed the basis of misunderstanding between Pullman and his employees. Her strategy of considering the larger forces in play within an industrial capitalist system did not, however, negate the individual’s agency. To reiterate from the previous section, she was firm in her belief that the primary cause of the tragedy was the lack of empathetic vision of Pullman and the workers toward one another: “If the responsibility of tolerance lies with those of the widest vision, it behooves us to consider this great social disaster, not alone in its legal aspect nor in its sociological bearings, but from those deep human motives, which, after all, determine events” (“A Modern Lear” 163).

It seems strange today to think of an argument that held relatively powerless workers responsible for empathizing with such a figure as George Pullman, but it’s important to note the degree to which the growing union movement among workers upended social consciousness during the late nineteenth century. People in Chicago, especially in working class neighborhoods like the nineteenth ward, initially had been sympathetic to the workers despite vilification of the workers by the press in Chicago and nationally. However, after several thousand federal troops were sent to Chicago and rioting and fires broke out after a worker shot a federal agent, papers across the U.S. called the workers anarchists (Knight 315) and constructed the strike as a threat to the survival of the nation. The *Washington Post* wrote that “war of the bloodiest kind in Chicago in imminent.” *Harper’s Weekly* called the strike “the rebellion,” and U.S. attorney general Richard Olney (himself on the board of a major railroad line) said in the midst of the strike that “we have been brought to the ragged edge of anarchy” by workers who defied the government (Campbell 79). Eugene Debs characterized the strike as “a contest between the producing classes and the money power of this country” (Knight 315); David Papke characterizes the strike as the peak of the battle between capital and labor in the Gilded Age.

Addams required of herself the discipline to try to understand all sides of a conflict, to take the broadest view, to take into consideration the backgrounds and motives of those involved, and she argues for such habits of mind and rhetorical practices in her various audiences: both labor and moneyed classes. She writes in *Twenty Years at Hull House* about her despair during the days of the strike and how she walked the four plus miles from Hull House to Lincoln Park in the sweltering Chicago summer in her long skirt in an attempt to gain perspective:

I recall a time of great perplexity in the summer of 1894, when Chicago was filled with federal troops sent there by the President of the United States, and their presence was resented by the governor of the state, that I walked the wearisome way from Hull-House to Lincoln Park—for no cars were running regularly at that moment of sympathetic strikes—in order to look at and gain magnanimous counsel, if I might, from the marvelous St. Gaudens's statue which had been but recently placed at the entrance of the park. Some of Lincoln's immortal words were cut into the stone at his feet, and never did a distracted town more sorely need the healing of "with charity towards all" than did Chicago at that moment, and the tolerance of the man who had won charity for those on both sides of 'an irrepressible conflict.' (21)

Lincoln was throughout Addams's life a model of generous, wise, broadminded rhetorical practice. Although she often struggled to live by his philosophy of "charity towards all," the idea became for her a moral compass that formed her rhetorical style more than any other.

She describes the role of mediator she and Hull House attempted to play, not only within the events of the strike but as a matter of practice throughout her life:

A strike is one of the most exciting episodes in modern life, and as it assumes the characteristics of a game, the entire population of a city becomes divided into two cheering sides. In such moments the fair-minded public, who ought to be depended upon as a referee, practically disappears. Anyone who tries to keep the attitude of nonpartisanship, which is perhaps an impossible one, is quickly under suspicion by both sides. (*Twenty Years* 148)

Addams was called a traitor to her class, and at the same time she was also criticized by labor for not more clearly aligning herself with their cause. According to Knight, "Her stance—that she would take no side—guaranteed that nearly everyone in the intensely polarized city would be angry with her...Practicing neutrality during the Pullman Strike required integrity and courage. In being true to her conscience, she paid a tremendous price" (319). It was one of the most painful experiences of her life. For her, neither the workers nor even Pullman himself was entirely to blame or blameless; her philosophy and rhetoric based on empathy meant that she often saw a great deal of grey where many

were seeing black and white. She often wrote of feeling like she was destined to always alienate everyone by trying to remain as objective as possible.

Brown points to the longest and what she calls “the most telling” rejection letter Addams received in 1896 regarding “A Modern Lear.” Horace Scudder, the editor of the *Atlantic Monthly* and uncle of Vida Scudder, the Christian socialist founder of New York’s College Settlement, praised the speech but argued that Addams had been too generous about George Pullman’s motives, which he felt were based purely on profit rather than philanthropy.

While Addams acknowledges Pullman’s motives for profit, she also tries to imagine what the situation looked like from Pullman’s perspective. What was it like, she asks, to be admired for your treatment of your workers in building them a lavish town and then to be reviled by people on both sides of the conflict, “brought...to the minds of thousands as a type of oppression and injustice, and to many others as an example of the evil of an irregulated sympathy for the ‘lower classes’” (165)? She allowed herself to imagine Pullman as someone with good motives on some level, who “had not only been good to those who were now basely ungrateful to him, but [who] felt himself deserted by the admiration of his people” (166). Addams argues that Pullman “doubtless began to build his town from an honest desire to give his employees the best surroundings. As it developed it became a source of pride and an exponent of power, that he cared most for when it gave him a glow of benevolence” (167). While she addresses his drive for profit and his motives of personal ambition, her primary point in constructing Pullman as someone who actually had a measure of good motives in his dealings with employees was that a new way of dealing with labor was necessary in a new age that was emerging.

Although the thirty three-year-old Addams would later become much more progressive in her arguments for government intervention in labor disputes, she was not naïve when she wrote and delivered “A Modern Lear.” Neither, however, was she a socialist like her good friend, Hull House associate, and labor leader Florence Kelley. In order to make her argument for the practice of mutuality in business on a much larger scale than the Pullman Strike, Addams attributes good motives to her friends in industry, those with whom she served on the Civic Federation board in Chicago, business leaders like her father who were operating on an outdated model. Like the people Hull House worked with in the nineteenth ward, workers did not want “benevolence” and a patronizing employer taking care of them (even though Pullman did more than many employers); they were beginning to join together to demand a place at the table, to engage in decision-making that affected them. Just as in a democracy, they demanded to have a voice rather than allowing corporations to buy them at the lowest price, and they would go on in the New Deal to demand that government no longer solely serve the interests of those with the most money.

While trying to see conflict from the point of view of management, Addams takes even greater pains to take into account the motives of the workers in the conflict. She attributes noble and selfless motives to them, praising their “brotherhood, sacrifice, the subordination of individual and trade interests to the good of the working class” (170).

While praising the motives of the individuals who took part in the strike, she uses the speech to consider how the personal is political and how the workers were part of a larger and growing labor movement, arguing for mutuality and a sense of larger responsibility within their ranks. Despite the fact that the workers clearly held less power than Pullman in the events surrounding the strike, Addams maintains that they still were responsible for trying to find some good in Pullman's motives. More importantly, in creating of the situation a metaphor for a larger critique of the effects of capitalism on both the capitalist and the laborer, she argues that if labor failed to take seriously its responsibility to work with management—and the individuals who comprise it—those resisting the worst impulses of capitalists would end up becoming the very thing they hated when they did gain power.

Confronting Difference and Injustice

Addams's persona and rhetoric often are characterized as conciliatory and ameliorative, and I have constructed her within a feminist tradition of non-violent rhetoric, more concerned with forging human connections than on persuasion. Considering the motives of human beings on various sides of an issue and relating to them on a personal level does not negate the existence of very real injustices and power imbalances. Rather than direct confrontation of various audiences, however, rhetorical empathy constructs and interprets the Other for various audiences, with all the emotions and identifications implicit in such constructions. It is in that process of sympathetic construction of the personal elements involved, of the motives behind speech acts and actions, that identification and connection occur. In that identification Addams highlights the very real differences between those with greater social and economic power and those on the margins.

Alongside empathy Addams sometimes employs biting irony and sarcasm; in "A Belated Industry" she exposes the cruelty of the working conditions of laborers and the complicity of her audience in a system that exploits young working women. Although she often presents herself in her rhetoric as somewhat removed, seldom using the first or second person and keeping a straight face for the most part, her humor and sarcasm come through in one of the most poignant moments in the summarized version of the speech published in the congress proceedings: "So strongly is the employer imbued with the sanctity of her own family life that this sacrifice of the cook's family life seems to her perfectly justifiable. If one chose to be jocose one might say that it becomes almost a religious devotion, in which the cook figures as a burnt offering and the kitchen range as the patriarchal altar"²⁶ ("Domestic Service" 629).

²⁶ The (mostly) complete version of her speech that eventually made it into publication outside the conference proceedings doesn't contain that particular line. In fact, it's one of the few omissions. One can only imagine the effect such a line would have had on her audience in the home economics panel: a woman who had eschewed "home economics" and a typical domestic life—and would be responsible for encouraging countless other young women to do the same—pointing out the absurdities of thoughtless devotion to family life, especially when such devotion exploited others under its own roof.

It is because of Addams's attempts to see Pullman in a generous light that her criticisms of him become so potent. Her moments of what LuMing Mao calls "direct" rhetoric (*Reading* 137), used along with a rhetoric of empathy, hold a good deal of ethical weight precisely because of her restraint and even-handedness. Even though Pullman's original motives toward his employees may have been philanthropic rather than solely profit-driven, Addams ultimately concludes that his actions toward them were exploitive, arguing that "the president assumed that he himself knew the needs of his men, and so far from wishing them to express their needs he denied to them the simple rights of trade organization, which would have been, of course, the merest preliminary to an attempt at associated expression...One will directing the energies of many others, without regard to their desires, and having in view in the last analysis only commercial results" (167). Despite the fact that using a stance of empathy and affectionate interpretation had "softened all her judgments" (164) toward Pullman, her final analysis, on close reading, was that he had in fact acted out of selfish motives and was part of a larger capitalist system that was exploiting workers.

The Congressional committee that investigated the Pullman Strike, and before which Addams testified, determined Pullman could have prevented the strike if had relented on lowering rents in the company town and that he had abused his power and took advantage of his employees to make a profit in the midst of a depression (Arthur and Broesamle 50). In the aftermath of the strike and public attention it brought him, two assassination attempts were made on Pullman's life. He died at age 66 of a heart attack in 1897, three years after the strike ended.

That Jane Addams would ask her readers to think about similarities between Pullman and the tragic figure of King Lear resulted in her essay being rejected by numerous editors. The speech, which became one of her most well known and one of the definitive statements on the motivations behind the Pullman Strike, would not be published until 1912, almost twenty years later, and not in a popular venue but in the academic journal *Survey*, directed toward a niche audience of social and reform workers.

Victoria Brown suggests that despite the fact that Addams was already becoming well known by 1896 when she first submitted "A Modern Lear" for publication, and that her calls in the text for an even-handed approach to social progress would have fallen on receptive ears in principle, there was something unsettling about her piece that caused editor after editor to reject it, even in publications where she'd previously found reception: "While others talked about making room at the civic table for all points of view, Jane Addams actually did it. While others talked about putting a human face on industrial conflict, Jane Addams actually did it. This made her both a noble figure in Chicago and an irritating one" (Brown 144). Addams called for all points of view to be represented fairly at the table, and she put a personal lens, a face, upon a wide scale labor conflict, both praising and alienating people on various sides of the issue.

Addams's use of the inventional stance and strategy of rhetorical empathy and her experiences at Hull House provided the discipline and compassion required to maintain a broadminded perspective in the midst of her anger and frustration. In 1931, four years

before her death at age 74 and after decades of practicing a rhetoric based on empathy toward both friends and enemies, Addams became the first woman awarded the Noble Peace Prize.

Chapter 4:

Appealing to the “Great Middle”: Rhetorical Empathy in the Intersection of Gay Rights and Religion

When a conflict implicates issues of identity . . . there may be a greater tendency towards framing issues in moral terms. . . . [O]nce a dispute is framed in moral terms, identity is often defined in opposition to “the other.”

— Jennifer Gerarda Brown, “Peacemaking in the Culture War Between Gay Rights and Religious Liberty” (2010)

My approach is to be vulnerable and let people get to know me for who I am, not who they might have imagined me to be. Once we see each other as fellow human beings and not as stand-ins for sides in a culture war, we can begin the conversation about how we disagree and why.

—Justin Lee, author, speaker, and founder of the Gay Christian Network (Email interview)

In this chapter I focus on what rhetorical empathy can contribute to rhetorical impasses within the site of sexuality/gender and religious rhetoric in the public sphere. I examine the rhetorical strategies of two gay rights advocates who identify as evangelical Christians and how they engage anti-gay discourse within their own discourse communities. The first, Kathy Baldock, is a straight ally who maintains a blog and writes and speaks on behalf of LGBTQ people in the evangelical church on a national level. The second research participant, Justin Lee, is a prominent spokesperson for the issue of sexuality and religion who self-identifies as a gay evangelical Christian. He speaks in venues across the U.S., particularly college campuses and churches, on the issue of religion and sexual orientation.

I focus on the intersection of LGBTQ and conservative Christian rhetoric for a number of reasons. First, despite increased acceptance of same-sex relationships²⁷, the issue remains one of the most polarizing civil rights struggles in the U.S. While broad gains for gay people have occurred in recent years—a majority of people in the U.S. express support for gay marriage rights, for example, and nine states and District of Columbia have

²⁷ According to a March 2013 survey by the Public Religion Research Institute and the Brookings Institute, for the first time in the U.S., a majority (52%) of Americans favor legalizing same-sex marriage, with 42% opposed.

passed marriage equality laws—the reality is that 38 states still have state laws and/or constitutional provisions limiting a marriage to a woman and a man (“Defining”).

Secondly, resistance to same-sex relationships remains most pronounced among people identifying as conservative Christians. Evangelical culture in particular is permeated with anti-gay rhetoric. Since the rise of the gay rights movement in the 1970s and with the rise of groups in the U.S. such as the Moral Majority around the same time, the religious right has consistently used the strategy of pitting gay people against people of faith in the U.S., constructing LGBTQ people as anti-religious “sinners.” Among those most against acceptance of gay rights and people in society are white evangelical Protestants in the U.S. A recent Pew Research Center study found a majority of people in the U.S. (58%) believe “homosexuality should be accepted by society” and 45% favor the right of lesbians and gay men to marry. White evangelical Protestants, however (the focus of this chapter), had the lowest numbers in the country—29%—for acceptance of LGBTQ people (Pew). Evidence suggests, however, that as younger evangelicals grow increasingly weary of being associated with “hating gay people,” change toward more acceptance of gay people is occurring.²⁸ After the defeat of Proposition 8 in California in November 2008, prominent gay rights groups in the U.S. such as the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD), the Human Rights Campaign, and gay publications such as *LGBTQ Nation* increased their focus on highlighting the role of faith in LGBTQ people’s lives.

Thirdly, I focus on rhetorical strategies within the site of gay rights and religious rhetoric because many of our students come from religious backgrounds, are LGBTQ, or both, and because statistics indicate many of those students refuse to abandon their faith tradition in order to claim an authenticity in their relationships.²⁹ The arguments I make about the value of rhetorical empathy in the public venues I highlight in this chapter hold value for our classrooms and our roles as teachers of rhetoric and composition. In a recent *College English* article, T.J. Geiger argues for teachers and scholars in rhetoric and composition to consider how best to effectively negotiate the intersections of sexuality and religion in our pedagogy. He writes that “the interpenetrating discourses of religion

²⁸ A majority (51%) of White, evangelical Protestants under age 35 support same-sex marriage rights, compared to only 15% of White evangelical seniors (Public). A sizable portion of people within evangelical circles has shown to be open to change on a number of social issues. Some indication of the tendency of evangelical Christians to respond positively toward appeals to justice and equality based on their faith precepts has been demonstrated in a 2009 study in the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*. The study authors concluded that orthodox Christian faith leads adherents toward positive attitudes toward homosexuals as individuals or as a group but not toward “homosexuality as a behavior or lifestyle.” They point to the paradoxical role of religion, citing Gordon Allport’s *The Nature of Prejudice*: “It makes prejudice and unmakes prejudice... The sublimity of religious ideals is offset by the horrors of persecution in the name of these same ideals. Some people say the only cure for prejudice is more religion; some say the only cure is to abolish religion” (Ford 146).

²⁹ A Barna Group study released in 2009 found 70% of LGBTQ adults self-identify as Christian, and 60% as “born again Christians,” a moniker often associated with evangelical Christians. George Barna, himself a conservative-leaning evangelical, said of the survey results: “People who portray gay adults as godless, hedonistic, Christian bashers are not working with the facts. A substantial majority of gays cite their faith as a central facet of their life, consider themselves to be Christian, and claim to have some type of meaningful personal commitment to Jesus Christ active in their life today” (Barna Group).

and sexuality saturate ideological formations, inform individual and community lives, and shape persuasive possibilities. Given their ubiquity, import, and ‘trickiness,’ the intersection of sexual and religious discourses seems to me an immensely appropriate site for rhetorical inquiry and ethical negotiation with students” (249). Whether or not we choose to actively incorporate course readings on sexuality and/or religion, these discourses, and this particular intersection, is a very real one for a number of our students, and being aware of rhetorical strategies that can help navigate these waters is (especially) important in rhetoric and writing classrooms.

In one of the few monographs in our discipline addressing the role of religious rhetoric in public discourse, Sharon Crowley attempts to recover for a general audience the robust discursive tools of the Euro-American rhetorical tradition to help address the polarization between fundamentalists and liberals. In *Toward a Civil Discourse* (2006) she argues that fundamentalism relies on a closed system that is not open to logical arguments; like progressivism, it relies on a complex system of interwoven beliefs that she calls *ideologics*—patriarchy and homophobia, for example—and that untangling one facet often leads to an entire belief system changing (69). She points out that the kind of change involved in fundamentalists³⁰ changing their minds on issues of significance usually does not involve logical arguments but rather a crisis or a shift in who holds credibility (*ethos*) in a person’s life.

Building on Susan Miller’s argument in *Trust in Texts* that rhetoric is grounded in our emotion-based commitments to people we trust—and that such trust and the emotions undergirding it are culturally formed—I explore the rhetoric of two evangelical Christians who have become activists for gay rights within their own faith communities. The changes one of them experienced, going from anti-gay to vocal advocate for LGBTQ people in conservative Christian churches, involved her personal connection with people who expanded and challenged her former position.

Rhetorical empathy as an explanatory theory attempts to account for what happens when people become involved emotionally and personally with an argument or an issue, the emotional component of empathy that can result when the Other becomes a real human

³⁰ While Crowley’s characterization of fundamentalists rings true in many respects, which I’ll discuss throughout this chapter, and while she concedes that liberal Christians do exist, she does not identify people or groups within the ranks of the large umbrella she calls fundamentalist who are actively working for change within their own communities. The one exception she notes (9) is the social justice, left-leaning Christian group Sojourners, founded by Jim Wallis in 1971. Within the larger umbrella of the Christian right, Crowley conflates fundamentalists and evangelicals—understandable given the way the terms “religious right,” “Christian right,” “fundamentalists,” and “evangelicals” circulate synonymously in public discourse and the media. Her conflation, however, of fundamentalist and evangelical Christians has the unfortunate consequence of reducing one of the largest religious blocs in the U.S. into a homogenous group of closed-minded bigots. One would be hard pressed to find anyone in the conservative Christian world who self-identifies as a fundamentalist, although they do exist. One group associated with this organization, for example, is the infamous Bob Jones University. As Crowley points out, religious historian George Marsden calls a fundamentalist an “evangelical who is mad about something” (103). The Facebook group “Christians Tired of Being Misrepresented” recently posted a definition of a fundamentalist as “someone to the right of us theologically whom we don’t particularly like.” One of my points of departure from Crowley is that in terms of actual beliefs, fundamentalists are a small group in the U.S. compared to evangelicals.

being with a face and a family and motivations with explanatory value behind his or her actions and words. Crowley touches on the personal element of rhetoric and of proximity as a motive for change when she relates a story in Stanley Fish's *The Trouble with Principle*. A Klansman changes his views after he hears a Klan leader say that upon realizing power, "defectives of a variety of kinds would be put into special colonies or otherwise dealt with" (189 in Crowley). He changes his beliefs when he realizes a condition his own daughter suffered with was included among those on the list. LGBTQ identified people know firsthand that people often change their firmly held ideologies and emotional commitments to those ideologies when they actually know someone who is gay or transgendered.

I focus on these two research participants in particular and their rhetorical strategies because they represent a "middle way" between the polarization that often characterizes the intersection of conservative Christian discourse and sexuality. Little attention is paid to moderates who speak out against anti-gay rhetoric in their own communities, either in the media or in rhetorical theory. Examples of entrenchment between members of polarized groups are easy to find; most cable news shows simply reinforce the political views of their audience and demonize anyone who disagrees with them. Conflict sells. An incident that immediately comes to mind for many of us on the issue of polarized discourse is the now famous exchange in October 2004 in which Jon Stewart excoriated Paul Begala and Tucker Carlson over what he called "partisan hackery" rather than honest debate on CNN's *Crossfire*. Stewart's "Rally to Restore Sanity" in October 2010 drew over 200,000 with the expressed aims of giving voice to the 70-80% in the middle who don't have extreme views but who lack a voice in the media. The example of Rush Limbaugh points to the financial rewards of demonizing those who disagree with you or who prove to be threats to your agenda. Demonizing gay people and decrying the loss of morality in the public sphere has been a rallying cry and fundraising method for the religious right in the U.S. for decades.

Just as the case of politicians willing to cross the political aisle, conservative Christian leaders who are willing and able to genuinely engage on the issue of same-sex relationships and religious faith are rare. Religious leaders within conservative Christian communities who advocate for full equality for LGBTQ people face criticism and the threat of losing their jobs; often they are criticized even for advocating humane treatment of gay people. Much of the pushback against anti-gay rhetoric in conservative Christian ranks has come from the rank-and-file insiders rather than leaders, and I focus on two such insiders in this chapter.

As Crowley points out, outsiders to the faith have much less chance of engaging with insiders on polarizing topics. Crowley's focus on finding ways toward a more civil discourse among polarized groups, should, according to her own admission, focus on firsthand, experiential knowledge and ways subalterns within religious discourse communities can gain access to the power required to shift deeply held ideologies (192-94).

The likelihood that outsiders to conservative religious discourse communities will hold sway against densely held belief systems is quite small, considering the degree to which such belief systems are closed to outside influences. She argues that change in such systems usually happens through those in subaltern subject positions rather than those who enjoy the most privilege in a group: “Their interpretations [of their belief] can never be gainsaid by outsiders, who are agents of evil. They can, however, be questioned by insiders who for some reason experience the subaltern or double consciousness, when, for example, their experience does not square with what they are being taught” (194). This disconnect between their experience and the teachings they’d been exposed to within institutionalized religion was in fact one of the primary catalysts for the changes that occurred in Baldock and Lee. While these two activists are not the only ones speaking out on behalf of LGBTQ people within conservative faith discourse communities, I focus on them as case studies in this chapter because they consistently employ strategies I associate with rhetorical empathy.

Research Methodology

Within this chapter I complicate Sharon Crowley’s important work in *Toward a Civil Discourse* in two ways: the first is that I bring into clearer focus the importance of the emotional and personal components of rhetoric as well as the role of motivations, both on a personal and social level in the form of interlocutors’ discursively constructed environments. Secondly, I use rhetorical empathy not only as a way of reading discourses in the site she studies, I employ a research methodology informed by rhetorical empathy, extending her research methods by conducting interviews with my research subjects rather than relying on secondary sources. In addition, my own background within evangelical and fundamentalist discourses enables me, to some degree, to avoid misrepresenting the rhetorical practices and people within the groups in question.

In fairness to Crowley, she herself concedes that she doesn’t know any fundamentalists personally and that her reliance on the scholarship of others *about* this group of people may be a weakness in her inquiry into how progressives and fundamentalists can civilly coexist in a democracy (x). She writes that she sees “few ways around the divide erected by conflicting belief systems, short of conversion, for an outsider who would analyze the discourse of believers. As a result I worry that in many places in this book I am simply returning the favor of misrepresentation” (x). I argue that the personal is vital in discursive engagement; so her lack of embodied, personal knowledge of her subjects, either in the form of research and/or personal relationships, forms a critical omission.

Her research questions are important: “How can outsiders discuss insiders’ beliefs with anything like fairness and accuracy? How can believers converse with unbelievers? And finally, is it possible to persuade people who subscribe to intensely resonant belief systems to adopt different positions?” (ix) However, her last question assumes that it is the task of progressives to persuade conservative Christians that their positions are wrong. A connected epistemology informing research practices and rhetorical invention challenges her (implicit) argument that rhetorical engagement between liberals and fundamentalists should entail progressives “enlightening” fundamentalists about the

backwardness of their positions. More directly, rhetorical empathy entails a personal, embodied way of knowing that has the challenging effect of mitigating such certainty and changing the way rhetors approach audiences as well as the appeals they use to communicate their positions. Foregrounding personal stories and considering both one's own and an audience's motivations involves vulnerability and uncertainty, but it also can result in a more ethical approach to rhetoric that opens avenues of engagement that a (purely) persuasion-based rhetoric would not.

Feminist researchers have argued that getting to know and collaborating with your subjects is an important aspect of research endeavors, despite the challenges involved with such methods (Addison, Brueggemann, Keller, Kirsch, Maynard). The resulting knowledge from such methods involves a connected form of epistemology that can have more fruitful results than a detached, "objective" model of inquiry. While Jane Addams certainly did not consider the residents of the nineteenth ward in Chicago "research subjects," her connection-based, personal epistemology characterizes her work with them and her rhetorical appeals on their behalf. I associate rhetorical empathy with the sorts of connected knowing that feminist researchers have for years identified as beneficial to their own work. Rhetorical empathy, then, functions on a number of levels in this chapter: as a generative heuristic for my research methodology, as an interpretive lens for discourse analysis, and as both a stance and a rhetorical strategy the subjects in this chapter use to engage their audiences.

To approach the question of how rhetorical empathy functions in the site of public sphere discourse on sexuality and conservative Christian rhetoric, I analyze in detail two extended examples of the rhetoric of Baldock and Lee: the first is a blog post on Baldock's website from September 2011 (among over 70) that characterizes her rhetorical strategies. The second is an extended online engagement between Lee and readers of a popular series on the blog of a straight, evangelical Christian writer.

In addition to analyzing their online rhetorical exchanges with anti-gay or questioning evangelical or conservative Christian audiences, I also interviewed both about their rhetorical strategies within these exchanges. I conducted a preliminary interview with Kathy Baldock via Skype in August 2011 and a series of interviews with her at her home in Reno, Nevada, over the course of three days in September 2011. While I was unable for various reasons to spend time with Lee, I conducted a series of online discursive interviews with him in the fall of 2012, and this study also benefitted from generous access to his reflections on his rhetorical strategies in November 2012 in the midst of his speaking engagements with major press and nationally syndicated talk show venues surrounding the release of his first book. The time I was able to spend with Baldock in the environment of her home contributed a great deal to my contextual understanding of her rhetorical strategies and her invention processes. Equally important, getting to know her provided insights on her motivations and her struggles with approaching her audience with empathetic rhetoric, both of which I discuss in detail in this chapter.

Until fairly recently, Baldock has been one of the few self-identified evangelical, straight allies to the gay community who has been willing to publicly advocate for LGBTQ

people within evangelical circles. Her background has served her well in this work: she is a New York City native and was the first female president of the Rutgers Engineering Society in the mid 1970s. After working for two decades as a civil engineer and in her own business, she has since 2006 worked full-time as a gay rights activist, blogger, speaker, and writer. A self-identified White³¹, straight, middle class, evangelical Christian who was raised Roman Catholic, Baldock is quick to point out in terms of her motivations that her daughter and son, both in their mid-twenties, are straight. She has a national voice in groups such as PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) and is a regular featured writer for the online magazine *LGBTQ Nation*. Her blog features her discussion about how her thinking on homosexuality changed from what she calls a “typical” anti-gay rights position based on a fundamentalist worldview to her current position.

Figure 2: Website of straight, evangelical gay rights activist Kathy Baldock (<http://canyonwalkerconnections.com>)

Baldock’s website (*Figure 2*) receives between 30-40,000 hits each month and features approximately 70 of her blog posts from June 2010 through June 2013. Several of her popular blog posts also contain embedded videos of her speaking directly into the camera to her primary audience for the post. The audiences for her site include fellow straight evangelical Christians, Christian leaders questioning their organization’s stance on homosexuality, and LGBTQ Christian adults and youth.

Justin Lee is one of the leading voices attempting to bridge LGBTQ and conservative, evangelical communities. His book *Torn: Rescuing the Gospel from the Gays Vs. Christians*

³¹ This study focuses on White evangelical communities, primarily because the “pray-the-gay-away” rhetoric of groups such as Exodus International on which I focus originates within White, Protestant evangelical communities, although “reparative therapy” efforts to change gay and lesbian-identified people’s sexual orientation are by no means limited to White, evangelical circles. Similar research on the rhetoric of gay rights activists within African American faith communities is needed.

Debate, released in November 2012, has been on *The New York Times* bestseller list, and he directed the documentary “Through My Eyes” (2009) about gay youth in Christian churches. He often functions as the voice of gay Christians on media outlets such as CNN, National Public Radio, and *The New York Times*. His upbringing in the Southern Baptist religious tradition and his coming out as a gay man in his late teens (he’s now 35) played major roles in his ability to speak with credibility to both groups. Rather than leave his faith tradition as many LGBTQ-identified people choose or are forced to do, Lee formed the Gay Christian Network in 2001, a national support network for people in his position: Christians who identify as LGBTQ and do not wish to abandon the benefits they find in their faith. He also acts as an activist presence within evangelical Christian discourse communities, but his activism takes a more subtle form, as does Baldock’s, than the more direct, confrontational forms associated with mainstream gay rights activists, who for multiple reasons want nothing to do with institutional religion.

Figure 3: Justin Lee, featured in the popular evangelical Christian blog series “Ask A Gay Christian” (<http://rachelheldevans.com/ask-a-gay-christian>)

The rhetorical exchange on which I focus for my analysis is his blog post “Ask A Gay Christian,” part of an ongoing series on the website of evangelical Christian Rachel Held Evans (Figure 3). Evans sets a tone on her site and within the “Ask A ...” series that invites civil discursive exchange among her audience of primarily evangelical Christians and guests outside their circle.³² She establishes a normative framework for rhetorical exchanges with the following blurb in her comment section: “**Please remember the point of our interview series is not to debate or challenge, but to ask the sort of**

³² Examples of other guest bloggers who have engaged in discursive question and answer forums in the series include a pagan, Catholic, Mormon, Seventh-day Adventist, feminist, and an atheist.

questions that will help us understand one another better. I'll be monitoring the comment section to make sure the questions are civil and fair" (Held Evans, Paragraph 7). There is no way of knowing how many comments she has deleted from the exchange, but the majority of comments are civil if not explicitly supportive of Lee, even if the poster disagrees with Lee, which I discuss in detail below.

In what follows I highlight Baldock and Lee's rhetoric using the theoretical framework and recursive practices I associate with rhetorical empathy:

- Appealing to the personal within discourse systems: experience and emotions
- Considering motives behind speech acts and actions
- Confronting difference and injustice
- Situating a rhetorical exchange as part of an ongoing process of mutual understanding and (ex)change (including vulnerability and self-critique on the part of the rhetor)

Below are examples of these strategies and practices on which I focus in Baldock and Lee's rhetoric (*Table 1*).

Table 1: Characteristics and Examples of Rhetorical Empathy in Baldock's and Lee's Rhetoric

Strategies	Examples in Baldock and Lee's rhetoric
Experience / Relationships	Coming out narratives as a straight ally and gay Christian
Motives	Avoidance of <i>trigger words</i>
Highlighting Difference	Role reversal scenarios / perspective shifts
Process and Mutual Change	Emphasis on the long view and understanding

I discuss each strategy, emphasizing their recursive, interrelated functions, with examples from the two rhetorical exchanges indicated above and insights from interviews with each research participant.

"I Know Because It Happened to Me": The Use of Testimony and Personal Experience in Evangelical and Coming Out Rhetoric

One of the primary strategies associated with rhetorical empathy are appeals based on personal experience—on stories. Both Baldock and Lee use their own story of coming out, she as a straight, evangelical ally in a conservative church and he as a gay man in his late teens, as a way of connecting with their audiences. In a post on her blog in September 2011 titled "Ten Things I've Learned About Gay People in Ten Years," Baldock makes a move characteristic of her rhetoric: she relates her own story about being certain in her conviction that being gay is a sin based on what she'd been taught in her religious faith. She writes:

In 2001, if you had asked me, “Kathy, can you be gay and Christian?” I would have hedged a bit and fallen on the side of “No.” I did not have any close relationships with gay people nor had I ever studied the issue in the Bible. I did not even know one gay Christian that I knew of. It was from this paradigm that I formulated my opinions about the lives of gay people and made assumptions about their status with God. All that changed when I met Netto on a hiking trail.

During our interviews Baldock referred often to the story of meeting her friend Netto Montoya ten years ago, and she frequently uses this narrative in particular as an emotional, personal appeal to her audience. Her close friendship with Netto, who identifies as lesbian, was pivotal in Baldock’s change from anti-gay to gay rights activist.³³ On the heels of a divorce ten years ago, she describes a crack that began forming in the certainty of the answers provided by her faith for the messiness of life. She’s an avid outdoor person, hiking almost an hour each day in the mountains around her Reno home near Lake Tahoe, and in the midst of her divorce aftermath, she began hiking with Netto. After a year, Baldock explains on her blog that Netto finally felt comfortable coming out to her and sharing more about her life. Up to this point, Baldock considered herself a “generally, open, accepting person,” and was surprised Netto kept her sexual identity to herself considering her identifications with gay identity such as a rainbow ring and bumper sticker on her car.

Baldock relates in a video on her website and in her interviews with me that Netto told her she didn’t come out to her because of negative experiences with Christians in the past; a friend had rejected her after learning she was gay, and, as Netto explained to me in an interview, she had gone to a Catholic school growing up and saw the effects of Christian patriarchy first hand. In addition, her identity as Native American further isolated her as an outsider in mainstream White culture, causing her to feel like she was “the lowest of the low, not wanted by people or God.” In the video Baldock begins to cry when she describes this admission by Netto of how Christians in her life and the institution of the church had made her feel. She determined to be different and began to question a theological and cultural belief system within conservative Christianity that would marginalize an entire group of people.

The first evening of my visit to her home, I met Kathy’s most recent houseguest, a White, gay man in a black turtleneck and jeans with greying hair, small round glasses, and a weary look. He had been staying with her for several weeks, recovering from a recent break up with his partner. The three of us had dinner on her deck that evening, and during a pause in the conversation Kathy looked at the two of us and said, “I think all my straight friends have abandoned me. It seems like all my friends now are gay.” Not that she’s upset at having gay friends; she says it’s made her “a more interesting person,” but she spoke often during the three days I interviewed her about how much her relationships

³³ Baldock does not refer to herself as an activist. She steers away from using the terms “social justice,” “activist” and especially “gay rights activist” in her rhetoric because these terms are coded as “liberal” and often “anti-religious” among conservative Christians. Rather she chooses to use words that will appeal to her audience: “mom,” “friend,” and Biblically-coded rhetoric such as “seeker of justice.”

have changed over the past several years and about the costs of her choices to take a stand for gay rights in a conservative environment. She's lost lifelong friendships and has ended serious relationships because of her advocacy work. She gets passionate when she talks about her gay friends; she gets equally sad when she talks about her straight, conservative Christian friends of many years who no longer associate with her. She says her experience of being rejected by her straight friends has made her more empathetic toward the experiences of LGBTQ people who come out and are rejected by their friends and family, though she's careful to qualify that her experiences are not the same.

Baldock has changed by getting to know—and love—the people who have been vilified within religious right discourse, and her pragmatic, experience-based epistemology informs her rhetorical practices. She often uses stories about her relationships with her gay friends to recast and resist commonplace constructions of LGBTQ people within conservative Christian belief systems. She discusses in her blog post how her friendship with Netto changed her own beliefs and the stereotypes she had of gay people before she actually knew any of them: “I had been warned by my heterosexual religious culture that gay people had erotic love, and not deep, committed, monogamous love. However, the relationships I witnessed as I engaged socially in the gay community with Netto were not distortions; I saw authentic relationships” (Baldock, “Ten Things”).

She points her audience to stories like Netto's and others among the hundreds of LGBTQ people she now calls friends rather than arguing with her audience and focusing on logical appeals. She avoids, for example, extended arguments about what are known among LGBTQ people as the “clobber” verses in the Christian Scriptures, condemnations of same gender sex acts in the Old and New Testaments³⁴ and so called because they have been used consistently against gay people in anti-gay, religious discourse:

I am quite strong in discussing these sections of Scripture, yet I encourage readers to go through the process I went through. Believing what others told me caused me to consider gay people as “less than” in God's eyes for three decades of my adulthood [...] Until I met gay Christians and did the work myself, I was exactly like the silently judging majority of the church. I read the verses used to investigate same-sex attractions as stand-alone verses out of context and with the English translations of words... Ten

³⁴ The most commonly cited passages in the Christian Scriptures condemning gay people are **Genesis 19:1-5**: the story of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah; **Leviticus 18:22**: “Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind; it is abomination”; **I Corinthians 6:9-10**: “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God”; **I Timothy 1:9-10**: “Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine”; and **Romans 1:26-27**: “For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.” (Boswell 91-117)

years of experience show that people rarely study the verses without prejudice until interaction with a gay, lesbian or bisexual person challenges their theology. When I could not reconcile the lives I *could* see with the words I thought I understood, *then* I did the work. (Baldock, “Ten Things”)

Baldock constructs a salvation narrative of coming out as an ally based on her personal experience of knowing gay and lesbian people. She creates a discursive model of someone who is religiously devout and inclusive of LGBTQ people, a model which until relatively recently was virtually unheard of in the conservative evangelical world she inhabits. Both Baldock’s and Lee’s conversion from anti-gay to gay rights advocate has resonances of evangelical salvation narratives: “I once was blind but now I see” epiphanies centered on twenty-first century human rights struggles. Anti-gay commenters on Baldock’s site frequently object to her use of personal experience to explain her change on gay rights. They point out that experiences alone (even good or life changing ones as she describes having with LGBTQ Christians) do not negate the traditional teachings of the Christian scriptures and that (conservative) theology trumps experience and emotion. However, personal experience and testimony in evangelical life have been valued since John Wesley and the Second Great Awakening in mid-nineteenth century U.S. religious experience. In her *College Composition and Communication* article “Enacting Faith: Evangelical Discourse and the Discipline of Composition Studies” (2001), Lizabeth A. Rand points to the value of personal salvation narratives for identity formation within Christian communities to many students. Appeals based on personal experience form a crucial element in rhetorical appeals to conservative Christian audiences because of their resonance with salvation narratives. Such strategies also point to Crowley’s argument that appeals based on logic seldom have an impact within conservative Christian discourse.

Like Baldock, Justin Lee emphasizes his own experience as a former, well-meaning, anti-gay Christian to help disarm his audiences who hold the same views. By extending empathy to his audience rather than judging them and by avoiding theoretical, scriptural arguments, he places the focus on personal experience and creates an empathetic response from his audience in turn. In an interview for this project he described his philosophy and rhetorical strategy of disarming audiences through the use of his own story:

It's funny to me to hear people talk about my approach as initially "disarming" folks. I never think about it that way, though I suppose it's true. I think of it more in terms of building relationships. We don't trust the advice of salespeople nearly as much as we trust the advice of our friends. But you can't fake a relationship just to change someone's mind; you have to be sincere. So how do you open the door for a sincere relationship when you're speaking to a large audience at once and only have a short amount of time? I think the best way is to be willing to make yourself personally vulnerable. So that's what I do. Instead of attacking people for all the ways

we disagree, I simply share my story and talk about the challenges, pain, and joy I've experienced, and the questions and struggles that still face me. Jesus was a model for the fact that there's strength in vulnerability. And rhetorically speaking, someone who bares their soul and talks about the difficult, shameful, or challenging parts of their life is far more compelling than the activist who assumes a posture of confidence and strength and tries to tell you why you're wrong about everything you believe. So my approach is to be vulnerable and let people get to know me for who I am, not who they might have imagined me to be. Once we see each other as fellow human beings and not as stand-ins for sides in a culture war, we can begin the conversation about how we disagree and why. (Email interview)

In his online post “Ask A Gay Christian,” Lee emphasizes his experience as a devout evangelical who once doubted whether identifying as both gay and religious was possible. In a move that characterizes his rhetorical exchanges, he identifies with his audience made up primarily of fellow evangelical Christians by establishing his credibility as “one of them”:

I grew up in a loving Christian home, accepted Christ at a young age, attended a Southern Baptist church, and generally had a pretty awesome upbringing. From the time I was young, Jesus Christ was—and continues to be—#1 in my life. My relationship with Him was life-giving in every sense of the word, and that’s why I considered it so important to live out my faith. I got the nickname “God Boy” in high school because I was the Bible-toting goody two-shoes Christian who didn’t smoke, drink, curse, have sex, or shut up about God! (Lee, “Ask”)

After constructing himself as the kind of evangelical Christian that even the most devout person in the audience would respect, and by setting himself up as a stereotype using humor and disarming his audience, he goes on to explain his views on homosexuality before he realized he was gay in his late teens:

My view of homosexuality was this: God created male and female for each other. Our bodies were designed to fit together in that way, and the Bible made it clear that while sexuality was a gift from God, using our sexuality in ways that were outside of God’s design for it was a sin—whether that meant premarital sex, adultery, or homosexuality. My pro-gay friends called me a “homophobe” for this view, but I didn’t hate or fear gay people; I simply believed that they were making a sinful choice with their lives, and that by speaking out in a loving way, I could call their attention to it and help bring them back to God. (Lee, “Ask”)

I’ll discuss this passage further below, but here I want to focus on his way of enacting rhetorical empathy by weaving together his personal narrative and his identification with his audience: by constructing his story as one that involved someone who was (and more importantly, is) genuine in his religious faith and who honestly believed he was doing the

morally right thing by standing up for his beliefs in rejecting homosexuality, he disarms his audience. Like him, in their minds they're not "haters" or "homophobes" but are doing what they believe to be morally required of them by their faith. He carefully creates a story that draws his audience in rather than alienating them, and in the process he attempts to build his credibility by focusing on his identity as a fellow believer rather than whatever stereotypes his audience may have of people who identify as LGBTQ.

After establishing his credibility and constructing fellow believers who disagree with him as devout with good motives rather than homophobes who hate gay people, he turns a rhetorical corner and constructs himself as 1) devout 2) having good motives and 3) sincerely wrong about homosexuality when he admitted to himself he was attracted to men:

I, of course, wasn't gay. At least, that's what I thought. But I did have a secret I was going to take to my grave. Like other guys my age, when I'd hit puberty, I had begun to experience sexual attractions. No surprise there. But one thing was different: while all of my guy friends were starting to notice girls for the first time, I was starting to notice guys. At first, I didn't worry about it. I figured this was just part of the process and that my attractions would eventually switch to girls. But they didn't. Instead, the feelings just kept getting stronger and stronger. Even if I could make it through the school day without thinking about guys, I'd go to bed at night and dream about guys. I'd wake up each morning feeling dirty and disgusted with myself. As you might expect, I was *horrified* by this. I couldn't tell anyone, and I didn't know what was wrong with me. It got to the point that I was crying myself to sleep, night after night, begging God to take away these feelings. It wasn't until I was 18 (and dating a beautiful girl I had no attraction to whatsoever) that I finally realized there was a word for people like me: "gay." (Lee, "Ask")

Lee performs rhetorical empathy with his audience on a number of levels. He foregrounds his body and the ways he's different from his audience in terms of his sexuality, building on and juxtaposing the identifications he establishes through the use of narrative. He elicits an emotional response to his experience of realizing his identity as a gay man directly contradicted the teachings of the church he'd been exposed to since birth. Finally, emphasizing that he tried to fight his feelings, he identifies with the evangelical tenet that homosexuality should be resisted regardless of its origins—genetic, environmental, or otherwise.

He ends his narrative by inviting his audience to identify with him further: imagine, he implicitly asks, if you were trying to fight something you'd been taught was wrong and your religious community rejects you for doing so. His narrative constructs a no-win situation for LGBT people within the conservative church:

As I turned to my church and the Christians I respected most to get their support, things only got worse. Christian groups kicked me out or turned their backs on me when they learned I was gay, even though I told them I didn't want to be and that I hadn't even acted on my feelings! I learned that that one magic word, "gay," had the power to make Christians turn unkind and uncompassionate without even realizing they were doing it. (Lee, "Ask")

He invites his audience to listen to his story as both similar and different from their own: they all have struggles, he implies: What if they were rejected for doing what they thought was the right thing? How have they done the very same thing to LGBT people they know, even though they may have thought they were acting morally at the time? He performs rhetorical empathy by sharing his story, identifying with his audience, and assuming good motives for them, and he solicits empathy from them in turn by appealing to his credibility as a fellow believer and their emotions as they realize he was unfairly stigmatized by people who espouse loving even one's enemies yet couldn't love their own.

Like Baldock, he relates how he struggled with the Biblical passages used to condemn homosexuality. In doing so he acknowledges the commonplace that dominates his audience's thinking—that the Bible condemns homosexual practices. Rather than debating the Biblical verses with his interlocutors, his strategy is to emphasize that he cannot change, and he then uses emotional appeals by inviting his audience to imagine what it would be like to have to live without their spouse or love for the rest of their lives:

All of these [Biblical passages against homosexuality] address sexual behavior, so when I first realized I was gay, none of them seemed relevant to me. I was attracted to the same sex, but I wasn't sexually active and I didn't have any plans to be. My plan was just to find a way to become straight so that I could be attracted to a woman and get married. Once I discovered that it was unlikely I would ever become attracted to women, I realized with despair that this meant I would have to be celibate and alone for the rest of my life. I was willing to do it if that was God's call for me, but the idea of being alone my whole life was a scary, sobering thought. Some people deal well with that; I'm not one of those people. (Lee, "Ask")

During this narrative he goes from being a devout evangelical believer (like his audience), to realizing he is gay and being rejected by his church (soliciting his audience's emotions), to becoming an advocate for justice and working toward full equality for LGBTQ people in the conservative church.

When I asked him to talk about his strategy of identifying with his audience through the use of stories and personal appeals, he discussed his motivations and the responses he often gets from such an approach:

Overall, I find that it's usually really successful at changing the tone of the conversation and getting people to think more deeply, which is what I really care about. There are always some folks who only want a debate, and some who seem to ignore the content of my response and only focus on their pre-conceived image of me, but I find that most people respond really well. I frequently hear from people who tell me that a conversation we had months or even years earlier was instrumental in helping them rethink the issues and grow closer to an LGBTQ family member or friend. (Email interview)

Because of his rhetorical strategy—his use of stories, his tone and attitude toward his audience, and his avoidance of “trigger words”—it’s difficult to imagine Lee in an antagonistic exchange with an anti-gay, conservative Christian. His strategy would be to walk away from such exchanges, and no such examples exist on the “Ask A Gay Christian” exchange.

To Pull or Not to Pull the *Trigger Words*: Affectionate Interpretation, Motives and Rhetorical Empathy

While we cannot possibly know or understand our own motives much of the time, let alone those of others, we can, by using an epistemological lens of rhetorical empathy, choose to have what Jane Addams called an “affectionate interpretation” of someone’s intentions. Often this lens and choice to use the *topos* of rhetorical empathy hinges on our own experience, as Jennifer Gerarda Brown discusses in “Peacemaking in the Culture War Between Gay Rights and Religious Liberty” (2010). Brown argues for the value of considering motives and the Other’s point of view within the process of mediation. She highlights the role of mediation in cases involving (perceived and real) clashes between gay rights and religious liberties in lieu of litigation, which often has no long-term winners, just as with much of the discourse that occurs around this subject. She points to psychological theories such as attribution error to explain why polarization occurs over what are perceived as moral issues:

While we usually assume that people can control their own dispositional characteristics, situational characteristics stem from conditions that are not chosen and give rise to “consequences . . . beyond the actor’s control.” Thus, in many negative situations, a person who has suffered harm makes an interpretive choice: will she see the harm as (1) the result of qualities, characteristics, and choices within another person’s control, (2) the unintended consequence of factors beyond another person’s control, or (3) some combination of the two? This interpretive choice has a significant effect on the conflict because it can so directly affect emotions. Russell Korobkin observes that “feelings of being disrespected, demeaned, or otherwise treated unfairly,” that would so naturally arise from tangible harm within someone else’s control, would be far less likely to flow from harm that appears “beyond the harmdoer’s control” (781).

The lack of agency within the dispositional and situational characteristics she describes is what we would think of as Foucault's discourse or Bourdieu's *habitus*—the discursive and material conditions under which our identities are formed. The rhetoric of the two subjects in this chapter points to the importance of being able to see the lack of agency within someone's actions and words despite the fact that those words and actions may be highly injurious, immoral, and worth condemnation. This lens of empathy is a choice that I argue is within the ability of those in non-dominant subject positions to make, despite an otherwise lack of agency and power within various discursive situations in everyday life and in larger institutional and cultural contexts. What I'm interested in is what occurs within the subject's rhetorical projection of self as a result of such a choice in what Arabella Lyon calls the everyday acts of deliberative rhetoric (*Deliberative*), as well as what occurs within a rhetorical exchange among the other actors/subjects in the exchange.

The issue of identity is intricately interwoven into motives and identification to the degree that even engaging with the "other side" can be perceived as a foundational threat to self- and group-identity in some cases, as Brown discusses:

When a conflict implicates issues of identity . . . there may be a greater tendency towards framing issues in moral terms. . . . [O]nce a dispute is framed in moral terms, identity is often defined in opposition to "the other." Thus, identity and moral indignation fall into a reinforcing loop. Making a concession—even in the form of entering into a negotiation—may be seen not only as a moral concession, but even as a potential threat to one's identity. (794)

This threat to identity is often apparent in the discourse surrounding gay rights and religious liberties. If, for example, someone on the side of LGBTQ equality uses a term like homophobe, bigot, or hater, such a move may immediately cut off any chance of engagement with someone invested in protecting what they see as tradition and standing up for the tenets of his or her faith. Brown points to the importance of mediation—which I'm extending to rhetorical exchanges involving rhetorical empathy—in separating identity or character and the tangible circumstances and material interests of specific rhetorical situations:

One of the hallmarks of mediation is that, when it is done well, it challenges parties in conflict to get behind and beyond labels like "bigot" and unpack phrases like "homosexual agenda." The rhetorical devices that some activists on both sides use to stir the ground troops may be absorbed and internalized by individuals who find themselves in actual, concrete conflicts—but those rhetorical devices are often singularly unhelpful in actually resolving the conflicts. Mediation can help the parties acknowledge "the degree to which material and tangible interests (as opposed to 'morality' or character) are determining the behavior of both sides." (798)

Both Baldock and Lee avoid attacking the character of their audience and alienating them by avoiding the use of trigger words. During tense exchanges they often attempt to diffuse anti-gay rhetoric with humor and deflection rather than confrontation. Baldock attempts to break the anti- / pro-gay binary and offers her own experience to her audience in her “Ten Things” post. She stresses the need for straight Christians to get to know gay people and that her experience cannot serve as a replacement for their own experiential knowledge. She also uses her experiential knowledge of her audience to create a connection and build trust so they’ll listen to her:

People who do not understand the views of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people are not all bigots; and people who are fully affirming in their support of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people are not all heretics. This conversation often is relegated to love and hate, right and wrong, but there is a wide expanse between the two sides. And that middle group is, for the most part, silent. You are the ones to whom I am offering these insights, from experience, knowledge, study, relationship and with a genuine interest in engaging the too often silent middle. (Baldock, “Ten Things”)

In our interviews she pointed out that this topic often brings out the worst in people but that she’s appealing to the best in them. Instead of reinforcing the discursive constructions of *bigot* or *hater* to describe people who believe homosexuality is immoral for religious reasons, she imagines and addresses her audience as people with good motives but who have been immersed in the discourse of conservative Christianity regarding gay people. She appeals to them to listen to stories that fall outside their experience and to use a different lens to examine the experiences that have formed their views and beliefs thus far. Because of her own experience she can identify with her audience’s motivations—their fear at doubting a deeply held belief, and also, notably, what she reads as their/her desire to treat people fairly. This identification affects how she invents arguments: her decision to respond with patience is in itself a form of empathy extended to her audience.

In an interview she shared an example of someone she called a “good person” who is associated with an anti-gay church in her community (she is married to the pastor). The woman saw Baldock at a church event and told her that she had read her blog and watched the video on her website describing her friendship with Netto: “She said, ‘You’ve verbalized everything I feel inside and I just didn’t know how to express. You’re saying everything I want to say; I just didn’t know other people were saying this. I watched your video over and over and couldn’t stop crying.’” Baldock describes her role as giving voice to conservative Christians who are moved and persuaded by gay rights discourse but have no language or role models to use in their own efforts to “come out” as an ally in their churches and communities:

Good people have these thoughts and don’t have any role models. When I started this work I had absolutely no role model; in 2006 no straight people were standing up for gay rights in the evangelical community. I’m

entrenched in it. If you see my website and I look just like you and I'm just another person, you might be able to identify with me. I want to talk to the middle group—not those already persuaded or those who have no desire to dialogue or listen—who were just like me: I wouldn't consciously say something mean about someone or hate anyone. (Personal interview)

Her strategy of using language that assumes good motives of her audience is also evident in a story she shares in her “Ten Things I’ve Learned About Gay People” blog post about a gay teenager who contacted her for support. I quote it here in its entirety and will parse out her strategy as it relates to the motives of her audience:

The loudest message the gay community hears from Christians is one of intolerance and hatred. Imagine the sadness when a darling young lesbian pleads with me for an answer. “*Why does God hate me?*” What would you say to her? If she really wanted an answer, what *would* you say? Very few would tell her that God hates her, yet this is the dominant message. Some would tell her she needs to change her sexual orientation for God to have a relationship with her.

The reality is that most of us know something is wrong with both of those messages. Most of us believe that God loves unconditionally and half of us already believe sexual orientation is not changeable. We may not understand the issue well enough to verbalize anything, so we stay silent. Ten years ago, I too was in that spot, not at all unkind to the gay community, just doing my Christian thing in my Christian heterosexual world. I had ceded my “kinder” voice to those who stand on street corners and in pulpits and passionately preach “homosexuality is an abomination.” *This* is the minority voice that is heard by the gay community.

In this passage she turns the trigger word *hate* into something her audience would immediately eschew—“Of course we don’t hate gay people...”—but then equates the insistence that LGBTQ people must be straight with making them feel like they cannot possibly be part of the church. Straight evangelicals have, in other words, created a no-win situation for their gay family members and congregants: act straight or you are not welcome. In a very generous read of her audience which she projects from her prior self and her own experience, she argues that such a message may not be what her audience intends but that it’s what LGBTQ people hear.

Whether her audience actually has such a generous stance is impossible to know; more than likely, based on the comments of many of those who post on her blog we could conclude that they do not. However, she chooses to see “the great middle” in this argument as moving toward greater inclusion of gay people into the life of the conservative church. This move allows her to connect with those who may for a number of reasons be open to the idea that the conservative church may be wrong on this issue.

Baldock positions herself as a model of a new kind of rhetoric in the evangelical world that constructs LGBTQ people as equal. By using such a revolutionary term (in conservative Christian discourse) as *gay Christian*, she is part of shifting the discourse and therefore the reality—however slowly—within the most anti-gay parts of U.S. culture. She is able to offer grace and extend the attribution of good motives to her audience because, as she writes, she was “one of them” not that long ago. At the same time, she is able to identify with her LGBTQ friends not because she is or was “one of them,” but because she has listened to their stories and gone through the difficult process of questioning discrepancies between church teaching and interpretations of the Bible and the real lives of LGBTQ people.

Like Baldock, Justin Lee extends compassion toward his audience of evangelicals. His empathetic approach may have even greater rhetorical significance because of his own positioning as someone who in his very body represents the gay scapegoat killed figuratively by conservative elements of the Christian church (and indirectly and literally in the form of suicides and homophobia-inspired hate crimes such as that of Matthew Shephard). He also avoids using the ultimate insulting words to evangelical Christians where homosexuality is concerned—bigots and haters—the topic of which formed one of the questions in the “Ask a Gay Christian” exchange, which I quote here in its entirety:

From Karl: Is it possible in your view for someone to disagree with you - to believe that the Bible consistently teaches sexual activity is intended for heterosexual marriage only - and for that person to not be a bigot, homophobe, motivated by ignorance or fear?

Justin: Absolutely! Some of my best friends disagree with me on this issue. I recognize that we are all fallible human beings, which means that either (or both) of us could be wrong, but that doesn't mean we aren't sincerely trying to seek the truth. There are bigots who use religious language to justify their hatred, but that doesn't mean that anyone who has a view I disagree with is a bigot. There are also many compassionate, loving Christians who sincerely want to be able to give their blessing to their gay friends' relationships but are unable to because they believe the Bible forbids those relationships. I absolutely respect that.

The same is true on the other side...I am sincerely seeking to do God's will with all my heart. If I am wrong, I am sincerely wrong. I'm not just looking for excuses. All of us, on both sides, need to be willing to assume good motives for those we disagree with. We don't have to agree with each other to make a genuine attempt to understand each other. (Lee, “Ask”)

By assuming good motives of his audience and those who disagree with him (though whether or not his audience has such motives is up for debate) Lee opens up a rare

discursive space among LGBTQ people and conservative Christians. By conceding that conservative Christians who disagree with him may have good motives behind their stance against homosexuality, he implicitly makes the point that he should be given the same respect and treatment in return. When I asked about his strategy in the exchange above with Karl, Lee described his approach of choosing to focus on motives behind the words of those he disagrees with in an attempt to build goodwill and foster listening:

A big part of my strategy is putting myself in the other person's shoes. If I'm going to do that, I need to respond to them in a way that's consistent with their (usually good) intentions rather than demonizing them based on the negative results of their actions. If I start out by labeling them a "homophobe" or "bigot," I've lost any chance to build a meaningful relationship. On the other hand, if I can acknowledge that Karl has only the best of intentions, we can begin to listen to one another, and I can gently help him understand ways that the result of his words/actions may not be what he intends. Another way of putting it is that I look for the best in people, assume their motives are good, and respect their views even when they differ from mine, focusing on what is most important and agreeing to disagree on the rest. My motto is that everyone is the protagonist of their own story, and I try to treat them accordingly.

Overall, the results I've seen are tremendous. People often tell me—as with the Rachel Held Evans post—that I've said things they've never heard before, even though the things I'm saying have been said many other times by many other people. So even though I'm far from the first to say these things, I've said them in a way that enabled the other person to truly *hear* what was being said, and that's always encouraging. (Email interview)

His ability to connect with conservative Christians on the issue of gay identity and ethics and to bypass the commonplaces of conservative Scriptural arguments is demonstrated by a representative sampling of the comments on the “Ask a Gay Christian” exchange from a poster identifying as “Bobby”:

You, Justin, are perhaps one of the most mature people I've ever met. Wow. I'm blown away, really. I've never read anything from either side of this issue that is as mature, reflective, or nuanced as yours. You, sir, are the kind of person that needs to be doing the talking on the TV networks and magazine stories. I, like many others here I'm sure, am still undecided. Decided on trying to follow Christ on this issue and practicing general kindness, but undecided as I keep thinking I get all the arguments, but then meeting or hearing from someone (such as yourself) who blows everything up.

You've given me a lot to think about, and I wish I could meet you in person. Oh, and Rachel...as a Calvinist leaning conservative, this whole

series has been phenomenal. You are to be commended, as I know of no others (in my “camp” or not, so to speak) who would do something like this. Very insightful and cool. (Lee, “Ask”)

This poster’s comments highlight the fact that Justin’s rhetorical strategies and presence on this online space have opened up spaces that seem impossible or at the least are rare. Interestingly, this rhetorical exchange took place in an online space, where outside of a photo of Lee and possibly a thumbnail of the numerous posters, no one is physically present. Often such rhetorical conditions become environments in which people feel comfortable being a far worse version of themselves than they may be in person. The disembodied nature of this exchange may actually have facilitated its civil nature in that the words and language become the focus rather than Lee’s (gay) body.

“How Would It Feel To You?”: Personal Appeals for Justice

One of the most important characteristics I associate with rhetorical empathy is the opening that it creates to highlight power differentials and injustice. Up to this point I’ve focused on the ways rhetorical empathy helps create connections and facilitates understanding between rhetors: rhetorical empathy involves thinking and language moves in the vein of Spivak’s strategic essentialism that attempt to gain an opening for an exchange rather than creating or perpetuating rhetorical impasse and polarization.

Once a connection has been established based on some sort of goodwill, common cause, or point of identity, an opportunity for advocacy arises. Such openings are *kairotic*, shifting, and guarantee no change in any party involved. However, my point is that these opportunities exist precisely because other facets of rhetorical empathy are in play in some fashion: a personal, emotion-based connection between individuals, appeals based on personal experience, and the assumption of good motives and goodwill even toward one’s enemies.

Baldock, for example, in the “Ten Things” post, asks her audience to consider the injustice of asking anyone to live without the potential of companionship in the form of an intimate partnership of the sort we call marriage:

Gay people exist, gay Christian kids exist...and they are in your churches. In most churches, we give them two options: “stay and hide” or “get out.” For gay youth, this is the message: “Sex is only appropriate inside marriage. However, you gay kids, it is *never* appropriate for you. God has called you to a life of celibacy, forever.” Do you remember being a teenager or a twenty-something? The sexual drive is strong. Most churches do not give gay youth a “wait until” time and they take away all hope of normal relationship and family. They effectively trapped this kid. He cannot be gay, he cannot be holy, he’ll always be alone, he is broken. The most common reactions will be either: internalized shame with a reaction of rebellion or depression; or he or she will walk away, never able

to please you, and rebel against all the hopeless and impossible teachings on sexual morality.

She focuses on the warrants of her audience, one of the most salient of which is that gay acts and identity of any sort are moral sins. She makes the strategic argument for this audience that being lesbian or gay is inborn. Then, like Lee, she appeals to her audience's sense of fairness and their own experience of having a partner to argue that it is immoral to require people to be alone in order to be accepted by their church and family. Finally, in this post she argues that trying to change people into the heterosexual norm in terms of sexual or gender expression results in harm and is itself immoral:

Reparative therapy (Exodus-type programs that offer results that take away "unwanted sexual attractions" or allude to a gay-to-straight conversion) treats homosexuality as if it were a "behavior" akin to other life choices like drug and alcohol usage, adultery, cheating and lying. You would expect that the elimination of bad behaviors would result in life benefits. However, if you force a gay person to "*not be gay*," loneliness, depression, isolation and shame can result. The rejection or insistence on change is destructive. Statistics on gay youth prove this. Gay youth, unaccepted by family, are:

- eight times more apt to attempt suicide than those who are accepted
- six times more susceptible to depression than those who are accepted
- three times more likely to get involved in drug and alcohol abuse than gay youth that are accepted
- three times more likely to contract HIV/AIDS and STD's than gay youth that are accepted (Baldock, "Ten Things")

Lee makes similar rhetorical moves in pointing out the destruction the conservative church has wrought on LGBTQ people:

Straight guys, do you remember what it was like to be 16 years old with raging hormones, completely unable to get your mind off of girls no matter what you did? Well, that was my life too, except it was my male classmates who made my hormones go wild, not my female classmates... When a young man is gay, the message he gets isn't to wait until the right time; it's that there will never be a right time. Not only that; he's told that his sex drive itself—not even lust but just the temptation he feels—is a horrible sin, something that may condemn him to hell even if he never acts on it.

Kids who hear these messages feel trapped. They've been made to feel that they're condemned even if they follow all the rules, and many grow to hate themselves. What often happens, then, is one of two things. Either they internalize the shame and become depressed and withdrawn, or they rebel

against the shame, coming out and in many cases making their sexuality the core of their identity for a while. (Lee, “Ask”)

In both examples, Baldock and Lee appeal to the values of their audience: religious devotion and adherence to (their understanding of) orthodox Biblical teaching on sexuality. They also appeal to their audience’s compassion and sense of basic fairness, hoping that these emotional responses will outweigh their adherence to what they’ve been taught. Ultimately both Baldock and Lee argue in these posts that personal experience and investment will be what causes a shift in understanding on this issue, not logical arguments or even appeals to compassion, and they make clear that shifts in understanding occur over time and are a process. Such a long view of difference—attempting mutual understanding rather than immediate persuasion or change—forms another important aspect of rhetorical empathy to which I now turn.

Changing the Subject: Rhetoric as “Becoming”

As it plays out in the strategies of Baldock and Lee, rhetorical empathy leaves open the possibility for further engagement. Both attempt to avoid shutting down conversations or using trigger words that alienate their audience. They position themselves as part of a larger, ongoing conversation about how two polarized groups can come together and change one another. They both stress that engagement with a topic as difficult as the intersection of sexuality/gender and religion is a process, not a static “belief” that occurs overnight or changes suddenly. In her “Ten Things” post, Baldock writes that “I intentionally inserted a time line to show the decade it took to come to these ten insights. On *every one of these points*, I either did not care or believed the contrary position.”

Lee writes that he “wrestled for a very long time” with the question of what to do with the six passages in the Bible that deal with same-sex issues and with how he’d been taught to view homosexuality within his church and cultural context. At the end of his post he invites his audience to “stay in conversation even though we don’t all agree.” His emphasis centers on the process of learning and understanding, grounded in stories, rather than on bringing people to the point where he may be at in his own activism, as he described in an interview:

I don't think it's realistic for me to instantly change their minds on every point where we might disagree, even if I might like to. So I focus on whatever I think is most pressing. In many cases, I find that the biggest issue is a simple lack of understanding, and that it is this basic lack of understanding of LGBTQ people's lives that underlies a lot of the conflict we see on these issues. My goal, then, is to increase that understanding.

Some LGBTQ advocates want to go in with rhetorical guns blazing and require people to be ready to accept the whole package of things they believe in—civil marriage equality, church marriage equality, a different reading of the Bible, abandonment of the gender binary, and whatever

else—when these folks are still trying to wrap their minds around the idea that some people are attracted to the same sex.

I know that some of those advocates would see some elements of my language and approach as an unacceptable "compromise," but to me, it's just the simple acknowledgement that people have to learn to crawl before they can walk. If I can convince someone not to kick their son out of the house or stop pushing him into ex-gay therapy, I've accomplished something, even if this person still goes to the polls and votes against marriage equality. (Email interview)

Lee's focus on rhetoric as a process of becoming rather than a one-way monologue intended to persuade a monolithic, stereotyped audience complicates the "us" and "them" binary of gay rights / religious discourse.

Positioning an audience as part of a spectrum rather than monolithic, as individuals with contexts and motivations important to their position, and as people who are in the process of becoming, offers potential for rhetorical engagement that goes beyond the idea of civil discourse—although civil discourse is a good starting point. The examples in this study suggest that possibilities exist for engaging with people whom Crowley would characterize as fundamentalists but who are willing to listen and consider other viewpoints. Rhetorical empathy entails treating such individuals as real people with stories and motivations of their own rather than responding with patronization and anger or relying on logical arguments to refute stereotypes and ignorance.

In the final chapter I examine a final site of difference—constructions of race within online social networks—and how a non-dominant group uses aspects of rhetorical empathy to resist racist stereotypes.

Chapter 5:

“The Real @Oxford Asians”: Rhetorical Empathy and Constructions of Race

Aliens, outsiders who are inside, disrupt the internal structure of a cultural formation as it defines itself vis-à-vis the Other; their presence constitutes a boundary crisis.

—Robert G. Lee, *Orientalism: Asian Americans in Popular Culture* (1999)

The students of the Asian American Association have taken it upon themselves to begin a campaign that humanizes Asian-Americans in order to show...bias-motivated beliefs and tweets have a real impact on real students.

—Response of students in Miami University’s Asian American Association to a racist Twitter account, @Oxford Asians

In this chapter I take up the issue of how rhetorical empathy functions in an incident involving constructions of race in multimodal, online discourse. I examine how students in the Asian American Association (AAA) at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, responded to a Twitter account called “@Oxford Asians,” created in September 2012 by a senior at the university, a White male fraternity member and, ironically, a strategic marketing major.³⁵

That the student used social media to vent his anxieties about race and difference at the university is highly significant, as is the fact that students in the AAA chose to respond to the Twitter feed by using social media. In my analysis of how rhetorical empathy functions in the students’ response, I take into account the material conditions surrounding the creation and circulation of the discourse, including the changing demographics at the university and the use of social media and visual rhetoric in the construction and circulation of what it means to be “Asian,” both in a local context and within larger cultural contexts in the U.S. (Nakamura).

In *The Available Means of Persuasion: Mapping a Theory and Pedagogy of Multimodal Public Rhetoric*, Sheridan, Ridolfo, and Michel point out that rhetoric within networked, multimodal environments involves a complex web that expands the traditional notion of a single rhetor addressing an audience: “Rhetorical action is no longer the result of a

³⁵ In keeping with the rhetorical and ethical choice of the Asian American Association in their response to the @Oxford Asians Twitter account, I choose to not use the name of the student even though his identity was disclosed (and confirmed by the student himself) in a news story run by a local news venue in Oxford, Ohio, the online paper *Oxford Townie* (Krause, “Miami Student”).

rational, autonomous subject who achieves a desired result by strategically adopting the right rhetorical techniques. Instead, it's the uncertain outcome of a web of contingencies, many of which are beyond the control of a single rhetor" (xxvii). I consider the web of contingencies involved in the circulation of the @OxfordAsians Twitter account and the response by the AAA students, and the affordances and constraints of social media in the construction and distribution of the rhetoric comprising the "Oxford Asians" incident.

Creation and Circulation of the @Oxford Asians Twitter Feed

On February 21, 2013, a graduate student in English became one of the hundreds of students at Miami University (and beyond) who were exposed to the @Oxford Asians Twitter feed. She reported the site to her professors in the department and to university officials. The *Oxford Townie* learned of the incident and ran a story a few days later, identifying the student responsible. In an interview with the *Oxford Townie* reporter, the student admitted to creating the Twitter feed and closed the account after being identified, but the *Oxford Townie* published a screen capture (*Figure 4*) before the account was no longer available (Krause, "Miami Student").

Figure 4: Screen capture of the original @Oxford Asians Twitter feed, from the *Oxford Townie*, in low resolution because the account is no longer available (Krause, "Miami Student")

Tweets from the account, a total of 40 in a six-month period between September 2012 and May 2013, currently are posted on the search engine Topsy ("@oxfordasians"). The tweets include references to racist stereotypes of Asians and Asian Americans, several representative examples of which are below (*Figure 5*).

Figure 5: Tweets from the @OxfordAsians Twitter feed

Members of the executive board of the student-run Asian American Association met shortly thereafter to decide on a response to the incident and to the larger issue of racism at the university the incident represented, and to call for a response from the university upper administration. The next day they posted a call on their Facebook page for their members who wished to participate to gather over the next two days to film a visual response directly addressing the racist tweets. Three days later the association posted their response on a blog site called “The Real Oxford Asians” (*Figure 6*).

Figure 6: “The Real @Oxford Asians,” a multimodal response to the @OxfordAsians Twitter feed created by the Asian American Association at Miami University (Park and Andracki)

The site consists of both verbal and visual responses resisting the racial constructions in the @OxfordAsians site: an 1100-word written response, written by graduate students Suey Park and Thaddeus Andracki (*Figure 7 and included as Appendix A*), and a series of photos of Asian American students and other student allies on campus.

Figure 7: The Real @Oxford Asians blog site, with a rotating photo slideshow and a written response to the @OxfordAsians site immediately below it.

Their visual response consists of a rotating photo slideshow of 17 Asian, Asian American, and allied students holding signs directly refuting the stereotypes in the Oxford Asians Twitter site. Most of the 17 photos include members of the Asian American Association holding signs with a tweet from the @Oxford Asians site printed at the top with a strike through signifying their resistance. Directly below on the signs are refutations of the original tweets, as on the examples below (*Figures 8a-12b*).

Figure 8a: Tweet reading, “Father say key to success in USA is drive fancy car even if I can’t drive good” from the @OxfordAsians Twitter feed

Figure 8b: Response from a member of the AAA reading, “Father say key to success in USA is respecting others” from The Real @OxfordAsians blog

Figure 9a: Tweet reading, “Can’t decide if I want to take a Sunday drive in my Mercedes or Porsche” from the @OxfordAsians Twitter feed

Figure 9b: Response from a member of the AAA reading, “Can’t decide if I want social equality or respect” from The Real @OxfordAsians blog

Figure 10a: Tweet reading “I ask professor 7 questions in a row. New record!” from the @OxfordAsians Twitter feed

Figure 10b: Response from a member of the AAA reading, “I ask professor 7 questions in a row...At least I’m learning in college” from The Real @OxfordAsians blog

Figure 11a: Tweet reading “Willing to trade 2 Vietnamese sweatshop workers for a Barstool ticket! DM me if interested!” from the @OxfordAsians Twitter feed

Figure 11b: Response from a member of the AAA reading, “DM me if you’re interested in promoting civil liberties for all people!” from The Real @OxfordAsians blog

Figure 12a: Tweet reading “Confucius say man who drop watch in toilet has a shitty time” from the @OxfordAsians Twitter feed

Figure 12b: Response from a member of the AAA reading, “Confucius say it is easy to hate and difficult to love” from The Real @OxfordAsians blog

The student who created the @OxfordAsians account managed to amass a following of nearly one thousand people on his Twitter feed, many of whom appeared to be part of the university community. Twitter messages, “tweets,” have the potential to spread rapidly as people who “follow” a Twitter feed re-post or “retweet” a message to everyone who follows their Twitter feed. A message becomes viral when it spreads rapidly through numerous social networks.

In *Cyberliteracy* Laura Gurak calls *speed*, *reach*, *anonymity*, and *interactivity* the primary features of online discourse; in the case of the @Oxford Asians account, and with Twitter in general, all four characteristics come into play. The speed, reach, and interactivity of the Twitter feed allowed the student to distribute with relative ease what he called in an interview with the *Oxford Townie* a “parody site,” “not meant to be malicious or racist in any way.” He characterized the Twitter feed as satire “meant to bring to light social issues in a witty way in the hope that it will promote self-examination and constructive dialogue about the issues presented” (Krause, “Miami Student”).

Of course, rather than “promot[ing] self-examination and constructive dialogue,” the site functioned as a way for certain members of the Miami University community—a disturbingly large amount—to vent their frustrations at the growing number of students from China at the university. On the saved version of @Oxford Asians site, it’s possible to see who re-circulated tweets from the site to their own Twitter pages (*Figure 13*). Clicking on certain of the user profiles reveals other, similar racist tweets.

Figure 13: Screen capture of the @Oxford Asians Twitter feed showing avatars (photos) of people in the creator of the site’s social network who had “followed” the feed (“@oxfordasians”).

Once a message is posted on a social network site, the author loses control of how it circulates. That social media rhetoric can circulate widely and be interpreted and used in ways the author may not have intended is the result of what Sheridan, Ridolfo, and

Michel call the *rhetorical velocity* of discourse—“the speed and direction of compositions as they travel through material-cultural spaces” (xxvi). One possible outcome of the rhetorical velocity of a Twitter feed can be the emergence of a “herd mentality,” much like a group of bullies on a playground, so that people who may not have otherwise engaged in bullying or racist speech acts or behavior in the physical world become part of a snowball effect, adding fuel to the “joke” the creator of the site successfully pulled off anonymously for six months.

In a recent study on cyber aggression—defined as “the transmission of aggressive behavior (e.g. threatening a peer, spreading a rumor) via cyber technology (e.g. on a computer, cell phone, personal digital assistant)” —the authors argue that anonymity is an important factor in cyberbullying (a subtype of cyberaggression that involves an imbalance of power). Their study on adolescents suggests that even those who wouldn’t engage in bullying-characterized behavior and speech acts in the physical world may be willing to do so in cyber spaces (Dempsey et al 298).

The anonymity afforded by social media, and particularly Twitter, made it possible for the student to create a site to which his name was not attached in any way. Even though initially the student’s audience were those who followed his Twitter feed, likely only close friends, the tweets eventually began circulating among secondary audiences who clearly failed to see the humor in the racist discourse, among them the graduate student in English, then her professors in the department, then university diversity affairs officials, and so forth.

In the case of the Oxford Asians Twitter feed, social networks became a way of quickly and easily circulating constructions of race, in this case Asians and Asian American students at Miami, that reflect and create a fear of the Other. As an avatar for the Twitter site—the photo Twitter users can select to put at the top of their home page—the student appropriated a widely circulated Internet meme originally known as “Asian Prince,” an audacious Liberace-style Asian male with a mullet haircut and mustache.³⁶ In the case of @Oxford Asians, the student recast the meme to represent the persona of an Asian student at Miami University (*Figure 14*).

³⁶ Among the numerous comments on the original *Oxford Townie* article breaking this story, one poster, self-identified as Anh Thu, writes that the avatar the creator of @OxfordAsians used “is the celebrated Vietnamese singer, Tuấn Anh. Our very own Liberace/Little Richard, if you will” (Krause, “Miami Student”). A search on a website dedicated to archiving and researching the circulation of Internet memes indicates the meme began circulating in 1999 as the avatar “Asian Prince” on a GeoCities account, an early social networking site (“Asian Prince”). The site and the avatar became something of a minor online phenomenon; its popularity peaked around 2004, with websites offering wallpaper themes of the original avatar image and copycat accounts appearing in online forums also using the image. While I can only speculate how the student learned about the meme and acquired the image, it seems reasonable to assume the meme had circulated widely enough for him to become aware of it in some fashion and that he determined it was the right fit for his purposes.

Figure 14: Avatar and description of the @Oxford Asians Twitter feed

Considering the similarities between the meme and the discourse surrounding it and the @Oxford Asians Twitter feed, a brief history of the circulation of the meme bears mentioning to highlight ways race is constructed in online social networks. In *Digitizing Race: Visual Cultures of the Internet*, Lisa Nakamura points out that “user-created avatars allow users to participate in racial formation and to transmit these to large, potentially global audiences of users” (18) and that studies of racial construction in the vein of Michael Omi and Howard Winant’s critical race theory must take into account the role of visual rhetoric in constructions of race in online, multimodal environments.

The original “Asian Prince” social network account constructed a hyper-sexualized Asian male who bragged about his sexual prowess with women and simultaneously portrayed himself as a drag queen, with loud, colorful, feminine clothing, makeup, and black hair styled high on top with a mullet cut. The avatar apparently was modeled on the actual performer, described by a concert review on an entertainment website in 1999 as “Little Richard meets Perry Como” (Nguyen). The meme imitating Tuấn Anh constructed on the “Asian Prince” site that eventually enjoyed a wide circulation in the U.S. depicted a campy, flamboyant playboy whose sexual orientation, like Little Richard’s, came under question on discussion boards (Straight). Not only, then, did the Asian Prince avatar become a way for White, male Internet users to joke at the expense of the Other in the form of an audacious character standing in for Western racist constructions of Asians; the meme also became an outlet for homophobia.

By using the Asian Prince avatar, the creator of the @OxfordAsians site creates an Asian male body who is arrogant, suave, and crass, with posts similar to those on the original GeoCities dating profile account of “Asian Prince,” characterized by messages such as “Hello Ladies!!! Feel free to browse my site. You will find me irresistible.” The audacity of the GeoCities account led to speculation that the Asian Prince persona was fake, and in June 2002, after his avatar was “outed” on a discussion forum as the singer Anh, the creator of the Asian Prince account (who still remains anonymous) took the site down, stating on the site that he had, in fact, finally found a wife (“Asian Prince”).

The student's use of the Asian Prince avatar and his construction of an "Oxford Asian" in his tweets bear enough resemblance to the Asian Prince meme that it is not unreasonable to assume he was familiar with the discourse surrounding the meme in some fashion. His Oxford Asian character exudes self-interested flamboyance and lack of knowledge of Miami culture. He is quite literally the Other, immersed in Oxford and Miami life and yet completely separate, an embodiment of racist anxiety in the guise of parody and humor. It's not surprising that certain comments on the *Oxford Townie* story about the Twitter site ("It's just a joke; lighten up!") are similar to discussion board posts about the Asian Prince account (Straight).

As the Oxford Asian persona, the student posted 40 tweets, which I discuss in detail below, describing his everyday life as a Miami student. The description of the account, located just below the photo, reads: "Must bring great good glory and honor to twitter," written in broken English and referring for its Miami University followers to the school's unofficial motto "Love and Honor," commonly used in discourse between Miami students.

The *Oxford Townie* article speculated that the incident was part of a reaction of Miami students to the rapidly growing number of students from China studying at Miami in the past few years (Krause, "Miami Student"). In fact, international student enrollment has increased by 178% since 2007.³⁷ The number of international students in the U.S. has risen dramatically in the past five years as well, with an almost eleven percent increase from between 2009 and 2010 and a 43% increase between 2010 and 2011 (*Open Doors*). Numbers have grown particularly in the number of undergraduate students from China studying in the U.S. Even at 5.5% of the total undergraduate population, Miami's international student population is still relatively small, but for some students the rapid increase in diversity on campus has proven to be a challenge rather than a boon to the global perspectives the school prides itself in.

The use of social media to spread racist fears and anxieties is not unique to Miami. A highly publicized incident in March 2011 involved a U.C.L.A. undergraduate, Alexandra Wallace, a White female who posted a video rant on YouTube about her displeasure with "some" Asian students at the university—"I don't mean it toward any of my friends; I mean it toward random people that I don't even know in the library"—who were unfamiliar with U.S. university social codes. "The problem is these hordes of Asian people that UCLA accepts into our school every single year, which is fine, but if you're going to come to U.C.L.A., then use American manners." She sarcastically mimics an Asian student talking on her cell phone and suggests that students check in on their families outside the library. Her diatribe was especially offensive because of its timing—the very day the tsunami had devastated the Japanese coast (Lovett, "U.C.L.A.").

The three-minute video, which became known as "Asians in the Library," went viral with millions of viewers, prompting the U.C.L.A. chancellor to release a statement in writing and on video condemning the discourse. Wallace submitted a written apology to the

³⁷ In 2007 Miami University reported an enrollment of 399 international students; in 2012 the number had risen to 1,112 ("International").

student newspaper, stating she had received numerous death threats and was withdrawing from the university, fearing for her safety (“UCLA Student”).

Other incidents involving racist Twitter accounts similar to the @OxfordAsians site have occurred at Purdue (Spring 2012) and Ohio State Universities. Although the @OxfordAsians site with its racist avatar meme is more pernicious than its Ohio State forbear, the influence of the @OSU_Asian Twitter account on the Miami iteration is clear: it contains tweets mocking and stereotyping Asian and Asian American students on campus in the first person voice of an avatar called “Your Favorite Asian” (*Figure 15*). The site came to the attention of university officials in August 2012 and was condemned in an email to students by the Vice President of Student Life and in a Twitter message to students by OSU President Gordon Gee: “Appalled to see racist tweets by a few Ohio State students. We are better than that. #OSUStandYourGround” (Williams).

Figure 15: Screen capture of the @OSU_Asian Twitter account: “Your Favorite Asian”

Ohio State University students have responded in a variety of ways to the @OSU_Asian Twitter account. One of the most high profile responses has been the creation of a Twitter account and a Tumblr site called “OSU Haters,” on which students “out” racist tweets of Ohio State students, publicly shaming them and resisting the anonymity social media often affords (*Figures 16-18*).

Figure 16: OSU Haters Twitter page, on which Ohio State University students discuss incidents involving racism on campus

Figure 17: OSU Haters Tumblr page, on which students discuss racism on campus and post tweets of a racist nature made by Ohio State University students

Figure 18: Screen capture of a tweet by an Ohio State University student on his Twitter account, re-posted to the OSU Haters Tumblr page

Another response involved the creation of a parody Twitter account, @OSU_WhitePerson, on which students tweet using the persona of a White, male fraternity member. The site's description on its masthead reads: "Beer pong should be an NCAA-sanctioned sport" (Figure 19).

Figure 19: Twitter page of @OSU_WhitePerson

As of this writing, the @OSU_Asian Twitter account is still active, with 1,618 followers, and its author(s) remains anonymous (@OSU_Asian). I highlight these examples to contrast the response of the Asian American Association at Miami. However tempting it may have been for the Miami students to respond in such ways, they chose to attempt to engage the larger university community in a dialogue, using strategically empathetic attempts to increase visibility for the latent and overt racism they encounter every day and that exists in systemic ways on larger levels.

The Function of Rhetorical Empathy in the AAA Student Response

The group's response represents what the students characterized as an attempt to "promote learning" and forms what I argue is an act of resistance using rhetorical empathy. In what follows I analyze their visual and verbal response, using the characteristics I associate with rhetorical empathy, followed by a discussion on the circulation and effects thus far.

As I've discussed throughout this project, one of the primary characteristics of rhetorical empathy is a focus on the personal within the system and with stories and experiences of individuals. In this case, the students' response primarily focuses on constructing Asians and Asian Americans as real people rather than stereotypes. In their written response they declare that "in order to promote [...] learning, the students of the Asian American Association have taken it upon themselves to begin a campaign that humanizes Asian-Americans in order to show these bias-motivated beliefs and tweets have a *real* impact on *real* students" (Appendix A, 122).

The photos of the students holding the signs refute the stereotypes of Asian and Asian American students represented in specific tweets on the Oxford Asians feed and put a face on the group of people being targeted by making these students real to their audience. In an example of what Sheridan, Ridolfo, and Michel call *rhetorical recomposition* (79), the students recast and recirculate the original tweets as statements about what they truly value rather than how the concept of "Asian" has been constructed in popular U.S. culture and continues to be constructed in this local context. By holding the posters with messages written in the concise genre of Twitter, they become embodied tweets with real faces rather than avatars. Through their photos and their stories they share in the written response, they become to their audience real people sitting beside them in class, real students walking through campus and eating at the table next to them.

Unlike the responses of OSU students in the form of the parody Twitter site and the OSU Hate site outing racist tweets of OSU students, the photos of Miami students holding signs humanizes the issue of racism, an emotional appeal that attempts to connect with their audience rather than (only) shaming those responsible for creating, reading, and circulating the tweets. Additionally, several students wear Miami identified t-shirts in the photos, as the AAA executive council specifically requested on their Facebook post announcing the protest, creating a visual identification of Asian and Asian American students with White-coded students in the dominant majority, and with the creator and

circulators of the Twitter feed who constructed Asian students as Other and not part of the Miami culture.

The photos also break down the anonymity of the @Oxford Asians site. Their photos identify them clearly, and their written stories identify them by name. Rather than outing the creator of the @OxfordAsians site and addressing him or his Twitter followers directly by name, the AAA students choose to make themselves vulnerable by making their identities and stories public, an example of what LuMing Mao describes as indirectness rather than a direct, “in-your-face” style in the Aristotelian tradition (*Reading* 137). The students in their response practice “shu.” They show compassion even to people who have mocked them, and they use themselves as an analogy to determine the best course of action in their rhetorical context. In short, the students use a strategy of attempting to treat their fellow Miami students the way they would want to be treated (Ames and Rosemont, trans. *Analects of Confucius*, 15.24, Hall and Ames 199).

Their response is a generous way of reading the world and others, like Addams’ affectionate interpretation, one that has the potential of softening the response of interlocutors and reducing the potential for backlash against their efforts. As Mao points out, however, such a response should not be considered a way of diminishing self; it is, rather, a way of showing strength through vulnerability and an awareness of the interconnectedness of both Asian American students and the dominant White students on campus. Mao connects his concept of interdependence-in-difference to the practice of “shu”:

As we practice and promote this rhetoric of togetherness-in-difference, we need to learn how to place ourselves in the others’ position and how to ‘word’ the world through the others’ eyes or ‘I’s’...And when we practice the concept of “shu,” we have to teach ourselves and our interlocutors that our mission is not to banish or impoverish self, but to incorporate both self and other into a relationship of interdependence and interconnectedness. (142).

Constructing the site as a joke designed to make light of cultural differences masks the cultural commonplaces and power differentials behind the discourse. Even though some of the students in the photos on The Real @Oxford Asians are (strategically) smiling, by physically marking out the “humorous” tweets reflecting racist stereotypes and replacing them with responses attempting to establish respectful speech and actions toward others as normative, the students resist the commonplace that @Oxford Asians is simply lighthearted humor.

The racist ideology circulated and rehashed on the @Oxford Asians site is certainly not original; it re-circulates and re-composes a popular meme, as I’ve discussed, and similar racist Twitter “humor” accounts at other universities. The @Oxford Asians account is in some respects more sinister in its racism than the direct confrontation in the “Asians in the Library” video rant; in masking its racism as humor, it also masks what Norman Fairclough calls *ideological common sense*, or common sense in the service of sustaining unequal relations of power (84). For example, the tweets I’ve highlighted above, “Father

say key to success is USA is drive fancy car even if I can't drive good" (8a), "Can't decide if I want to take a Sunday drive in my Mercedes or Porsche" (9a), and "I ask professor 7 questions in a row. New record!" (10a), reflect the *model minority* racist ideology of Asian Americans described by Robert G. Lee—the notion that Asians are more driven by success than other minority groups in the U.S. The tweets, and the commonplaces they mimic, reveal a fear of the idea that a group could be more intelligent and successful than the dominant, "real Americans" of European descent.

The (sincere) disbelief of certain members of the Miami community that anyone could be so thin-skinned that he or she would be offended by a "joke," as the creator of the Twitter site refers to it, also masks the model minority commonplace that Asian Americans are politically docile, less likely to cause trouble and defend themselves against racist speech acts or behavior. The tweets also reflect what Lee calls *yellow peril*—a fear of globalization and the rise of competing economies—especially pronounced during economic recessions. The photos of the "real Oxford Asians" and their stories in their written response resist the insider-outsider rhetoric of the Twitter feed (Ashby) and the idea that Asian students studying in the U.S. and Asian American students are the alien in the community. According to Lee, "Aliens, outsiders who are inside, disrupt the internal structure of a cultural formation as it defines itself vis-à-vis the Other; their presence constitutes a boundary crisis" (3).

In addition to the individual photos on the site, the students' written response uses the appeal of personal stories of racism on campus. In the response several students share stories about being ostracized and alienated on campus, sitting by themselves in the dining hall, and squirming in their seats in a classroom—often the only Asian student in the class—as others in the room make jokes about Asians:

"Sometimes I take some racial jokes lightly. However, it can go too far easily," says Karolin Ginting, Junior and Publicity Chair of AAA. Christina Lam, a Junior studying Early Childhood Education, says "I'm usually the only Asian person in my classes. Sometimes when my classmates brings [sic] up Asian related humor and everyone laughs at it, I don't know whether I should join in on the laughter or just sit there because I feel uncomfortable." Many of Lam's peers in AAA share similar sentiments. (Appendix A, 122).

These appeals are designed to engage the audience on an emotional and personal level and to form connections based on what can be shared emotions and experiences. These appeals also invite the students' multiple audiences to imagine what it would be like to be on the other side of their racist actions:

Lam shares that "eating alone at the dining halls has been extremely hard on me. I try to avoid it as much as possible. There are instances when I am alone where people would just look at me and stare and laugh at me. Or when people would start talking bad about Asians in front of me, as if I can't understand what they're saying. Or when people make fun of how

Chinese people speak in some made-up version of Chinese, thinking it's funny. I noticed that all these things happen when students see an Asian person. Somehow it triggers in their brains that it's okay for them to talk or act this way. They think it's hilarious, while I'm the one getting hurt by it." These sort of incidents leave students with feelings of exclusion and isolation. (Appendix A, 123)

By sharing stories from students who are identified by name, the written response, like the photos, becomes a way of resisting the commonplace that the Twitter feed was "just a joke." Park and Andracki write that "many of these students express how lack of a distinction between humor and discrimination has resulted in them [sic] feeling uncomfortable and unwelcome in spaces on campus." Their response attempts to recast the humor trope by positioning the "joking" on the Twitter feed and in classrooms as divisive and hurtful: "'Posting jokes belittling another culture only serves to create a divide between students. I did not find the "humor" to be funny or entertaining at all. The worst part was that so many students followed this account without even considering the harm,' says Scott Dougherty, Senior in Psychology" (Appendix A, 122).

In addition to the personal and emotional appeals in the piece, the students approach their audience with a strategically generous reading of their motives. They frame their written response using a rhetoric of empathy at the outset, writing in the third sentence that "it is always better to be the bigger person. The creator and some of the followers honestly have a different mindset and do not realize what they are doing is hurtful. They should have another chance to learn." At the end of their response they include a quote from Vice President of the Asian American Association, senior Christine Pil, constructing their audience not as racists but as fellow students who need to learn to use their words responsibly. Her words, and their response, recast the Asian and Asian American students mocked on the Twitter feed as agents who not only resist getting on the level of their harassers but who use the incident to teach their audience about right actions: "We planned this event to educate the student body on how to deal with these types of situations, promote cultural awareness, and explain that having the right of freedom of speech also means being responsible enough to use it appropriately" (Appendix A, 123).

The AAA students' rhetorical empathy functions on multiple levels. Their rhetoric constructs the students involved with the @OxfordAsians site as individuals and real people themselves rather than (only or primarily as) racists without a body or a face, just as their response constructs the Asian students as individuals with stories and emotions and a proud cultural identity rather than nameless, faceless members of a minority group.

They also, though, position themselves and their audience as individuals who have been formed by cultural discourse and are part of a larger, racist system of which the university culture is part. They confront the injustice of this system, and they highlight their own very real bodies as suffering because of their coded and real difference from the dominant White subject position: "The Twitter account is one more manifestation of an overarching culture of intolerance" in which "students are victims of active discrimination that causes real fear" (122). They relate incidents in which Asian female students at Miami have

been sexually harassed, experiencing “objectification and exotification.” One student in the association is quoted as saying, “I’ve decided to break the silence on this issue because Miami needs to hear our personal encounters with this type of behavior. Microaggressions against international students, Asian American students, and other minority groups occur at Miami University more often than people think.” They point out that “issues of street harassment and hate speech often go unchecked by the university, but students still feel its very real effects” (Appendix A, 123).

Ironically, by constructing those behind the Twitter account as members of a culture of racist privilege, the rhetoric of The Real @OxfordAsians insists students take responsibility for their words and actions, and yet allows the Asian American students, even as victims of racism, to see their harassers as victims as well. Rhetorical empathy provides a degree of agency to those with less power in this rhetorical context; by giving ground in the form of becoming vulnerable, the students gain rhetorical and ethical ground over those who attempted to dehumanize them into the Other.

Like Lee and Baldock, who resist calling the people they engage with “bigots” or “homophobes,” the students throughout their piece avoid using the words “racist” or “racism.” The only two instances of the word occur within quotes from White allies: Scott Dougherty, a senior psychology major and Forrest McGuire, a junior and Chief of Staff for the Associated Student Government on campus. Dougherty is quoted as saying that the incident is “an opportunity for open discussion about the underlying issue here: that is, racism and bias towards minority students” (Appendix A, 123). McGuire urges a response from the university community: “I want my peers and my university not to be bystanders in situations like this—they need to speak up against any form of racism on Miami’s campus” (123-24).

Rather than an anger-based, direct confrontation, the students chose in this situation to employ a rhetoric based on empathy and vulnerability, considering the motives of their audience. Their use of rhetorical empathy may have been sincere on a certain level, and it may have been strategic as well—that is, purposefully done to get the other side to consider the ideas being expressed rather than reflecting a generosity they genuinely felt toward their audience. The students were, we can speculate, justifiably angry and deeply disturbed by the rhetoric circulating among hundreds of their classmates on the Twitter site, but in their rhetorical response, they chose let the anger go to the degree that they could engage their audience with a degree of compassion. Regardless of the level of sincerity of the emotions that result in making a conscious choice to approach the Other with an empathetic stance—and such sincerity cannot be measured regardless—performing empathy can be a fruitful rhetorical move in that it offers an opportunity for mutual change and dialogue rather than defensiveness and an attempt to “save face” on the part of their audience, as Mao discusses (*Reading* 37-39).

Conclusion: The Effects of Rhetorical Empathy and the University Response

The Oxford Asians Twitter feed is only one example of the kinds of racist responses to the growth of Asians students on campus—racism that largely has stayed under the radar

of official public discourse.³⁸ The Asian American students' rhetoric creates an opportunity for learning on the part of the university community and represents an effort to create lines of dialogue that currently do not exist on campus. On March 19 the AAA held a town hall meeting on campus in response to the Oxford Asians Twitter feed as part of Diversity Awareness week. At the meeting, attended by approximately 75 students and a few faculty and staff, Asian American and African American students talked about not only the Twitter incident but about racist incidents they experience in their everyday lives. Unfortunately, this event may not emerge beyond only (valuable) in-group frustration-venting sessions, as largely was the case with a town hall meeting designed to address another incident that made headlines at Miami University last fall. A flier titled "Top 10 Ways To Get Away With Rape," posted in a male dorm on campus, went viral on Facebook and made national news ("Top 10"). Only after the flier and the sexism behind it became a national news event did the upper administration respond publicly to the incident.

The student association points out in their response that before real change can begin to occur, "the first step... would be the University taking a stand and making it known that this is unacceptable" (Appendix A, 123). So far the only response from upper administration officials has occurred in the two *Oxford Townie* news stories. The first, appearing in the piece breaking the story, was from Ronald Scott, Vice President for Diversity Affairs, who expressed his "sense that there isn't a groundswell." He reported that the university was "planning a campaign that will occur in the next few weeks to talk to faculty, staff, and students about Miami's values" (Krause, "Miami Student"), a campaign that has yet to occur.

The second response, appearing in a second story in the *Townie* on April 8, consisted of statements from President Hodge, who according to the piece called the *Townie* to address the Twitter site. Hodge condemns the contents of the site and praises the response of the university community in standing up to the racist discourse—a response which consisted primarily of Asian American students responding on their own behalf with the support of a few committed faculty allies. The story characterized his response as largely dismissive of suggestions the incident may be indicative of problems with racism among students. The president in fact expressed optimism that the Twitter incident was simply the kind of growing pains that come with added diversity, saying that the increased numbers of international students will "not bring more tension, but more acceptance" (Krause, "Miami's Asian Community"). When asked why the administration had not spoken out sooner, he responded that "we try to use the voice of the President sparingly so as not to give a bigger stage to people who do stupid and despicable things."

The degree of rhetorical effect the response created by the AAA will have remains to be seen. Their piece did not appear to "go viral," as they'd expressed hope for on their Facebook page announcing the response plans. At the current date it has been shared on Twitter 81 times and on Facebook 291 times. No events aside from the AAA-run town

³⁸ Other than the *Oxford Townie* article, no news sources reported the incident. The only coverage in *The Miami Student*, the student-produced online and printed newspaper, was an editorial written by a Miami student calling for university officials to respond to the incident (Wong).

hall have been planned on the Miami campus to address larger issues with racism and privilege the Twitter incident brings to light. Attempting to create a shift in how a campus culture perceives and talks about difference is a daunting task, especially on a campus that has struggled with a reputation for lacking diversity. The response of the Asian American Association, characterized by empathetic rhetoric, is an inclusive step toward that goal. It seems fair to argue, however, that significant shifts will occur only when stances and practices such as rhetorical empathy are practiced not only by students in less privileged positions at the university but by those with the most degree of agency—upper administrative leaders, faculty leaders, and student leaders across campus.

Chapter 6:

Conclusions

I cannot muster the “we” except by finding the way in which I am tied to “you,” by trying to translate but finding that my own language must break up and yield if I am to know you. You are what I gain through this disorientation and loss. This is how the human comes into being, again and again, as that which we have yet to know.

—Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (2004)

The open hand and the closed fist have the same basic skeletal structure. If rhetoric is, as Aristotle defined it, “a discovery of all the available means of persuasion,” let us be prepared to open and close that hand as the occasion demands.

—Edward P.J. Corbett, “The Rhetoric of the Open Hand and the Rhetoric of the Closed Fist,” *College Composition and Communication*, December (1969)

Biologist Frans de Waal argues in *The Age of Empathy* (2009) that empathy is part of the evolutionary process: we need to put others first in communities at times in order to perpetuate the community. The practice of non-violent rhetoric, pronounced in figures such as Nelson Mandela and Martin Luther King, Jr., figures prominently in feminist rhetorical theories. Non-violent, empathetic practices, foundational to a variety of spiritual and religious traditions, are motivating factors in the rhetoric of Jane Addams and the two gay rights activists in this study, Justin Lee and Kathy Baldock. Whatever the origin of our desires for connection and peace, there is merit to the idea that a peaceful rhetoric begets peaceful rhetoric. Judith Butler argues that the violent response of the U.S. to 9/11 has caused even greater destruction than the original acts on that day, and in *Precarious Life* she advocates for a metaphor of interdependence instead.

My questions driving this study focus on how empathy can be employed rhetorically to help navigate pronounced difference, especially difference involving intersectional subject positions such as gender/sexuality, religion, class, and race. I pursued the question of how empathy has been theorized and used as a rhetorical concept not only in the

Western canon but beyond it within marginalized rhetorical practices in the Euro-American tradition and beyond. I focused on the constraints of empathy: in which cases might it be a *kairotic* choice and in which cases would it simply be co-opted by those with more power? Using Burke's pentad as a starting point, I asked: What is empathy, and in particular what is rhetorical empathy? What agents employ it and with whom? How does it function and when; that is, in what exigencies does it function with rhetorical effectiveness?

More research needs to be done on the effects of rhetorical empathy on the various actors within rhetorical exchanges, both within public sphere rhetoric and within classrooms in which rhetorical persuasion is taught using a method such as I've described in this study. While measuring the efficacy of a rhetorical strategy is difficult—especially using self-disclosure methods and trying to study such an ephemeral concept as empathy in the first place—triangulating research to include both the rhetor and the audience would be helpful in determining the degree to which such a rhetorical approach is capable of helping people navigate pronounced difference and overcome obstacles to effective communication and understanding. I believe our discipline has much to offer studies of empathy within cognitive science and psychology that typically focus on bodily responses to attempt to measure someone's level of empathetic engagement within staged scenarios. Such studies often do not take into account the social position of research subjects or the role of motivations in empathetic responses (or lack thereof), as Jean Decety and Meghan Meyer point out in their study of empathy in psychology.

In what follows I discuss implications of rhetorical empathy for pedagogy and public discourse.

Implications of Rhetorical Empathy for Public Discourse

I chose the sites in this study—gay rights and fundamentalist discourse, class and labor rights issues, and constructions of race in online environments—because they present clear challenges to rhetorical engagement across primary forms of difference. By focusing on rhetors who have successfully employed rhetorical empathy, I hoped to demonstrate its possibilities. I do not intend, however, to present their use of the strategies I associate with rhetorical empathy as uncomplicated. For example, in Jane Addams's case, her stance of mediation and of challenging “both sides” in a conflict to consider the stories and the motivations of the Other did not produce the kind of immediate changes some might associate with effective rhetoric. Like other peacemakers such as Martin Luther King, Jr., and Barack Obama, Addams was criticized for being too conciliatory toward her enemies. The gauge for effective mediating rhetoric could be the degree to which it leaves the door open for future engagement and gradual shifts rather than immediate change.

Rhetorical engagements are part of ongoing discourses, and agency occurs within discourse as *kairotic* and shifting, with numerous constraints. We must, however, account for the agency that such strategies as rhetorical empathy can offer in certain circumstances. While we ask the question of whether or not those in non-dominant

subject positions can speak and assert any degree of agency, we must account for particular instances in which such subjects are in fact speaking and creating moments of agency and possibility. In the example of Kathy Baldock's rhetoric, her subject position as a female creates a great deal of difficulty for her within conservative, religious discourse communities. She told me a number of stories about being silenced by male religious leaders under the pretense that she is a single female without the "covering" of a male—a significant factor in the communities she's trying to engage with. In such communities, women are expected to be seen and not heard in public for the most part, except as teachers of children and other women. Being confronted by a woman—even in the relatively mild manner Baldock uses—about the issue of homosexuality has caused a number of male leaders within conservative Christian circles to not only ignore her but to attack her personally. On one occasion a male pastor had security guards escort her out of the question-and-answer portion of a public conference on homosexuality and the church as she asked participants what the consequences of their anti-gay beliefs would be on their gay sons and daughters. Baldock has managed to effectively engage with resistant audiences despite the constraint of gender, however.

As a male, even a gay-identified male, Justin Lee does not encounter the same resistance as Baldock. Female rhetors have faced discrimination within social movements in the U.S. historically, the most prominent example of which was when women began participating in public campaigns against slavery in the mid-nineteenth century, advocating for women's rights after they faced a great deal of backlash for speaking publically in the presence of men. Addams faced similar constraints because of her gender, such as when George Pullman refused to meet with the female members of the Chicago Civic Federation during their attempts to mediate between the company and the workers just before the Pullman strike erupted. Since Addams was the only woman playing a pivotal role in the mediation, and one of only two women on the large committee made up of business and civic leaders, her point was clear.

As I outlined in chapter one, I position rhetorical empathy as a process-based rhetorical strategy and as one of many forms of resistance to anti-gay ideology and policies on a larger spectrum. Building on Linda Flower's paradigm of forms of engagement, I position rhetorical empathy as one point along a spectrum of rhetorical strategies. For example, gay rights activists use in-group expressions such as drag and camp as a form of resistance, and forms of disruption in the 80s and 90s such as protests by ACT UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power, founded in 1987 in New York) and the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence (founded in San Francisco, 1979), gay men who donned nun habits in protest of the Catholic Church's stance on homosexuality and its (lack of) treatment of the AIDS crisis. Mark Jordan describes the Sisters as "post-Christian ritual specialists for gay spaces...mark[ing] the confusing persistence of church after church has been denied" (183).

The examples of engagements with difference in the gay rights study in this project may resonate with a greater number of people than the often-publicized examples of (often far) right- and left-wing discourse on the subject. For example, as I've emphasized in this chapter, ultra-right, conservative Christian discourse on the issue of homosexuality has

been characterized by a demonization of the gay community in order to perpetuate the power of the institutionalized Church, linked as that power is to patriarchy and other forms of perpetuating the status quo. On the other hand, gay rights movements on the left are guilty of focusing on the worst elements in religion, often justifiably and in some cases because of their own trauma at having been rejected and mistreated by people who claim a religion of love and peace. Both extremes are understandable in certain cases but not helpful in the effort to encourage greater understanding of the Other.

I argue that engagement between those who disagree on issues related to same-sex love and religion not only is possible but is happening on an increasingly large scale. A prominent example is the recent announcement in June 2013 from Alan Chambers, president of the largest “ex-gay” organization Exodus International, that the group would disband after 37 years. In his announcement Chambers publicly apologized to the gay community for the harm Exodus has caused LGBTQ people for decades (Lovett, “After”). Such examples hold promise as models for civil discourse and going beyond the “us” and “them” model of rhetorical exchange that characterizes so much of the discourse in the intersection of gay rights and religion. I don’t intend to construct a simple, clean spectrum of types of resistance within this particular discursive site: for example, on one end of the spectrum hard-core leaders on both sides of the gay rights struggle talking past each other when they do engage, and on the other end an idealized, collaborative dialogue in which both sides engage productively. The reality is much messier and more complicated than that, and furthermore such a spectrum would always be in flux depending on the rhetorical constraints and requirements of the cultural and historic moment.

Rhetorical empathy can be an effective strategy within certain rhetorical situations but is not always the most appropriate or best response. In certain situations justified anger and a more direct address of an audience are appropriate and more rhetorically effective. Rhetorical empathy is a strategy among many other forms of resistance, a peace-based *topos* that functions quite differently than more direct forms of engaging with difference and injustice in public discourse—and can be effective in certain rhetorical situations than a more confrontational approach.

Implications of Rhetorical Empathy for Pedagogy

While this study does not focus on the implications of rhetorical empathy within the classroom, I want to point toward various ways of thinking about how rhetorical empathy could play out within composition pedagogy. In my introduction I touched briefly on implications for rhetorical empathy in the classroom with the example of Julie Lindquist’s application of surface acting and deep acting. While she doesn’t use the term rhetorical empathy but rather “strategic empathy” and doesn’t use the framework I’ve created with this study, she examines the possibilities of foregrounding emotion in the classroom in productive ways and discusses the importance of trying to understand students’ contexts and motivations. Such an approach has relevance in both critical and expressivist pedagogies and combines elements of both. Being up front about our own views in ways that allow students to do the same holds the possibility of creating spaces

where conflict and affirmation are both possible, a balance that Dennis Lynch, Diana George, and Marilyn Cooper discuss in their CCC article “Moments of Argument: Agonistic Inquiry and Confrontational Cooperation” (1997).

They acknowledge the value of Susan Jarratt’s often-cited “case for conflict” in rhetoric and composition pedagogy, in which she argues against the idea of a nurturing environment in composition classes. In her article “Feminism and Composition: The Case for Conflict”³⁹ (1991), she advocates a pedagogical approach in which the body and difference are highlighted and in which “conflict is central,” writing that “differences of gender, race, and class among students and teachers provide situations in which conflict does arise, and we need more than the ideal of the harmonious, nurturing composition class in our repertory of teaching practices to deal with these problems” (270). Lynch, George, and Cooper resist the either/or binary of conflict or collaboration, arguing that “serious argumentation requires a willingness to see things differently and to be changed in and through the dialogic process” (68).

Lynch and his co-authors discuss the importance of ameliorating risk and the pain of seeing an Other’s perspective and being open to change. The change we experience when we open ourselves to hearing and truly considering another perspective often is accomplished, they write, through struggle and conflict. Like Lindquist and like my arguments about the moves involved with rhetorical empathy (and, it must be mentioned, like moves in Rogerian rhetoric⁴⁰), they point out that in their experience students tend to be more open to such risk after they feel some sort of connection or a safe environment to help motivate them to listen: “We believe that students will risk such changes only when argumentation is perceived as a social activity through which they, first and foremost, connect with others” (68).

They position persuasion in the context of rhetorical education as about change not only within an audience but within a rhetor, holding that “we need to see [argumentation] not just as a matter of winning or losing but as a way to connect with others which may lead to change, not only in the world but also in ourselves” (84). This focus on changing the subject is most applicable to privileged students and rhetors, as is Ratcliffe’s rhetorical listening. Using an approach such as rhetorical empathy involves giving up privilege in certain ways: that is, when we decide to listen to someone’s stories and attempt to discern what is motivating him or her, we choose to be vulnerable—a move that can be productive for anyone but that obviously is riskier and more costly for those in non-dominant subject positions.

³⁹ Originally published in *Contending With Words: Composition and Rhetoric in a Postmodern Age*. Ed. Patricia Harkin and John Schilb. New York: MLA, 1991: 105-24. Cited here in a reprint from *Feminism and Composition: A Critical Sourcebook*. Ed. Gesa E. Kirsch, Faye Spender Maor, Lance Massey, Lee Nickoson-Massey, and Mary P. Sheridan-Rabideau. New York: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2003: 263-280.

⁴⁰ In *Rhetoric: Discovery and Change* (170), Young, Becker, and Pike write that “[w]hen the writer builds bridges he [sic] must accept the possibility that he, as well as his reader, may be changed. Of course, he may use rhetorical techniques to manipulate others for his own ends, seeking to change them while insulating himself from ideas that might force changes in his own mind... But if the writer seeks to establish a true community by means of his words, he himself must be willing to change” (178).

As Krista Ratcliffe points out in *Rhetorical Listening*, identity and identification are finely interwoven. Rhetorical engagement often entails the issue of how much of our identity and identifications with certain people and groups we are willing (or able) to give up in order to persuade or connect with an Other. The shifts in identification within rhetorical exchange are shifts in power and agency and form new identities. In teaching stories such as Lindquist's, it's important to keep in mind that even though teachers inhabit one subject position that involves more power in a classroom—albeit a very important one—our power invested by the institution is only one aspect of our identities. Teachers also, of course, may be in less privileged subject positions otherwise in terms of ableness, gender, race, class, or sexual orientation. Power and privilege are slippery concepts that shift in relation to context. A major goal of Ratcliffe's rhetorical listening is acknowledging privilege and getting to a place where someone realizes that how she or he approaches argument is affected by social positioning and deep, historical narratives that play out in every rhetorical situation. People in less dominant subject positions are acutely aware of their social roles and positioning, as Jacqueline Jones Royster points out in "When the First Voice You Hear Is Not Your Own," and must learn early in life to listen to the dominant majority in order to survive. Those with privilege must learn to listen and acknowledge their power.

This study has caused me to think differently about my own teaching in many ways. One of the most significant thus far is the importance of trying to imagine what it's like to be a student in my class. In some ways empathy can be boiled down to a focus on audience and trying to best anticipate what communicative approach will be most effective. What rhetorical empathy adds to composition theory and pedagogy is, I believe, an emphasis on students as real people, with stories and motivations behind their responses in class. This focus on students affects every aspect of pedagogy: from how we write assignments and design our curriculum, to how we try to anticipate how students may react to a particular reading and discussion about it. I think about the idea of rhetorical empathy also in relation to teaching multimodal assignments and new technologies. I try to remember what it was like for me the first time I opened a new software application and felt overwhelmed at the possibilities and frustrated because I didn't even know how to begin. It's easy for us to forget what it is like to be in the position of our students, and important to try to remember, even if our experiences will never be exactly the same as theirs.

Another implication of rhetorical empathy for pedagogy is the importance of doing work along with our students whenever possible. Just as we (hopefully) try to think about how frustrating it is to stare at a blank screen and not have a clue where to begin and therefore help students with the invention process, it's important for writing teachers to be writers and equally important for those of us who incorporate multimodal assignments to use various modes in our own work and to practice (and fail) along with students. In two digital writing and rhetoric courses I taught last fall, I kept a writer's journal of my thoughts as I did the assignments I gave students. One was an audio podcast, a genre I'd had little experience with. The experience caused me to relate to my students differently, to better anticipate their questions, and to grade differently. I realized in several cases that their work was far more advanced than what I was doing. Part of my issue, as it is with

all of us, was a lack of time to put into the assignment, but even this aspect comes to bear on the amount of work I assign and the expectations I have on students who are juggling courses, work, and extracurricular responsibilities.

It was good for me to feel—and I stress the word *feel*—what it’s like to open a new program and not have a clue what it does or how to make it do what I want it to do. It’s one thing for me to teach a writing assignment or a software application I’ve used for years and an entirely different experience to teach something new. The latter puts us in a position to learn along with students, and just as with making ourselves vulnerable by listening to students and trying to understand what motivates them, doing so requires risk on our part as instructors. Learning along with students is a kind of surface acting, but de-centering the classroom and admitting we don’t always know the best way to proceed, and thus making ourselves vulnerable, can become forms of deep acting and normalized aspects of our pedagogy.

Choosing to empathize with students is a risk, especially for people occupying non-dominant subject positions. I faced this at Miami University as someone from a working class background. My first year of teaching there I constantly had to remember my relationships with my friends in high school and college whose families were in much higher income brackets than mine. I had to remind myself that my friends didn’t choose to be wealthy and that they were, I’m sure, fairly blind to the privileges that came with it; they were good people whom I loved—real people behind their class position. Assuming a stance of rhetorical empathy toward students in my particular teaching context doesn’t mean that I don’t challenge students to see their privilege, but it makes me care for them in ways I otherwise wouldn’t be able to and therefore makes it more likely they’ll listen to me when I do challenge them.

A further application of rhetorical empathy in the classroom regards asking students to do reflective, metacognitive writing. Rather than simply projecting our own experience onto them, it’s important to get their feedback at numerous points during a class in the form of writer’s reflections at various stages of an assignment process that ask students to try to understand their own and their audience’s motivations. Often this understanding can come through writing their own stories and experiences and listening to those of their audience. These sorts of meta level prompts and writing assignments are especially important in rhetoric and composition courses in which students are asked to try to persuade a certain audience to think or act differently about either a given or a chosen topic, as many composition courses do.

I’ll conclude with the idea that engaging in rhetorical empathy changes the subject of discourse (not only or necessarily the audience), as my title “Changing the Subject” emphasizes. It’s important to note that “performing empathy” may be sincere on a certain level and it may, at the same time, be strategic—that is, not necessarily coming from a deeply emotional, honest level but purposefully engaged in to get the other side to consider the ideas being expressed. As I discussed in Chapter One in the example of surface acting and deep acting in Julie Lindquist’s article on classroom applications of empathy, a rhetor may be angry (or feel any number of emotions) but chooses not to

respond in anger so that s/he can engage an Other with a degree of compassion. The extent to which such a rhetorical move is sincere is impossible to know, even for ourselves at times, but the sheer power of habit would suggest that the more often rhetors employ an inventional stance based on empathy, the greater such a stance becomes a commonplace, a normalized way of engaging with others, regardless of the degree of offense, injustice, or socially-marked difference. This is an important point that is difficult to research, quantify, and measure, even through self-disclosure methods, but it is a fair speculation based on the case studies in this project.

The examples I've highlighted suggest that engaging in rhetorical empathy can benefit those with less power in various ways: by mitigating anger, providing perspective, and in certain cases can increase the chances they will be heard by (and therefore be persuasive to) their audience. Despite its limitations and challenges, a rhetoric of empathy—characterized by personal, emotional appeals, a consideration of the motives of an Other, and on mutual understanding and (ex)change—can function as an ethical invention strategy for the difficult work of engaging with difference.

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Appendix A:

The Real @OxfordAsians Discursive Response⁴¹

Suey Park and Thaddeus Andracki

Although the Twitter account “@OxfordAsians” has been removed, most tweets the author(s) of the account wrote can still be found archived [here](#).⁴² Student leaders from the Asian American Association (AAA) at Miami University of Ohio have decided to speak up and turn this incident into a learning moment. Alumna Ashley Hornsby says regarding the incident, “It is always better to be the bigger person. The creator and some of the followers honestly have a different mindset and do not realize what they are doing is hurtful. They should have another chance to learn”. In order to promote this learning, the students of the AAA have taken it upon themselves to begin a campaign that humanizes Asian-Americans in order to show these bias-motivated beliefs and tweets have a *real* impact on *real* students. Tolulope Perrin-Stowe, Junior in Zoology and AAA Fusion Chair shares she is “saddened, but honestly not very surprised, because many people have similar sentiments on campus. There is still a lot of growing for Miami University and its students to do and this was just another unfortunate reminder of that fact.” The Twitter account is one more manifestation of an overarching *culture* of intolerance.

Many of these students express how lack of a distinction between humor and discrimination has resulted in them feeling uncomfortable and unwelcome in spaces on campus. “Sometimes I take some racial jokes lightly. However, it can go too far easily,” says Karolin Ginting, Junior and Publicity Chair of AAA. Christina Lam, a Junior studying Early Childhood Education, says “I’m usually the only Asian person in my classes. Sometimes when my classmates brings [sic] up Asian related humor and everyone laughs at it, I don’t know whether I should join in on the laughter or just sit there because I feel uncomfortable.” Many of Lam’s peers in AAA share similar sentiments. “Posting jokes belittling another culture only serves to create a divide between students. I did not find the ‘humor’ to be funny or entertaining at all. The worst part was that so many students followed this account without even considering the harm,” says Scott Dougherty, Senior in Psychology.

Other times, students are victims of active discrimination that causes real fear. HaeJi Lee, an international student in Speech Language Pathology/Audiology, shares: “Some people would say that I need go back to my country.” Mallory Chen, a Sophomore and domestic student, reports that “I was told to go back to my own country once. As an Asian-American, it’s pretty unsettling that there are people who still do not recognize that diversity is what defines America.” These sort of statements make students feel they do not belong on campus. Not only international students, who are far from home and desiring to find acceptance at Miami University, but also to domestic students of

⁴¹ Originally published on the website of Suey Park on March 3, 2013 (<http://criticalspontaneity.com/2013/03/03/the-real-oxfordasians/>). Reprinted here in its entirety with permission.

⁴² Web text contains link to the URL <http://topsy.com/twitter/oxfordasians?nohidden=1&page=1>.

marginalized racial/ethnic identities, who are continually seen as an “other” despite being born and raised in the United States.

Lam shares that “eating alone at the dining halls has been extremely hard on me. I try to avoid it as much as possible. There are instances when I am alone where people would just look at me and stare and laugh at me. Or when people would start talking bad about Asians in front of me, as if I can’t understand what they’re saying. Or when people make fun of how Chinese people speak in some made-up version of Chinese, thinking it’s funny. I noticed that all these things happen when students see an Asian person. Somehow it triggers in their brains that it’s okay for them to talk or act this way. They think it’s hilarious, while I’m the one getting hurt by it.” These sort of incidents leave students with feelings of exclusion and isolation.

Lee and Hornsby express how being Asian-American women can contribute to feeling even more vulnerable to attacks, especially in spaces where alcohol are present. “One time, I was walking by a fraternity house, and they yelled, ‘Do you want some eggrolls?’ and ‘Come up and play with us.’ And ‘Sexy Asian!’” recalls Lee. Similarly, Chen has experienced similar objectification and exotification, saying there have been “countless incidents where I’ve been attempted to be picked up with ‘Ni hao’”. Issues of street harassment and hate speech often go unchecked by the university, but students still feel its very real effects.

Students met at the AAA general body meeting last Thursday and discussed how Asian-Americans are seen as being silent about their experiences. However, “ignoring discrimination does not make it go away, it just gives the aggressor more assurance that what they are doing is acceptable and won’t be challenged,” shares Perrin-Stowe. “I’ve decided to break the silence on this issue because Miami needs to hear our personal encounters with this type of behavior. Microaggressions against international students, Asian American students, and other minority groups occurs at Miami University more often than people think. If this trend continues, many potential minority students will lose interest in attending Miami due to its lack of cultural diversity and acceptance. We planned this event to educate the student body on how deal with these types of situations, promote cultural awareness, and explain that having the right of freedom of speech also means being responsible enough to use it appropriately,” says Christine Pil, Senior, Zoology Major, and Vice-President of AAA. “As a member of AAA, it is important that everyone speak up and that we stand together to show that these tweets are not acceptable. Change and understanding will require a group effort. There is an underlying bias at this and other universities against Asians, particularly international students, that needs to stop,” urges Dougherty.

Although the students of AAA have taken action and are receiving support from the Office of Diversity Affairs, they still desire that the university “acknowledge this problem and take some actions and make minority student feel they are more welcomed” says Ginting. Dougherty says that “this is an opportunity for open discussion about the underlying issue here: that is, racism and bias towards minority students. However, the first step in this would be the University taking a stand and making it known that this is unacceptable,” before moving forward and enacting real change. Forrest McGuire, Chief of Staff for Associated Student Government and Junior, shares “I want my peers and my

university not to be bystanders in situations like this—they need to speak up against any form of racism on Miami’s campus.”

The students of AAA see one another as family, people who make them feel they belong on this campus. They have created a space where their unique cultures and stories can be embraced. Still, they desire for future Asian-American students to feel they are accepted and included in more places on Miami University’s campus. These students are attempting to do something we should all do: to leave our environments in a better state than we first encounter them.