“LOOKING FOR TROUBLE AND MAKING IT”: RHETORICAL METHODOLOGIES AND PRACTICES FOR LGTBQ COMMUNITY ACTION AND REMEMBERING

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ABSTRACT

"LOOKING FOR TROUBLE AND MAKING IT": RHETORICAL METHODOLOGIES AND PRACTICES FOR LGTBQ COMMUNITY ACTION AND REMEMBERING

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In this project, I study the rhetorical practices of two lesbian collectives, the Let's Be an Apple Pie Collective and the Ambitious Amazons, involved with the Lesbian Center in Lansing, MI in the 1970s and 1980s. Reading across twenty years of Center newsletters and other archival and ephemeral materials located in MSU Special Collections, collective and individual archives, and collective oral history interviews I conducted with collective members, I trace the rhetorical practices through which the collectives engaged the lesbian, and larger geographic, community and sustained the Center. I introduce the exigency for the study through both the story of my own coming into this project and the multitude of creation stories the collective members and archival materials tell about the exigence and creation of the Lesbian Center. I also introduce the tensions in these exigencies and introduce the participants and the collectives they were a part of. I build a methodological framework for queer rhetorical historiography and public memory scholarship which draws on and is responsive to the collectives' rhetorical practices of the community. I find that the collectives' rhetorical practices of gathering and naming emerge as tactical interventions to create cultural spaces of survival and "thrive-al" and to negotiate tension and risk within the Center and the larger community. I describe *gathering to make available*, a rhetorical practice that Lansing lesbian collectives engaged in to create social spaces and places. *Gathering to make available* involved the tactics of identifying, interfacing, envisioning, documenting, sustaining, and assembling. I also study the collectives' use of naming as a rhetorical strategy. The

collectives used tactics of visibility and tactics of coding in naming. I argue that the rhetorical strategy of naming has both discursive and material impacts and speaks to the collectives' larger social and epistemological politics. Finally, I offer methodological implications for scholars of rhetorical historiography.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Lyn, to Marilyn: Remember you and I used to laugh about looking for trouble and looking around and thinking, 'We need a lesbian center in this town. Let's go make one! We need a bookstore in this town. Let's go make one!"

Marilyn: We would characterize this generically as "looking for trouble and then making it."

My curiosity about the queer public memory and histories of the Lansing area deepened in May 2014 when I learned of a new cultural heritage theme study the National Park Service had just announced: the LGBTQ Initiative, aimed at identifying, interpreting, and commemorating sites related to LGBTQ history. One part of the Initiative is a Google map of "Places with LGBTQ Heritage." As I glanced at the map, I noticed the Midwest and Upper/Great Plains' lack of pins. As of October 2015, there were a few pins in Chicago, Minneapolis, and other large urban areas, like Detroit, the location of the only two pins in Michigan. There were no other pins in Michigan, no pin to mark the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, the long-running, and arguably the most notable and notorious womyn's music festival in the United States. There were no pins in mid-Michigan, no pin to mark East Lansing, the first community in the country to enact protections for gays and lesbians in 1972, and no pin to mark Lansing, the home of *Lesbian Connection*, the longest running publication for lesbians in the country. I recalled and reflected on those significant places in the queer history of the Lansing area that I'd been learning more about since moving to the Lansing area in 2012 to study at Michigan State University. While I knew better than to mistake the map for the territory, I understood that there must have been an even deeper, richer history of LGBTQ people creating community and activism in the area.

In this chapter, I tell the origin stories of my project and the story of two lesbian collectives – the Let's Be an Apple Pie Collective and the Ambitious Amazons – and the Lansing Lesbian Center in the mid-1970s. Using storytelling, I introduce the exigencies for the study through both the story of my own coming into this project and the multitude of origin stories the collective members and archival materials tell about the exigence and creation of the Lansing Lesbian Center in Lansing, MI.

Research Questions

But first, let me provide a bit of a more traditional origin story for a dissertation project. The questions that framed this inquiry are:

- How did the lesbian collectives in mid-Michigan understand and describe their roles in the lesbian community and how did those roles shape the rhetorical practices they engaged in?
- What rhetorical practices did the collectives engage in to fulfill that work?
- How might researchers of feminist and queer rhetorical history learn from communities and their organizing to shape their methodologies?

The research questions evolved throughout the course of this project. Initially, I started with research questions which more descriptively- and causally-focused around the public memory of the Center; however, I allowed the questions to shift based on the community members' interests and views, a process I discuss in Chapters 2 and 5.

Purpose of the Study

Following from the questions above, this dissertation has two purposes: 1) to offer a framework for community-initiated and community-sustaining rhetorical action and 2) to create

a methodological framework for engaging in rhetorical public memory and historiographical projects with and for feminist and queer communities.

Proximal Exigencies: Geographical, Virtual, and Affective

My motivations for this project were in many ways proximal. Janine Solberg develops the concept of proximity as tool for reflecting on the research process, arguing that proximity is at once spatial and relational and locates research in space, time and larger contexts and relationships. Solberg asserts there are three types of proximity: geographical, virtual, and affective, and they connect researcher positionality to research tools and methods and methodologies. Virtual proximity is the possibility of locating materials "through the use of finding aids, search technologies, metadata, and similar mechanisms" (67-68). Geographical proximity describes the physical location of research artifacts. Affective proximity is the emotional factors that drive topic selection. Virtual, geographical, and affective proximity all played a part in my decision to study the Lansing Lesbian Center and the two lesbian collectives who operated it, the Let's Be an Apple Pie Collective and the Ambitious Amazons.

Following my hunch about LGTBQ activism in the area, I turned to the Michigan State University (MSU) Special Collections to see what I could find. MSU Special Collections houses a Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay, and Transgender Collection in its Radicalism collection. The LGTBQ Collection was established in the early 1970s and was one of the first of its kind at that time. Librarian Anne E. Tracy, who was a member of the local LGBTQ community, was dedicated to preserving materials of the community within the institutional archives. A little searching through the MSU Special Collections online database turned up a wealth of materials related to LGBTQ history on the Michigan State campus and in the greater Lansing area. I learned that, indeed, a vibrant network of LGBTQ collectives, organizations, places and publications existed

in Lansing and East Lansing in the latter half of the 20th century. From my perspective – and, surely, in part because of the archiving focus and efforts of Tracy, her colleagues, and the larger lesbian community – the lesbian and women-centered network had extensive materials in the archives and, therefore, at least the appearance of having been especially active.

One particular organization, the Lansing Lesbian Center, was the location of many events, multiple publications, and groups, as I saw evidenced in my early searches in the MSU Library online database by multiple related listings and portfolios under iterations of the publication name "Center News" and under the two collective names. In Chapter 2, I provide a comprehensive list of those materials. I soon learned that the Let's Be an Apple Pie Collective founded the Lansing Lesbian Center in 1975. The Ambitious Amazons, the small lesbian collective that was in the process of creating the *Lesbian Connection* (LC), rented a room to assemble and distribute their developing publication. In February 1977, another unnamed collective took it over, and later that spring, the Ambitious Amazons assumed responsibility for the finances and operation of the Center where they'd been renting an office and organizing monthly gatherings for Michigan lesbians, known as "Statewides." As the collectives focused on creating and strengthening lesbian community and spaces in Lansing, Michigan, and the U.S. through newsletters, events, like dances and discussion groups, and spaces like the Center, they were also attentive to documenting lesbian experience, collecting resources, and recording the organization's and related associations' histories.

By beginning with the story of how I came to this project through not seeing any historical LGBTQ sites on the NPS LGBTQ Cultural Heritage Initiative map, I mean to make clear that my interest in the local area, geographically speaking, was a primary motivator. After searching online records, I walked from my office to MSU Library's Special Collections brick and mortar

location in the Main Library. As I dug into the archival materials, I realize some people were even closer than I knew: one of the founding members of the Let's Be an Apple Collective lived across the street from my partner, and I recognized many other names in the archival materials as people I knew, or knew of, in the community.

The affective proximity is a bit more complex. While I am interested and drawn to queer historiography and community organizing, what drew me to the Lansing Lesbian Center was more akin to affective, or ideological, distance, than proximity. While it's beyond the scope or focus of this project to do an extensive review of the issues, there is a history of lesbian or "womyn" only spaces defining "woman" biologically, "woman-born, woman-identified" as the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival slogan goes. As a queer-identified woman, I have a keen interest in queer women-centered histories; and yet as a cisgender person who operates in alliance with trans* people, I have some qualms and discomforts with the ways in which women-centered queer histories have sometimes been trans*exclusionary. As Royster and Kirsch suggest, feminist rhetorical research requires *strategic contemplation*: that we step back, take things slow, and ask ourselves questions about our obligations and ethics. They pose the following question: "How do we respond to — and represent — historical subjects when we discover that we may not share their values or beliefs?" (22). I frequently asked myself this question over the course of this project. While Solberg and others have taken up the concept of proximity, I'm thinking also of affective distance, that affective distance which piqued my curiosity. However, in my initial pass through the archival materials, I also noticed I began to have different kinds of reactions based on which collective's newsletters I was reading. As I read the Let's Be an Apple Pie Collective's materials in my early passes, I could feel myself developing a fondness for them. When I read in their first newsletter that one of their purposes

for having a lesbian center branch on campus was so they could "exploit university resources," I felt a kind of knowing wave wash over me, a recognition of kindred spirits. I had jokingly used to the phrase "to exploit university resources" in the past to describe my motivation for community-based work.

As I settled on a historiography project about the Lansing Lesbian Center, the specific focus of my analysis developed as I read archival materials and interviewed collective members, a process I address in the next chapter.

Creation of the Collectives and the Center

In the 1960s and 70s, women's and lesbian collectives were increasing in popularity and generally sought to "create a safe space for women, develop a viable feminist economy, to re-create female identity free from patriarchal influence, and to dismantle the patriarchy through separatism" (Shugar 180). The Combahee River Collective and The Furies Collective are perhaps the two most well-known lesbian collectives.

The Combahee River Collective was a black feminist lesbian collective formed in Boston in 1974,

> when many of its members were struggling to define a liberating feminist practice alongside the ascendance of a predominantly white feminist movement, and a Black nationalist vision of women deferring to black male leadership (Grant 184).

Named for the Raid at the Combahee River Ferry, a military effort through which Harriet Tubman led hundreds of formerly enslaved people to freedom, the Combahee River Collective first convened to as a conscious-raising group to theorize the experience of black womanhood. In their "Combahee River Collective Statement," the Collective articulated the origins of black feminist thought and politics and their beliefs in identity politics as a mode of organizing toward

liberation, and spoke out against lesbian separatism. Throughout the 1970s, the Combahee River Collective Statement organized in Boston around activist issues such as police brutality, reproductive and abortion rights, and desegregation of schools. The "collaborative work" of the collective, Grant argues, "was made possible by long-standing relationships the collective had cultivated over years of activist work in black, feminist, and progressive communities" (185).

Several years earlier, a lesbian communal living and working group named The Furies was created in Washington D.C. in 1971. The Furies sought to connect women's rights movements, gay liberation, and class politics, and took on some of "hippie counterculture's rejection of mainstream values" (Valk 322) through their theorizing of lesbian feminism. The Furies published a newspaper, *The Furies*, to distribute their writing and ideas. While the Combahee River Collective and The Furies Collective had vastly different ideologies and ways of organizing, both embodied the work of lesbian collective organizing of the time in that they each were theorizing, writing, and publishing; seeking to translate their politics and ideas into practice; working from identity politics; negotiating boundaries of those identities and describing and struggling with how to define their identities and issues, as well as those of their allies; and relying on community networks and relationships to facilitate their work.

Situated in this historical milieu, two groups of lesbian women in Lansing, Michigan came together to form two collectives: Let's Be an Apple Pie and Ambitious Amazons. The Let's Be an Apple Pie collective formed in 1975 and aimed to create and maintain a local lesbian community center—the Lansing Lesbian Center, which it ran until the collective dissolved in 1977 and gave up responsibility for the Center. The Ambitious Amazons collective formed in 1974 to create the publication space of the *Lesbian Connection*, a national communication network for lesbians, which it continues to publish.

The course of events which led to the creation of the Lansing Lesbian Center was in many ways propelled by some moments of crisis at the Women's Center in East Lansing, which included internal ideological conflicts between groups of women, infrastructural issues like funding and space, and external ideological forces. Ideological differences included disagreement about issues such as whether bisexual women should be included in lesbian events. One example of external ideological forces influencing the community occurred when women from other lesbian separatist communities goading the Lansing collectives into being more political in their organizing. The infrastructural issues included loss of financial support when the City of East Lansing revoked funding from the Center and loss of building space when the landlady evicted the collectives. There was a confluence of events; and yet, each collective recalled different aspects and significances of those happenings when we spoke about the creation of their collectives and the Center, particularly as that creation was motivated by a move away from the Women's Center in East Lansing.

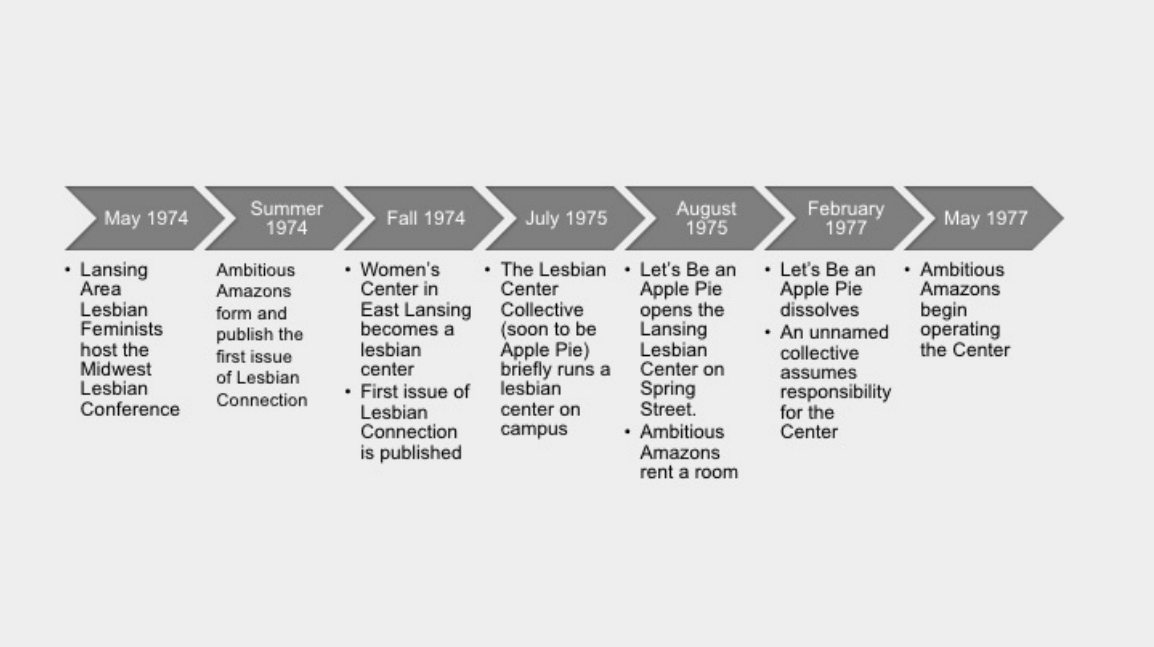


Figure 1. Brief timeline of significant moments in the early years of the Lesbian Center

In the following section, I tell the stories each collective told about their experience of those exigencies and events in more detail. The point of setting their stories side by side is not to settle on some accurate record of "true" events; rather looking at each collective's respective telling of the happenings, and what elements take precedence in each telling, can help shed light both on the values and perspectives of the collectives, as well as on their relationships and commonalities and their tensions and differences. As Kennedy argues: "oral histories, if sensitively used, can provide a window into how individuals understand and interpret their lives" (191). Kennedy, in her discussion of Portelli's oral history research with workers in Terni, Italy, who didn't give an accurate timeline of events according to other historical documents, writes:

> This inconsistency could be taken to show the unreliability of oral history and the faultiness of memory. Portelli suggests otherwise. Although the stories in this case do not help in ascertaining dates, which can be obtained from other sources, they do relay information about how workers think about their lives and the value they give to dignity and pride. Portelli argues that many people had moved the date…because in their minds the mass strikes of that time avenged the death of [a fellow worker]. It was too painful to consider that a fellow worker did not die for a major cause, that that his death had not been avenged (191).

In this view, stories that individuals and collectives tell can reveal the meaning that individuals assign and create from events in their lives and pasts. When I spoke with the Let's Be an Apple Pie Collective members, Terry reflected on the potential contradictory or diversionary perspectives that might arise as the various factions of the Lansing lesbian community reflected on their shared history: "It could be interesting. One time, my partner Sue and I were at a party and we were asked what our fight was and we knew what it was, in fact it happened in front of

these two [Marilyn and Lyn, two of her fellow collective members]" "Oh, I remember that!" Marilyn chimed in. And Terry continued:

> People said, it was a game, and they said what was the fight about? And we almost had it over again because we disagreed about what the fight was about. And, so, I'm thinking about you writing about this community stuff and what each side thinks we were fighting about…and we're like "Nooo... it was this way! No, it was that way."

Examining the variations between memory (collective or individual) and historical documents gives insight into cultural values. Further, as Thomas King writes: "contained within creation stories are relationships that help to define the nature of the universe and how cultures understand the world in which they exist" (10). The creation stories that the Collectives tell can help define: 1) how the collectives think about their work and value, 2) how they understand their relationships with each other, 3) how they understand the local lesbian community. I start with an event which occurred early in the string of events and which both collectives attributed significant meaning to—the Midwest Lesbian Conference, held in East Lansing at MSU in 1974. From there, I include the stories in the order in which I heard them, the sequence in which I conducted the interviews—first, the Let's Be an Apple Pie Collective, then, the Ambitious Amazons.

Women's Center and Lansing Area Lesbian Feminists

Prior to the creation of the Lesbian Center on Spring Street in Lansing, there was a Women's Center on Grand River Avenue in East Lansing, directly across the street from the Michigan State University campus. The Women's Center received funding support from the City of East Lansing in its first year, 1973. The Women's Center hosted services and events such as

rape, abortion, and feminist counseling, consciousness-raising and gay women's rap groups, and a speaker's bureau. It was also a meeting location for various collectives, including a women's newspaper collective, women's music collective, and the Lansing Area Lesbian Feminists, who provide many of the aforementioned services and organized a nationwide lesbian conference in the spring of 1974 ("Women's Center"). At the time of the Midwest Lesbian Conference, the Ambitious Amazons and Let's Be an Apple Pie collectives did not exist yet; rather, the women who would eventually split into two groups to become those collectives were members of the Lansing Area Lesbian Feminists.

Midwest Lesbian Conference: "Outside Agitators" Stirring "The Shit Up"

Members of both Let's Be an Apple Pie and Ambitious Amazons identified The Midwest Lesbian Conference and its aftereffects as a significant historical moment for change in the local community. The Midwest Lesbian Conference was held in May 1974 at Michigan State University. Over 200 women from across the U.S attended, including many from within the Lansing area and Michigan at large (Grosvenor). Women from both Let's Be an Apple and Ambitious Amazons recalled lesbians from Chicago who came to the conference as one catalyst for disruption and transformation in the local lesbian community. As Terry and Lyn, of Let's Be an Apple Pie, remembered:

> Terry: So, these separatist women came from Chicago.
>
> Lyn: Ah, the outside agitators.
>
> Terry: And they said that we were such a sweet little agreeable community because we weren't political. Of course, we'd just put on this Midwest Lesbian Conference in which we'd had all these workshops and that kinda stuff. The only reason we were able to do that was because we got along with each other and the

only reason we got along with each other was because we weren't political. [They said] that we should be separatists. That was some of the first cracks in the sidewalk of the community, that I remember, was them coming and talking about that.

As margy[1] and Cheryl recalled it:

margy: When we put out our first conference, our first lesbian conference, we had all these women from Chicago come and they were all in the midst of the, they call it the "Chicago Lesbian Wars," and they sort of came and brought [the lesbian wars along with] them. And we were just, somebody called us the, Lansing was like this, or East Lansing… you know, this loving but apolitical community, because all we did was "Let's have fun" and then you know these women came from Chicago and other women from the Midwest and it sort of educated us on all these different issues that we'd never even thought of, you know, like "No, you can't have it in a bar, there's alcoholism" and then this and then you know, accessibility. It's like whoa. But that's what you know, it was from that conference actually that, after that conference, which was the spring of '74, that summer was when lots of lesbian groups, collectives doing all sorts of different things started. And that's when you know we started the whole thing, changing the women's Center into a lesbian center and we started Lesbian Connection from that, you know, so a lot came from that one event.

Cheryl: They stirred the shit up, didn't they?...Yeah, sometimes what we teach each other isn't always the best things, you know.

[1] margy does not capitalize her first or last name.

By the accounts of both collectives, the Midwest Lesbian Conference and the influence of the lesbian separatists from Chicago "stirred shit up" and pushed the community members to both increase their collective lesbian organizing and change the shape, methods, and underlying principles of their organizing. The participants cited this event as a catalyst for the splintering of the Lansing Area Lesbian Feminists into multiple "sects," which would include the Let's Be an Apple Pie Collective and the Ambitious Amazons.

Let's Be an Apple Pie Collective

Beyond noting the Midwest Lesbian Conference as one catalyst for community change, Let's Be an Apple Pie remembered an incident at the Women's Center in East Lansing that motivated a small group of women to form the Let's Be an Apple Pie Collective and move to a different location and establish the Lesbian Center. For Terry and Lyn, the precipitating event of the dissolution of the Women's Center in its early days of becoming a Lesbian Center in East Lansing was one of exclusion and definition around who was welcome at a lesbian center. Terry recalled:

> One of the precipitating events of splitting was, ah, that one of the women came to an event there and she didn't identify as lesbian and people, some people knew that and they asked her to leave and then others of us ... some of us got really upset that she was asked to leave because many of us – not me because I felt like I was one that was born as lesbian – many women were coming out then and they weren't very strongly identified as lesbian yet.

Lyn added: "Well, she [chose] to identify as 'bisexual' that was the … 'oooooh,'" implying it was considered taboo or scandalous by some of the lesbians who were newly committed to separatism to identify as bisexual rather than lesbian. Terry continued describing the

disappointment that she and other women felt at that exclusion:

> Well, it was really a drag and we realized that we were not in a place of excluding women who wanted to be self-identified as belonging, so we...that was one of the big precipitating issues I recall and we must've been having to leave that space.

Terry recalled the shift from the Lansing Area Lesbian Feminist collective to multiple factions:

> I mean we split into two groups while we were still there over some issues, some intense issues…I mean, this [page of meeting notes] says, mainly that we want the Center to be the things that [Lyn] said: where we can have events and we can do stuff and, uh, then it was about how we were gonna split the assets from the old center and that was a huge point of contention. In terms of the Tuesday night meeting, it's a big argument about money and the Lesbian Connection saying if they didn't' get the hundred...it was all over one hundred dollars.

Lyn questioned whether the precipitating issue might have been something else: "Or was it that margy wanted to leave and have a space for LC?" Lyn recalled:

> So, I came in after this hoo-ha. I heard about the problem, about bisexual and that. And I don't, I really don't remember except coming in at the point where LC needed a space and it became clear that LC...I think they were talking about Lesbian Center but it became clear that they didn't have energy or interest in doing a community lesbian center. They wanted a place where they could put together the LC, maybe run some fundraisers but, and some of us completely naive, speaking for myself, having just caught feminism within the last, the previous couple years and, like, ya know, gung-ho…thought it was nuts to be trying to support a building or a space and not doing community events and came

> up with the idea that we would make a collective, because it was the 70s after all, and because we were really interested in being as correct politically as you could possibly be, that we would, that *we* would undertake to maintain a lesbian center and partly support that by rent from LC. So, LC would have room and they would have the run of the general space for collating and stuff, but that we wouldn't be wasting that space the rest of the time. That's what I remember.

Let's Be an Apple Pie began with ten members, and membership shifted several times in its two-year existence. In their first official newsletter, published in September 1975, the Let's Be an Apple Pie collective wrote: "We are a collective of lesbians whose purpose as a collective is to provide and run a center for the use of the local lesbian community of which we are members." The collective formed to facilitate the functioning of what would come to be known as the Lansing Lesbian Center.

Of the creation of the collective, Lyn recalled: We "came up with the idea that we would make a collective, because it was the 70s after all, and because we were really interested in being as correct politically as you could possibly be." She alludes to the place of collectives in women and lesbian community organizing at the time and to the idea of political correctness, a key value for the collective. Political correctness for them meant, the "good meaning of politically correct," according to Marilyn: "social pressure to understand and stop doing the bad things that were parts of networks of oppression."

The collective wrote: "We see ourselves as custodians, gathering the personal and material resources of this local lesbian community to make them available to this same community at large." The role of custodian calls upon professions of caring for and cleaning buildings and facilities, and by proxy, to the notion of custody, which nods to legal discourses of

relationships between people and institutions. By naming themselves as custodians, the Let's Be an Apple Pie Collective oriented their actions to the lesbian community, its resources, and the Center. In their first issue of the Lansing Lesbian Center Newsletter, which they describe as a formal "statement of [their] purpose and policies," Apple Pie wrote that they intended to:

> provide space, facilities, and resources for social events, community service, political and educational functions and other activities of self-defined lesbians who consider themselves close enough to the center to make regular use of it.

As Marilyn described in a later Center newsletter, "I tend the Center to make a 'socially-politically' comfortable space for other parts of my living" ("Issue 11").

The Ambitious Amazons

External forces played a larger role in how the Ambitious Amazons recalled their history. margy recalled that in the fall of 1974, after the Midwest Lesbian Conference, the Lansing Area Lesbian Feminists, having been influenced by the ideas of separatism imported from Chicago, began the process of converting the Women's Center to a Lesbian Center. margy described the Women's Center and the conversion process:

> Originally, it had been a women's center and then we took it over and changed it into a lesbian center, partly because, and this is when it was a women's center, we had tried to get, we were trying to get funding through the county and the city to pay for a half-time position for somebody to run it, um, which was gonna be me, and, um, it looked really good, the county was [granting] the most funding and we had gone through all the hearings and stuff and it was like, great, but right before the final sign off on it, I don't know if it was Right to Life, one of the right wing groups got wind of it and called all the county commissioners and freaked out that

> because there lesbians and we had put out a brochure, not to the county but they got hold of one, that talked about all the different collectives that met at the Center and one of them was the lesbian group and then one was the self-help health group, women's health group, and they did, ya know, self-help exams with the speculums…and of course, there was abortion counseling, too…It became too much of a political hot potato for the county commissioners, so they backed off and actually another group, which annoyed us, I think it was the Drug Education Center, was what they were called at the time, quickly created, because the county really wanted to fund, we were doing rape counseling and they really wanted to fund that to make it, you know, because there was such a need, and when it got known in the community that our funding was in jeopardy, this other group, non-profit group, quickly created a rape counseling factor, and came in and said "We'll do it, and ya know, we're not controversial." That gave the county commissioners their out. They could switch funding to them and cut us out, so then we lost that funding, and we were trying to figure out over the summer what to do and then we decided we wanted to do stuff for lesbians rather than trying to reach all women.

Cheryl added: "As long as you were gonna get slammed for it anyway, you might as well own it and be it." margy recalled that they re-opened as a Lesbian Center in the fall of 1974:

> And then immediately the landlady tried to evict us and after we went to court and everything…She dropped the case, but what our lawyer said…who was actually a renowned liberal, Zolton Ferency. He'd run for governor in Michigan and stuff, but anyway, he said that she was realizing she was losing the case so she dropped

> the case and then, um, she could wait a few months and then raise the rent, and get rid of us that way, which is exactly what she did. After she did that, we had to find a new place and I think that's when the other collectives came to be, the Apple Pie group, I'm not positive. I don't know what they said, how they remembered it… We got evicted from the Center on Grand River."

East Lansing had passed a city ordinance in 1973 which prevented discrimination against LGBTQ people and businesses. The ordinance prevented the outright eviction, but not raising the rent several months later.

In the face of needing to find a new location, the Ambitious Amazons decided to shift the focus of their work from running a community center to publishing a magazine, a change stemming also from the Midwest Lesbian Conference. When they were organizing the conference, they realized that promoting the conference was "almost impossible" because it "occurred to [them] that no matter how many artists created lesbian albums, books or posters, or how many activists organized lesbian groups, centers, or conferences, it all would be basically pointless if other lesbians had no way of knowing these things existed." ("A Little About Us").

The Ambitious Amazon collective began with four Ambitious Amazons, and the membership of the collective has transformed over the course of its history. They set out to fill the "need for a worldwide lesbian communications network" by creating *Lesbian Connection*, "a free worldwide magazine for lesbians." Because the Amazons did not think of themselves as writers and they knew that they did not and could not represent all lesbians, they decided that the content of *Lesbian Connect*ion should not be written solely by the collective members but generated and written by its readers. Through the process of wider representation and perspectives of many lesbians, they asserted that *Lesbian Connection* would "thereby [become a]

space for a wide-ranging lesbian dialogue" ("A Little About Us").

The Ambitious Amazons oriented themselves as caretakers in relationship to a wider network of lesbians: "We thought of ourselves as the caretakers of this forum, the ones who physically put it all together." ("A Little about Us"). The orientation of caretaker for the Ambitious Amazons is fulfilled by the actions of physically assembling the forum. The demands of producing such a publication required a location to create, assemble, and distribute the magazine. For the Ambitious Amazons, the facility and space of the Center were logistical and physical necessities to do the work of creating the space of the *Lesbian Connection*. The Amazons rented a room in the Center to produce *Lesbian Connection* until spring 1977, when they gained responsibility of running the Center. *Lesbian Connection* is still being published today.

Organizational Overview of the Dissertation

In this chapter, I have recounted the origin stories of this dissertation project, the lesbian collectives I studied, and the Lansing Lesbian Center in the mid-1970s. I have introduced the exigency for the study through both the story of my own coming into this project and the multitude of creation stories the collective members and archival materials tell about the exigence and creation of the Lansing Lesbian Center in Lansing, MI.

In Chapter 2, "Methodology and Methods," I articulate the methodological framework and methods for this project. The methodology draws from feminist rhetorical historiography, cultural rhetorics, and, most importantly, the rhetorical practices of the collectives. I describe my data set, which includes 20 years of newsletters, as well as other institutional, community, and personal archival ephemera, and in-depth interviews with members of the collectives. I also

describe the methodological processes of this project, including the evolution of the interview methods based on collective desire and practices.

In Chapter 3, "*Gathering to Make Available*: Creating Spaces Through Everyday Practices of Sharing," I describe *gathering to make available*, a rhetorical practice that Lansing lesbian collectives used to create social spaces. The collective members gathered and shared many things—people, power, ideas, capacities, and material and financial resources. *Gathering to make available* involved the tactics of identifying, interfacing, envisioning, documenting, sustaining, and assembling.

In Chapter 4, "'It's a Delicate Balance': Visibility and Coding as Rhetorical Tactics of Naming," I focus on the collectives' use of naming as a rhetorical strategy. The collectives used tactics of visibility and tactics of coding in naming. The collectives sometimes used naming as a tactic of visibility, giving a swim team a conspicuously lesbian name for a public competition, for example. Naming for visibility, then, is a way to create and perform lesbian identity and presence in public spaces. At other times the collectives used naming as a tactic for coding. I draw attention to patterns in which the collectives intentionally obscured the lesbian identifiers in names they created to avoid attention and potentially unsafe conditions. In these ways, the rhetorical strategy of naming has both discursive and material impacts and speaks to the collectives' larger social and epistemological politics.

In Chapter 5, "Conclusion," I reiterate and synthesize the preceding chapters to conclude the dissertation with implications for the field of rhetoric and composition.

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

In the previous chapter, I outlined the guiding inquiries of my project: to examine how the Let's Be an Apple and Ambitious Amazon collectives understand and describe their roles and work and rhetorical practices they engaged in to fulfill that work. Further, I ask what rhetorical scholars of feminist and queer history might learn from communities and their organizing to shape their methodologies and how can rhetorical scholars create historical projects and artifacts that might find use in and for the communities from which they arise.

Following from those questions, I seek: 1) to offer a framework for community-initiated and community-sustaining rhetorical action and 2) to create a methodological framework for engaging in rhetorical public memory and historiographical projects with and for feminist and queer communities. These aims necessitate not just a historiography, but a queer rhetorical historiography guided by methodological scholarship in feminist and queer rhetorical historiography and, perhaps more significantly, informed by the theories, values, and practices of the lesbian community which I am working with and studying. Therefore, in this chapter, I review relevant scholarship in feminist and queer rhetorical historiography. I also describe the affordances of oral history for queer rhetorical historiography. Finally, I articulate the methodological principles that guided this project and describe the methods.

Feminist and Queer Rhetorical Historiography Methodologies: From Recovery and Gendered Analysis to Remembering and Rhetorical Processes of Gendering

Feminist historiography has often been understood to fall into two categories of methodologies: recovery and gendered analysis (Jarratt cited in "Queering" 40; Tasker and Holt-Underwood; Schell and Rawson 10). In the discipline of rhetorical studies, the origins of this split in feminist historiography are often traced and attributed to Karlyn Kohrs Campbell's book,

Man Cannot Speak for Her: Volume I, a study of the rhetoric of women's rights activists published in 1989, and the subsequent dispute in *Philosophy and Rhetoric* between Kohrs Campbell and Barbara Biesecker.

Man Cannot Speak for Her was considered primarily a recovery project. Taking poststructuralist perspective, Biesecker criticized the work's "affirmative action" approach (Biesecker 340). Biesecker argued instead "for a feminist intervention into the history of Rhetoric that persistently critiques its own practices of inclusion and exclusion by relativizing rather than universalizing what Aristotle identified as 'the available means of persuasion'" (350). In response, Kohrs Campbell accused Biesecker of participating in the historical silencing of women ("Biesecker Cannot Speak"). Since that exchange in *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, recovery and gendered analysis and their tensions have persisted as dominant feminist rhetorical methodologies. In this research project, I considered how I could engage in rhetorical scholarship which relativizes and analyzes the rhetorical practices of the local lesbian collectives, while attending to how my work might also recover some of the history of the community, as I aimed to create historical artifacts which would be useful and useable for the community members.

Increasingly, feminist rhetorical historiographers call for methodologies that push past the limits of recovery and gendered analysis. In her *Octalog II* talk, Cheryl Glenn called for rhet/comp scholars to "regender rhetorical history" by "imagin[ing] gender as an inclusive and nonhierarchical category of analysis for…examining a wide range of rhetorical performances by sexed bodies…[and] denaturalizing the concept of sexual differences" (29). Similarly, in her *Octalog III* talk, Jessica Enoch argued for a new feminist historiographical practice of gendered rhetorical analysis through which scholars might interrogate the processes by which ideas and concepts surrounding gender and power relations come to be normalized. In her later article

"Releasing Hold," Enoch extends her Octalog III ideas and the two primary methodologies of recovery and gendered analysis by calling for "remembering" and "rhetorical process of gendering," methodologies which investigate "the dynamic relationships among rhetoric, gender, and history" (60). She suggests researchers should look outside textual materials and those materials held in traditional archives and looking closely at the assumptions inherent in our methodologies.

At a disciplinary level, scholars in rhetoric and composition increasingly turn to the rhetoricity of remembering and public memory as a way both to expand the "boundaries of historical recovery" (Enoch 60) and to examine the "operations of power and the possibilities for resistance in creating and sustaining women's presence in public memory" (Enoch 63). In this way, studies of public memory can be one way of working across the methodological divide of recovery and gendered analysis for feminist rhetorical historiographers.

However, in the face of the "memory boom," some assert memory is used to refer to so many things that it is rendered almost meaningless. Moshenska argues that the concepts of memory and public memory have come to reference "a bewildering number of things including (inter alia): data, literature, archives, knowledge, impressions of the past, traditions, old things, stories, myths and legends, popular histories, memes, souvenirs, places, monuments, and so on" (201). Because of the range of its referents, he argues that memory has lost its power of specificity: "A word that means so much can signify no one thing accurately" (202). Therefore, he calls for "the use of more specific, active terms such as 'remember' and 'commemorate' that describe actual processes and encourage analysis that focuses on agency and context" (Moshenska 204). Moshenska proposes a three-pronged model for approaching memory

phenomena, which focuses on rhetorical uses of various media, narratives told by individuals or small groups, and differences in public narratives (Moshenska 205).

In this project, I attempt to span the methodological divide of recovery and gendered analysis, using remembering to examine the rhetorical practices lesbian collectives employed to build lesbian communities. I also engage in writing what some might consider a recovered history. To study memory and rhetorical histories in this community, I use Moshenska's model. I analyze various types of media, including newsletters, magazines, community events. I create "narratives within small groups," by first focusing on the rhetorical work of small collectives and by collective oral history interviews in which the individuals engaged in remembering and storytelling. In the introduction, I set differing narratives about the origins of the collective and Center alongside each other. Moshenska calls for this work in the "public sphere," particularly. The public memory of the Center – understood by members of the current lesbian community, who were not around at the Center's inception – tend to erase both the role of the Let's Be an Apple Pie from the Center and the Center as anything except a place which supported the *Lesbian Connection.* In the following sections, I describe how I enact and extend Moshenska's model in this project through the use of archival materials and oral history.

Archives: From Storehouses to Sites of Rhetorical Meaning-meaning

Heeding Moshenska's call for looking to various types of media requires also a critical understanding of the ways in which archives and archiving are themselves, what he calls, "cultural, political, and intellectual processes to promote and amplify specific narratives" (205). Alongside shifting methodologies for feminist rhetorical historiography, disciplinary understanding of archives has been evolving.

In rhetoric and composition, ideas about the purpose of archives have shifted to align more with the cultural historiography approaches. In her essay "(Per)Forming Archival Research Methodologies," Lynée Lewis Gaillet captures that understanding, writing that "archives are now viewed as primary sources for creating knowledge rather than mere storehouses for finding what is already known" (39). Citing historian Ann Laura Stoler, who investigates colonial cultures through archival productions, Gaillet sums up this zeitgeist as: "archiving as a process rather than archives as things" (40). Gaillet argues that archives are often viewed in one of two ways: as places of storage or places of meaning making (39).

The methodologies of recovery and gendered analysis align, respectively, with these two purposes: Feminist rhetorical historiographers who focus primarily on recovery are more likely to seek out materials in traditional archives where materials are stored. On the other hand, those more interested in gendered analysis tend to be more interested in archives as places of meaning-making and archives as a process, rather than a static location and set of documents. Either approach maintains two assumptions that Sarah Hallenbeck notes of feminist rhetorical historiographical scholarship: "feminist rhetorics are women's rhetorics and rhetorical action is organized and contained" (16). That is, all women's rhetoric falls under the purview of feminist rhetoric and rhetorical action can be located in documents and ephemera located in archives (Hallenbeck 14).

Despite the acknowledgement of the limitations of traditional archives and materials in representing women's rhetorical history, feminist rhetorical historiographers are *generally*, and perhaps even *increasingly*, beholden to materials in printed textual forms, as well as to documents found in traditional institutional archives. To put it another way, "archive-based

histories" (Hawhee and Olson 100) are the currency of rhetorical historiography and "historiography is becoming archival at its core" (Graban et al. 236).

The meaning of archives in rhetoric and composition continues to push the field toward varied methodologies, including queer archival methodologies. Queer rhetorical and archival practices are not *necessarily* about LGBT identity, *per se*, but involve wider "critique of normativity along many different axes of identity, community, and power" (Morris and Rawson 75). Relatedly, they define a queer archive not (necessarily) as that which includes LGBT materials but archives that critique and challenge normativizing collection and circulation practices. Queer archives are, as Charles Morris and Kelly J. Rawson argue "sites of rhetorical invention" that "function variously as rhetorical resources, political engagement, constructionist historiography, and collective memory." According to Rawson, queer rhetorical archival practices allow us to rethink the bounds of our evidence and our histories, and that matters both for rhet/comp's archival work and for our investment in queer lives and histories ("Queering the Archive!" 239). In this way, I looked to the archival materials to begin to understand the ways in which the collectives invented themselves and the lesbian communities they sought to create and sustain.

In "Queer Rhetoric and the Pleasures of the Archive," Alexander and Rhodes argue that online queer archives "rework the network, putting in motion ever-changing chains of connection that break the bonds of static and stable meaning." Queer historiography rather than assuming "static and stable meaning" for concepts constellating around historiography and its methodologies embrace an anti-normativizing rhetoric that can push rhetorical historiography to interrogate and question the relationships amongst theoretical concepts.

In the face of exclusion from institutional archives, queer rhetoricians, following Foucault and Derrida and others, have used "archive(s)" as a metaphor (*Archaeology; Archive Fever*). One emerging metaphor is that of archive as a metaphor for experience. This metaphor recalls the work of noted feminist historian, Joan Scott. In Scott's "The Evidence of Experience," she argues that experience is "that which we seek to explain, that about which knowledge is produced. To think about experience in this way is to historicize it as well as to historicize the identities it produces" (780). Scott asserts that "Experience is a subject's history" (783).

Jean Bessette takes up the metaphor of archive as experience in her theorization of the book *Lesbian/Woman*, which is a collection of anecdotes by middle class lesbians, as an archive. She extends "the concept of queer archival ephemera to consider anecdotes as a form of historical evidence" (29). From Bessette's work, I take the term "archive" to function as a metaphor for a collection of evidence, regardless of where that evidence is housed, whether in an institution, a book, a body, a website. Because of exclusion from traditional archives, queer archives must look to evidence in other forms, "which means that queer archives often function as bodies of evidence" (Morris and Rawson 77).

Oral History and LGBTQ Rhetorics

Oral history has a rich history both in communities and in many academic disciplines. It is a methodology that lends itself to individual remembering and storytelling, as Moshenska's model calls for. As a methodology, it can be approached in a range of ways; however, here I will focus on three aspects of oral histories which are most relevant for this project: memory as cultural; reflexive and process-oriented; and a feminist and queer practice.

As Cultural

Before telling the origin stories of the collectives in Chapter 1, I briefly discussed the ways in which oral histories can reveal, not necessarily the truths of historical accounts, but how individuals, or collectives, in this case, understand themselves and their role in history. Biber-Hesse and Leavy argue:

> Oral history allows for the merging of individual biography and historical processes. An individual's story is narrated through memory. This means that their recollection of their experiences, and how they give meaning to those experiences, is about more than 'accuracy;' it is also a process of remembering — as they remember, they filter and interpret. Having said this, there is a tension between history and memory, the collective recorded history and the individual experience of that collective history, that can be revealed, exposed, and explicated though oral history (156).

One of the most foundational oral history projects in working class lesbian historiography is *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Go*ld in which the researchers "came upon many cases where narrators' memories were internally contradictory or conflicted with one another," and they "came to understand that these contradictory memories conveyed precisely the freedom and joy and the pain and limitation that characterized bar life in the mid-twentieth century" (Kennedy and Davis 191). In her consideration of cultural memory, Taylor looks to the ways in which embodied performances can carry memory and histories for those controlled by or excluded from Western institutional archives. She argues that "cultural memory is, among other things, a practice, an act of imagination and interconnection" that is "embodied and sensual, that is, conjured through the senses" and "links the deeply private with social, even official, practices"

(82). Oral history might be considered one of those cultural memory practices. In line with Biber-Hesse and Leavy, then, oral history could increasingly become important as a methodology for queer rhetorical historiography, particularly as the field of rhetoric and composition looks toward public memory as methodology.

As a Feminist and Queer Practice

In her 1977 article, "What's So Special About Women? Women's Oral History", Sherna Berger Gluck asserted that oral history among women is always already "a feminist encounter," no matter if the women involved identify as feminist or not, because "it is the creation of a new type of material on women; it is the validation of women's experiences; it is the communication among women of different generations; it is the discovery of our own roots and the development of a continuity which has been denied us in traditional historical accounts" (5). Oral histories have aimed to "record the voices of the historiographically–if not the historically–silent" (Shopes 132). In Biber-Hesse and Leavy's words, "oral history is also often used to study the experience of oppression— the personal experience of being a member of an oppressed group" (Biber-Hesse and Leavy 157). Biber-Hesse and Leavy cite an oral history interview project regarding the workplace discrimination and heterosexism faced by a lesbian physical education teacher, arguing that "personalizing the shared experience of oppression is a strength of oral history" (157). She asserts that "oral histories also eloquently make the case for the active agency of individuals whose lives have been lived within deeply constraining circumstances." *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold: The History of the Lesbian Communit*y was a "pivotal bridge between historicizing women's bodies and gender and the subsequent rise of queer oral history methods" (Ramirez and Boyd 2). Oral history as a methodology might also align with queer rhetorical historiography's push against heteronormative truths and evidence. For example, Morris

critiques “the rhetoric of evidence” (189) because scholars often do not concentrate on the motivations and desires behind the use of evidence (190). In his work on the rhetoric surrounding Abraham Lincoln’s sexuality, Morris asserts that evidence reveals the “materialization of desire to determine a particular truth” on the part of researchers, rather than a definitive truth of Lincoln’s sexual desire, or orientation (195).

As Cheryl, an Ambitious Amazon, explained about the local lesbian history:

> …You know, that’s the basis of how it all happens in this community is we, you know, share our knowledge and experience and try to build on it. But, you know, obviously, it’s more of an oral history. I mean there’s some artifacts that you can produce, but they don’t tell the story and you know, whenever there’s a chance to kind of preserve it and pass it on.

Not only then does oral history align with rhetorical methodologies for remembering, it is particularly suited for queer and feminist rhetorical historiographies projects. Further, as Cheryl notes, the local Lansing lesbian community understood that much of its history does not exist in archival documents. Further, those archival documents that do exist support existing narratives of the community and its own memory and history.

As Process-oriented and Reflexive

Oral history as a practice often focuses on aspects of the past and history which may not be found in archival materials and is at once reflexive in the moment and of memories. In that way, oral history takes process as both its focus and method. Shopes asserts that oral history “gathers data not available in written records about events, people, decisions, and processes,” and that “Oral history interviews are grounded in memory, and memory is a subjective instrument for recording the past, always shaped by the present moment and the individual

psyche. Oral history can reveal how individual values and actions shaped the past, and how the past shapes present-day values and actions" (np).

In the process of reflection on the past from the present moment, oral history is both practice and process. This is a key characteristic of oral history: the creation of a narrative that takes shape between the participant and the researcher. Biber-Hesse and Leavy argue that oral history is not only about the researcher learning from the participants, rather a collaborative endeavor in which meaning is made:

> But it is not enough to say that we learn about the lives of our respondents as with other qualitative methods of interview and observation, oral history allows researchers to learn about respondents' lives from their own perspective—where they create meaning, what they deem important, their feelings and attitudes (both explicit and implicit), the relationship between different life experiences or different times in their life—their perspective and their voice on their own life experiences. Oral histories allow for the collaborative generation of knowledge between the researcher and the research participant (151).

Oral history then is a space for participants to shape meaning, yet also a space of co-constructing meaning. In this project, I conducted collective, or group, oral history interviews, a decision I address more in-depth in the next section. Shopes argues that "recounting the experiences of everyday life and making sense of that experience, narrators turn history inside out, demanding to be understood as purposeful actors in the past" (np). While typical oral history interviews facilitate the co-construction of meaning between research and participants, collective oral history interviews reflect the values of this particular community and facilitate the collaboration of knowledge making across multiple participants, as they co-constructed their

memories and created and assigned meaning therein. This co-construction afforded both multiplicity of meaning and shared meaning as the collective members reflected on themselves as "purposeful actors" in the lesbian community.

Methodological Principles

The previous methodological literature has shaped my methodological approach by pushing me to consider the ways in which feminist rhetorical historiography might retain recovery as a goal, in order to produce artifacts of history which might find use in communities. However, I also situate my research in the turn towards public memory. Within that turn, remembering is a more active methodology which extends feminist methodologies. I was drawn to oral history as a methodology because it is particularly suited for feminist and lesbian communities and their practices and values. I pair oral history with archival research to study various types of narratives that were created about the community through archival documents and individual remembering and storytelling. As part of those narratives, I also examine the tensions between narratives within the community.

As I noted in Chapter 1, there are two goals for this project:

- to offer a framework for community-initiated and community-sustaining rhetorical action
- to create a methodological framework for engaging in rhetorical public memory and historiographical projects with and for collective feminist and queer communities

To both shape the goals for this project and then to work toward those goals, I took cues from the values and practices, the theorizing and organizing that the lesbian individuals and collectives I interviewed did and continue to do about their work. While this research is situated in feminist and queer rhetorical and public memory scholarship, one of the methodological decisions I made was to create a methodological framework that is deeply informed by the values and practices of

the community I am studying. The outcome from the shaping of the methodological literature and the community values and practices is a set of methodological principles that guided my practices as a researcher.

The methodological principles guiding my work are: sharing collective knowledge and experience, interconnectedness, identity-based meaning-making, and keeping the history. In the following section, I draw from the oral history interviews with collective members to explain and define each principle and then offer a brief example of how each principle materialized in my research practices and analysis.

Collective Knowledge and Experience Sharing

Building knowledge through collectivity and experience-sharing was (and is) a key value in the Lansing lesbian community, as well as lesbian communities at large, especially in the 60s and 70s. As a researcher, my research practices were informed by that collectivity and experience sharing of the community, both in the data analysis and collection phases.

Cheryl, an Ambitious Amazon described an endeavor of collectivity and experience-sharing, in relation to national and local lesbian history:

> …I mean, it definitely, you know, I think that as a whole in that time period and not just in this area, but lesbians in general were really, you know breaking the new ground, and deciding no one is gonna do it for us, and then figuring it out and then not just hoarding that information, sharing it, developing it, with other lesbians and improving upon it and trying to share it and communicate it. Whereas coming into Lansing and this community and the Center, you immediately had that sense of everything is possible, if you want to do it, just go do it, people will help you and you know, you know don't, you don't have to wait

> for some other entity to create the thing and form it and you can only participate in it, you can actually be part of the creation. That was definitely the sense then, and I think still the sense now.

Because the lesbian communities valued knowledge that was built and shared from within, as I was building my analytical framework (e.g. macro- and micro-codes), I looked to the language and frames that the archival materials and participants provided, rather than attempting to impose external language or codes to describe their rhetorical work. For example, the macro-code "gathering to make available" arises directly from how the Let's Be an Apple Collective described their purpose and work as a collective.

While there are myriad examples of the collectivity in the project, the primary and most prominent representation of it was in the collective interviews. In my IRB proposal, I originally proposed to do one-on-one interviews; however, the individuals of the collectives, still in their collectivity and friendship decades after the collectives formed, desired to do interviews together as a group. As Lyn, one of the Let's Be an Apple Pie members, said: "We were, and are, in community with each other.... As witnessed by the fact that you tried to interview one of us and you get three of us." I used collective oral history interviews rather than individual interviews as a responsive choice, to honor the collective and collaborative ways of sharing knowledge and experience which is the foundation of the lesbian communities herein.

Interconnectedness

Interconnectedness is another principle of the collectives which also shaped my methodological practices and decisions. Because the women in the lesbian community valued collectivity, they understood that separate collectives and organizations were connected and interconnected, despite different goals and identities. As a researcher, this meant that I sought to

tell this history in a way that drew from and highlighted the interdependent nature of the community and collectives. I call this methodological principle interconnectedness to reflect the language used by participants. Cheryl explained it this way:

> … my personal experience…of the Center and Lansing—and margy described some class differences and things like that—but it's a very interconnected community, very, very interconnected. And also, I had mentioned like I came from Detroit where the community was small but the, I don't know, I don't know, what the word is I'm looking for... the things that you could do living in that community were wide and varying and lots of opportunity and to me the same is true in this area. There were all kinds of things to do and to plug into that were smaller here and they were more accessible but very diverse and you know, you know pretty Midwest, ah, mentality of "we won't encroach on you and try to draw you in, but if you come in, you're more than welcome, and we're happy to receive and we're glad to have you kind of be part of what's happening." And that mentality meant that lots of people were, you know I'd do the Lesbian Center and go play softball and then I'd go produce a concert and then this woman over here does sewing circle and she does bowling and then this one over here does the softball and the bowling things and everybody very much had opportunity to kind of {Margy: Yeah, it was almost} come together, come be a part.

Lyn also noted the interconnectedness, despite differences: "that link between Let's be an Apple Pie, which we soon named ourselves, and LC is crucial to how the thing was put together but it really doesn't have anything to do with what we were trying to do." The interconnectedness then was an integral part of the ways the lesbian community, and these two

collectives functioned, despite the fact that they had difference aims and goals.

Interconnectedness, then, became "crucial to how [my research project] was put together." Through a methodological lens of interconnectedness and with my analytical focus on rhetorical practices, the timeline and organizational distinctions between *Lesbian Connection* and the Lesbian Center begin to fall away slightly. I address this decision in more detail in Chapter 3.

In reflecting on what was valuable about the Center and the experiences as a historical entity, Terry expressed:

> One of the things I really value is how many things we had going on. Cos I was doing Goldenrod, with women's music here, and Sue, my partner and I and Susan and another person were doing a production company and there was, and that could happen because of the Lesbian Center partly because the Lesbian Center was reaching out to women, then women came to concerts, we'd get to the Lesbian Center and the connection was happening here, and the Feminist Women's Self-Help, I mean, it was just like…
>
> Lyn, chimed in: Pretty soon, the Bookstore.
>
> And Terry concluded: Yeah, the Bookstore, and then the Feminist Credit Union. It was all just feeding off each other here.

Lyn noted that meant "an awful lot of overlap in personnel." Marilyn went on to reflect on how that feeding off each other and the overlap in people created an energy:

> Well, there was, and the people, you two more than me, you put enormous numbers of hours and enormous amounts of energy and thought in figuring out and worrying and fussing and raging and communicating, if there was. But, ah, the opportunity to do that is co-constructed with the conscious effort to make

> organizations, to make groups, to make projects…also, an intensity goes into it, but, also, as you're building those, they generate the intensity.

Marilyn pointed out that the interconnectedness that began during the early days of the Lesbian Center, has persisted. She mentioned recently encountering a woman from the past while out walking and thinking: "Oh, one of mine!" and they greeted each other. Marilyn continued:

> That's part of the glue that holds it together and this isn't somebody I know well at all, she's in the broad nest of overlapping circles and those are very much held together in this town, by long deep relationships that started with those organizations. We would've been friends, but it's hard to say if we hadn't made those kinds of efforts to organize ourselves to make something, I'm not at all sure that so many of those friendships or acquaintanceships or connections would've been so enduring.

Royster and Kirsch propose a feminist methodological approach for rhetorical historiography called social circulation, which focuses on "connections among past, present, and futures in the sense that the overlapping social circles in which women travel, live, and work are carried on or modified [generationally] and can lead to changed rhetorical practices" (23). My methodological decisions to account for the interconnectedness which was and continues to be so much a part of the Lansing lesbian community meant that in my analysis, I looked across the everyday rhetorical practices of Let's Be an Apple Pie and the Ambitious Amazons, with an eye toward the ways they were connected, related, intertwined. I could have told the stories of the collectives, the Center, and Lesbian Connection chronologically and separately; instead, however, I have decided to tell them as deeply interconnected. For example, in the parts of this project on *gathering to make available* and naming, I have not made a point to differentiate

between practices that may have occurred while the Ambitious Amazons ran the Center or when they were renting a room.

Keeping the History

My methodological approach was also informed by the practices within lesbian communities in the 1970s, and still today, of recording and archiving the present moment to create a historical record. Terry and Lyn engaged in this history-keeping for both the Center and other organizations and entities they were a part of. Terry recalled: "I just had a sense that we were doing something that was gonna need its history kept and so I kept it." Lyn continued:

> Right, me, too. I kept papers from all the stuff that I've been involved with and I had a consciousness that this stuff was ephemeral and that if we didn't keep it, no one would know that it had happened, let alone be able to reconstruct what happened, in what order, and implicit in that a sense that it was of import. And so, I kept a lot of ephemera in terms of other people's newsletter and flyers and um, statement papers, and small press pamphlets and books, because as I was involved in running the Book Coop, which started off as feminist and alternative and radical and, quickly became 90% feminist with little appendages, and so this material was coming through advertising, and newsletters, and the small press books and pamphlets and so I kept them, as well as records from whatever I was involved in.

In *Archive Fever*, Derrida notes that history and archives are "a question of the future, the question of the future itself, the question of a response, of a promise and of a responsibility for tomorrow. The archive: if we want to know what that will have meant, we will only know in times to come" (36). Morris and Rawson critique this necessary permanence, what they call the

"archival imperative," arguing that "The question of the archive is thus in the end not whether it succeeds in preserving the past from oblivion but how the past that eventually emerges from it can potentially produce a revelatory historical consciousness of the present" (80). This echoes Shopes assertion that oral history can reveal "how the past shapes present-day values and actions."

As scholars of lesbian history, Kennedy and Davis argue for "ethical and *useful* research" (cited in Boyd and Ramirez 3). As the collectives aimed to keep their own history, one methodological imperative as I research and write about that history, creating new contributions to that history, is to create artifacts which the community members find useful and ethical. This primarily meant sharing transcripts of interviews for review and asking if there was anything they'd like to edit, omit, or clarify. While dissertations are not often considered artifacts useful to communities outside of the academy, the community members were enthusiastic about this project, and the dissertation, as one historical artifact for the community.

> Terry: It's like I think it's really important to save the history but I don't know that young people know this history or care to know it.
>
> Marilyn: They don't know it's there to care about.
>
> Terry: Like I didn't know
>
> Lyn: I'm pretty tickled that you're busy doing a dissertation.
>
> Terry: Yeah, me, too, I love it.
>
> Lyn: We kind of envisioned ones coming along doing dissertations.

Marilyn: Actually, I think that somebody would write a dissertation which actually a piece of our rhetoric at some point in their, imagining: why do we have these boxes of stuff in our attic?

Lyn: I didn't think you'd arrive so soon.

As I spoke with margy and Cheryl about what products or artifacts I could produce that would be of use to the lesbian community, they spoke of making sure that the materials, including newsletters I reference, the transcripts of the interviews, and even the dissertation, were accessible to the community members. I elected to audio record the interviews, rather than video, for ease of archiving in local archives. I also transcribed the interviews with little editing, as a forethought to archiving the transcripts alongside the audio files. My reasoning being that it would be easier for me or archivists to clean up or edit a transcript per archival needs, rather than to re-transcribe for a transcript closer to the audio, if needed.

As Cheryl said, "I would love to see the finished product if you're willing to share with the folks. That's definitely another piece." As a methodological consideration inspired by the community's belief in archiving their present for the future, I also attended to the ways in which this work could become a part of that archiving in history, and of the implications of it joining the history. I have left large segments of interviews intact to allow for greater representation of the collective members' voices. Further, there is an extensive literature about reciprocity as a key feature of community-based research in rhetoric and composition. Attentiveness to how the products of this research could be a gesture of reciprocity also informed my research practices.

Everyday Cultural and Identity-based Meaning-making Practices

Oral history's focus on processes and practices means that the day-to-day experiences are

the topics of discussion in oral histories, rather than more intermittent, public experiences that make their way into textual and other archival documents. These experiences connect to what cultural rhetoricians call "everyday rhetorical practices." DeCerteau conceptualizes everyday rhetorical practices as "ways of operating" or doing things (xii). These rhetorical practices are situated in and dependent upon values. As the Cultural Rhetorics Theory Lab explains: in cultural rhetorics, there is a:

> persistent focus on the how —the practices of meaning-making that create, negotiate and maintain those structures – that equals a focus on rhetorics. In other words, rhetoric is not so much about "things" as it is about "actions." This orientation towards actions, then, teaches us how particular practices—ways of thinking, ways of problem solving, ways of being in the world—are valued (or not) within specific cultural systems and/or communities (Powell et al. 6).

Oral history and cultural rhetorics as a methodology enables the study of the actions and practices of a particular community. This methodological consideration guided me to on the collectives' rhetorical practices, as shaped by their ways of being in the world.

In my conversation with the Apple Pie collective members, the concept of rhetorical practices arose. Marilyn asked: "Is the fact that the three of us are dressed almost identically a rhetorical practice?" referring to their iterations of outfits of khaki shorts and short-sleeved button-down shirts. I responded that it probably was and alluded to a discussion earlier in our conversation about the "convention fleet of Subarus" parked outside of the office of Goldenrod Music, where we were meeting. Marilyn had observed earlier there were three Subarus in the parking lot—I'd noted mine was parked a few blocks away from the office of Goldenrod Music, the women's music distribution company Terry started in 1975. Marilyn continued: "Everyone's

pulling up in a Subaru. Actually, I think it is. It's part of how you're expressing the meanings of your life and who you are."

Working from her observation, rhetorical practices, then, are ways of doing which express the meanings of one's life and one's identities. Dressing in a particular way or driving a particular car are ways of doing things that express identity and the "meanings of your life," ways of being in the world. However, these ways of doing take on their meaning as they become situated in relation to one another. That is, they are social and interrelational. When I arrived at Goldenrod and Terry greeted me, her shorts and button-up seemed unremarkable. When Bone arrived in similar dress, it could have been a coincidence. However, when Marilyn arrived in a plaid button up and beige cargo shorts, the pattern seemed to be forming. The meaning accumulated across time as these women came to share space in relation to each other. The meaning of Subaru, or "Lesbaru," as car for LGBTQ women emerges from a history of targeted marketing by the company in the early 1990s. Rhetorical practices then are dynamic ways of doing that express identity and "meanings of your life" which accumulate meaning temporally, spatially, and relationally.

As Cheryl articulated it, one of the goals for the Ambitious Amazons while maintaining the Center was: "Just providing that space to connect and, ah, socialize and, you know, feel a part of the community and explore a little what the culture and mores and you know, social aspects of that community were." In their socializing and being in community, they were also engaging in inquiry about what it meant to be a part of that community and, perhaps even, what the community's "ways of thinking, ways of problem solving, ways of being in the world" were. My analytical focus then was informed by cultural rhetorics scholarship and collectives' principles of reflecting values through their actions and contemplation of what values and cultural aspects

comprise the community. From this analytical perspective arose the focus on the rhetorical practices of *gathering to make available* and naming.

In this section, I reviewed the two feminist rhetorical historiography lines of methodologies: recovery and gendered analysis, which have since given way to methodologies of remembering and rhetorical processes of gendering, which in some ways allow for bridging the gap between the previous methodologies. I articulated my use of various types of media in my analysis, including newsletters, magazines, community events, my creation of "narratives within small groups," through focusing on the rhetorical work of small collectives and by collective oral history interviews in which the individuals engaged in remembering and storytelling, and my setting of differing narratives about the origins of the collective and Center alongside each other. This approach requires attention to the ways in which archives and archiving are "cultural, political, and intellectual processes to promote and amplify specific narratives" (Moshenska 205). Because queer rhetorical archival practices push for reconsideration of the bounds of our evidence and our histories, I argued that archival materials were useful as a starting place for understanding how the collectives invented themselves and the lesbian communities they sought to create and sustain. From Scott and Bessette's work, I take the term "archive" to function as a metaphor for a collection of evidence. Because of exclusion from traditional archives, queer archives must look to evidence in other forms. I argue that oral histories can serve as one such archive, or collective of evidence. The three aspects of oral history as methodology which are most relevant for this project are its attentiveness to memory as cultural; its reflexive and process-oriented nature; and its existence as a feminist and queer practice.

Following my review of methodological literature, I created a queer rhetorical

methodological framework that is heavily influenced by the local lesbian community's values and practices. As a researcher, I argue that many communities and individuals with lived queer experiences have theoretical understanding of their experiences which can shape the methodological frameworks made by rhetorical scholars. In my own methodological framework, the community principles guiding my research practices are: sharing collective knowledge and experience, interconnectedness, identity-based meaning-making, and keeping the history.

My research practices in the data analysis and collection phases were informed by the collectivity and experience sharing valued by lesbian collectives in the mid-late twentieth century. I sought to tell this history and share my research in a way that drew from and highlighted the interdependent nature of the community and collectives. My analytical focus then was informed by cultural rhetorics scholarship and collectives' principles of reflecting values through their actions and contemplation of what values and cultural aspects comprise the community. From this analytical perspective arose the focus on the rhetorical practices of gathering to make available and naming. In the next section, I turn my attention to the specific methods of my project.

Methods

In the section, I begin by listing and describing the archival materials I analyzed for this project. Then I describe the methods for the oral history interviews I conducted with two groups of collective members, including the participants, recruitment, methods, and interview instruments and processes. The section concludes with an explanation of the process by which I analyzed both the archival and interview data.

Archival Research and Data

I began my research with historical, archived documents housed in Michigan State University Special Collections. The following is a list of the archival materials I examined, the dates of the materials, and their locations.

- Lansing Lesbian Center newsletters
    - MSU Special Collections Radicalism Collection
    - Monthly issues from 1975-1989
- Lansing Lesbian Center clippings and miscellaneous materials
    - MSU Special Collections, 1 portfolio
- Lesbian Connection
    - MSU Special Collections
    - Of special interest were the first three issues and the special commemorative issue from Feb. 1985, which includes commemorative material from Vol 1, Issues 1-2, originally published in 1974.
- Additional (East Lansing) Lesbian Center/LC archival materials
    - Materials from 1973-1989
    - Archives of Terry Grant (one box of materials)

The last item on the list are materials I obtained during the interview stage of the research process. Terry, one of the collective members who I interviewed, shared a box of her meticulously organized materials from her personal archive from her lesbian community organizing work in the Lansing area.

Description of newsletters.

The primary archival materials I analyzed were newsletters. Across the twenty years they were published as a newsletter of the Center (before morphing into a small local lesbian magazine called What Helen Heard which is distributed with Lesbian Connection), the design and content layout changed. The largest changes were due to passing of publication responsibilities from Let's Be an Apple Pie Collective to the Ambitious Amazons and to changing technologies. The Let's Be an Apple Pie newsletter was typed with a heading centered on the first page with the title: LESBIAN CENTER NEWSLETTER and the issue number (e.g. #4), with the month and year included on the following. After a space, the following information appears: LET'S BE AN APPLE PIE COLLECTIVE and the Center's address and phone number over the following three lines. The newsletter then opens with an introductory paragraph that begins with the greeting and followed by a summary of the general state of affairs at the Center. The introduction focused especially on any changes in finances, procedures, or other notable events or happenings. The body of the newsletter is then divided into sections with capitalized and underlined headings. Though the sections fluctuate slightly from month to month and the titles to the sections change, common newsletter sections include: general announcements, monthly activities, a financial or treasurer's report, detailed description of any special upcoming events that require more explanation, such as the Lesbian Campout Weekend. Most months, the newsletter includes a calendar hand-drawn with a straight-edge that includes the monthly events. There is also a detachable quarter sheet for pledges and donations.

When the Ambitious Amazons began to run the Center, the Lesbian Center News became the Center News. The Ambitious Amazons changed the design of the newsletter when they took it over in May of 1977. They bolstered the prominence of the title by using different fonts and

adding a double Venus symbol (two circles with crosses, used to denote lesbianism). The heading then read CENTER NEWS, MONTH and YEAR, followed by: Helen Diner Memorial Women's Center/Ambitious Amazons, PO Box 811/East Lansing, MI 48823. The sections of the newsletter became more stable: an introduction that included various information, such as a report on recent happenings, needs, or upcoming events; a financial report; details of upcoming events; ads/announcements. Some issues included a calendar, hand-drawn ads, or an attached flyer for a particularly large or important event or issue. With the January 1984 issue, the titular and other identifying information was moved to the left column of the newsletter. The double Venus symbol and "Center News" become larger. The symbol is printed in a font that looks hand-painted, as if quickly drawn with a paint brush and the title is printed in a cursive font.

Recruitment.

To recruit participants, I used a method similar to snowball sampling. I first gathered names of collective members from the newsletters in the archives. Typically, only first names were used. From there, I relied on my own knowledge of members of the contemporary lesbian community and the organization to identify those who were collective members or held other significant roles in the Center or community and who I either knew personally or knew someone who could connect me with them. For the Let's Be an Apple Pie Collective participants, I asked a longtime community member who knows some of the women whom I do not know to put me in touch. She introduced me to Terry Grant and Marilyn Frye through an email message. For the Ambitious Amazons, I asked another woman I know, Penny Gardner, who is still deeply involved in the Lesbian Connection, as the president of their publishing institute, Elsie Publishing, to introduce me to margy lesher, the founder of *Lesbian Connection*, who still runs publication. In my research notes about that conversation, I wrote:

Penny called me this morning to check in about my project and the plan for her to get in touch with Margy. We discussed the names and people I'd encountered in the archived organizational materials, particularly the newsletters. I shared what I'd learned in my reading of the archival materials, such as the Let's Be an Apple Pie Collective starting the Center, when Penny mentioned she thought that Margy had started the Center. Penny also shared herstories of the community. She helped me identify people whose current chosen names I knew but could not identify in the archives—connecting the chosen names with the names they used at the times the newsletters were written.

She told me margy is debating between donating to the MSU Special Collections or the Lesbian Herstory Archives. She told me about the origin of First Fridays, a social event for lesbians that happens once a month. Penny said it was started by Marilyn Frye, as a closed potluck (by which she meant it was invite only, I think) for professors who were "closeted." Penny said margy eventually took the event over and changed switched it to rotating hosts and locations, that included regulars but also "an ebb and flow of women."

While the Center had stopped functioning as a community center and was primarily the office for Lesbian Connection by the time she became involved in the local lesbian community, Penny recalled hearing stories and details about the dancing and the parties at the Center, which had so many people on the dance floor that it would shake. "But mine are secondary, hearsay, not primary sources. Is that what they're calling them these days?" As she told me a story about a

devastating breakup with effects that seems to have shook the community, she said: "I'm making this up, out of a patchwork of memory."

Let's Be an Apple Pie Collective

For the interview with the Apple Pie Collective members, I was invited to the office of one of participants located in Old Town, a part of Lansing which another participant identified as "gay central" in the 1990s, where there were "lesbian and gay businesses for blocks out there all at once, all of a sudden" (VanDeKerkhove). The office belonged to Terry Grant, a participant who was a part of Let's Be an Apple Pie Collective, which first oversaw the operation of the Lansing Lesbian Center and produced the Center News, the Center's long-running newsletter. Terry invited me to do the interviews at her office, where she currently runs her accounting business. She initially purchased the business to run the renowned women's music distribution company that she founded in 1975, Goldenrod Music. The office building itself is non-descript, a one-story beige building with some brick detailing. I walk through the glass front door, the kind you find on the front of many institutions—doctor's offices, banks, etc. Terry greeted me and gestured to the area just inside the doors that serves as a waiting area for the business, indicating we would hold interviews there, which we did.

I spoke with three of the original members for this project: Lyn, Marilyn, and Terry. I was initially put in touch with Marilyn and Terry via email. Terry responded: "Would you be interested in interviewing two of us together? My friend Carolyn [Bone, Lyn] and I were both part of the early lesbian center years. We think our combined memory might be more accurate" (Grant). I planned to conduct the interview with both of them. When I arrived at interview location, Terry mentioned that Marilyn might also be joining us, which she did. During the interview, describing the significance of her time with the Center and the collective, Lyn said:

"We were, and are, in community with each other.... As witnessed by the fact that you tried to interview one of us and you get three of us." Those three were Marilyn Frye, Terry Grant, and Lyn Schaefer.

Marilyn Frye

Marilyn Frye came to the Lansing area as a faculty member in Philosophy at Michigan State University, where she eventually became a University Distinguished Professor of Philosophy and worked until she retired. She was one of the first Let's Be an Apple Pie members. After her involvement with the Collective and the Center, she was heavily involved in a variety of community organizing efforts, including Bare Bone Studios for Women's Art, an art studio space which she operated with Lyn, and Lesbian Alliance, a renowned lesbian activist organization in Lansing from 1982-1996. For several years in the 1990s, she published a newsletter called Dyke Heights Dispatch, named after a Lansing neighborhood where many lesbians lived and continue to live.

Terry Grant

Terry Grant was drawn to the Lansing area in the early 1970s after she read in a national news magazine that East Lansing had passed a city ordinance protecting LGBT people from discrimination—the first city in the country to do so. She "grew up in an environment" where "women were just not valued and lesbians were just not even discussed." When she arrived in East Lansing, she "didn't even know particularly much about lesbians" and she describes a transformation in her perceptions after her arrival in the Lansing area: "when I came here and I found my people and I found, like, women could be valued, we could value each other and we could be lesbians, and it would be cool to be a lesbian and we could have lesbian friends and we could have a community." Terry was a student at Michigan State University, involved in

women's and feminist efforts on campus. An accountant by trade, she started Goldenrod Music in 1975 —the same year Apple Pie formed and opened the Center—to distribute women's music and has been a national leader in the women's music movement, particularly around distribution efforts, in subsequent decades. She was also involved in Lesbian Alliance.

Lyn Schaefer, Bone

Lyn Shafer, or Bone, is an artist who has been involved with community organizing in many ways in Lansing. She owned a women's book co-op, operated an art studio space called Bare Bones Studios for Women's Art, and was a professor of art and design at Lansing Community College. In addition to being an Appleseed, as the Apple Pie members called themselves, she ran the Feminist Credit Union branch in Lansing, and she was also a part of the Lesbian Alliance.

Ambitious Amazons

After Penny connected margy and I through an email message, we scheduled a time to meet and she added: "I'm cc'ing another woman who ran the Center for a number of years - she said she'd be willing to come talk with you too if the time works out" (lesher). Cheryl VanDeKerkhove was the woman in reference and she joined us for the interview, so the second interview I conducted was also a collective effort with margy lesher and Cheryl VanDeKerkhove.

margy lesher

margy lesher was one of the original members who has continued as the publisher of *Lesbian Connection* since then. margy is also the founder *of Lesbian Connection*. Founded in 1975, and created, produced, and distributed from a room rented in the Lansing Lesbian Center, the *Lesbian Connection* is the longest running "publication for lesbians" in the U.S. In the early

1970s, margy was involved in anti-war movements at Michigan State University. In 1974, she and three other lesbians formed a collective, called the Ambitious Amazons and started the *Lesbian Connection* in 1974.

Cheryl VanDeKerkhove

Cheryl joined Ambitious Amazons as a *Lesbian Connection* staff person in 1987. When she joined in 1987, Cheryl was the director of the Women's Council at MSU and had been "cutting her teeth on some of the activism and things in the area." When I asked how she became involved with the Lesbian Center and *Lesbian Connection*, she exclaimed: "That's a good story!" and went on to explain:

> I had some roommates in Lansing and one of them knew margy, or Sandy, I don't remember, but somebody knew somebody from LC and there was a [women's music] festival they were doing with LC and their folks who were going to represent LC backed out at last moment and it cast a wide net to the community who could drop everything and travel across the country… it was SisterFire out east.

margy added:

> Oh, that's right…they were driving and I was flying out, and I was gonna help out. Yeah, because they backed out, and I had no way to take [the table supplies] on the plane."

Cheryl said:

> They needed somebody to drive all the stuff out…So that's where I came in. Sure, 22 years old! I can go cross country tomorrow, no problem. We can drive overnight, we can sleep on the side of the road, it was all good…I did a couple of

> days for that festival, met margy, found out more about LC and was like, "This is cool."

Upon returning from the festival, margy convinced her to leave her job at a local grocery store warehouse where she was making "a whole 50 cents more an hour than [she] would get paid to…work at LC." She described her decision to begin working at *Lesbian Connection* and the Center: "I was like, easy answer, I'd rather work with lesbians, so yeah, and then I started at LC and worked there for many, many years to come."

Cheryl worked full-time at the *Lesbian Connection* and, as part of that work, ran the Center, which consisted mainly of writing newsletters and running dances. She said, after the woman who had previously DJed at the Center dances left, Cheryl began acting "permanently as DJ and managing the Center and cleaning the beer bottles at four in the morning and whatever."

Cheryl's experience coming to the Center aligns with the larger lesbian collective tendencies to step in and contribute as needed. She described her varied work and activities at the Center and LC as indicative of one of the underlying principles of the local Lansing community: "[it's] is very grassroots, it's very much 'we need these things, who's gonna do it'." She described it this way: "We want to make something happen, let's just go do it and people just go do things until it's done, basically." Since her time working at *Lesbian Connection* and the Center, she has been involved in other local initiatives including starting a lesbian award program. She also opened a LGBTQ bookstore, The Real World Emporium, in Lansing in 1994, at which time she moved away from working at the Center. Both margy and Cheryl cite her departure as one reason the Center dances and newsletter stopped on a regular basis.

The interview with Cheryl and margy took place at the old home which houses the current *Lesbian Connection* and Elsie Publishing offices in Lansing. On the main floor of the house, the

staff works on the publication. I met with Cheryl and margy in upstairs conference room around a large conference table.

Oral History Interviews

Because remembering as methodology allows for telling stories and capturing aspects of practices, history, and memory not visible solely in the archival material, I conducted interviews with collective members. I initially planned to conduct two phases of one-on-one interviews with two to four people integral to the Lesbian Center and its related entities; however, the first two people I contacted suggested interviewing two people together, so my methods shifted responsively to meet the collective members' requests. I will address those changes more specifically in the following respective collective sections.

Interview tools and transcription.

I audio recorded the interviews. To guide the conversation during the interviews, I created a preliminary list of questions. I shared the interview instrument with participants ahead of time. I also made clear that we were free to deviate from the list and be guided by areas of participant interest. As indicated on the list of questions, I brought along copies of Center newsletters for participants to look over. The initial interview questions were:

1. What were your role(s) and involvement with the Lansing Lesbian Center? If you were a member of a collective, feel free to speak to your role within the collective, and the collective's role in the Center, as well.
2. What do you remember as some of the most important moments in the existence (or history) of the Center?
3. What are some of your other memories related to the Center?

4. What do you value most about the Center and your past experience with it now?
5. The newsletters seemed to be a significant document for the Center. What purpose(s) do you remember the newsletters and flyers serving in the Center? What were the processes of creating the content and the printed documents?
6. What elements or stories of the Center's history might be excluded from the Center News? That is, if I used the newsletters as the primary memorial document to learn about and write the history of the Center. What kinds of things might I be missing?
7. What were the practices or processes for saving Center materials?
8. What were your own archiving processes like for any materials you saved? What were your goals in archiving?
9. What is the value of the Center as a historical entity? Why might it be important to remember the Center as part of lesbian, local, and/or national history?
10. As I situate my research in particular social movements and histories, are there particular contexts do you think are important for me to account for and attend to? Are there readings you would recommend?

What may be clear from this list is that, at the stage of interviewing, I was interested in how the participants understood their work and the Center as historical, particularly how the historical influenced present day circumstances. I was also interested in learning from the participants about the parts of the history of the Center that couldn't be found in the printed, archival materials.

These conversations facilitated a turn toward the rhetorical work that the collectives were engaging in, rather than the public memory surrounding the work. Yet, because the collectives were so intentional about their creation and inventions of their histories and archives, I began to understand how the creation of public memory and creation of a historical presence was just one aspect of the collectives' multifaceted rhetorical labor. That is, I moved from a desire to understand the public memory of the Center and the collectives as a thing that exists untethered from the work of the collectives, or as a phenomenon which could be clearly traced as an effect of some precise course of action the collectives took. Rather, I began to understand the existence of a public memory or public memories and the archival traces and histories of the collectives' as one piece of the larger category of the rhetorical strategies and work of the collectives' community organizing efforts—not as a separate artifact or mere effect of that work.

Neither interview followed the script of the questions I'd formulated ahead of time. Instead, each conversation opened more organically, led by the collective members, as they reflected on how the collectives came to be. These origin stories comprise Chapter 1. Because the first question was one intended for individuals, as an opportunity to reflect on the specific work they did, rather than a collective work, that question was met with some resistance or refusal, which I understood as part of the collectivity that continues to exist. The latter questions proceeded in a more conversational format in which the participants co-constructed their memories and reflections. Each interview lasted one and a half hours.

After I conducted both interviews, I used InqScribe software to transcribe them. In their entirety. While I am not highly trained in transcription, I did aim to capture as much of the nuance as I heard in the conversations in the transcript. For example, when I heard "because" pronounced as "'cos" or "cuz." I transcribed it in that way. Perhaps more significantly, I also

sought to retain the ways the individuals interacted during conversation, namely completing each other's sentences and thoughts or co-constructing a story in turns. Each transcript was approximately 30 pages or approximately 12000 words for the Apple Pie interview and 14000 words for the Ambitious Amazons interview. In the transcriptions and in the writing of this project, I use the actual names participants identify by in their day to day lives. I wrote my IRB to allow for pseudonyms or anonymity and offered those options to participants. They all declined, a response I anticipated as all of them have been living "out," and engaged in visible lesbian activism in the community for decades.

Data analysis and interpretation.

I began my data collection and analysis with the Lesbian Center newsletters. As I initially read the materials, I read them for what they contained and how they constructed the present and immediate past. In the next pass through the materials, I paid close attention to how the collectives, particularly in the early, foundational newsletters, described and defined themselves and the work they set out to do, that is what I came to understand as their descriptions of the rhetorical work of lesbian collectives. For both collectives, I identified the related and intertwined categories into which this rhetorical work fell: gathering resources and defining and naming the community and its components. Those became my macro-codes. As I continued in subsequent passes of the materials and in the analysis of the interviews, I coded for any activity that was a part of process of *gathering to make available* and for any instances of naming. In subsequent analytical passes through the data, I identified micro-codes. For the *gathering to make available*, they are: identifying, interfacing, envisioning, documenting, sustaining, and assembling. For naming, they are visibility and coding. Table 1 provides a list of codes used during analysis.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have articulated a queer rhetorical methodological framework that is deeply informed by methodological literature and the values and practices of the lesbian community I am studying. Implicit in this framework is a belief that many people in queer communities have a lived and theorized understanding of their experiences which can deeply inform rhetorical scholars in their development of methodological frameworks.

Table 1. Coding Framework

Rhetorical Practice (macro-code)	**Micro-code**	**Description**
Gathering to make available	Identifying	the practice of creating the domain from which the personal and material resources used to create lesbian spaces would draw from and helping others to understand the boundaries of the that domain
	Interfacing	reaching out to non-collective members directly to draw them into the Center and the Connection
	Envisioning	imagining the possibilities of the Center and the Connection, a gathering of the visions and dreams of the collectives for the space of the Center propelling the Center into the future.
	Documenting	gathering in writing through reporting and recording the information and resources of the collectives and community.
	Sustaining	pooling financial resources to maintain the Center
	Assembling	bringing together material objects
Naming	Visibility	Naming for rhetorical visibility is to name to draw attention to lesbian presence, or other seemingly unseen or erased presence or labor.
	Coding	Naming for rhetorical coding means to name in order obscure an identity or ideological component of a thing for *particular audiences.*

Building on the dominant methodologies in feminist rhetorical historiography lines of methodologies, I argue that public memory and processes of remembering are one way to cross the methodological divides of recovery and gendered analysis. Situated in those threads of methodological trends and drawing from Moshenska's model, I articulated my use of various types of media in my analysis, including newsletters, magazines, community events, my creation of "narratives within small groups," through focusing on the rhetorical work of small collectives and by collective oral history interviews in which the individuals engaged in remembering and storytelling, and my setting of differing narratives about the origins of the collective and Center alongside each other. Following this model requires attention to the ways in which archives and archiving are "cultural, political, and intellectual processes to promote and amplify specific narratives" (Moshenska 205), so I briefly reviewed views of archives as places of storage or places of meaning making (Gaillet 39), before reviewing queer rhetorical archival practices which push for reconsideration of the bounds of our evidence and our histories. In this way, I argued that I used the archival materials to begin to understand the ways in which the collectives invented themselves and the lesbian communities they sought to create and sustain. From Scott and Bessette's work, the term "archive" is a metaphor for a collection of evidence. Because of exclusion from traditional archives, queer archives must look to evidence in other forms, "which means that queer archives often function as bodies of evidence" (Morris and Rawson 77). Oral histories can serve as one such archive, or collective of evidence. The three methodological aspects of oral history relevant for this project include attentiveness to memory as cultural; its reflexive and process-oriented nature; and its existence as a feminist and queer practice.

The outcome from the shaping of the methodological literature and the community values and practices is a set of methodological principles which guided my research practices: sharing

collective knowledge and experience, interconnectedness, identity-based meaning-making, and keeping the history. My research practices in the data analysis and collection phases were informed by the collectivity and experience sharing valued by lesbian collectives in the mid-late twentieth century. For example, I built my analytical framework (e.g. macro- and micro-codes) from the language and frames that the archival materials and participants provided, rather than attempting to impose external language or codes to describe for their rhetorical work and conducted collective interviews rather than individual.

Because the women in the lesbian community valued collectivity, separate collectives and organizations were connected and interconnected, despite different goals and identities; therefore, I sought to tell this history and create my research in a way that drew from and highlighted the interdependent nature of the community and collectives. Finally, my methodological approach was also informed by the practices within lesbian communities in the 1970s, and still today, of recording and archiving the present moment to create a historical record. Therefore, as I researched and wrote about that history, in effect creating new contributions to that history, I sought to create artifacts which the community members would find useful and ethical. Through the collectives' being in community, they were also engaged in inquiry about what it meant to be a part of that. My analytical focus then was informed by cultural rhetorics scholarship and collectives' principles of reflecting values through their actions and contemplation of what values and cultural aspects comprise the community. From this analytical perspective arose the focus on the rhetorical practices of gathering to make available and naming.

The following two chapters describes two of the collectives' rhetorical practices: *gathering to make available* and *naming*. Chapter 3 describes and analyzes the rhetorical

practices of gathering to make available that the collectives engaged in to create and sustain the spaces of the Lesbian Center and the *Lesbian Connection*. Chapter 4 examines the collectives' rhetorical acts of naming which they engaged in for purposes of creating visibility of lesbian identity and presence and also for coding, or concealing, lesbian presence or identity. In Chapter 5, I concluded the dissertation with implications.

CHAPTER 3: *GATHERING TO MAKE AVAILABLE*: CREATING SPACES AND PLACES THROUGH EVERYDAY PRACTICES OF SHARING

In this chapter, I describe *gathering to make available*, a rhetorical practice that Lansing lesbian collectives engaged in to create queer cultural spaces for survival and "thrive-al." First I introduce the two different collectives in the Lansing lesbian community: Let's Be an Apple Pie and the Ambitious Amazons. Next, I describe rhetoric in this context as the making of spaces and places through *gathering to make available*: bringing things, such as people, ideas, and materials, together in order to share them with the community. Then, I analyze six rhetorical gathering practices which the collectives engaged in: identifying, interfacing, envisioning, documenting, sustaining, and assembling. Finally, I conclude with a discussion of outcomes of the rhetorical practices of gathering: a number of queer cultural spaces for survival and "thrive-al," such as the Lansing Lesbian Center and *Lesbian Connection*.

Gathering to make available is an analytical term that comes from the Let's Be an Apple Collective. They viewed their work, as custodians of the Center, as "gathering the personal and material resources of this local lesbian community so as to make them available to this same community at large." The Ambitious Amazons describe their work as publishers of the *Lesbian Connection* similarly; they gather "news and ideas for, by, and about lesbians" and "simply collect what you've sent us, type it, edit it for clarity and length, print it, and every two months,

send it back out to lesbians all across the continent and throughout the world."

From the physical and stable location of the Lansing Lesbian Center at 427 Spring Street and the designated rooms and agreements within the building, the collectives engaged in separate, yet, crucially related, rhetorical practices to create what they called "spaces." Thus, the sharing of the place of the Center created social interrelations and interactions among the collectives, their communities, and the individuals who came together makes the Center a place, as well as space. While Apple Pie worked to create the lesbian space of the *Lesbian Connection* on a local scale, the Amazons worked at a national and global level to create their space of the *Lesbian Connection*.

In the context of Apple Pie and the Amazons, and the Lansing Lesbian Center and *Lesbian Connection,* the collectives aimed to sustain both the physical place and arrangement of the 427 Spring Street and spaces of the Lansing Lesbian Center and *Lesbian Connection*, which were dependent in many ways on the place of the Center. Spaces emerge through "wide-ranging dialogue," in the case of *Lesbian Connection*. Space is an environment, implied when the collective members talk about creating "safe spaces." They also emerge through the rhetorical practices of *gathering to make available*, as they did at the Center. The collectives created both place, and space, the boundaries between which are porous and interconnected. The collectives engaged in rhetorical practices of gathering, which create spaces and places, at the same time those practices are shaped by the spaces and places. They aimed to create stability and structures in the way they arranged themselves in the place of the physical locations. However, the collectives didn't determine only a *need* for space, but a *desire*: a desire to be in community with one another, to create cultural spaces of lesbian pleasure and knowledge-making. In other words, they engaged in the rhetorical practices of gathering as a way of survival and "thrive-al."

The collectives gathered to make available as a matter of *survival* as lesbians, but also as a matter of *thrive-al*, to borrow a word used by the Apple Pie Collective in an early newsletter. They wrote: "The Let's Be an Apple Pie Collective is jubilant over the lesbian center's continued survival, even thrive-al, if we may coin a word." In the context of the Center, they use survival to indicate stability in its functioning and finances. Yet taken into the larger context of lesbian organizing, survival points to the continued, and related, struggle to exist as lesbians in the face of heterosexism. If survival for the collectives meant to be able to keep existing as lesbians at a lesbian center against the heteropatriarchal odds, then thrive-al meant moving beyond functioning to flourishing. I argue that survival is a state of necessity, and thrive-al is a jubilant state which opens up new social and cultural ways of being lesbian. While the concepts of survival and thrive-al come from the collectives—are analytical terms in this case—they have resonances with scholarship in rhetoric and composition, particularly in indigenous and native cultural rhetorics and queer rhetorics. In cultural rhetorics, I see echoes in survivance—survival and resistance (Powell; King, Gubele, and Rain-Anderson). The collectives gathered the people and resources of their lesbian communities to make available for exigencies of survival *and* "thrive-al," function *and* flourish, of need *and* desire.

Rhetorics of Practiced Place and Space

Apple Pie and the Amazons used the rhetorical practices of *gathering to make available* to create the Lansing Lesbian Center as a *place* in Lansing, as well as *spaces*. The rhetorical practices of *gathering to make available* created the queer cultural places and spaces of the Lansing Lesbian Center and *Lesbian Connection* for survival and thrive-al. In this section, I briefly describe the theoretical frameworks that guided my rhetorical interpretation of rhetorical practices and the theoretical principles of place and space.

I begin by offering a theoretical framework for understanding place and space, before moving on to a discussion of the ways in which the collectives existed in and created spaces and places. According to DeCerteau, place is "an instantaneous configuration of positions. It implies an indication of stability" (117). He argues that place is governed by "the proper…the elements taken into consideration are beside one another, each situated in its own 'proper' and distinct location, a location it defines (117). DeCerteau describes the relationship between space and place in this way: "space is practiced place" (117). Yet, to separate place and space so definitively is to oversimplify. I argue that the collectives engaged in rhetorical practices to create places and spaces of survival and thrive-al, even while the places and spaces shaped their rhetorical practices.

For the Lansing lesbian collectives, *place* is the physical location of the building at 427 Spring Street. In the time leading up to the creation of Apple Pie and the Center, it became clear to members of Apple Pie that the Amazons needed a location to produce *Lesbian Connection*, but didn't have "energy or interest in doing a community lesbian center." Thus, as Lyn put it, some of the women: "having just caught feminism within…the previous couple years…thought...it was nuts to be trying to support a building or a space and not doing community events and came up with the idea that we would make a collective." In part, Apple Pie formed out of both a desire to have a lesbian space in the community and a need to not waste a location that would already to be partially designated as lesbian space.

Like many gay and lesbian community centers forming at the time, the community did not have enough resources to purchase a building, so Let's Be an Apple Pie rented a building in August of 1975 at 427 Spring Street in Lansing. In turn, the Ambitious Amazons rented a room within the Center from Let's Be an Apple Pie. Apple Pie included a section in their first

newsletter with the heading "The Center," which describes the spatial contracts and obligations within the Center: The Amazons "will have one office and the exclusive use of the largest room a small part of the time on a regular schedule for collating…and…holding statewide gatherings." Lyn articulated the relationship between the two spaces this way: "*Lesbian Connection* is crucial to how the thing was put together but it really doesn't have anything with what we [Let's Be an Apple Pie] were trying to do." margy, similarly shared: "my focus at the time was starting *Lesbian Connection*, but we used the Center where we did the putting the issues together and stuff, so the Center was always important to us because we needed a place for that." The collectives' attempts to articulate and agree upon the physical arrangements of the ways in which they, as two separate entities, would exist distinctly and separately from each other in the same building speaks to the idea of the *proper* in the *place* of the physical building, an attempt at creating stability.

The collectives attempted to create order and agreements on how the physical space of the building would be used, yet tensions ran high in those attempts because, while they shared some underlying axiological principles, they also diverged widely in some beliefs, which created challenges for the creation of policies and practices. As Lyn expressed: "we kept trying to hammer out agreements, particularly in this context between Apple Pie and LC [*Lesbian Connection*], we kept trying to hammer out agreements. And as I recall, things would just shift on you in the middle of the meeting."

As the collectives worked to formulate policies about how they would share space, those policies which affected the community members also need to be communicated to those people how used the space of the Center. Therefore, as the policies were created and revised, there was also a continual need to express the differing policies to community members in documents,

particularly the newsletter. For example, Apple Pie wrote about policies on alcohol use:

> ...it is important that it be understood that different collectives and individuals sponsor different events at the center, and the sponsors of events have the say about what goes on at that event. The Let's Be an Apple Pie Collective wants to assert clearly that it does not like laws which discriminate against younger women, but that it still would like all women using the center when alcohol is around to take responsibility themselves for having appropriate identification. The Ambitious Amazons will continue to ask people not to bring illegal things into the center for events they sponsor, because some women are unwilling to accept having the related risks imposed on them.

Rhetorical Tactics of Gathering to Make Available

I have described generally the characteristics of the practice of *gathering to make available*. The rhetorical practice of gathering meant bringing things together to share them with the lesbian communities they sought to engage. According to their first newsletter, Apple Pie understood their work as a collective to be: "gathering the personal and material resources of this local lesbian community so as to make them available to this same community at large" ("Issue 1"). The Amazons said they gather "news and ideas for, by, and about lesbians" and "simply collect what you've sent us, type it edit it for clarity and length, print it, and every two months, send it back out to lesbians all across the continent and throughout the world." However, more specifically, the rhetorical practices of gathering included the following tactics: identifying, interfacing, envisioning, documenting, assembling, and sustaining. In the following section, I describe and analyze each of those practices, along with their modes and materials, and their contributions to making places and spaces for survival and thrive-al.

Before I get to the rhetorical tactics of the gathering practice though, the timeline of collective involvement bears repeating at this point. The Let's Be an Apple Collective ran the Center and events from August 1975 until February 1977. During that time, the Ambitious Amazons rented a room from them to produce *Lesbian Connection*. In May 1977, the Ambitious Amazons took over responsibility for the Center. At that point, it continued, in some ways, to function as a community center with events and dances; however, the focus and need for the Center for the Ambitious Amazons was its facilitation of the production and publication of the magazine.

The timeline and distinctions between *Lesbian Connection* and the Lesbian Center are necessarily interconnected. Moreover, while I am writing about these practices in discrete categories or segments, they are recursive, interrelated practices which support each other. Further, I want to note again that my focus here is on the rhetorical practices of gathering employed by both Let's Be an Apple Pie and Ambitious Amazons in their work with the Center, and to a lesser extent *Lesbian Connection*, in all their interconnectedness. Therefore, in what follows, I do not, except in cases where I cite an archival document, necessarily adhere to a temporal or chronological frame for the practices of gathering. In other words, I have not made a point to differentiate between practices that may have occurred while the Ambitious Amazons ran the Center or when they were renting a room.

Identifying

Gathering to make available required the rhetorical practice of identifying what and who constituted the "local lesbian community." While the descriptions of lesbian center and lesbian magazine might seem to give a clear description of who the space is for and what kinds of events and information they'd provide, the questions of who's included in the identity of lesbian and

what constitutes an event or information of lesbian interest were very much in-flux for the Lansing lesbian community. That is, the practice of *gathering to make available* is bounded by the domain which things are gathered from and returned to: lesbian communities, whether local or national (and eventually global). To gather from that domain, the collectives first needed to identify what was, or was not, a part of the lesbian community and what defined events and news of lesbian interest. However, the collectives in the process of identifying the domain also create it in the act of naming who and what constitutes with the lesbian community. The collectives *identify* who is part of the lesbian community and therefore what is an event that is lesbian sponsored or of lesbian interest. For Let's be an Apple Pie and the Ambitious Amazons, *gathering to make available* required identifying: the practice of creating the domain from which the personal and material resources used to create lesbian spaces would draw from.

Because the collectives believed that many women in the community were negotiating their identities in relationship to "lesbian," and also understood the identity of lesbian to be one of becoming for many women, the collectives valued self-identification and diverse representation as they worked to define the domain. As Lyn expressed it: "you have to find your people and you have to figure it out. The idea that you're born with a perfectly clear consciousness about is kinda...optimistic." The process of becoming lesbian then, is a social process of becoming. And for the collectives, honoring that social becoming while carefully identifying the domain, the boundaries of the community, was an integral practice of the gathering to share. The rhetorical practice of identifying looked like many different things: holding closed meetings of the collectives, explicating definitions in early newsletters, and providing heuristics such as examples or a list of questions to help participants identify what

would and would not be considered an event of interest to lesbians. I will address each of those examples of identifying in the following paragraphs.

Closed meetings for the Apple Pie Collective, especially in the early days, was one space where they engaged in intense, even contentious, negotiation of the boundaries of the community; amongst themselves, they sought to identify where they would draw the lines of those identity boundaries. In the early days of the Center, Apple Pie needed to gather for closed meetings for collective members only to negotiate amongst themselves how they would delineate the boundaries of the lesbian community. They were occasionally called "business meetings," and in running the closed meetings the role of meeting chair rotated in order to disperse the power and share the labor. As the collective wrote in their initial newsletter, the purpose of the closed, collective-only (or by invite only) meeting was: "to protect our growing interpersonal relationships as a collective, to preserve confidentiality when necessary, and to promote efficiency." As the collective members recalled, the decision to have closed meetings was fraught with tension and arose from the desire to be able to negotiate and work out some of the challenges and disagreements the collective members were having behind closed doors, particularly related to decisions about drawing boundaries around who should be included at the lesbian center and who should not. As they negotiated those difficult decisions amongst themselves, they wanted to have space to work through their ideas without fear of hurting someone in the larger community or facing larger repercussions. As Lyn put it, "we needed to form ourselves up." Closed meetings, then, were one way that the collective engaged in the rhetorical practice of identifying.

The practice of identifying what and who constituted the lesbian community was complex because, although the collective wanted to create a space for lesbians, they also didn't

want to exclude women who might be close allies or in the process of figuring out their sexuality. Because of the circumstances the Apple Pie attributed as one catalyst for departing the Women's Center in East Lansing—a woman being asked to leave an event because she identified as bisexual rather than lesbian—at least one collective member felt uncertain about how to negotiate issues of inclusion and definition of lesbian. The collective members expressed feeling a tension between wanting to create lesbian-only space, yet recognizing that in the context of that historical moment creating lesbian-only space could be incredibly exclusionary and cruel to women who were struggling to understand their identities. Terry described it this way: "many of us were just coming out of the closet and we were inching out and we couldn't say words, like, we could barely say the word "gay." "Lesbian" was just like way over the top and so people, I think, women say they're bisexual because they're like inching along," and Lyn remembers "having the attitude that we didn't want to close the door to bisexual women or even to straight women who were coming to, to, to Apple Pie sponsored... you for the reason you said, you have to find your people and you have to figure it out. The idea that you're born with a perfectly clear consciousness about is kinda optimistic." While Marilyn expressed having much less certainty, yet that it was not something she could clearly articulate at the time. She recalls wanting space for:

> figuring our stuff out and supporting each other and felt some, some sense that having people anyone there who wasn't lesbian identified was gonna somehow disturb that, and that was quite vague, my thoughts, my fears, like what would they do. It's not though I had a well-structured fear but I had some anxiety about it and some unease and so…I mean. I just remember that I just, I was much less clear. that what was good and bad for us, because we were very focused on what

> was good for us. Let's figure it out and do it. And that was a place where I was much less clear than some of the other folks.

The closed meetings then operated as a space where the collective could face the tension they felt between potentially excluding women who were their friends and the need for lesbian-only space. They created this closed space in order to protect from, as Marilyn indicates, a vague sense of fear that some of the collective members perceived or felt at that tumultuous transitional time. For some members of the collective, the practice of conducting closed meetings in order to identify and negotiate was a survival response in the face of an unnamed fear.

In the practice of identifying, the collective also wanted to leave space for women to self-identify. For example, Apple Pie wrote in the first newsletter "we leave the terms 'local' and 'lesbian' to be defined by those women who wish to participate in the center" and go on to say the center is for "self-defined lesbians who consider themselves close enough to the center to make regular use of it." In line with embracing a stance of allowing people to self-define, they write "…any woman who thinks it's appropriate for her to attend the function will be admitted. We are opposed in principle to the notion of requiring 'lesbian credentials' of any sort from any woman who comes to our door." They also acknowledge that there may be women who are "struggling to come out or to define their sexuality, as well as to straight women who may not yet have considered their sexuality."

When the Ambitious Amazons took over the Center, they issued a reminder in their April 1980 newsletter: "…this place is a Lesbian Center, and all lesbians are welcome. We've never asked a woman coming in if she's a lesbian, but the Center is for lesbians." In a letter printed in the Lesbian Center newsletter issue 11, in July of 1976, Marilyn, identifies woman-loving as a primary characteristic of people participating in the community center: "We need a place to

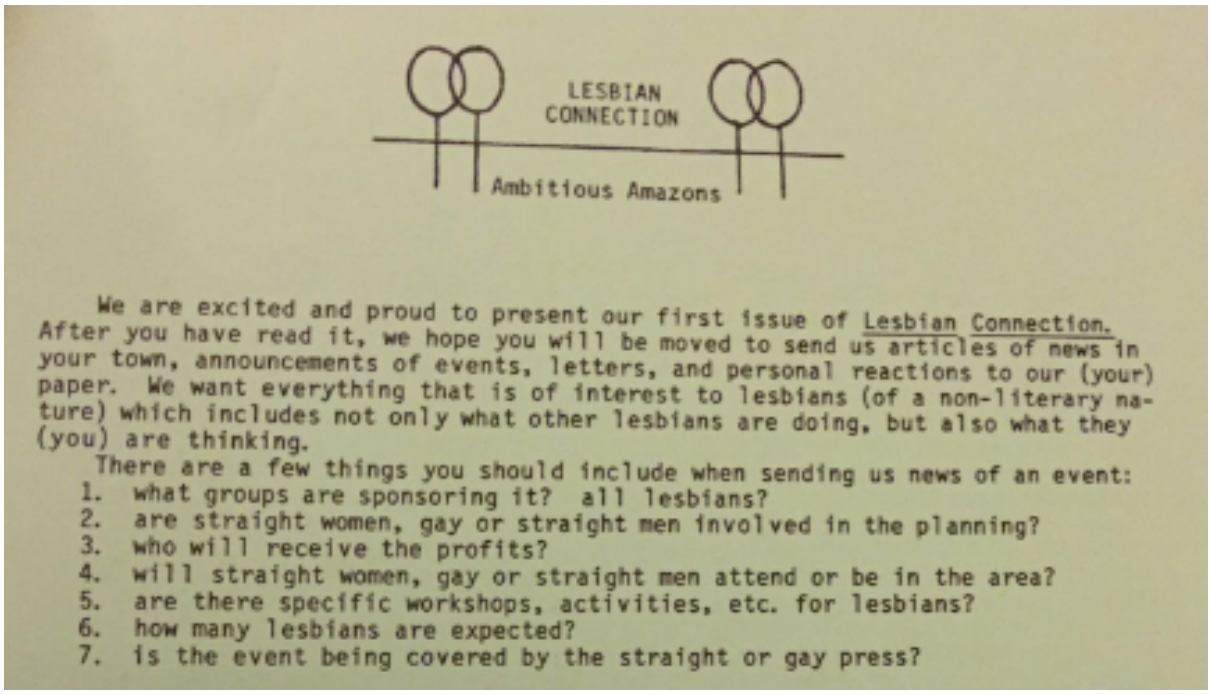
socialize among others who share women-loving as a vital part of their lives. (We differ a lot in all other respects but *woman-loving is a very important thing to have in common*)." Throughout the course of the newsletters, that's as close as anyone comes to explicitly defining what they mean by lesbian, though there are other implicit references that shape what it is to be a lesbian in the context of the Lesbian Center.

The collectives' identifying practices of defining – yet leaving room for self-definition – allowed women and lesbian to have some agency in practice of identifying. These practices of definition, through self-definition, is a practice of *gathering to make available*. While the collectives do the defining and identifying work, they also make that practice available to other women in the community through the practice of self-definition and identification.

Beyond practices of identifying through negotiating who was included in the Center and *Lesbian Connection*, the collectives identify what events are of lesbian interest, through the use of various heuristics. Apple Pie writes: "we will allow at the center only activities which are of interest to lesbians, though not necessarily to lesbians-only." They provide an example as a mode of identification: "for example, we would not provide facilities for a birth control clinic, but would be open to a lesbians group promoting medical self-help (which is of interest to straight women as well)."

For the *Lesbian Connection*'s readers to identify what is "of interest to lesbians," the Amazons provide a heuristic in the forms of a list of questions in their first issue of *Lesbian Connection* for those who will be sending in the announcements. In addition to the serving as an implied measure of what constitutes a lesbian event, the responses to the questions also provided the Amazons with supplemental information to help them decide whether the event met their criteria for a lesbian event.

Gathering to make available from within the lesbian community meant that the collective members felt the need to delineate what and who constituted the community. To do the rhetorical work of creating a community through defining it, they engaged in identifying practices. Identifying included negotiating boundaries and inclusion and helping non-collective members in the community to understand. Identifying occurred both in closed meetings, and also in definitions and heuristics published in the Center News and *LC*. Identifying responded to community needs and values, while at the same time shaping those needs and values.


LESBIAN
CONNECTION

Ambitious Amazons

We are excited and proud to present our first issue of Lesbian Connection. After you have read it, we hope you will be moved to send us articles of news in your town, announcements of events, letters, and personal reactions to our (your) paper. We want everything that is of interest to lesbians (of a non-literary nature) which includes not only what other lesbians are doing, but also what they (you) are thinking.

There are a few things you should include when sending us news of an event:

1. what groups are sponsoring it? all lesbians?
2. are straight women, gay or straight men involved in the planning?
3. who will receive the profits?
4. will straight women, gay or straight men attend or be in the area?
5. are there specific workshops, activities, etc. for lesbians?
6. how many lesbians are expected?
7. is the event being covered by the straight or gay press?

Figure 2. Image of event heuristic from the first issue of *Lesbian Connection*

Interfacing

Interfacing describes the rhetorical practice of gathering that explicitly involved the collective members reaching out to non-collective members directly to draw them into the Center and the *Connection*. The analytical term "interfacing" comes directly from one of the Appleseeds: Lyn recalls, with laughter: "…and that's what I mean, I remember doing an awful lot of conversing and interfacing and trying to get women to show up and trying to get women,

once they showed up to deal with the business." The practice of interfacing included reaching out to individual women to draw them in.

In addition to one on one conversations, interfacing also included more collective modes of connecting with community members such as community or "open" meetings, which Apple Pie held for the general lesbian community they had identified. In contrast with the strategizing closed collective meetings, the open meetings were open to anyone who self-identified as part of the lesbian community for which the center was a resource. Apple Pie wrote that they "feel an equally urgent need to have frequent, announced, general lesbian community meetings, at which anyone may speak, to keep in touch with the desires and opinions of the rest of the community." They acknowledge the mundanity of such interfacing in a newsletter announcing a meeting for assessing progress and goals: "A meeting is a meeting is a meeting, and by any other name is still a meeting, but this one is open to all, and anyone who want to get in to doing things at, for, with the center should come along to this meeting."

Envisioning

Envisioning was an integral practice of imagining the possibilities of the Center and the *Connection*, a gathering of the visions and dreams of the collectives for the space of the Center propelling the Center into the future.

Lyn recalled: "And I remember that some of our endless discussion was about how the Center could be used and how lesbians, other lesbians in the community, could use the building. We kept talking about the mythical photography collective. What if there were a group of photographer lesbians who wanted to set up a dark room, you know, we'd want to be, we'd want to facilitate that. And how could we do it and under what terms would we let them use space in the building? It never actually happened. That never actually happened. I don't remember if we

ever had any groups, we had bigger dreams than we were able to pull off, for what this could be."

In their first newsletter, after taking responsibility for the Center in 1977, the Amazons called a community meeting that would serve to set community goals. The short and long-term goals that emerged at that meeting are reported in the following newsletter of 1977:

> Here is the complete list of goals we all came up with. We didn't evaluate any of these suggestions. Whether we want to commit ourselves to all of these goals, and what priority we feel they each have, will be discussed at the next community meeting:
>
> > SHORT-TERM: get out of debt; softball; put out a monthly calendar; monthly party; Statewides; game nights; darkroom; guest speakers; printing collective; lesbian A.A.; kid-sharing; referral lists (both of professionals like dentists and lawyers, and of community resources); silkscreen T-shirts; nice lawn; bring in plants; new lamps and furniture; field trips (canoe trip in July, Cedar Point amusement park, etc.); carpooling; tool exchange; put in community garden; ventilation fans; and good potlucks.
> >
> > LONG-RANGE: classes; peer counseling; center staffed; more community involvement; panels; rap groups; Cafe Lesbos (a weekly restaurant/cafe); community guide; phone list; discussion nights; lost & found; free box (for clothes, etc.); library; moving co-op; magazine sharing; new building; extra speakers for juke box, prints and pictures on center walls; child care provided for events; pet care; more room to dance;

and room to talk. (ND)

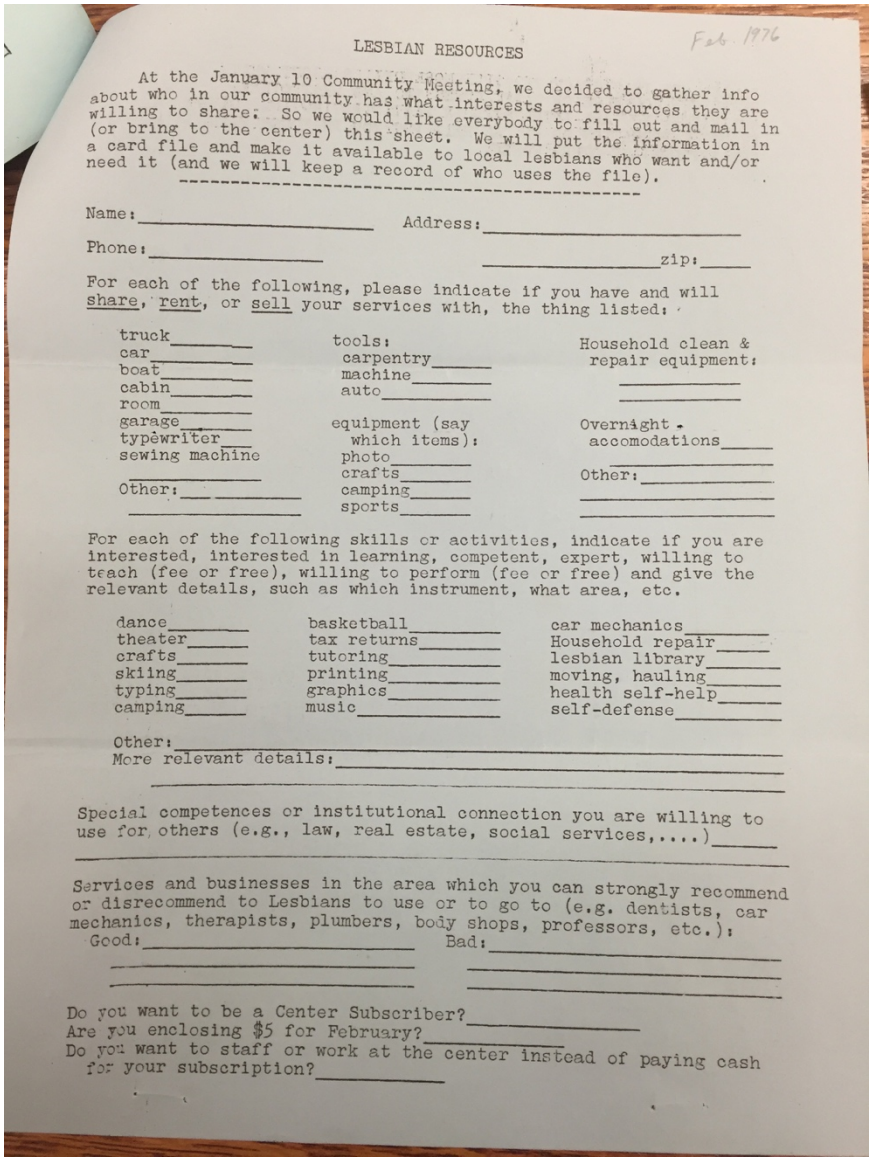
The process of envisioning what the Center *could be* was both an act of survival and an act of thrive-al. The short- and long-term goals bridge across functional necessities, such as eliminating Center debt and staffing the Center, and imagined desires. Across the history of the Center the collectives engaged in the practice of envisioning their hopes and dreams even as they struggled to sustain the functioning of the Center. Through envisioning, survival and thrive-al were constantly intertwined. For example, in their July 1978 newsletter, the Amazons envision even as they announce that they were cutting back events as a matter of practicality.

> As it stands now, we're going to cut back on the events – in addition to the monthly Statewides, we'll usually have only one center event – alternating a coffeehouse and party. It's discouraging to us to have even fewer lesbian events, but we're equally concerned about the lack of other types of activities. The Memorial Picnic seemed to be a success and we'd like to see more picnics and softball games. We'd like to see lesbian peer counseling for all the women who call and need to talk to someone. Lesbians doing panels for classes; up-to-date bulletin boards with housing, events, and various resources; a place for lesbians who want rap groups, or discussion on various topics (monogamy, politics of money, racism in the community, anarchism, trends in the lesbian movement, etc. etc.), or how-to workshops (there's an incredible number of talented lesbians in this area). We'd like the center open more often. We still think about our Cafe Lesbos idea. These are just a small sampling of what the center could be – but none of it will happen unless you want to see it and are willing to be an active participant. Please think for a moment about the center and LC.

Documenting

In order to gather the resources, the collectives needed to document what resources existed in the lesbian community. Therefore, documenting is the rhetorical practice of gathering in writing through reporting and recording the information and resources of the collectives and community.

One example of the practice of documenting as a rhetorical practice of gathering was the documenting skills and talents through a resource sheet. The collective members often created feedback forms that they included in the newsletter to solicit and encourage feedback and



LESBIAN RESOURCES

Feb. 1976

At the January 10 Community Meeting, we decided to gather info about who in our community has what interests and resources they are willing to share. So we would like everybody to fill out and mail in (or bring to the center) this sheet. We will put the information in a card file and make it available to local lesbians who want and/or need it (and we will keep a record of who uses the file).

Name:_____ Address:_____

Phone:_____ _____zip:_____

For each of the following, please indicate if you have and will share, rent, or sell your services with, the thing listed:

truck_____
car_____
boat_____
cabin_____
room_____
garage_____
typewriter_____
sewing machine
_____
Other:_____
_____

tools:
carpentry_____
machine_____
auto_____

equipment (say which items):
photo_____
crafts_____
camping_____
sports_____

Household clean & repair equipment:
_____
_____

Overnight accomodations_____
_____
Other:_____
_____
_____

For each of the following skills or activities, indicate if you are interested, interested in learning, competent, expert, willing to teach (fee or free), willing to perform (fee or free) and give the relevant details, such as which instrument, what area, etc.

dance_____
theater_____
crafts_____
skiing_____
typing_____
camping_____

basketball_____
tax returns_____
tutoring_____
printing_____
graphics_____
music_____

car mechanics_____
Household repair_____
lesbian library_____
moving, hauling_____
health self-help_____
self-defense_____

Other:_____
More relevant details:_____
_____

Special competences or institutional connection you are willing to use for others (e.g., law, real estate, social services,....)_____
_____

Services and businesses in the area which you can strongly recommend or disrecommend to Lesbians to use or to go to (e.g. dentists, car mechanics, therapists, plumbers, body shops, professors, etc.):
Good:_____ Bad:_____
_____ _____
_____ _____

Do you want to be a Center Subscriber?_____
Are you enclosing $5 for February?_____
Do you want to staff or work at the center instead of paying cash for your subscription?_____

Figure 3. Image of the Lesbian Resource sheet from the Center News

participation from the community in shaping the center. According to the first Apple Pie resource sheet published in the February 1976 newsletter (Fig. 3), at the January 10, 1976 Community meeting, Apple Pie "decided to gather info about who in our community has what interests and resources they are willing to share." The sheet, which came attached to the Center newsletter was intended to be detached and returned to the center, had sections for women to indicate: 1) what material resources they had to share, such as a car or truck, yard or household equipment, or

room in their house for visiting lesbians; 2) what skills or activities they wanted to gain or share; 3) areas of expertise; and 4) recommendations for local businesses and services that were either lesbian friendly or not. Once the information was collected, the collective put the information in a card file to "make it available for local lesbians who want and/or need it." And the collective would keep a record of who uses the file. The practice of encouraging shared resources arises from the Collectives dedication to "gathering the personal and material resources of this local lesbian community so as to make them available to this same community at large." As the custodians of the Center, they saw to the redistribution of resources throughout the Center.

Sustaining

Sustaining is the rhetorical practice of gathering financial resources to maintain the Center. In order to sustain the Center and *Lesbian Connection*, Apple Pie and the Amazons needed financial resources to pay for rent and other building expenses, such as heat and electricity and production and distribution of the magazine. Sustaining assured that the collectives could pay the bills so the Center could stay open and that the Connection could be created and sent out, yet the collectives often created systems and events which supported sociality and thrive-al while gathering the funds to pay bills.

While a portion of the rent was paid by subletting rooms to the Ambitious Amazons where they could carry out the work of *Lesbian Connection*, one of the rhetorical practices of financially sustaining the center include creating a subscription system for members. As Lyn tells it:

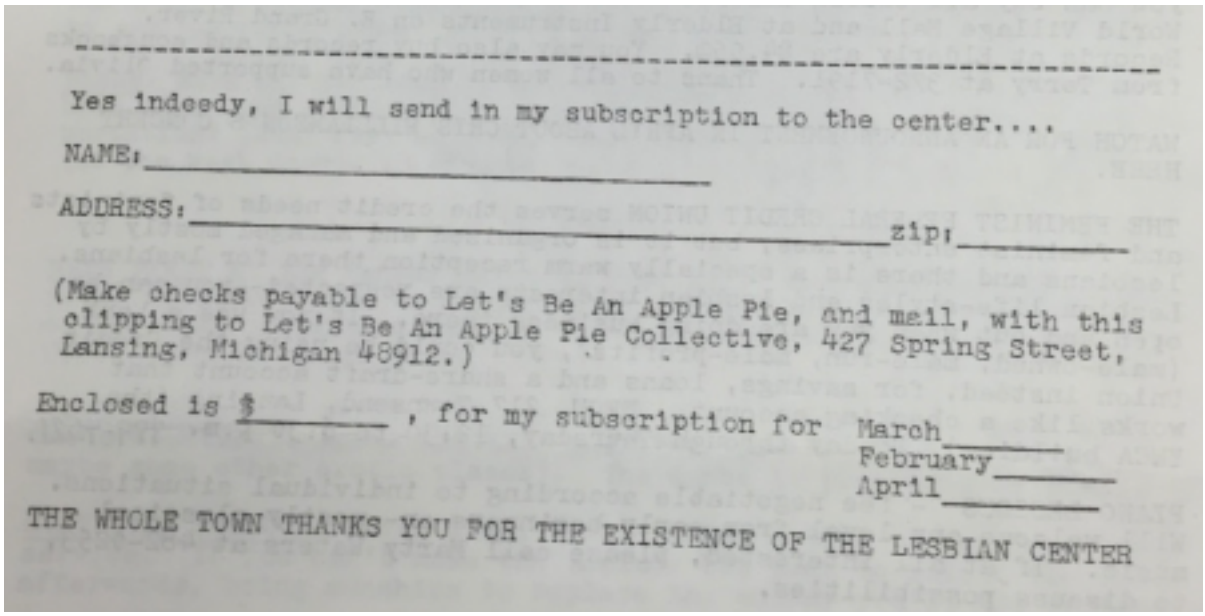
> ...we didn't have a source of funds, and I don't think it even crossed anyone's mind to even think about 501C3 or anything. Even if we could've thought of some category at the time, that's dealing with the government, we're not gonna do

that. But we didn't have a source of funds and we couldn't very well do bake sales so we hit on this idea of subscriptions.

Apple Pie created the system of subscriptions to gather the financial and labor efforts of the community. As they noted in the first newsletter: "The whole point of the center is service to the lesbian community; work to maintain the center itself or to provide that service from it will be the center's lifeblood." The subscription system was one way for the collective to gather that lifeblood. Through subscribership, women pledged either their money or time or labor in support of the center. To be a full subscriber, meant that women could pay $5 per month (see Fig. 4), or commit to 2 hours of work for the center, or some combination of the two. In exchange for their money or labor, women could have "the right to use the place and its facilities for her projects of lesbian interest"; free admission to Apple Pie sponsored events, excepting live performances and classes, which were additional fundraising sources through which performers and facilitators were also paid; and, after two full months as a subscriber, voting rights in general meetings and the right "to force [the] collective to call a general meeting on a given topic and to abide by a vote of the subscribers." Apple Pie created the structure of subscribership in order to gather the collective personnel, in the case of labor donation, or material, in the case of financial donations, resources. Through that system of gathering, those resources came to be shared with the larger lesbian community as the funds paid to keep the building open and cover expenses and the donated labor supported events, functions, upkeep, and maintenance of the Center. Further, the individuals who availed their individual resources were afforded access to events, as well as decision-making power and authority in regards to the Center's management and policies.

The Amazons' Statewide [Gathering for Lesbians] is another example of sustaining for survival and thrive-al. Just as Apple Pie employed funding practices and strategies, Ambitious

Amazons also looked to the women in the local community for financial and labor support, where a large proportion of the *Lesbian Connection* audience were initially located.



Yes indeedy, I will send in my subscription to the center....

NAME:_____

ADDRESS:_____zip:_____

(Make checks payable to Let's Be An Apple Pie, and mail, with this clipping to Let's Be An Apple Pie Collective, 427 Spring Street, Lansing, Michigan 48912.)

Enclosed is $_____ , for my subscription for March_____
February_____
April_____

THE WHOLE TOWN THANKS YOU FOR THE EXISTENCE OF THE LESBIAN CENTER

Figure 4. Image of a subscription form from the Center News

They created a monthly event called Statewide [Gathering of Lesbians], as a fundraiser for *Lesbian Connection*. In its early days, Statewides "included a potluck, and, a meeting and if it was in the summer, we'd have a softball game, you know, it was more than just a dance." As the name Statewides suggests, the event "was to give women from out of town, a way to come and actually meet people and get to know each other because sometimes, you know, just a dance is sometimes kinda hard to." For that reason, the Amazons turned the Statewides into a day-long series of events which took place monthly and spanned across locales, including a local park and the Center. The park portion of Statewides were one of the few events that took place in a public setting. Statewide Dances often had a theme, such as the very popular and well-attended February dance which was alternately called the Valentine's Dance or, most commonly the Susan B. Anthony Birthday Party. The practice of gathering people together helped raise funds to support the financial sustainment of the *Lesbian Connection*. When the Ambitious Amazons had

full responsibility for the Center, they continued to hold dances there both as fundraisers for *Lesbian Connection* and as social events for the community.

Assembling

The practice of assembling is the work of bringing together material objects. The collectives engaged in assembling to support and create spaces of survival and thrive-al. I focus on three examples to illustrate the collectives' rhetorical practices of assembling: collecting objects, collating, and archiving.

As the collectives sought to create the location of the Lansing Lesbian as a space for lesbians to gather, they reached out for material objects such as furnishings for the space, music and music players, and books for the lesbian library. The kinds of objects collected were shaped by the politics of public and private spaces for women and lesbians. Women are often associated with the private sphere, and lesbians have historically sought private spaces, free from the male gaze. The furnishings the collectives sought to acquire, such as rugs and lamps, are those which call to the establishment of a domestic and home-like space. Further, the music and reading materials collected express a dedication to lesbian-created, -affirming, and -relevant content and work.

Books were yet another material resource gathered from the community members. As Apple Pie wrote in a newsletter call for readers to go through their own books:

> and figure out which you can give or loan to the Lesbian Center Library. Books by and/or about lesbians can be removed *from splendid isolation on your bookshelf to a position as part of a resource for the whole community*. Also books of interest to lesbians, including anti-lesbian things, if they are <u>classic</u> garbage" (underlining original, emphasis mine).

The process of gathering the books and the language used to describe, draw attention to the ways in which the individual books, and I argue other objects and materials, take on new meaning as they are gathered and placed in relationship with other books, thus forming both a knowledge and entertainment resource to be shared with the community and a space for the community. Women could check out books to take home or use the space of the Library for reading. The Lesbian Lending Library, which is still open by appointment, became a space for women to gather and visit, an especially welcome quiet space during the loud parties and dances held at the Center.

The Ambitious Amazons named the practice of gathering together to physically assemble and staple together each magazine issue "collating." The event calendars in the Lesbian Center newsletter usually listed the event as "LC collating and stapling." It was scheduled for around four hours a night for a two-week period, every three months. As a rhetorical practice, the Ambitious Amazons used the physical production and assembling of each individual copy of the magazine as a social event for members of the local lesbian community. The practice of community collating arose out of both the necessity to undertake the large task or assembling the magazine issues on a small budget and the value of the creating spaces for lesbians to gather.

As margy and Cheryl describe it, the physical tasks of collating and stapling created a type of social space that was in some ways differentiated from other events at the Center due to the practical, task-focused nature of the gathering. Cheryl said it was: "definitely a social activity, I mean you're across the table from somebody folding, stapling, assembling pages" and margy expanded: "Because for a couple weeks, there'd be a bunch of lesbians and you could go there and you wouldn't have to talk because you had a task to do, but you could listen and get to know people and people did get to know each other there." In 1981, the *Lesbian Connection*

began paying everyone who participated, a small amount, so it became a source of income for lesbians in the community. Collating stands as perhaps emblematic of the ways in which the practice of gathering personal resources, such as the announcements, news, events found in *LC,* and gathering in the embodied and social act of assembling those resources turn the rented rooms of the Center into social spaces.

In addition to gathering the real-time resources of the lesbian community, the collectives and their members were also attentive to archiving their histories. As Madhu Narayan writes of the national Lesbian Herstory Archives, founded the same year as the Amazon collective: in lesbian communities, there was often a feeling "that the past is happening right now and it has to be carefully recorded and remembered in the present through the collection of everyday artifacts and stories." With Center and *Connection* artifacts, this collection occurred at both the individual and collective level. Terry said: "Yeah, I mean, I just had a sense that we were doing something that was gonna need its history kept and so I kept it." Lyn followed up with:

> Right, me, too. I kept papers from all the stuff that I've been involved with and I had a consciousness that this stuff was ephemeral and that if we didn't keep it, no one would know that it had happened, let alone be able to reconstruct what happened, in what order, and implicit in that a sense that it was of import. And so, I kept a lot of ephemera in terms of other people's newsletter and flyers and um, statement papers, and small press pamphlets and books, cos as I was involved in running the Book Coop, which started off as feminist and alternative and radical and um, quickly became 90% feminist with little appendages, and so this material was coming through advertising, and newsletters, and the small press books and pamphlets and so I kept them, as well as records from whatever I was involved in.

Cheryl reflected on the current state of her basement: "And I do, I genuinely do, I have a basement full of stuff. I'm a functional hoarder around some of the things from that period. And I've been gradually going through and trying to reduce it down to only one copy of everything, if I have stuff."

The archiving practices of the Amazons occurred at the organizational level and resulted in two archives: "office copies" and "permanent files" of their Center newsletters and issues of *Lesbian Connection*. The "office copies" are a kind of community archive which include copies that could be distributed to people who requested copies for myriad reasons. Cheryl called this "our needs response": "where somebody writes about 'do you have the address for blah blah,' you know a lot of times, we wouldn't just send them the information, we'd send them the actual newsletter that they were asking about." margy contrasted the office copies with the permanent files: "Whereas we have another place, actually, it's in my house still, where we call 'permanent files' which are supposed, to be, you know, forever."

Conclusion

For Let's Be an Apple Pie and the Ambitious Amazons, the rhetorical practices of gathering arose out of beliefs that a lesbian community could be self-sustaining and self-sufficient. The community's finances, knowledges, skills, and energy could come from the domain of the local community and be more than enough to sustain itself, and the spaces of a Center and magazine. Identifying, interfacing, envisioning, documenting, sustaining, and assembling emerged as rhetorical practices of gathering which served to create the practiced places and spaces of the Lesbian Center and *Lesbian Connection.* As these practices demonstrate, gathering as a queer rhetorical practice is a dynamic and multimodal process. While the collectives aimed to create structures for experiences, the ways in which they did so were not

static across situations or foci, rather highly adaptable, drawing on many modes and materials.

While "coming out" is a common rhetorical trope for LGTBQIA people to describe identifying their sexuality or gender identity for external audiences, gathering might be thought of as a "bringing in," or rather a queer rhetorical practice of the collectives in order to facilitate coming in for the purposes of creating queer cultural spaces for surviving *and* thriving in the face of the sexism and heterosexism in other public spaces. In the context of LGBTQ social activism, tropes of struggling for survival and fighting for rights often arise. While these social aims are crucial, these tropes move attention away from the ways in which community organizing, and even community more broadly, in LGBTQ communities is also about pleasure, desire, and joy. The collectives *gathered to make available* as a matter of *survival* as lesbians, but also as a matter of thrive-al. They gathered in order to come together in social settings to be with each other, as lesbians, as evident in the social events, the dances, the socializing the collectives and communities did, while they fought for their existence as lesbians. In this case, *gathering to make available* is an everyday queer rhetorical practice of bringing together lesbian bodies and resources. Focusing on the mundanity of the everyday practices such as these might help illuminate the makings of queer communities out of need *and* desire, of function *and* fun, for survival *and* thrive-al.

In the next chapter, I focus my analysis on another set of the collectives' rhetorical practices, practices which often moved into public spaces outside of the Center and the lesbian community: their acts of naming. Specifically, I focus on the ways in which they engaged in naming through tactics of rhetorical visibility to create lesbian presence and tactics of rhetorical coding to conceal or hide lesbian identity or presence.

CHAPTER 4: "IT'S A DELICATE BALANCE": VISIBILITY AND CODING AS RHETORICAL TACTICS OF NAMING

In the context of this sort of organizing, you have to be visible. On the other hand, you know it, especially then, it was a delicate balance. You wanted to be visible to lesbians but you're not going to put "Lesbian Center" in the telephone book and you're especially not going to put it in the telephone book with your address.

— Lyn, Bone, Let's Be an Apple Pie collective member

The Ambitious Amazons and Let's Be an Apple Pie collectives were namers. From naming their collectives to naming the Center to naming the newsletter to naming subcommittees and more, the women's rhetorical practices of naming were so commonplace as to potentially go unnoticed; however, a study of their rhetorical practices of collective naming offers insight into names as rhetorical texts and shows how naming is a meaning-making practice which both reflects and shapes social and political contexts and values.

To remind you, the broader questions guiding this research project are: How did the collectives understand and describe their roles in the lesbian community and how did those roles shape the rhetorical practices they engaged in? What rhetorical practices did they engage in to fulfill that work? I found that naming was one set of rhetorical practices that the collectives engaged in. Therefore, in this chapter, I address the following questions, more focused specifically on the rhetorical practice of naming: What acts of naming did the collectives engage in, for what purposes, and to what ends? Further, how did these meaning-making practices of naming illustrate the larger rhetorical politics of the collectives?

I begin this chapter by presenting literature on names as rhetorical and naming as rhetorical practice. Next, I focus on an analysis of acts of naming which the collectives engaged

in, more specifically on the collective creation and use of *proper* names of groups, publications, and places. In my analysis of acts of naming, I found the collectives engaged in acts of naming for two primary purposes: rhetorical visibility and rhetorical coding. By naming for rhetorical visibility, I mean that the collectives named a thing (e.g. committee or place) in a way that would draw attention to the queerness of the thing, and to create lesbian presence. By naming for rhetorical coding, I mean that the collectives named a thing in a way that would obscure or conceal the queerness of the thing *for particular audiences*. One might think of my use of the term "coding" here as more aligned with notions of speaking in code rather than with the coding of research data. I show how the collectives engaged in naming for the social and cultural purposes of community building, commemoration, and safety. I share examples and stories of the proper names created by the two collectives—Let's Be an Apple Pie and the Ambitious Amazons. Through their naming practices of visibility and coding, the collectives sought to communicate or avoid communicating with particular audiences.

Naming as a Rhetorical Practice

Naming and names are rhetorical. As Star Medzerian Vanguri asserts both individuals and communities use the practice of naming to create, sustain and change identities. Vanguri writes that "naming is not a one-time identity stamp but rather an ongoing rhetorical process in which selves are constituted and reconstituted and power changes hands" (3). Processes of naming reflect "the circulation of power, ideology, and memory" (2), as well as order the world and construct identities for people. Given these rhetorical effects, Vanguri calls for heightened attention to "the social and political motives for and consequences of naming…[with] attention to the systems that produce, govern, and sustain them" (2-3). This chapter shows how the Let's Be an Apple Pie and the Ambitious Amazons used naming for two rhetorical purposes: (1) to

make visible, draw audiences' attention, and create lesbian presence; and (2) to code, in such a way that would communicate or avoid communicating with particular audiences.

Rhetorical Visibility

The collectives' practices of naming as acts of rhetorical visibility function as a "coming out." David Grindstaff argues that coming out is "a social act, a complex and nuanced rhetorical practice — a matter of invention" (127). Visibility ranges from speech acts of "coming out" as LGBTQ to more embodied practices of marking identity to signal queerness, such as asymmetry as a queer aesthetic or handkerchief flagging or more recently, femme nail polish flagging. Like Grindstaff, Elizabeth Galewski has also argued that visibility is an integral part of queer identity politics.

The collective engaged in naming as a matter of invention — of community identity and community safety. Creation of rhetorical visibility served multiple important purposes — for example, for collective members to signal themselves to other lesbians and provide ways for them to get in contact while avoiding the attention and potential wrath of homophobes. They also spoke and wrote of "being out," as a way of making the community safer for each other, thus claiming rhetorical practices of visibility. In the context of the collectives' organizing, naming was a constellating set of practices in which the collectives strategically sought to either make themselves known as lesbians to particular audiences or to keep themselves unknown to other audiences—what I call rhetorical visibility.

The politics of visibility in queer communities are premised on several understandings. The notion of rhetorical visibility is deeply connected to queer politics of visibility, which arise from notions of what David Grindstaff calls "rhetorical secrets." The assumption that all people are straight unless otherwise stated creates a certain *invisibility* and a lack of *presence* for

lesbians. Tied up in the practices of being out in the community, are notions of safety, shame, presence, and invisibility.

The members of Let's Be an Apple Pie and the Ambitious Amazons deeply theorize and consider issues related to rhetorical visibility. Much of their theorization focused on the discursive effect of lesbian presence in the community through having lesbian-identified spaces would have on both the lesbian community and the area community at large. Rhetorical visibility through lesbian spaces are related to rhetorical naming for rhetorical visibility, because the lesbian spaces and events were given proper names. The concepts of lesbian presence and rhetorical visibility are not synonymous; however, I want to bring in the collective's discussion and thinking around lesbian presence through spaces, such as the Center, because it sheds light on the larger rhetorical goals the collectives had in relation to the politics of visibility.

For the Let's Be an Apple Pie collective, the Center itself created rhetorical visibility for the lesbian community and, in turn, the lesbians who were (and are) a part of that community. In an early Apple Pie newsletter, Marilyn described the connections between rhetorical practices which occurred at the Center and the rhetorical practices Apple Pie engaged in that extended into the larger community. In a short article called "Why A Lesbian Center?: One Appleseed's Thought": printed in Apple Pie's 11th newsletter of July 1976, Marilyn constructed a list of four reasons that the Center was necessary:

1) The new lesbians need a place where they can find other lesbians.
2) I think the whole community is a little safer for lesbians if there is a lesbian presence around.
3) The existence of a lesbian center is a message to the community.
4) We need a place to socialize among others who share women-loving as a vital part

of their lives.

The assertion that the Lesbian Center was a message shows how naming can create rhetorical visibility. On item three, Marilyn expounds:

> The existence of a lesbian center is a message to the community. The world tends to believe what you tell it to believe. If lesbians go around acting like they are ashamed and have to hide their lesbianism, the world will believe lesbianism is something to be ashamed of; if we are out, being present in the world, we project the idea that we good and beautiful…which we are. The power of presence is a very large power, and the existence of the center helps us maintain Presence.

While the lesbian center was a private, social space for lesbians to come together, the collectives sought for it to also function discursively in the larger community against normative notions of closeted shame and homophobia, which construct lesbians and lesbianism, as "rhetorical secrets" to borrow Grindstaff's term. Instead the Center, as a physical space in the area, speaks a message to the Lansing area community. The building itself was an investment of resources; while the collectives protected the address and the location of the Center through some means, the notion that a community center for lesbians existed in the community sent a message, even if its precise details were not, for good reason, accessible to the community at large. The idea of the community center circulating in the community created a public presence, even if the location was not necessarily known.

The collectives also believed that the rhetorical visibility of the Center created a safer community for lesbians, as Marilyn indicated in the second point of her newsletter list above. For the collective members, this safety was connected to a desire to be openly lesbian in public places. As Terry described it, "We weren't interested in being in the closet." To which Marilyn

followed up*:* "I was of the opinion and saying it in various places that the safest thing was to be out." For example, following point two above, she wrote: "It's a psychological advantage in the game. People don't feel as free about picking on someone if they know she has buddies who would stand up for her." If there are enough lesbians around to maintain and sustain a center, there are enough around to support each other, in the eyes of the larger community.

Several of the collective members had ties to the Michigan State campus, as either faculty or students, so the campus was one of the spaces they identified to be out, that meant having a small branch of the Center on campus, being openly lesbian as an individual in the workplace, or finding other events and opportunities to create a lesbian presence. The community members identified those three ways to create lesbian presence, or to 'be out.' Thus, while naming the physical location of the Center with a lesbian name and "being out," or individuals openly calling themselves lesbian to coworkers and others they knew, were acts of rhetorical visibility in and of themselves.

Drawing from other queer scholars' conceptualizations of rhetorical visibility in LGBTQ contexts and the Let's Be an Apple Pie collective's understandings of the discursive effects of "lesbian presence" through lesbian spaces and existence in non-queer public spaces, I define rhetorical visibility as naming to make lesbian identity perceptible. In the following section, I will focus on specific examples of the collective's acts of naming for visibility, as they align with their larger rhetorical goals of visibility and safety.

The Lesbian Lampreys

The Let's Be an Apple Pie Center News offers an example of naming for rhetorical visibility. For example, a letter from the February 1976 edition contained a section titled "Can You Tread Water?" stated:

> The time has finally come to open the closet door on the Women's Intramural Building. Here's how: There is an all-University team swim meet coming up soon. A few dykes recently got together and decided that we should enter a team and call it "The Lesbian Lampreys."

Following the call for subscribers who were also MSU students to participate in the meet, the section in the newsletter continues: "We'll compose some solid DYKE cheers and finally liberate the women's I.M. It's about time, right?... Please come out and prove that, yes, TeaRose, lesbians do exist in the Women's I.M."

The creation of the swim team was not about a skilled athletic performance, rather a rhetorical performance of collective lesbian identity. The title "Can You Tread Water?" and the requirement to "swim just one length" of the pool sets a low bar for swimming skill requirements for membership on the Lesbian Lamprey team, which indicates that the women were not looking to create a team that would compete in the meet with the goal of win the swimming events. Instead, the goals of forming and competing as a team under the Lesbian Lampreys were rhetorical and social; by competing under a team that was clearly identified as lesbian, the Lesbian Lampreys and their fans aimed to create a lesbian presence in a women-only space in order to draw attention to lesbian existence in women's spaces, which were often assumed to be heterosexual/straight normative spaces. While creating a lesbian presence in general public places was important to the Let's Be an Apple Pie members, creating a lesbian presence in women's spaces was equally important to the women. In the 1970s, one of the large wellness and fitness centers on the Michigan State University campus, where many collective members and lesbian community members were students, staff, or faculty, was a women-only space.

Through the naming, creation, and competition of the Lesbian Lampreys, the women

argued they would be able to "open the closet door" and "liberate the women's I.M." The women gave the team, what Terry called, a "conspicuously lesbian name," reflecting Vanguri's claim that naming helps make the "named identifiable" (3). The act of creating a women's swim team, which is also a lesbian swim team, make the women, team, and fans identifiable and visible as lesbian, as lesbian community. Giving the swim team a "conspicuously lesbian name," is just one example of how the collectives created lesbian visibility for audiences who may have assumed the women who make use of the IM and other spaces at Michigan State University were straight women. This act of naming helped produce a difference from the assumed heterosexuality of MSU women, and an act of naming for collectivity on the part of the swim team and their fans. In other words, giving the team a "conspicuously lesbian name" exemplified what Grindstaff calls, "queer resistance to heteronormative power relations" (150).

The team competed in a meet on March 4, 1976. As Terry remembered the meet*:*

> …we had a screaming lesbian audience. But was hilarious was that actually we were, our team was disqualified and they announced over the speaker that "The Waterlily Lesbians [sic] were disqualified on the breaststroke relay for an illegal touch." It was because we had touched wrong on the side of the pool, but I mean, that's what they announced. You shoulda heard that place.

As Terry recalled this, she implied that the Wellness Center erupted in laughter and cheering. One might imagine that laughter and cheering came from those gathered to shout out "solid dyke cheers" and also by other spectators present for the Freudian slip. The act of naming and competing under the Lesbian Lamprey for rhetorical visibility was a rhetorical act aimed at creating lesbian presence in the I.M., a public moment of liberation and resistance.

The Helen Diner Memorial Women's Center and What Helen Heard

The collectives also used naming to recover, commemorate, and make visible women and their intellectual work that has been erased by history. The strategy of naming for commemoration is also emblematic of the ways in which knowledge was created and shared within the collectives and local lesbian community.

When the women's center was established in 1972 in East Lansing, it was initially named the Helen Diner Memorial Women's Center. Helen Diner was the American pseudonym of Austrian writer and historian Bertha Eckstein-Diner. Diner published a book called *Mütter und Amazone: ein Umriss weiblicher Reiche* (Mothers and Amazons: An Outline of Female Empires) in 1932. Translated into English as *Mothers and Amazons: The First Feminist History of Culture* in 1965, the text on matriarchal societies is highly contested. Some people believe its value was never appropriately acknowledged because it was written by a woman before her time; others believe the work was intellectually sloppy. For example, the book received a scathing review in *Contemporary Sociology: A Journal of Reviews* in 1975, wherein the reviewer asserted "there is no apparent reason for this book to have been published, other than to cash in on the women's liberation movement with a seemingly relevant title that could be issued quickly," (58) pointedly noting that the book's content was "vague, with no footnotes or bibliography to clear up the matter" and lacked the "complete and documented ethnographic detail" of other books of similar topics.

The naming of the Center after Diner suggests the namers and creators of the Women's Center wished to recover Diner and her work. While there are no archival records to speak of about the initial decision to select the name and I didn't speak with the women who initially chose the name for the first iteration of the Center, the Ambitious Amazons indicated that they

inherited the name and then came to assign meaning to it. The Ambitious Amazons I spoke with attributed their decision to keep the name the same as one of practicality and frugality:

> Like the reason we had that Helen Diner Memorial Women's Center name, we never chose it, it was the previous group that had run the Women's Center and they were doing the Coffeehouse, which was Joan Nelson and a couple other women, they actually incorporated the Women's Center and then they quit doing it and we were too cheap to spend the money to get a new name and incorporate, so we just took over their incorporation, so that's how, so we didn't know who Helen Diner was we just took over the Women's Center name.

The Center's name was derived from its original naming by the women who created the Women's Center in East Lansing and inherited or claimed by the Ambitious Amazons for practicality's sake.

The significance of the name Helen Diner was lost, if temporarily, when responsibility for the Center transferred from Joan Nelson and the women who established its first iteration in East Lansing, through the Apple Pie Collective to the Ambitious Amazons. This was clear from margy, who admitted the Amazons didn't know who Diner was. As the name of the Center changed from Women's Center to Helen Diner Memorial Women's Center to the Lansing Lesbian Center/the Helen Diner Memorial Women's Center, and changed hands from collective to collective with the Helen Diner name, the meaning of the Helen Diner name was lost and then re-understood and the story of Helen Diner retold and reinterpreted. As if in a complex game of telephone, the name loses meaning and accumulates new, reshaped meaning as the Center exchanged hands. As Medzerian Vanguri argues, this process of recontextualization may "signal more about group than individual" (5).

The Ambitious Amazons understood the placename as one in which a woman whose work was lost to history can be commemorated. In our conversation, Cheryl and margy relayed their understanding of the history of Diner and her book:

> Cheryl: I mean the Lesbian Center was called the Helen Diner Memorial Women's Center for the longest time because of this Helen Diner who nobody ever heard of, and again, she had written this book about Amazons and didn't reference anything, so there was no…
>
> margy: She was an anthropologist.
>
> Cheryl: …citations.
>
> margy: And she wrote a book called *Mothers and Amazons* and I think this was like in the 30s or 40s, I think she was German, but she didn't…
>
> Cheryl: Cite her sources.
>
> margy: So, people have said.
>
> Cheryl: Where did she get all...
>
> margy: Which we didn't know, but people have written in about her, sending a paragraph about how sad it is that she didn't, you know, cite things, so her book was never taken serious.
>
> Cheryl: But it's, you know, obviously, it' s more of an oral history, I mean there's some artifacts that you can produce, but they don't tell the story and you know, whenever there's a chance to kind of preserve it and pass it on, you know that's the basis of how it all happens in this community is we, you know, share our knowledge and experience and try to build on it.

For Cheryl, the Helen Diner name speaks to the epistemological politics of the collective,

particularly the way they valued sharing knowledge within the community and passing it on and preserving it. This connects to an intentional use of the Helen Diner name, which the Ambitious Amazons engaged in, for a local newsletter they call *What Helen Heard*.

The Ambitious Amazons began publishing the Center Newsletter with the name of the Helen Diner Memorial Women's Center as of the February 1978 issue. In 1996, the Center Newsletter morphed into a local lesbian event guide, which was (and continues to be) distributed to *Lesbian Connection* subscribers in the mid-Michigan area, called *What Helen Heard*, also named after Diner-Eckstein. For the Ambitious Amazons, selection of the name of the Center was both a way to recover an intellectual and scholar lost to history and was a practical decision. The Ambitious Amazons also came to use the name to represent their values of knowledge sharing within the local community, as told by the name *What Helen Heard,* a publication for sharing local information for lesbians in the Lansing area.

Rhetorical Coding

In contrast to rhetorical visibility, rhetorical coding is a practice of naming the collectives used that sought to obscure lesbian identity. Drawing examples of rhetorical coding from both collectives' archival materials, especially newsletters, and from stories they shared in our interviews, I show how the collectives sometimes practiced naming to obscure the queerness, or other social or cultural element, of the thing for particular audiences. To be clear, my use of the term coding in this chapter does not refer to the process of analysis that I went through as a researcher, rather coding in this chapter is an analytical category which I identified through the research process. Coding, then, in this chapter is a purpose for which the collectives named in order to conceal lesbian identity, or to conceal other social or cultural factors in alignment with their political beliefs. One might think of my use of coding here as more aligned with notions of

"speaking in code" rather than with the coding of research data.

Elsie Publishing

In the early days of the *Lesbian Connection,* the Ambitious Amazons were concerned about how the delivery of a magazine to with the word "lesbian" in it might negatively impact subscribers. Since the magazine sent to subscribers' homes through the United States Postal Service, the Ambitious Amazons mailed the *Lesbian Connection*, and later *What Helen Heard*, without markers on the outside. This was because the Ambitious Amazons were aware that many of their subscribers may not be 'out' or not want mail with lesbian content to be associated with them or their home addresses for safety and other reasons. An early issue of *Lesbian Connection* reflects this concern. In the issue, the collective wrote: "Also, for those who requested that their copy of L.C. be sent in a brown wrapper, we regret that we cannot oblige you. The title does not show anywhere on the outside, however, so you are protected by our anonymity. What better cover-up than that!" While this is not an instance of naming, this vignette draws attention to both subscribers' and publishers' concern with the word lesbian being connected with individuals for particular audiences. I share it as context for the following example of naming for rhetorical coding.

Elise Publishing, the publishing company of *Lesbian Connection*, continues that attentiveness to the need of in the case of Elsie Publishing. The name Elsie "codes" lesbian identity, creating a name out of the acronym LC that effectively conceals the lesbian identity. The *Lesbian Connection* is often referred to by collective members and subscribers with the acronym: LC, which, similar to the speaking aloud of "Let's Be An," takes on a different sound when spoken aloud: el cee, which sounds like the woman's name, Elsie. Elsie thus became the name of the publishing company which produced the newsletter. The Elsie Publishing Institute was

formed as the 501(c)3 to oversee the production of the publication.

The rhetorical coding of *Lesbian Connection* demonstrated an interest in privacy and safety concerns of subscribers, many of whom, especially in the early days of the publication in the 1970s, were women living in rural areas. This is related to the exigence for the publication, to create lesbian community for those who did not have it in their physical, geographic communities. The collectives engaged in naming for safety reasons primarily when the explicitly lesbian information could potentially lead (homophobic) people to locate lesbian women in the very places where lesbians felt the need to be safe, such as their homes or the Center, and have control over who had access to those locations and any representations of themselves or those places as lesbian.

Alton Park, Patriarche Park

The Ambitious Amazons held many of their Statewide Gatherings of Lesbians, a monthly dance and fundraiser, and other events such as picnics, at a local outdoor park in East Lansing. The park is located on Alton Road and was previously called Alton Park until the late 1960s, at which point it was renamed Patriarche Park after John M. Patriarche, a long-time East Lansing city employee. margy describes it this way:

> And there were things other than, you know, we also had, we had, um, picnics that we'd have at Alton Park, Patriarche Park, we wouldn't call it Patriarche Park. It used to be Alton Park and then they renamed it in East Lansing.

They refused to call it Patriarche Park because of that name's proximity to the word of patriarchy. In the newsletters, they printed the location of the events as Alton Park, even after it officially changed to Patriarche Park. Their continued use of the previous name marks a kind of unnaming or a refusal to participate with a larger community naming practice. In comparison to

the Helen Diner Center act of naming for commemoration, the act of refusing to participate in a new commemorative naming works to code the perceived oppressive nature of a public place name.

Rhetorical Visibility and Coding: Extended Example with Let's Be An Apple Pie Collective

The name Let's Be an Apple Pie is perhaps one of the most complex instances of naming, rhetorically speaking, that the collectives engaged in. The name has multiple meanings, and manifests both rhetorical visibility as well as rhetorical coding. In this extended example, I unpack the name's multiple meanings, and discuss the ways in which the various readings of the name speak to audiences in different contexts, as it relates to making themselves rhetorically visible.

The collective name contains two parts, "Let's Be An" and "Apple Pie." The first part can be read in two ways: first, as a call to its collective primary audience to be an apple pie, let us be an apple pie, and, second, as a code for lesbian — "Let's Be An" is very similar in appearance and sound to "lesbian." With the name Let's Be an Apple Pie, the collective engaged in the rhetorical work of appealing to a lesbian audience who was in the know while escaping any more than a bit of attention from public audiences who were not privy to its referent or didn't read it, perhaps, aloud to hear the "lesbian" of "Let's Be An…" or who might not take the initiative to find out what it meant or referred to.

The collective name Let's Be an Apple Pie can be read and interpreted in a range of ways. In its most common printing, "let's be an" is a contraction and an imperative for its audience: "Let us be an apple pie." This is a most literal example of how rhetorical study of names works to construct identity, or a "call to be" (Medzerian Vanguri 5). The name first creates an "us," the community of lesbians, and then calls on that community to "be an apple pie." And what does it

mean to "be an apple pie?" Bone provides some insight: "We had a little slogan. We don't have anything to do with God or motherhood but let's be an apple pie." In a social and historical context when general consensus was that lesbianism was not necessarily a good thing, the name claims the idea of goodness, through connections with the seemingly All-American representations of God, motherhood, and apple pie. Their slogan states: we're not this or this, but we can still be this anyway. The slogan implies that while the collective isn't religious or parental, they still wanted to evoke images of themselves as upstanding citizens. The slogan is also slightly tongue-in-cheek.

The references to God, motherhood, and apple pie refer to cultural narratives of nationalism and citizenship, as understood through such phrases "for mom and Apple Pie," which is said to have been the response to soldiers in World War II about their reasoning for going to war or serving in the military. That phrase morphed into the saying "as American as motherhood and apple pie," though "as American as apple pie" was in use much earlier. These idioms in their nationalistic connotations seek to create the U.S. and American citizens as good and nurturing, and homemakers, to speak to instances of patriotic "goodness." As Bone's reference to God implies, the idiom also relied on notions of religiosity as a moral compass. The collective's slogan as a pun, which is also a bit tongue-in-cheek, and their disavowal of relations to God show their clever irreverence. So, a call to be an apple pie is both a call to "goodness" as being upstanding citizens with some of its nationalistic connotations of what it means to be a good citizen. Yet the name also works to shape a collective identity of the collective that is "good," upstanding citizens, as well as humorous and clever, and a bit irreverent.

The collective members asserted that, at that time, being out was a way to be safe because it removed some of the salaciousness and scandalousness affiliated with lesbian. Marilyn

reflected on being openly lesbian as an attempt to eliminate the discursive power of lesbian identity as a weapon to be used against lesbians:

> That if you were concerned about your safety, um, that if you were out that for one thing you'll find out who your enemies are. They can come right out and tell you. And, and for another it squelches a lot of people getting energy and jollies off gossiping about you. "Oh, she's a lesbian." I felt in my work setting that if someone said to one of my coworkers "Oh, she's a lesbian" they'd say, "Uh...yeah?" Because you'd need to have something, that's new, that's sort of hot to gossip and when it wasn't new or hot it just wasn't gonna have any potential for that kind of exchange, and that kind of stirring people up with their anxieties of whatever their issues are.

While the naming of the collective in relation to lesbian audiences shaped collective identity, in relation to other audiences, it also worked to code and hide that very collective identity. The name Let's Be an Apple Pie didn't just live as a call to the community in the contexts that only lesbians were privy to. The name also circulated in public contexts amongst non-lesbians communities. For example, the collective listed their phone number under their name Let's Be an Apple in the local Lansing phone book. Women who heard or knew about the Center or the collective from others who passed on the collective's proper name could find the listing quite easily. The information was available for those who knew it was there and what to look for. In the business section of the telephone book, the name might give clues about the kind of establishment it is.

Publishing the name in the phone book allows for lesbians who are seeking the Center out to locate its phone number to contact the Center or collective. With that purpose in mind, the

name Let's Be an Apple Pie speaks to an audience that is already aware of the Center and the Collective name and know what they were looking for as they sought out the listing in the phone book. While on the other hand, the "lesbian" in the "Let's Be an Apple Pie" listing likely escaped the attention of many people who were not familiar with the Center or the collective and saw it there. Certainly, the concealed "Lesbian" in the title would have. The listing occasionally did attract the attention of people who were not familiar with the center but were curious about what Let's Be an Apple Pie was. Yet in its unusualness and vagueness as a telephone book listing, the curiosity of those who were unfamiliar with it was piqued as we see in the following vignette that Lyn told about taking a phone call while working at the Center:

> Jim Huff, who did a local column in the [local city paper, the] Lansing State Journal for years and years, called our number because he'd seen: "Let's be an Apple Pie" listed in the phone book, and I had to explain to him about all about this and he was very sweet and gentle and said he wouldn't hurt us and he didn't publish anything about us. It was gonna be some kind of human interest thing, you know, "What is this?" and so I told him what it was.

In many ways, this vignette illustrates the complexities of naming and context for a lesbian collective in this era. While the circulation of the collective name, Let's Be an Apple Pie, amongst the local lesbian community created a particular social identity for the collective members, the name also reflected on the Center as a whole. As contexts shifted – from private community publications and communications like the Center Newsletter to more public forums, like the public Lansing phone book – the naming practices of the collectives aimed to create safety for the Center and the women who ran it. The decisions on when, where, and how to be visible required constant negotiation, or balance. As Lyn went on to

say:

> In the context of this sort of organizing, you have to be visible. On the other hand, you know it, especially then it was a delicate balance. You wanted to be visible to lesbians but you're not going to put "Lesbian Center" in the telephone book and you're especially not going to put it in the telephone book with your address.

In its reading by public audiences who are not in the know, then, the name functions, as seen in the call from journalist Jim Huff, as a kind of ambiguous signifier. It doesn't mean anything, or is nonsensical or too nebulous to be pinned to any real meaning for audiences who are unfamiliar with the Center and collective—those who don't read the lesbian in "Let's Be an." In the phone book, when the name is listed with an address which would allow people to easily find and do harm to the Center and the women there. The coding of the lesbian identity through the name Let's Be an Apple Pie then creates a level of safety.

Conclusion

The lesbian collectives used naming as a rhetorical strategy. There are two tactics clearly used in this community: tactics of visibility and tactics of coding. Through the tactics of visibility, naming was a way to perform lesbian identity in public spaces in order to "liberate" said spaces from oppressive heterosexist practices. Visibility as a naming tactic is also a way to commemorate foremothers and speak to lesbian and feminist politics of knowledge, which both seek to recover the intellectual labor of women whose work was lost to the patriarchal forces of history and to model the ways in which knowledge is created and distributed in local lesbian communities. Rhetorical practices of naming are significant because they were a way to strategically perform lesbian identity to construct the lesbian community creating both discursive and material impacts for community members.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

In the introductory chapter of this project, I posed three overarching questions that guided my study with Let's Be an Apple Pie and the Ambitious Amazons collectives:

- How did the lesbian collectives in mid-Michigan understand and describe their roles in the lesbian community and how did those roles shape the rhetorical practices they engaged in?
- What rhetorical practices did the collectives engage in to fulfill that work?
- How might researchers of feminist and queer rhetorical history learn from communities and their organizing to shape their methodologies?

In the following three chapters, I sought to answer those questions to offer a framework for community-initiated and community-sustaining rhetorical action and to create a methodological framework for engaging in rhetorical public memory and historiographical projects with and for feminist and queer communities. More specifically, I aimed to describe the rhetorical work that the Let's Be an Apple Pie Collective and the Ambitious Amazons, involved with the Lesbian Center in Lansing, MI in the 1970s and 1980s, undertook in order to create lesbian community both locally and in larger geographical contexts.

Chapters 3 and 4 analyzed the rhetorical practices the collectives used to create the spaces of a lesbian community center and a lesbian publication. I found two primary categories of rhetorical practices, gathering to make available and naming. The collectives' rhetorical practices of gathering and naming emerged as tactical interventions to create queer cultural spaces and to negotiate tension and risk within the Center and the larger community. I described gathering to make available, a rhetorical practice that Lansing lesbian collectives used to create community spaces. Gathering to make available involved the tactics of identifying, interfacing, envisioning,

documenting, sustaining, and assembling. I also studied the collectives' use of naming as a rhetorical strategy and argued that the collectives used tactics of visibility and tactics of coding in their naming practices. I argue that the rhetorical strategy of naming has both discursive and material impacts and speaks to the collectives' larger social and epistemological politics.

In this final chapter, I reiterate the findings and concluding moments of each of those chapters to connect this study with larger scholarly threads and issues to forward implications of this research for the field of rhetoric and composition. First, I look to my study of the collectives' rhetorical practices of gathering to make available and naming as models for collective rhetorical action and what they might offer scholarship in rhetoric and composition. I also argue that the collectives' idea of "thrive-al" provides a framework which is a shift from many tropes that implicitly shape queer rhetorical studies. Then, I turn to the methodological implications of this study for rhetorical history and public memory, arguing for community framing and analysis; collective oral history interviews; and reciprocity through contributions to community and public history as takeaways. I conclude with next steps for this research.

Models for Collective Rhetorical Action

In this project, I sought to understand how the Let's Be an Apple Pie and Ambitious Amazons' collective orientations as custodians and caretakers of the lesbian center sharped the rhetorical work they engaged in, and to understand the rhetorical practices and tactics they engaged in to create and sustain lesbian spaces and publications, thereby creating and sustaining lesbian community. As the preceding chapters of this dissertation demonstrate, gathering to make available and naming emerged as significant rhetorical practices, with complex subsets of rhetorical tactics, for the collectives. In the following section, I dwell on the conclusions.

Implications for Gathering to Make Available

For Let's Be an Apple Pie and the Ambitious Amazons, the rhetorical practices of gathering arose out of beliefs that a lesbian community could be self-sustaining and self-sufficient. The community's finances, knowledges, skills, and energy could come from the domain of the local community and be more than enough to sustain itself, and the spaces of a Center and magazine. Identifying, interfacing, envisioning, documenting, sustaining, and assembling emerged as rhetorical tactics of gathering which served to create the practiced places and spaces of the Lesbian Center and Lesbian Connection. As these tactics demonstrate, gathering as a queer rhetorical practice is a dynamic and multimodal process. While the collectives aimed to create structures for experiences, the ways in which they did so were not static across situations or foci, rather highly adaptable, drawing on many modes and materials. The collectives' rhetorical practices offer insight into the ways in which rhetorical resources, work flow, and rhetorical strategies and tactics are, or can be, grounded in community and community values. While I have primarily situated this study in feminist rhetorical historiography, the collectives' practices can serve as models for contemporary collective community rhetorical action, and this study provides an example of a study of rhetorical practices that demonstrates how communication and work practices are always already rhetorical and cultural. In these ways, I argue that this project demonstrates that rhetorical historiography scholarship has the potential to cross-pollinate with other areas of rhetoric and composition and fields like technical communication.

In this project, the collectives' organizational work of seeking to draw lesbian women into community together, or what I call "coming in" and their concept of "thrive-al," create productive tension with the common tropes of coming out and survival in discourse about

LGBTQ people and communities, which inevitably shape queer rhetorical scholarship; therefore, the focus on coming in and thrive-al represents a shift for queer rhetorical scholarship.

While "coming out" is a common rhetorical trope for LGTBQIA people to describe identifying their sexuality or gender identity for external audiences, gathering might be thought of as a "bringing in," or rather a queer rhetorical practice of the collectives in order to facilitate coming in for the purposes of creating queer cultural spaces for surviving and thriving in the face of the sexism and heterosexism in other public spaces. In the context of LGBTQ social activism, tropes of struggling for survival and fighting for rights often arise. While these social aims are crucial, these tropes move attention away from the ways in which community organizing, and even community more broadly, in LGBTQ communities is also about pleasure, desire, and joy. The collectives gathered to make available as a matter of survival as lesbians, but also as a matter of thrive-al. They gathered to come together in social settings to be with each other, as lesbians, as evident in the social events, the dances, the socializing the collectives and communities did, while they fought for their existence as lesbians. In this case, gathering to make available is an everyday queer rhetorical practice of bring together lesbian bodies and resources. I urge that scholars of queer rhetorical history be attentive to the ways in which tropes, many of which are based in a material reality for queer people, shape our research. Focusing on the mundaneness of everyday organizational practices, such as meetings and naming, for example, might help illuminate the makings of queer communities out of need and desire, of function and fun, for survival and thrive-al.

Implications for Naming as a Rhetorical Practice

The lesbian collectives used naming as a rhetorical strategy. There are two tactics clearly used in this community: tactics of visibility and tactics of coding. Through the tactics of

visibility, naming is a way to perform lesbian identity in public spaces to "liberate" said spaces from oppressive heterosexist practices. Visibility was a naming tactic to commemorate foremothers and speak to lesbian and feminist politics of knowledge, which both seek to recover the intellectual labor of women whose work was lost to the patriarchal forces of history and to model the ways in which knowledge is created and distributed in local lesbian communities: creating knowledge within the community; leveraging that knowledge for the local community; sharing that knowledge with the local community, including through oral traditions such as storytelling. Like rhetorical practices of gathering, as a study of the rhetorical work of creating community, the study of the collectives' rhetorical practices of naming are significant because they were a way to strategically perform lesbian identity to construct the lesbian community, creating both discursive and material impacts for community members. Naming in social movements and community building may be so obviously rhetorical as to be overlooked. Here again, scholars of rhetorical historiography have an opportunity to turn attention to naming to closely study the ways in which it bridges public and private contexts and creates discursive and material consequences in communities.

Methodological Implications for Rhetorical History and Public Memory

In this project, I have asked: how might researchers of feminist and queer rhetorical history learn from communities and their organizing to shape methodologies for rhetorical history research? I have come away with three primary responses to this question, which I will address in the following section: community framing and analysis; collective oral history interviews; reciprocity through contributions to community and public history.

Community Framing and Analysis

When I began this project, I was primarily interested in the public and collective memory of the Center and the larger lesbian community in the Lansing area; however, as I conducted interviews and asked the collective members about their memories of the Center and about how they understood the Center and affiliated spaces as historical entities, what emerged in their responses was a focus on what they were *doing* in the years the Center was active, or, as I came to understand it, the rhetorical work of creating and sustaining lesbian community through the Center. Because of that pattern of emphasis in the interviews, I turned my analysis of the archival materials to see how they described that work at the time they were doing it. I anchored that analysis on the ways in which they identified their roles or their positions in relationship to the Center in the newsletters and magazines. That naming of their roles and positions oriented them in particular ways to the Center and Lesbian Connection and, therefore, to the rhetorical work they undertook. In her work with oral histories of aboriginal people in northwestern Canada, published in "Oral History, Narrative Strategies, and Native American Historiography: Perspectives from the Yukon Territory, Canada," Julia Cruikshank asserts:

> What is too often missing from American Indian studies as a whole: Greg Sarris (1993) suggests, is interruption and risk. Scholars frame the expense of others with reference to disciplinary norms. Yet unless we put ourselves in interactive situations where we are exposed and vulnerable, where these norms are interrupted and challenged, we can never recognize the limitations of our own descriptions. Academic discourse, Sarris argues, has to be broadly interrogated by other forms of discourse in order to make it clearer what each as to offer the other (4).

I argue for allowing for similar interruption and risk within queer rhetorics, and queer rhetorical historiography specifically. While I could have remained singularly focused on the theoretical framework of public memory in this project, there was great gain in allowing the community participants to reshape the interview questions and focus and, therefore, the analysis. As I mentioned in Chapter 2, one effect was that I came to understand the public memory and the archival traces and histories of the Collectives as one piece of the larger category of the rhetorical strategies and work of the Collectives' community organizing efforts—not as a separate artifact or mere effect of that work. This is a shift from much public memory scholarship which often analyzes how external ideologies shape the public memory of events and communities, and a shift that warrants more exploration through research.

I have articulated a queer rhetorical methodological framework that is deeply informed by methodological literature and the values and practices of the lesbian community I studied. Implicit in this framework is a belief that many people in queer communities have a lived and theorized understanding of their experiences which can deeply inform rhetorical scholars in their development of methodological frameworks. Relatedly, Cruikshank maintains:

> local voices from North American indigenous communities provide more than grist for conventional disciplinary paradigms and have the power to contribute to our understanding of historiography (6).

Following Cruikshank's argument, throughout this dissertation, I have claimed that my methodological aim, in part, was to trust and value the lived experiences and theories of the community I'm studying enough to allow them to give shape to my research practices. Rhetorical historiographers can, and should, look to their subjects' or participants' modes, methods, practices of organizing to shape their critical methodologies. In this project, for

example, the outcome from the shaping of the methodological literature and the community values and practices is a set of methodological principles which guided my research practices: sharing collective knowledge and experience, interconnectedness, identity-based meaning-making, and keeping the history. My research practices in the data analysis and collection phases were informed by the collectivity and experience sharing valued by lesbian collectives in the mid-late twentieth century. For example, I built my analytical framework (e.g. macro- and micro-codes) from the language and frames that the participants and archival materials provided, rather than attempting to impose external language or codes to describe their rhetorical work and conducted collective interviews rather than individual.

Because the women in the lesbian community valued collectivity, separate collectives and organizations were connected and interconnected, despite different goals and identities. Therefore, I sought to tell this history and create my research in a way that drew from and highlighted the interdependent nature of the community and collectives. Finally, my methodological approach was also informed by the practices within lesbian communities in the 1970s, and still today, of recording and archiving the present moment to create a historical record. Therefore, one methodological imperative as I researched and wrote about that history, in effect creating new contributions to that history, is to create artifacts that the community members find useful and ethical. Through the Collectives' being in community, they were also engaged in inquiry about what it meant to be a part of that. My analytical focus then was informed by cultural rhetorics scholarship and the Collectives' principles of reflecting values through their actions and contemplation of what values and cultural aspects comprise the community.

Collective Oral History Interviews

In this project, following the community's practices and values of collectivity also impacted the way in which interviews were conducted. Oral history interviews are almost always one-on-one between a participant and a historian. This goes for oral history interviews in queer communities as well. In this project, the women I contacted to interview created the interview scene as a collective one in which two or three people were interviewed at once.

In the instance of my interviews, the collective members argued that the collective interview attested to the way they lived and continue to live in community with each other. Further, they found that collectively assembling their reflections on the past offered more opportunities for invention and reflection, or in Lyn's words: "We could get each other started easily on to different things." In the context of the memory boom in which rhetorical scholars increasingly turn to public and collective memory as frames for studying the past and producing rhetorical historiographies, collective oral history interviews, particularly in the context of community organizations and social movements and queer communities, can serve as a reflection and representation of collective knowledge building often valued in LGBTQ communities and other social movements.

Reciprocity Through Contributions to Community and Public History

Much has been written about the role and necessity of reciprocity in community-engaged research. In the context of rhetorical historiography scholarship, scholars might do well to enact reciprocity through creating historical artifacts that the community members find useful and ethical. In the case of the Let's Be an Apple Pie Collective and the Ambitious Amazons, they requested sharing my dissertation with them and with the larger community. They also suggested and requested making the archival materials available to a wider audience, primarily through

digitization. While digitizing entire archival collections can be desirable and possible, and there is extensive scholarship in rhetoric and composition detailing various approaches to such research projects, that process can be resource and labor-intensive, so is not always feasible. As such, rhetorical scholars might also consider contributing their research to collaborative history projects established and sponsored by other organizations and institutions. These contributions are often low-stakes, low-investment, yet high payoff if one considers making research, and historiographical research, accessible outside of academic frameworks and paywalls. For example, in the case of this project, I have mentioned that the absence of Michigan markers on National Park Service's LGTBQ Cultural Heritage Initiative map was one impetus for this research and I am working to shape the introductory material in Chapter 1 into short location-based descriptions to pin to the NPS map.

As national LGBTQ projects proliferate, researchers have a real, and relatively simple, way to contribute their local research to larger historical endeavors, which in turn make the knowledge and materials available to wider audiences. When I spoke with the Apple Pie collective members, I mentioned the possibilities of contributing my research on the local Lansing lesbian community to the NPS LGBTQ Cultural Heritage Initiative, and Marilyn said, "You can put us on the map." The act of contributing to large history projects can, indeed, bring about recognition to small or local social movements and community organizations which may not have gained enough national prominence or sustained enough temporal longevity to garner attention from historians.

In my call for studies of small and/or local organizations, and social movements or organizations, which could be considered short-lived or low impact, I am not necessarily arguing in support of the "broadening imperative" (Skinnell), which urges for the expansion of histories

of marginalized communities as the primary purpose and goal of critical rhetorical historiography; however, I do believe that rhetorical historiography studies of community organizational practices in particular are situated to enact local studies which align with Skinnell's notion of critique: "I define critique narrowly, following Michel Foucault and Judith Butler, as the practice of 'pos[ing] the question of the limits of our most sure ways of knowing'" (113). Studies of short-lived and/or local social movements and community organizations without national prominence or longevity, in their juxtaposition against large social movements or organizations, require asking different kinds of questions and might in turn push us into new ways of knowing through inquiry.

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