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Reflecting on & Reimagining Feminism in Rhetoric and Composition: From Graduate School to the Professoriate

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Introduction

In 2019, *Xchanges* published a CFP for a special issue: the "Symposium on the Status of Graduate Study in Rhetoric and Composition." As graduate students and friends, united by our shared positionalities and feminist values, we submitted an article using the same framework we employed in our panel at the *Feminisms and Rhetorics Conference* that same year. Engaging with the conference theme of "DIY Feminism," our article was published with the title, "Doing it Herself: Cultivating a Feminist Ecological Ethos as a Female Graduate Student." In this piece, we discussed how we used feminist rhetorical tactics to challenge patriarchal structures in academia and work towards a space that was more inviting for women in graduate school. Over five years later, with *Xchanges*' new CFP for its 25th anniversary special issue, we are prompted to revisit our original article as we reflect on and reimagine our conceptualizations of feminism in the field of rhetoric and composition[1].

Much has changed since 2019 when we drafted the original piece. Globally, we have experienced a pandemic, countless acts of unjust violence especially against marginalized bodies, and deeply concerning moments of political violence. Professionally, we have finished our doctoral programs and transitioned into tenure-track roles as assistant professors in different regions of the country. And yet, much still remains the same. Women are still not recognized as equals across several domains, and as with many institutions, women in academia must navigate patriarchal structures that remind us that these institutions were not designed with us in mind. In 2019, we often found ourselves fueled by frustration and anger. In 2026, we still experience these emotions, but we also remember that "sometimes the fight takes a while. That doesn't mean we won't win" (Harris, 2024).

In this article, we not only discuss reflection and reimagination as valuable (feminist) practices in rhetoric and composition, but we materially enact them. There are multiple ways to read this article, and we encourage you to engage with it in whatever order best serves you. However, in composing it, we imagined that readers would first read our original article from 2019 as it stands on its own. Then, readers would read our annotations from 2026 in which we reflect on our previous ideas and graduate student

[1] Since our original publication, one of the original authors chose to pursue an alt-ac career while two of us chose to pursue academic careers and are now assistant professors. While an alt-ac perspective would be valuable to this piece, the lack of institutional need and amount of labor required to publish in academic venues means revisiting this work for publication is beyond the scope of our third original coauthor at this time.

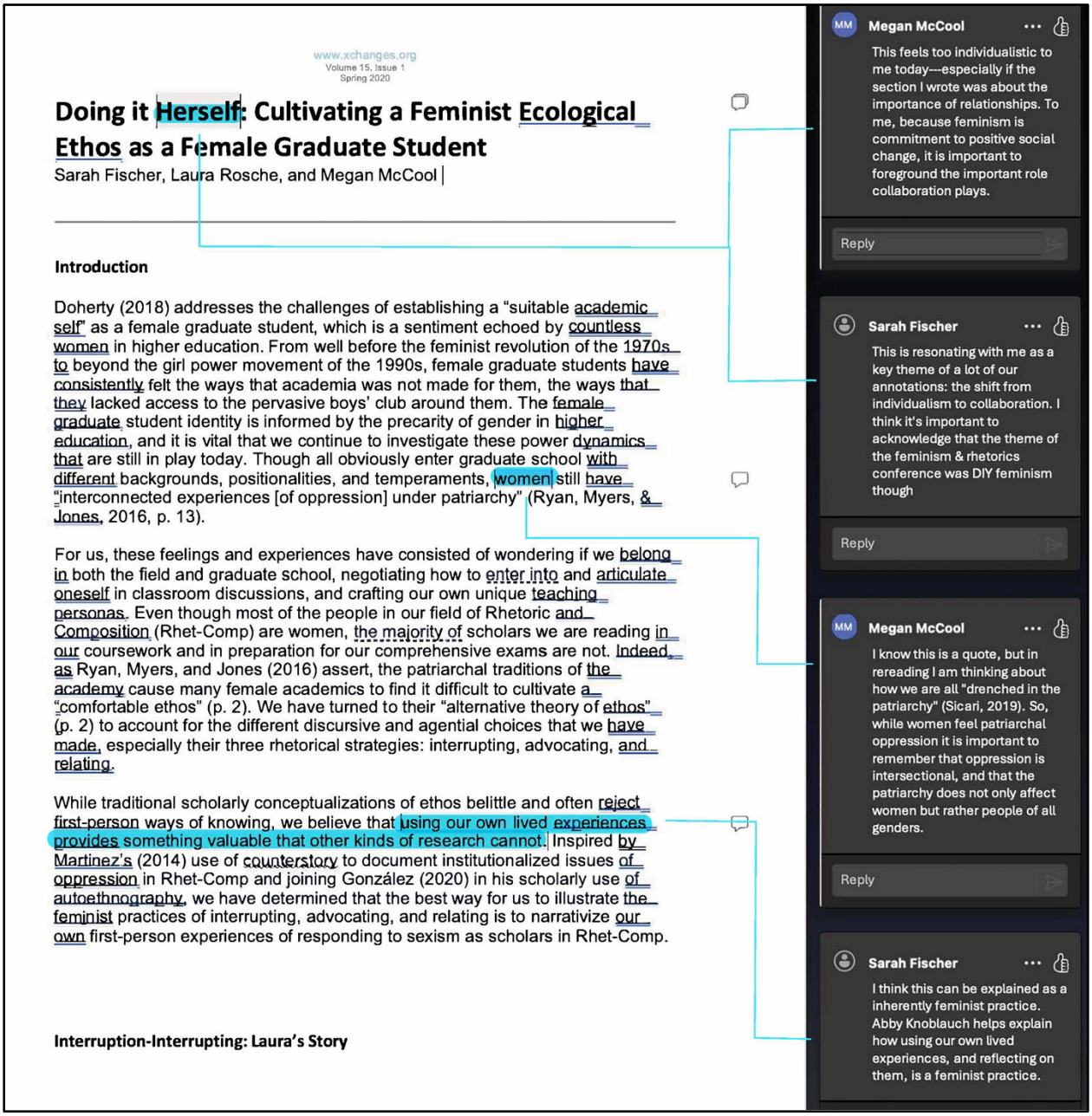
identities. Finally, readers would turn to the remainder of the article that synthesizes our reflections and articulates a concise reimagining of feminism–one that turns away from individualistic values and towards intersectionality and collaboration; one that enacts what we identify as five key feminist practices in the discipline: rhetorical listening, reflexivity, revision, responsivity, and positive gatekeeping.

Note on Methodology

To revisit and reassess our ideas in "Doing It Herself," we re-read the original article, leaving casual annotations for each other about our initial reactions to the article. Then, together we developed questions to use to guide a second round of more systematic reflections. Crafting these questions helped us to move beyond the gut reactions one often feels when revisiting their own writing and toward a more thoughtful and critical understanding of how our conceptions of feminism have evolved since 2019. The guiding questions we used to compose these annotations included:

- How have our perspectives on feminism shifted?
- Which places in the original article no longer feel "true" to us? Or, which places still feel true?
- Are there places that remind us of other scholarship in the field that we are now more familiar with?

Original Article with Annotations



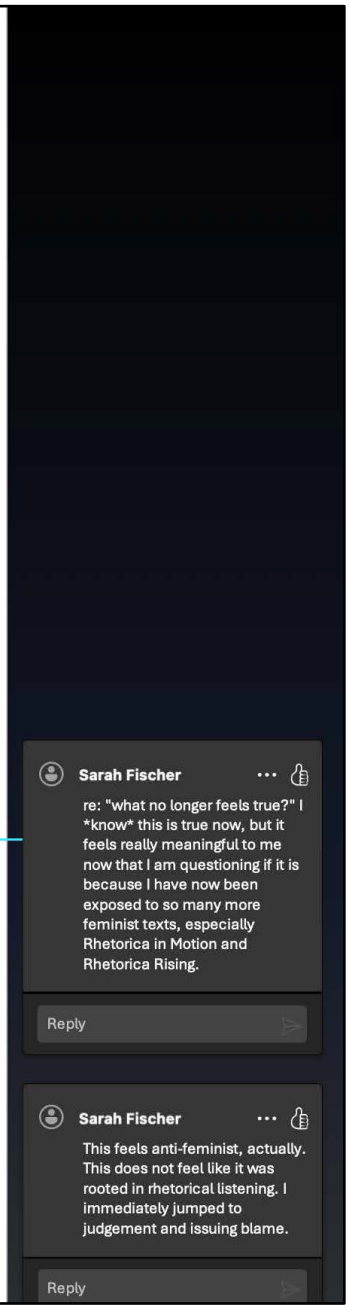
During my final semester of coursework, I was responsible for compiling a reading list for the qualifying exam I would take the following fall. The list was to include approximately 100 texts, and it was intended to provide me with comprehensive knowledge of our field's history and key concepts, as well as reflect my unique scholarly interests. To get started, my advisor encouraged me to reference syllabi from our program's core classes, reading lists from previous exam takers, and the tables of contents from popular edited collections. Taking that advice, my list came together easily, and it quickly exceeded the number of texts required. However, as I looked it over, I realized only a quarter of the texts were composed by or included women, and I worried it didn't reflect the feminist values that inform my scholarship, teaching, and daily life. I wasn't sure what to do; I anticipated that the list would be approved because it included some of the most popular works in our field, and it looked similar to the lists my peers had compiled in years past. I wasn't comfortable, though, studying a reading list that did not include more women's voices.

I use this example not to suggest that previous students had purposefully left women off their lists, but instead to acknowledge one of the ways in which the rhetorical tradition itself often goes unquestioned despite its lack of female voices. There are real, material consequences for this. As a female graduate student, I have struggled to find my place in our field—to find perspectives that adequately represent my gendered experience as a speaker and writer. An uninterrogated rhetorical tradition excludes entire populations of people and their lived experiences as rhetors; it does not account for the unique rhetorical strategies disenfranchised communities must use in order to be heard. Therefore, I could not re-inscribe that tradition.

So, I decided to interrupt it. Interruption, as Ryan, Myers, and Jones (2016) suggest, is a strategy that women have used "to grasp agency and shift normative discourses for some time" (p. 23). By interrupting dominant discourse practices and traditions, women can call attention to their marginalized position, and reveal "the constructed nature of what we consider normal" (p. 24)—and that's what I tried to do. For each male voice on my list, I worked to find a woman's that would challenge or complement it. I worked to interrupt the tradition in our field that prioritizes masculinized rhetorical discourse, and by doing so, I found a place for myself within it.

Advocacy-Advocating: Sarah's Story

In week 12 of a 16-week course taken to fulfill my individualized "Race and Writing Studies" minor, my professor assigned a text by a female author—the *first* female author he had assigned all semester. As Laura illustrates, male dominated, or even male-exclusive, canons are the norm in higher education, and as a result, they are largely left unnoticed and unquestioned. During week 12, though, Megan realized this gendered oversight; when I expressed my excitement about reading a book entitled, *Landscape of a Good Woman*, she expressed her excitement about finally reading a book that featured a woman's voice altogether. And when she informed me that she did not have plans to ask our professor about his oversight, I acknowledged that the "risks of silence [were] too high" (Ryan, Myers, & Jones, 2016, p. 3) and ultimately



felt I "had no choice" (p. 153) but to advocate for her, myself, and our female peers.

According to Ryan, Myers, and Jones (2016), "Advocacy entail[s] rhetors advocating for their own right to speak authoritatively and negotiating the complexities of speaking for others" (p. 111). Given my limited authority at the time as a first-semester female graduate student, and the precarity of speaking on behalf of unknowing others, I decided to carry out my advocacy in a private conversation. After class one day, instead of accusing, arguing, or assuming, I asked my professor why he waited so long before introducing a female author. His response was powerful. Without hesitation, he apologized to me and immediately accepted accountability by admitting that this was an oversight that deserved to be corrected. But more, the very next course meeting, he apologized to the class and delivered handouts of photocopied tables of contents and fostered a discussion about the importance of diversity in the field and in course design.

The texts we read have material effects on the way we make meaning in and of our worlds. A syllabus containing entirely male authors provides the class with a narrow understanding of the field, which is especially troublesome in an introductory course that should function as a broad survey. But perhaps more importantly, this limited scope would be dangerously perpetuated in our final projects: individually designed syllabi of subsets of the field, which several students intended to submit as actual course proposals in our university. And most personally, while every text's masculine pronouns and unrelatable masculinized examples served as micro-frustrations, their large-scale assumptions of a shared male-centered, logocentric pattern of thinking were a forceful reminder that I did not belong in academia. But my advocacy resisted; it showed me that I belong here. Because *women* belong here.

Relation-Relating: Megan's Story

For Ryan, Myers, and Jones (2016), relating emphasizes the ways that women rhetors' ethē are "socially constructed" (p. 195). For a female rhetor, therefore, three general modes of relating with people develop: "collaboration, connection, and coalitions or alliances" (p. 195). Thankfully, I have been lucky enough to experience these different modes of relating throughout my life. But as I reflect upon my time during graduate school, I have realized that these three ways of relating have been bound up together, inextricably linked in the relationships that have helped me to cultivate a feminist ecological ethos in graduate school.

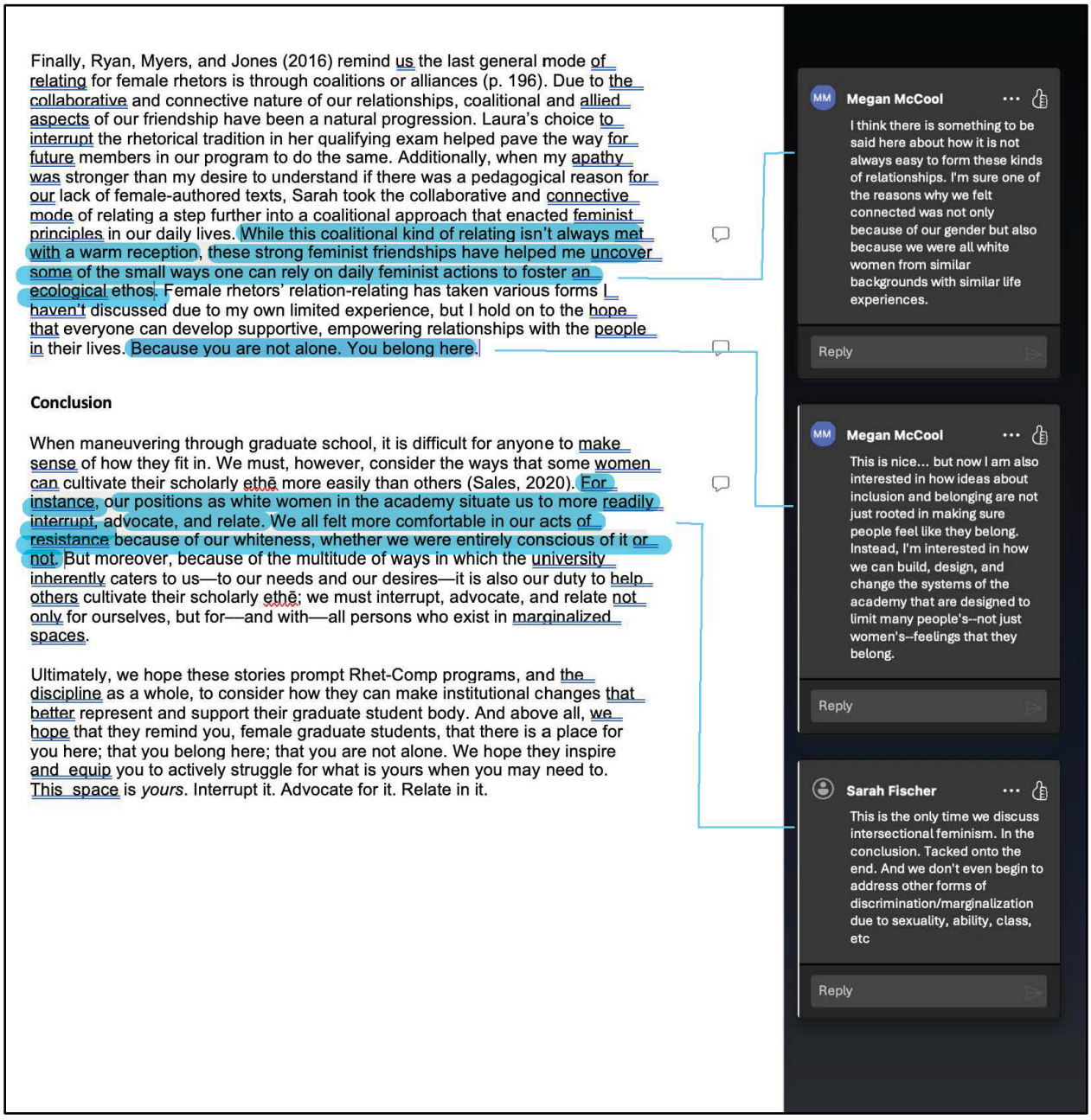
Collaborating with Sarah and Laura is a way of relating I have relied on to breathe life into the isolating moments that can often accompany academic work. I have spent countless hours speaking with both of them about the ideas we were grappling with in our coursework. They are the ones who help me see things I missed in my own readings of texts. They are the ones who continually push me to think about ideas that matter. Collaborating in these ways has allowed us to connect over shared experiences of being in the same graduate program but also our shared interests in feminism and social justice that extend beyond the work we do as graduate students.

Sarah Fischer
I am also hesitant to even call this conversation advocacy… what and who was I advocating for?

Reply

Sarah Fischer
I think there is something to be said here about how much I am positioning this as a singular act rather than something that was collaboratively and collectively negotiated. I now know, especially from engaging with Megan's work, that feminism is fundamentally rooted in collective action.

Reply



Reflections

Though we entertained several themes upon which to reflect here, two overarching themes prevailed. First, we realized that our conception of feminism in "Doing it Herself" was far too narrow. Aside from a few sentences in the conclusion that acknowledge our whiteness, we did not seriously contend with intersecting identities and their importance to and for feminism. Our understanding of feminism was a predominantly white understanding, and if "intersectionality is the marrow within the bones of feminism" (Gay, 2013), then what we were after wasn't really feminism at all. In her reflections section, Sarah elaborates on the theme of intersectionality as it relates to her research

on embodiment and social media. Additionally, the second theme that emerged was that our understanding of feminism was concerningly individualistic. Although we acknowledge the concept of "relation-relating" in the original article, we failed to understand the ways in which true feminism extends beyond individuals and small groups of friends. In her reflections section, Megan explains the importance of feminist approaches to collaboration by situating it in her research on community writing and gender-based violence prevention.

Sarah's Reflections

One thing Megan has always been good at reminding me is: "two things can be true." This reminder has been especially helpful when thinking about my definitions of scholarship. In my first year of graduate school, my understanding of academic, peer-reviewed scholarship was writing that was neutral, objective, and ultimately, what today I'd called *disembodied*. When receiving our invitation to submit a manuscript in 2019, I was surprised to learn that the editors wanted to read a narrative-based piece for a peer-reviewed journal. Even after our article was published, as I was updating my CV, I asked my coauthors if I was "really allowed" to place the *Xchanges* article under the "Peer-Reviewed Journal Articles" heading because "it's *just* a narrative piece." However, two things can be true. Scholarship can be the traditional disembodied writing, but it can also be—and I'd argue is often better when it is—fully embodied. In this section, I explain how our original *Xchanges* article, especially as it was my first publication, prompted me to rethink the role of embodiment, embodied knowledge, and embodied rhetoric in academic writing.

As I continued to develop my research interests in coursework and beyond, I found myself gravitating towards scholarship that used first-person language and reflected on lived experiences (Calafell, 2010; Cedillo, 2018; Hidalgo, 2017; Vieira, 2019). In particular, I was struck by scholars' "commitment to exercising the critical self-reflexivity and questioning that is a hallmark feature of feminist research" (Schell & Rawson, 2010, p. 18). While previous academic training had taught me that these feminist commitments were at best not academic and at worst solipsistic or even narcissistic, these feminist scholars showed me the intellectual and ethical value in critical self-reflexivity, including critically self-reflecting on one's own lived experiences. Put simply: feminists in rhetoric and composition taught me that lived experience is a legitimate form of knowledge. And I would soon learn how to extend and leverage this knowledge.

With more time and more deep reading in the field, I began to understand this kind of scholarship that emphasizes the personal, the felt emotions, and the lived experiences as belonging to the larger subfield of Embodied Rhetorics. In her seminal article, "Bodies of Knowledge: Definitions, Delineations, and Implications of Embodied Writing in the Academy," Knoblauch (2012) offers three categories of embodiment upon which rhetoric and composition scholars are often focused when discussing embodiment: embodied language, embodied knowledge, and embodied rhetoric. Embodied language involves metaphors related to the body and its senses and sensations. Embodied knowledge pertains to using one's body, including one's emotions and lived

experiences, to make meaning. Embodied rhetoric, for which Knoblauch advocates, is more complex. It involves "a purposeful decision to include embodied knowledge and social positionalities as forms of meaning making within a text itself" (Knoblauch, 2012, p. 52). In other words, embodied rhetoric is when the writer explores how their body affects their writing and subsequently implements those reflections into the writing itself. This idea of embodied rhetoric "provide[s] concrete strategies for enacting [the foundational ideals of] Adrienne Rich's call for a politics of location in writing" (Knoblauch, 2012, p. 52). This kind of rigorous reflection asks the writer to think beyond their own emotions and lived experiences and to situate them within larger contexts that consider the material effects of sociocultural factors like gender, race, class, ability, and sexuality.

Knoblauch's (2012) delineations give me the language to explain some of the lack of nuance of our original *Xchanges* article. In "Doing It Herself," we relied on embodied knowledge, rather than embodied rhetoric, to narrate our experiences. Focusing on our individual lived experiences, without fully zooming out to reflect on our (privileged) positionalities, allowed us to elide crucial embodied differences and, ultimately, to produce what Megan and I feel reflects a problematically narrow conception of feminism. Glenn (2018) elaborates on this idea and articulates what is at stake if it continues:

> "No one assumes only one identity. We cannot consider the needs of women without also accounting for race, ethnicity, gender, citizenship, class, sexuality, ability, and more. Such nuanced awareness, such intersectionality, is the 'marrow within the bones of feminism.' Without it, feminism will fracture even further. ("Looking," par. 6)" (p. 56)

Though we aimed to advance feminist goals, by not engaging in deeper reflections on our positionalities–by not practicing embodied rhetoric–we were allowing feminism to fracture.

I am not arguing that embodied knowledge is not valuable. Using one's body and bodily senses to make meaning is crucial to the discipline, especially in multimodal settings, as emphasized by scholars like Steph Ceraso, Jody Shipka, Anne Frances Wysocki, and Kristin Arola. I am arguing that in the context of our original article, embodied rhetoric would have propelled our embodied knowledge further and taken us closer to achieving our feminist goals. By reflecting on our experiences as female graduate students in male-dominated courses and curriculum, *alongside* critical reflections of our white, hetero-cisgendered, and able bodies, we could have worked towards a more accurate depiction of feminism–one that aligns with rhetoric and composition's definition of feminism as necessarily inclusive and intersectional.

These ideas, about 1) lived experiences as valuable feminist knowledge and 2) embodied rhetoric as a framework for self-reflexively interrogating my lived experiences, informed my dissertation project as a graduate student and continue to inform my research as an assistant professor today. Because of the way "Doing It Herself" opened

new possibilities for the way I understand scholarship, I undertook projects that place embodiment and lived experiences at the center. Specifically, I research lifestyle vlogs and their relationship to rhetorical awareness, and I incorporate autoethnographic approaches as I draw on my own lived experiences as a lifestyle vlogger on YouTube. Without challenging my conception of scholarship in the way our original *Xchanges* article did, I am not sure my research would have come to fruition. And more, I am not sure I would be in a position to teach students approaches to writing and rhetoric that remind them that their lived experiences are valuable ways of knowing–even and especially within the academy.

Megan's Reflections

As I review our original *Xchanges* piece, I find myself oscillating between two different frames of mind. On the one hand, I find myself remembering what it was like to be a graduate student in the first year of a combined MA/PhD program and all of the anxieties, questions, and unknowns that transition entailed. I remember acute feelings of imposter syndrome. *Everyone was surely smarter than me? Everyone surely had read more than me? Everyone surely was there on purpose? But I was surely there by mistake.* Tricky experiences from visiting campus as a prospective graduate student were still fresh in my mind as they involved me feeling like an outsider compared to the men who were prospective students in my program. These experiences lingered and erroneously served as "evidence" of my imposter syndrome. As I sought to intellectualize these worries, one of the main ways I could do so was to view them through the lens of gender. Doing so, in turn, led me to feel connected to feminist scholarship in rhetoric and composition. At the same time, the relationships I was building with Sarah and Laura also helped me make sense of these complicated experiences and feelings. It was feeling like an outsider and an imposter but also the relationships I formed that inspired my section of our original *Xchanges* piece. In writing the "relation-relating" section, I hoped to remind others they are not alone and that they belong not only in graduate school but in the field as well.

On the other hand, as I reflect on our original piece, I find myself viewing these experiences and thoughts through the lens of what I have learned on the other side of graduate school. While it is meaningful to look back at our original piece and point to ways my thinking (both personally and professionally) has evolved for, what I believe, is the better, I also cannot help but notice those glaring moments where I do not think I had everything quite right. In particular, one theme of the original piece that stands out to me as being not quite right is our focus on individualism rather than solidarity and community. As our annotations reference, much of the framing we used to write about our experiences as graduate students was focused on the individual. This fact is reflected in everything from the title, "Doing it *Herself*," to our consideration of how *individuals* can go about cultivating an ethe for *themselves* that is grounded in feminist philosophies and practices.

Upon reflection, I find this emphasis to be especially "sticky" for two reasons (Ahmed, 2004). First, because the central purpose of my section of "Doing it Herself" was to

encourage readers to foster connections, relationships, and community. And second, while in some ways the aim of this section might have been successful in reminding readers of the importance of building supportive, meaningful relationships with others, I also wonder about the ways it missed the mark. By focusing on a form of feminism in which one does it *herself*, I find myself wondering about who we were unintentionally leaving out, as Sarah describes above, and the implicit effects this approach can have on feminist efforts.

Additionally, these moments of foregrounding individuality rather than solidarity and community are especially noticeable to me because these ideas are central to my research today. Since working on our original piece, I found myself drawn to the field of community writing–scholarship in rhetoric and composition that 1) focuses on theories and practices for how to meaningfully write collaboratively with communities beyond the academy and 2) what this work can help us learn about the nature, study, and practice of writing. Reading the work of Paula Mathieu, Tom Deans, Linda Flower, and Ellen Cushman deeply inspired me as a first-year graduate student. Furthermore, learning about the field of community writing felt like finding an academic and scholarly community of which I could belong; I found myself relating with other scholars in the field and feeling inspired about the kind of work I wanted to do.

While our original *Xchanges* piece did not take up the field of community writing, I now realize the collaborative approach to the actual writing of "Doing it Herself" served as an early instance of what it means to put values of feminism and collaborative knowledge-making into practice, values that are also taken up and complicated in community writing. Because of the importance of collaboration and relationships in community writing, working with others to co-create knowledge has remained an important part of my scholarship. The CCCC Position Statement on Community-Engaged Scholarship in rhetoric and composition (2023) highlights the importance of collaboration and knowledge production in community writing, explaining that "knowledge is not held solely in university settings, but flows between communities." Our original piece, then, served as an early model for what it means to do this work with others, and it helped me see collaborative writing and research as not only an asset but more so as a necessity for feminist work in rhetoric and composition. While it is important for individuals to cultivate a feminist ecological ethe through relating, it is also important to focus on how feminist visions of the future rely on a collaborative rather than individualistic approach to positive social change.

As I developed my own research trajectory and explored how I would like to contribute answers to some of the key questions of community writing, a feminist approach has remained central to my thinking. My work in community writing focuses on gender-based violence prevention and the ways that various community organizations go about supporting survivors. Because of the community-based context of my work, I found it to be ethically imperative to consider feminist approaches to community writing work. *How could I think and write about community writing in the context of issues of gender-based violence without relying on feminist theory?*

Looking back on our original piece, then, considering the importance of relationships, belonging, coalitions, and community through a feminist lens was not an anomaly but rather an approach to research in rhetoric and composition that still guides my thinking and scholarship. I think my story of relation-relating in "Doing it Herself" is indicative of a key question that has stuck with me. That is, what is the role of collaboration and relationship building in community writing and how can feminist theories and approaches help us reimagine this work? While I am still working through possible answers to this question, I hope that graduate student readers and early career scholars will remember that though our approaches, frameworks, and theories might change, the work we put into our early thinking and writing are necessary to the development of our longer intellectual trajectories.

Reimaginings

In case we have not yet made this clear in the article so far: we understand feminism as a body of scholarship within and beyond rhetoric and composition, but also–and especially pertinent to this article–as a value system that guides how we move through our daily lives, including our academic spaces. Through our reflections, we have each identified key practices that are critical to enacting feminism in rhetoric and composition. Sarah discusses rhetorical listening, reflexivity, and revision, and Megan expands on these practices by considering responsivity and positive gatekeeping. We understand these values and practices as allowing us to reimagine a more intersectional feminism and a more collaborative feminism.

As we move from reflecting on our previous ideas to reimagining these ideas moving forward, we find it important to note that our reimaginings are still in process. They are not perfect nor are they finalized. As such, we do not seek to include these reimaginings as a final "answer" to the issues we now recognize in "Doing it Herself." Rather we view our reimaginings as a feminist practice of acknowledging and working through the tensions, imperfections, and complexities that make up this kind of work. Feminism has allowed us to imperfectly reimagine the affordances, constraints, and tensions that arise in feminist work. As Gay (2014) argues in *Bad Feminist*, it is important to "reconcile the imperfections" of feminism in order to still focus on "all the good it can do" (p. x). By reimagining all the good that feminism can do, we hope to better work toward a world in which people of all genders have equal opportunities in all areas of their lives.

Sarah's Reimaginings

While the field's definition of feminism is multiple and still evolving, there are three key practices that I believe have served as, and will continue to serve as, critical to enacting feminism in rhetoric and composition: rhetorical listening, reflexivity, and revision. These values allow us to reimagine a more intersectional feminism and are informed by feminist writings from scholars in the discipline who write about concepts like rhetorical listening (Garcia, 2019; Glenn and Ratcliffe, 2011; Ratcliffe, 1999; Ratcliffe and Jensen, 2022) reflection and reflexivity (Acosta et al., 2026; Ahmed, 2014; Cedillo, 2018; Kirsch

& Royster, 2010; Kirsch & Ritchie, 1995; Knoblauch, 2012; Sicari, 2019;), and revision (Glenn, 2018; Kirsch & Sullivan, 1992). In this section, I discuss how I carry out these feminist practices, especially in my research. I focus first on the feminist framework I employed in a body chapter of my dissertation. Then, I discuss the way I use these practices in my current research as an assistant professor.

I understand these three values as interrelated. They are united by common practices of critical interrogation of one's own positionality/embodiment and common goals of better understanding others, especially across difference. Rhetorical listening is a "way of helping continually negotiate our always evolving standpoints, our identities, with the always evolving standpoints of others" (Ratcliffe, 1999, p. 209). Reflexivity, then, aids in rhetorical listening as it allows us to systematically and rigorously contemplate our own bodies and the way they move through the world–especially the times and places they move with frictionless privilege. Finally, revision is what results from our rhetorical listening and reflexivity. When we listen deeply, not for our own personal gain but to truly "stand under" (Ratcliffe, 1999) and reflect on our own beings and our "politics of location" (Kirsch & Ritchie, 1995), we can realize shortcomings, oversights, and inaccuracies. And more, we can course correct by taking accountability and revising, demonstrating that we "are not afraid to go back, rethink, revise, [and] forge ahead" with hope that our ideas, and our discipline, "will eventually blossom with intellectual and academic respect and equality" (Glenn, 2018, p. 138).

In my dissertation, I examined YouTube vlogs through multiple methodologies, including making vlogs of my own, assigning vlogs as major projects in writing classes, and–as I discuss in more detail here–analyzing popular vlogs on YouTube as case studies. Rhetorical analysis is a long-standing practice in Rhetoric in Composition; as researchers, we employ it in our scholarship to make new arguments or address existing ones, and as instructors, we teach our students to practice it, too. However, because of the field's struggles to clearly articulate method/ologies (Holmes & Hurley, 2024; VanKooten & Del Hierro, 2022), rhetorical analysis felt not only too broad but also ethically fraught when attempting to use it in my dissertation. Analyzing vloggers' productions of their lives and their bodies via video felt like it flattened them as people, failing to fully account for their intersectional identities, and overlooked the multiple kinds of labor that go into producing a vlog–labor(s) that I know first-hand. Inspired in part by Meagan E. Malone's analysis of popular YouTube video essayist Natalie Wynn[2], I decided to employ a particular approach to my rhetorical analysis–one that was rooted in feminist values of rhetorical listening, reflexivity, and revision. Like Malone models in "Embracing the Potentials and Navigating the Pitfalls of Interdisciplinary Method/olodgies" (2024), I distilled a feminist framework for analysis from Kirsch and Royster's 2010 article, "Feminist Rhetorical Practices: In Search of Excellence," to analyze YouTube vlogs. Following Malone's lead, I used Kirsch and Royster's feminist practices, rooted in rhetorical listening, reflexivity, and revision to analyze YouTube videos more systematically and intentionally.

[2] Often known by her YouTube channel's name, *Contrapoints,* Wynn is a transgender YouTuber who creates content about topics related to politics, gender, and race.

This framework helped guide my analysis in more rigorous and, ultimately, more feminist ways. With Kirsch and Royster's framework, my analysis became grounded in rhetorical listening, as I "deeply and respectfully listen[ed]" (Kirsch & Royster, 2010, p. 649) to each artifact, working not to impose my own perspectives but to "speculate…what might likely be true based on what we have on hand" (Kirsch & Royster, 2010, p. 650). At the same time, their framework encouraged me to acknowledge my own positionality and inherently impartial perspectives. Throughout my analysis, I used Kirsch and Royster as a guide to continually reflect on my own embodiment and the way it led me to make certain interpretations and, at times, precluded me from making other interpretations. Specifically, I was able to reflect on aspects of my embodiment and lived experiences that aligned or varied from the YouTubers who I analyzed, namely my whiteness, my fluency in only one language, and that I do not have children. This kind of intentional, strategic, continuous, and rigorous reflexivity allows for more intersectional feminism–the kind of feminism we aspire for but failed to reach in "Doing It Herself."

Furthermore, modeling what Kirsch and Royster do in their article, I included "Reflection" sections at the end of each case study. Here, I returned to my analysis months after initially conducting it, and reflected on my reflections, with the privilege of time and distance to see new things and make revisions where necessary. Enacting feminism within rhetoric and composition means continuously revising previous writing and thinking, especially your own, and it means constantly re-interrogating one's positionality and privilege in that thinking and writing. It is this very kind of feminist revision that we hope to enact in this current article.

Now, as an assistant professor, I am working on refashioning my dissertation into a book. These feminist practices of rhetorical listening, reflexivity, and revision are still just as critical for me as I "look and look again, listen and listen again, [and] think and think again" (Kirsch & Royster, 2010, p. 652) about my methodologies and their ethical implications. While adding a feminist framework to my analysis helped alleviate some of my research anxieties, the practice of analysis altogether still feels ethically flawed. For lifestyle vlogs in particular, where people (often women) display their bodies, their homes, and their lives as public and consumable content, analysis does not feel like enough. With analysis, I feel, as Ramos (2016) says, I am "transform[ing] people into objects." In order to more fully rhetorically listen–especially to empathetically hear across difference–I must have these vloggers' own voices.

One approach I am exploring for the book is video-based interviews with vloggers, where vlogger's own voices and bodies can speak for themselves. This approach demonstrates a more intersectional kind of knowledge-making since I will not serve as the sole contributor of knowledge. By featuring multiple perspectives, with their own bodies and voices on screen, I can show vloggers from multiple subject positions–including marginalized and multiply marginalized positions–without filtering them through the lens of my own whiteness, and hetero-cisgendered womanhood. Replacing analysis of public artifacts with video-based interviews requires extra time and labor that

is not always easily afforded on the tenure track, but it is a more feminist approach I would not be attempting without rhetorically listening to feminist scholars and mentors, reflecting on my previous writing/thinking, and revising old ideas with new insights I've gleaned.

Megan's Reimaginings

As I described in my "Reflections" section, relation-relating is a feminist practice that continues to be central to the research I do in rhetoric and composition. Now, though, I think about relation-relating through the lens of feminist collaboration. I do not see these two concepts as mutually exclusive, but rather I am now reimagining the ways that relation-relating for feminist aims requires thoughtful, careful collaboration. In reflecting on "Doing It Herself," I find myself reimagining how an individualistic approach to feminist relation-relating is not only untenable for feminism, but it is also contradictory. When considering the various relationships that emerge when engaging in feminism, many in rhetoric and composition have explored the important role that collaboration plays (Glenn, 2018; Micciche, 2010; Nickoson & Sheridan, 2012; Royster & Kirsch, 2012;). In other words, we cannot do the work of feminism without feminist collaboration. Using my experiences with community writing to ground me, in this section I describe what feminist collaboration has come to mean to me and outline two rhetorical practices that have helped me enact feminist collaboration.

As I mentioned above, my research is focused on theories and pedagogies of community-engaged writing, specifically within contexts of gender-based violence prevention. Key questions I am interested in are, what kinds of partnerships are possible between students and survivors? And, how can these partnerships help us further theorize community writing? While I was writing in the genre of a dissertation, a *genre* that demands single authorship and work that needs to be completed in a strict timeframe, I was also writing for the *field* of community writing, an area of study that demands research be developed from relationships with community partners, is reciprocal rather than extractive, and is co-created rather than imposed (CCCC, 2023). The demands of the genre of a dissertation which requires an individualistic approach to scholarship, and the demands of the field of community writing which centers research that is collaborative, are in many ways incongruous.

I suggest that feminist collaboration is one approach for navigating these incongruities; I do not, however, see this practice as one that is straightforward or without its own complexities. For example, when navigating a feminist approach to collaboration in my dissertation research, I had to consider relationships between myself, students, and community organizations. I also had to consider students' relationships to the social issue that grounded our work: issues of gender-based violence such as domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking. For many readers, the complicated ethical dynamics of this work make themselves immediately clear. As a researcher who brings feminist theory to community writing (in large part because of the social issue with which I was working), I had to acknowledge the complicated ethical and relational dynamics involved in this work, and a feminist approach to collaboration was one

framework that helped me do so. For example, I needed to consider how to maintain reciprocal relationships with my community partners, the ways that my pedagogical research could be collaborative with my students, and also what kinds of collaborative writing were possible between students and the community partners with whom they were being asked to work.

Through reflecting on both my earlier work writing "Doing It Herself," as well as by reflecting on my dissertation research, I have noted two feminist rhetorical practices that have been useful for my work with feminist collaboration and that might also be useful for others in theirs: responsivity and positive gatekeeping. In many ways, I see these practices as complementary to and extensions of Sarah's discussion of rhetorical listening, reflexivity, and revision. By providing these additional approaches to feminism, I hope to equip readers with additional examples of feminist values and practices that can be used for the various contexts in which we work.

Responsivity is a practice rooted in feminist values while also being a central practice of community-engaged writing. Sheridan (2018) writes that responsivity "challenge[s] standardized practices" of collaboration "in favor of supple, situated interactions based on the current needs of those within specific communities and publics" (p. xi). Additionally, Royster (2014) explains that "a rhetoric of responsivity [is] a way of being and a way of doing" (p. 288) in which rhetoricians can build "cross-sectional collaborations in local urban contexts that permit us to see and work as academics in ways that are intellectually robust, responsive to contemporary problems and issues, and also responsive to the diversity of the human beings involved" (p. 283).

In my dissertation work, this looked like being responsive to the capacities of community partners. While much of community writing scholarship argues for the importance of designing community-university partnerships collaboratively with community organizations, the practice of responsivity gives feminist researchers one specific way to approach these collaborations. When discussing options for a collaboration between my writing students and one nonprofit organization that I had been working with for years, it turned out that my initial goals for the partnerships did not align with the organization's needs and capacity for collaboration. While I was hoping for a deeply collaborative partnership in which students were writing with the organization and its clients, the organization most needed students to provide direct service work that supported the daily operations of their survivor-centered programming. Community writing has long cautioned against the kinds of partnerships that this nonprofit desired (see CCCC, 2023; Morton, 1995; Restaino & Cella, 2013), so though I was initially hesitant to continue our collaboration, I chose to be responsive to the goals and capacities of my partner organization.

This responsivity led me to rethink the possibilities for this kind of community writing partnership and to consider how I could help students ethically engage in this work in ways that did not reinforce a charity-oriented or savior-minded approach to social change and instead could contribute to more ethical and inclusive feminist social change.

As I develop new partnerships with community organizations in my role as an assistant professor, building relationships grounded in mutual trust and respect with nonprofit organizations in new settings and tentatively outlining what a collaboration between them, myself, and my students might look like, reminds me of the importance of enacting responsivity, which prioritizes situated, responsive approaches to working with others rather than standardized ones. Practicing responsivity reminds me that the ways I have collaborated with others in the past do not automatically translate to my present. Or, that sometimes these collaborations might involve taking risks that go against the standardized approach. In a time marked by attacks on the public funding structures that support much nonprofit work, now more than ever it is important to be responsive to the always evolving needs and capacities of community partners.

Additionally, collaborating with others for feminist aims also brings up the issue of when it is necessary to practice what Itchuaqiyaq et al. (2022) call positive gatekeeping. In their 2022 symposium for the *Community Literacy Journal* on protecting community members from the demands of the university for access to people, communities, and lands, Itchuaqiyaq et al. argue that the idea of access is often seen as an unquestioned good (2022, p. 94). In other words, it is commonly thought that the more accessible peoples, communities, and land is to university researchers for collaboration, the better for all groups involved. Rather than considering opening up access to communities, lands, and peoples as always good, they instead suggest that this kind of access puts communities "at risk of exploitation" (2022, p. 95). As a way to mitigate this risk, they suggest that academics can exercise a "positive gatekeeping function" in which researchers serve as a "precursor to exploitation" (2022, p. 94).

In my dissertation research, positive gatekeeping looked like not only being responsive to the needs of community partners but also preemptively considering the kinds of harm both partners and students might face in collaborative work centered around gender-based violence prevention. For instance, one organization with whom students worked was a coalitional group made up of local and state governmental commissioners and nonprofit organizations that supported gender justice generally but also had programming focused on gender-based violence prevention specifically. Because of the nature of this organization and the work they are involved with, as well as their eagerness to work with student writers at the university, I found it important to provide some guardrails for this partnership that honored the capacities and labor of this coalitional organization. I did not want to take advantage of the kinds of access they were offering students, so I worked to ensure that our collaboration together honored the other roles and responsibilities of these community partners and did not add an unreasonable amount of additional labor to their already heavy work loads.

Additionally, I had to consider the well-being of students, and the kinds of access to their own personal mental and emotional bandwidths they would need to give to community partners in this context. To navigate this, I always ensured that students were given a choice on the kinds of community-engaged work in which they participated, and I worked to implement trauma-informed pedagogy in my classroom.

Moving forward in my research, I am continuing to consider the ways that I, as a community writing researcher, can ensure that the access I am asking for—access to community organizations, access to the lives of survivors, and to students' mental and emotional bandwidths—is never assumed nor taken for granted. I am continuing to think about what kinds of collaborations are possible between survivors and students and the ways that I can serve as a positive gatekeeper for both groups of people.

When engaging in collaborative feminist work for positive social change, it is essential to be attuned to the various positionalities of those with whom one is working. Echoing Sarah's calls for an intersectional approach to feminism, by serving as a positive gatekeeper in one's community-engaged partnerships, we can better navigate the ethical and relational complexities that exist below the surface of our work. On the other hand, even when collaborative feminist spaces exist and limiting unfettered access to institutionally disadvantaged groups can be beneficial, particularly in contexts of community writing, feminist scholars in rhetoric and composition remind us of the importance of being attuned to who has access to feminist collaboration and thus collective social change in the first place (Chavez, 2013; Licona, 2013; Royster & Kirsch, 2012). To ensure access to feminist collaboration and coalitional work is possible, those from more privileged positions must reflect on and reimagine more thoughtful ways to center the experiences of folks who have been historically left out of feminist social change work.

In seeking to navigate these dilemmas as ethically as possible, feminist approaches to collaboration helped guide me. While I know there is no ethically pure way to navigate this work, I would like to think that feminist theories and approaches to collaboration helped me mitigate the harm that could have been caused. Because, for me, feminist collaboration is not just about "relation-relating" as a way to build community, but rather, feminist collaboration is centered around the fact that we are always already in relationship with others when we do feminist rhetorical work. As a result, we must always be aware of how feminism helps us recognize and respond to the ways that collaborative relationships always require us to examine one's positionality and relationships, or our embodiment as Sarah would say, to those with whom we are collaborating, and all of the ethical tensions that come up as a result.

Conclusion

We hope that this article has not only discussed, but has also materially shown, the importance of critically reflecting on one's previous work in order to reimagine more rigorous and more ethical approaches to feminist rhetoric. By revisiting our original text from when we were early career graduate students, from where we stand now as early career faculty, we have more fully realized the important roles intersectionality and collaboration play in rhetorical feminism. By engaging in practices critical to the discipline such as rhetorical listening, reflexivity, and revision, Sarah has discussed her renewed thinking about research methodologies as well as connections to embodied rhetorics. Similarly, Megan has considered the ways that her community-engaged writing research extended her original ideas about the role of relation-relating in feminist

work. By highlighting practices of responsivity and positive gatekeeping, Megan has highlighted how feminist collaboration provides one approach for navigating the complexities and incongruities that often exist in collaborative work. These five feminist practices of rhetorical listening, reflexivity, revision, responsivity, and positive gatekeeping are important to rhetoric and composition because they help us achieve feminist goals. While our current times are marked by precarity, especially in the form of democratic backsliding and public distrust and defunding of higher education, they are also defined by remarkable feminist scholarship in rhetoric and composition. By sustaining these five practices, feminist scholarship serves as an example for pushing against current pressures and designing a more equitable future.

Whether you are reading this as an early career graduate student, late career faculty member, or somewhere in between or entirely unaffiliated, we hope that you also feel inspired by the 25th anniversary of *Xchanges* to reflect on the legacies of the teachers, researchers, and practitioners that have influenced your work in order to reimagine new futures for our field. As we complete final edits on this manuscript in light of the news of the National Council of Teachers of English's decision to de-charter the Conference on College Composition and Communication, one of the field's flagship journals, and the Studies in Writing and Rhetoric book series, this special issue and its call to reflect and reimagine feels not only kairotic but also imperative.

Whether thinking of your own teaching and research or the future of the field, your reflections and reimaginings might consider an expansive understanding of feminism, like us, or maybe they take up other themes like accessibility, linguistic justice, or decoloniality. These reflections and reimaginings might be done alone in a private diary, at brainstorming and ideation sessions with others in your area, or, like us, with a dear friend in a public, peer-reviewed journal. No matter the focus of this work, we recommend starting with a list of questions, like the ones listed on pages 2-3 of this article.

- How have your perspectives on [the topic or purpose of your research] shifted?
- Which places in your initial thinking or writing no longer feel "true" to you? Are there any beliefs or assumptions that you have taken for granted? Or, which places still feel true and why?
- Are there ideas, practices, or counternarratives that remind you of other scholarship in the field that you are now more familiar with?

Regardless of the content or the setting, we hope we have carved out space for people–especially academics—to take a look back and say, "Here's where I got it wrong" and then cast a brave vision forward and say, "Moving forward, here's why I hope I'm getting it right."

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