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Seeking Justice and Effecting Organizational Change: Kategoria as a Form of Rhetorical Leadership

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SEEKING JUSTICE AND EFFECTING ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE:
KATEGORIA AS A FORM OF RHETORICAL LEADERSHIP

by

Marnie Lawler McDonough

A Dissertation Submitted in
Partial Fulfillment of the
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ABSTRACT

SEEKING JUSTICE AND EFFECTING ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE: *KATEGORIA* AS A FORM OF RHETORICAL LEADERSHIP

by

Marnie Lawler McDonough

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2022
Under the Supervision of Professor Leslie J. Harris

Organizational scandals at both the institutional and leadership levels abound in society, and, with growing platforms and forums to level allegations, public accusations by myriad individuals have increased. As an understudied genre, *kategoria*, or speeches of accusation, should be considered for their ability to influence change. In this study, I argue that *kategoria* can be employed as a form of rhetorical leadership and utilized as a tool to disrupt value hierarchies and, thus, effect organizational change. This investigation assumes a genre analysis to move beyond establishing accusation simply as a classification of forensic rhetoric but to illustrate that the generic form can be employed as rhetorical leadership, able to successfully be used by individuals with varying degrees of power to disrupt value hierarchy expectations and motivate change by establishing guilt and seeking justice. As the evolution of holding those in power accountable for misdeeds and public speeches of accusation continue, this study reveals both the rhetorical tactics that can impact change as well as how those who hold less institutional power can effectively enact these rhetorical strategies to achieve justice. To uncover the rhetorical mechanism of *kategoria*, I examine three contemporary and successful cases of leadership change in which individuals with less institutional power than the accused used discourse to motivate concrete action. My case studies include accusations leveled at leaders at Michigan State University, Uber, and Facebook. Deeper

understanding of *kategoria* is necessary to enrich scholarship for critics by illuminating the rhetorical strategies that can be successfully deployed in these speeches to accomplish the ends called for by the accuser. Furthermore, elucidating these strategies has practical implications for individuals who wish to reveal leadership transgressions and impact institutional action. Revealing what has been useful in the past can inform future rhetorical attempts at *kategoria* that call for organizational change. At a time when enhanced understanding of speeches of accusation is critical for scholars and individuals seeking concrete change at the leadership level, my study fuses theoretical and practical implications, impacting both scholarship and society.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Organizational scandals at both the institutional and leadership levels abound in society. Facilitated by growing social platforms and forums to level allegations, public accusations of all kinds have increased. According to *Forbes*, society has witnessed “a series of corporate scandals that have betrayed consumer trust and destroyed shareholder value in many large enterprises.”¹ *Fortune* magazine annually recounts the top corporate scandals of each year, with accusations including data breaches, insider trading, bribery, embezzlement, hiding assets, and falsifying information about safety breaches and other important consumer standard checks.² High profile scandal is not limited to the business world. An article examining scandals in higher education asserts that “successful people in power sometimes behave badly,” and, when such allegations are made public, leaders must be held accountable.³ Examples of accusations at the leadership level in higher education include “explosive allegations of dangerous drug binges” and “turning a blind eye to a problematic situation,” along with others that lay “bare questions of morality, money and power among high-ranking” individuals in organizations.⁴ This increase in accusations underscores the importance of examining this rhetoric to reveal strategies that can be utilized to effect organizational and leadership change.

As the list of stakeholders, investors, board members, victims, and survivors speaking out against organizational leaders and demanding institutional action grows, it is increasingly important to examine the rhetorical attempts at accusation that have been successful in effecting change. *Kategoria*, a speech of accusation, is a classical rhetorical form that can be enacted to influence change and motivate action.⁵ I advance this research to argue that *kategoria* can be employed as a form of rhetorical leadership and utilized as a tool to disrupt value hierarchy to effect organizational change. The influx of this type of rhetoric publicly enacted in our

contemporary society due to growing forums for leveling allegations, combined with the increasing number of voices seizing power to advance accusations, renders this a ripe time to investigate *kategoria*. Deeper understanding of the rhetorical form is necessary to enrich scholarship for critics by illuminating the rhetorical strategies that can be successfully deployed in these speeches to accomplish the ends called for by the accuser. Furthermore, elucidating rhetorical strategies in cases that have been reported as successful by media accounts has practical implications for individuals who wish to reveal leadership transgressions and attempt to impact concrete institutional action. Understanding what has been useful in the past can inform future rhetorical attempts at accusation that call for organizational change.

To uncover the rhetorical mechanism of *kategoria*, I turn to successful instances of accusation that have indicted both an organization and its leadership. The *Harvard Business Review* notes that “several changes in the past decade have brought us to this moment. Some were technological... other changes were cultural,” and ultimately this shift indicates that “the work environment now is much different from what it was.”⁶ As the corporate world and its standards for leader behavior continue to evolve, the trend of leveling accusations in the public forum against high-profile individuals will likely grow as more platforms to do so are introduced and previously silenced voices are encouraged to speak out. In their 2016 study of persuasive attack strategies, James R. DiSanza and Nancy J. Legge asserted:

Although attacks against others’ actions or character have been around for as long as people have disagreed with one another, the development of the Internet, especially social media sites such as Twitter and Reddit, combined with our ongoing culture wars and highly polarized politics, have created an environment rife with persuasive attacks.⁷

The types of allegations noted by DiSanza and Legge are important to consider as society examines existing organizational standards for leaders and how to address the accusations to enact change. Studying successful rhetorical accusations against leaders is crucial, especially

considering the belief that “translating outrage into action... requires moving beyond hashtags toward new norms of workplace conduct.”⁸ As the evolution of holding those in power accountable for misdeeds and public speeches of accusation continue, studying successful instances of *kategoria* can reveal both the rhetorical tactics that can impact change as well as how those who hold less power can effectively enact these rhetorical strategies.

The pervasiveness of public accusation indicates that a growing number of voices are contributing to the conversation. The increase in platforms and public support for allegations provide a forum for individuals who may not hold traditional avenues of authority to speak out against those who do wield power. Though sexual harassment allegations are not the primary focus of this investigation into successful instances of *kategoria* leveled against organizational leaders, it should be noted that the #MeToo movement has been named as responsible in part for the emergence of individuals speaking out against wrongdoing. According to an article in *U.S. News and World Report*, individuals credit the movement “for creating the conditions that emboldened” them to publicly come forward with a multitude of accusations.⁹ Another reason cited in the media for the influx of *kategoria* is “a domino effect,” suggesting that when individuals who hold less power than the accused begin to speak out, others begin to “feel safe enough to come forward” with their own allegations.¹⁰ The public speeches of accusation directed at organizational leaders “and the institutions that support them” have propelled movements and effected change, resulting in the assertion that “such callouts embrace the leveling effects of social media to empower marginalized voices.”¹¹ What has been termed “cancel culture” is in fact “accountability,” according to the *Atlantic*.¹² This prevalence of public accusation from myriad individuals applies directly to the impact of those previously silenced

voices and those with varying degrees of power but less than the accused. Utilizing rhetorical leadership in the form of *kategoria* motivates accountability and effects change.

In this chapter, I will establish the importance of my study and ground it in relevant scholarship. Additionally, I will describe the specific instances of accusation on which I am focused and introduce the case studies that will illustrate my argument. To begin, I discuss the implications of my examination that extend to both scholarship and society. Then, I provide an overview of the literature to which this study will contribute. Specifically, I examine concepts of leadership in organizations, organizational culture and communication, crisis communication, and resistance to change in organizations. Next, I discuss rhetorical leadership and how it can be used to motivate change, establishing *kategoria* as a form of rhetorical leadership. Finally, I will present and justify my three case studies as contemporary examples of accusation in which individuals with varying degrees of power successfully employed *kategoria* as a form of rhetorical leadership to effect change in organizations.

Implications for Scholarship and Society

Revealing successful rhetorical strategies of *kategoria* has utility for practitioners seeking to effect change through speeches of accusation and for rhetorical scholars seeking greater insight into *kategoria* as a genre. My study illustrates that enacting *kategoria* as a form of rhetorical leadership can disrupt power systems. As a genre, *kategoria* has typically been investigated as a rhetorical form advanced to elicit apology or self-defense as a response, but my examination shows that speeches of accusation can be successfully utilized to effect concrete change. I will demonstrate that individuals who hold varying degrees of power can employ accusation to engage in public rhetorical leadership and to motivate leadership change in organizations. These implications extend to both scholarship and society by situating *kategoria*

as a form of rhetorical leadership accessible to all individuals who wish to employ strategies shown to be successful in speeches of accusation.

This investigation has several implications for rhetorical scholarship. Primarily, my study will contribute to scholarship by situating *kategoria* as a form of rhetorical leadership. This examination will position *kategoria* as a tool for change and illustrate the potential utility of speeches of accusation that do not seek to elicit self-defense as the response. Studying successful *kategoria* will bolster the literature on this type of speech form by revealing tactics that can be employed in speeches of accusation that can effectively motivate change and serve justice, contributing an entirely new consideration into how *kategoria* operates. My investigation will also enrich rhetorical leadership scholarship by expanding understanding of speech forms that can be employed to enact change and who has access to accusation as a rhetorical form. In many cases, leadership is attributed predominantly to those with legitimate authority. Legitimate authority is defined as power held by an individual based on position or title and the given control over others as a result of their role.¹³ An individual does not have to hold legitimate authority to enact leadership, particularly leadership through discourse. It is increasingly possible for those whose voices have previously been silenced to seize power in an attempt to influence change through rhetoric. I will contribute to rhetorical scholarship by illustrating that *kategoria* can be used as a tool by individuals with varying degrees of power to shift power dynamics by repositioning leadership as a function achieved through public rhetoric as opposed to just legitimate authority.

The utility of this study extends beyond scholarship to society. As noted, society has seen an increase in public allegations from individuals who previously may not have had the platform or the voice to effect change. As platforms grow and silenced voices are amplified, myriad

audiences would benefit from access to rhetorical strategies that have proven successful in similar instances. Positioning speeches of accusation as a form of rhetorical leadership that is accessible by all individuals regardless of degree of power expands the potential reach and pragmatic nature of this study. By identifying and explicating useful rhetorical tactics, my examination will have practical implications for individuals who seek to accuse or who coach others in their *kategoria* attempts. Outlining successful *kategoria* strategies will help crisis managers, practitioners, and future accusers be more effective rhetorical agents. At a time when enhanced understanding of speeches of accusation is critical for scholars and individuals seeking concrete change at the leadership level, my study will seek to fuse theoretical and practical implications, impacting both scholarship and society.

Communication and Leadership in Organizations

Rooted in leadership and communication in organizations, my study contributes to scholarship that draws on concepts of organizational communication and culture, leadership, and crisis communication. Specifically, by situating *kategoria* as a tool for change, I seek to expand the literature on rhetorical leadership and explicate the practical implications of my study as well. To begin, I establish that organizations are communication-based, and that leadership is manifested through communication. Then, I review the literature on the impact of leadership on creating and shaping organizational culture. Next, I will highlight the role of a leader in crisis communication and organizational response to a crisis situation. Further, I detail the historical resistance to change in organizations, specifically related to the industries in which my case studies reside. Finally, I move into rhetorical leadership and how enacting rhetorical leadership can successfully influence organizational change. As an understudied genre, *kategoria* should be

considered a tool for rhetorical leadership to be employed by individuals with varying degrees of power to effect change.

An understanding of organizations is grounded in the process of communication that underscores activities and interactions within an organization. According to Michael Z. Hackman and Craig E. Johnson, organizations are formed through the process of communication.¹⁴ In his review of communicative perspectives for understanding and critiquing organizations, John G. McClellan noted, “As scholars and practitioners increasingly embrace organizations as social constructions, communication is more commonly recognized as the practice that creates, maintains, and transforms organizations.”¹⁵ In addition to forming and defining them, the communication within an organization can reveal shared meaning and reality among individuals. Charlotte Simonsson and Mats Heide studied how organizations could become more communicative, particularly to ensure early detection of impending crises. They maintained that “An important aspect of the communicative organization is that it widens the understanding of strategic communication as a practice that involves all organizational members.”¹⁶ This perspective supports the notion that shared meaning is created within an organization through communication and interaction among various individuals. McClellan elaborated on the necessity of understanding an organization through communication, noting that “communicative perspectives reveal how everyday communication in the workplace constitutes organizational cultures and subjectivities in ways that normalize dominant ways of understanding,” meaning, “organizational realities emerge in communication performances/practices.”¹⁷ Examining the function of communication within an organization can facilitate understanding of leadership, organizational culture, responses to crisis, and resistance to change.

Akin to organizations being formed by the process of communication, leadership is a communication-based activity. Hackman and Johnson defined leadership as “human (symbolic) communication that modifies the attitudes and behaviors of others in order to meet shared group goals and needs.”¹⁸ In their study on managing the language of leadership, Gail T. Fairhurst and Robert A. Sarr posited that individuals become leaders through the “ability to decipher and communicate meaning out of complex and confusing situations.”¹⁹ This view indicates that the functions of leadership are demonstrated through communication. Leaders then should be expected to engage in open interaction with stakeholders to ensure shared meaning and understanding that marks organizations. Jim Vickrey, a leadership scholar, advanced the belief that “communication and leadership are... inextricably linked.”²⁰ Communication is more than just an act or process in which leaders engage. Instead, leadership is exhibited through communication, affording the possibility of a wide variety of individuals to assume leadership.

In an organization, despite the creation of shared meaning and interaction, much of the communication comes from the leadership level. In their 2021 article, Milton Mayfield, Jacqueline Mayfield, and Robyn Walker stated that their “research emphasizes the power of leader communication for creating strong organizational alliances with followers. Leaders need awareness of how their communication drives a follower’s identification and target their speech in a strategic fashion.”²¹ This assertion underscores the importance of considering quality of communication with regard to prevalence of communication. If leader communication dominates in an organization, what is being communicated should be meaningful. Linjuan Rita Men and Hua Jiang investigated the relationship between organizational leadership and communication and found that “employees look up to the leaders, watch how leaders interact with others, and determine whether leaders put words into action. In this case, leaders set the overall tone of

communication for an organization.”²² Managing meaning is a key component of leadership, as discussed. Jonathan Clifton, in his analysis of leadership discourse in interactions, maintained that “in organizational settings, leadership is regarded as influencing the process of managing meaning so that certain organizational meanings are privileged over others.”²³ This perspective moves leadership beyond the act of managing meaning generally to managing meaning in a way that prioritizes specific understanding. Leaders rely on the transfer of symbols to make meaning. Managing meaning in a focused way is one aspect of creating and shaping culture in an organization.²⁴ Though organizational culture can be a shared experience, much of the communication in organizations come from leadership and, as a result, leaders are often credited with creating and managing the environment of an organization.

Organizational Culture

Through communication and the exchange of symbols, organizations develop a unique environment which relies on shared meaning and a created reality among stakeholders. This environment is considered the culture of an organization. Edgar H. Schein, an organizational psychologist who is considered the founder of the field of corporate culture, defined culture as:

Organizational culture... is the pattern of basic assumptions that a given group has invented, discovered, or developed in learning to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration – a pattern of assumptions that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems.²⁵

Pulling from various studies on organizational culture, Men and Jiang noted that “organizational culture is conceptualized as a collection of shared key values, symbols, meanings, beliefs, assumptions, and expectations among organizational members” and determines all aspects of organizational life.²⁶ With this view of the ubiquitous influence of culture in an organization, creating a supportive and productive environment should be the priority. In fact, in a study on

what leaders need to know about culture, D. D. Warrick advanced that “organizational culture describes the environment in which people work and the influence it has on how they think, act, and experience work,” and, as a result, cultures can “create excellent environments for people to work in or... create dysfunctional environments filled with stress and tension.”²⁷ The culture of an organization influences the shared reality of stakeholders in a way that impacts not only their environment but also how they think and act within the organization.

Leadership and communication within an organization directly impact the creation of organizational culture. Warrick contended that “although many factors influence culture, organizational culture primarily reflects their leaders,” and that “the impact of leaders on culture is particularly influential at the top level.”²⁸ This assertion that leaders play a significant role in the creation of culture and are “culture makers” within organizations is echoed throughout the scholarship.²⁹ Communication is the primary mode for a leader to create culture. A leader’s language and symbol use significantly impact the environment within an organization. In their study linking leader communication and follower organizational identification, Mayfield, Mayfield, and Walker reinforced that “leader talk guides followers to identify with the unique culture of the organization where they are members.”³⁰ In his 2021 article, McClellan introduced the idea that interaction in organizations can have an impact on culture. He acknowledged that understanding of organization and culture from a leadership perspective persists because leader communication is reinforced in daily routines, discourses, and social practices of organizational life.³¹ Although culture can be impacted by a variety of factors, the creation of organizational culture is consistently linked to leadership and leader communication.

Leaders are not only responsible for creating culture within organizations, they are also tasked with shaping that culture over time. Schein believes that leadership and culture can only

be understood when considered together: "... one could argue that the only thing of real importance that leaders do is to create and manage culture and that the unique talent of leaders is their ability to understand and work with culture."³² Culture is shaped, or managed, over time through communication. Organizations are expected to evolve with innovation and societal changes and leaders are expected to shape culture in a way that adapts appropriately. Warrick detailed that "leaders influence culture through their strategies, practices, values, leadership style, and example."³³ Each of those aspects of leadership are communicated verbally and non-verbally in organizations and reflect the importance of a leader who can embrace change as needed. Mayfield, Mayfield, and Walker concluded that "leader communication... has a positive and significant association with follower organizational identification," and consequently, identification with organizational culture.³⁴ The leader's impact on follower identification underscores the importance of leadership communication that reflects and responds to the needs of an evolving organization. Consistently, the scholarship illustrates that leaders are responsible for shaping culture in an organization, predominantly through communication. The culture that develops and the environment that persists depends on the leader, his or her communication style, and the situations that arise surrounding the organization that require a response. The culture of an organization and leadership communication are of particular importance when a crisis occurs.

Crisis Communication and Organizational Response

Organizational crises occur internally or externally and necessitate a response, typically from the leadership level. W. Timothy Coombs, who advanced the Situational Crisis Communication Theory to address protecting organizational reputation in a crisis, defined crisis as "an event that disrupts an organization's operations and threatens its reputation which can

change the way stakeholders interact with the organization.”³⁵ The threat to organizational reputation and stakeholder interaction can impact the viability of an organization. An organizational response in a crisis situation is necessary to stave off potential long-term damage to the organization and its leadership. In their study on communication challenges to crisis response, Joanne E. Hale, Ronald E. Dulek, and David P. Hale determined that “Appropriate communication decisions within the response stage may simplify the crisis recovery stage by containing or lessening the crisis,” emphasizing the importance of organizational communication in a crisis situation.³⁶ Leaders play a key role in the communication decisions and organizational response to crisis. In fact, leader communication and the culture of an organization can impact organizational understanding of a crisis. Schein described this impact in his article on the role of a leader, and more specifically one who was integral in founding an organization, in managing organizational culture. He stated that the leader:

... will have a major impact on how the group solves its external survival and internal integration problems... he or she will typically have biases... based on previous cultural experiences and personality traits. In my observations, entrepreneurs are very strong-minded about what to do and how to do it. Typically they already have strong assumptions about the nature of the world, the role their organization will play in that world, the nature of human nature, truth, relationships, time, and space.³⁷

The response a leader has to a crisis is another factor evident in shaping and managing organizational culture. Leadership communication during a crisis situation can influence understanding within the internal environment of the organization. Additionally, a leader’s communication can impact external perception of organizational reputation depending on the response to the crisis.

Organizational accountability in the face of a crisis can take several forms but typically the first line of defense from an organization is communication. Though organizations may have spokespeople to issue statements in response to situations, Nora Denner, Benno Viererbl, and

Thomas Koch studied the effects of personalized leader communication in the time of organizational crisis. The researchers concluded that statements from an organizational leader in response to a crisis situation promote the most favorable perception of an organization's public image.³⁸ Leaders can issue rhetorical responses to address organizational crisis, but crisis situations sometimes necessitate personal accountability of a leader, especially when transgressions of the individual infect the culture of an organization.

Apologia is one way that leaders can respond in a crisis situation: "in response to an attack which demands a direct response, a speech of self-defense or *apologia* can be employed."³⁹ Scholars have advanced strategies for crafting effective *apologia* to sufficiently respond to an accusation and satisfy an accuser. In her study of the evolution of *apologia* to account for contemporary shifts in the relationship between accuser, accused, and audience, Sharon D. Downey contended that "progressive variations in *apologia*'s function coincided with rhetors' increasing dominion over the apologetic situation" which has diminished the value or purpose of self-defense rhetoric as it could be less accurate and less ethical.⁴⁰ Though *apologia* remains a viable and useful genre, Downey's assessment calls attention to the fact that in certain instances, self-defense is not the appropriate response to a charge and may not satisfy the accuser. In such instances, the satisfactory response to a crisis could move beyond rhetoric to concrete action.

When a rhetorical response is not sufficient, the organization may be called upon to address a crisis situation with change. Coombs maintained that "crisis responsibility requires accountability in the form of an organization providing a response for its actions,"⁴¹ and in some instances, the satisfactory response may be in the form of concrete action such as new leadership. According to Hale, Dulek, and Hale, "a number of recent studies predict a strong correlation

between an organization's values and culture and that organization's behavior during the response phase."⁴² They asserted that in certain cases, crises "could only be addressed effectively after top-level executives were replaced and cultural changes were implemented."⁴³ Many organizations are resistant to change, despite the need for flexibility and adaptability to remain viable. This resistance can come from leadership and can be embedded in the culture a leader has created within the organization.

Organizational Resistance to Change

Motivating organizational change, particularly at the leadership level, has historically been challenging. Reasons for resistance to change in organizations range from the "founder effect" and culture to fear of the unknown and potential irrelevance. "A change of command is one of the most delicate moments in the life cycle of any organization," and can result in losses in market value, employees, customers, and relevance.⁴⁴ Because change can disrupt business-as-usual in unknown ways, "organizations continue to do as they've always done, even when it seems irrational to do so."⁴⁵ The "founder effect" contributes to this resistance by "suffocating change and manifests itself when the thinking and traits of the founders are concentrated and amplified."⁴⁶ Overcoming this requires a rejection of organizational heritage as well as a potential disruption of the cultural equilibrium, which can produce long-term, unwanted consequences.⁴⁷ My study focuses on a specific set of instances of *kategoria* that successfully motivated the organizational change that was called for in the accusation, which is significant given the historical tendency of organizations to resist change. Considering the specific industries represented in my case studies, I will elaborate on reasons for the resistance to change in academia, start-ups, and Big Tech.

As with organizations generally, resistance to change in higher education is prevalent. Reasons cited for this resistance range from the desire to “preserve the status quo” to the fear of the unknown. According to *Inside HigherEd*, “Significant change will never occur in any institution until the forces for change are greater in combination than the forces preserving the status quo,” and “competing priorities from across university divisions, lack of external funding/support... and an inability to lead change” exasperate the change process in academia.⁴⁸ Despite reports that higher education holistically needs big changes, “universities are notoriously resistant to internally directed reform – too many interest groups think they ‘own’ the university – the students, the faculty, the alumni, the administration.”⁴⁹ Presented with these challenges, academia often resists or avoids change altogether. As a result, a “common assumption is that higher education is inert, ‘a change-resistant enterprise’ that sidelines innovation in defense of legacy practices and faculty prerogatives.”⁵⁰ Understanding how change has successfully been motivated in higher education through rhetorical leadership is critical given the historical resistance to and purported need for change in academia.

Startups, though rooted in innovation, are often resistant to change beyond what the company was incorporated to develop and produce. A startup company is known for “addressing the deficiencies of existing products or creating entirely new categories of goods and services,” bringing them to market and making them irreplaceable for consumers.⁵¹ Known as industry disrupters, startup founders tend to resist change because “often, they fail to realize the negative consequences of sustaining the status quo, or they’re indifferent to them.”⁵² Additionally, startup leaders typically hold “entrenched interests” which “prevent them from taking immediate action,” even when they do recognize a need for change.⁵³ The *Harvard Business Review* noted that “characteristics that are necessary to lead an organization through significant transitions —

traits such as patience, consensus building, and adherence to strict processes — don't always come naturally to the best entrepreneurs.”⁵⁴ These factors combined with “the power asymmetry between leaders and their employees” in startups account for the resistance to change in these organizations.⁵⁵ With leaders themselves resisting change, successfully motivating action can be even more difficult. Revealing rhetorical strategies that have been successful in effecting change at startups will be useful for future attempts at shifting power dynamics at the leadership level in organizations that may also suffer from leader resistance and cultural myopia.

The traditional resistance evident in Big Tech echoes the assumptions about change within startups particularly when a founder is actively involved and even more so when that founder personifies his or her brand. Big Tech is a term that refers to major technology companies like Facebook, Apple, Amazon, and Google, “which have inordinate influence.”⁵⁶ The *New York Times* asserted that technology companies are among the most powerful forces in the world, on par with governments, and “it’s unsettling that a handful of unelected tech executives have this much power.”⁵⁷ That kind of power, often unchecked, can make leaders reticent to change. On top of the desire to retain position and power, much like startup founders, there is an underlying inability to lead change evident in Big Tech. One report maintained that “tech companies should be the paradigm of how to prep for leadership transitions, since they operate in such a constant state of flux. They’re far from it.”⁵⁸ Another reason cited for resistance to change in Big Tech is the scrutiny these companies face during times of transition.⁵⁹ Avoiding or resisting change keeps leaders securely in place and external probing to a minimum. Understanding the ways in which *kategoria* can be utilized as a form of rhetorical leadership will afford access to individuals with varying degrees of power to use discourse to disrupt systems,

seek justice, and effect organizational change at the leadership level, even in historically change-resistant organizations.

Rhetorical Leadership for Organizational Change

Given the proclivity for organizations to be resistant to change, it is important to examine who and what are capable of influencing change and how change has been successfully effected in the past. Coombs asserted that the needs of the stakeholders take priority when responding to a crisis,⁶⁰ and concrete change can be the need demanded in response to a crisis to restore public image. If stakeholders take priority in a crisis situation, then it can be assumed that their voices will impact organizations. This potential two-way communication affords the possibility of stakeholders being able to influence change in an organization. The most effective organizations are those that evolve and adapt, guided by leaders who embrace change and are capable of navigating it.⁶¹ Cultural change, while often necessary, is not an easy process for organizations – hence, the historical resistance discussed. According to Ronald Heifetz and Marty Linsky, who have extensively researched adaptability and change management, adaptive change requires “individuals throughout the organization to alter their ways.”⁶² They posited that “to make real progress, sooner or later those who lead must ask themselves and the people in the organization to face a set of deeper issues – and to accept a solution that may require turning part or all of the organization upside down.”⁶³ If the organizational leader is not open or willing to adapt in these situations, leadership change may be called for by other individuals within or outside of the organization.

As leaders are responsible for the communication climate and are expected to guide organizations through change, calls for leadership change could be met with resistance. Betty A. Farmer, John W. Slater, and Kathleen S. Wright examined the necessity of communication when

navigating organizational change and discovered that much of the literature on organizational communication is replete with statements about the singular importance of communication, specifically in the change process and even more specifically when it relates to leadership change.⁶⁴ The authors noted that “of all the kinds of organizational change, changes in leadership are among the most common.”⁶⁵ The evidence of resistance to change in organizations contrasted with the regularity of leadership change necessitates a deeper understanding of how individuals can overcome resistance to effect change.

As established, scholars contend that leadership is grounded in managing meaning and can be enacted through discourse. This perspective allows the possibility for individuals with varying degrees of power to employ rhetoric as a form of leadership. In his study that proposed a typology of leader behavior based on observation of leadership activity, Robert L. Husband explained the distinctions between power and influence as related to positions of leadership. He maintained that power and influence are two different mediums to induce change, with power relating to a legitimate position of authority such as that of a leader in an organization. Influence, on the other hand, is related to goal identification and the ability to understand and respond to others’ needs.⁶⁶ When this critical distinction in leadership breaks down, the opportunity becomes ripe for individuals without legitimate authority to act. Rhetorical leadership is one tool for these individuals. Exploring how rhetorical leadership can be enacted to promote change is therefore important to study.

Individuals with varying degrees of power can utilize discourse to shift power dynamics and effect change in organizations. Fairhurst and Sarr emphasized leadership as making sense of a subject by judging its character and significance, determining a particular meaning, and asserting that our interpretations should be taken as real over other possible interpretations.⁶⁷

This process is the management of meaning through discourse and a way of enacting leadership through rhetoric that is accessible to all individuals. Clifton echoed this accessibility:

“Leadership is not necessarily the property of any one person; it can be distributed and it is open to challenge.”⁶⁸ To understand how *kategoria* can be employed as a form of rhetorical leadership, scholars and society alike must develop a better understanding of the rhetoric that is capable of prompting organizational response in the form of concrete change, especially given the historical resistance to change evident across organizations.

A key element emphasized in the rhetorical leadership scholarship is the management of meaning which provides the rhetor – or accuser – an opportunity to craft the accusation in a way that meets the parameters of forensic rhetoric to motivate change. Managing meaning to ensure that past actions are highlighted to establish guilt and assert specific justice that will satisfy the accuser is critical to the success of the *kategoria*. Vickrey emphasized the management of meaning in his piece on symbolic leadership. He echoed other scholars in his assertion that communication is not merely a tool of leaders but instead “communication is the process by which leadership is exercised.”⁶⁹ Viewing leadership from this frame accentuates the accessibility of rhetorical leadership for individuals who seek to effect change through discourse. Fairhurst and Sarr also underscored that “the simple but powerful lesson behind seizing leadership moments is to manage meaning.”⁷⁰ Managing meaning is the way that individuals can create an image, as referenced, to modify a situation based on the establishment of guilt and description of justice that marks forensic rhetoric and accusation. The contention that leadership is created and seized through communication offers a high-level definition of rhetorical leadership and illustrates that individuals of varying degrees of institutional power can enact

leadership through discourse. As this study exemplifies, *kategoria* is a tool that can be employed for rhetorical leadership to manage meaning and motivate change.

Shaping meaning and engaging in rhetorical leadership is accessible to all individuals, regardless of legitimate authority, power, or position. As exhibited, not only are forums for public communication growing and evolving, but silenced voices are also being amplified in our current society as more individuals seize power through discourse. Dennis S. Gouran, whose piece addresses the effectiveness of leadership through construction of messages, maintained that individuals “who have constructive motives and appreciate the common good” can – and possibly should – enact rhetorical leadership.⁷¹ Certain factors impact the success of exercising leadership effectively, according to Gouran. One such factor germane to my study is the “recognition of power as distinct from leadership.”⁷² When individuals are able to recognize that power can be held in the absence of legitimate authority, they may be more likely to seize power and utilize rhetorical leadership as a means for achieving justice. In their article on collective resistance as leadership in the workplace, Heather M. Zoller and Gail T. Fairhurst constructed a definition of leadership from a discursive view “that locates leadership in communication and discourse.”⁷³ The authors asserted that “leadership as the management of meaning also need not be performed by only one individual appointed to a given role” which is echoed by Clifton who, in his piece on a discursive approach to leadership, noted that leadership is not necessarily commensurate with hierarchy.⁷⁴ This position affords the possibility of individuals with varying degrees of power to engage in leadership through discourse, by definition and by accessibility. Suzanne W. Morse advanced her contentions that leadership should be universal and personal, positing that the current notion of leadership must expand beyond legitimate authority. She asserted that “there are skills, abilities, and circumstances that call on all to perform the

leadership function.”⁷⁵ This performance of leadership, particularly through rhetoric, extends to those with less or no power than the organizations and leaders that they accuse for the purpose of seeking justice. Understanding the ways in which accusation can be constructed as a form of rhetorical leadership accessible to individuals with varying degrees of institutional power can further embolden and prepare individuals to utilize *kategoria* as a tool to motivate change in organizations.

When employed as a form of rhetorical leadership, *kategoria* can disrupt power systems to motivate change. In his article which advanced a theory of persuasion in social movements, Herbert W. Simons focused on “intentional symbolic acts” of individuals who wish to motivate change, claiming that leadership of social movements necessitates rhetorical requirements.⁷⁶ This understanding provides foundation for our current day conception of rhetorical leadership, particularly as it relates to employing speeches of accusation to shift power and motivate change. For the purpose of his study, he defined social movement as “an institutionalized collectivity that mobilizes for action to implement a program for the reconstitution of social norms or values.”⁷⁷ This perspective connects to my study by explicating the impact that individuals can have by utilizing accessible resources such as discourse to construct a specific call for change that serves the end of seeking justice for the greater good. Zoller and Fairhurst contributed to this view of rhetorical leadership by moving beyond “the person in charge” to attributing leadership to being about “the way one or more actors engages the community and its mores in collective action” with the end of seeking justice for society, or in my specific case, an organization in peril.⁷⁸ Social movements are marked by collective action motivated by rhetoric as a form of leadership. In a similar way, the instances of *kategoria* selected for my study illustrate the potential of speeches of accusation as a rhetorical form to motivate action through rhetoric intended to serve

justice for the greater good of an organization. Organizational change can be effected by employing *kategoria* as a tool of rhetorical leadership to disrupt power systems.

Rhetorical leadership is accessible to myriad individuals and by utilizing *kategoria* as a tool, rhetors can shift power systems to achieve change and justice. Understanding the ways in which speeches of accusation operate as a tool for change is critical to ensuring individuals are able to effectively enact rhetorical leadership to motivate concrete action. One specific way in which speeches of accusation can be employed for justice in organizations through rhetorical leadership is by engaging argument related to value hierarchy. Zoller and Fairhurst noted that leadership is “a process of dynamic exchange and interchanges of values, although the nature of the exchange and the range of values can vary widely.”⁷⁹ A focus on value hierarchy functions to shift perception and motivate action and is prominent in the *kategoria* selected for my study. Elaborating on leadership as the management of meaning, Fairhurst and Sarr posited that “leadership is about taking the risk of managing meaning.”⁸⁰ An accusation, particularly one leveled against a more powerful individual, is a risk. It is also a risk to attempt to influence others through language and work to ensure a persuasive, clear message whose specific end – call to action – is understood and accepted. Rhetoric is the resource used to motivate others to act⁸¹ and effective construction of *kategoria* as a tool for rhetorical leadership is critical for individuals to seize power and to maximize the reward over the risk involved. In an organizational context, “leadership is all about taking risks necessary to positively affect the work lives of others and move an organization forward.”⁸² *Kategoria* is one form of rhetorical leadership that when employed by individuals of varying degrees of power can successfully accomplish justice by motivating needed concrete change at the organizational level.

Overview and Case Studies

In the following chapters of this dissertation, I will develop and defend my case for *kategoria* as a form of rhetorical leadership that is capable of shifting value hierarchy and effecting change in organizations. In the next chapter, I will discuss genre analysis and explicate why I have chosen this method for my study. Then, I will move onto my three case studies that will allow me to illustrate the successful utility of accusation as a form of rhetorical leadership employed by individuals with varying degrees of power. I will conclude with a summary discussion of my analysis, including implications, limitations, and how this research contributes to scholarly conversation on *kategoria* and rhetorical leadership.

For my analysis, I will utilize artifacts that have been identified by the media as successful in achieving specified change or action, basing success measure on mainstream media qualifications. These particular texts exemplify instances of public accusation issued by voices that were amplified at a key time for potential impact in society and as a result, the texts chosen for my study hold power and will allow me to reveal successful rhetorical strategies that can be employed in *kategoria* as a form of rhetorical leadership to motivate organizational change. For the purposes of my study, organizational change refers less to cultural change than to explicit action such as the removal of a leader, policy change, or specific structural action at the leadership level of an organization. My subset includes case studies of organizations situated in academia and the startup and Big Tech industries, each of which has its own historical tendency to resist change.

This investigation of successful rhetorical tactics employed in *kategoria* is focused on a very specific subset of speeches of accusation. I will explore instances of organizational leaders in crisis who personify the brand they represent in such a way that their individual transgressions have impacted the organization itself both internally and publicly. The cases on which I will

focus are all public grievances with statements issued by individuals who hold less power than the accused and seek forensic ends. Forensic oratory, as classified by Aristotle, is intended to provoke judgment concerning a past action as a means for justice.⁸³ My study examines instances of *kategoria* in which concrete organizational action as opposed to self-defense is the satisfactory response – the justice – to the accusation.

To achieve my purpose, I will undertake a genre analysis to examine three instances of *kategoria* that have been deemed successful in motivating the specific change called for by the accuser(s). Genre analysis will allow me to investigate texts that have been persuasive in influencing concrete organizational change to discover how the successful rhetorical strategies revealed have been and can be enacted to accomplish the change called for and serve justice for an organization at the leadership level. I will accomplish this not by proving that my selected texts are in fact *kategoria* – that is already established by the nature of the accusation and call to action evident in each – but by highlighting the ways in which the accusers in each instance utilized value hierarchy to achieve the ends of forensic rhetoric and influence change. I will also show that *kategoria* can be situated as a form of rhetorical leadership utilized by individuals who hold varying degrees of power by describing who issued the selected calls for change and illustrating that rhetoric was the driving factor for change. In so doing, my study will expand the scholarship on speeches of accusation as well as rhetorical leadership by advancing enhanced comprehension of *kategoria* as a rhetorical form and introducing a new tool for enacting leadership through discourse. This examination will also have practical applications for future accusers in society who wish to employ successful tactics of *kategoria* through rhetorical leadership to seek justice and motivate change in organizations. My three selected texts serve as

exemplars for their subset of *kategoria* and offer instances to illustrate that by shifting value hierarchy, speeches of accusation can successfully effect change and serve justice.

Contemporary Cases of Successful Kategoria

By examining this subset of cases through the lens of genre, I will be able to identify the rhetorical strategies that function to shift value hierarchy, disrupt power systems, and effect organizational change that can be applied to future construction of *kategoria* as a form of rhetorical leadership in the specific instances I have described. Situating *kategoria* as a tool for rhetorical leadership to influence change and seek justice will bolster critical understanding of the rhetorical genre of *kategoria*, augment scholarship on rhetorical leadership, and contribute to the larger societal conversation of accusations and responses to organizational scandal when leader accountability alone is not satisfactory and concrete change is demanded. The three cases I have identified each fit my particular subset of speeches of accusation: public grievances leveled at an organizational leader whose transgressions have infected the brand and in which the accuser's desired change is directly outlined. Each text represents an example of *kategoria* leveled at a pivotal time, amplified publicly, and identified by the mainstream media as successful in achieving an end related to the stated desired outcome. These three speeches of accusation were issued by various individuals and groups, each with differing levels of power within or relationships to the accused organization and leader. The power of my artifacts lies in part with the public label as successful but also in that each text will enable me to examine instances of one rhetorical form issued by diverse voices to multiple individuals at various times with similar yet distinct ends to uncover generic consistencies. By viewing these texts through the lens of a genre study, I will seek to prove my argument that when employed as a form of

rhetorical leadership, *kategoria* can shift value hierarchy and be utilized as a tool for organizational change.

Three contemporary cases of *kategoria* when a leader's transgressions have permeated the organization, and specific action is called for, that have proven successful will serve as my case studies. The following texts are specific instances of accusation when the leader and his or her brand are inseparable, and the *kategoria* seeks more than personal accountability but also change at the organizational level. Each of these artifacts have been identified as successful by mainstream media, and it is that media endorsement that will serve as the success measure for my study.

The first case involves Michigan State University (MSU), which faced a series of high-profile scandals beginning with sexual abuse accusations against former MSU doctor Larry Nassar. Specifically, I will examine a statement issued by more than 120 survivors of abuse at the hands of Nassar to the MSU Board of Trustees calling for the resignation of interim president John Engler, which claimed that he “reinforced the culture of abuse” at the university.⁸⁴ As a result of the statement, the Board of Trustees pushed out Engler “after nearly a year of tumult and eye-opening comments at Michigan State.”⁸⁵ The second case I will focus on is Uber, the popular ride-hailing service that was “rocked by a series of scandals... including accusations of sexual harassment and a toxic work culture, a high-profile trade-theft lawsuit, and reports of operations designed to deceive regulators” under the leadership of former CEO Travis Kalanick.⁸⁶ In June of 2017, Kalanick resigned as CEO after a memo issued by two venture capitalists “helped convince the Uber Technologies co-founder to step down as chief executive officer.”⁸⁷ I will analyze that memo as a key text. Finally, I will explore the attempt by investors and stakeholders to urge Facebook CEO and chairman Mark Zuckerberg to step down “as

chairman and rip up the firm's dual-class share structure.”⁸⁸ While the statement issued did not result in Zuckerberg's removal because of the control he holds in the company and his ability to overrule investor voting, the rhetoric did yield a majority vote in favor of removing Zuckerberg from leadership of the social media platform. According to *Business Insider*, in response to the investor statement, “independent investors voted overwhelmingly in support of proposals... to fire Mark Zuckerberg as chairman and scrap the firm's share structure.”⁸⁹ That investor statement is my third text.

Significantly, these texts each proved successful in achieving the goal of the statement: organizational change occurred as a result of speeches of accusation issued by individuals with less power than the accused. Over the next few chapters, I will elaborate on each case, provide ample contextual evidence to illustrate and support the success of these *kategoria*, and conduct a genre analysis of each text to demonstrate the rhetorical consistencies uncovered and show how they function to accomplish organizational change and justice. The ability of these three texts to advance the change called for underscores their significance to my study of successful rhetorical attempts at *kategoria*. By undertaking a genre analysis of these texts, I will be able to identify the consistent rhetorical tactics evident in speeches of accusation in instances of leadership transgressions credited by the media with impacting the organization and promoting change. As discussed, this investigation has practical implications as well as implications for scholars. My study can practically inform future attempts at *kategoria* by individuals with varying degrees of power who wish to hold leaders accountable for their transgressions as well as seek concrete change. My study will contribute to rhetorical scholarship by advancing new considerations for scholars when examining speeches of accusation that are increasingly common in society today and by introducing practical new forms of rhetorical leadership accessible to myriad individuals.

Conclusion

Speeches of accusation are increasingly prevalent in society, and rhetorical critics as well as any individual wishing to motivate change would benefit from a deeper understanding of the utility of *kategoria* as a tool of rhetorical leadership. Gouran maintained that “largely absent from scholarly literature concerning leadership are suggestions and strategies for enhancing effectiveness.”⁹⁰ By considering generic forms such as forensic rhetoric as a tool for social change, as Leslie J. Harris and Jansen B. Werner advanced in their 2021 study, and extending that to *kategoria*, as argued in this study, the body of literature on both *kategoria* and rhetorical leadership will be bolstered. The consideration of new strategies and modes for enacting rhetorical leadership, as well as expanding the pool of who is capable of enacting rhetorical leadership, will enhance scholarship. Individuals seeking change through rhetorical leadership “can function more effectively via knowledge of principles concerning the construction and exchange of arguments and, importantly, factors that can influence success.”⁹¹ Addressing the successful construction of speeches of accusation to reveal rhetorical tactics that can be utilized will pay dividends for future accusers who enact rhetorical leadership to impact change and serve justice. By situating *kategoria* as a tool that can be employed for rhetorical leadership and social change, the utility of speeches of accusation expands as a way to shift power dynamics and effect change in organizations. My study begins this work by uncovering and elucidating the rhetorical tactics that individuals of varying degrees of power can use to construct *kategoria* that successfully influences organizational change.

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⁷⁹ Zoller and Fairhurst, "Resistance Leadership," 1139.

⁸⁰ Fairhurst and Sarr, "Framing: Seizing Leadership Moments in Everyday Conversations," 2.

⁸¹ Fairhurst and Sarr, "Framing: Seizing Leadership Moments in Everyday Conversations," 2.

⁸² Fairhurst and Sarr, "Framing: Seizing Leadership Moments in Everyday Conversations," 2.

⁸³ *The Rhetorical Tradition: Readings from Classical Times to the Present*, eds. Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2001), 30.

⁸⁴ Alanna Vagianos, "Over 100 Larry Nassar Survivors Urge MSU to Fire Interim President John Engler," *Huffington Post*, June 19, 2018, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/larry-nassar-survivors-john-engler_n_5b291605e4b0f0b9e9a56efe.

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<https://www.businessinsider.com/facebook-investors-vote-to-fire-mark-zuckerberg-as-chairman-2019-6>.

⁹⁰ Gouran, “Problematic Constraints on the Successful Exercise of Leadership,” 230.

⁹¹ Gouran, “Problematic Constraints on the Successful Exercise of Leadership,” 229.

Chapter 2: A Generic Approach to *Kategoria*

The purpose of my study is to demonstrate that *kategoria* can be enacted as a form of rhetorical leadership by employing tactics that shift value hierarchy and disrupt power systems while establishing the guilt of the accused and seeking justice through a specific call to action. As a genre of forensic rhetoric, speeches of accusation can move beyond self-defense as a response to motivate concrete change. My examination specifically looks at organizational change at the leadership level called for by individuals who hold less power than the accused. Revealing the rhetorical strategies that have been successful in enacting change in organizations will inform future accusations and enhance understanding of *kategoria* as a rhetorical form. I illustrate that as a form of rhetorical leadership and as a tool for motivating change, speeches of accusation can be constructed to employ rhetorical tactics that successfully appeal to more desirable values in a given situation to shift power and effect organizational change.

For this study, I have selected cases in which an accuser with less power than the accused has specified a desired organizational change, such as removing a leader from power, and that change subsequently has been achieved or voted in favor of by a relevant rhetorical audience. By carefully examining these texts through the lens of genre, with *kategoria* considered a generic form of forensic rhetoric that seeks justice as its ultimate end, I will show how these texts address past actions to establish guilt and seek justice – leadership change – for the organization. Additionally, this study will uncover how those with varying degrees of power can enact certain rhetorical strategies within accusation to effect organizational change. Through my genre analysis, I will demonstrate that *kategoria* can be employed as a form of rhetorical leadership and used as a tool to shift value hierarchy to effect organizational change.

In this chapter, I will explore the method of genre analysis and its appropriateness for my study. To begin, I examine practical and theoretical understanding of how and why a critic would undertake a generic approach to rhetorical criticism. Next, I ground this approach in my specific examination and establish the generic parameters for the subset of *kategoria* that I will be analyzing. Then, I define forensic rhetoric and detail how *kategoria* has been studied in scholarship. Finally, I situate *kategoria* as an understudied form of forensic rhetoric and describe the utility of value arguments in accusation to influence change. Throughout this chapter, I will demonstrate that genre analysis is the appropriate method of rhetorical criticism to illustrate that *kategoria* can be employed as a form of rhetorical leadership capable of shifting values, disrupting power systems, and effecting change in organizations.

Genre Analysis as a Method for Understanding Rhetorical Transactions

A genre analysis involves investigating texts of similar types of discourse and seeks to uncover the recurrent components and strategies that emerge to bolster theoretical understanding of that generic form. Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, Kathleen Hall Jamieson, and Carolyn Miller have written extensively on genre and the considerations for understanding this rhetorical form as well as why a critic would undertake a generic study. According to Campbell and Jamieson, “Genres are groups of discourses which share substantive, stylistic, and situational characteristics... What is distinctive about the acts in a genre is the recurrence of forms *together* in constellation.”¹ A genre study attempts to bolster understanding of the ways in which consistent rhetorical forms operate together across similar instances of rhetorical acts – in the case of my examination: speeches of accusation. The authors further detailed their definition of a genre: “A genre is composed of a constellation of recognizable forms bound together by an internal dynamic.”² A genre claim indicates “that the critic is now arguing that a group of discourses has a synthetic

core in which certain rhetorical elements, e.g. a system of belief, lines of argument, stylistic choices, and the perception of a situation, are fused into an indivisible whole.”³ The significance of this implication for the critic and on the genre claim is that “it provides an angle of vision” that reveals “the dynamic within the rhetorical acts of human beings, in different times and places, responding in similar ways as they attempt to encompass certain rhetorical problems,” such as, notably for my study, “an accusation to which no forensic defense is adequate.”⁴ My study seeks to reveal the consistent rhetorical elements uncovered in the selected instances of *kategoria* to deepen understanding and expand the utility of speeches of accusation for scholars and society. Conducting a genre analysis of speeches of accusation can contribute to the comprehension of the specific rhetorical components evident in this particular type of discourse as well as provide a useful resource for successful construction of future attempts at *kategoria*.

Kategoria as a rhetorical genre is well-established in the literature. Halford Ross Ryan addressed this directly in his 1982 piece, asserting that “the ancients believed that accusation was also a genre.”⁵ The year prior, Noreen Wales Kruse emphasized this belief in her article on establishing generic parameters for apologetic discourse. She asserted that Plato “thought accusation and apology were the two genres of rhetoric, while Isocrates separated rhetorical discourse into ‘apology, encomium, accusation, and admonition’.”⁶ Despite the contentions of the ancients and the fact that “rhetorical scholars agree that *apologia* is a legitimate rhetorical genre” and “the same... is germane to accusatory speeches,” Ryan echoed scholarly complaints that little attention has been given to describing the generic components of this speech set.⁷ B.L. Ware and Wil A. Linkugel mentioned the lack of examination of such genres in their seminal piece on *apologia*, positing that “although most critics assent to the existence of genres, few engage in anything which even resembles what might appropriately be called *generic* criticism.”⁸

Again, this study does not seek to prove that the selected texts are examples of *kategoria* but instead to advance the contention that speeches of accusation can be employed as a form of rhetorical leadership by individuals of varying degrees of power when seeking to influence change. A genre analysis will allow me to do this by identifying and explicating the rhetorical tactics that have been and can be successful in effecting organizational change and achieving justice at a leadership level.

Scholarship provides useful guidelines for undertaking a genre analysis. A genre analysis investigates the “constellations that are strategic responses to the demands of the situation and the purposes of the rhetor” to explicate the components revealed and how they can be reproduced.⁹ According to Campbell and Jamieson, “generic criticism is an orderly means of close textual analysis.”¹⁰ The critic conducts a close reading of the artifact for study to “identify the stylistic and substantive responses to perceived situational demands” and “examine recurrent stylistics, substantive, and situational characteristics of groups of discourses perceived as similar by responding rhetors.”¹¹ A genre analysis affords the critic insight into rhetorical transactions through examining how recurrent strategies operate to respond to a situation. These rhetorical tactics can then be utilized in future instances of the generic form under investigation.

Building on the generic elements of style, substance, and situation, scholars have advanced additional considerations for the critic conducting a genre analysis. William L. Benoit endeavored to expand genre theory and deliberate a “more complete conception of the invention of rhetorical discourse” by including purpose, agent, and agency into a genre analysis.¹² This perspective provides a more robust generic understanding that is particularly germane to a genre analysis of accusation, as it considers the rhetor and the purpose of the rhetorical transaction. In his 1982 article, J. Justin Gustainis described the specific advantages of using generic rhetorical

criticism, and he also offered instruction on the method for conducting this type of analysis. He stated that: the critic focuses on the aspects of style, substance, and situation of the rhetorical transaction; the critic classifies various types of rhetorical artifacts and the specific characteristics represented by each; and the critic can develop rhetorical theory based on descriptive generalizations uncovered.¹³ Using a genre analysis, I will conduct a close reading of three selected texts to reveal the recurrent stylistic, substantive, and situational components while also focusing on the implications of rhetor, purpose, and agency. In so doing, I will identify and elucidate the rhetorical strategies that have been successful in specific instances of *kategoria*, a generic form of forensic rhetoric that can be used as a tool for rhetorical leadership.

Theoretical considerations of a genre analysis have been advanced in the rhetorical scholarship, as well as justification for genre study. Campbell and Jamieson maintained that “genre analysis is justified if and only if the meaning and purpose of the work are illuminated by struggling with the evidence to determine the work’s best classification.”¹⁴ This study assumes a genre analysis to move beyond establishing accusation simply as a classification of forensic rhetoric but to illustrate that the generic form can be employed as rhetorical leadership, able to successfully be used by individuals with varying degrees of power to disrupt value hierarchy expectations to motivate change by establishing guilt and seeking justice. According to Campbell and Jamieson, “genres... are perceived patterns with significance and usefulness” and generic criticism is justified by “the understanding it produces rather than the ordered universe it creates.”¹⁵ My examination will reveal patterns of rhetorical tactics evident in *kategoria* with the intention of illuminating successful and useful strategies that can be employed in speeches of accusation to accomplish change and achieve justice for the greater good of the situation. My study is justified as it moves beyond classification of *kategoria* as a form of forensic rhetoric to

situate speeches of accusation as a tool for rhetorical leadership and to identify useful understanding for future attempts at accusation.

This study illustrates three unique examples of individuals at varying levels of power who utilize similar, interrelated rhetorical tactics to meet the requirements of the generic form of forensic rhetoric to enact change. Identifying the ways that rhetoric has been engaged to disrupt value hierarchy to serve justice is useful and necessary to enrich rhetorical scholarship and inform future attempts of *kategoria*. Campbell and Jamieson advanced that because “all works are not only unique but also resemble other works, generic criticism is essential.”¹⁶ A genre study takes into account different times and places, in addition to diverse rhetors with varying levels of power and access to myriad platforms. Beyond the internal dynamic which fuses a group of discourses, a genre claim can fuse rhetorical acts across space and time. Campbell and Jamieson maintained that a focus on individual speeches can fail “to recognize the impact of rhetorical acts on other rhetorical acts... which fuse recurrent forms into genres which, in an important sense, transcend a specific time and place.”¹⁷ This consideration applies to my study that investigates selected speeches of accusation in my subset for the emergent rhetorical consistencies identified that are useful for informing future *kategoria*. My genre study seeks to impact comprehension and construction of future rhetorical acts of *kategoria*, moving beyond one instance in time to help practically inform other speeches of accusation across time and place. Additionally, this genre study will provide a useful resource for individuals of varying degrees of power who wish to achieve justice through rhetorical leadership.

As proposed, my study seeks to move beyond implications for the rhetorical scholar to also provide benefit for the communication practitioner and future accuser. In her 1984 article, Miller sought to elaborate on Campbell and Jamieson’s approach to genre by considering the

practical application of “the way in which genre can be said to represent typified rhetorical action.”¹⁸ She asserted that “a rhetorically sound definition of genre must be centered... on the action it is used to accomplish.”¹⁹ Miller’s investigation, which incorporates the notion of action into a scholarly treatment of genre, underpins my consideration of the wider audience of individuals who may seek rhetorical tools to inform the construction of speeches of accusation. Miller advocated for an understanding of genre “based in rhetorical practice, in the conventions of discourse that a society establishes as ways of ‘acting together’” to seek “to explicate the knowledge that practice creates” so that it offers theoretical and practical learning.²⁰ This understanding of genre aligns with treatment of leadership as accomplished through discourse, underscoring the idea that an individual who may not hold legitimate authority can employ rhetoric as a practical tool to effect change in society. She concluded her piece by arguing the need for a pragmatic component to a genre claim: “a genre claim may fail if there is... no way to understand the genre as social action.”²¹ Rhetorical leadership can be a tool for social action, as discussed, and *kategoria* can be enacted as a form of leadership to disrupt power systems. My examination will account for the critical practical application of *kategoria* in society by advancing ways to employ *kategoria* as rhetorical leadership that considers social action as a key component of speeches of accusation and will provide usefulness for practitioners, future accusers, and scholars.

The Utility of Genre Analysis to Situate *Kategoria* as a Tool for Rhetorical Leadership

Having established the usefulness of genre analysis as a method for understanding recurrent rhetorical forms, I now turn to its utility for situating *kategoria* as a tool for rhetorical leadership. Genre analysis has generated “a plethora of insightful studies... serving as an important alternative to neo-classical studies of single speeches.”²² Because I am seeking to

inform future attempts at accusation, looking at multiple instances of *kategoria* is necessary and genre analysis moves beyond single speeches to allow me to investigate “distinctive, recurrent situations in which discourse occurs” and analyze texts to describe “the rhetorical practice (common features) inherent.”²³ Campbell and Jamieson contended that rhetorical forms do not occur in isolation and that these forms are phenomena. The scholars stated: “that forms are phenomena has persuasive and critical significance because, as a result, forms can induce participation from others.”²⁴ In addition to uncovering successful rhetorical tactics that can be employed in accusation, my study illustrates that individuals with less power than the accused can utilize *kategoria* as a form of rhetorical leadership to impact change. Genre analysis allows me to identify strategies that mark this rhetorical form and can be reproduced in future instances. This analysis can inspire individuals to engage in this type of discourse as a means of seizing opportunities to promote justice.

As noted, scholars have advanced that a contemporary view of genre analysis must account for style, substance, and situation, while also moving beyond those elements to ensure deeper understanding of the rhetorical transaction. Moving beyond a situational view of genre criticism, Benoit found that generic analyses “can be grouped into studies that focus the critic’s attention on rhetors’ *purpose*, the *situation*, the *rhetor*, and the rhetorical *means or agency*.”²⁵ My analysis takes each of these components into consideration as my concern lies in successful construction of accusation by individuals of varying degrees of power with a specific call to action in organizational situations that demand change. Miller expanded her view of genre as social action and proposed that “we see genre as a specific, and important, constituent of society, a major aspect of its communicative structure,” as well as “capable of reproduction” and “a means by which we... understand the opportunities it holds.”²⁶ The pervasiveness of accusation

in society today renders it important to study for better comprehension as it is increasingly a rhetorical form that is embedded in cultural discourse. Elucidating how *kategoria* can be used for disrupting power systems and motivating change will highlight opportunities for individuals to employ accusation. Finally, and perhaps most compelling, is Gustainis' view that "generic rhetorical criticism can provide illumination of the ways humans try to persuade each other."²⁷ He contended that applying the generic approach to the rhetoric of social movements would provide insight for understanding and explaining how that particular type of persuasion operates in society. Utilized by individuals with less power than the accused, *kategoria* as a form of rhetorical leadership must be persuasive to disrupt expected hierarchies and influence change. Revealing the strategies that have been successfully employed in these instances will yield future benefits for both scholarship and society.

In determining why genre analysis is the best approach for my study, I also acknowledge the limitations of generic examinations. Campbell and Jamieson asserted that "generic claims are difficult to sustain because constellations of elements rarely fuse into unique and indivisible wholes of the sort described."²⁸ I account for this challenge by examining only generic similarities of a specific type of forensic rhetoric and a limited subset of instances of *kategoria*. Despite the particulars of my subset and number of cases explored, viewing these examples of accusation through the lens of genre will help me illustrate that *kategoria* can be utilized as a form of rhetorical leadership. In 1979, Thomas M. Conley expressed his reservation regarding genre approaches to analysis, positing that they are "limiting and reductive by nature."²⁹ It is this concern that obliges me to detail the parameters of my study very specifically. My claim is restricted to my particular subset of speeches, and I recognize that examinations of accusation in other situations and fields is desirable to fully understand successful strategies of *kategoria*. I

endeavor to advance a useful set of tactics that can be employed through rhetorical leadership to effect organizational change, avoiding what Conley warned generic classifications could become: “tiresome and useless taxonomies.”³⁰ Benoit, who examined the limitations of genre theory in the field of rhetoric, contended that traditional genre theory “does not acknowledge the inherent complexity of rhetorical action.”³¹ I believe that a genre analysis can overcome this constraint by exploring purpose, agent, and agency, in addition to style, substance, and situation, and focusing on uncovering the recurring strategies that undergird the success of the genre. For instance, by revealing tactics of *kategoria* in statements issued by individuals with varying degrees of power that have proven successful across three cases in divergent organizations, I can better inform scholarly understanding of the genre and bolster practical application of rhetorical strategies of accusation.

Generic Parameters for Specific Subset of *Kategoria*

Through genre analysis, I will explicate the rhetorical elements that comprise speeches of accusation and demonstrate that *kategoria* can be enacted as a form of rhetorical leadership to shift value hierarchy and impact organizational change. I reiterate that my study focuses on a particular type of *kategoria*, addressing the generic components uncovered in these distinct texts and illustrating how the rhetorical moves work for my subset of speeches of accusation. Kruse contended that “the first step in any exercise of generic criticism is the establishment of the parameters of the genre in which the items to be scrutinized are to be located.”³² With this in mind, I emphasize that my examination will not attempt to uncover successful rhetorical strategies for all instances of *kategoria* but instead for my specific subset, as previously defined. The particulars of this subset include public grievances in which: a leader’s transgressions impact the organization internally and externally; the accuser holds less power than the accused

and seeks forensic ends due to the nature of the leader's association with the brand; concrete institutional action is sought and named; and mainstream media has deemed the accusation successful in achieving some resolution related to the desired outcome as a result of the *kategoria*. Future generic investigations of other subsets of *kategoria* and varying examples of speeches of accusation would further enhance the scholarship.

Establishing these parameters and acknowledging that my genre claim will be asserted for those specific instances of *kategoria* are critical prior to advancing my study that situates speeches of accusation as a form of rhetorical leadership capable of shifting value hierarchy and disrupting power systems. Campbell and Jamieson asserted that “genre claims are difficult to sustain because constellations of elements rarely fuse into unique and indivisible wholes of the sort described.”³³ Identifying my subset allows me to focus on studying particular instances of *kategoria* to reveal generic consistencies unique to that type of accusation. In his 1965 book *Rhetorical Criticism: A Study in Method*, Edwin Black discussed generic criticism and the assertion that “the *rhetorical* appraisal of policies – that is, the estimate of relationships between these policies and linguistic and argumentative conventions – does fall into the unique province of rhetoric.”³⁴ A fundamental element of the purpose of my study is the examination of instances of *kategoria* to better understand how the rhetorical tactics employed in a perceived situation work persuasively to achieve a desired end for individuals with varying degrees of power. For Black, “the vision of the fullest rhetorical potentialities of the speech”³⁵ is confirmation of a text's worthiness to study as a generic exemplar. Further, he believed that “a single example can illustrate the point,”³⁶ which Campbell and Jamieson described as a view of genre that focuses “not only on what has recurred but on what may recur.”³⁷ I contend that three representative cases will provide adequate texts to determine the consistent rhetorical strategies that

characterize my subset of *kategoria*. As noted previously, Campbell and Jamieson concluded that “the justification for a generic claim is the understanding it produces rather than the ordered universe it creates.”³⁸ Enhanced understanding reinforces the benefits of studying speeches of accusation as a generic form of forensic rhetoric and a tool for rhetorical leadership that seeks justice as its end.

***Kategoria* as a Generic Form of Forensic Rhetoric**

The instances of *kategoria* I will examine seek specific forensic ends, and my interest lies in the construction of speeches of accusation that call for more than individual *apologia* from a leader but instead to effect concrete organizational change. As discussed by Campbell and Jamieson, *kategoria* is traditionally considered a generic form of forensic rhetoric.³⁹ Forensic rhetoric, as classified by Aristotle, is “intended to provoke judgment concerning a past action” by determining guilt and is considered a means for justice.⁴⁰ In instances of *kategoria*, justice can be viewed as the specified end or action that serves the greater good called for in the accusation. In the particular instances that I will examine, justice is the stated end that supports the viability of the organization over a leader known for transgressions. While traditionally forensic rhetoric occurred in the courts, either attacking or defending an individual,⁴¹ Leslie J. Harris and Jansen B. Werner illustrated “the significance of this genre outside of the courtroom.”⁴² My study extends the examination of forensic rhetoric outside of the courtroom with a focus on *kategoria* employed by individuals who hold less power than the leaders they have accused. In addition, I will investigate those cases when the *kategoria* demands justice in the form of action of significant organizational change and that will not be satisfied by mere self-defense.

Generic explorations of forensic rhetoric are limited in the scholarship, particularly, as noted, instances of this rhetorical form outside of a legal context. Forensic rhetoric attempts to

uncover the truth, and this frequently happens outside of a legal situation, as accusation occurs in myriad situations across a variety of platforms.⁴³ In their study of forensic rhetoric and racial justice, Harris and Werner moved outside the courtroom and concluded that “consideration of the past and recognition of guilt makes forensic rhetoric important for creating the groundwork for social change.”⁴⁴ This frame extends to my study in which individuals are seeking change at the leadership level within organizations. Accusers use forensic rhetoric to establish guilt as a mode for achieving justice for the greater good. Vivian I. Dicks addressed the lack of research on forensic rhetoric in her article which identified rhetorical strategies for use in the courtroom. She maintained that those employing forensic rhetoric to persuade an audience “must have a comprehensive rhetorical plan.”⁴⁵ Though her study was focused on legal discourse, her contention that a comprehensive rhetorical plan is necessary for individuals seeking justice extends beyond the courtroom to any situation in which accusation is leveled. *Kategoria* is an understudied form of forensic rhetoric that deserves attention outside of courtroom settings, especially as accusation proliferates in modern society.

Advancing *Kategoria* as a Device for Rhetorical Leadership

The term *kategoria* has appeared in teachings from ancient Greeks and from literature spanning both rhetorical and organizational communication scholarship. The common understanding of *kategoria* across scholarship is a speech of accusation, as evidenced throughout this paper. In his study of *kategoria* and *apologia* as a speech set, Ryan stated: “The Greek noun *kategoria* signifies ‘an accusation, charge,’ and the Greek verb *kategoreo* is defined as ‘to speak against, to accuse’.”⁴⁶ He proposed the broad definition of *kategoria* as a speech of accusation, which has since been adopted in the literature. For instance, in his study of crisis communication and stasis theory, Charles Marsh, as well as Michael R. Kramer and Kathryn M. Olson, in their

examination of progressive *apologia*, treat *kategoria* as “accusation.”⁴⁷ In his numerous studies generating and refining a typology of attack strategies, Benoit focused his discussion on persuasive attack, noting, “Persuasive attack is another phrase for accusations, criticisms, complaints. In ancient Greece this kind of speech was called *kategoria*.”⁴⁸ This study will align with rhetorical scholarship and use “*kategoria*” and “speeches of accusation” interchangeably.

As a rhetorical act, speeches of accusation are considered to be a generic form of forensic rhetoric. Ryan asserts that Plato divided oratory into the two genres: accusation and apology, and Aristotle divided forensic rhetoric more specifically into accusation and apology.⁴⁹ As discussed by Campbell and Jamieson in their study on form and genre in rhetorical criticism, *kategoria* is traditionally considered forensic, focusing on past action to establish guilt and to seek justice.⁵⁰ Though many studies have examined forensic rhetoric within the confines of a courtroom, accusation can occur outside of legal discourse and increasingly does. It can also be enacted as a tool by those who don’t hold legitimate power and who do not have space or means to advance formal accusation in the traditional sense.

Traditionally, *kategoria* has been studied as a speech form enacted primarily to elicit self-defense or *apologia*. An accusation sets in motion the need for a response “through apologetic discourse.”⁵¹ Scholarship on *kategoria* and *apologia* largely does not consider alternate responses to accusation. Kramer and Olson proposed that *apologia* be viewed as “progressive” to account for a series of *kategoria* leveled over time, reinforcing the common supposition that self-defense is the appropriate response to accusation.⁵² In his study which discusses the impact of stasis on the *kategoria/apologia* speech set, Marsh reiterates that *apologia* would not exist without *kategoria*, emphasizing the need to focus attention on both rhetorical forms, with greater emphasis on the construction of the defense speech.⁵³ Because *kategoria* and *apologia* are knit

together as a speech set, such that “speeches of accusation and apology can serve as analog,”⁵⁴ examining the two types of rhetoric together is already considered essential to help the apologist understand how to best craft a response. The contention that *kategoria* and *apologia* be considered in tandem may ensure the critic deeper understanding, as Ryan suggests, but it can limit the ways in which scholars analyze the accusation. This study focuses on effectively shaping *kategoria* to elicit a response other than self-defense as well as to show how accusation can be utilized as a form of rhetorical leadership by individuals without legitimate power. As a generic form of forensic rhetoric that seeks a definable end, *kategoria* has the power to move beyond *apologia* as a response to motivate change and serve justice through concrete action. Examining speeches of accusation through this lens illustrates that *kategoria* can be utilized as rhetorical leadership to shift power and effect change.

There are instances in the existing rhetorical literature in which *kategoria* is treated as solely a condition necessary for self-defense or *apologia*. Much of the literature overlooks the utility of *kategoria* on its own which undermines the potential of this rhetorical form. In his study of how rhetorical stasis theory can help construction of crisis communication responses, Marsh maintained that *kategoria* allows “crisis managers to decide whether to attack an accusation at its minor premise level, major premise level or conclusion” in his or her response to allegations.⁵⁵ From the crisis communication perspective, the *kategoria* is treated as a cause which allows the apologist insight into how to best construct his or her defense based on the exigence perceived in the accusation. This crisis communication view of speeches of accusation should be expanded to consider the importance of the *kategoria* on its own as a critical rhetorical form and by identifying successful rhetorical strategies of accusation. Incorporating the ways in which accusation can be used as rhetorical leadership to shift power dynamics in organizations to

seek justice and influence change would bolster scholarship and provide a useful tool for future accusers.

As instances of *kategoria* continue to be publicly advanced, the utility of speeches of accusation as a form of rhetorical leadership accessible to individuals with varying degrees of power demands attention. Despite the existence of speeches of accusation throughout history as well as the pervasiveness of and myriad delivery means for these rhetorical attempts in today's society, *kategoria* remains understudied in rhetorical scholarship. Ryan noted the dearth in modern scholarship regarding speeches of accusation in his examination of rhetorical criticism treating *kategoria* and *apologia* as a set.⁵⁶ Recalling Plato, Aristotle, and Isocrates, Ryan noted that accusation is a genre of oratory and observed that "apologetic discourse is motivated by accusatory discourse."⁵⁷ According to Ryan, "aside from the ancients, however, no one has gone beyond a few sentences in describing accusatory discourse."⁵⁸ Ryan addressed this deficit by proposing "to treat accusation and apology as a speech set" and by illustrating this claim through a representative example of the *kategoria/apologia* of Pope Leo X versus Martin Luther.⁵⁹ In advancing this contention, Ryan emphasized the necessity of studying speeches of accusation so that the scholar could gain insight into their construction and motivations. Exploring successful instances of *kategoria* will prove useful to empower even more voices to join these types of calls through the employment of speeches of accusation as a tool for rhetorical leadership.

Much of the existing rhetorical literature on *kategoria* is focused on understanding a specific case of *kategoria-apologia* used in tandem, widening the audience for study of speeches of accusation to include crisis managers, rhetorical critics, and society at large. Ryan offered benefit for the rhetorical critic when he posited that "by identifying and assessing the issues in the accusation, the critic will gain insights into the accuser's motivation to accuse, his selection

of the issues, and the nature of the supporting materials for his accusation.”⁶⁰ In their studies of persuasive attack strategies, Benoit and James R. DiSanza and Nancy J. Legge indicated that examination of *kategoria* can benefit society in general by categorizing attack strategies in cultural conversations. DiSanza and Legge asserted that persuasive attack makes an impact in society because the strategies “relate to assumptions that are easy for us to understand and supply,” and knowledge of such tactics is important for myriad audiences.⁶¹ Further investigation of *kategoria* as a genre will enrich the existing literature by illustrating the ways in which this rhetorical form can be employed to shift power and how these strategies can be used to craft future accusations.

Scholarly treatment of *kategoria* lags far behind research on *apologia*, the rhetorical genre its very existence spawned. In his 2006 study of *apologia* and crisis communication, Marsh acknowledged that “an *apologia* would not exist without an instigating *kategoria*” and highlighted that the treatment of *apologia* was more extensive in scholarship.⁶² Benoit addressed *kategoria* in his 2017 article on persuasive attacks, which he claimed is synonymous with speeches of accusation.⁶³ In making the case for studying this type of rhetoric, he asserted: “Despite considerable evidence of interest among scholars in responses to or defenses from persuasive attack... persuasive attack itself, the pervasive form of communication that provokes such responses, has been the subject of relatively little investigation.”⁶⁴ In the year prior to Benoit’s study, in their article refining a taxonomy of attack strategies, DiSanza and Legge likewise noted this scarcity of *kategoria*-related research: “Although there is a significant amount of literature on the persuasive defense... there has been much less work on persuasive attack.”⁶⁵ In their piece on *apologia*, Ware and Linkugel recalled: “The recurrent theme of accusation followed by apology is so prevalent in our record of public address as to be, in the words of

Kenneth Burke, one of those ‘situations typical and recurrent enough for men to feel the need of having a name for them’.”⁶⁶ The prevalence of *kategoria*, the fact that it has been necessary to name this rhetorical form, and its inseparability from *apologia* support the contention that further study of successful speeches of accusation would be beneficial to both scholarship and society. DiSanza and Legge made this claim directly: “It is clear that we need a stronger understanding of the rhetoric of persuasive attack if we are to fully understand our current cultural and political dialogue.”⁶⁷ Focusing specifically on *kategoria* enables me to uncover how speeches of accusation can be successfully constructed and enacted by myriad individuals to effect change. This study will move beyond the position that *kategoria* is one part of a speech set to demonstrate that speeches of accusation can be utilized as a form of rhetorical leadership which seeks justice as opposed to *apologia* as its end. Developing this perspective on *kategoria* will contribute to the scholarship on the rhetorical genre of speeches of accusation and bolster the rhetorical leadership literature by revealing new ways in which *kategoria* can be employed as rhetorical leadership to motivate organizational change.

Advancing an accusation, particularly directed at an organizational leader with legitimate power, with a concrete call to action grounded in seeking justice by individuals who hold less power can be associated with social change rhetoric. A contemporary view of *kategoria* organized outside the courtroom is that accusation is “concerned with giving birth to an image.”⁶⁸ This image is born because the accuser(s) perceive “an exigence which (s)he would seek to modify through accusatory discourse.”⁶⁹ The public assertion of this image through *kategoria* with a defined desired end by an individual without legitimate authority is a form of protest, designed to shift power and enact change. Harris and Werner made the direct connection between forensic rhetoric and social change rhetoric in their article which contends that forensic

rhetoric can enable the public to imagine possibilities for justice.⁷⁰ The authors “insist that forensic rhetoric is an important tool for social justice” and their extensive research concluded that while much scholarly work focuses on forensic rhetoric in the courtroom, “legal rhetoric, even unsuccessful test cases, have transformative potential.”⁷¹ The transformative potential of speeches of accusation is becoming increasingly established in society today and deserves scholarly attention. Situating *kategoria*, a form of forensic rhetoric, in the context of social change deepens its potential by acknowledging accusation as a means for effecting concrete change at the organizational level when utilized by individuals seeking justice through rhetorical leadership.

As exemplified, current scholarship focuses disproportionately on responses to *kategoria* as opposed to how to successfully construct speeches of accusation to accomplish the accuser’s desired outcome. For instance, in the *apologia/kategoria* speech set, coaching on how to craft a successful rhetorical text is typically focused on the construction of speeches of self-defense; my focus is the understudied, underdeveloped speech of accusation and its ability to be utilized as rhetorical leadership by individuals with varying degrees of power. There is a delineation between addressing theory (e.g. Ryan) and practice (e.g. Benoit) and my study will attempt to fuse these two critical aspects of examining speeches of accusation to benefit both rhetorical critics and crisis managers who seek deeper understanding of *kategoria*. My investigation will reveal rhetorical strategies that accusers, practitioners, and scholars can employ to develop and to better comprehend future accusations. By identifying and explicating tactics that have motivated change based on successful cases that fit my particular subset, I will show the ways accusation employed as rhetorical leadership can disrupt value hierarchy, shift power, and bolster future attempts at influencing organizational change through *kategoria*.

Value Arguments to Motivate Change within *Kategoria*

One way to utilize speeches of accusation to establish guilt and seek justice is to appeal to values that shift value hierarchy to disrupt existing power systems. An appeal to values accentuates specific values that support the greater good over the individual or existing structure and offers the audience a choice by motivating alignment with certain values over others. Harris and Werner asserted that “forensic rhetoric pushes audiences to consider if the actions of the past adhere to the purported values of the present.”⁷² Value hierarchy arguments prioritize a more desirable value relevant to the present situation over another less acceptable value or one that no longer suits the sustainability of the circumstance. Employing value arguments in speeches of accusation motivates concrete action that moves beyond self-defense as a response which would not serve the ends of justice as actualized change called for in the *kategoria*. Genre analysis will allow me to reveal the rhetorical consistencies that exist in these instances of *kategoria* that have successfully operated to appeal to value hierarchy to effect change. By uncovering these rhetorical tactics and explicating them, scholars and society can arrive at a deeper understanding of how to construct speeches of accusation as a form of forensic rhetoric to achieve justice.

Value arguments operate to motivate action by offering a choice of what is more desirable and acceptable in a situation. According to Chaim Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca in *The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation*, one appeals to values to induce the audience to make one choice over another and to justify those choices to be accepted by others.⁷³ The authors asserted that “agreement with regard to a value means an admission that an object, a being, or an ideal must have a specific influence on action and on disposition toward action.”⁷⁴ This contention speaks to the utility of this influence in an argument, such as in an instance of *kategoria*, to highlight desirability of a value in a particular situation and to show how it

contributes to effect action. In his 2014 article, Fabrizio Macagno investigated the relationship between value-based reasoning and emotive language, noting that “value judgment (or rather the cognitive change) provides a reason for a physical or psychical reaction that can drive to action.”⁷⁵ Employing value arguments in speeches of accusation is a way to influence action in the audience by presenting a choice and motivating alliance with the value that is deemed more desirable. In the specific instances of *kategoria* that I will explore, this influence is manifested through an alignment with the value that is more acceptable in the present situation and serves the greater good of an organization, achieving justice by promoting leadership change.

To motivate concrete change, value arguments must work to persuade an audience of the superiority of the value presented. Value arguments are considered persuasive in that their role is “to justify choices on which there is not unanimous agreement by inserting these choices in a sort of empty frame with respect to which a wider agreement exists.”⁷⁶ For instance, when faced with a choice to align with an established leader or an accuser seeking change, an audience can be conflicted based on myriad factors. When that choice is reframed as a value argument that prioritizes a value that fosters the greater good, an audience may be more likely to be persuaded to action. Macagno’s piece on value-based reasoning also explored the persuasiveness of such arguments. He concluded that discourse with an emotive dimension, for instance claims grounded in value-based reasoning, can be used to modify and influence decisions. According to Macagno, “values are considered to be reasons to act” and value judgments motivate the audience to undertake the behavior – or change – “that is commonly accepted to be the most appropriate in the given circumstance.”⁷⁷ An article exploring the psychology of the persuasiveness of co-value arguments, in which one social value is applied to advance and support another, found that individuals considered an appeal to values motivational when the end

seemed plausible. The authors contended that this type of argumentation is persuasive because values are perceived as important, viewed positively, and compel individuals to act in accordance with their values.⁷⁸ Value hierarchy arguments are persuasive and motivate action because, regardless of the result, the “simultaneous pursuit of these values leads to incompatibilities,” and obliges one to make a choice.⁷⁹ Positioning a hierarchy of values further illustrates desirability in a situation and by enacting value-based reasoning, action is compelled by offering a choice to align with what will serve the greater good and, in the case of *kategoria*, will also serve justice.

Introducing value hierarchy arguments into speeches of accusation can disrupt power systems by shifting perspective of which values are more desirable in the present to overcome the past. These value arguments are germane to the situation and enacted to illustrate which value needs to be prioritized for the greater good – specifically to my study, for organization sustainability over an individual who has transgressed. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca stated that “accepted hierarchies occur in practice... like that expressing the superiority of the just,”⁸⁰ which supports my contention that value hierarchy arguments can be successfully enacted in speeches of accusation to achieve justice in the form of change. A value hierarchy is deemed more important to the structure of an argument than the actual values, per Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca: “A particular audience is characterized less by which values it accepts than by the way it grades them.”⁸¹ The subordination and superiority of values is the crux of understanding how value hierarchies function in speeches of accusation to motivate change. The accusation does not deny the importance of one value but seeks to rhetorically emphasize the greater desirability of another in the particular instance of *kategoria* to accomplish the specified call to action and serve justice. The authors concurred that superiority of values vary among

individuals, and Macagno also noted that value hierarchies partly depend on cultural factors and individual disposition.⁸² In the cases examined for my study, value judgments rely on the individuals and cultural factors that exist within the organization itself to make determinations for what best serves justice for that culture. As will be elucidated, the value hierarchies emphasized in my texts do not necessarily claim that certain values are unacceptable or undesirable within a value system but simply underscore prioritizing the values most desirable in leadership contexts given the particular set of circumstances that called for change, action, and justice.

Conclusion

A genre study of my specific subset of *kategoria* will allow me to examine the consistent rhetorical elements that exist across several examples of speeches of accusations. In revealing these components, I will illuminate the ways in which these tactics can be utilized in speeches of accusation as a form of rhetorical leadership to seek justice, advancing an understanding of *kategoria* that has yet to be established in the scholarship. Given the evidence provided that *kategoria* is a rhetorical genre and a form of forensic rhetoric that can establish guilt for past actions and serve justice, and the increasing prevalence of accusation as a speech form in society today, a genre analysis of *kategoria* will provide added understanding of this rhetorical form for scholars and offer myriad individuals a tool to inform future speeches of accusation. Having identified a particular subset of *kategoria* to explore, a genre study will allow me to substantiate my contention that speeches of accusation can be employed as a form of rhetorical leadership and utilized as a tool to shift value hierarchy to effect organizational change. In addition, I will illustrate that *kategoria* as a tool for rhetorical leadership can be engaged by individuals with varying degrees of power to level accusations against those with legitimate authority and to

achieve actualized change. The resulting analysis will offer insight into successful construction of speeches of accusation that will extend theoretically to scholarship and practically to society, ensuring benefits for scholars, communication practitioners, and future accusers alike. Having established the importance of this study, I now move into my three case studies that investigate leadership change at Michigan State University, Uber, and Facebook.

Notes

¹ Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson, "Form and Genre in Rhetorical Criticism: An Introduction," in *Form and Genre: Shaping Rhetorical Action*, eds. Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson (Virginia: Speech Communication Association, 1978), 20.

² Campbell and Jamieson, "Form and Genre," 21.

³ Campbell and Jamieson, "Form and Genre," 21.

⁴ Campbell and Jamieson, "Form and Genre," 21.

⁵ Halford Ross Ryan, "*Kategoria* and *Apologia*: On Their Rhetorical Criticism as a Speech Set," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 68 (1982): 254.

⁶ Noreen Wales Kruse, "The Scope of Apologetic Discourse: Establishing Generic Parameters," *Southern Speech Communication Journal* 46 (Spring 1981): 279-80.

⁷ Ryan, "*Kategoria* and *Apologia*," 254.

⁸ B. L. Ware and Wil A. Linkugel, "They Spoke in Defense of Themselves: On the Generic Criticism of *Apologia*," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 59, no. 3 (1973): 273.

⁹ Kathleen Hall Jamieson and Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, "Rhetorical Hybrids: Fusions of Generic Elements," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 68 (1982): 146.

¹⁰ Campbell and Jamieson, "Form and Genre," 17.

¹¹ Campbell and Jamieson, "Form and Genre," 19-20.

¹² William L. Benoit, "Beyond Genre Theory: The Genesis of Rhetorical Action," *Communication Monographs* 67, no. 2 (June 2000): 190.

¹³ J. Justin Gustainis, "The Generic Criticism of Social Movement Rhetoric," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 12, no. 4 (Autumn 1982): 255.

¹⁴ Campbell and Jamieson, "Form and Genre," 17.

¹⁵ Campbell and Jamieson, "Form and Genre," 25, 18.

¹⁶ Campbell and Jamieson, "Form and Genre," 25.

¹⁷ Campbell and Jamieson, "Form and Genre," 26.

¹⁸ Carolyn R. Miller, "Genre as Social Action," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 70 (1984): 151.

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- ¹⁹ Miller, "Genre as Social Action," 151.
- ²⁰ Miller, "Genre as Social Action," 163, 155.
- ²¹ Miller, "Genre as Social Action," 164.
- ²² Benoit, "Beyond Genre Theory, 181.
- ²³ Benoit, "Beyond Genre Theory, 181.
- ²⁴ Campbell and Jamieson, "Form and Genre," 19.
- ²⁵ Benoit, "Beyond Genre Theory, 181.
- ²⁶ Carolyn R. Miller, "Rhetorical Community: The Cultural Basis of Genre," in *Genre and the New Rhetoric*, eds. Aviva Freedman and Peter Medway (Pennsylvania: Taylor & Francis, 1994), 67-78.
- ²⁷ Gustainis, "The Generic Criticism of Social Movement Rhetoric," 257.
- ²⁸ Campbell and Jamieson, "Form and Genre," 22.
- ²⁹ Thomas M. Conley, "Ancient Rhetoric and Modern Genre Criticism," *Communication Quarterly* (Fall 1979): 50.
- ³⁰ Conley, "Ancient Rhetoric and Modern Genre Criticism," 50.
- ³¹ Benoit, "Beyond Genre Theory, 182.
- ³² Kruse, "The Scope of Apologetic Discourse," 290.
- ³³ Campbell and Jamieson, "Form and Genre," 21.
- ³⁴ Edwin Black, *Rhetorical Criticism: A Study in Method* (London: The Macmillan Company, 1965), 78.
- ³⁵ Black, *Rhetorical Criticism*, 89.
- ³⁶ Black, *Rhetorical Criticism*, 78.
- ³⁷ Campbell and Jamieson, "Form and Genre," 24.
- ³⁸ Campbell and Jamieson, "Form and Genre," 18.
- ³⁹ See Campbell and Jamieson, "Form and Genre."

⁴⁰ *The Rhetorical Tradition: Readings from Classical Times to the Present*, eds. Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2001), 30.

⁴¹ Bizzell and Herzberg, *The Rhetorical Tradition*, 172, 185.

⁴² Leslie J. Harris and Jansen B. Werner, "Forensic Rhetoric and Racial Justice: Rhetorical Advocacy in the Reason *Why the Colored American Is Not in the World's Columbian Exposition*," *Communication Studies* 72, no. 4 (2021): 630.

⁴³ Harris and Werner, "Forensic Rhetoric and Racial Justice," 622.

⁴⁴ Harris and Werner, "Forensic Rhetoric and Racial Justice," 629.

⁴⁵ Vivian I. Dicks, "Courtroom Rhetorical Strategies: Forensic and Deliberative Perspectives," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 67 (1981): 178.

⁴⁶ Ryan, "*Kategoria* and *Apologia*," 254.

⁴⁷ Charles Marsh, "The Syllogism of Apologia: Rhetorical Stasis Theory and Crisis Communication," *Public Relations Review* 32 (2006): 42; Michael R. Kramer and Kathryn M. Olson, "The Strategic Potential of Sequencing Apologia Stases: President Clinton's Self-Defense in the Monica Lewinsky Scandal," *Western Journal of Communication* 66, no. 3 (Summer 2002): 347.

⁴⁸ William L. Benoit, "Criticism of Actions and Character: Strategies for Persuasive Attack Extended," *Relevant Rhetoric* 8 (2017): 1.

⁴⁹ Ryan, "*Kategoria* and *Apologia*," 254.

⁵⁰ See Campbell and Jamieson, "Form and Genre."

⁵¹ Ryan, "*Kategoria* and *Apologia*," 255.

⁵² Kramer and Olson, "The Strategic Potential of Sequencing Apologia Stases," 348.

⁵³ Marsh, "The Syllogism of Apologia," 42.

⁵⁴ Ryan, "*Kategoria* and *Apologia*," 254.

⁵⁵ Marsh, "The Syllogism of Apologia," 41.

⁵⁶ Ryan, "*Kategoria* and *Apologia*," 254.

⁵⁷ Ryan, "*Kategoria* and *Apologia*," 254.

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- ⁵⁸ Ryan, “*Kategoria and Apologia*,” 254.
- ⁵⁹ Ryan, “*Kategoria and Apologia*,” 254.
- ⁶⁰ Ryan, “*Kategoria and Apologia*,” 254.
- ⁶¹ James R. DiSanza and Nancy J. Legge, “The Rhetoric of Persuasive Attack: Continuing the Development of a Taxonomy of Attack Strategies and Tactics,” *Relevant Rhetoric* 7 (2016): 15.
- ⁶² Marsh, “The Syllogism of Apologia,” 42.
- ⁶³ Benoit, “Strategies for Persuasive Attack Extended,” 1.
- ⁶⁴ Benoit, “Strategies for Persuasive Attack Extended,” 3.
- ⁶⁵ DiSanza and Legge, “The Rhetoric of Persuasive Attack,” 2.
- ⁶⁶ Ware and Linkugel, “They Spoke in Defense of Themselves,” 273-4.
- ⁶⁷ DiSanza and Legge, “The Rhetoric of Persuasive Attack,” 2.
- ⁶⁸ See Walter R. Fisher, “A Motive View of Communication,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 56, no. 2 (1970): 132; Ryan, “*Kategoria and Apologia*,” 255.
- ⁶⁹ Ryan, “*Kategoria and Apologia*,” 255.
- ⁷⁰ See Harris and Werner, “Forensic Rhetoric and Racial Justice.”
- ⁷¹ Harris and Werner, “Forensic Rhetoric and Racial Justice,” 629, 621.
- ⁷² Harris and Werner, “Forensic Rhetoric and Racial Justice,” 630.
- ⁷³ Chaim Perelman and L. Olbrechts-Tyteca, *The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation* (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1969), 75.
- ⁷⁴ Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, *The New Rhetoric*, 74.
- ⁷⁵ Fabrizio Macagno, “Manipulating Emotions: Value-Based Reasoning and Emotive Language,” *Argumentation and Advocacy* 51 (Fall 2014): 114.
- ⁷⁶ Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, *The New Rhetoric*, 76.
- ⁷⁷ Macagno, “Manipulating Emotions,” 111.

⁷⁸ Gregory R. Maio, Ulrike Hahan, John-Mark Frost, Toon Kuppens, Nadia Rehman, and Shanmukh Kamble, “Social Values as Arguments: Similar is Convincing,” *Frontiers in Psychology* 5 (August 2014): 1.

⁷⁹ Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, *The New Rhetoric*, 82.

⁸⁰ Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, *The New Rhetoric*, 80.

⁸¹ Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, *The New Rhetoric*, 81.

⁸² Macagno, “Manipulating Emotions,” 114.

Chapter 3: Michigan State University

Michigan State University boasted a reputation for academic and athletic excellence, the latter in part due to renowned physician and athletic trainer Larry Nassar. In 2016, after nearly 20 years of working for MSU in various roles, allegations of sexual misconduct and abuse against Nassar became public.¹ By the end of 2018, almost 200 survivors of abuse had come forward with claims against Nassar, many of which had been previously reported and overlooked.² Nassar was sentenced to 175 years in prison on multiple counts of criminal sexual misconduct during his tenure at MSU.³ The university agreed to an unprecedented \$500 million settlement to survivors for failure to protect them from Nassar.⁴ However, survivors of Nassar's abuse demanded further accountability, especially given evidence that MSU leaders had ignored the survivors' claims and perpetuated a culture of abuse at the university.

The university experienced rapid turnover of leadership in the wake of the Nassar scandal and in January of 2018, John Engler was appointed interim president. According to the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, Engler's "selection was controversial from the start, and many saw him as a symbol of an intransigent culture that put political considerations ahead of morally sound decision making."⁵ Engler's brief time as head of MSU has been described as "a year of tumult" during which he publicly made "eye-opening comments" including the suggestion "that some abuse victims enjoy 'the spotlight'."⁶ In addition, Engler was accused of "offering a cash payoff to a survivor" of Nassar's abuse as well as suggesting that another survivor was manipulating other women to speak out.⁷ Nevertheless, Engler's institutional power made his position as interim president appear secure until the board was ready to appoint someone else to the role.

Survivors of abuse, however, were appalled by Engler's appointment given his evident disregard for and disparagement of survivors and by the culture of abuse they claimed he

fostered at the university. Many of these women, calling themselves “Sister Survivors,” wrote a public letter to the board of trustees demanding that Engler be immediately removed from his leadership position. Despite their lack of institutional power, many commentators credit the Sister Survivor’s letter for Engler’s removal from MSU leadership.⁸ When the board of trustees pushed Engler out of his position in January 2019, one member remarked that the leader’s “reign of terror was over.”⁹

In this chapter, I argue that by rhetorically constructing leadership as a decision as opposed to a circumstance, it is possible to shape the necessity of organizational change and shift the power from those who hold legitimate authority to those seeking justice. Examining this construction of leadership is important because it reveals rhetorical strategies that can be employed in a speech of accusation to shift value hierarchy, disrupt power systems, and motivate concrete change. Illustrating the ways in which the Sister Survivors enacted leadership through discourse to level an accusation that was successful at achieving the desired outcome can inform future attempts at *kategoria*, particularly when the accuser(s) holds less power than the accused. A close reading of this letter through the lens of genre reveals that rhetorical strategies of *establishing a clear dichotomy grounded in values, developing a specific image of leadership, and utilizing personal appeals* can enable a power shift to successfully motivate change. These rhetorical tactics operate to shift value hierarchy expectations to emphasize the desired and acceptable values germane to a specific instance. Shifting value hierarchy allows those with varying degrees of power, who deploy accusation as a form of rhetorical leadership, to promote action that serves the greater good and the viability of the future. By rhetorically disrupting value hierarchy expectations to motivate specified change, individuals without institutional power can accomplish justice.

In what follows, I will illustrate the ways in which the Sister Survivors' statement framed leadership as a decision as opposed to a circumstance to accentuate the need for change at MSU. Leadership enacted as a deliberate decision in an effort to effect change is the very nature of rhetorical leadership. The Sister Survivors' accusation leveled at Engler, who held legitimate authority given his role of university president, is an example of rhetorical leadership deployed by individuals with varying degrees of power. Their rhetorical leadership enabled them to establish guilt and call for justice by shaping the desirable value framework for this particular set of circumstances. My analysis of their letter will support my overall contention that *kategoria* can be utilized as a tool for rhetorical leadership to shift value hierarchy and effect organizational change. To begin, I will discuss historic resistance to change in academia which highlights the significance of the ability of the Sister Survivors' statement to effect change. Then, I will provide brief contextual background on the statement and offer evidence of the elements of forensic rhetoric contained within the text. Finally, I will conduct a close reading of the statement through the lens of genre to reveal and explicate the rhetorical tactics that successfully function to shift value hierarchy and motivate concrete change that can inform future attempts at *kategoria*.

Universities and Organizational Change

Organizations tend to be resistant to change, and this propensity holds true for universities and colleges. According to an article published by *Inside Higher Ed*, "Significant change will never occur in any institution until the forces for change are greater in combination than the forces preserving the status quo. And in colleges and universities, the forces for resisting change are extremely powerful."¹⁰ The 2006 study on change in higher education cited a variety of reasons for this resistance. Of note to my analysis is the assertion that "many academic leaders have personal priorities that do not mesh with the goals... or the stated priorities of their

institution.”¹¹ Leadership plays a crucial role in facilitating change and creating a culture that embraces that change. If a leader’s priorities do not align with those of the institution he or she serves, the leader’s resistance may prevent organizational change. Another factor contributing to the resistance to change in higher education is that “assessment and accountability are viewed by many as evils to be avoided rather than as tools for improving... the quality of their institution.”¹² Assessment and accountability are areas of concern that fall directly under the purview of boards of trustees in institutions of high education, and their resistance can be extremely problematic when it comes to the need for change.

The board of trustees typically serves as the legal governing body of a university. According to *Forbes*, the board of trustees hold unique control due to two distinct advantages. First, the trustees “legally *are* the university, with major decision-making powers,” and second, they are individuals dependent on resources earned outside of the academy, they often have clout, and they hold a perspective of life outside the university itself.¹³ Despite these attributes, global management consultancy McKinsey & Company posits that “modern university boards may lack the capabilities required to provide oversight and guidance to their institutions,” concluding that “this resistance to change has serious consequences.”¹⁴ Though they hold legal power to enact change, “rarely are trustees the agents for needed, bold changes.”¹⁵ This resistance to change can be attributed to the fact that often the trustees are not involved in the daily operations of the institution and because their information is typically provided to them by the president of the university, “who wants trustees to hear good things and avoid learning about campus weaknesses and embarrassments, since the president’s salary and employment future is enhanced by good news.”¹⁶ This dynamic complicates the unbiased nature of the role of the board of trustees, their oversight of a university, and their potential for driving change.

Michigan State University was no exception to these national and global trends in higher education, particularly with regard to leadership, board oversight, and resistance to change. Each member of the board of trustees is elected to the role. According to MSU's website: "The trustees of Michigan State University are publicly elected by Michigan voters and have general supervision over the university and its funds. The board consists of eight members elected for staggered eight-year terms. Members serve without compensation."¹⁷ At the time of Engler's tenure at MSU, some board members held "an entrenched view... that firing Engler would somehow be more disruptive than keeping him in place and hoping his behavior would change."¹⁸ In spite of complaints about Engler and his continued transgressions, the reports from MSU concluded that "No matter how bad things got, most trustees argued, change was somehow worse."¹⁹ With a board of trustees responsible for university supervision seemingly comfortable with the status quo, enacting change – especially at the leadership level – was hindered.

The leadership role of university president – specifically for public universities – is an appointed one. John Engler's appointment as interim president of MSU came in January 2018 "as fallout over the university's failure to respond to sexual abuse by Larry Nassar continue[d] to roil the campus and while a national search was conduct[ed] to replace Lou Anna K. Simon who stepped down as MSU president after 13 years in the wake of the Nassar scandal."²⁰ According to media reports: "The board saw in Engler, a former Republican governor of Michigan, an able political tactician who could help to reach a swift legal settlement with the abuse victims, setting the table for a permanent president."²¹ Despite the unanimous decision by the board, Engler's appointment was contentious from the beginning. Students "seeking transparency and asking board members to help restore trust in the university's leadership" felt the appointment was "political" and that Engler was an individual with no academic leadership experience.²² In

response to his opposition, Engler promised “The changes that need to be made are the changes we're going to be making.”²³ Upon his resignation one year after his appointment, Engler’s legacy is “one of the most bafflingly contentious exhibitions of higher-education leadership in recent memory.”²⁴ The needed changes that he promised to make did not come to fruition. A board member who was appointed only two months prior to Engler’s ouster commented on the board members who kept Engler in place, despite “how corrosive Engler’s relationship would become with the survivors: ‘I don’t think they fully appreciated the damage that happens when you have the wrong leader in place – thinking that just not changing would keep things more stable. In fact, it’s the reverse’.”²⁵ Ultimately, Engler’s fatal flaw, according to another member of the board of trustees, was that he didn’t understand the bigger issue of culture at the university.²⁶ Change in organizations often occurs at a cultural level and that culture is typically driven at the leadership level, making it imperative to have a president and board of trustees who are capable of supporting and cultivating appropriate culture and needed change.

In Michigan State University’s case, not only was Engler notably resistant to change, but he also appeared to be responsible for perpetuating an environment that condoned abuse and creating a culture that did not value safety or prioritize students and survivors. Engler’s tenure has been described as “the most trying, tumultuous stretch in university history in the wake of the Nassar sexual abuse scandal.”²⁷ In addition to making “numerous statements and decisions that drew outrage” including “reckless and vile personal attacks upon individual survivors and their legal counsel,” it has been widely reported that “he took actions to obstruct and undermine criminal investigations of the university and its administration.”²⁸ Other actions like closing a fund that was set up to help survivors pay for mental health care and publicly sharing a woman’s medical history in response to a lawsuit she filed against the school “sparked outrage among

assault survivors, advocates and others” in the community.²⁹ Consistently positioning the survivors as the enemy as opposed to supporting them, ESPN reported that Engler also failed to respond to or report emails that he received from five separate women who said they were sexually assaulted or harassed during their time at Michigan State.³⁰ Despite the fact that Engler was appointed to drive change for the university, his contributions to the existing culture and resistance to change underscored the need for leadership who would enact change and seek justice.

The Sister Survivors’ Statement

Organizational change was called for in the case of Engler, as evidenced by Nassar survivors and MSU board members seeking his removal as interim president of the university. In response to the allegations against him and the belief that “Engler did not understand victims of abuse and has not fulfilled the promises he made when he took the job,” a group of individuals attempted to enact change that would result in new leadership at MSU.³¹ On June 19, 2018, over 120 abuse survivors, the aforementioned Sister Survivors, issued a public statement calling for new leadership at MSU and demanding that the board fire Engler.³² Condemning his leadership, the open letter asserted that “MSU cannot move forward and become an institution of integrity and safety until John Engler is no longer President, and a new interim leader who will stand against an abusive culture is found.”³³ The statement, issued in advance of a board of trustees meeting, was picked up by the *Associated Press* and published in mainstream media outlets across the nation.³⁴ Signatories of the Sister Survivors’ letter included “Olympic gymnastics gold medalist Aly Raisman, and Rachael Denhollander, a former gymnast who has been one of the most vocal critics of Engler.”³⁵ Denhollander posted the entire statement on her personal Twitter account, where she had more than 46,000 followers.³⁶ Having received national attention, the

public letter calling for justice was the successful impetus for leadership and cultural change at Michigan State University during Engler's interim presidency.

Though Engler's official ouster came seven months after the letter was issued, this statement launched a barrage of other calls for his removal including five members of Congress from Michigan, at least three Republican state lawmakers, a Republican candidate for governor, two MSU elected trustees, and a group of 23 MSU academic leaders.³⁷ The letter was widely distributed, and the athletes who comprised the Sister Survivors were given additional platforms to call for change and justice. The Sister Survivors received recognition for their bravery that "transcends sports" as they were honored at the 2018 ESPY Awards, which was broadcast nationally on ESPN one month after they issued their public statement.³⁸ Several of the women spoke at the award ceremony, echoing the assertions published in their statement. The women's testimonies in the trial against Larry Nassar are credited with securing his lengthy prison sentence, and their words continued to hold power as the scandal at MSU persisted.³⁹ On January 17, 2019, Engler "was asked to resign by a board that was prepared to fire him."⁴⁰ The letter signed by 120 survivors of abuse serves as an example of a successful rhetorical attempt to enact organizational change at the leadership level and is ripe for analysis.

Accusation and Demands for Justice

The purpose of the Sister Survivors' public statement was to enact change at the leadership level of MSU in order to seek justice for the survivors of abuse at the university. Their desired outcome was directly stated in the open letter: the women called for the removal of John Engler and the appointment of a new leader who would stand against an abusive culture.⁴¹ In addition to this specific change at the leadership level, the Sister Survivors sought justice for the survivors by also calling for leadership that would create a safe environment where no one would

be afraid to speak up and where no cries would go unheard by the university.⁴² To achieve these ends, the Sister Survivors utilized *kategoria* as a form of rhetorical leadership to call for change and justice. As a generic form of forensic rhetoric, speeches of accusation look at past actions, determine (in this case) guilt and seek justice. Examining this public statement through the lens of genre has revealed three distinct rhetorical strategies that illustrate ways in which individuals with varying degrees of power can successfully deploy *kategoria* as a form of rhetorical leadership to shift value hierarchy expectations and motivate change within an organization. As previously advanced, I argue that by rhetorically constructing leadership as a decision as opposed to a circumstance, it is possible to shape the necessity of organizational change and shift the power from those who hold legitimate authority to those seeking justice. This analysis will illustrate how the strategies of *establishing a clear dichotomy grounded in values, developing a specific image of leadership, and utilizing personal appeals* can successfully promote change when employed in speeches of accusation as a form of rhetorical leadership by individuals seeking justice at an organizational level.

The Sister Survivors' statement is an example of *kategoria* as a generic form of forensic rhetoric and utilized as a tool of rhetorical leadership. Specific evidence within the text showcases the elements of forensic rhetoric, including establishing guilt based on past actions and seeking justice as its end. Throughout the text, the Sister Survivors highlighted Engler's transgressions as they rhetorically indict him and his past actions, shaping his guilt and the need for future recourse. The text describes Engler's behavior as "abhorrent" with "subtle threats," accusing him with offenses including refusing to listen, attacking survivors, and creating an unsafe environment.⁴³ In addition, the statement addressed an appropriate rhetorical audience that is capable of endorsing the called-for change. The MSU Board of Trustees, which has

previously been complicit, is framed in the text as judges with an obligation to enact justice. Though this gives the board power, it enforces the rhetorical leadership of the Sister Survivors who disrupted the established systems by shifting power from Engler to the trustees. Using discourse as a means for leadership, the Sister Survivors' accusation statement developed the generic elements of forensic rhetoric and operated to effect organizational change.

Establishment of a Clear Dichotomy Grounded in Values

Throughout the Sister Survivors' statement, clear rhetorical dichotomies emerge that set the foundation for constructing leadership as a decision as opposed to a circumstance. These dichotomies, grounded in values, operate to create a power shift for justice by offering a choice to the audience (the board of trustees) and also the reader. Emergent dichotomies rhetorically constructed within the text include right or wrong, ability or inability, and what is clear juxtaposed against the unstated – but implied – what is unclear. These dichotomies present a choice between one value over another, ultimately enforcing the values that underpin the Sister Survivors' criteria for what is right and just. The desirable choice within the dichotomies is that which aligns with the more acceptable values in this situation that motivate change and achieve justice. The rhetorical dichotomies evident in this statement illustrate the critical distinction that leadership is a conscious decision, not simply a circumstance based on position or power held as a result of one's role. The construction of leadership as a decision as opposed to a circumstance operates to disrupt expected value hierarchies and shift power from those with legitimate authority to those who have consciously decided to enact leadership through rhetoric with the goal of seeking justice.

One of the dichotomies that emerges in this text is the determination of what is right and what is wrong. In line with the genre of forensic rhetoric, this accusation worked to establish

guilt while creating an image of the Sister Survivors on the side of right and Engler on the side of wrong. This dichotomy set the foundation for the Sister Survivors to establish their criteria for what constitutes right, grounded in the value of justice itself for the survivors and students. Any other values in this instance, particularly those associated with Engler, are considered wrong. The rhetorical construction of right and wrong functions to offer an easy choice to the audience; it is, generally, more desirable to be on the side of right. Offering the choice to align with what is rhetorically constructed as right can serve as a persuasive tactic for motivating change.

Throughout the text, right and wrong is delineated through direct statements of what is right and the ways in which the Sister Survivors have adhered to this side of justice. The Sister Survivors asserted that “we chose to speak up at great personal cost because it was right.”⁴⁴ This statement functions in several ways. First, it serves as a declaration of the agency of the Sister Survivors and their active decision – “we *chose*” (emphasis mine) – to utilize rhetorical leadership in the form of *kategoria* to seek justice. The reminder that this decision comes “at great personal cost” underscores their lack of institutional power in this situation. They did not specify the potential personal cost in this statement but as survivors of abuse and an abusive culture who have spoken out in the past, they likely have previously experienced consequences of using their voices for justice against those in power. Finally, the statement directly contended that the Sister Survivors believe that issuing this accusation is the right thing to do for the future of the university and for justice – so much so that they are willing to consciously decide to put themselves at risk. What is right in this situation serves the greater good of the university moving forward but also must serve justice for the transgressions of the past. The satisfactory response to the *kategoria* is one that achieves justice by addressing both the past and the future. By aligning themselves with what is right, these direct statements of right and wrong serve to establish a

foundation for what is right while also suggesting that if the Sister Survivors are right, then those in positions of leadership to whom this letter is addressed are wrong.

This juxtaposition of right and wrong is further developed directly in personal appeals to each board member and functions to reinforce that despite the circumstance of their position, the board members can decide to act for justice. The Sister Survivors began their individual appeals to board of trustees members by stating that “We call on them to stand for what is right by demanding President Engler’s immediate resignation, and removing him if he refuses to resign.”⁴⁵ This statement emphasizes the enactment of leadership through discourse of the Sister Survivors and their decision to call upon these individuals to align with them on the side of right, to support the value of justice. The Sister Survivors took ownership of their purpose by utilizing “we” and by directly stating what they view as a satisfactory response to their call for action. What they believed is right was clearly stated: Engler’s resignation or removal. While the effectiveness of the personal appeal to motivate change in this instance of *kategoria* will be developed further, the direct pleas to do what is right is critical to address.

As discussed, the board of trustees are elected or appointed positions and, as a result, are roles designated by circumstance as opposed to decision. In this instance of rhetorical leadership, the text works to establish the dichotomy of right and wrong. By reiterating this individually to each board of trustees member addressed, the text served as a reminder that despite the circumstance of their position, the board members have the potential of making the decision to enact leadership by aligning with the Sister Survivors and what is right. They are offered the choice of aligning with the value of justice, shifting the hierarchy from the values that Engler represented. In one appeal, the Sister Survivors asserted that “it is never too late to do the right thing,” reinforcing the notion that one can move from circumstance to decision at any time.⁴⁶

Throughout the personal appeals, doing what is right is equated with authority, responsibility, integrity, and safety,⁴⁷ each of which speak to the purported values of university leadership. For instance, one personal appeal directly named these values, underscoring the necessity of each to lead the university into the future: “You still have authority and a responsibility... to do what is necessary to restore integrity and safety to MSU’s campus.”⁴⁸ Highlighting these desirable values reinforces a hierarchy shift as the board is called to not only prioritize but also to enact the values that Engler had abandoned. The rhetorical creation of the dichotomy of right and wrong served to reinforce to the board of trustees that leadership is not necessarily enacted simply because of a position or title, but instead is an active decision to be made by individuals who wish to motivate change and justice for the greater good.

Establishing what is deemed wrong accentuates that aligning with the values considered right is more desirable and works to establish the guilt of the accused. The Sister Survivors’ letter detailed Engler’s transgressions in each paragraph. They contended that Engler utilized “threats” and has “ridiculed, lied about, and shamelessly mocked” anyone who attempted to speak up about abuse or an abusive culture.⁴⁹ The actions described are generally considered wrong so even without explicitly stating right or wrong, the text further underscored this dichotomy by highlighting Engler’s past behavior. These descriptions encourage a value shift by reinforcing that Engler’s perceived values based on his actions do not align with what is right. In addition, the Sister Survivors stated that “President Engler has refused to apologize for his attacks and lies,” which illustrates that not only has he engaged in wrongful conduct, but he was also given an opportunity to speak in self-defense and eschewed that path, further solidifying him on the side of wrong. Justice will not be actualized until Engler’s transgressions have been satisfactorily addressed for the greater good of the university, as well as for the survivors. The

text maintained that Engler had a mindset that is “demeaning and derogatory” as well as “damaging,” advancing the establishment of his guilt and exemplifying his firm standing on the side of wrong.⁵⁰ Each of those words are defined as ways of acting against others, as opposed to for them, and therefore are descriptors that do not align with someone who seeks justice for individuals who have suffered abuse. The text situated wrong through the framework of how Engler treated people versus any work he did for the university. Prioritizing people is the way to serve justice for the university holistically, and the Sister Survivors established in their letter that Engler was not capable of doing that given his past actions. By utilizing their rhetorical leadership to emphasize Engler’s guilt through the detailing of his transgressions, the Sister Survivors bolstered the right and wrong dichotomy evident in this instance of *kategoria* which works to shift value hierarchy and promote change.

The right and wrong dichotomy established in a speech of accusation seeks to move power from those with institutional power to those pursuing justice. It also works to bolster the notion that leadership is a decision as opposed to a circumstance by exposing complicity in wrongdoing. The Sister Survivors linked Engler’s transgressions to the complicity of other institutional leaders with the statement that “they persist in attacking our character, our integrity and our intelligence.”⁵¹ This assertion places others who hold institutional power at MSU as transgressors along with Engler. Further, their attacks on the survivors render them complicit and therefore on the wrong side of justice. The women directly accused the board of trustees of complicity when they claim that each member “who chose President Engler and have refused to stand against his attacks... is complicit in his abusive mindset and in continuing the culture of abuse at MSU.”⁵² By reinforcing their inaction to enforce change, this statement underscored that a position of leadership is a circumstance, but true leadership – like that enacted by the Sister

Survivors – must be a decision. In issuing this public accusation, the Sister Survivors chose to stand for what is right and therefore took the power to determine outcomes as opposed to Engler and other institutional leaders whose alignment with wrong negates their power to serve justice.

Another dichotomy that emerges in this text is ability versus inability. The language utilized within the Sister Survivors' statement distinguishes between the ability of the survivors of abuse to enact leadership and do what is right and Engler's inability to lead and move the university toward justice. This dichotomy is emphasized through clear distinctions, including the use of the word "cannot" to describe Engler and his actions multiple times. For instance: "it is clear to us that he cannot" bring accountability, transparency, and change to MSU,⁵³ which are essential conditions that comprise justice. The word "cannot" denotes an inability to do something as opposed to "will not" which indicates an active choice. Further evidence of this distinction is supported by the claims that the damage Engler has caused "cannot be repaired until he is gone" and "MSU cannot move forward" until Engler is removed from leadership.⁵⁴ If someone cannot fulfill the requirements of their position, that indicates an inability to achieve what is expected of one in that role. Additionally, the emphasis on Engler's "damaging mindset" operates to strengthen his inability to serve justice to survivors of abuse based on the detrimental nature of his beliefs. The reiteration of Engler's mindset, as noted above, serves to bolster the perception that his transgressions are not based on unwillingness but on incapability. The dichotomy of ability and inability frames those in leadership by circumstance as incapable of accomplishing the change required to successfully perform the duties of the position. This dichotomy provides an opportunity for those enacting rhetorical leadership to utilize power to showcase their ability to fill the gaps created by those who hold institutional authority to seek and serve justice.

The dichotomy between ability and inability is bolstered by the language utilized by the Sister Survivors to underscore their ability to make determinations based on their conscious and active choice. Throughout the text, the Sister Survivors utilized the phrase “we chose” multiple times, showcasing their agency and ability to decide to enact leadership through rhetoric, specifically, in this case, *kategoria*. Near the conclusion of the letter, the Sister Survivors contended that their determination for seeing justice achieved “will not cease” until MSU has a new leader.⁵⁵ The promise to persevere in their quest for justice until it is served rhetorically emphasizes that they have the ability to continue to fight for themselves and other survivors of abuse. The first-person language that is pervasive throughout the statement is marked predominantly by active, assertive verbs reflecting the decisions of the Sister Survivors, for example: “we recognize,” “we care,” “we say ‘no’,” and “we stand to protect.”⁵⁶ These statements construct an image of the Sister Survivors as individuals with decision-making ability and power who have the ability to do what Engler has failed to do for MSU – create a safe environment where the culture of abuse is eradicated.

To further juxtapose their ability with Engler’s inability, statements such as “we have made our motivations clear”⁵⁷ operate to expose that the opposite is likely true for Engler who has lied, attacked, and made threats as opposed to working to fix the culture of the university. The following assertions about the past – “We stood against our abuser. We stood against an abusive culture.”⁵⁸ – function to bolster the Sister Survivors’ ability to accomplish justice and change because they have done so in the past and can prevail again. The language highlighted not only illustrates the Sister Survivors’ focus on the past to reinforce guilt but also showcases that they are forward-looking to serve justice. These statements, which underscore their ability, also serve to reiterate Engler’s inability to create change. The dichotomy of ability and inability

that persists throughout the letter supports the notion that the Sister Survivors are enacting rhetorical leadership through a public accusation to illustrate their ability to capably and successfully achieve justice.

The Sister Survivors reinforced leadership as a decision and the necessity of change throughout their accusation statement by developing the idea of clarity. The assertion of clarity operates to bolster the previously detailed dichotomies of right and wrong and ability and inability by rhetorically strengthening the Sister Survivors' position as harbingers of justice. Something that is "clear" is difficult to argue against. For instance, the Sister Survivors stated that "it is clear to us that he cannot" bring the change needed to MSU.⁵⁹ Claims of this type underscore that Engler's removal is the only satisfactory path to justice. By utilizing this dichotomy, the Sister Survivors worked to create an image of Engler and his guilt that is deemed so apparent it leaves the audience unable to dispute it without acknowledging their own complicity. The clarity of the Sister Survivors extends to the superiority of the values with which they align, rendering those values the desirable choice to support. The text declared that "President Engler clearly views sexual abuse survivors as either manipulators out to use people for personal gain (having the same mindset as our abuser), or as themselves manipulated into being used by someone for personal gain (victims yet again)."⁶⁰ This statement of clarity compounds the right and wrong dichotomy by further elaborating on what is deemed wrong and serves to persuade the audience to not only choose the side of right but to see that aligning with Engler is also aligning with the Sister Survivors' abuser. What is unclear in this statement is why Engler views the survivors in this way, but the critical message here is that Engler is wrong and has an inability to support survivors and that those who enable his leadership to persist are complicit. The issue of complicity is addressed directly with the contention that "each member of

the MSU board of trustees who chose President Engler and have [*sic*] refused to stand against his attacks and characterizations of sexual assault survivors is complicit in his abusive mindset and in continuing the culture of abuse at MSU.”⁶¹ This comparison between Engler and the board of trustees functions to motivate board members to align with the more acceptable values in this case and make the choice to no longer be complicit on the side of wrong, moving from circumstance to decision and utilizing their power to enact change. The statements of clarity within this instance of *kategoria* expose that once again the Sister Survivors are on the side of right and are utilizing their rhetorical leadership to achieve justice by influencing the board of trustees to move away from complicity and toward change.

Highlighting what is clear underscores the message of the Sister Survivors by offering an image that not only is difficult to argue against but also so evident, it should have been seen and acted on prior to their letter. Clarity is emphasized here: “On the point, there is no debate: President Engler has failed miserably.”⁶² The Sister Survivors utilized *kategoria* as rhetorical leadership to develop the criteria necessary for an institutional leader and to show that Engler does not meet the requirements. The phrase “no debate” serves a similar function to “clearly” in that it indicates that there is no opposing thought or opinion that will be accepted by the Sister Survivors. If the audience should refute these statements, their complicity is once again revealed. The conclusion of the letter posits that: “President Engler’s actions are clear. Now the Board must be clear. Our actions as survivors have been clear.”⁶³ This reiteration of “clear” operates to enforce that change cannot happen without the board using their power to serve justice.

There were many media reports about Engler’s actions and transgressions, an abusive culture was still being perpetuated at MSU, and Engler’s leadership was not creating the necessary change: this was “clear” and should be easy to perceive and understand. The Sister

Survivors had taken action against their abuser and were working to create a culture at MSU that was safe and protective: this also was laid bare for all to see, as evidenced by their open letter and previous testimonies. In their statement, the board was being called to be “clear” – transparent, unclouded – and move to a leadership based on active decision as opposed to circumstance of position. This dichotomy between what is clear and what is unclear prioritizes values that are deemed more desirable to the Sister Survivors and bolsters the previous dichotomies revealed in the text by underpinning what is right and wrong and who has the ability and inability to act for change and justice.

Development of a Specific Image of Leadership

The next rhetorical tactic uncovered in the Sister Survivors’ open letter which publicly accused Engler of a history of transgressions is the development of a specific image of leadership that dissociates leadership as a circumstance of position or title from the conscious decision to actively lead. The former is a noun – a position that is appointed or elected and holds legitimate power as a result of the title – while the latter is a verb – an active role that is chosen by an individual seeking an end. By breaking apart these two distinct aspects of leadership, it is possible to redefine leadership for the audience and instill the notion that power by position or title alone does not necessarily make an individual a leader. This dissociation of leadership as a decision as opposed to a circumstance functions to shift power from those who hold institutional authority to those who enact rhetorical leadership to motivate change and seek justice. In this text, that dissociation is achieved through the rhetorical construction of a specific image of leadership that builds upon the dichotomies evident in the letter to accentuate Engler’s guilt and the need for organizational change. The image of leadership constructed in the text focuses in part on identifying and enforcing the most desirable and acceptable values for a leader to exhibit

as a way to indict Engler. Forensic rhetoric is marked by its concern with the past and in developing this image of leadership, the Sister Survivors are judging Engler's past behavior and framing it as an unchangeable reality. This rhetorical device of dissociating leadership as a decision from leadership as a circumstance is another way that the Sister Survivors enact rhetorical leadership to shift power and achieve justice.

The primary way in which the Sister Survivors constructed a specific image of leadership is by describing what leadership is *not* by itemizing Engler's wrong actions and bad behavior. As noted, this categorization serves to solidify his past behavior as antithetical to leadership and emphasizes his inability to change. These descriptions are marked by references to desirable values for a leader juxtaposed with Engler's lack of exhibiting and supporting those values. They posited that "President Engler has only reinforced the culture of abuse at MSU," by "creating an unsafe environment on campus."⁶⁴ The word "reinforced" in this instance can suggest that he had the opportunity to encourage or enact change but instead his behavior fortified and preserved the very culture he was appointed to fix. This can underscore his inability to be a leader and the notion that leadership by circumstance should be broken apart from the decision to lead as the title alone does not ensure capability. Engler's past behavior is described throughout the Sister Survivors' letter which further develops the image of what leadership is not. His behavior is described as "subtle threats," "abhorrent," "demeaning and derogatory," and "belligerently abrasive."⁶⁵ Generally, leadership is expected to be motivational and visionary, mentoring and encouraging, to steer a group toward a common goal. The descriptors provided in the Sister Survivors' letter develop an image of what leadership is not and underscore Engler's guilt and inability to lead MSU. They directly contended that Engler's past actions and behavior "is not leadership," which they rhetorically constructed for the audience by the specific image of hostile

leadership.⁶⁶ The Sister Survivors implicitly constructed an image of good leadership through the contrast with Engler's hostile and ineffective leadership. If reinforcing a culture of abuse and creating an unsafe environment is not leadership, then eradicating that culture and fostering a safe environment can be said to be leadership. In detailing Engler's transgressions to create an image of what leadership is not, the Sister Survivors also rhetorically developed a specific image of leadership which illustrates that leadership is not necessarily a condition of circumstance but instead must be an active decision to adhere to what is required of a leader and ultimately what is just.

The Sister Survivors further developed this specific image of leadership by punctuating their statement with discussion about values that tie into the requirements of a leader and align with justice, which is the desired end goal. Including value statements in a text, especially a public accusation, can be persuasive as values offer the audience an opportunity to determine with which values they align or wish to align. By incorporating values into the image of leadership that they have constructed, the Sister Survivors bolstered the other rhetorical tactics they employed to solidify that they are the side of right and Engler is wrong, and to motivate the board of trustees to move from complicity to change. For example, the name they chose to call themselves as signatories of this letter as well as to be referred to publicly in the media – "Sister" – highlights the value of family that can indicate mutual support, safety, love, and comfort. Naming themselves "Sisters" connotes that they feel a familial bond. To align with Engler as opposed to the Sister Survivors could suggest that the board does not value family or the corresponding values and feelings associated with it. The name acts persuasively as an appeal to a specific value to motivate the board members to consider their own families in their future actions.

At the root of this *kategoria* and rhetorical leadership of the Sister Survivors is the end goal of justice, and this value is highlighted directly and indirectly throughout the text. When discussing the future and current survivors who have not yet spoken up, the other “sisters” this group is seeking to protect from Engler, the Sister Survivors stated that they “deserve justice” and need to feel safe “when they demand justice.”⁶⁷ The value of justice lies in the fair treatment of individuals and the Sister Survivors have constructed an image of Engler’s leadership that is the antithesis of fair, particularly toward the survivors of abuse. Justice is more than something to value, it is something that survivors “deserve” and by rhetorically creating this image of leadership and Engler’s inability to act as a leader must, the Sister Survivors underscored the need for change. Value statements can be a persuasive rhetorical tactics for motivating change and accomplishing justice as they encourage the audience to determine their own personal values and how they wish to align.

Additional value statements throughout the text bolstered the persuasiveness of this rhetorical tactic by adding to the specific image of leadership being constructed for the audience to help them determine with which side they wish to align and ultimately motivate justice being served. To dissociate leadership as a noun from leadership as an action, values are utilized to illustrate what a leader is in opposition to Engler’s past behavior. The Sisters Survivors stated that the hope was that Engler “would bring accountability, transparency, and change to MSU,” which helps to craft the image of leadership that is expected for the president of a university.⁶⁸ These values are not necessarily innate to an individual nor are they granted to one by mere circumstance of the position they hold. Accountability, transparency, and change require effort – an active, conscious decision to lead and engage in behavior that takes responsibility, is open, and can navigate new processes and situations. The Sister Survivors underscored this vision of

leadership by asserting that “President Engler has refused to listen” and “President Engler has refused to apologize for his attacks and lies.”⁶⁹ Refusing to listen and to take responsibility directly opposes the values of accountability and transparency, further exemplifying Engler’s inability to lead and developing the image of what leadership is and is not. Constructing a specific image of the values expected to be held by leadership and demonstrating the ways in which Engler violated those expectations serves to dissociate leadership as a circumstance versus a decision and builds the case for Engler’s guilt and the need for change.

The ultimate goal of the Sister Survivors’ letter was justice for the survivors of abuse, and to achieve this, MSU must create a culture of safety which is also a value emphasized throughout the text. Forms of the words safety and protection pepper the letter and are utilized to juxtapose the vision of leadership being created and Engler’s inability to lead. The Sister Survivors stated that their determination will not cease until “MSU has a leadership who creates an environment where no child, student or person fears to speak up.”⁷⁰ An environment that instills fear is typically not one that is also safe. The word “child” in this statement affords an image of one who must be protected, further underscoring the importance of protection and the value of safety. This image of leadership is contradicted by Engler’s behavior: “Our deepest concern is the impact [Engler’s] statements and behaviors will have... in creating an unsafe environment.”⁷¹ This statement reinforces his inability to meet the requirements of a leader as his behavior encourages the opposite environment than what is needed at MSU. Further developing this image of leadership, the Sister Survivors contended that their vision “requires leadership whose statements and behavior engender trust and models exemplary conduct.”⁷² The case made against Engler in this *kategoria* reiterates his inability to create an environment of trust and model that behavior given his guilt based on past actions that has been established. The Sister Survivors,

seeking justice, stated that no organizational change will mean anything “if there is not leadership that creates an environment where survivors feel safe to speak up.”⁷³ Again, this emphasizes the critical nature of the value of safety and its role in this specific image of leadership that is constructed throughout the letter. They continued: “It is our position that MSU cannot move forward and become an institution of integrity and safety until John Engler is no longer President.”⁷⁴ Though it was alluded to throughout the letter and revealed through this analysis, this statement clearly demonstrates that a new leader is the only answer, the only outcome that will satisfy this public accusation. This direct call-to-action supports the contention that leadership is an active choice. A leader must decide to hold the values associated with leadership as simply having a title or being in a position does not grant an individual the conditions of leadership. Breaking apart leadership as a circumstance of position from leading as a conscious decision and aligning leadership with specific values can create an image of leadership that works to persuasively motivate change by inspiring a power shift for justice.

Personal Appeals

Personal appeals directed to the six of eight board of trustees members who remained aligned with Engler – two had already publicly called for his removal⁷⁵ – were included in the Sister Survivors’ *kategoria* and operate as a rhetorical tactic to motivate change and accomplish justice. These appeals which are directed to each board member individually function to create a deeper connection to the case than simply the one based on their appointed or elected role. Specific details contained in the personal appeals work to connect each board of trustees member to the Sister Survivors through emotional association and relatability more than just their current removed position of oversight. The development of connection serves to motivate the board members through the reminder of their own personal situations and the potentiality of

manifesting the resulting behavior or actions in their professional lives. Personal appeals also address individual values situated in the overall framework of values that support the greater good of the university for the future and serve as retribution for the past. This strategy helps to shift value hierarchy to focus on what is most desirable given the current situation. The rhetorical tactic of personal appeals challenges the board of trustees to move from circumstance to decision by recalling that each one is more than just a board member but a human with similarities to the Sister Survivors and vested interests in issues directly linked to this case. The personal appeals bring into focus the parallels between each individual and the Sister Survivors' case to spark empathy, which is the ability or the active choice to understand another, and ultimately motivate action to achieve change and justice.

Each personal appeal is constructed to address specific details that showcase the similarities between the board member and the Sister Survivors' case including issues involving individual position, personal beliefs, health condition, sex, and status. Many of these appeals rely on value arguments to emphasize the connections. As noted, in addition to their oversight role, each board member also holds or has held positions outside of MSU which offer them perspective but also can keep them distanced from the requirements of a leader or the needs of the university. A rhetorical appeal to personal issues can motivate a shift in alliance from Engler to the Sister Survivors as details are described that reveal the connection that exists between board members and the case at hand. For instance, to the singular woman on the board aligned with Engler, the Sister Survivors maintained that "your choice as a woman to stand by in silence while hundreds of female sexual abuse victims are attacked and vilified is appalling."⁷⁶ The focus on biological sex – specifically utilizing "woman" and "female" to enforce this shared experience – in this personal appeal links this board member to the survivors. This statement is

also unique in that it is one of only two times throughout the entire letter that the survivors referred to themselves as “victims,” which operates to not only create connection but to change the frame of the survivors’ experience and elicit empathy, marking this personal appeal an emotional one.

The direct appeal to a board member who was a former National Football League player focused on his ability to “fight hard on the football field” juxtaposed with his “unwillingness to fight over something that matters so much more: the safety of women and children.”⁷⁷

Comparing the skill he has in a professional sport, which also aligns with the Sister Survivors’ experience as competitive gymnasts, to what is expected of a leader off the field, underscores the ability and inability dichotomy discussed previously as well as the value of perseverance. The text further developed the importance of this value by incorporating a metaphor grounded in their shared experience of participating in athletics to promote additional connection and understanding between this board member and the Sister Survivors. They pleaded: “You have six months left in your term. Please don’t lose your willingness to fight hard for what is right at the end of the fourth quarter.”⁷⁸ The metaphor of time serves as a reminder that is not too late to align with the Sister Survivors on the side of right and there is still opportunity to show perseverance in moving from leadership as circumstantial to actively deciding to act for justice.

Another example of a personal appeal grounded in connection was to the trustee undergoing serious health issues. The Sister Survivors acknowledged this and offered condolences but asserted that regardless, they “must also recognize that you still have authority and a responsibility in this situation.”⁷⁹ This statement addresses the legitimate power he holds based on his position as a board member while also reminding him of his responsibility to the university, and ultimately the survivors of abuse. By specifically stating “we know you are

undergoing serious health issues,” the values of personal wellbeing and safety come into focus and aligns this trustee to the Sister Survivors whose personal wellbeing and safety also suffered. This rhetorical connection functions to demonstrate the Sister Survivors’ leadership and their ability to empathize with him in the hopes that that sentiment will be returned, and the board member will actively decide to act for change and justice. Focusing on specific details in each personal appeal operates to form human connection beyond positionality to highlight desirable values, shift power, and move toward needed change.

Women, fighting for others, and health concerns are key issues to the Sister Survivors and central to this case. These personal appeals work to highlight the parallels that the Board of Trustees might have previously overlooked. In addition, these specific details emphasize critical values tied into building the image of leadership and the expected values associated with it. The values of equality, perseverance, and safety are framed within personal connections and grounded in examples that impact the board members directly. These individual distinctions build upon other rhetorical tactics uncovered in the text to shift power, motivate change, and achieve justice by revealing personal connections that work to align the board members with the Sister Survivors as opposed to Engler.

Across the personal appeals there are a variety of values highlighted, in addition to the emphasis on the dichotomy of right and wrong. These rhetorical tactics build upon the others already discussed in this analysis and work collectively to persuasively enact this public accusation, focusing on the unchangeable reality of Engler’s past behavior and how the board of trustees can shift power and serve as change agents for the future of MSU. After calling on the board members to “stand for what is right,” the Sister Survivors posited that “the lack of courage these trustees have displayed to this point is discouraging.”⁸⁰ This reminder is the first of three

about right and wrong throughout the personal appeals, which bolsters the dichotomy strategy detailed above. Courage is considered to be an essential trait for a leader, particularly one who has the ability to navigate change in an organization. The reference to a “lack of courage” serves to further establish the image of leadership created by the Sister Survivors and is also in opposition to the Sister Survivors who, as noted, asserted that they consciously made the choice to stand for what is right despite personal risk. This juxtaposition demonstrates an ability to lead versus leadership simply by title or position. It also can serve to motivate the board members as it offers them the choice of aligning with the value of courage or continuing to be perceived as cowardly.

Another value that is pervasive throughout the personal appeals is that of family. Four of the six personal appeals mentioned children, for instance: “you are aligning yourself with misogyny, and against not only women, but even children” and “protecting John Engler over sexual assault survivors... and over the current students and children who attend and visit your campus – is horrifying.”⁸¹ There are several implications for the mention of children and the emphasis of the value of family. First, the notion of children recalls the need for leaders who value safety and protection, as “children” connotes individuals that are more vulnerable than “adults.” The idea of safety is highlighted by the comparison of protecting Engler – an adult male – over survivors, students, and children, the very audience that a university is charged with keeping safe. The term “children” may also enforce the value of family for any board members who are parents, affording them an additional personal connection to the case and providing supplementary motivation to move to the side of right and enact change.

Integrity, the value of honor and strong principles, was also mentioned in the personal appeals. One trustee is accused of valuing political loyalty over “personal integrity” while

another is indicted for a “lack of moral integrity.”⁸² This offers a choice for the board members to determine if they wish to align with the value of integrity, which is typically a characteristic ascribed to an effective leader, by serving justice. Personal integrity is not the only kind mentioned in these appeals, but also the integrity of MSU. One of the personal appeals included the statement: “We are asking you to do the right thing, to stand against an abusive culture and do what is necessary to restore integrity and safety to MSU’s campus.”⁸³ As Engler’s past behavior has been detailed to illustrate that his actions perpetuate an abusive and unsafe environment, this statement is a reminder that the only way forward for the honor of the university is new leadership. It also serves to align what is right with integrity and safety. Value statements are an effective rhetorical tactic to motivate change as they offer the audience a choice to determine where their values lie. Associating certain values with leadership and crafting the appeals to personally address individuals provides an opportunity to build connections and empathy in an attempt to effect change.

Ultimately, the personal appeals operate to move the board of trustees from complicit to take action by developing an individual connection to the Sister Survivors and the case. These can be effective as they are constructed to inspire a specific emotional link and offer an active choice to the individual. As noted, being appointed or elected to a position does not mean that individual is capable to be a leader and the personal connections addressed in the appeals serve as a reminder of not only that but how it is also possible to decide to shift power to those who have the ability to lead by effecting change. The Sister Survivors reminded one trustee that “it is never too late to do the right thing, and we are asking you to do it now.”⁸⁴ The letter concluded with a similar statement: “Now we are asking you to stand against [an abusive culture] too and lead MSU forward into real change.”⁸⁵ These statements are two of the three within the personal

appeals that position their desire for change and justice as something for which they are “asking.” The distinction of “asking” as opposed to “demanding” underscores the opportunity for choice, as the Sister Survivors are asking them, which indicates that the board members have the agency and ability to decide to move toward change. This subtle nuance in the rhetoric operates to illustrate that while Engler has proven to be incapable of change and his guilt has been established, the Sister Survivors are showing the board of trustees that their circumstance – leadership by position – does not prevent them from making an active decision. Even if they have shown a lack of courage and inaction in the past, it is “never too late” for them to choose to align with right and serve justice for the survivors of abuse.

Conclusion

The Sister Survivors’ open letter issued to the Michigan State University Board of Trustees and published across multiple media outlets is an example of a successful instance of *kategoria* and the genre of forensic rhetoric. In the letter, the Sister Survivors detail John Engler’s transgressions and past behavior, framing them as an unchangeable reality to establish his guilt, and seek justice for survivors of abuse as well as the university as a whole. After analyzing this text through the lens of genre, I revealed the rhetorical strategies of *establishing a clear dichotomy grounded in values, developing a specific image of leadership, and utilizing personal appeals* can be employed in a speech of accusation to shift power and achieve justice. Each of these rhetorical tactics promote the superiority of certain values over others, affording the audience the choice to align with the more desirable values in this situation. The rhetorical tactics build upon each other in the text, strengthening the persuasive power of each strategy as they operate collectively to illustrate certain dichotomies that are grounded in the prioritization of values within the development of a specific image of leadership and the deployment of

personal appeals. The Sister Survivors successfully enacted rhetorical leadership to motivate the board of trustees and shift power from Engler, effect change, and accomplish justice. The rhetorical tactics uncovered in this example of *kategoria* enabled the Sister Survivors to construct leadership as a decision as opposed to a circumstance and shape the necessity of organizational change, shifting the power from those who hold legitimate authority to those seeking justice.

Notes

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Chapter 4: Uber

Scandal marked Travis Kalanick's tenure at Uber, the ride-sharing technology company he co-founded and led for seven years. However, tumult wasn't always the norm at Uber, but the story of the small San Francisco startup that revolutionized its industry and became one of the most valuable companies in the world begins replete with the highs and lows that such companies tend to face.¹ Founded in early 2010, UberCab, as it was originally known, "quickly became a hit among Bay Area techies" who could order a car by sending a text or pressing a button on a mobile phone.² Later that year, after securing funding from a variety of venture capitalists, the company rebranded as simply Uber in an attempt to distance itself from the taxi business.³ Kalanick served as Uber's CEO from December 2010 to June 2017, "turning the ride-hailing company into an unstoppable juggernaut worth nearly \$70 billion during that time," and expanding globally into 70 countries.⁴

Referred to as the "quintessential Silicon Valley start-up story," Uber continued to secure capital from well-known individuals and organizations while expanding domestically across the United States and into international markets.⁵ As funding grew, so did Uber's services, including UberX, UberPool, UberEats, and the now defunct UberRush. In 2015, Uber opened a robotics research center and partnered with Carnegie Mellon University to create a new facility, branded Uber's Advanced Technologies Center, for testing self-driving cars.⁶ Also during this time, the company secured its first acquisition and began exploring partnerships as discussions with Toyota on how the two could work together commenced. In July 2016, Uber announced that it "had completed its two billionth trip, just six months after reaching one billion rides."⁷ Praised for ingeniously harnessing "technology to disrupt 21st century transportation," one Uber investor claimed that Kalanick will "have a lasting impact on the world" with "many pages in the history

books... devoted to the entrepreneur.”⁸ Another investor stated that Kalanick “is a visionary. He has built an enormous business that is changing the way people live.”⁹ In 2017, the public assumption surrounding the company and its potential IPO (initial public offering) was that “Uber is on track for global domination as it becomes a universal transport logistics platform, the digital infrastructure matching demand with supply, not just in taxi rides but deliveries of all sorts.”¹⁰ What began as a tech startup rapidly expanded and revolutionized under Kalanick’s leadership and became a powerhouse that continues to operate and thrive.

Despite being lauded for his vision and innovation, Kalanick’s success at Uber was marred by a series of corporate scandals resulting from a blatant disregard for rules and norms and his proclivity “for risk-taking that pushed Uber beyond the pale, sometimes to the very brink of implosion.”¹¹ In addition to allegations of sexual assault and promoting a toxic work environment, Kalanick “flouted transportation and safety regulations, bucked against entrenched competitors and capitalized on legal loopholes and gray areas to gain a business advantage.”¹² Kalanick’s actions undermined the mission of a reputable, reliable transportation company, and his leadership is often reported to have endangered customers, employees, and investors, the very people whose interests he was to steward.

In this chapter, I argue that through the rhetorical construction of leadership as a conduit for public perception, it is possible to disrupt the expected hierarchy of value systems to successfully effect organizational change at the leadership level. The construction of leadership as a way to manage public perception matters because it uncovers rhetorical strategies that can be utilized to shift the prioritization of certain values over others to promote the viability of an organization for the greater good and to serve justice. Through a genre analysis of a venture capitalist letter credited with impacting leadership change at Uber, I’ve identified the rhetorical

tactics of *value prominence*, *emphasis on public perception*, and *concern for organization over individuals* evident within this text. These tactics have successfully disrupted expected hierarchies to shift power and motivate change in an organization. I will elucidate these strategies and how they operate in *kategoria* as a tool for rhetorical leadership to inform future attempts at accusation, particularly for individuals who hold less power than the accused. Demonstrating that the framing of leadership as a conduit for public perception can shift value hierarchy and disrupt power systems is key to illustrating that accusation can be employed as a form of rhetorical leadership capable of effecting organizational change and serving justice.

Moving forward, I will explicate the ways in which the investors prioritized public perception throughout their statement to promote leadership change for the greater good of Uber. Their accusation letter was issued as an instance of leadership through discourse to establish Kalanick's guilt for past actions and demonstrate that change was needed to achieve justice for the organization as a whole. Value arguments play a prominent role in the construction of this instance of *kategoria*, and the text focuses on shifting expectations of desired values based on this specific situation. In so doing, the letter illustrates that accusation can be employed as a form of rhetorical leadership by individuals with varying degrees of power to disrupt expectations and motivate change. I will begin by providing contextual background of Uber and Kalanick and the transgressions that marked the need for change. Next, I will discuss the traditional resistance to change pervasive across start-up organizations as well as cultural considerations of the industry that underpin the significance of this investor letter to influence change at Uber. Then, I will conduct a genre analysis to uncover and elucidate the rhetorical tactics that framed leadership as a conduit for public perception, successfully shifting value hierarchy expectations to motivate organizational change and inform considerations of *kategoria* as a form of rhetorical leadership.

The Need for and Resistance to Change at Start-ups

Allegations of bad behavior permeated the organization, from both internal and external sources. While Kalanick was not directly implicated in each accusation leveled at Uber, his leadership is said to have fostered a culture where questionable actions went unpunished and were often encouraged. The scandals at Uber ran the gamut, with countless complaints and several high-profile cases emerging during Kalanick's tenure. The *Guardian* reported that following an investigation led by media outlets, "Uber revealed there had been 170 customer reports (by English-speaking users) with a 'legitimate claim of sexual assault' between December 2012 and August 2015," and "32 London drivers had been accused of assault between 2015 and 2016."¹³ Compounding the troubles surrounding the drivers at Uber, there were multiple disputes over their role as employee or contractor and lawsuits over how drivers were to be paid, which led to investigations by the Federal Trade Commission.¹⁴ In January 2017, "Uber agreed to pay \$20 million to the US government" as a result of misleading drivers about potential earnings."¹⁵ A bombshell report from the *New York Times* detailed "one of the greatest behavioral experiments" rife with "psychological tricks" that Uber utilized to keep its drivers on the road.¹⁶ Investors and outside organizations took issue with Uber as well. Both Apple and Google have been named as accusers of Uber, with Google suing the company for "intellectual property theft" after alleging Uber used "stolen technology to advance its own autonomous-car development."¹⁷ During the seven years that Kalanick led Uber, these types of allegations were the norm and his reported attitude was to encourage behavior that could propel Uber and turn a blind eye when the organization received pushback. Under Kalanick's leadership, persistent accusations piled up and Uber's organizational culture quickly became unhealthy and uncomfortable.

Some maintain that the legacy of Uber's one-time chief executive is the toxic and sexist culture he fostered. One media outlet reported that "Uber will likely be talked about for years to come... as a cautionary tale, the misshapen unicorn that embodied toxic macho start-up culture," at the center of which stands "the brash, pugnacious persona" of Kalanick.¹⁸ Susan Fowler, the former Uber engineer who exposed a pattern of questionable behavior at the organization in her open statement published in early 2017, believed the culture of workplace bullying originated from the top, specifically with Kalanick, and became "systemic."¹⁹ The *New York Times* exposed Uber's "aggressive, unrestrained workplace culture" in a report about employees doing cocaine during a corporate retreat and the acceptance of "groping... female employees."²⁰ When examining the role leadership plays in cultivating an organizational culture, these reports indicate that Kalanick failed. "The very best entrepreneurs must be skilled at building not just a product or service, but also an internal culture in aid of that product or service," according to sources familiar with start-up culture and sustaining a viable organization.²¹ However, with Kalanick at the helm, allegations within Uber of a toxic, sexist culture led to an independent investigation of the company in early 2017 by former U.S. attorney general Eric Holder and his law firm.²²

There is evidence that the culture propagated inside of Uber correlates with norms of start-up culture more broadly. Transportation expert Hubert Horan analyzed the ride-sharing company's rise and noted that "Uber's growth to date is entirely explained by its willingness to engage in predatory competition funded by Silicon Valley billionaires pursuing industry dominance."²³ One of Kalanick's own mentors, the start-up entrepreneur turned venture capitalist, Mark Cuban, asserted that: "Travis's biggest strength is that he will run through a wall to accomplish his goals. Travis's biggest weakness is that he will run through a wall to accomplish his goals."²⁴ Combining Kalanick's proven tendencies with the very nature of start-up culture was a combustible proposition

from the get-go. According to one branding expert, “Start-up culture is especially susceptible to toxicity because of the high-pressure nature of the environment.”²⁵ One sign of a toxic culture in a start-up is that failure is not only discouraged but punished. Kalanick’s proclivity to “win at whatever he puts his mind to and at whatever cost” nurtured this toxic culture that accepts nothing less than success, particularly if projected onto employees.²⁶ Another characteristic of a toxic start-up culture is a vagueness of expectations and parameters. While it holds that “there’s a lot of groundwork to cover when building start-ups from the ground up,” there is still a need to draw lines.²⁷ Employees look to their leaders as examples and “Kalanick gleefully bent and broke rules in city after city, upending the industry as he went.”²⁸ The *New York Times* reinforces that “a blindness to boundaries is not uncommon for Silicon Valley entrepreneurs,” but for Kalanick that led to “a pattern of repeatedly going too far.”²⁹ As business was booming, culture was tanking, and Kalanick did not exhibit the leadership characteristics to right the sinking ship that was Uber.

In February 2017, after years of complaints and accusations, “the company was pummeled by a seemingly never-ending barrage of bad news, with a new crisis almost every day,”³⁰ leading up to Kalanick’s resignation in June of that year. The results of an internal independent investigation led by former US attorney general Eric Holder into Uber’s workplace culture “found 215 claims from employees of discrimination and sexual harassment,” and resulted in an organizationally self-disclosed 20 firings.³¹ This moment was building though: “it was only 14 months earlier that (Arianna) Huffington had joined, in April 2016, with the distinction of being the only female on the board of directors” of Uber.³² The *Guardian* reported that:

At that point, Uber’s short history was marred by a long list of tech-bro sins: an executive had suggested digging up dirt on a reporter critical of the company; it was revealed the company had technology that could track users’ locations; and Kalanick had responded to

a reporter's joke about his increasing desirability with women by saying: "Yeah, we call that Boob-er."³³

Although she was brought on as a "friend" and remained a strong advocate of his talents, Arianna Huffington became vocal for the removal of Kalanick. She repeatedly claimed she supported him and that she believed the company could "fundamentally change" its culture with Kalanick in his leadership role.³⁴ In contrast, she also is reported to have been adamant about ushering in a new culture at Uber and rehabilitating the brand by bringing more women on to the board and promising "no more brilliant jerks" at Uber.³⁵ Her conflicted opinion was one of a multitude of voices culminating in a time of turmoil for Kalanick, though after several attempts calling for change and justice, one particular plea spoke louder to the once-successful start-up entrepreneur.

Similar to many organizations, there was a resistance to change evident at Uber during Kalanick's tenure as chief executive. In several of the statements issued to and about Kalanick over the years, this resistance was noted. In an open statement issued in February 2017 by Mitch and Freeda Kapur, Uber investors since 2010, the overarching message was the need for change that had not yet been realized within the organization. They stated: "We are disappointed to see that Uber has selected a team of insiders to investigate its destructive culture and make recommendations for change. To us, this decision is yet another example of Uber's continued unwillingness to be open, transparent, and direct."³⁶ The early investors lamented that their own offers to serve as resources for change management had gone largely ignored by Kalanick and despite "countless opportunities to do the right thing," Uber was constantly quick to return to "aggressive business as usual."³⁷ A similar sentiment was expressed months later in a June 20, 2017 letter that highlighted venture capitalists' "profound concerns" about Uber's "willingness to fully embrace the changes that are needed."³⁸ This letter also suggested that, to its detriment,

“Uber has shown an unwillingness to hire and retain experienced individuals.”³⁹ Individuals close to the organization witnessed the resistance to change that marked Kalanick’s time at Uber and, through multiple instances of *kategoria*, attempted to utilize rhetorical leadership to effect change.

The resistance to change manifested in a variety of behaviors and specific actions during Kalanick’s administration. Two specific examples emerge as evidence to support a chronic resistance to change at Uber, promulgated by Kalanick himself. In 2014, Kalanick’s second-in-command “notoriously suggested that the company could gather compromising information” about a technology journalist.⁴⁰ Despite this transgression being widely reported, the executive was not removed or reprimanded, suggesting that such tactics were accepted at Uber and that change was not likely to happen even when misdeeds were proven and public. In another instance, a woman was raped by an Uber driver in India, and Kalanick is reported to have had a senior executive obtain the woman’s medical records. According to media reports, “Kalanick was convinced the rape was staged as part of a plan to discredit Uber by its main Indian rival Ola.”⁴¹ This suggests that Kalanick was more willing to resort to illegal means to maintain the image and competitive edge of Uber than to seek a path of change by addressing the rape allegation directly. Kalanick knew that change was needed, despite his resistance to it, as evidenced by a statement to employees that was made public in which he asserted: “... the criticism we’ve received is a stark reminder that I must fundamentally change as a leader and grow up.”⁴² Yet timelines of scandals at Uber and Kalanick’s own behaviors illustrate that it was still months before the leader took any real action in an effort to change – personally or organizationally.

Venture Capitalists’ Call for Change

During his time with Uber, myriad stakeholders leveled rhetorical attempts at Kalanick for various alleged transgressions. Former Uber engineer Susan Fowler's blog post in February 2017 detailing sexual harassment and gender bias at Uber is credited with being the first in a long line of statements of *kategoria* against the company and its leadership.⁴³ Not long after Fowler's accusations were made public, Uber investors began to speak out about observations of the organization's culture under Kalanick. In the previously mentioned open letter to the Uber board as a result of the "toxic patterns we have observed," the Kapors stated: "We are speaking up now because we are disappointed and frustrated... it is now up to us to call out the inherent conflicts of interest in [Uber's] current path."⁴⁴ Though the calls for change continued to build, it was a letter delivered months later that made concrete impact. According to *Fortune*: "On June 20, 2017, two venture capitalists arrived at the Ritz-Carlton hotel in Chicago to hand-deliver a letter to Travis Kalanick. The memo helped convince the Uber Technologies co-founder to step down as chief executive officer."⁴⁵ Though the names of the two venture capitalists who delivered the letter have not been released, the text does identify a number of investor groups that supported the statement. This statement, said to have given "Uber CEO Travis Kalanick a kick toward the door," was endorsed by Benchmark, First Round Capital, Menlo Ventures, Lowercase Capital, and Fidelity Investments, each of which had an interest in the long-term viability of the organization.⁴⁶ This text was published widely after a judge ruled that evidence leading up to Kalanick's removal from Uber should not be kept from the public.⁴⁷ Examining this statement of accusation that is credited with effecting organizational change allows me to identify the ways in which rhetorical leadership was enacted in this case to seek and serve justice.

As a generic form of forensic rhetoric, the venture capitalist letter features rhetorical elements that operate to establish guilt for past actions and assert a specified call to action that will satisfy the accusers and serve justice. Past actions such as “discrimination, harassment, and retaliation” are addressed and deemed to be “enormously troubling.”⁴⁸ Kalanick is not directly named as the perpetrator of those transgressions but his ability to lead the organization into and beyond the change required to ensure a sustainable future for Uber is questioned in the text. This underscores his guilt via complacency about the wrongdoing of the organization, in addition to other “serious and unresolved” issues that have gone unchecked under Kalanick’s leadership.⁴⁹ The text constitutes Kalanick as the appropriate rhetorical audience to endorse the called-for change. The letter is addressed to “Travis,” which acknowledges the authority he holds to enact leadership change and justice for the greater good of the organization. Justice is outlined in four steps, including first and foremost Kalanick’s immediate and permanent resignation as CEO.⁵⁰ The desired end is contingent on leadership change, as the other three steps cannot proceed without Kalanick’s removal as leader of Uber. The investors deployed *kategoria* as a form of rhetorical leadership to establish guilt based on past actions and advance a satisfactory end to serve justice by prioritizing desirable and acceptable values based on the circumstances and for the greater organizational good.

Accusation as Rhetorical Leadership to Disrupt Expected Hierarchy

The purpose of the statement delivered to Travis Kalanick by the venture capitalists was to effect organizational change at the leadership level of Uber in order to repair public perception of the ride-hailing company and remedy an internal toxic culture. By utilizing rhetorical leadership through *kategoria*, the venture capitalists worked to serve justice for external investors and stakeholders as well as employees by rehabilitating Uber as a brand with new

leadership. The desired outcome of this statement is clearly and directly asserted: “The company must change at its core.”⁵¹ In the letter, the venture capitalists detailed the “concrete steps,” including an immediate leadership transformation, that they maintained were necessary to enhance “leadership and culture” at Uber while also allowing the company to succeed operationally and reputationally.⁵² This example of *kategoria* as a form of rhetorical leadership calls for change and justice by constructing leadership as a medium of public perception and seeks to shift power to those who exhibit concern for the well-being of the organization. As discussed, I argue that through the rhetorical construction of leadership as a conduit for public perception, it is possible to disrupt the expected hierarchy of value systems to successfully effect organizational change at the leadership level. As a generic form of forensic rhetoric, speeches of accusation look at past actions, determine guilt, and seek justice. By analyzing this letter through the lens of genre, I have uncovered three rhetorical strategies that can be utilized in accusation by individuals seeking justice to influence organizational change. The rhetorical strategies of *value prominence*, *emphasis on public perception*, and *concern for organization over individuals* revealed within this text can disrupt expected hierarchies to shift power and motivate change in an organization. This examination will demonstrate the ways in which these strategies enacted in *kategoria* can be a form of rhetorical leadership that successfully disrupts power and value hierarchies to seek justice at the leadership level.

Value Prominence

Throughout the venture capitalists’ letter, values were prominently featured and function not only as a way to shape expectations for public perception but also to establish which values should align with leadership. The text reiterated the desired values of the investors who endorsed this letter and were seeking change, which appeals to the audience in a way that motivates

alignment based on individual value hierarchy. The contrast between the values suggested by the venture capitalists and the values evident at Uber serves to offer a choice, and the framing of values makes the choice clear for any individual who believes in justice to serve the greater good. The hierarchy of values presented does not deny that multiple values can be desirable but instead positions one as more acceptable in a given situation. In this text, the appeal to values serves to illustrate the divergent value systems held by Kalanick and those calling for organizational change. In this way, values can rhetorically shape what justice means and the form it takes by emphasizing values that promote fairness, equity, integrity, and morality as the desired and necessary path for an organization to thrive. The values that are prominently featured in the text underscore both what Uber should be but is not and what the investors who are utilizing rhetorical leadership to disrupt power for change and seek justice represent.

By bringing the values that Uber does and does not exhibit to light in this letter, the investors worked to shift power by demonstrating that they recognized that there needs to be a value shift at the organization for its sustained success. Through their rhetorical leadership in publicly stating the desired values and the ones that must change, they are disrupting expectations of who knows an organization best. If they have to call this out to Kalanick, then his leadership must not be as lucid as theirs to realize such divergent values between public perception of Uber and a desirable, necessary value system for a successful organization. Twice in the text, the investors noted the importance of the values of transparency and social responsibility. They asserted: “We believe that the cultural values of Uber need to be transformed to embrace transparency, diversity and social responsibility.”⁵³ To transform something is to change it completely so that it begins anew, and this statement functions to illustrate that values of transparency, diversity, and social responsibility would be revolutionary

for Uber. Many of the transgressions attributed to Kalanick and Uber are in direct contrast to these values, as the misdeeds have typically been irresponsible and hurtful as well as ignored and covered up. These values are reinforced again later in the text, as the venture capitalists maintained that Uber cannot play a “positive role” in communities until “a new level of trust, social responsibility and transparency” is achieved.⁵⁴ By connecting these values to a “positive” role, the text rhetorically links trust, social responsibility, and transparency to desirable characteristics for an organization.

The text also suggested values that future board members should hold as the organization transforms. The venture capitalists recommended that board seats should be filled with “truly independent directors” who are “experienced, unbiased, and come from diverse backgrounds.”⁵⁵ Again the value of diversity is emphasized, as that would signify a cultural shift for Uber and a step toward inclusivity. By directly highlighting the values mentioned above that are needed for Uber to move forward, the text also indirectly emphasized that the organization had not exhibited those values in the past. The rhetorical suggestion of what the organization needs to be operates to imply that the investors do hold those values, given that they are the ones who can clearly see the change that must happen for Uber to transform and remain viable.

Not all references to the cultural shift necessary at Uber for transformation and sustainability directly mentioned values, but instead some allowed the audience to make their own value assumptions. For instance, the venture capitalists noted that “among the enormously troubling developments that have recently come to light are the issues of discrimination, harassment, and retaliation.”⁵⁶ These three issues are described as “troubling,” which indicates that those behaviors must change and do not denote values held by those presenting this statement. If discrimination, harassment, and retaliation must change, this statement rhetorically

operates to suggest that the value opposite of each is what is desirable for the organization: inclusivity, respect, and forgiveness. The authors emphasized the value of respect in the text, as the venture capitalists noted a lack of respect evident currently within the organization. The text addressed “allegations about the behavior of Uber’s senior executives in connection with the India rape incident.”⁵⁷ As mentioned previously, it was reported that this incident was mishandled internally, even ignored, by Kalanick. Disregarding rape allegations could connote a lack of respect for human life, women, honesty, and common decency, among others, on the part of Kalanick and Uber holistically. This apparent lack of the value of respect is detrimental to Uber as the text asserted that “transformation... is necessary for Uber to succeed... as a respected member of the community.”⁵⁸ This statement indicates that respect is a value that Uber must first exhibit publicly in order for it to be restored from the public. The values both directly stated and alluded to in the text connect to justice being sought through a power shift that the investors, who recognize and hold these desirable values, are enacting rhetorical leadership to accomplish.

By issuing this statement, the investors were indicating their value system and attempting to rhetorically showcase that those values align with the direction in which Uber should be heading. For instance, the assertion in the text: “We all believe in Uber’s mission.” Specifically naming the mission as “Uber’s” illustrates that the investors have respect for Uber but that they recognize public perception is impacted under Kalanick’s leadership, which must be removed from the organization. This distinction may not be recognized widely and the value system of the investors compelled them to bring this to light, demonstrating their commitment to the viability and greater good of Uber above any individual. This ranking of organization over individual will be further developed in this chapter and demonstrates a disruption in the expected hierarchy of

values, which typically prioritizes people over companies. The investors utilized this *kategoria* against Kalanick as rhetorical leadership to underpin their respect for Uber and as motivation to shift the values exhibited by the organization to ones that align with the desirable values they themselves hold to ultimately bolster public perception.

The concept of public perception is emphasized throughout the venture capitalists' text and is employed to underscore the value prominence featured in their call for organizational change at the leadership level. According to the letter, "The public perception is that Uber fundamentally lacks ethical and moral values,"⁵⁹ which the investors can recognize due to their own ethical and moral values. This perception of lack also indicates that ethical and moral values are desirable and align with the side of justice, given that the investors have identified that this is an area of necessary change for Uber. The necessity of the organization shifting to these particular values is reinforced through the declaration that a new leader must have "the ability to establish the ethical, values-based culture Uber needs to move forward."⁶⁰ This reinforcement operates in several ways. First, it emphasizes that Uber is currently not a values-based organization, at least not the desirable values that the investors are advancing through this instance of rhetorical leadership. Next, stating that a new leader must have this ability serves to suggest that Kalanick does not have that ability and therefore is NOT capable to lead Uber into the future. Finally, the "move forward" underscores the stagnancy of Uber in its current state. Tying values into public perception serves to further indict Kalanick and his inability to foster the necessary culture change that the venture capitalists are laying bare in this *kategoria*.

The dire need for change within Uber that will serve justice, heal the organization, and secure its place sustainably in the future is further stressed by absolute statements relating to a holistic shift in values. The overarching call to action in this text is summed up in the following

assertion: “The company must change at its core.”⁶¹ Value systems are typically embedded in individuals – and organizations run by individuals – socially and culturally, but this statement reminds the audience that value systems are capable of change. However, as this declaration suggested with the word “core,” it is the type of change that requires a tangible, seismic shift to achieve – such as new leadership. It is also a non-negotiable change as evidenced by the word “must,” which is absolute. This need for concrete change is reiterated in the statement that “Uber’s full value for all its stakeholders cannot be realized unless” Uber adopts “values that transcend the negative business practices and culture of the past.”⁶² In this statement, two different definitions of the word value are evident. This exemplifies the need for a shift in cultural values such as trust and respect to ensure the viability of the organization in the long-term by securing its bottom-line value. Further, the word “cannot” is absolute, again emphasizing the imperative nature of the investors’ claim. “Full” value suggests that Uber will continue to suffer and not be as robust as it could be without realizing change. Incorporating “all stakeholders” speaks to equity and fairness, and the justice that the venture capitalists are seeking for “all,” another absolute. The phrase “transcend the past” makes it clear that Uber has previously rejected desirable values and that tendency must be overcome to move into the future. The word “transcend” further indicates a core change, a concrete removal and renovation, which can be achieved for Uber through the justice of a leadership change. The use of absolutes can work to shift the power from Kalanick, who holds legitimate power, to the investors who are enacting rhetorical leadership through accusation by illustrating their understanding of the situation and the need for change and justice for the betterment of the organization. Value prominence demonstrates the divergent value systems between those seeking justice and the accused whose guilt is being established. Highlighting values serves to offer the audience a

choice of aligning with desirable values to enact change and justice, ultimately working to shift power through the rhetorical leadership of *kategoria*.

Emphasis on Public Perception

The values of an organization have a direct impact on public opinion and the text built on value prominence with an emphasis on public perception. By emphasizing the importance of public perception, the letter once again disrupted the expected hierarchy by prioritizing perception over reality. Reality, or concrete facts, is typically given more credit in an argumentative hierarchy⁶³ but the text flips this to spotlight perception importance. In matters of leadership and organizations, however, the concept that reality and perception are two separate notions can be dissociated, as perception IS often considered the reality of stakeholders and can significantly impact public opinion. By underscoring the damaged public perception of Uber, the text reinforced the necessity of change for purposes of public opinion. Even if what the venture capitalists advanced is not Kalanick's reality, public perception is hindering the success of Uber and therefore change is necessary.

Another way that the rhetorical strategy of emphasis on public perception operates in this text is to reinforce that other stakeholders, including customers and employees, share this perspective and desire for change and justice. Stressing the importance of public opinion removes the primary onus from the investors, and the idea that what is asserted in the text is solely the public's perception can help the investors stay aligned with the organization beyond any organizational change enacted. Focusing on cultural values at Uber to establish a need for change opens the door for the investors to demonstrate that public perception of the organization is damaged and reinforces the need for change. The text engaged value argument to prioritize the values that are more desirable to the public and move the organization toward those values that

will serve the greater good and lead to future sustainability for Uber. Through utilizing *kategoria* as rhetorical leadership, the venture capitalists introduced the importance of public perception as another tactic to disrupt the expected hierarchy to shift power, seek justice, and motivate change.

In the text, the venture capitalists repeatedly noted that transformation is possible, but the public perception of the organization must be acknowledged and addressed. The text directly asserted: “The public perception is that Uber fundamentally lacks ethical and moral values,” rhetorically linking values with public perception.⁶⁴ Organizational values must support “growth and bottom line” alongside the culture of Uber, as noted in the text, which rhetorically serves to balance public perception with stakeholder needs. This balance operates to underpin the investors’ interest in reviving public perception for the sake of the organization’s future as well as show that both aspects of the business – Kalanick’s reality of bottom line and public perception of Uber – are vital for leadership to consider and foster. Leadership and culture are tied together with regard to public opinion, which reinforces the importance of perception. The letter declared that “the company must take certain concrete steps to enhance its leadership and culture,”⁶⁵ not one or the other, but both in tandem as they cannot be separated when it comes to public perception. This statement indicated that there is specific action that the investors can recognize that Kalanick had not or could not as the change had not been implemented yet, which works to shift power from the leader who is not capable to those utilizing rhetorical leadership to illustrate their ability to motivate change.

The venture capitalists posited that “Uber has a clear opportunity to engage positively with its employees, drivers and customers to change the company, correct this perception and achieve Uber’s full potential.”⁶⁶ This statement reinforced the rhetorical leadership of the investors through the indictment of Kalanick as not able to recognize, much less seize, the

“clear” or apparent opportunity for justice and change. The phrase “engage positively” indicates that the opposite is currently true and therefore positivity equals a cultural change. As leadership and culture are linked, a leadership change would directly impact organizational culture, which would affect public perception. Transformation is possible, according to the text, but only with a cultural shift in the form of tangible organizational change such as the removal of Kalanick as head of Uber. The investors utilized rhetorical leadership to illustrate that through *kategoria* and an emphasis on the impact of public perception, a shift in leadership is possible and can effect change in the organization.

Public perception is created by an awareness of the organization that is communicated by both internal and external sources; by drawing attention to this, the investors showcased their recognition of its importance. Phrases indicating that the public is aware of the problems that Uber faces permeated the investor letter. The venture capitalists stated that “troubling developments... have come to light” and that there are “publicly reported allegations.”⁶⁷ These statements demonstrate that no matter what Uber perceives as reality, public perception is shaped by what is reported externally – by the media or stakeholders – and that the organization’s transgressions are being revealed regardless of what Kalanick attempts to cover up or the lack of transparency exhibited by the organization. This reinforcement of the importance of public perception further disrupts the expected hierarchy to further establish Kalanick’s guilt and shift power to the investors who are utilizing rhetorical leadership to effect change. The problematic nature of Uber’s current public perception is complicated by the repeated notion that the organization has yet to reach its “full potential.”⁶⁸ Several times in the text, it is suggested that Uber can only reach its “full potential” through change. The reiteration of “full” indicates that the existing public perception is that Uber is only meeting partial, if any, potential. The text also

suggested that “Uber’s full value for all stakeholders” cannot be realized until the organization overcomes and moves beyond its current public perception.⁶⁹ This persistent emphasis on “full” indicates a void that Kalanick has failed to fill but that the investors are attempting to rectify not only for the organization itself but also to serve justice for “all stakeholders,” and that they have the power to change what Kalanick has not.

While the current public perception is not favorable for Uber, the reality does exist that the organization revolutionized its industry, and this is utilized in the text to further emphasize the importance of recognizing public perception. The investors acknowledged that the company has “transformed the world’s idea of transportation,” but that positive public perception is tempered by the following statement which asserts that “a series of revelations, however, continues to affect Uber’s business.”⁷⁰ The “however” indicates a shift in perception, from the positive to the negative, and “continues” suggests that this perception of Uber has been building and will persist without concrete change and justice for stakeholders. This move from a positive perception to a negative public opinion, rhetorically signified by the “however,” further supports the contention that perception is prioritized over reality in this text, which disrupts expectations and motivates change. The reality is that Uber “transformed the world’s idea of transportation,” but it is also a reality that Uber’s business is being affected negatively by its public perception. This struggle is highlighted rhetorically to shift power from Kalanick, who is failing as a leader, to the investors who seek to transform the organization. This statement also illustrates that Uber as an organization does have the ability to transform, but now transformation must focus on showcasing Uber “as a respected member of the community.”⁷¹ Kalanick’s reality is his ability to innovate technology and now the need is a focus on public opinion and the capability of the organization to “engage positively with ... employees, drivers and customers” to correct the

current public perception.⁷² It is those groups whose perception is now reality and Uber must enact leadership that can transform not just in a business capacity but in the realm of public opinion, and the venture capitalists are poised to lead this power shift and achieve justice.

The emphasis on public perception evident in the text operates to create an urgency and necessity for tangible change upon which action must be taken. The text warned that if public perception is not addressed “Uber’s operations and reputation will continue to erode, to the detriment of the company and all of its stakeholders,” including Kalanick.⁷³ This statement functions to marry Kalanick’s strength and reality – the operations of the organization – with public opinion, which is the reality of the stakeholders as manifested by their perception of Uber. By reiterating that public perception affects not just Uber but the individuals, including Kalanick, who are associated with the organization, the text appealed to those who wish to salvage public opinion of this organization that revolutionized the transportation industry. Through their rhetorical leadership in the form of *kategoria*, the investors stressed that public perception will only be revitalized through action. In back-to-back paragraphs they repeated almost verbatim: “the company must immediately take concrete steps” and “the company must take certain concrete steps.”⁷⁴ The urgency and necessity are conveyed through the imperative of “must” as well as the insistence of “immediately.” “Concrete steps” indicates tangible action that will operate to counter the public perception which is prioritized over Kalanick’s current situation. The emphasis on public perception and its importance to the future of the organization is demonstrated through the rhetorical leadership of the investors, in this instance via a statement of accusation designed to establish not only Kalanick’s guilt for creating and fostering the current culture at Uber but also his inability to move the organization into a future it needs to realize to succeed. This prioritizing of public perception over reality disrupts the expected hierarchy to

rhetorically accentuate the necessity and urgency of transformation which can only be realized through a shift in power from Kalanick to those who seek justice through leadership change.

Concern for the Organization over Individuals

Continuing to build on value prominence and an emphasis on public perception, the text reveals an overarching concern for the organization, prioritizing it over individuals, in particular Kalanick. While the text does illustrate that the investors have compassion for Kalanick, it is clear that their real concern lies with the future of Uber as a whole. The text rhetorically separates concern for the organization from concern for the individual, which disrupts the expected hierarchy in a way that shifts power from the individual, Kalanick, to enact leadership change. Needs of individuals are typically prioritized over needs of an organization, but much like the emphasis on public perception, this *kategoria* is being utilized as a form of rhetorical leadership to flip expectations and establish the guilt of Kalanick in a way that showcases that investors have the best interests of Uber in mind as they work to enact change and accomplish justice. The concern for the organization that is rhetorically uncovered in this text also works to remove guilt from Uber itself to land it solely on Kalanick so the organization can transform its value system and public perception, and so the investors can remain aligned with Uber as they seek to move it into the future. The disruption of this expected hierarchy underscores the allegiance of the investors and motivates a power shift as they recognize the changes that must occur within Uber for it to succeed as an organization.

The text began to establish the priority of organization over individual by contrasting the investors' compassion for Kalanick with their concern for the viability of the organization. This assessment illustrates that while the venture capitalists recognize the reality of Kalanick's contributions, their interest lies with the overall health and sustainability of Uber. One way in

which the organization is prioritized over the individual is the rhetorical dissociation of Kalanick from the organization he founded. This dissociation creates an identity and future for Uber independent of and unfettered by Kalanick. The investors declared that they were grateful for Kalanick's "vision and tireless efforts over the past eight years."⁷⁵ Through this statement, they appealed to Kalanick's reality within the organization but "the past" indicates that what he's done is no longer relevant, especially given persistent allegations and damaged public perception. The investors moved to rhetorically shift power from Kalanick by establishing their own credibility and further indict Kalanick through expressions of concern for the organization that take precedence over compassion for the embattled leader. Before they asserted their call to action for core change, the venture capitalists addressed their own investment in Uber and quantified it, which establishes not only credibility but also the crucial nature of the organization's best interest as the statement underscores that Kalanick is not the only individual at stake in Uber's erosion. The text stated that the investors represent "approximately 40% of Uber's voting shares and 28% of Uber's overall stock."⁷⁶ Additional evidence that the investors were rhetorically establishing their role as stewards of the organization appears in their insistence that they "believe in Uber's mission" and "remain fully supportive of Uber's mission."⁷⁷ The emphasis on the fact that it is "Uber's mission" they champion suggests that the opposite also holds true: the investors do not believe in Kalanick's mission nor his ability to implement the necessary changes to fulfill the organizational mission. Prioritizing the organization over the individual through concern for its viability rhetorically shifts the expected hierarchy and illustrates that the needs of the organization take precedence over the individual, especially one who does not serve in the best interest of the organization. This concern for the organization

appeals to the need for change in power to those who can guide Uber into the future by prioritizing its well-being and its mission.

Concern for the organization can illuminate the specifics of necessary change while also demonstrating the inability of an individual to foster and lead the needed transformation. This concern for organization over individual reinforces the investors' association with Uber and their desire for change for the overall good. The text maintained that "new leadership... will allow Uber to begin the critical process of healing and rebuilding."⁷⁸ This statement operates in several ways. First, it reiterates that this process cannot happen under the current system, but rather only specifically through "new" leadership. Next, it suggests that this process is "critical," underscoring its necessity and again emphasizing the investors' concern for the success of the organization. Finally, it assigns typically human processes to an organization; healing, in particular, is more often associated with an individual and the use of this word to describe what Uber needs highlights concern for the organization in a personal way. Additionally, the venture capitalists declared: "We need a trusted, experienced, and energetic new CEO who can help Uber navigate through its many current issues."⁷⁹ This statement prioritizes the needs of the organization over Kalanick's, the individual. Currently, the individual is holding Uber back from achieving its "full potential," as noted in the discussion of public perception. Trust, experience, and energy are desirable values for the organization as it moves into the future and are germane to the greater good of Uber. These leadership values are prioritized over the values that Kalanick had exhibited – or lacked – in the given situation. "Revitalized" leadership is also the goal – this word, as well as the suggestion that a new CEO should be "energetic" can indicate that Kalanick is tired and worn out, and the venture capitalists' compassion for him is evidenced through the suggestion of a "permanent" rest from this role. While concern for him as an individual is

alluded to, concern for Uber takes precedence since organizational changes are for the greater good of all stakeholders. The investors directly posited that Kalanick needs “to immediately and permanently resign as CEO and transition this leadership role to capable hands.”⁸⁰ This statement makes the urgency clear that the organization needs revitalization to succeed and remain viable and expresses concern for Uber by the investors who are prioritizing its interests over those of Kalanick’s. “Capable” hands will help it heal and rebuild as opposed to Kalanick’s incapable hands. Uber needs help, and the investors’ concern for the organization is driving them to enact rhetorical leadership to motivate the change necessary to resuscitate and bring Uber back to life.

As mentioned, the text repeatedly advanced support of Uber independent of Kalanick which reinforces both the concern for the organization and the investors’ alignment with it and its success. Their investment in the organization is expressed in statements such as: “Please know that we remain fully supportive of Uber’s mission and the incredibly positive role Uber can play in communities around the world.”⁸¹ The text continued to stress the organization over the individual by reiterating support of Uber by name, as opposed to any sentiments directly expressing support for Kalanick. Showcasing their allegiance to the organization, through declarations like “we remain fully supportive of Uber’s mission,” operates to isolate the investors from Kalanick and his guilt and reinforce that even when change is realized and Kalanick is removed as leader, the venture capitalists will be loyal to Uber and its mission. Statements throughout the text indicated that Uber can be “positive” as an organization with the suggestion that justice for stakeholders in the global community through leadership change can begin to eradicate the current negative state of the organization. The investors drove home their concern for the organization in the assertion that with their proposed changes, “we firmly believe Uber can ensure its future as one of the most important companies Silicon Valley has ever

produced.”⁸² This statement rhetorically eliminates Kalanick from the reality of Uber by not mentioning him as a part of Uber’s future – or past. Change is necessary and the investors’ concern is focused on prioritizing the future of the organization as opposed to Kalanick’s future. This erasure further solidifies the venture capitalists’ concern for Uber and rhetorically displays their ability to shift power from Kalanick to those who can lead the organization to change and justice.

In the spirit of change and justice, and to illustrate that compassion for the individual is evident, the letter closed with the “hope” that Kalanick will agree to this path advanced by the venture capitalists. Throughout the text, the language is typically of urgency and necessity – marked by words such as “need,” “must,” and “cannot” – which are not words that indicate choices. “Hope” in this statement – “we hope you will agree to move forward with us on this path” – operates to show that there is concern for the individual, despite flipping the hierarchy throughout the text to prioritize the organization.⁸³ This rhetorical shift can work to motivate change by appealing to a shared concern and compassion for the organization, suggesting that despite divergent value systems, differences in perception, and the need for change, a shared concern for the organization aligns the investors and Kalanick in some way that makes prioritizing the future of Uber the concrete action that all will endeavor to undertake to effect change and achieve justice.

Conclusion

The public letter issued by Uber investors urging Travis Kalanick, co-founder and former CEO of the ride-sharing company, to remove himself as the head of the organization is an example of *kategoria* and the genre of forensic rhetoric that successfully motivated change. Through an examination of the text, I uncovered the rhetorical strategies of *value prominence*,

emphasis on public perception, and concern for organization over individuals which can be utilized to disrupt expected hierarchies to shift power and motivate change in an organization. In this letter, the venture capitalists illustrated through these rhetorical strategies that leadership can be a conduit for public opinion and emphasized the importance of a leader who can recognize the importance of that and adapt as necessary. Each of the three rhetorical tactics revealed in the text build upon each other to establish guilt and seek justice. These rhetorical strategies also disrupt the expected hierarchy of values systems to dissociate perception from reality and prioritize concern for the organization over the individual, allowing the investors to secure themselves as stewards for Uber, capable of motivating change and moving the organization into the future. In so doing, the investors were able to successfully enact rhetorical leadership through accusation to shift power, effect change, and serve justice.

Notes

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²⁵ Kelsey L.O., “Attention Startup CEOs: Here Are Four Signs Your Company’s Culture in Toxic,” *Medium.com*, July 28, 2020, <https://medium.com/swlh/here-are-four-signs-your-companys-culture-is-toxic-5dde2984ad1e>.

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Chapter 5: Facebook

The social networking platform Facebook is an organization that has experienced highs and lows since its introduction in 2004 by then-college student Mark Zuckerberg. Launched as a database of profile pages for Harvard University students, Facebook is one of today's largest technology companies with a current valuation of \$1.06 trillion.¹ The once-exclusive medium quickly grew, expanding first to all Ivy League schools then to high school students then to any college student. Facebook became available to anyone who wanted to make a profile in 2006 and by 2012, the platform boasted 1 billion users.² For better or worse, Facebook is credited with transforming social interaction.³ In the process, the platform's reach has extended globally, and the organization has acquired the social networks Instagram and WhatsApp, in addition to Oculus, a company that manufactures virtual reality headsets.⁴ The organization has been recognized for building a robust and reliable infrastructure and attracting innovative engineers who are responsible for inventing countless new tools and technologies.⁵ Statistically, Facebook is the most popular and successful social network, with 2.85 billion active monthly users and a combined 3.51 billion monthly users across all of its entities.⁶ Facebook has amassed much success since its introduction, and the dynamism of the platform has been attributed in large part to innovation as well as the tenacity and vision of its founder.

Since the founding of Facebook, Mark Zuckerberg has become a prominent figure in the technology community. Zuckerberg founded Facebook when he was 19 years old in a dorm room and now he is "regarded as one of the most brilliant minds of his generation."⁷ Some media posit that Zuckerberg's entrepreneurial success has been fueled by his competitive spirit and his mastery of public relations, both of which have helped Facebook overcome obstacles through the years.⁸ In 2017, he served as Harvard's youngest commencement speaker ever and received an

honorary doctorate at the ceremony.⁹ With his wife, Priscilla Chan, they established the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative, a philanthropic organization that serves local communities with the mission of helping to solve “some of society’s toughest challenges.”¹⁰ The high-profile nature of Zuckerberg’s role in technology and philanthropic efforts render his name, and Facebook’s, globally recognizable.

The global recognition of both Facebook as a social network and Zuckerberg as founder, CEO, and chairman causes the organization and the individual to become interchangeable to the public. The *Washington Post* claimed in 2018 that “Zuckerberg has long been considered synonymous with Facebook.”¹¹ In an article discussing the founding of Facebook, the author asserted that “everything about Facebook has changed from then to now, except Mark Zuckerberg,” emphasizing that the two have consistently had a synecdochical relationship.¹² As Facebook experienced growing scrutiny over the years, this synecdoche has impacted Zuckerberg professionally and personally. The *Atlantic* explained: “Zuckerberg, as the metonym for the company, has been dragged, too. Whether or not it is fair, a CEO must be a company and vice versa, because that’s how things that are too big and too complex become understood.”¹³ In this particular case, the blurring of organization and individual means that the transgressions of one become the transgressions of the other. In 2019, media reported that:

There seems to be a growing appetite to hold Zuckerberg personally accountable for Facebook’s misdeeds. Federal regulators have reportedly been considering whether to hold Zuckerberg personally liable for the company’s failings, citing Zuckerberg’s influence over the company as its C.E.O., chairman, and majority shareholder.¹⁴

The public conflation of Zuckerberg and Facebook results in a synecdochical relationship which can be problematic for a leader and an organization, especially with regard to accountability and controversy.

In this chapter, I argue that when leadership is rhetorically constructed as an opportunity for shared responsibility to maximize impact, it is possible to reframe the expectation that organizational success is contingent on the concentrated power of an individual in order to move toward a more autonomous structure. A specific way to emphasize the superiority of shared responsibility over singular authority is to rhetorically shift expected value hierarchies by highlighting the desirability of values that support the viability of the organization over the values of the individual leader. Through a genre analysis of an investor statement issued to Zuckerberg, I found that the rhetorical strategies of *juxtaposing too much power with independence, intersecting synecdoche and justice*, and *linking of public trust and organizational responsibility* can effect organizational change. These rhetorical tactics successfully spotlighted the values that serve the greater good while establishing guilt and specifying a satisfactory course for serving justice. Explicating these strategies and how they can be deployed through accusation as a form of rhetorical leadership can inform future attempts at *kategoria*. This chapter will illustrate that individuals who hold varying degrees of power can enact rhetorical leadership to impact organizational change and achieve justice through the prioritization of shared responsibility over a dominant power structure.

From here, I will demonstrate the ways in which an investor of Facebook utilized rhetorical leadership to construct leadership as a shared responsibility to shift values and motivate organizational change. This instance of *kategoria* was read directly to Zuckerberg at a shareholder meeting and published across media outlets. The accusation letter established Zuckerberg's guilt for past actions and proposed leadership change for the greater good by prioritizing shared values that would support the organization's future. Though an investor holds some power in an organization, the current structure of Facebook greatly limits shareholder

power while bolstering Zuckerberg's control. This statement thus serves as an example of *kategoria* as a form of rhetorical leadership issued by an individual with less power than the accused. First, I will offer contextual background on Facebook's structure and controversies surrounding the organization. Next, I will discuss the resistance to change historically evident within technology organizations, and Facebook specifically, which marks the significance of this particular instance of *kategoria* for influencing change of any kind. Finally, I will conduct a close reading of the text through the lens of genre to demonstrate the rhetorical tactics that shift value hierarchy to position leadership as a shared responsibility that can motivate organizational change for the greater good of justice.

Controversy and Resistance to Change

Facebook has weathered its share of controversy and scandal since its introduction almost 18 years ago. Under the leadership of Zuckerberg, Facebook "found itself at the center of a growing storm over a wide array of issues."¹⁵ From data hacking and data harvesting to misinformation and fake accounts, financial irregularities and internal disputes, Facebook's public woes run the gamut.¹⁶ Despite challenges surrounding the platform that date back to the contestation of its origins, Facebook's existence-threatening troubles began shortly after the 2016 presidential election.¹⁷ Allegations emerged that Facebook proliferated misinformation, amplified fake news, and allowed Russian trolls to deceive American voters in the run-up to the election.¹⁸ It was later revealed that the now-defunct Cambridge Analytica, a data analytics company utilized by Facebook, harvested data from the profiles of more than 87 million users and used it to target voters during the election after being hired by former President Donald Trump's campaign.¹⁹ In addition to this breach in user security and privacy in the US, accusations surfaced that Facebook was "contributing to political violence and deliberate

misinformation in Myanmar, India, Germany, the Philippines, Brazil, and more.”²⁰ More scandal became public when Facebook announced in September of 2018 that it had been hacked and that more than 30 million users had their personal information compromised, making it the worst hack that Facebook had ever experienced.²¹ The lack of information security and accuracy in an information-sharing service cuts directly to the core of what such organizations minimally pledge to deliver to their various stakeholders. These scandals have contributed to intense scrutiny of Facebook and Zuckerberg from the public and stakeholders over the years and threaten the sustainability of the social network.

The transgressions of the organization extend to Zuckerberg, who has been named in many of the accusations against Facebook. He has also personally been implicated, including a December 2018 allegation that he discussed “how to make money off user data” and sought “agreements with multiple companies to help [Facebook] access user information.”²² Personal emails from Zuckerberg himself appeared to reveal “Facebook offering major advertisers special access to user data,” an infringement of the platform’s promise to not sell user information.²³ While Facebook promotes privacy and security, assuring users of their control over their own data, led by Zuckerberg “the company has, throughout its history, traded on data access in order to grow the business.”²⁴ Just before these allegations became public, the founders of each of the three major entities owned by Facebook – Instagram, WhatsApp, and Oculus – quit the organization due to frustrations stemming from Zuckerberg’s influence over them.²⁵ That frustration indicates the all-consuming control Zuckerberg asserted through his leadership. Chris Hughes, a co-founder and early employee of Facebook who was at Harvard with Zuckerberg, maintains that:

The company’s mistakes – the sloppy privacy practices that dropped tens of millions of users’ data into a political consulting firm’s lap; the slow response to Russian agents,

violent rhetoric and fake news; and the unbounded drive to capture ever more of our time and attention – dominate the headlines.²⁶

In addition to capturing media attention, the scandals and controversy also impact Zuckerberg's personal reputation and the public opinion of Facebook – both internally and externally.

The synecdochical relationship between Zuckerberg and Facebook is underscored and complicated by the CEO and chairman's controlling stake in the organization, hands-on approach, and overwhelming decision-making power. Because of his majority voting rights, Zuckerberg has complete control of Facebook.²⁷ In a statement published in the *New York Times*, Hughes described the organizational structure as follows:

Facebook's board works more like an advisory committee than an overseer, because Mark [Zuckerberg] controls around 60 percent of voting shares. Mark alone can decide how to configure Facebook's algorithms to determine what people see in their News Feeds, what privacy settings they can use and even which messages get delivered. He sets the rules for how to distinguish violent and incendiary speech from the merely offensive, and he can choose to shut down a competitor by acquiring, blocking or copying it.²⁸

This amount of power concentrated in one individual is problematic when it comes to accountability and responsibility over the organization as well as holding Zuckerberg personally accountable. Currently, there is a dual-class structure in place at Facebook in which

Class A voters receive only one vote per share, while Class B voters – which consist of the company's management and directors – receive 10 votes per share. This means that Zuckerberg, the company's majority shareholder who holds 75% of Facebook's Class B stock, controls 58% of Facebook's vote.²⁹

The structure and his majority vote afford Zuckerberg the power to “automatically kill any Facebook vote he doesn't agree with – like, for instance, an attempt to limit his power.”³⁰ The synecdoche of Zuckerberg and Facebook is emphasized through the ultimate control Zuckerberg has over the organization given its current power structure which prioritizes controlling leadership over shared responsibility.

Facebook's organizational structure, including the overwhelming leadership control, impacts the internal culture of the social network. Media reports suggest that many Facebook employees feel silenced and are encouraged to not speak about their experiences working for the organization. Those who have spoken out describe a "top-down approach where major decisions are made by the company's leadership," which aligns with the current power structure and Zuckerberg's control.³¹ There is "an atmosphere at Facebook in which employees feel pressure to place the company above all else in their lives" and fall in line with leadership decisions and directives.³² The culture fostered at Facebook has contributed to the wave of scandals because employees feel powerless to speak out regarding internal issues, including misdeeds. In turn, the controversies exacerbate the culture in which employees describe being discouraged to voice dissent and dissuaded from giving managers critical feedback or challenging decisions.³³ Given its market dominance and the purported pressure from leadership for employees to stay silent, "every time Facebook messes up, we repeat an exhausting pattern: first outrage, then disappointment and, finally, resignation."³⁴ An organizational culture that promotes silence and powerlessness is fostered by a leadership structure that concentrates full power into one individual who holds complete control.

Despite its innovation in products and services, Facebook has been resistant to internal change, particularly in its leadership structure and the power that Zuckerberg wields. Annually, Zuckerberg traditionally declares a personal challenge that he will address that calendar year. In 2018, considering a slew of scandals and public accusations, he announced that he would "fix Facebook," indicating his awareness that issues within the platform existed.³⁵ Despite this acknowledgement, Zuckerberg has eschewed opportunities for change when faced with scandal by denying the organization's role in them. He reportedly responded to misinformation claims by

stating that “Personally, I think the idea that fake news on Facebook ... influenced the election in any way is a pretty crazy idea,” illustrating a resistance to criticism and the suggestion of a need for structure change.³⁶ Zuckerberg continues to publicly exert his complete control over Facebook, countering a question about whether he was still the right person to run the organization with: “Yes, I think life is about learning from mistakes and figuring out what you need to do to move forward,” though time and evidence reveals that Zuckerberg has not practiced what he preached.³⁷ His resistance to change is exemplified in the fact that he “has surrounded himself with a team that reinforces his beliefs instead of challenging them,” solidifying his power to make decisions and run Facebook as he deems.³⁸ Organizational change is necessary at Facebook as evidenced by numerous scandals and mounting accusations against the platform and its leadership. The power structure in place and a history of resistance to internal change is problematic for Facebook and Zuckerberg as public allegations and cries for change persist.

An Activist Shareholder’s Proposal

Addressing the accusations that have mounted against Facebook requires concrete change as excuses and insincere mea culpas from the organization and its leadership have failed to satisfy its detractors. According to *Vox*, Facebook “and CEO Mark Zuckerberg have issued multiple apologies for its missteps, and yet the scandals keep coming.”³⁹ A call for concrete change came in early May 2019, when the aforementioned Hughes issued a statement in the *New York Times* claiming that Zuckerberg’s “influence is staggering, far beyond that of anyone else in the private sector or in government” and calling that “unchecked power” problematic.⁴⁰ Hughes’ suggestion at the time was that “the government must hold [Zuckerberg] accountable,” though as further scandals emerged, Facebook continued business as usual.⁴¹ This instance of *kategoria* leveled at Zuckerberg and the social media platform proposed an actual

leadership shift and set the stage for allegations of the problematic nature of the power structure in place at Facebook to motivate concrete change and seek justice.

A letter issued by “activist shareholder” Jonas Kron and supported by myriad individuals and groups became the catalyst for organizational change at Facebook. On May 30, 2019, during a Facebook shareholder meeting, Kron read a statement calling for Zuckerberg to be removed from leadership and to shake up the entire organizational structure, asserting that it is “unwise to have so much power concentrated in one person.”⁴² This statement was also published across media outlets prior to the shareholder meeting.⁴³ Days later, *Business Insider* reported that “powerless investors vote[d] overwhelmingly to oust Zuckerberg as chairman,”⁴⁴ highlighting that the desire for change was widespread, despite power limitations to enact that change. In response to Kron’s statement, Facebook shareholders were reportedly “furious at the way Zuckerberg has handled a series of Facebook scandals” and “they think the company would benefit from an independent chairman meant to hold Zuckerberg and his top team accountable.”⁴⁵ Quantitatively, 68% of investors voted to oust Zuckerberg as chairman which was a significant increase over the 51% of investors who voted for a similar proposal two years prior.⁴⁶ The support for this proposal indicates that the rhetorical leadership enacted by Kron in the form of accusation worked to motivate a move toward change at the organization.

As established, one aspect of the problematic nature of Facebook’s current power structure is Zuckerberg’s controlling stake on the board and as CEO.⁴⁷ Due to his ability to override any shareholder majority votes, the change proposed in Kron’s statement was not actualized, but the level of support shown for the power structure shift was “rarely seen in shareholder proposals.”⁴⁸ Further compounding the overwhelming vote to break up Facebook, the *New York Times* published an article claiming that “the House Judiciary Committee

announced a broad antitrust investigation into big tech,” to “explore whether the companies have abused their market power to harm competition and consumers,” based in part on allegations presented in Kron’s statement.⁴⁹ Unlike my previous two case studies, the specific desired outcome of the accusation was not realized but change was initiated as a result of the investor letter and subsequent shareholder voting. These steps toward concrete action illustrate that the investor statement presented to Facebook shareholders in May 2019 was a successful instance of *kategoria* as rhetorical leadership to serve justice and move toward leadership change at the social networking platform.

As a form of forensic rhetoric, the investor statement contained rhetorical elements that highlighted past actions to establish guilt and advanced a specific call-to-action that will satisfy the accuser and serve justice for the organization. A “list of controversial and damaging social impacts” as well as limited oversight due to too much power concentrated in one person comprise the transgressions of the organization under Zuckerberg’s leadership.⁵⁰ Rhetorically establishing Zuckerberg’s guilt for these actions in addition to the indication that Facebook enabled these actions set up the accuser to constitute the appropriate rhetorical audience to rectify the past by serving justice for the future. The letter was addressed to Zuckerberg, members of the board, and fellow shareholders,⁵¹ emphasizing that any change endorsed must be voted upon and agreed to by the majority – including Zuckerberg himself. The preferred outcome of this *kategoria* was an independent board chair, ending Zuckerberg’s singular leadership and replacing it with the more desirable shared responsibility for the greater good of the organization and its future. This investor accusation was deployed as a form of rhetorical leadership to establish guilt, shift power, and disrupt value hierarchy to accomplish acceptable justice and necessary organizational change.

Accusation to Construct Leadership as a Shared Responsibility

The purpose of the statement presented to Mark Zuckerberg at Facebook's annual shareholder meeting was to influence organizational change at the leadership level by breaking up the current power structure and moving to a more autonomous system. In this instance of *kategoria*, the goal was not to remove Zuckerberg from the organization completely but instead to shift power from a singular individual to ensure shared responsibility and a move away from the synecdochical public impression of Facebook. Utilizing rhetorical leadership through accusation, Jonas Kron, an activist shareholder, worked to serve justice for all stakeholders and users of the platform by establishing the problematic nature of the current organizational structure and illustrating how change could revitalize the brand. In this statement, the desired change is declared: "I am here... seeking an independent board chair policy for Facebook."⁵² In detailing the necessary change, Kron built a case that included the problems Facebook has faced, establishing Zuckerberg's guilt, and the ways to overcome those problems by making "a simple, yet powerful change" to salvage the organization's future.⁵³ I argue that when leadership is rhetorically constructed as an opportunity for shared responsibility to maximize impact, it is possible to reframe the expectation that organizational success is contingent on the concentrated power of an individual in order to move toward a more autonomous structure. Through my investigation of the generic form of forensic rhetoric in which speeches of accusation look at past actions, determine guilt, and seek justice, examining this letter through the lens of genre revealed three rhetorical strategies that can be utilized in *kategoria* by individuals with varying degrees of power to promote organizational change. The rhetorical strategies of *juxtaposing too much power with independence*, *intersecting synecdoche and justice*, and *linking of public trust and organizational responsibility* uncovered in this text operate to construct leadership as a shared

responsibility, shifting power and impacting change by reframing organizational structure expectations. This analysis will illustrate the ways in which these strategies utilized in *kategoria* function as a form of rhetorical leadership which disrupts value hierarchy and successfully reframes power while seeking justice for an organization.

Juxtaposition of Too Much Power and Independence

The Kron statement revealed a focus on juxtaposing the idea of individual power with a need for independent oversight which demonstrated the shareholders' purpose as well as reframed the expectation that singular organizational leadership is necessary for the success of the organization. The juxtaposition of individual leadership and an autonomous structure is one rhetorical strategy utilized that begins to break apart not only these two disparate notions of leadership but also more specifically operates to distance Mark Zuckerberg from Facebook. Working to rhetorically illustrate that too much power concentrated in any one individual is problematic for the organization functions in part to establish guilt by highlighting past actions and instances in which sole leadership has damaged the organization and its ability to serve its stakeholders. Demonstrating that individual power has created detrimental issues for the organization affords the shareholders the capacity to juxtapose this idea with the notion that leadership is an opportunity for shared responsibility. Prioritizing independence over singular authority shifts value hierarchy by presenting a more desirable and acceptable value option for this circumstance. Aligning with the value of independence indicates a choice for freedom and renewed identity for the organization from an individual who has threatened those values by instituting overarching authority. By illustrating the negatives of the current structure and the positives of the proposed structure, the text appealed to the audience to shift expected value hierarchy and align with the side of justice and change for the organization. The juxtaposition

between the problematic nature of too much individual power and the conceivable success of an autonomous leadership structure works to serve justice for the organization by effecting change that will move the organization successfully into the future.

The need for shared responsibility as opposed to an individual leader is reinforced throughout the text and operates in several ways. First, the statement works to establish Zuckerberg's guilt by describing past actions that were met with failed leadership and ultimately damaged the organization's public image. Throughout the text, Zuckerberg isn't specifically named as the individual directly responsible for the transgressions, but as the CEO and Chairman as well as the synecdochical representation of Facebook, it is implicit that he is the guilty party. However, by not specifically indicting Zuckerberg by name throughout the text, the statement further reinforces the need for shared leadership through the suggestion that too much power concentrated in any one individual will be problematic. The emphasis throughout the statement is on "any" individual leader, indicating this change in power is not about Zuckerberg personally but instead what he represents as a leader with too much power and an inability to provide the necessary oversight for a successful organization. The implicit indictment of Zuckerberg as opposed to specific personal accusations works to appeal to Zuckerberg himself, who holds majority voting rights over organizational change at Facebook, to recognize that the shareholders are seeking justice for the organization holistically and could motivate his alignment with their proposed leadership structure change.

One way the need for shared responsibility and a move to an autonomous leadership structure is reiterated throughout the text is through broad statements that underscore the problematic nature of too much power vested in one singular leader. In fact, the belief that this power structure change is necessary serves as the foundation for the text: "as its core this... is

about the risk of concentrating too much power in one person – any person.”⁵⁴ The word “core” indicates something fundamental that must exist solidly for sustainability. Applying this foundational concept to the proposal to move to an autonomous structure demonstrates that change is the only way to ensure the viability of Facebook in the future. In addition, the word “risk” implies danger, underpinning that the current structure of individual leadership has caused damage to the organization for which the shareholders are seeking justice and to rectify moving forward through the proposed change. This statement also reinforces that the problem rests in concentrated power in general – “one person – any person,” implicating Zuckerberg as he represents Facebook but also underscoring that issues will persist under any individual leader with too much power. The juxtaposition between singular leadership and an autonomous power structure is enforced through repeated references to the need for and viability of the value of independence. Kron’s purpose is declared as “seeking an independent board chair policy for Facebook.”⁵⁵ Independence, or a neutral leadership structure, is proposed as the solution to the current organizational problem of too much power in one individual. Too much power can impact an individual’s ability to fulfill his or her responsibilities as evidenced in the assertion that “vesting a single person with both executive and board leadership concentrates too much responsibility in a single person.”⁵⁶ Leadership and responsibility are conflated in this example, extending power to accountability and further emphasizing the need for a new power structure within the organization to ensure that full oversight is possible. The capability of a leader to be accountable is particularly critical in a people-facing organization that has global stakeholders invested internally and externally. The contention continued that vesting too much responsibility in one person “inhibits independent board oversight of executives.”⁵⁷ This statement suggests that with Zuckerberg in the position of both CEO and chairman, leadership actions simply cannot

be overseen as there is no neutral party in place to perform that oversight. Again, the juxtaposition of the singular power is reinforced as unbiased oversight. Independence is rhetorically established as the solution to the existing problem of too much concentrated power at Facebook and will be the justice served for past transgressions and to secure the future of the organization.

Independence as the optimal power structure as opposed to singular leadership is further enforced in the text through the rhetorical suggestion that it is the intelligent option. The text stated that “it is unwise to have so much power concentrated in one person.”⁵⁸ Using “unwise” appeals to the audience who likely wants to be considered wise and thus motivates them to align with the new power structure being proposed. Similarly, the statement that “a unified chair and CEO is such a misguided idea”⁵⁹ motivates change with the suggestion that singular leadership is “misguided” or foolish and wrong. The implication that the current power structure is flawed is reinforced by language that alludes to the intelligence of those who support singular leadership in this instance and motivates by appealing to the desire to be on the side of smart choices. These two assertions are also blanket statements about singular leadership in general and therefore do not serve specifically as personal attacks on Zuckerberg. As a result, it is possible that they also appeal to Zuckerberg who is motivated to align his organization with intelligent moves and savvy leadership. Another statement that illustrates that the proposed change is necessary is the contention that “recent changes [at Facebook] are fundamentally insufficient.”⁶⁰ This suggestion indicates that any change that has been made is “insufficient” or not enough and long-term sustainability is still lacking. To move the organization into the future, it is necessary to accept the proposed power structure change. These statements motivate change by signifying that not

only is an autonomous power structure superior to singular leadership at Facebook, but it is also the intelligent option.

The juxtaposition of the necessity of independence at Facebook with the problematic nature of “too much power” concentrated in an individual is framed not only as dangerous to the organization but also to society, creating an additional urgency to effect change and serve justice. Kron contended that “Facebook is incredibly powerful – with wide-ranging and difficult-to-understand, let alone control, social impacts.”⁶¹ This statement highlights the encompassing environment of Facebook as a social network connecting people around the world, reinforcing the breadth of stakeholders impacted by the organization and its leadership. By noting that the impacts of the organization are “difficult-to-understand” and difficult to “control,” this assertion also bolsters the suggestion that there is no way one person alone can successfully handle the task of understanding and controlling Facebook and further supports the idea that responsibility should be shared. To understand and control the social impacts of the organization is impossible without shared responsibility and proceeding with too much power vested in one person heightens the risk of perpetuating the past and current “controversial and damaging social impacts.”⁶² If “power and impact” are directly related, as the text implies, and with the history of “controversial and damaging social impacts” of Facebook, the case is rhetorically made that the power structure **MUST** be changed to avoid future negative impact. The suggestion that “having a unified chair and CEO severely limited” the ability to provide adequate oversight of the organization reiterates the notion that the opposite – an independent board structure – would be capable of adequate oversight and potentially eliminating the damaging social impacts. A lack of adequate oversight coupled with a history of transgressions intensifies Zuckerberg’s guilt as leader and public face of Facebook. It also motivates the change to break up the current power

structure to shift the dangerous current trajectory and serve justice for Facebook's extensive stakeholders.

An independent board structure is positioned as the only viable change for the success of Facebook in contrast to the current power system and the minor shifts that the organization had attempted to implement. Highlighting the flaws in not only the singular leadership in place at Facebook but also the insufficiency of changes implemented within the organization further indicts Zuckerberg's leadership in addition to emphasizing the necessity of an autonomous board to accomplish justice. Kron acknowledged that "we recognize that Facebook has a lead independent director... the board has recently taken steps to articulate more clearly her power and responsibilities."⁶³ This statement demonstrates that the power outside of the ultimate power is also currently concentrated in one individual, which has already been established to be problematic. The words "power and responsibilities" were previously utilized to describe the individual in singular leadership, but the role described above is power-adjacent as it still is possible for Zuckerberg, as unified chair and CEO, to overrule this power. Additionally, the assertion that the board must take steps to "articulate more clearly" this role and its oversight indicates that there exists a vagueness or confusion about this structure that could negatively impact stakeholders. The letter continued that "a lead independent director does not command that same authority" as the singular leader, suggesting that "power and responsibilities" here are symbolic as this person does not hold the appropriate authority to legitimize her role and enforce her oversight as does the individual holding all of the actual power.⁶⁴ The changes that have been implemented are shown to be insufficient to move the organization into the future and serve justice for the stakeholders both internally and externally, reinforcing the need to support the proposed independent board structure.

Juxtaposing the dangers of the existing system of concentrating “too much power” in one individual with the prospects for success of the proposed autonomous structure operate in this *kategoria* to indict singular leadership to motivate change and seek justice for organizational stakeholders. The word “power” throughout the text rhetorically emphasizes the relationship between power and responsibilities and accountability as well as illustrates the scope and scale of authority within Facebook. The text concluded with a plea: “let us not miss this opportunity to make a simple, yet powerful change.”⁶⁵ Utilizing the root word “power” in this statement signals a shift in the way the term has been used previously in the text. In this context, change is described as powerful and implied to be a positive thing which is contrasted with the many references to the dangers of “too much power” vested in an individual. In addition, the word “us” in this statement is inclusive which appeals to the audience as an invitation to align with the proposed new structure and assigns the shareholders power of their own to be a part of the change. Through the rhetorical leadership of this letter, power is reframed as something that is a shared responsibility as opposed to the expectation that one individual is capable of accountability to an entire organization and its many stakeholders. By reframing the expectation of successful leadership through the juxtaposition of “too much power” in one individual with independence, Kron enacted rhetorical leadership to seek justice and motivate organizational change.

Intersection of Synecdoche and Justice

Underpinning Kron’s letter to Zuckerberg and Facebook shareholders is the idea of synecdoche and the intersection of the concept with justice. According to Barry Brummett, “synecdoche is the trope of *representation*,” and is utilized when referring to a part of something to represent the whole, thus identifying the part that stands for what the rhetor wants to

emphasize about the whole.⁶⁶ In the case of Facebook, Mark Zuckerberg has long been synonymous with the organization, serving as the part that represents the whole.⁶⁷ While it may be common for the leader of an organization to be its public face, a synecdochical relationship can be problematic for both the individual and the organization. When the part effectively represents the whole, transgressions committed by the individual or the organization conflate, and issues of leadership become organizational issues and vice versa. Rhetorically, an accusation can be bolstered by this conflation to motivate change through demonstrating that the only way to serve justice for the organization is to break apart the leader and the organization. This breaking apart shifts value hierarchy by prioritizing the values of the organization over the values of the individual. Emphasizing values that are more desirable for the future of the organization to illustrate their superiority over the values exhibited by current leadership can motivate a shift in value hierarchy for the greater, shared good. Rhetorical leadership is enacted in this text to disrupt the existing synecdoche for the benefit of stakeholders and the organization. Throughout this statement, the expectation of the success of singular leadership is reframed to display that shared responsibility is the best structure for Facebook.

There are specific statements within the text that addressed the risks associated with a synecdochical relationship between leader and organization, but the letter itself serves as an indictment of Zuckerberg's leadership and his inability to see the problematic nature of Facebook's current structure. That this accusation must be issued highlights Zuckerberg's synecdoche with Facebook and that justice cannot be served until his individual leadership is broken apart from the organization as a whole. As noted, the letter is issued by Jonas Kron, an activist shareholder of Facebook. He is named in the statement, along with "Trillium Asset Management and the Park Foundation" as well as co-filers of the proposal: "the New York

comptroller, the treasurers of Illinois, Rhode Island, Connecticut, and Oregon, and a multitude of smaller and faith-based investors.”⁶⁸ Despite the synecdochical relationship between Zuckerberg and Facebook, this list of stakeholders represents numerous others who are involved and invested in the future of the organization. The naming of these individuals solidifies that despite public appearance, Zuckerberg is not the only person who represents the organization, disrupting the synecdoche and attempting to rhetorically detach his leadership from the whole of Facebook. Providing a list of individuals and investors who have identified Facebook’s issues also acts to implicate Zuckerberg who is supposed to be the leader and the steward of all stakeholders but has not been capable of protecting the organization from controversy and damage. These named shareholders contended that “we have watched with growing dismay as that list of controversial and damaging social impacts grew very long.”⁶⁹ Their dismay is described as “growing” which indicates that it is intensifying and implies that the trajectory is getting worse for Facebook. This implication establishes Zuckerberg’s guilt not just for the scandals and “controversial and damaging social impacts,” but also for not being able to identify the issues and enact the change that is so clearly needed. As discussed, the shareholders have proposed an independent board structure for the future of Facebook, suggesting that they have not only revealed the problems at the organization, but they have also determined the best course of action for its success and sustainability. The rhetorical leadership enacted in this *kategoria* exploits the problematic nature of synecdoche in an organizational context to advance the proposed autonomous structure of leadership.

The text further revealed the risks associated with a synecdochical relationship between leader and organization by showcasing examples of successful organizational structure that eschews individual leadership and embraces independence. When advancing the proposed

independent power structure for Facebook, Kron declared: “We should look to the examples of highly successful companies such as Alphabet, Apple, Autodesk, and Microsoft – which all have independent board chairs.”⁷⁰ Naming these organizations, particularly Apple and Microsoft, serves several purposes. First, this list provides evidence to support that the autonomous structure proposed in the letter does work and that high-profile, comparable organizations to Facebook successfully utilize the structure. Second, it illustrates that organizations can break the synecdochical model while still having a notable figure in place as a leader without standing for the entire organization. Finally, this specific identification serves to appeal to Zuckerberg’s desire to compete or keep up with such organizations as well as to align himself with his role models. Zuckerberg has publicly stated over the years that “Bill Gates was my hero,” calling Gates “one of the greatest visionaries our industry has ever had” and his company, Microsoft, “incredibly inspiring” by “making a concrete change in the world.”⁷¹ Bringing these organizations into the plea to Zuckerberg to change the structure of Facebook functions to remind him of the way those he admires have led their organizations and attempts to motivate him to accept the power shift to independence.

The desired outcome of separating Zuckerberg from the organization is directly stated in the text, which further emphasizes the danger of a synecdochical relationship. Kron stated that “we need different people in these two distinctly different leadership positions,” which distinguishes the role of CEO from the role of chairman.⁷² Isolating the two roles punctuates the need to separate the individual leader from the organization, which is underscored by the repetition of “different” and “distinct.” Focusing on the divergent nature of the two roles indicates that one person may not be capable of accomplishing the duties of each and reinforces that justice for the organization as a whole is only possible when the synecdochical relationship

is disrupted. Zuckerberg, continuing to serve in both roles, reiterates his synecdoche with Facebook despite other successful organizations operating with an autonomous structure like the one proposed by the shareholders in this letter. Utilizing rhetorical leadership to bring this relationship to light as well as the lack of synecdoche evident in other comparable and successful organizations motivates change and seeks justice by highlighting the problematic nature of this structure for the future of the organization.

Addressing values, specifically those associated with desirable leadership, is another rhetorical strategy utilized in this instance of *kategoria* to highlight the danger of a synecdochical relationship between leader and organization. In this text, value discussion is employed to reinforce the necessity of an independent board structure as opposed to leadership concentrated in one individual. For example, Kron stated that “responsibility and accountability” are key components of “power and impact” and highlight why one person is not capable of effective oversight.⁷³ With one person standing for the entire organization, values can get lost – especially if the leader’s values don’t align with the organization’s publicly stated values. This emphasis shows that, in contrast, independent board oversight can keep an organization’s values at the forefront, highlighting the need for more than one person to represent the organization and thereby ensure successful balance and justice.

The proposed power structure change is recommended to create a successful future for shareholders – those proposing the independence – and also “individuals, families, and communities around the world.”⁷⁴ Bringing in these additional stakeholders builds upon the values of care and empathy for others and specifically the concrete value of family, which is built not only through those related to us but those in our communities as well. The reference to values of empathy and family appeals to individuals who share those values as well as

Facebook's mission to build community and bring the world closer together⁷⁵ and those who desire to refurbish the organization's public image that has been marred by synecdochical leadership. It is also specified in the text that "faith-based investors" support the proposal for moving to a new structure.⁷⁶ While "faith-based" could refer to investors who are tied to a congregation or religious network, the lack of specificity in identifying those investors affords the notion of faith as a value to come into play here. As a value, faith is a belief system that helps guide people through difficult times, from darkness into light. Labeling investors as "faith-based" suggests that there is a hope and belief that the organization can overcome its past transgressions and that Zuckerberg will do the right thing, dismantling his singular leadership and moving to the independent board structure. Rhetorically establishing the synecdoche of individual and organization functions to motivate change by illustrating the problematic nature of this relationship for the future of Facebook. In this instance, accusation as a form of rhetorical leadership appeals to stakeholders to see that the only way forward and to serve justice is by breaking apart the individual and the organization. For the future of the organization, stakeholders should support the move from a singular leader who represents the entire organization to the proposed independent board structure.

Linkage of Public Trust and Organizational Responsibility

The rhetorical strategies revealed in the Kron text work together to culminate in the linkage of public trust and organizational responsibility also uncovered in the shareholder letter. Throughout the text, leader responsibility is emphasized as are the ways in which the current power structure has failed to uphold required leadership accountability. As Zuckerberg's guilt for past transgressions and his inability to meet the expectations of leadership needed to move Facebook into the future are established, the text underscored the necessity for shared

responsibility by shifting the existing system of power from individual leadership to an independent board structure. This case is further made by demonstrating that public trust in Facebook is damaged, and it is the organization's responsibility to repair that trust. The organization is not just accountable internally to its employees and shareholders but also externally to the public that it seeks to connect globally. The values of trust and responsibility go hand-in-hand and are necessary to the sustainability of an organization. Linking public trust to organizational responsibility serves to reinforce the notion that one individual – any individual – is not capable of taking on that level of accountability and stewardship and therefore, the solution for a successful future is shared responsibility via an autonomous structure. This linkage shifts value hierarchy and prioritizes the values that support the viability of the organization over the less acceptable values associated with the individual in this case. Again, though the implication is that singular leadership by any one individual is problematic, the emphasis on damaged public trust works to indict Zuckerberg himself, given that his oversight has allowed public trust to collapse. Linking public trust to organizational responsibility operates to seek justice and effect change by highlighting the flawed system currently in place that allows damaged public trust to persist while also stressing the necessity of a power shift for a successful future.

Public trust is directly referred to within the text and identified as something with which the organization should be concerned to move Facebook into the future. By advancing the contention that public trust must be restored to ensure a successful future for the organization, the text further implicated Zuckerberg's leadership and encouraged the proposed change to achieve justice. Kron stated that "at a time when there is little public trust in Facebook, it is navigating a regulatory landscape that is changing quickly."⁷⁷ Facebook is mentioned here as "it" as opposed to a more specific reference to an individual leader which underscores the

synecdoche and interchangeability of Zuckerberg and the organization. The synecdochical relationship is also enforced by describing the lack of public trust as being in “Facebook” as opposed to Zuckerberg with the implication being that they seamlessly stand in for each other, whether consciously or not in the public’s image. The note that the “landscape... is changing quickly” reminds the audience that rapid change requires an organization that can respond to those changes as opposed to one resistant to change. A new structure is needed to keep up with navigating the “regulatory” adjustments. This statement also suggests that if regulations and business are changing, then Facebook must do so as well if the organization is to survive in the future. Public opinion, as discussed in previous chapters, is reality and without “public trust” an organization that is designed to be public-facing and user-focused must accept responsibility and change accordingly. Trust is a value, one that most organizations promise to uphold especially when it comes to protecting the interests of their publics and stakeholders. A direct focus on the relationship between public trust and the need for change motivates that necessary change by illustrating that Facebook is not currently exhibiting accountability and reinforces that organizational responsibility to stakeholders is required for sustainability.

The connection between public trust and organizational responsibility is rhetorically constructed in the text to reinforce the need for leadership structure change through an emphasis on future plans that have not happened under the current leader which has impacted public opinion. Illustrating that Zuckerberg’s leadership has prohibited change in the past works to condemn his ability to lead, underscoring the need for a power shift. A prevalent and publicly contested issue at Facebook over the years has been privacy. The need for change related to this persistent issue is stated in the text: “Facebook is embarking on a privacy pivot which leadership has described as requiring a completely new platform.”⁷⁸ To “embark” on something is to take

on something completely new or forge a new path. Utilizing this word in this statement suggests that Facebook has not protected or prioritized privacy in the past if they are just embarking on it now. Also, it is implied that to truly embark on something takes new leadership, especially when current leadership has been resistant to change in the past. Referring to Zuckerberg as “leadership” in this statement reinforces that there is too much power in one individual yet serves to recall as discussed previously that this applies to any individual not just Zuckerberg and therefore, the change can’t simply be a new leader but instead an independent board who can oversee a variety of areas and interests as proposed. The word “requiring” in this statement reinforces the necessity for change and suggests that “leadership” has recognized this need. This appeal motivates change because if Zuckerberg himself believes a new platform is needed and is able to acknowledge that, then he should see that a new leadership structure is also needed. Organizational responsibility and public trust are connected explicitly when it comes to privacy, another desirable value. “Privacy pivot” has become a buzzword phrase at Facebook over the years. At the core of Facebook’s platform is the promise of user privacy – or was meant to be – and is an organizational responsibility to the public. That user privacy has consistently proven to be violated suggests that privacy is not a priority of Zuckerberg’s, therefore breaking public trust and further establishing his guilt. The word “pivot” refers to a shift, a literal turn in another direction. If Facebook is embarking on or heading to new territory via a privacy pivot, it underscores that privacy is a new notion for the organization and something that Zuckerberg has failed to protect in the past and may not be capable of protecting in the future. Linking public trust and the organization’s responsibility to protect it functions to seek justice for stakeholders by promoting change to a new power structure that will capably prioritize more desirable values and public needs for the sake of the future of the organization.

While the letter focused on past actions to establish guilt and seek justice, when linking public trust and organizational responsibility there was a focus on the future of Facebook to illustrate how change will bolster the connection between stakeholder and organization. The change called for in this proposal “would go a long way towards creating a successful future, not only for Facebook and its employees and its shareholders but for individuals, families, and communities around the world.”⁷⁹ This statement speaks to the organization’s internal, external, and global reach and demonstrates that the change called for has a much grander scope than just Zuckerberg and the immediate issue of a shift in leadership. The emphasis on a “successful future” for myriad stakeholders serves as a reminder of the scope and scale of Facebook and appeals to the shareholder voters who are concerned for their interests and those of their family and friends as well as the public who utilize the platform. Suggesting that a “successful future” must be created reiterates that the current state of the organization is not successful and has not been in many ways that have damaged public trust. Facebook is barraged with scandals and controversies and aligning change with future success functions to show that without change, the future may not be successful, and individuals may continue to be subjected to “damaging social impacts,” further destroying public trust in the organization. This letter rhetorically underscored that it is the organization’s responsibility to protect its publics and Zuckerberg has been proven incapable, and therefore an independent board is needed to shift power and serve justice.

Preventing societal danger and taking accountability to rectify damages caused to the public are primary responsibilities of organizations. The text illustrated that the existing leadership structure at Facebook had consistently failed at both tasks and, as a result, had destroyed public trust. Kron’s letter served to remind shareholders and Zuckerberg of their organizational responsibility to protect publics moving forward in an effort to repair public trust

and enforce that a move to an autonomous board structure will be successful for Facebook. Kron used the phrases “critical moment” and “difficult and challenging moment” within the text, which underpin the seriousness of the situation and the need for change to move beyond this time.⁸⁰ By referring to the current time as “critical,” “difficult,” and “challenging,” the urgency of the situation is highlighted which can motivate change by emphasizing the need for swift action to rectify the issue. The statement acknowledged that change is not easy, but Facebook and its stakeholders are not being served justly by Zuckerberg. Kron declared that it is the responsibility of the organizational shareholders to “not miss this opportunity.”⁸¹ The opportunity for effecting change and achieving justice is coming at this “moment,” stressing that the damaged public trust is possible to repair as long as there is action taken because moments can be fleeting. It was in the shareholder voters’ hands to seize this moment for justice and change.

Further indicting a leadership structure where all power is concentrated in one person to illustrate a lack of organizational responsibility, the letter posited that “the CEO position is the most demanding job in corporate America and the responsibilities of a chairman of the board are enormously time-consuming.”⁸² If the CEO position is the “most” demanding job, the suggestion is that it requires much time and effort to successfully complete the required duties. The chairman position is also described as “enormously time-consuming,” emphasizing that it would be incredibly burdensome, if not impossible, for one person to successfully engage in both. Undertaking both roles then can result in a lack of organizational oversight which can lead to damaged public trust. Once it is established that too much power in any one individual is problematic and that leading the organization is impossible for one person alone, combined with the fact that public trust in the organization is destroyed, each of the rhetorical tactics employed

in this *kategoria* culminated to indict Zuckerberg and motivate change in the power structure. These rhetorical strategies operated together to illustrate that successful leadership can exist in a power structure divergent from what Facebook has experienced thus far. This text demonstrated that Zuckerberg stands for the entire organization and is interchangeable in the public perception. This conflation further establishes Zuckerberg's guilt and suggests that the only way to serve justice is by breaking apart leader from organization. The synecdoche must be split apart through a shift to an autonomous board structure in order to ensure a successful, sustainable future for the organization that can also regain the trust of its public through accountability. Justice is served to stakeholders of the organization when power is not concentrated in any one individual but becomes a shared responsibility to minimize or avoid damaging social impacts and preserve public trust.

Conclusion

The statement presented by Jonas Kron, an activist shareholder of Facebook, proposing a new leadership structure for the organization is an example of *kategoria* and the genre of forensic rhetoric that successfully motivated a step toward change. This instance of rhetorical leadership focused on past actions to establish guilt and propose a way to serve justice. Throughout the text, leadership was rhetorically constructed as a shared responsibility, reframing the expectation that organizational success is related to power vested entirely in one individual. An examination of this text revealed the rhetorical strategies of *juxtaposing too much power with independence, intersecting synecdoche and justice, and linking of public trust and organizational responsibility* which can be employed to shift value hierarchy, disrupt organizational leadership expectations, and effect change. These rhetorical strategies operate together to demonstrate that too much power concentrated in an individual can result in a lack of organizational responsibility

and damaged public trust to the detriment of the organization, especially when there is a synecdochical relationship between leader and organization. Utilizing these rhetorical strategies to bring to light the problematic nature of an individual with too much power and proposing a leadership structure to move the organization into the future, Kron successfully enacted rhetorical leadership through accusation to motivate change and encourage justice.

Notes

¹ See Alexis C. Madrigal, “Before It Conquered the World, Facebook Conquered Harvard,” *Atlantic*, February 4, 2019, <https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2019/02/and-then-there-was-thefacebookcom/582004/>; Chris MacDonald, “Facebook’s Great Valuation: Right Time for FB Stock?,” *Nasdaq.com*, September 5, 2021, <https://www.nasdaq.com/articles/facebook-s-great-valuation%3A-right-time-for-fb-stock-2021-09-05>.

² Madrigal, “Facebook Conquered Harvard.”

³ Madrigal, “Facebook Conquered Harvard.”

⁴ Prachi Bhardwaj and Paige Leskin, “Facebook is 15 Years Old. Here’s a Look Into the Life, Career, and Controversies Surrounding CEO Mark Zuckerberg,” *Business Insider*, October 16, 2019, <https://www.businessinsider.com/mark-zuckerberg-facebook-fabulous-life-career-photos-2017-4>.

⁵ Gil Press, “Why Facebook Triumphed Over All Other Social Networks,” *Forbes*, April 8, 2018, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/gilpress/2018/04/08/why-facebook-triumphed-over-all-other-social-networks/?sh=7bfd1cfa6e91>.

⁶ Press, “Why Facebook Triumphed Over All Other Social Networks.”

⁷ Bhardwaj and Leskin, “Facebook is 15 Years Old.”

⁸ Press, “Why Facebook Triumphed Over All Other Social Networks.”

⁹ Bhardwaj and Leskin, “Facebook is 15 Years Old.”

¹⁰ “Our Approach,” Chan Zuckerberg Initiative, accessed January 25, 2022, <https://chanzuckerberg.com/about/our-approach/>.

¹¹ Elizabeth Dwoskin, “Mark Zuckerberg’s Crusade to Save Facebook is Taking Him to the World He’s Long Avoided,” *Washington Post*, April 9, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/economy/for-mark-zuckerberg-protecting-facebook-means-stepping-into-the-spotlight/2018/04/09/31518554-3c0a-11e8-a7d1-e4efec6389f0_story.html.

¹² Alexis C. Madrigal, “Even if You Hate Mark Zuckerberg Now, You’ll Love Him Later,” *Atlantic*, October 1, 2018, <https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2018/10/even-if-you-hate-zuckerberg-now-youll-love-him-later/571426/>.

¹³ Madrigal, “Even if You Hate Mark Zuckerberg Now, You’ll Love Him Later.”

¹⁴ Alison Durkee, “Facebook Investors Begin to Revolt Against Mark Zuckerberg,” *Vanity Fair*, June 4, 2019, <https://www.vanityfair.com/news/2019/06/facebook-investors-revolt-against-mark-zuckerberg>.

¹⁵ Emily Stewart, “Facebook’s Very Bad Year, Explained,” *Vox*, December 21, 2018, <https://www.vox.com/technology/2018/12/21/18149099/delete-facebook-scandals-2018-cambridge-analytica>.

¹⁶ Issie Lapowsky, “The 21 (and Counting) Biggest Facebook Scandals of 2018,” *Wired*, December 20, 2018, <https://www.wired.com/story/facebook-scandals-2018/>.

¹⁷ Madrigal, “Facebook Conquered Harvard;” Bhardwaj and Leskin, “Facebook is 15 Years Old.”

¹⁸ Bhardwaj and Leskin, “Facebook is 15 Years Old;” Lapowsky, “The 21 (and Counting) Biggest Facebook Scandals of 2018.”

¹⁹ Bhardwaj and Leskin, “Facebook is 15 Years Old.”

²⁰ Bhardwaj and Leskin, “Facebook is 15 Years Old.”

²¹ Bhardwaj and Leskin, “Facebook is 15 Years Old.”

²² Stewart, “Facebook’s Very Bad Year.”

²³ Lapowsky, “The 21 (and Counting) Biggest Facebook Scandals of 2018.”

²⁴ Lapowsky, “The 21 (and Counting) Biggest Facebook Scandals of 2018.”

²⁵ Lapowsky, “The 21 (and Counting) Biggest Facebook Scandals of 2018.”

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²⁷ Bhardwaj and Leskin, “Facebook is 15 Years Old.”

²⁸ Hughes, “It’s Time to Break up Facebook.”

²⁹ Durkee, “Facebook Investors Begin to Revolt Against Mark Zuckerberg.”

³⁰ Durkee, “Facebook Investors Begin to Revolt Against Mark Zuckerberg.”

³¹ Salvador Rodriguez, “Inside Facebook’s ‘Cult-Like’ Workplace, Where Dissent is Discouraged and Employees Pretend to be Happy All the Time,” *CNBC*, January 8, 2019, <https://www.cnbc.com/2019/01/08/facebook-culture-cult-performance-review-process-blamed.html>.

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- ³⁴ Hughes, “It’s Time to Break up Facebook.”
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- ³⁸ Hughes, “It’s Time to Break up Facebook.”
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- ⁴¹ Hughes, “It’s Time to Break up Facebook.”
- ⁴² Jake Kanter, “‘It Is Unwise to Have So Much Power Concentrated in One Person’: Here’s the Stinging Message That Will be Read to Mark Zuckerberg on Thursday by an Investor Who Wants to Take Him Down,” *Business Insider*, May 30, 2019, <https://www.businessinsider.com/investors-demand-facebook-fire-mark-zuckerberg-as-chairman-2019-5>.
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- ⁴⁴ Kanter, “Facebook Shareholder Revolt Gets Bloody.”
- ⁴⁵ Kanter, “Facebook Shareholder Revolt Gets Bloody.”
- ⁴⁶ Kanter, “Facebook Shareholder Revolt Gets Bloody.”
- ⁴⁷ See Hughes, “It’s Time to Break up Facebook.”
- ⁴⁸ Kanter, “Facebook Shareholder Revolt Gets Bloody.”
- ⁴⁹ Cecilia Kang and Kenneth P. Vogel, “Tech Giants Amass a Lobbying Army for an Epic Washington Battle,” *New York Times*, June 5, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/05/us/politics/amazon-apple-facebook-google-lobbying.html>.
- ⁵⁰ Kanter, “Unwise to Have So Much Power.”

⁵¹ Kanter, “Unwise to Have So Much Power.”

⁵² Kanter, “Unwise to Have So Much Power.”

⁵³ Kanter, “Unwise to Have So Much Power.”

⁵⁴ Kanter, “Unwise to Have So Much Power.”

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⁶⁶ Barry Brummet, *Techniques of Close Reading* (California: SAGE Publications, 2010), 87.

⁶⁷ See Dwoskin, “Mark Zuckerberg’s Crusade to Save Facebook is Taking Him to the World He’s Long Avoided;” Sarah Frier, “This Team Runs Mark Zuckerberg’s Facebook Page,” *Bloomberg Business Week*, January 18, 2017, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-01-18/this-team-runs-mark-zuckerberg-s-facebook-page>.

⁶⁸ Kanter, “Unwise to Have So Much Power.”

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Conclusion

Through this study, I have illustrated that *kategoria* can be employed as a form of rhetorical leadership and utilized as a tool to shift value hierarchy to effect organizational change. I introduced the prevalence of accusation in contemporary society, detailed how the method of genre analysis was best positioned to help me demonstrate my contention, and then conducted close readings of three specific case studies of successful instances of *kategoria* that impacted leadership change within organizations. This study contributes to scholarly understanding of how rhetorical leadership can be employed by individuals of varying degrees of power. In addition, it has practical implications for future accusers in society. To ground my examination, I reviewed literature on leadership, communication in organizations, organizational culture, and crisis communication. Additionally, I explored forensic rhetoric and situated *kategoria* as an understudied form of that genre while advancing accusation as a tool for rhetorical leadership. I conclude my investigation with a summary discussion of my analysis, including implications, limitations, and how this research contributes to scholarly conversation on *kategoria* and rhetorical leadership.

My genre analysis of speeches of accusation focused on three contemporary cases of *kategoria*. My particular subset was limited to instances of accusation that met the specified parameters. The subset of *kategoria* investigated for my study included public grievances in which: a leader's transgressions impacted the organization internally and externally; the accuser held less power than the accused and sought forensic ends due to the nature of the leader's association with the brand; concrete institutional action was called for and named; and mainstream media deemed the accusation successful in achieving some resolution related to the

desired outcome as a result of the *kategoria*. My case studies were instances in which individuals sought leadership change in organizations in academia, start-ups, and Big Tech.

In my first case study, a demand for leadership change at Michigan State University, I argued that by rhetorically constructing leadership as a decision as opposed to a circumstance, it is possible to shape the necessity of organizational change and shift the power from those who hold legitimate authority to those seeking justice. A close reading of the accusation issued to the board of trustees through the lens of genre revealed that rhetorical strategies of *establishing a clear dichotomy grounded in values, developing a specific image of leadership, and utilizing personal appeals* can enable a power shift to successfully motivate change. These rhetorical tactics shift value hierarchy expectations to emphasize the more desirable and acceptable values germane to a specific instance. The construction of leadership as a decision underscores the deployment of rhetorical leadership by individuals who do not hold institutional power. In so doing, those individuals enact leadership through discourse and can disrupt power systems. This case study emphasized that *kategoria* can be utilized as a form of rhetorical leadership capable of influencing change in organizations.

My next case study explored an investor's call for change at Uber. My genre analysis of that text revealed rhetorical tactics of *value prominence, emphasis on public perception, and concern for the organization over individuals*. These tactics successfully disrupted expected hierarchies to shift power and motivate change in an organization. I argued that through the rhetorical construction of leadership as a conduit for public perception, it is possible to disrupt the expected hierarchy of value systems to successfully effect organizational change at the leadership level. The construction of leadership as a way to manage public perception is useful in instances of *kategoria* because the rhetorical strategies utilized can shift the prioritization of

certain values over others to promote the viability of an organization for the greater good and to serve justice. Understanding this construction of leadership can inform future attempts at accusation and guide individuals with varying degrees of power who seek change.

My third case study examined a shareholder statement that proposed a power structure change at the leadership level at Facebook. I argued that when leadership is rhetorically constructed as an opportunity for shared responsibility to maximize impact, it is possible to reframe the expectation that organizational success is contingent on the concentrated power of an individual in order to move toward a more autonomous structure. Through a genre analysis of the statement, I found that the rhetorical strategies of *juxtaposing too much power with independence, intersecting synecdoche and justice*, and *linking of public trust and organizational responsibility* can effect organizational change. These rhetorical tactics successfully spotlighted the values that serve the greater good while establishing guilt and specifying a satisfactory course for serving justice. This case illustrated that *kategoria* can be employed by individuals with less power than the accused to influence change in organizations. Framing leadership as a shared responsibility further highlights that accusation as rhetorical leadership is an effective tool for motivating change and seeking justice in organizations.

Accusation is a pervasive form of discourse in society today. Deeper understanding of *kategoria* as a rhetorical form by identifying recurrent strategies that can be reproduced in future instances of accusation to successfully effect change is critical to scholarship and society. In my study, I have revealed useful rhetorical tactics that can be utilized in instances of *kategoria* to influence leadership change in organizations. However, there are limitations to my investigation. Primarily, my examination focuses on a very specific and narrow subset of accusation. While I maintain that these three cases are illustrative of the ways that *kategoria* can be used as a tool for

rhetorical leadership, genre analysis of additional instances of accusation would bolster this understanding. In addition, examining accusation from other perspectives would also enrich the scholarship on the genre of *kategoria* and rhetorical leadership by expanding the parameters in which this type of speech can be effective. For instance, my study is grounded in leadership and organizations, but the proliferation of accusation is rampant in many aspects of society. Further analysis would solidify my contention that *kategoria* employed as rhetorical leadership is an effective tool for change and justice in a variety of settings.

In establishing that *kategoria* can be utilized as a tool for rhetorical leadership, my investigation has revealed several assertions about speeches of accusation. First, *kategoria* as a genre has typically been studied and enacted to elicit apology or self-defense as a response. My study expands this view of accusation to illustrate that it can move beyond rhetoric as a satisfactory response and be used to effect concrete change, specifically in organizations. I have also shown that leadership is a communication-based activity and therefore, discourse can be a powerful tool for enacting leadership. As a result, individuals with varying degrees of power can utilize accusation to engage in public rhetorical leadership to seek and achieve justice by leveling *kategoria* against individuals who may hold more power or legitimate authority because of their role or position. When utilized as a tool for change, *kategoria* as rhetorical leadership can disrupt power systems. As evidenced in my analysis, one way that *kategoria* can disrupt power systems is to appeal to value hierarchy to shift power by emphasizing the more desirable and acceptable values in the given situation for the greater good. This value hierarchy often emphasizes the greater good over the good of the individual. In the instances explored in my study, value hierarchy arguments attempt to prioritize the good of the organization over the good of the

individual leader. Accusation, when employed as rhetorical leadership, can impact change and achieve justice.

An integral component of the findings uncovered in my examination is the employment of value arguments. When a leader transgresses, it indicates a violation of explicit or implicit organizational values. An accusation that seeks justice as its end is a rhetorical transaction that functions as a realignment back to the values that are deemed superior in a particular instance. Therefore, successful instances of *kategoria* must establish the significant and appropriate value hierarchy, demonstrate how the leader disrupted this hierarchy, and advance an image of justice that will satisfy the accuser and serve the greater good. Value-based arguments influence action by offering the audience a choice to align with the more desirable and acceptable values in a situation. My study revealed that successful speeches of accusation employ value arguments as a way to motivate change and to seek justice. Introducing value hierarchy arguments into *kategoria* disrupts power systems by shifting perspective of which values are more desirable in the present to overcome the past. Enhanced understanding of *kategoria* as a rhetorical form necessitates this consideration of how values operate to inform future construction of successful speeches of accusation.

Examining the specific rhetorical tactics that my study uncovered, several consistencies emerged that mark the genre of *kategoria* and can serve as the basis for future speeches of accusation. These consistencies are evident throughout all three texts and characterize the specific strategies elucidated in each analysis. In addition to value arguments, strategic framing of the past, construction of an image of leadership, and emphasis on public perception and trust are each fundamental to *kategoria* as a genre in the instances explored in my study. These overarching categorizations encompass the rhetorical strategies revealed in my analysis and can

be employed in ways that relate specifically to each instance of accusation, as evidenced in my three texts. Understanding these classifications, including the importance of value arguments, is critical for future accusers seeking justice and organizational change.

As a genre, forensic rhetoric recalls the past to establish guilt. Successful instances of *kategoria* expose past behavior and frame it as an unchangeable reality. Through strategic framing of the past, it is possible to motivate change in several ways. First, speeches of accusation highlight a leader's transgressions as a rhetorical indictment of past actions. This indictment serves to shape guilt and enforce the need for future recourse. By establishing the guilt of the leader based on the past, the *kategoria* operates to implicitly illustrate that the guilt will persist in the future. Next, past actions are not only detailed and ascribed to the leader, they are also consistently shown to be harmful to the organization. Connecting the leader's transgressions to the sustainability of the organization demonstrates that the greater good has not been a consideration in past actions. Speeches of accusation must call the leader's ability to rectify past actions into question, which serves to solidify that the future will be a repeat of the past without change. Strategic framing of the past is an essential component of successful *kategoria* and is grounded in indicting a leader's past to motivate change for the future.

The construction of an image of leadership is another characterization of *kategoria* that is vital to consider for future speeches of accusation. To develop a desirable image of leadership, accusers can focus on presenting both the ideal qualities of leadership as well as attributes that a leader should not exhibit. Successful instances of *kategoria* should identify and enforce the most desirable and acceptable characteristics for leadership juxtaposed with the leader's lack of those qualities. This juxtaposition builds on the strategic framing of the past through describing what leadership is *not* by itemizing a leader's transgressions and bad behavior, which serves to

solidify an individual's actions as antithetical to leadership. Descriptions of leadership can be marked by references to desirable values to expose a leader's inability to align with acceptable organizational values. Leadership is expected to be motivational and visionary with the greater good of the organization as the ultimate goal. Leaders that have transgressed or perpetuate toxic cultures are not seeking the greater good for the organization. Revealing that juxtaposition in a speech of accusation through the explicit or implicit construction of what leadership is, is not, and should be operates to motivate change and achieve justice.

Another consistency uncovered in my analysis that is critical to successful instances of *kategoria* is the emphasis on public perception and trust. Favorable public perception and public trust are foundational to the viability of an organization and are tied in part to leadership actions. Accusers who establish the guilt of a leader can rhetorically connect his or her transgressions to damaged public perception and trust of the organization holistically. This emphasis on public perception operates to create an urgency and necessity for tangible change upon which action must be taken. As leadership and culture are linked, a leadership change would directly impact organizational culture, which would affect public perception and build trust both internally and externally. Speeches of accusation should work to demonstrate that public perception and trust in the organization are damaged as a result of the leader's past actions and change is the only satisfactory path forward. A focus on the reality of public perception to stakeholders operates to seek justice and effect change by highlighting the flawed system currently in place that allows damaged public trust to persist. Strategic framing of the past, the construction of an image of leadership, and value arguments each contribute to an emphasis on the importance of public perception and trust to the sustainable future of an organization. These characterizations work

together to mark *kategoria* as a genre and to inform future accusers who wish to motivate change.

The implications of my study extend to both scholarship and society. My findings contribute to scholarship on *kategoria* by expanding the conception of this rhetorical form to move beyond a condition for *apologia* to be considered on its own as a generic tool useful for motivating change. Additionally, this study augments rhetorical leadership literature by introducing new speech forms and new ways to engage public leadership by individuals with varying degrees of power. By offering insight into successful rhetorical tactics that can be employed in speeches of accusation to disrupt power systems, shift value hierarchy, effect change, and serve justice, future attempts at *kategoria* can be bolstered, providing a practical benefit in society. Finally, illustrating that *kategoria* can be enacted for social action and organized outside the courtroom will prove beneficial to society at large as accusation and platforms for issuing *kategoria* continue to evolve, grow, and become more accessible.

My study demonstrated that it is possible to redefine leadership and instill the notion that power by position or title alone does not necessarily make an individual a leader. The ability and power to lead and effect change is possible for individuals who do not hold legitimate authority via a title. This dissociation of leadership shifts power from those who hold legitimate authority to those who enact rhetorical leadership to motivate change and seek justice. Forensic rhetoric is marked by its concern with the past and in each of my case studies, a leader's past behavior was framed as an unchangeable reality. Establishing guilt by looking at the past enables individuals to reframe expectations of leadership and use discourse to disrupt power systems, shift value hierarchy, and achieve justice. A specific tactic revealed in my examination that serves to disrupt power systems was highlighting the desirability of values that support the viability of the

organization over the values of the individual leader, which shifts expected value hierarchies. The recurrent strategies uncovered through my genre analysis are capable of being reproduced and can inform future attempts at accusation, particularly for individuals with varying degrees of power who wish to assume leadership through discourse.

Rhetorical leadership can be a powerful tool for effecting change and serving justice. Accusation, an understudied form of forensic rhetoric that seeks to establish guilt for past actions and serve justice, can also motivate change. Organizations are often hierarchical and resistant to change, particularly at the leadership level. As leadership is grounded in the managing of meaning, individuals who are seeking change for the greater good of an organization can utilize discourse to influence change. My study revealed and explicated rhetorical strategies that can be employed in instances of accusation. This examination enhances scholarship while also practically impacting society and future instances of *kategoria*. Through my genre analysis of successful speeches of accusation leveled at leaders, I have shown that *kategoria* can be employed as a form of rhetorical leadership and utilized as a tool to shift value hierarchy and effect organizational change.

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Marnie Lawler McDonough

EDUCATION

Ph.D. in Communication

Expected May 2022

Graduate Certificate in Rhetorical Leadership

2017

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Milwaukee, WI

Dissertation: "Seeking Justice and Effecting Organizational Change: *Kategoria* as a Form of Rhetorical Leadership"

Advisor: Dr. Leslie J. Harris

Committee: Dr. S. Scott Graham, Dr. Sarah Riforgiate, Dr. John Jordan

M.A. in Corporate and Organizational Communication

2008

Fairleigh Dickinson University, Madison, NJ

Thesis: "Gender and Power in Organizational Communication: Gendered Characteristics and Supervisor Preference"

Advisor: Dr. Jennifer K. Lehr

B.A. in Communication; Minors: Business/French

2000

The University of Scranton, Scranton, PA

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

- Fifteen (15) semesters of experience teaching at the undergraduate level within the Communication departments of four (4) diverse institutions
- Formats taught include face-to-face and online plus familiarity and comfort with hybrid formats
- Creation and adaptation of courses to fit a variety of time lengths including 50 minutes and 70 minutes meeting 3 times a week, 75 minutes and 110 minutes meeting 2 times a week, and 160 minutes meeting 1 time a week
- Actively assess and evaluate student needs based on observation and feedback to adapt and modify course lessons and assignments as deemed fit to optimize student learning and promote awareness of stated course outcomes
- Work closely with students to provide guidance as needed and/or requested on course material and assignments as well as broader counsel on Communication as an academic major and career option and other questions related to the Communication field
- Provide letters of reference for students (by request) for graduate study, scholarships, and potential jobs pending discussion of short- and long-term goals to develop an understanding of fit and direction in each case

Concordia University, Mequon, WI

August 2021-Present

Adjunct Instructor

- Develop curriculum, create assignments and assessment parameters, build lessons, and teach course material to provide students with scholarly and practical understanding of interpersonal communication and its importance in human relationships
- This general education course is often a student's first Communication class of any kind. As a result, my class lessons span the course material plus activities that help strengthen writing, speaking, and critical thinking skills. In-class exercises are designed to enhance awareness of course concepts by applying them to real-world examples.
 - COM/PSY 201 Interpersonal Communication (face-to-face and online)

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Milwaukee, WI

August 2015-Present

- Develop, adapt, and expand curriculum, prepare and teach lessons, create and assess assignments, and contribute to teaching and learning discussions

- Work across several formats and time/day combinations, expand use of technology in the classroom, and experiment with various assignments and teaching styles to enhance my ability to effectively teach classes and achieve student course outcomes and enrich the student learning experience across all my courses
- Moved from a lab instructor to a stand-alone instructor with autonomy while under the guidance of a course director to bolster my skills as an educator
- Served as guest instructor for a COMMUN 103 lecture to 500 students on Visual & Presentation Aids and Special Occasion Speeches (Fall 2016)
- Served as guest speaker for graduate-level COMMUN 772 (Rhetorical Leadership & Ethics) class on Interactions of Leadership and Rhetorical Pedagogy to lead discussion on my publication: “A Truly Inspiring Notion”: A Case-Study of Project-Based Graduate Service Learning” (Fall 2018)

Teaching Assistant – Stand Alone Courses

- COMMUN 311 Communication and Leadership
- COMMUN 362 Argumentation and Debate
- COMMUN 464 Theory and Practice of Persuasion
- COMMUN 335 Critical Analysis of Communication (face-to-face and online)
- COMMUN 103 Introduction to Public Speaking

Teaching Assistant – Lab Instructor (3 sections per semester)

- COMMUN 103 Introduction to Public Speaking

Carroll University, Waukesha, WI

January 2015-May 2021

Adjunct Instructor

- Developed curriculum, determined assignments and assessment parameters, crafted lessons, and taught course material to provide students with both academic and practical understanding of the field of Public Relations and generate awareness of its pervasiveness in society
- This introductory class is often a student’s first exposure to this material. Given this, I designed my lessons and exercises to not only provide comprehension of what Public Relations is and what a practitioner may do but also to inspire an interest in the field, its theory, and practical application.
 - COMM 208 Introduction to Public Relations

Montclair State University, Montclair, NJ

August 2013-May 2014

Adjunct Instructor

- Designed curriculum, prepared classroom lessons, created activities that illustrated the fusion of theory and practice, and taught multiple sections of required courses in the School of Communication & Media
- Set course outcomes and directed, advised, and assessed student learning as it pertained to these courses and related assignments
 - CMST 270 Organizational and Group Leadership
 - CMST 101 Fundamentals of Speech

PUBLICATIONS

Lawler McDonough, Marnie. Invited book review of *Demagogue for President: The Rhetorical Genius of Donald Trump*, by Jennifer Mercieca, *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 51, no. 1 (March 2021): 236-237.

Lawler McDonough, Marnie. “The Evolution of Demagoguery: An Updated Understanding of Demagogic Rhetoric as Interactive and Ongoing,” *Communication Quarterly* 66, no. 2 (2018): 138-156.

Lawler McDonough, Marnie, Marks, Laurie, & Harris, Leslie, "A Truly Inspiring Notion': A Case Study of Project-Based Graduate Service-Learning," *Partnerships: A Journal of Service-Learning and Civic Engagement* 8, no. 2 (Fall 2017): 63-78.

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

Lawler McDonough, Marnie. "Toward a Rhetoric of Strategic Confusion: Examining Critical Nuances that Mark Confusion as a Rhetorical Tactic." Accepted for presentation at the annual conference of the National Communication Association Conference, Indianapolis, IN, November 19-22, 2020. *Virtual Conference*.

Lawler McDonough, Marnie. "Expanding the Roots of Service Learning: Ella Baker's Rhetorical Advocacy of Experiential Learning." Presented at the annual conference of the National Communication Association, Salt Lake City, UT, November 8-11, 2018. *Top Paper Panel of the Experiential Learning Division*.

Lawler McDonough, Marnie. "Role Play- Act I: A Collaboratory about the Transition from Professional Work to the Academy" and "Role Play- Act II: A Collaboratory about the Transition from the Academy to Professional Work." Panelist at the annual conference of the National Communication Association Conference, Salt Lake City, UT, November 8-11, 2018.

Lawler McDonough, Marnie, Marks, Laurie, & Harris, Leslie. "Graduate Education Inside and Outside the Academy: A Model for Service-Learning." Presentation at the Annual Conference of the International Association for Research on Service-Learning and Community Engagement, New Orleans, LA, July 18-20, 2018.

Lawler McDonough, Marnie. "Confusion in a Time of Chaos, Misinformation, and Fake News: Examining Nuances that Mark Confusion as a Rhetorical Tactic." Accepted for presentation at the biennial conference of the Rhetoric Society of America, Minneapolis, MN, May 31-June 3, 2018.

Lawler McDonough, Marnie. "Let's Talk Chicken: Competing Values, Sustained Dialogue, and the Boycott Rhetoric of the Enduring Chick-fil-A Controversy." Presentation at the annual conference of the Central States Communication Association, Milwaukee, WI, April 4-8, 2018.

Lawler McDonough, Marnie. "Balancing Identification and Division: Conscious Distance in Rhetorical Leadership." Workshop at the annual Midwest Winter Workshop, Bloomington, IN, February 3, 2018.

Lawler McDonough, Marnie. "From Connection to Consequence: Finding Success in Rhetorical Violations of Self-Help Genre Expectations." Presentation at the annual conference of the Central States Communication Association, Minneapolis, MN, March 15-19, 2017.

Lawler McDonough, Marnie, Marks, Laurie, & Harris, Leslie. "Graduate Education Inside and Outside the Academy: A Model for Service-Learning." Presentation at the Annual Conference of the Western States Communication Association, Salt Lake City, UT, February 18-21, 2017.

AWARDS AND HONORS

- Selected as the first humanities graduate student to be featured in the annual UWM Research Magazine (2019)
 - The Growing Pervasiveness of Demagogic Rhetoric
- Melvin H. Miller Excellence in Research Award (2018)
- *PRWeek Awards* Employee Communications Campaign of the Year (2008)
 - The Dow Chemical Company: "I am the Human Element"

ACADEMIC SERVICE

- Reviewer for National Communication Association Annual Conference (2021)
 - Reviewed and provided feedback for four submissions, Critical and Cultural Studies Division
 - Reviewed and provided feedback for three submissions, Public Relations Division
- Reviewer for Western States Communication Association Undergraduate Conference (2019)
 - Reviewed and provided feedback for four submissions
- Reviewer for Central States Communication Association Conference (2018)
 - Reviewed and provided feedback for four submissions, Rhetorical Theory & Criticism Division
- Lambda Pi Eta (LPH) National Communication Honors Society Liaison (2018-2019)
 - Served as primary point of contact for undergraduate members of the honor society
- UWM Communication Graduate Student Council (2017-2019)
 - Ph.D. Graduate Affairs Committee (GAC) Representative
- Judge for UWM's Annual Undergraduate Research Symposium (2017, 2019)
- UWM Public Speaking Showcase Co-organizer (Spring 2016-Spring 2018)
 - Managed all aspects of the annual all-campus event including event planning, student participant recruiting, securing community judges, and hosting showcase
- UWM's NEH Next Generation Humanities Ph.D. Planning Grant Committee (2016-2017)
 - The goal of this committee was to transform curriculum within the Humanities to help doctoral students become more marketable outside the academy. The project was supported by a grant of \$25,000 from the National Endowment of the Humanities. I was one of three graduate students invited to serve on the committee from Humanities doctoral programs at UWM.
 - My work extended to multiple committees, including:
 - Planning Committee
 - Core Committee
 - Community Engagement Subcommittee

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

- The University of Scranton – Department of Communication & Media Alumni Advisory Board

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

CURRENT

- National Communication Association (NCA)
- Central States Communication Association (CSCA)

PAST

- American Marketing Association (AMA)
- International Association of Business Communicators (IABC): Membership Committee
- Association for Women in Communication (AWC): Vice President, Student Relations
- Public Relations Society of America (PRSA): Mentoring Committee, Co-Chair

PROFESSIONAL AND ACADEMIC MENTORSHIP

- IABC: Launched program for New York Chapter; served as a mentor to young professionals
- PRSA: Co-chaired program for New York Chapter; served as a mentor to young professionals
- The University of Scranton – Kania School of Management and Department of Communication: Served as a guest speaker and mentor to current students and recent graduates
- UWM: Served as a mentor to first-year Ph.D. students (2016-2019)

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Freelance Marketing & Communications Professional

October 2011-July 2015

- Directed the content strategy and development for clients; assessed communication methods and platforms and made recommendations on how to better reach target audiences through message and channel
- Wrote and edited all communication needed for clients, including, but not limited to, website copy, print materials, articles, press releases, fact sheets, grant applications, speeches and talking points
- Provided overall marketing direction and support on projects, both long- and short-term
- Developed strategic social media (SM) plans for clients based on their needs; established, managed, and grew their SM platforms
- Served as an advisor to clients on best practices and latest trends in marketing and communications
- Clients included: Mfa; MWW; Comcast Spotlight; Stevens Institute of Technology; The University of Scranton; New York Medical College; College of Mount St. Vincent; Adult School of Montclair; independent film director Fran Tarr; Spine & Osteoarthritis Center of New Jersey; Immaculata High School; Colorful Dogs

Stevens Institute of Technology, Hoboken, NJ

September 2008-October 2011

Associate Director of Communications

June 10-October 11

- Promoted the Stevens Institute of Technology brand globally through strategic communication and marketing plans; served as primary writer for the University website and other key promotional materials
- Oversaw University website homepage content to ensure timeliness and relevancy with targeted messages for all constituents; analyzed analytics to determine success of placed stories
- Established the social media (SM) presence for the University, including maintaining branded profiles/pages/groups (resulting in a 561% growth in "Likes" on Facebook; 7,190% growth in "Followers" on Twitter within less than a two-year period), educating staff on SM strategies, and monitoring SM trends
- Led a committee of 15 University communicators to generate news content and cultivate story leads; assigned story coverage as appropriate; developed monthly newsletter (distributed to 50,000+) of top news stories
- Oversaw issues related to University branding, after participating in a year-long re-branding initiative; directed use of logo and branding elements, working closely with all University divisions
- Supported the mission and vision of the University by following industry trends and current events; positioned Stevens and its faculty/staff as thought leaders in science, technology, innovation, and entrepreneurship
- Managed freelance writers, student workers and an outside PR agency; edited all written content before posting and distribution
- Represented the University in the local community, acting as liaison to the City of Hoboken, identifying opportunities for cross-promotion and organizing participation in community events and initiatives

Assistant Director, Marketing & Communications

September 08-May 10

- Developed and implemented marketing campaigns designed to increase University enrollment and garner interest in the school, both at the undergraduate and graduate levels

- Provided high-level guidance to executive management of the University on marketing efforts and special projects, including, but not limited to, trademark renewal, presentations for quarterly Board of Trustees meetings, event execution, advertising buys and placement, website development and proposal editing
- Acted as the media relations contact for the University Enrollment and Administration department, performing all aspects of the process including writing press releases, pitching stories, and maintaining relationships with key local editors
- Crafted responses to public and press queries, developing and executing crisis communication plans as needed, determining appropriate channels for response, and proactively seeking solutions to avoid or preempt future crisis situations

Insidedge/GolinHarris, New York, NY

July 2007-August 2008

Account Group Supervisor/Internal Communications Consultant

- Conceived and oversaw all internal communications programs for various clients, consisting of industry-leading pharmaceutical, telecommunications and financial companies
- Strategized practical and innovative communication solutions and implemented programs to support the employee communications needs of all clients
- Conducted extensive qualitative and quantitative research, including focus groups, one-on-one interviews, and surveys, to gain understanding of employee communications needs and individual corporate culture
- Wrote and presented tactical plans to, and provided communication training for, chief corporate officers, including CEO, CMO, CCO, CRO and others as needed
- Pitched the capabilities and services of Insidedge/GolinHarris to potential new clients and maintained relationships with existing clients
- Directed the monthly accounting for each client, including time management and billing

Comcast Spotlight, Bloomfield, NJ

January 2005-June 2007

Marketing Manager, NY DMA

- Developed and implemented the annual marketing plan, in addition to overseeing a \$1 million marketing budget, for the advertising sales division of Comcast Corporation in the New York market
- Created marketing materials for the sales staff as needed including presentations, sales updates, one-sheets, fact sheets and newsletters
- Conceived and implemented creative marketing solutions for clients, including network-partnered promotions, pro-social campaigns, and traffic-generating events
- Organized and executed all events for the DMA, including, but not limited to, client and employee events, quarterly Town Halls, talent appearances, trips, golf outings, meetings, and conferences
- Managed the internal communications of the market, sharing best practices and regional news with Comcast Spotlight and Comcast Corporation employees nationally, via internal announcements, weekly email blasts and sales updates, a monthly newsletter, and an intranet site
- Served as a representative for Comcast Spotlight NY DMA at industry events, meetings, conferences, and corporate functions
- Accountable for the daily responsibilities and annual performance reviews of 2 Marketing Coordinators and the marketing functions of 10 sales assistants

BBC Worldwide Americas, New York, NY
Senior Manager, Communication & Strategy
Manager, Communication & Strategy
Coordinator, Communications

June 2000-December 2004

August 04-December 04

February 02-July 04

June 00-January 02

- Expanded and promoted the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) brand across the US, Canada, and Latin America
- Developed and implemented communication strategies for television sales, publishing, consumer products, library sales and other divisions across BBCWA

- Planned and oversaw press launches of new BBC products across North America (including, but not limited to, programming, DVDs, books, stock footage, and other consumer products)
- Acted as representative for the BBC in North America at industry events, client meetings and trade shows
- Wrote and maintained the North America portion of the global BBC intranet site
- Prepared all communications pieces for internal executives including, but not limited to, speeches, talking points, announcements, briefings, and one-sheets
- Wrote and organized distribution of press releases, fact sheets and other press materials
- Created and distributed all internal communications pieces including, but not limited to, daily press recaps, email announcements, and a monthly newsletter
- Maintained and developed relationships with contacts at key publications
- Organized and executed executive and talent press interviews and events
- Monitored and reported daily BBCWA's presence in the press (for entire BBC organization, approx. 25,000 people in worldwide offices)
- Coordinated all activity for trade shows, including all accommodations, press relations, material distribution and booth design
- Managed daily responsibilities of the Communications Assistant/Coordinator