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TOWARD A CULTURAL RHETORICS PRAXIS OF CARE FOR DIGITAL

STORYTELLING PROJECTS ABOUT REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE

by

Danielle Marie Koepke

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ABSTRACT

TOWARD A CULTURAL RHETORICS PRAXIS OF CARE FOR DIGITAL
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by

Danielle Marie Koepke

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2023
Under the Supervision of Professor Dr. Rachel Bloom-Pojar

Recent events have drawn national attention to the fight for reproductive rights. However,

Black women, Indigenous women, Women of Color, and LGBTQ+ people have long been

fighting for reproductive justice, which connects reproductive rights to issues like immigration

rights, fair wages, housing, quality education, and safe neighborhoods. There has also been a

shift towards reproductive justice scholarship in rhetoric and writing studies. This dissertation

focuses on the efforts and experiences of the Promotores de Salud, Latinx health promoters

working for reproductive justice in Wisconsin. By constellating rhetorics of reproductive justice,

cultural rhetorics, and queer and feminist scholarship, this dissertation builds a foundation for a

cultural rhetorics (CR) praxis of care that supports digital storytelling projects about reproductive

justice. Through the methods of story, relationality, constellation, and decolonial practices, this

dissertation grapples with the complications of implementing a CR praxis of care into a

community-engaged digital storytelling project with the promotores de salud and of

implementing the project into the digital classroom. *Cuentos de Confianza: A Community

Writing Project for Reproductive Justice* is a bilingual digital storytelling project written by six

promotoras about their lived experiences as Latina women advocating for sexual and

reproductive education and health in their communities. Through a community writing class, the

curation of the site, and the circulation of the stories to community and academic audiences, this

dissertation examines how a CR praxis of care offered practical actions for caring for vulnerable stories and storytellers throughout the life of the project. The findings suggest that sharing stories about reproductive justice in digital spaces must be done through active care practices that value story and relationships over research methods and data analysis, that center community knowledges and experiences, and that pursues new and alternative methods to best care for their community partners. This dissertation demonstrates how feminist researchers and rhetoricians can expand their practices of care to better account for the complexities of caring for stories in digital spaces and use their rhetorical skills to support community efforts on the road toward reproductive justice.

Para las promotoras de salud: gracias por compartir sus historias hermosas con nosotros.
(For the health promoters: thank you for sharing your beautiful stories with us.)

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABC	**Explanation**
BIPOC	Black, Indigenous, and People of Color
CCmáS	Cuidándonos Creceremos más Sanos (Growing Healthier Together)
CR	Cultural Rhetorics
E207	English 207: Health Science Writing
E240	English 240: Writing, Rhetoric and Culture (Writing for Social Action)
E855	English 855: Seminar in Public Rhetorics and Community Engagement: Rhetoric of Health and Medicine
IRB	Institutional Review Board
LGBTQ+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and other diverse gender and sexual identities
LMS	Learning Management System
MA	Master of Arts
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
PNC/CCC	Prenatal Care Coordinator/Childcare Coordinator
PPWI	Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin
RHM	Rhetoric of Health and Medicine
UWM	University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

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To Rachel, for being more than a faculty advisor. Thank you for mentoring me, teaching me, and encouraging me as I struggled to make the words of this dissertation mean as much as the lived experiences those words represent. And to the rest of my committee, I'm grateful for your openness, support, and gently challenging throughout this process.

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To my dystopic friends, for the space to be petty, salty, and angry. Hollander is calling us to reunite with drinks and cheese curds and siracha aioli sauce (don't forget your rage notes).

To the music that helped me write when I didn't think I could type out even one more word: Ms. Gets her DISS done, dark academia, soulsound♥, and Big Bootie Mix, vol. 18.

To papa, for showing me that care is complicated. You showed care not through words or emotions but through practical actions like giving me quarters you'd saved up since I'd been born or helping me buy a car so I could drive to college. I promised I would finish, and here I am. I wish you were still here to see it.

To my mom, for being the one person in the world whose hug melts me. Thank you for always supporting my dreams, even when I didn't think I'd ever reach them. And for the best chocolate chip cookies in the world that can fix almost anything. I'm grateful that you and dad instilled in me a will to succeed and never give up.

To Evelyn and Lyla, for giving me passion to advocate for young people to have access to the human rights of reproductive justice. And, for making me laugh when I take myself too seriously. Maybe now I will have time to improve my Smash Bros skills. (;

To Tyler, for staying by my side throughout this crazy journey. How can I not be cliché? I literally could not have done this without you. Thank you for pushing me to go back to graduate school to achieve my dream. It means the world to me. I love you.

to hate
is an easy lazy thing
but to love
takes strength
everyone has
but not all are
willing to practice

-    Rupi Kaur

Chapter 1: Constellating Rhetorics of Reproductive Justice

This dissertation has been a labor of love. It might be cliché, but it is the kind of love you keep fighting for even when it is hard. So much care has gone into the research, writing, and doing of this dissertation. To begin, I share a care statement so we can enter into a space of trust together:

Welcome to the conclusion of a story four years in the making. I invite you in as a reader with your own unique perspective and worldview. I ask that the embodied experiences shared throughout this dissertation are respected and honored, and that you strive to hold complexities together instead of striving to find one true answer or argument. This dissertation is a collection of stories about research, community-engaged work, and life as a graduate student/human. Don't read it as a traditional type of dissertation. I hope for it to be read, understood, and acted on, not for it to be tucked away quietly in our campus archive, never to be seen again. The layout, design, content, and language choices are all intentional. So too are the citational lineages. Citations are political and the citations I include in my writing tell a story about whose voices matter. This dissertation intentionally centers voices of those historically marginalized and helps draw new lines of scholarship for future scholars. As you read, I hope you also reflect on the emotional labors involved in the writing of this. I am a mother who completed doctoral studies during some of the darkest days of Covid-19. I've worked 3-4 jobs at a time while earning a PhD. The years have been long and arduous, and I look forward to the next chapter of my story. In this dissertation you will find some of my own lived experiences. I ask that you extend care for these stories and work to understand how they are linked to my experiences of research, writing, and teaching. Finally, across the chapters there are general mentions of sexual assault,

domestic violence, suicide, pregnancy loss, and other topics related to reproductive and sexual

health. Please take the time you may need to care for yourself as you read. Thank you for

entering into this space with me.

they destroy the lives of the living
because they say
they value the lives of children
but if this was about children—
they'd actually protect children when they get here
they'd give parents the resources to raise them
they'd act after school shootings
they'd say *the earth is burning and*
we need to save it for our children to keep breathing
this isn't about children—
this is about them having control of our bodies
we don't need reasons to justify why we need abortions
but these bans prove how little they value human life
they force death upon people undergoing non-viable pregnancies
they criminalize miscarriages and stillbirths
they make those who've been raped
keep children they never wanted
they don't ban abortion because they love human life—
they ban abortion because
they think they own human life.

- rupi kaur

Figure 1. A poem from Rupi Kaur, written on Instagram shortly after the Dobbs Decision, June 2022.

Starting From Story

I open my dissertation with a story. It's important for you to understand why I'm here

writing this now. I follow the example of cultural rhetoricians such as Malea Powell, Andrea

Riley-Mukavetz, and V. Jo Hsu, who practice story as a powerful teaching and relationship-

building tool, so that you know who I am and how I've come to this work. I also follow feminist

scholars throughout history including bell hooks, Audre Lorde, Gloría Anzaldúa, and Cherríe

Moraga who demonstrate that the personal is political. How we come to our work as scholars matters because it impacts how we do our work.

In 2007, I was a highschooler with big dreams for the future. I loved playing basketball, reading, and writing. I had inspiring quotes plastered all over my walls with actual glue (Sorry, dad!). I was going to play basketball in college, go on to earn a PhD, and teach forever! I never even imagined having my own kids, though I loved babysitting and helping in my church's nursery. I was raised in an extremely conservative Christian home which led to some arguments as I got older about what I wanted vs. what my parents wanted. We went through seasons of having a good amount of money and seasons of barely having enough money to buy food for meals. It wasn't a perfect life but looking back it seemed like I tended to make the best of things and that overall, I was happy.

When I was 17 my life took a dramatic shift as I very surprisingly found out I was pregnant. I was quite shocked because I had no real sexual or reproductive health education at home or at school. I was too embarrassed to even search for things that people my age might search for online that would better clue me in to what I was experiencing. Plus, my dad was a whiz with computers and often checked search histories. It was, unfortunately, a case of preaching abstinence as *the method* of birth control. And it had failed. *What to do?* I remember before a basketball game that fall, I was trying to figure out why my period was late for the second month in a row. I didn't always get it the same week each month, so I hoped for the best and continued to do nothing. It wasn't until I got into some serious trouble with my parents that I finally burst into tears and admitted my worry that I might be pregnant.

From the moment the pregnancy test result was positive, my life changed drastically. Because I was part of a family that considered abortion to be evil, and because I was basically on

house arrest from that day until the day I gave birth, there was nothing to do but make the best of it. I wasn't allowed to return to my part time job, to see or talk to my friends, or to go anywhere on my own. After all, I had lied to my parents and made some bad choices. My family supported me in that they didn't kick me out and let me stay living with them once my daughter was born. My mom drove me to every prenatal appointment with my younger siblings in tow. Two months before my due date, I was proposed

Figure 2. Me holding my newborn baby, July 2008.

to by the biological father, and the plan made by both sets of parents was just to make things work. To "fix it." However, the biological father did not really care about me. Three days before my due date, I got dumped for another non-pregnant girl. I was induced one week later and had a healthy birth. I wasn't afraid to care for my baby because I'd cared for so many other babies growing up. What I didn't even stop to think about was how to care for my own emotional wellbeing given everything I was experiencing.

While I was pregnant, my mom and I had a serious conversation about my future. She

said supported me if I wanted to continue going to college and if I wanted to still try to play basketball. She said wanted me to still have a life. To dream. And I am forever grateful she said that to me. I set my sights fully on academic pursuits. I finished high school the year after my daughter was born and started taking college classes at our local two-year university.

Figure 3. My daughter and I when I graduated from Marquette, May 2013.

From there, I transferred to Marquette, where I graduated in 2013. By this time, I had rekindled an old friendship that developed into love and had gotten married in fall of 2012. After I walked across the stage at Marquette nine months pregnant with my second child, I left the ceremony and drove across the country to welcome home my husband from his 8-month tour in Afghanistan as a U.S. Marine. We decided it best that I work instead of continuing to graduate school at that time, so I became a freelance writer pulling in whatever jobs I could to supplement our income. Four years later, I came back to graduate school to hopefully finish the one goal I'd had since I was first pregnant: to earn a PhD, the highest level of education in my field. And here I am, *so close* to being done it brings tears to my eyes to type it. My older daughter is completing her freshman year of high school this year, and in the same year, 10 years after I graduated from Marquette, I am here graduating from the doctoral program.

My story overall feels like a success. Like, *look at her, she overcame hard obstacles, but she succeeded!* This view of my story has been offered to me as a compliment when I was still attending church. The church ladies loved me and my cute little family. But there is a darker side to my story I often leave out. It is painful for my husband or my kids or my family to hear about. And some things no one hears about because it brings forth anger, bitterness, and other emotions in me. The biological father of my first child emotionally, verbally, and sexually harassed me during the time that I was pregnant and after. He broke up with me because he was dating someone else when I was about to give birth. He later stalked me at my work, repeatedly taking my keys and refusing to let me leave. He would yell and grab and shake me, trying to force me to come back to him. He would call my cell phone and the general work phone and show up unannounced. He tried to break into my home when he was supposed to have my daughter because I wasn't returning his calls and I had to file for a restraining order against him as a

result. Even now, I don't want to write the details of it all. I skim over them. I leave things out. I was so young. I didn't know how to name some of the things I was experiencing. I was used, manipulated, and forced into situations I did not want to be in.

Even though this man has not been acting like a parent for the last 15 years, nor has he been paying accurate child support, he has continued to fight against me, tried to control my life and my daughter's, and manipulated my words and my daughter's to use against me. He has taken me to court numerous times to fight to have more time and more control and I am forced to compromise or pay more money to lawyers. There are times a seemingly normal decision – Is it time for her to have her own phone? – becomes a huge fight in his attempts to control everything. There are times I've thought, *I must be crazy*. But then I check the receipts. While I had to be a mother since the moment I give birth, and really since the moment I found out I was pregnant, he has done whatever the f*ck he wanted for most of her life, all the while demanding things of me because he is biologically a father. While he had the fun weekend trips and events, I had the day-to-day parenting of a child going through struggles, transitions, illnesses, etc. I have been chained to this toxicity for 15 years and I cannot get away.

I share this with you not because I want sympathy and not to be dramatic, but because it is wrapped up tightly with my overall *why* of this dissertation. Lately I have wondered what my life would have been like if I would have had someone in my 17-year-old life who helped me to get an abortion. I know, *how can she even say that?!* I don't regret my daughter one bit. I also have grown enough and have learned enough to be able to hold that care for her in one hand and hold care for myself in the other hand. The minute I was pregnant no one cared about me for *me*. They cared about me for the baby, or for who I might be as a married mother one day, or for me as how I represented the family. No one asked if *I* thought having a baby would be best for *my*

future or for *my* wellbeing. I love my daughter with all my heart, and I have always put her first. Still, I wonder how different my life would have been if I would not have been tethered to a manipulative, abusive person for life because I accidentally got pregnant 15 years ago.

These experiences, alongside my graduate education in rhetoric and composition studies as well as women's and gender studies, have fueled a passion in me about reproductive justice, which I will discuss in more detail shortly. My story matters for my dissertation because I deeply desire for everyone, but especially for young people, to have access to sex education and reproductive health services so that they can make informed decisions about their own lives and their own bodies. I am also passionate about teaching people how to consider the complexities of reproductive issues. For instance, if someone argues that they are "pro-life," I want to know what they really mean by that. Do they mean that a fetus specifically should have a chance at life, without any regard whatsoever to the pregnant person's chance at life? Do they consider what it might cost the mother in physical, mental, emotional, and economic labors? It is rather poetic that people tend to call these things labors. What about the labor pains felt by the mother? What about the lasting pains of having a child on the mother? On her body? On her mind? Some people say that they are pro-life and are willing to adopt "unwanted" children. Why aren't they willing to put their money toward supporting mothers who didn't want to be mothers in the first place? Why aren't they willing to put their money toward supporting sex education, contraceptives, and care for people who could become pregnant instead of into adoption after the fact? It's too late at that point.

But this dissertation isn't about my personal story. At least, it is not meant to center my story. I know I have privilege – I can see it through parts of my story I just recounted here. I know that access to sexual and reproductive health education and services, including but not

limited to abortion care, is unequally distributed along lines of privilege. I don't want my positionality to be centered in this work. I only want readers to understand how I came to this project and why care is central to it. I seek to use my voice and my positionality as a white woman to amplify and care for the stories of Black women, Latina/x women, Indigenous women, Women of Color, and people who identify as LGBTQ+ about their experiences of and efforts towards reproductive justice.

Speculating on Care as an Active Response to Reproductive Injustices

For the last two years, I have used my academic resources and my personal skills to highlight and support the work of a specific group of Promotores de Salud, Latinx health promoters, who provide sexual and reproductive health education and support to their communities across Wisconsin. These reproductive justice activists are community health experts who balance issues of gender equity and reproductive rights with issues of immigrant rights and access to health education and services. During this time, I have worked in collaboration with Dr. Rachel Bloom-Pojar at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (UWM) and a group of the promotores to develop a digital storytelling project that has come to be known as *Cuentos de Confianza: A Community Writing Project for Reproductive Justice*.[1] The website for this project, which I will describe in detail in Chapter 3, hosts stories written by six promotoras (female-identifying health promoters) about their lived experiences surrounding reproductive [in]justice and their journeys as promotoras. As the website creator and manager, I have had to navigate many complicated ethical concerns throughout the life of the project

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[1] *Cuentos de Confianza* translates directly into English as Stories of Trust. In Chapter 3, I discuss how "confianza" represents more dynamic meanings in Spanish than in English. Throughout the dissertation, I integrate Spanish words into my English writing without italicizing because I see language access as intertwined with reproductive justice.

regarding the curation of the site, the circulation of their stories in digital spaces, and use of the site by secondary audiences such as academics. As a researcher working with community collaborators, I have been wary of separating the story from the storyteller (Novotny and Gagnon 2018, 74-5). Caring for stories is a practice of caring for the people telling those stories, especially when vulnerable experiences with reproductive [in]justice are involved. This is something tangible we each have likely experienced – how our own stories are cared for once the words have left our mouths or have been typed on the page. Throughout this project, I have been deeply attuned to the relation between the promotoras, their stories, and what actions I can take to care for them.

This dissertation recounts the ethical concerns that I negotiated during the development and dissemination of *Cuentos de Confianza* and offers a praxis of care for feminist researchers to implement when engaging in community projects that center marginalized voices, especially through digital storytelling. This dissertation is situated not at an intersection, but as a constellation formed in response to calls by cultural rhetoricians and feminist scholars. While intersectionality considers the intersecting dynamics of identities, oppressions, and lived experiences, constellation seeks to connect lines that might not necessarily intersect to draw a larger picture from those connected nodes. Both intersectionality and constellation are valuable for this conversation. This dissertation is a response to calls for scholars in the rhetoric of health and medicine to "put their scholarship into conversation with issues pertinent to reproductive justice" (Novotny and De Hertogh 399) to develop more ethical research and community engagement practices that better care for those involved. Additionally, cultural rhetoricians such as Casie Cobos et al. call us to further examine the "roles and uses of cultural rhetorics outside of a scholarly context" (150). Cultural rhetorics views culture and rhetoric as always already

intertwined and highlights story as world-building theory, relationality as foundational to research and community engagement, constellation as a practice of building connections across multiple knowledges and ways of being in the world, and decolonial practices as necessary in the pursuit of a more socially just world. While part of this dissertation has to do with academia, the research, work, and curation has been done with and for the community of the promotores de salud.

To actively care for this unique project, I learned to apply speculative thinking to my practices of care. In her book, *Matters of Care*, María Puig de la Bellacasa describes how speculative thinking is "attached to situated and positioned visions of what a livable and caring world could be" without any one of those positions "[defining] in advance what is or could be" (60). This move is in line with feminist scholars who call for a politics of speculative thinking to imagine both buried pasts and possible futures (For example, Hartman's *Wayward Lives*). Speculative thinking allows me to hold space for a plurality of meanings instead of one definitive formula of care. I follow Puig de la Bellacasa in my baseline definition of care as three overlapping and convoluted meanings: Care as labor, work, or activity; care as an affect or feeling, and care as a political ethic (204). To me, care is a web of doings, feelings, and ethics that sustain relations among humans, non-humans, and the world around us. Multiple webs of care work together, some more than others, to sustain these interwoven relations as best as possible. According to Puig de la Bellacasa, there are two facets of speculative thinking that are helpful for reimaging care:

1. Seek what other worlds could be, and
2. Stay with the trouble of our own complicities and implications.

Two feminist rhetoricians, Maria Novotny and Dawn Opel, also lean on Puig de la Bellacasa's work to claim that speculative thinking brings care back from mere feminist critique to meaningful action. Care is a responsive and reflective action (99). Care is an active response that seeks out what possible paths could lead to as-well-as-possible worlds (Puig de la Bellacasa). By establishing care as an action, we "[ground] care ethics in situation" (Puig de la Bellacasa 204). And, I would suggest, that situation is rhetorical. *How to care, and for whom? In response to what exigence? For what purpose? Within what kinds of contexts?* When we ground care ethics in situation, we are "acknowledging poisons in the grounds that we inhabit rather than expecting to find an outside alternative, untouched by trouble" (11). We cannot care outside of all the messy entanglements we are caught up in because we cannot get outside of them. We must grapple with *how to care* where and how we are. In this way, care is also a constant reflection on yourself, your surroundings, and what you can do within those practical entanglements (Dombroski 11).

To accomplish care this within the scope of a dissertation, I've had to reach outside of traditional methods, methodologies, and deliverables. Therefore, I present this dissertation as a product of research-creation. Research-creation considers art practices (broadly defined) to be research methods. In her manifesto, *How to Make Art at the End of the World*, Natalie Loveless argues that research-creation is both a method and a product that is transdisciplinary, freeing scholars and especially students from disciplinary constraints while allowing them space to produce more innovative scholarship and transform pedagogy and research from neoliberal holdings. Research-creation brings together the formal and the informal, producing "hybrid forms, defamiliarizing and uncanny, that oscillate between more than one 'species' of production"

(56). These methods and products make space by failing. Because such a product fails to belong as purely scholarship, purely art, or otherwise, it expands possibilities and "tells other stories" (57). Research-creation challenges the academy by drawing on feminist, queer, decolonial, and anti-racist movements that critique "not only who gets to participate and whose labor gets to count but also which modes of address are permitted scholarly status" (57). This requires slowing down in order to defamiliarize. By doing so, we can ask different questions and ask questions differently. We can find ways "to persuade [others] to care and to care differently. By wedging open what gets to count as research, where, when, and how, research-creation, […] works to render each of us a little more capable, a little more care-filled, opening us onto new webs of sensorial attunement and nurturance" (107). This experimental, artistically driven method supports a more sustainable existence within academia, not only in the Arts where it was first theorized, but also in the Humanities, where I find myself.

What I've done in this dissertation it not exactly traditional research, nor is it exactly art, nor does it exactly *fit* anywhere. But it is a product of research, of creativity, of collaboration, of rhetoric, and of care. Through actions of care, I allowed this project to lead me into unknown territories. Like one graduate student who produced a research-creation project with Loveless as her adviser, I've used "multimodal forms of research" in this practice of research-creation and, along the way, have experienced "an embodiment of the theory surrounding care" that I'd previously researched in more traditional manner (Plouffe, qtd.in Loveless: 104). To me, this is how research-creation and care are connected. To do this work of moving across disciplinary methodologies, scholarships, requirements, as well as community concerns and needs, we need a praxis of care that takes shifting cultural and rhetorical situations into account. This is how I came to practice a cultural rhetorics praxis of care. In the remaining sections of this introductory

chapter, I constellate a web of knowledges from different areas of expertise to orient readers to the main themes and underlying concepts of this project: The Reproductive Justice Movement, Connections to Rhetoric, and Caring for Stories in a Digital Reproductive Justice Project. I end with what this project does and a brief description of each chapter.

The Reproductive Justice Movement

Black women, Indigenous women, Women of Color, and Trans individuals have historically endured reproductive injustices across a range of issues at the hands of patriarchal ideals and policies. Since the founding of America immigrant women, Black women, and Indigenous women have wrongfully had their children taken away (Briggs). Women in Latin America have been targeted for reproductive and gender-based violence that often ends in murder (Hernández and De Los Santos Upton). Black women and Women of Color have been coerced into a variety of sterilization and birth control experimentations (Fixmer-Oraiz). Cruelties such as these are often erased from official historical accounts or are not widely known about by those unaffected. At the same time, many medical advancements in reproductive health methods made by women have been cut out of historical records. For instance, in past centuries birth and reproductive health were the work of midwives; male doctors avoided it. But as medical advancements increased, men took over areas they considered to require expertise, including reproductive health services (Roberts). Midwives were pushed out of their profession under a false belief that they were not experts because they had not studied at a university. But these male experts did not fully understand nor even try to understand the female body, and so they did not know how best to attend to women who had complications concerning pregnancies, birth, and afterbirth. This only skims the surface of the reproductive injustices incurred over generations. Throughout time, when medical institutions have failed to provide quality,

equitable, and culturally specific reproductive healthcare, advocates of reproductive justice fill in the gaps for their communities.

Reproductive justice is a movement separate from the women's rights movement that has grown out of this history of injustice and oppression. As long as there has been a mainstream women's rights movement, there have been those fighting against racism and exclusion within it such as Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, and Ida B. Wells Barnett (Davis 1983). In the 60s and 70s, the now well-known Combahee River Collective developed as a group of Black lesbian feminists working to bring awareness to the unique conditions of Black women within both feminist and civil rights movements (Taylor 22-3). Membership was fluid over the years, including Audre Lorde and bell hooks, but those who wrote the Combahee River Collective Statement included Barbara Smith, Beverly Smith, and Demita Frazier. In the 70s, there were also women of the progressive Puerto Rican Young Lords Party in New York City who made advancements for female leadership within the group and advocated for access to abortion, education about birth control options, an end to forced sterilization, and other issues like fair wages and childcare support (Nelson). Activist labors such as these paved the way for the reproductive justice movement to be more officially formulated in the 90s. In preparation for the International Conference on Population and Development, at which it was agreed upon that "the individual right to plan your own family must be central to global development" ("Reproductive Justice", a group of Black women met to discuss ongoing exclusions from the women's rights movement. They claimed that these continued racist and classist discriminations were seeded deep within the movement (Davis 1983; Roberts). The group named themselves Women of African Descent for Reproductive Justice and began building coalitions across ethnicities. In 1997, they renamed themselves SisterSong. Today, SisterSong is "the largest

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national multi-ethnic Reproductive Justice collective. [Their] membership includes and represents Indigenous, African American, Arab and Middle Eastern, Asian and Pacific Islander, and Latina women and LGBTQ people." ("Reproductive Justice").

Loretta Ross and Rickie Solinger, who have both done important theoretical work to formalize the framework of reproductive justice and have worked in community activist groups to advocate for and educate about reproductive justice, define it through these principles:

1. The right not to have a child,
2. The right to have a child, and
3. The right to parent children in safe and healthy environments.

In addition, "reproductive justice demands sexual autonomy and gender freedom for every human being" (9). This transformational framework accounts for the shifting of identities while always keeping equity, dignity, and justice centered (Ross et al. 13). At its core, reproductive justice is rooted in community, not academia. It centers the most marginalized voices and disrupts mainstream white women's rights activism that is often a single-issue movement.

Unlike the mainstream women's rights movement, which has historically harnessed its fight for abortion to the right of privacy and to the freedom of choice, reproductive justice is based on a universal human rights framework. In the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* case, the U.S. Supreme Court established abortion as a constitutional right, determining that "reproduction is a private matter, to be decided by the nation's citizens" (Foster 163). This focus on a citizen's right to "privacy" hinges on who is seen as a citizen worthy of privacy. Historically, the category "citizen" has had narrow boundaries, blurring the line between non-citizen and non-desirables

(Hong; Puar). As such, many are excluded from protections for privacy offered to citizens, including incarcerated women, immigrants, and Trans individuals. Freedom of choice similarly has a small audience because it posits women as private consumers – those who have money *can choose* to pay for an abortion or other reproductive healthcare if they are seen as "citizens." Meaning, if a person lived in a place where abortions were illegal, they could choose – if they had enough money and were accepted as a citizen – to travel elsewhere to secure one. Unlike this narrow path to reproductive rights, reproductive justice claims that being able to have an abortion is a basic human right that every human being deserves regardless of race, class, gender, sexuality, citizenship status, etc. It is important to understand that this argument expands reproductive rights beyond a privacy matter. A person has the right to pursue alternative family building through methods like in vitro fertilization without being married; a Trans individual has the right to gender affirming health care; a pregnant teenager has the right to an abortion service they can travel to; a queer couple has the right to adopt and raise a child (Patton-Imani).

As a human rights framework, reproductive justice is situated within the umbrella of social justice. It is not situated within feminism, partially due to the racism and classism that have been bound up in feminist movements throughout history. A well-known example is the women's suffrage movement: though many Black women fought for this cause, they were not included in the 19th amendment, which paved the way for white women to vote in 1920. Black women were not allowed to vote due to Jim Crow Laws until the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Barbara Smith, a member of the Combahee River Collective, reflected on the positionality of Black women on human rights over feminist-specific concerns: "we have a right as people who are not just female, who are not solely Black, who are not just lesbians, who are not just working class, or workers – that we are people who embody all of these identities, and we have a right to

build and define political theory and practice based upon that reality" (qtd. in Taylor: 61). Even the narrative of feminism itself is often (though perhaps unintentionally) reduced to "waves," of which intersectionality is presented as The Contribution of Black Women in one wave. During the years that Kimberlé Crenshaw was coining the term intersectionality within the field of law (See "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex"), the women of SisterSong and other Women of Color reproductive justice organizations were *already* calling for intersectional analysis because of their exclusion from and mistreatment by white feminist movements.

And this has continued. When Donald Trump was elected president in 2016, the Women's March that happened in response was the largest single day protest in America (North). Sadly, it was not a surprise that the concerns of white, heterosexual, middle-class women were uplifted as representative of universal women's issues while many other marginalized identities, such as Trans women, were harmfully ignored. In the image below, the truth is painfully displayed: white women are wearing pink "pussy hats" while a Black woman in front of them holds a sign that reads, "Don't forget: White Women Voted for TRUMP." 52% of white women voted for Trump in 2016. Though this march was highlighted in mainstream media as feminist activism, it does not address racism or other inequities. Wearing

Figure 4. Tweet in response to Women's March, January 2017.

pink, having reproductive organs, and being pro-choice does not make a person a feminist and it co-opts attention from intersectional issues. It is imperative to understand intersectional

approaches to feminism because intersectionality is a concept that emerged out of necessity from the lived experiences of Black women, Indigenous women, and Women of Color. Due to this lack of awareness from mainstream feminists, I've noticed an increasing number of my peers across fields of study who have either carefully worded their definition of feminism or have sidestepped it altogether in favor of social justice.

Reproductive justice recognizes that reproductive health and wellness intersect with other social justice issues. Fighting for abortion rights alone will not help most people, because even in places where abortion care is available, it has been restricted, limited, policed, and privatized, hindering most people from being able to access it in time. For instance, Barbara Gurr writes about how most women on reservations are unable to access prenatal care due to lack of transportation and inability to take time off work to travel the long distance to the sparsely located Indian Health Service clinics (82-83). These women are individually blamed for lack of care when the truth is that the medical institution is failing to provide equal access to needed health services. Additionally, other community concerns such as access to quality healthcare, good education, fair housing, humane wages, safe and healthy neighborhood environment, immigrant protection, and financial support for families are all essential to reproductive justice (Ross). Reproductive justice demands rights for all those with reproductive bodies to live in a safe and healthy environment, unharmed by racism, sexism, and other oppressions. It demands equity and justice for every person, going beyond what mainstream feminism offers. However, that is not to say that feminism and reproductive justice don't intersect. Many reproductive justice activists describe themselves as Black feminists, Women of Color feminists, or Queer activists. In recent years, the reproductive justice framework developed by SisterSong has also shifted its language to include sexual justice and gender freedom more explicitly as a human

right (Price 587). Reproductive justice calls scholars and activists to "move beyond thinking about reproduction in terms of gender, [and] understand how sexuality, reproduction, and general health and well-being are connected to other social justice issues such as economic justice, environmental justice, immigration, prison reform, and LGBTQ liberation" (586).

While there are national organizations for reproductive justice, the foci of local demands are based on community-specific needs. Over recent years, scholars have more formally documented the efforts of communities doing reproductive justice work, including Black, Latinx, Asian American, and Indigenous women in America (See Silliman et al.). For example, reproductive justice scholar Katsi Cook founded the Mother's Milk Project, which researched issues with milk supply in Mohawk women living along the St. Lawrence River in Ontario, New York, and Quebec. Because this issue was specific to her own community, she trained some of the women to do the research work as researcher-participants. Together they analyzed how the milk supply of mothers was impacted by nearby environmental hazards (Silliman et al.). This project incorporated "knowledge and expertise of health research scientists, members of the community, and health care providers" (Silliman et al. 143). It also centered Indigenous orientations to the woman's body as part of the environment of a growing fetus and of a new baby, honoring the six major principles of Indigenous sovereignty, which included reproduction.

Latinx communities in Wisconsin are another example of the need for specific community focus within reproductive justice advocacy. Not only are there differing levels of support and acceptance of birth control, abortion, and other issues, but there is also a range of unique transnational experiences of injustice across the Américas. These transnational experiences and concerns are unique. Many Latinx communities seek to empower future generations across borders and advocate for expanded support for immigrant communities.

Centering community needs means that reproductive justice activism may have different goals in different communities. There is no such thing as one-size-fits-all. Multiple solutions are needed to address multi-faceted injustices (Silliman et al. 55). What joins unique community issues together is their relation to not only reproductive rights but reproductive justice.

Figure 5. "Goddess of Fierce Protection." Black Paint Studios, 2016. This painting was intended to be a mural in a Milwaukee neighborhood, but the male-dominated board rejected it. The image still holds meaning for the Promotores de Salud.

Between the start and end of this dissertation, I have witnessed how reproductive justice overlaps with issues such as climate change, healthcare, and education, and how structures of power work to unevenly distribute life chances for people along racialized and gendered lines (Spade 9). In 2022, the *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* case was brought before the U.S. Supreme Court and in June of that year the court decided that the right to abortion was not held up by the constitution. This ruling overturned *Roe v. Wade*, which since 1973 had protected a woman's choice to have an abortion (See NYT report). This ruling also overturned the *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* case from 1992, which had held up a woman's right to abortion but added provisions such as informed consent and the 24-hour waiting period. The *Dobbs* decision gave states the power to regulate all aspects of abortion no longer protected by

federal laws. This resulted in a cascading effect: at least thirteen states were successful in

completely banning abortions, while others implemented new gestational limits. As of April

2023, states continue to limit or ban abortions altogether. This has caused clinics where abortions

are legal to be overwhelmed and has also caused many questions and concerns surrounding life-

saving medical emergencies. Some states have even banned the use of medicines to end

pregnancy such as mifepristone and misoprostol and access to levonorgestrel emergency

contraception, commonly known as Plan B or the morning after pill. In Wisconsin, specifically,

the original 1849 criminal abortion law was put back into effect when *Roe v. Wade* was

overturned. While state legislators continue to debate, no changes have come as of April 2023[2].

These law and policy changes caused many to rally in protest and to support grassroots

activism for abortion care. People took to social media in the days following the *Dobbs* decision

in flash-activist-fashion. Information, talking points, and resources were shared across temporary

channels like the story feature on Instagram and on TikTok. Within a few weeks, it died down,

Figure 6. Instagram story by @ipasorg, June 2022.

except for some organizations committed to the cause (@reproductivejusticeaction on Instagram). I've included here just a few of the Instagram stories I archived during this time. Figure 6 is an Instagram story from @ipasorg, an international organization that supports reproductive justice. They use a chart to explain how abortion is much more complicated than a two-sided argument. The other three I've included each use story to document what was happening in first few weeks since the *Dobbs* decision to appeal to their

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[2] On April 4th, 2023, Janet Protasiewicz defeated Dan Kelly in the 2023 spring election, giving abortion advocates hope for future state legislation to be put in place to protect reproductive health services.

audience: Figure 7 shows Facebook being used by police to aid in prosecuting a teenager for abortion, figure 8 shows a woman being criminalized after a miscarriage and figure 9 shows a 16-year-old being denied an abortion by a judge because she was too immature. These demonstrate how quickly stories of reproductive [in]justice travel, how quickly they are replaced, and how easy they are to save/reshare.

Figure 7. Instagram story by @feminist, August 2022.

Figure 8. Instagram story by @Sistersong, August 2022
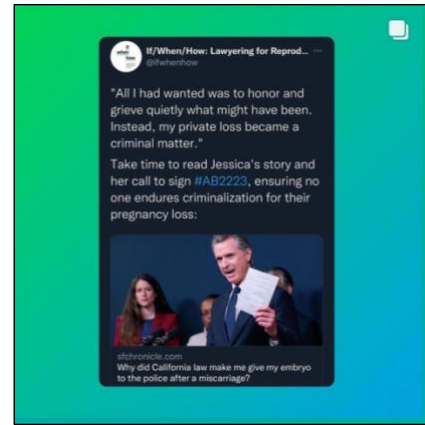
Figure 9. Instagram story by @wmfwisconsin, September 2022.

For some people who have easier access to birth control and contraceptives, it was relatively easy to move on from their initial reactions to *Dobbs*. But this is not new. In her book, *Feminism is for Everyone*, bell hooks warns that women who have access to birth control and abortion "have no firsthand experience of the powerlessness and vulnerability to exploitation that will always be the outcome if females do not have reproductive rights" (29). For many middle- and upper-class white women, access to these services did not stay a priority of their own short-term worries. It is not surprising. At the same time states were making abortions illegal, there were multiple shootings, stabbings, and occurrences of police violence across the country; monkeypox rose on people's radar, as well as the continued spread of Covid-19 variants; there was a national shortage of k-12 teachers as the school year began; and wildfires ravaged across

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the west. For many others, though, they could not ignore the fear that comes with lack of abortion care because they do not have access to birth control, reproductive health care services, or health insurance. For instance, some may have been incarcerated and are pregnant right now without any way to care for themselves. They may very well end up giving birth against their choice, shackled to a bed (Smith 2015). Most people cannot afford to ignore reproductive justice because it seeps into all areas of their lives. Those who are not white, heterosexual, able-bodied, and middle/upper class are pushed into places of precarity (Spade 9). Having reproductive rights does not mean having reproductive freedom. We need to fight for reproductive justice, not just for abortion rights, if we are ever to increase the life chances of all people across races and genders.

Almost every day since June of 2022 I have not been able to ignore how rhetoric is at work in the reproductive justice movement. Scrolling through my social media accounts, I have noted how stories are shared in digital spaces as people vie for or against abortion and reproductive justice. Phrases and visuals are taken, used, changed, and repurposed. Even the hashtag #ReproductiveJustice has been rhetorically implemented by antiabortion accounts on Instagram. Academics might respond to these increased digital rhetorical actions by suggesting that fast-moving social media or digital public spaces are of lesser import than a rhetorical analysis of carefully researched texts that is then reviewed and published in a scholarly journal like the *Journal of Rhetoric of Health and Medicine*. However, considering the audience groups who have access to social media versus those who have access to a journal hidden behind a paywall, rhetoricians need to pay more attention to the rhetorical happenings of reproductive justice in digital spaces. If we are to engage in a praxis of care for storytelling in digital community projects, we need to merge more popular education approaches (see Freire; hooks

1994) such as reproductive justice pedagogies and social media studies with traditional

rhetorical, digital, and media studies. In the next sections, I draw connections between

reproductive justice and areas of rhetoric that have informed my approach to this work.

Connections to Rhetoric

The field of Rhetoric and Composition Studies has shifted and transformed throughout

time, spanning many subfields and definitions. In this section, I will review a few areas of

rhetoric that are tied to this dissertation project: cultural rhetorics, the rhetoric of health and

medicine and the rhetorics of reproductive justice, and digital rhetorics and design justice. In

doing so, I will also foster interdisciplinary connections to Indigenous, queer, and feminist

theories as a practice of constellation of knowledges that are beneficial to this type of project.

Creating a constellation from these nodal points paints a picture of the rhetorics of reproductive

justice. For my dissertation work, I have leaned on a couple definitions of rhetoric:

- "The persuasive element in discourse" (Segal 5),

- "The wide array of communicative devices humans have at their disposal to
  create effects on each other" (Nicotra 2), and

- "Meaning-making as it is enacted in specific cultural communities" (Powell et al.
  7).

To engage in rhetoric is to make meaning for oneself and with/for others by utilizing written

and/or spoken words, body language, symbolic expressions including those found across digital

technologies, sounds, and other communicative methods at one's disposal within a specific time

and place, with a specific audience in mind, and for a specific purpose. We can learn more about

the elements of any rhetorical situation by asking the following questions: *Who is the communicator, and what exigence are they responding to? Who is their target audience and what kinds of strategies do they employ to appeal to them? What is the unique context in which the rhetorical event is occurring, and how might it be further circulated in the future?* These questions get at the details of a rhetorical event, which always happens within some kind of cultural context.

Cultural Rhetorics

Cultural rhetorics has been my own orientation to the field and so I build its scholarship here in a bit more detail. To cultural rhetoricians, "Rhetorics [are] always-already cultural and culture [is] persistently rhetorical (Powell et al.). Cultural traditions and practices are being continually made through rhetorical practices. As people make rhetorical decisions about how they will communicate amongst themselves (i.e., consider audience, purpose, context, etc.), they are also continually making and re-making their culture. This area of scholarship allows for an understanding of discursive and meaning-making practices from within the situatedness of a community instead of displacing and examining it from outside of its cultural context. It also recognizes the non-discursive elements that impact rhetoric, such as relations between bodies, embodied experiences, and non-verbal meaning-making through things like crafting and quilting. Cultural rhetorics is the orientation I use to understand the implications of relationship building and storytelling practices in community-engaged projects that center reproductive justice. There are four guiding principles for cultural rhetorics: story as theory, relationality, constellation, and decolonial practices. These are meant as a guide for engagement, not as a rigid checklist.

The first principle centers story as important theory-building work. This principle equally values the stories of historically marginalized peoples alongside more traditional or formal knowledges. This principle draws heavily on Indigenous theories, within which story and theory are tightly linked. Even in what western scholars might deem abstract theory-making, there are stories being told (Maracle). Theories are stories that people use to explain the world. Robin Wall Kimmerer exemplifies this as she weaves stories about Indigenous wisdoms concerning the natural world, plants, and her own personal experiences together to offer a larger narrative about how to better care for the planet amidst its current human destruction. Some scholars rebuild lost histories of Indigenous communication and rhetoric, such as Angela Haas's work on the rhetorical uses of wampum belts as technology (2007). Others demonstrate a variety of representations of Indigenous ways of being in the world to deconstruct the myth of one type of Indian (King; Gubele and Anderson, eds.). Indigenous scholars and elders have deep wisdom to share about how people have communicated over time, and about how we can live in harmony with the largely non-human world around us. While others also emphasize story, Indigenous scholars are honored here for their longstanding impact on cultural rhetorics specifically. I apply story as theory by starting from stories to build a praxis of care and by giving story and experience the same attention as scholarly theories.

The second principle, relationality, values the many forms of relations that a person has with other people, with the land, with nonhumans, and with themself. This principle recognizes that relationality is a key aspect of all human and nonhuman life. For example, Donna Haraway and María Puig de la Bellacasa each consider the world from more-than-human perspectives in which humans must heal their relationships with their other-than-human relations to save the planet, and humanity along with it. Relationality also guides researchers to practice more

mindful and responsible engagement that is built on slow-grown relationships and offers co-ownership of research data to participants (Wilson; Novotny and Gagnon; Riley-Mukavetz). Relationality, too, includes a person's own relation to their body, their embodied experiences, and other material connections, and some cultural rhetoricians theorize the impacts of multimodality and digital technologies on relations to oneself and to others (Johnson; Williams et al.). I apply relationality by centering relationship building and accountability in my work on *Cuentos* – with Rachel, with the director of the promotores, with the writers, and with the project itself.

The third principle, constellation, is a practice of building connections between concepts, perspectives, individuals, and communities. Imagined as a web or a literal constellation in the sky, this principle offers the potential for "multiply-situated subjects to connect to multiple discourses at the same time" (Powell et al.). As such, cultural rhetorics expands a more traditional view of rhetoric to include feminist (Royster and Kirsch), queer (Banks, Cox, and Dadas, eds.), and Indigenous (Driskill) orientations, fostering interdisciplinary connections. It allows for creative arts related to storytelling to be seen as rhetorically valuable, including making and curating art (Loveless), public performance (Young), and digital archiving (Jackson and Bratta). Cultural rhetorics strives to consider multiple traditions of rhetoric that account for and honor the multiple ways of being in this world. I apply constellation to foster connections across areas like Black feminist theory, Women of Color feminisms, and Queer theories to learn about and implement a praxis of care in my work, which I will discuss more in Chapter 2.

The fourth principle, decolonial practices, is an active call to create something beyond critique. By acknowledging the oppressive systems in place, we can delink from them and imagine new futures (Mignolo). Decolonialization of the mind, however, is not enough:

"decolonization specifically requires the repatriation of Indigenous land and life" (Tuck and Yang 21). Decolonial research practices are honored as meaningful ways of knowing and, importantly, *enacting* justice in the world as academics (Tuhiwai Smith). Cultural rhetoricians strive towards this in a variety of ways. Pedagogically, teachers build new ways to ethically and respectfully engage in teaching that break away from institutional norms (García and Baca). Theoretically, scholars push the boundaries of what theory-making means within the field, creating deliverables that challenge what counts as rhetoric (Alexander and Rhodes; Mao). Methodologically, researchers continue building more ethically responsible methods for working within communities (Arellano et al.). Practically, some pass on Indigenous skills and practices that disrupt colonial discourses and traditions (Driskill). The ways I apply decoloniality are 1) how I approach teaching with *Cuentos*, which I will discuss further in Chapter 4, and 2) how I push the boundaries of this whole dissertation process and product. In the following subsections, I highlight key concepts from other areas of rhetoric that are important to, and intersect with, reproductive justice and cultural rhetorics.

RHM and the Rhetorics of Reproductive Justice

Because reproductive justice is tied to health and the body, the Rhetoric of Health and Medicine (RHM) provides scholarly thought on rhetoric, health, and the body for my work and contains examples of scholars researching topics connected to reproductive justice, even if they don't call it that. RHM is described as an "emerging interdisciplinary subfield (rhetoric itself being interdisciplinary) that seeks to uncover how symbolic patterns structure thought and action in health and medical texts, discourses, settings, and materials" (Malkowski et al. n.p.). Elsewhere, the rhetoric produced around health and medicine is explained as "not only rhetorical

as it is reproduced in published texts; it is also rhetorical as a system of norms and values operating discursively in doctor-patient interviews, in conversations in hospital corridors, in public health debate on health policy, and in the apparatus of disease classification" (Segal 3). Communications concerning health issues and medical processes and procedures have an element of persuasion in them. Communicators are striving to achieve a purpose whether to inform, to argue, to advocate, or to persuade. A patient who is told to consider birth control to avoid more unwanted pregnancies is participating in a rhetorical event about reproductive health. Discourses surrounding health, medicine, and the medical institution are always already rhetorical, and some RHM scholars are "moving their work beyond the confines of their scholarly fields and into spaces of practical healthcare delivery" (Lora and Mark, in Novotny and De Hertogh 394). RHM researchers can consider how they can utilize their academic expertise and resources to support activist movements such as reproductive justice work already being done by grassroots community activists.

Feminist RHM scholars particularly have been constructing discourses that connect to reproductive justice both through their content centering women and reproductive issues and through their methodologies honoring the lived and embodied experiences of their participants (Frost and Haas; De Hertogh). Such work reflects the use of both qualitative and quantitative research based on what will offer the most helpful information given the context and participants of a study. Indigenous scholars within RHM have also utilized its framework to support reproductive justice concerns, such as rhetorically analyzing silences among Indigenous women about past sterilization abuses. By adjusting her methodology to study silences as well as responses in remembering sterilization abuses against Cherokee women, Caroline Jennings offers significant findings on the rhetorical use of silence as part of the memory and

remembering processes (6). With knowledges of medical and clinical discourses concerning illness, healing, and overall wellness, RHM scholars can analyze current and historical conditions to articulate injustices or calls to action. For example, Erin Frost and Michelle Eble's edited collection *Interrogating Gendered Pathologies* analyzes the ways in which discourses of pathologies have gendered consequences. While not focused specifically on reproductive justice, this collection covers topics include infertility (Novotny and Horn-Walker), raced pathologies (Liz), and transgender, non-binary, and gender-nonconforming embodiment (Perdue). Similarly, Judy Segal offers guidance on how researchers can use rhetorical analysis as a way to analyze the rhetorical elements found in communication as opposed to sticking to texts they think reach some standard of what it means to do rhetoric (9). These scholarly pursuits inform my work by providing models for researching and writing about reproductive justice issues for academic audiences.

Within RHM, the rhetorics of reproductive justice is a growing body of scholarship that benefits my work as it supports the everyday discourses and communicative methods of reproductive justice advocates, activists, and other people who experience reproductive [in]justice. Actions of reproductive justice engage rhetoric. For instance, a critique of the language used to refer to menstruating bodies in healthcare settings exposes reproductive injustices toward Trans women and other LGBTQ+ patients and can also garner a call for updated language uses. Though it has been slow moving, rhetoricians have been moving towards a framework for the rhetorics of reproductive justice. Maria Novotny and Lori Beth De Hertogh define the rhetorics of reproductive justice as "discursive activities [that] mediate communities as they work to address the 'intersecting oppressions' and 'power systems' (SisterSong) that influence reproductive bodies and related healthcare policies" (1). Discursive activities,

including those found on social media platforms, in court rooms, in hospitals, and in community organizations, are utilized to intervene in or moderate issues of reproductive health and justice.

In the article, "Amplifying Rhetorics of Reproductive Justice within Rhetorics of Health and Medicine," Lora Arduser, Mark A. Hannah, Kimberly Harper, Stacey Pigg, Sheri Rysdam, and Barbi Smyser-Fauble share dialogically about their efforts at merging these two growing bodies of scholarship. The text demonstrates how rhetoric has an important role to play in the fight for reproductive justice. Additionally, the scholars who collaborated on this dialogic piece claim that the rhetorics of reproductive justice is "a praxis that can help make RHM better aligned with social justice work, particularly regarding the reproductive experiences of BIPOC" (376). They signal the importance of centering community in reproductive justice, especially because "safe and sustainable access to reproductive health is determined not just through healthcare systems but often determined by the very communities in which we live" (3). A neighborhood in an area with mainly white, middle-class women will have different health concerns and access to medical resources than a neighborhood in an area with mainly working-class Women of Color due to the uneven distribution of privileges and power dynamics. Reorienting RHM to a reproductive justice framework allows for analysis of and advocacy for raced, sexed, and classed reproductive bodies that are "always already navigating, negotiating, and fighting the socioeconomic, racial, and homophobic barriers limiting care" (3). The rhetorics of reproductive justice center on the embodied experiences of marginalized voices and challenge scholars of rhetoric to critically think about how they do research, who they center in their work, and what types of normative and damaging discourses they might be circulating, whether intentional or not.

Attuning to the rhetorics of reproductive justice reveals how our own lived experiences orient us to reproductive justice work and how rhetorical methods and methodologies can support reproductive justice work (Novotny and De Hertogh). In an open access special issue on reproductive justice in *Reflections: A Journal of Community-Engaged Writing and Rhetoric*, contributors brought together definitions, an annotated bibliography, tool kits, and activist stories to get more scholars actively involved in the reproductive justice movement and to document diverse voices of the movement in the public and civic context instead of in an academic or theoretical context. The issue highlights story as a powerful advocacy tool (Hunte and Duffly), the rhetorical practices of doulas (Yam), and how rhetoric is at work in narratives of healthcare providers (Cusanno and Ketheesaswaran). In one piece, Kimberly Harper connects gun violence to the reproductive [in]justice of unsafe neighborhood environments as she calls for amplification of and supportive response to grieving Black mothers who have lost a child to police violence (2020). Most significant to my work are those that discussed the importance of building relationships when entering into partnerships with communities (For example, Bloom-Pojar and Barker; Hartline et al.). This special issue does important work not only showing the diverse applications of the rhetorics of reproductive justice but also the ways in which rhetoricians can collaborate with community partners to work together on these issues.

In analyzing the rhetorics of reproductive justice, it is important to acknowledge the embodied and material realities of reproductive bodies. As feminist rhetoric scholars Frost and Eble write in their collection, "embodied knowledge is essential to finding meaningful explanations for our bodies" (5). Embodied knowledge, or "the way a body carries meaning through discourse and the ways in which bodies are positioned vis-à-vis distributions of power across groups" is rhetorically valued in "We are BRAVE", a community-centered storytelling

project (Hunte and Ming T'ien Duffly 104). The participants make sense of the world and make meaning with each other through what they feel in their bodies and through sharing from their experiences. From another angle, rhetoric impacts the material realities of women, especially Black women and Women of Color (Cusanno and Ketheeswaran 236). A medical misdiagnosis or refusal for a provider to believe a patient, which reportedly happens more for Black women than for white women, carries material and bodily consequences (Davis 2019). Additionally, scholars interrogate which bodies are perceived or observed only materially, such as when Trans or gender-nonconforming people are medically examined. They are "quickly reduced to the material, or how they 'appear' to others" (Perdue 261). Thus, while avoiding the reduction of the body to its material appearances, embodied rhetoric seeks to make the material and embodied affects and experiences of the body visible, however complicated they may be.

When we acknowledge the embodied realities of reproductive bodies, we can see the injustices that happen to those who don't fit into normative identities or experiences. For instance, Jonathan Alexander and Jacqueline Rhodes explain how including identity categories such as Queer and Trans in medical environments, while seemingly progressive, can be a masked method of exclusion (2018). They write that "queer lives become intelligible – one wants to say 'legible' – only when they articulate themselves in the rhetoric of the dominant" (7). White Queer people have been able to fold themselves to fit into the dominant narrative in the U.S if they adhere to heteronormativity, but this is not possible for many others, such as Trans People of Color. The authors across this edited collection define and describe how sexual and reproductive identities are bound up with race, gender, and class through rhetoric. It is imperative for rhetoricians to critically engage with how discourses of sexuality have shifted

over time and how they may impact the experiences and decisions of reproductive people who may identify as LGBTQ+, non-binary, or gender-nonconforming within medical settings.

Other rhetoricians have analyzed the embodiment of the identity of "mother" through representations such as young mothers, motherhood broadly speaking, and Black mothers specifically. Jenna Vinson's feminist rhetorical analysis reveals the myths about teen moms that circulate through discourse apparatuses such as campaigns, statistics, and advertising posters (xv). She disrupts these myths with real stories of young moms who finish high school, who are happy being moms, and who have family support for their decision. Linda Buchanan deconstructs motherhood more broadly as a cultural code which "communicates but cloaks prevailing power relations" (5). By repeating a single narrative about motherhood, many Black women, Women of Color, infertile women, and Trans people are excluded, silenced, or erased from the narratives of motherhood. Chris Barcelos draws attention to the intersections of race, class, and gender often left out of narratives of young Latina mothers (2020). Reproductive justice makes space for each woman and reproductive person to have their own bodily autonomy and respect for the choices they make. By considering embodied rhetorics, I can draw these critical analyses of identity, exclusion, and diverse embodied experiences into my work.

Digital Rhetorics and Design Justice

This dissertation seeks to critically engage with what it means to care for stories about reproductive justice in *digital spaces*. Digital rhetoric is "the digital negotiation of information – and its historical, social, economic, and political contexts and influences – to affect change" (Haas 412). This definition builds on the work of technofeminist scholars to deepen the complexities of power relations, privilege, and oppression that are entangled in the design and

use of digital technologies (Wajcman; Benjamin; Selfe and Selfe). Rhetorical concerns are at the base of digital media productions: "All interactions and all communications in and with digital media intersect with questions of ethics. Why are we communicating? For what desired result, and for whose benefit? Those are basic questions of rhetoric that are also basic questions of ethics" (McKee and Porter 401). Thus, rhetoric is also involved in digital storytelling. Because my work is largely focused on the creation and circulation of a digital storytelling project, I draw on feminist digital rhetorics as well as design justice.

Figure 10. A Diagram of questions design justice causes us to as, posted to Instagram by @designjusticenetwork, 2023.

Digital rhetoric scholars are explicit about how digital design often burdens many while privileging a few due to the deeply engrained influences of white supremacy, heteropatriarchy, ableism, and other structures of inequality (Haas 2018). With an orientation toward justice, though, design can support activist work. Stories can do important theory-building work, as mentioned earlier, and in digital spaces they have the capacity to impact larger, more public audiences. For example, Cruz Medina explains how digital *testimonios* claim powerful truths by sharing culturally relevant personal experiences in a multimodal format (see here). Alexandra Hidalgo, speaking about her own feminist digital storytelling project, notes that "blending the digital with analyzing and theorizing our personal experiences results in vibrant, generative scholarship" (see here). My work builds on these digital areas of scholarship but does something distinct from these projects in that it applies digital design justice (Costanza-Chock) to my rhetorical choices through a lens of care. Design justice calls for scholars to create deliverables

that will be used by a community alongside that community. Community members are legitimate

co-developers, so that their rhetorical and cultural values are adhered to (Costanza-Chock).

Digital storytelling has great potential. However, if digital storytelling projects for communities

are co-opted for the personal gain of the researcher, the community does not benefit, and their

stories likely go unprotected. Additionally, if a product is made using community stories without

their input, it may not be what the community wants and/or they may not even be able to use it

for themselves. For digital projects involving marginalized communities, especially, co-curating

the content and the design with community collaborators can keep the ownership and decision-

making power of the digital projects within the communities themselves (Vinson and Dutta). I

strive to do similar work with the creation of and management of *Cuentos*.

Caring for Stories in a Digital Reproductive Justice Project

Relationships and stories are at the heart of this dissertation. As concepts and as practices,

they are intertwined. Stories are powerful tools (King) that can persuade, inform, and create

change in activist work. But we must be aware that stories are hard to untangle from one another,

and from the embodied experience of the storyteller (Kimmerer). They are interrelated. Stories

are also rhetorical (Gagnon). They are crafted for a specific audience, with a specific purpose,

within a specific context. For example, Julie Cruikshank researched the rhetorical strategies that

Native storytellers in Northwestern Canada utilized to tell the same oral story in different

situations across time to achieve varied purposes for diverse audiences (19). In her time with the

women she interviewed, they tell the same story but with different details at different times to

influence or educate others in the community. Thomas King, an Indigenous scholar, claims that

stories are all we are (2). He advises: "stories are wonderous things. And they are dangerous"

(9). Similarly, Loveless explains how stories "encourage us to see some things and not others.

Entrenched stories like 'race,' 'gender,' 'class,' and 'nation' have historically done this very well,

prescribing who might accomplish what, where, when, and how" (2). We as feminist researchers must be careful which stories we tell because stories build our world and what we believe about it; stories build what we believe about other people and what we believe about ourselves. Some stories stick with us. Some stories change us forever.

Stories are often utilized for advocacy purposes, but there is danger is splicing a story from the embodied experience of a person. In our increasingly digital world, we must keep in mind the distances stories can travel online. There can be benefits to this, such as sharing life moments with family and friends from far away. But there are also risks. Sharing stories in digital spaces makes them more vulnerable to be taken and used – at best for new or different purposes and audiences, at worst for harm to the storyteller and to others. In seconds, a person can screenshot an image, a quote, a tweet, or an Instagram story, and then it is theirs to do with what they will. Digital stories, seemingly abstract in form, are still tied to a real person's embodied experience. We must be careful about the stories we tell and circulate in the digital world, because once they are out, they are beyond our control. Even in cases where stories are later proven to contain false, inaccurate, or partial information, their influence has already disseminated. What is believed to be true becomes true (or true enough) through these fast-moving digital methods. It is taken in as a sentiment even if it *is* proven to be false, and that sentiment is embedded into peoples' minds, potentially furthering false narratives about people, cultures, or events. This is why stories are powerful. This is why stories are dangerous.

Since *Roe v. Wade* was overturned in the *Dobbs* decision, stories related to abortion have been digitally circulated on TikTok, Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, blogs, and digital news sources faster than we can keep up with the facts, as demonstrated by the Figures 6-9 on p. 22. Already, those earlier stories have been replaced by a myriad of others. It is almost impossible

for me to give readers something current. People across a range of political standings use different parts of the same story achieve their ends about abortion. Imagine, for a minute, that my own story would be shared as a prolife campaign during this time. Someone reads my dissertation, reads the story I've shared here, and decides to share their version of it on social media. It might read like an abstinence campaign story:

> *She found herself pregnant during her junior year of high school. She thought it was love. Due to her conservative Christian upbringing, the word abortion was not even uttered. She prayed for forgiveness. She trusted God and made a plan to walk back from her sinful ways. She promised to do her best for her unborn child, and she did. She got more involved in church, finished school, and hoped for the best. She has a beautiful family now and is about to finish her PhD. She is happy and thankful she overcame this challenge!*

No mention of feeling trapped, harassed, or mistreated. No mention of being stuck in a life that I did not even know if I wanted. Of course, no mention of being forced to deal with a manipulative, verbally and emotionally abusive "co-parent." The story as told here leaves out certain details I wish people knew. But it could support a digital prolife campaign. Whether due to picking out parts of a story or sharing a story without knowing the full context, there are dangers in circulating a story to support a cause. I share my own story as an example because I want to avoid picking apart any of the many stories used in this way. I've kept a close eye on

how stories have been digitally used since June 2022, and many abortion stories have been

circulated and categorized as reproductive justice or centered by prolife accounts claiming to be

reproductive justice organizations or by organizations that only campaign for abortion. Where

are the other stories? Reproductive justice is more than abortion.

Sharing stories is a complicated issue. We want stories. They help us better connect with

people, causes, and issues. However, when stories are not cared for, the people at the center of

stories are not honored and are put at risk. An interesting example of this is a story I came across

about the Ironbound community in Newark, New Jersey. Ironbound is a small community with a

majority Hispanic ethnicity. The people have been historically subjected to environmental racism

and have long been fighting for their own health and wellness (Xenia E.). The featured article

was written in a way to generally connect environmental racism with reproductive health,

perhaps to entice clicks using buzzwords. I read it expecting to get a story from women or other

people impacted by the air pollutants that the author claims hinder the ability to get pregnant and

to have healthy births.

Illustration by Josh Christensen

In the 4-square-mile Ironbound community of Newark, New Jersey, environmental activists advocate against the construction of a new power plant.
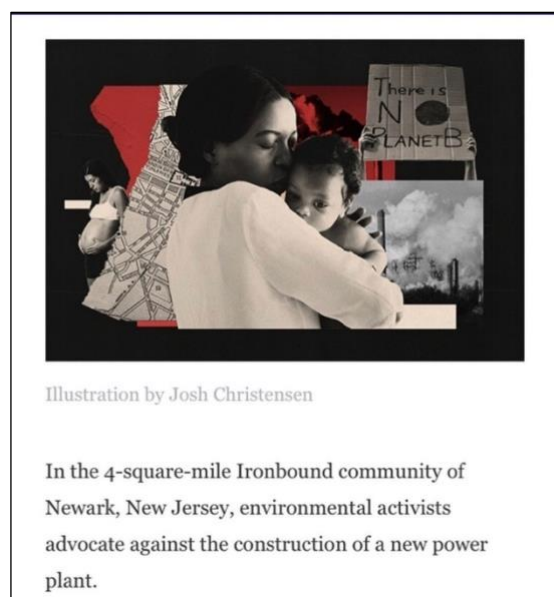
Figure 11. Image of the beginning of the article shared on Instagram by @Ironboundenvironmentaljustice, February 2023.

However, there were no such stories. @Ironboundenvironmentaljustice, the Instagram account for Ironbound, thanked the online journal, *Giddy*, for publishing the piece and promoted it on their page. So, they were on some level grateful for the media coverage. The mayor had a brief quote, and there were other scholars who weighed in on the connections between environmental racism and reproductive health. Overall, it felt like a local

example being used to represent national data points. I couldn't help but wonder: *Should there have been a personal story to help readers really get a sense of these issues? Were community members being protected by this rhetorical choice? Or is it more a question of the author's relation to the community, as in, they didn't have one so couldn't get a more personal account?* I'm not looking to tell you what should have been in that article. But these are the kinds of complex questions I am interested in grappling with throughout this dissertation.

Rhetoricians are uniquely positioned to support the reproductive justice movement because, among other things, we have been specifically trained to critically think through the complexities of expanding and evolving rhetorical situations. In my own community-engaged work with digital storytelling, I have found that it is essential to center caring for stories and the people sending them out into the world. It has caused me to slow down and ask hard questions: *How are stories about reproductive justice cared for? Who does that care? And how are the stories cared for when they don't match the mainstream ideals of "reproductive justice" aka abortion rights?* There are multiple labors of care involved with telling a story, and these labors are intensified for marginalized storytellers. When people from marginalized communities are called on to share their stories about reproductive injustices for advocacy purposes, they are put into vulnerable positions without much support or care once they've "given" their story. Additionally, often the people asked to do this labor of sharing their marginalized experiences of reproductive justice are Black mothers, Latina mothers, Queer mothers, etc. Mothers, it is generally assumed, tend to care about the future of their children and, by extension, the future of their community. They may feel a duty or responsibility to serve their community, to better it, to share their own story in hopes that others who come behind them can live a better life. For instance, Andrea-Tera Arenas and Elosia Gómez interviewed Latina activists in Wisconsin who

had served their Latinx communities for their digital project and book, *Somos Latinas: Voices of Wisconsin Latina Activists*. The women share their stories through interviews, reflecting on how they were motivated by other women in their lives to continue improving the lives of their families and friends (237). These women carry multiple labors of care such as caring for their children, for their extended families, for their work, for their communities, and for the betterment of Latinx people across the state. When mothers are also asked to share their stories on top of all these labors, it may feel both like an opportunity and a burden.

Though I did not seek out motherhood or mothers in my dissertation work, it came to be that each of the writers of *Cuentos*, as well as Rachel and myself, are all mothers. Part of how relationships and trust were formed was through our stories of being a mother across a variety of experiences. It was also formed through recognition of these labors and layers of care that others may not notice. For myself, it was built by being aware of my positionality on the peripheral of the group. As I am not fluent in Spanish nor am I Latina, there were moments and spaces that weren't for me. I didn't try to push my own story or experiences as a mother into the center of our time together. When, one-on-one, I was able to share with one promotora about our similar experiences of being young mothers who work and juggle many care responsibilities, and it deepened our relations. As I read and listened to the stories of the promotoras, I also found myself connecting especially with Kendy's story because our experiences of becoming mothers at young ages were similar. My identity as a mother has driven much of how I care for their stories and how I go about this work with them. At the same time, I continue to try to center and highlight their experiences as Latina mothers engaged in layers of care and concern that I am not. I opened this chapter telling my own story and asking questions about labor and care. As a mother enacting multiple labors of care, I've wanted to make that visible to people who may not

be seeing it or experiencing it. By working with this group of promotoras, who are also mothers, I hope to lift up their stories concerning motherhood, gender equity, and other reproductive justice issues while at the same time lifting up care for these stories and the storytellers who care so much for others.

What this Project Does

This dissertation is made up of five chapters with the accompanying website project and an appendix of supplemental materials. Chapter 2, "A Cultural Rhetorics Praxis of Care," weaves together lineages of care and offers applications of a cultural rhetorics praxis of care that spans research, community-engaged work, and teaching. Chapter 3, "Caring for Cuentos," showcases my application of this care to the community writing project with the promotores de salud and the curation of the site. Chapter 4, "Applying a Cultural Rhetorics Praxis of Care in the Digital Classroom," tells the story of, and my reflections about, the implementation of *Cuentos* into two of my classes. Finally, Chapter 5, "A Manifesto of Care for Reproductive Justice," reflects on implications, reviews some areas of productive failure, and considers complications of applying care in community-engaged digital storytelling projects. This dissertation does not seek to build a new theory of care. Instead, it seeks to constellate existing theories/praxes of care into a web of multiple possibilities that helped to inform my own practices of care within my role in the *Cuentos* project.

As such, this research-creation grapples with the complexities of how to care for stories of reproductive justice in community-engaged digital projects. It specifically looks at the project I did with a group of promotores de salud and how our relations impacted practices of care over the life of the project. I hope to show, not so much critique or argue, how I practiced care within my role as website editor for the digital storytelling project's continually evolving rhetorical situation. As researchers, implementing care has a direct impact on how we engage with

community participants. In fact, we may find it is better not to have "participants" but instead co-researchers, co-writers, or co-conspirators. By building a framework of care from a cultural rhetorics methodology, I displace some of the mainstream feminist notions of care and instead expand to have multiple possibilities for multiple ways of being in the world. By applying this framework in community and academic settings, I will demonstrate how a cultural rhetorics praxis of care allows scholars to ethically partner with multiply marginalized communities more ethically on digital projects. I bring together research, writing, curation, digital design, and reproductive justice work into a research-creation deliverable. This dissertation has implications for what feminist rhetoricians can learn from a cultural rhetorics framework for community-engaged work with storytelling that centers community members and values them as co-creators.

When I wrote my dissertation proposal in spring of 2022, before the *Cuentos* digital site was even publicly launched, my research questions focused on two potential projects with local organizations (what I refer to below as Lola's and the Promotores). Those questions were:

1. How do community organizations like Lola's and the Promotores care for the stories of marginalized experiences of motherhood?

2. What does a feminist ethic of care look like when attending to story, relationality, and constellative practices?

3. What benefits and complications accompany community-engaged digital storytelling projects, and how can a feminist ethic of care support this work?

Since then, some shifting occurred. And, as it is with research-creation, I had to be willing to "follow curiosity and sit with anxiety" (Loveless 57). I had to step back from partnering with one organization due to my timeline and capacity to get the work done in a caring and ethical manner. You'll hear a bit more about Lola's in Chapter 5. I also chose to focus on reproductive

justice, not specifically on motherhood because as I worked with the project, heard the stories and experiences of the writers, and thought about my own experiences in relation to them, I recognized that the range experiences of reproductive justice expanded beyond just motherhood. The six original cuentos (stories) are about motherhood in some ways, yes, but they are also about more than that. As far as "feminist ethic of care," I had for some time been more broadly considering what my own ethic of care looked like as I interacted with this community-engaged digital project.

Over the summer and fall of 2022, I came to realize that my research questions for writing about this were more like this:

1. What specific practices make up a cultural rhetorics framework for care in community-engaged projects?

2. What complications, complexities, and failures arise when sharing our digital storytelling project, *Cuentos*, with various audiences?

3. In what ways can we push back against institutional constraints as part of caring for our community relations?

There are a lot of smaller, related questions I had to consider when creating a digital space for these marginalized stories of reproductive justice that would be shared publicly. *How do I continue to care for stories that are circulating in digital spaces? How can I continue caring for the people who share these meaningful stories, and for how long should I keep thinking about this? How can I balance the needs of the promotores, or of the project, with the PhD timeline I'm on?* Often, people in marginalized communities share their stories with well-meaning, white, privileged scholars who fail to reciprocate with care about where and how those stories are

circulated (Wilson). I did not want to do that. Being a part of *Cuentos* came about by relationship-building, by telling and listening to stories, and by taking care. The collaboration continues to involve building trust and showing care as we move towards new paths and visions for the future of *Cuentos*. While it takes more time, and is lot messier, implementing this cultural rhetorics praxis of care has allowed me to do my best, most ethical work for the promotores de salud and for their communities on the road toward reproductive justice.

Chapter 2: A Cultural Rhetorics Praxis of Care

*Stories go in circles. They don't go in straight lines. It helps if you
listen in circles because there are stories inside and between
stories, and finding your way through them is as easy and as hard
as finding your way home. Part of finding is getting lost, and when
you are lost you start to open up and listen.*

- Terry Tafoya, in Shawn Wilson's *Research as Ceremony*

I found my way to a praxis of care by getting lost. I've been lost the better part of two

years, wandering down paths, being open to what might come, listening for what is rising up out

of everyday moments as I engage with this digital community project on reproductive justice.

Much of finding my way home or finding my way to what this chapter would be about, was

through the *doings* – designing and curating the *Cuentos*[3] site, having creative conversations with

Rachel and María Barker and the writers, and practice caring for the stories and storytellers along

the way. As I tried to figure out
how to label what I was doing, I
took to old fashioned note-taking
techniques. Pictured here is an early
constellation of my ideas for the
dissertation as I tried to figure out
what I was doing and how
everything was fitting together. On
the next page is a picture of another
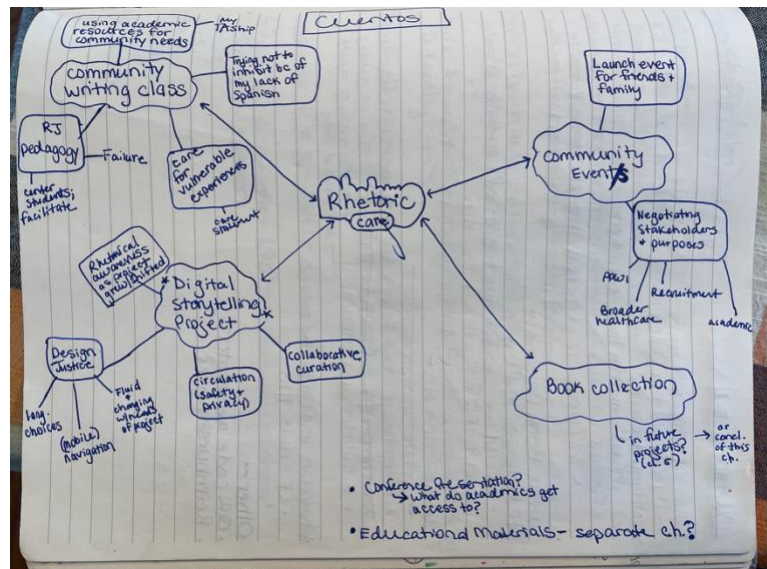
Figure 12. Constellating ideas with paper and pen, Spring 2022.

notebook page from earlier stages of the dissertation: one of many such pages on which I

---

[3] *Cuentos* is shorthand for the full name of the project, *Cuentos de Confianza: A Community Writing Project for
Reproductive Justice*. Beyond the digital site, it is also the name I use to refer to all that encompasses this
community-engaged work.

brainstormed about "care" through words, phrases, arrows, squiggly lines, etc. The third picture

is from a more recent writing session in which I was clarifying the overarching concepts framing

this dissertation in Chapter 1. Of course, life-sustaining coffee is also pictured.
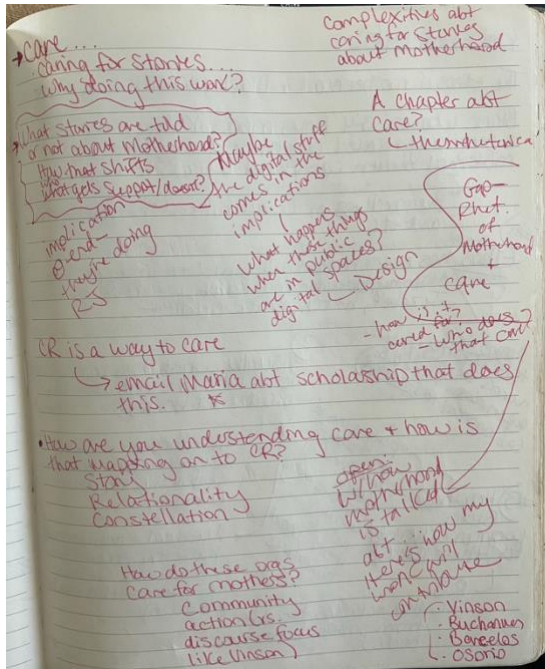
Figure 13. Notes on connections between care and cultural rhetorics, Summer 2022.
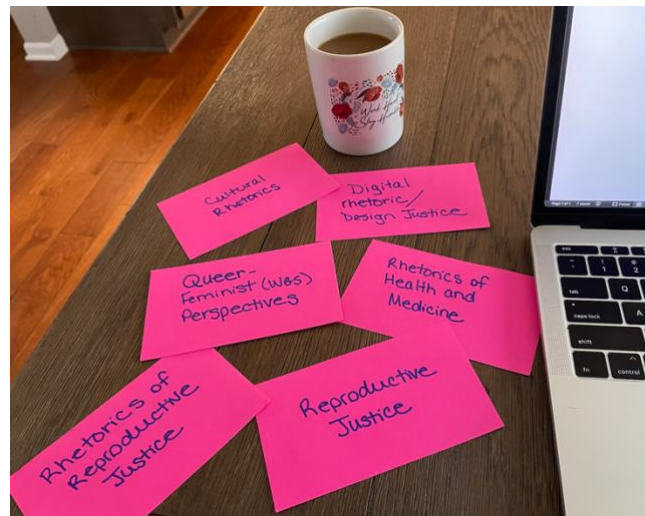
Figure 14. Notecards of major concepts for Chapter 1, plus coffee (: , Winter 2022.

I share these snippets of my notes to show the mess of this work. While it can be

common for dissertators to experience a messy process, it was excruciatingly messy for me as I

side-stepped any one method/ology or framework that would take away from the actual doings.

That made me feel a bit lost a lot of the time, but not in a bad way. Getting involved in the

creation and management of a digital storytelling project that uplifts the experiences of the

promotores within the larger reproductive justice movement has required me to unpack theories

I've learned as a doctoral student and rethink which practices will be best suited for our project's

evolving rhetorical situation. It has, at times, called for me to change out one method of

engagement with another. For instance, I have sat in on meetings where all speakers were

conversing in Spanish and I did my best to observe and translate for myself; at other times, I

have chosen not to attend to not hinder the conversations and interactions happening in Spanish and instead got general notes from Rachel. At all times, it has depended upon my willingness to renegotiate the rhetorical aspects of caring – *how to care* – when, where, for whom, and in what ways. Through this partnership with the promotores de salud, I've also observed their labors of care. They step in to care for their communities in ways that institutional health services do not. They do more than educate community members on matters of sexual and reproductive health. They build networks of care to support their Latinx communities in day-to-day issues that arise. They carry vulnerable and sometimes traumatic stories from others that get layered with their own stories of reproductive [in]justices. The more I got to know the promotoras (female identifying health promoters) who collaborated on *Cuentos*, the more I felt the accountability to care for them and for their stories by not confining my actions to a method/ology or certain set of research practices. Through this, I did come to find some flexible practices of care that benefited our project.

The goal of this chapter is to articulate a praxis of care that can support reproductive justice digital storytelling projects, though it can apply to other similarly vulnerable projects, too. The principles of cultural rhetorics methodology and diverse theories of care have informed my actions while working on *Cuentos* and are beneficial for researchers who engage in digital community projects to consider. So here, I weave together lineages of care that I have learned from and that have impacted my actions, including how I have written this dissertation. Then, I articulate how cultural rhetorics principles frame a praxis of care for stories and the people who share these stories digital storytelling projects. I end the chapter with suggested tools for care and potential measurements of the impacts of care. This chapter theorizes how implementing a

cultural rhetorics praxis of care[4] in community-engaged digital projects allows feminist

researchers to center caring for stories and to embrace the messiness of this kind of work.

Weaving Together Lineages of Care

Those of us who call ourselves feminist researchers must be cognizant of how we use the

word "care." In her book, *Living a Feminist Life,* Sara Ahmed etymologically breaks down the

word "care" into the Old English connotations of "sorrow, anxiety, [and] grief" (169). These

words suggest that when someone is full of care, they are anxious about potential ills, breakages,

or failures. Imagine holding a fragile item: you are careful not to break it. But often, "the more

careful you are, the more your hands tremble" (169), leading to the dreaded breakages anyways.

Ahmed shows how breakage is not the end of a thing but opens up possibilities for new things:

breakage of unhealthy relationships leads to the creation of fragile communities "assembled out

of the experiences of being shattered" (Ahmed 2014, n.p.). For Ahmed, care is an acceptance of a

fragile, vulnerable co-existence with other fragile individuals by those who deviate from a

heteronormative life for a queer existence. By extension, other individuals experience a queer

existence as they deviate from, or are forcibly excluded from, our racialized heteronormative

society due to their religion, ethnicity, class or income status, citizenship status, and more. This

sense of a vulnerable co-existence with other fragile individuals encouraged me to further pursue

various definitions and practices of care to see how they might together support a more flexible,

vulnerable, fragile way of caring for researchers to enact.

I cannot weave together citational lineages of care without noting the complicated nature

of embarking on such a task. It is, indeed, very much like writing a story. Choosing to tell one

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[4] I will refer to this as a CR praxis of care from now on, and will refer to cultural rhetorics as CR.

story is necessarily choosing to not tell another story. Including any certain line of scholarship

necessarily excludes other lines. As a feminist scholar, I have found it to be true that "how

feminists tell stories matters" because telling certain feminist stories repeatedly engrains a certain

line of feminist scholarship over time (Hemmings 1; see also Nash and Pinto). We must be

careful with the words we write, as they have the power to construct realities (Hemmings 55). I

also view citation to be "how we acknowledge our debts to those who came before; those who

helped us find our way. When the way was obscured because we deviated from the paths we

were told to follow" (Ahmed 2017, 15-16; See also Ahmed's *Queer Phenomenology*). Sarah

Ahmed is one such person who has helped me to find my way. A different path to follow.

Here, I admit that I give you a very brief snippet of large, living bodies of scholarship

that speak to theories and practices of care. I have studied extensively across these areas of

scholarship and do my best to honor each of them. Many of these areas overlap and I don't view

this as a comprehensive literature review on these areas of scholarship. But for clarity, I organize

portions of these scholarship stories into the following subsections: A white Feminist Ethic of

Care, Black Feminist Theory: Community Care, Neoliberal Feminism and Self-care, Women of

Color Feminisms: Theory in the Flesh, Transnational Feminism: Care as Labor, Crip and

Disabled Complications of Care, Queer of Color Critique and Trans Studies: Who Deserves

Care, and Care as Rhetorical. This review offers a small glimpse of how these bodies of

scholarship approach care and how they've informed my work. I put forth these lineages of care

not so much as fixed and separate lines but as nodes in a constellation that map multiple ways of

caring to learn from and foster connections across. In other words, we should imagine lines being

drawn by connecting these dots across disciplines, revealing how drawing interdisciplinary lines

between distinct points creates a certain picture of care that can only be complete when drawn

together. This practice of constellation lends itself to speculative thinking about potential new ways to care that support and sustain *Cuentos*, and other such projects and the people involved. It also makes us aware of what negative connotations or actions are related to care that we should avoid or be wary of. Because of the shifting nature of the *Cuentos* project, this constellation of care theories supported the flexibility and transformability needed in caring for the stories of the promotoras.

A white Feminist Ethic of Care

The history of an ethics of care philosophy has been dominated by white American women such as Carol Gilligan (gender difference psychology), Nel Nodding (educational philosophy), Virginia Held (feminist philosophy), and Rosemarie Tong (feminist health philosophy). These scholars theorized care, or ethical caring, as an intentional or deliberate decision (Nodding). They drew from early white feminist figures including Mary Wollstonecraft, Catherine Beecher, Elizabeth Stanton, and Margaret Sanger to support their theories. Mary Wollstonecraft is championed as one of the earliest feminist philosophers. In 1792, she deployed comparison to British men and contrast to other non-elite women as logical reasoning for elite British women to gain more rights (Wollstonecraft). Following Wollstonecraft, Catherine Beecher argued in the 19th century for the educational rights of women because they were morally powerful and were therefore responsible for making men good (Michals). While Beecher's writings are used to demonstrate an early example of an ethic of care, it was narrow in that it only applied to white women and only within the domestic sphere. She did not believe in women's suffrage. In the 20th century, Elizabeth Stanton fought for women to be able to participate in politics and economics – but only white, elite women (Myers 47). Black women in

America couldn't vote until more than 40 years after white women. Finally, Margaret Sanger defended contraceptive use successfully through a Eugenics-based argument about eliminating poverty (Davis 1983). While contraceptives have afforded many advances to women, it was a long time before they were even accessible to most women. Each of these feminist figures have a complicated feminist ethics because while they accomplished groundbreaking progress for women, they only cared to uplift the plights of white, elite women. Though ethics of care scholars may have been trying to show the unique strengths of women, their focus on a natural connection between care and white feminine qualities leads them towards essentialist feminism. Building an ethic of care on a narrow vision of feminism is problematic because it ignores differences among women and ignores the experiences of non-white women altogether.

Black Feminist Theory: Community Care

Black feminist theorists critique white, mainstream feminism for being exclusionary and narrowly focused on the desires of white, middle-class women (Nash; Cooper; Hill Collins). For decades, Black woman have been writing, speaking, and organizing within the framework of intersectionality. Even before the term was coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in the 90s, Black women were drawing attention to the multiple oppressions that they endured due to both racism and sexism (Taylor; Lorde). Black feminist theory highlights lived experience as significant knowledge, intersectional analysis as an essential theoretical lens, and mainstream feminism as a historically racist movement. Care factors in as a practice of stewardship and a practice of survival. Audre Lorde described care as a survival practice for Black women to engage in together, not alone (*Burst of Light*; see also Nash). As she writes about her experiences with cancer, she reflects on how care is about learning how to live for yourself and be in support of

yourself when you are under attack simply for living your life. Patricia Hill Collins' ethic of caring in her Black Feminist Epistemology includes recognizing individual uniqueness within community, valuing the expression of emotions, and a capacity for empathy (283-4). For Christina Sharpe, care is a more convoluted political practice tied to violence against and death of Black people. It is a self and collective practice of continuing to live in the wake of death. This type of care impacts and is impressed upon the Black body (10). Some Black feminists call on each other to not care so much about certain things, such as the mainstream appropriation of the concept of intersectionality, as a way to care for themselves and each other (Nash 80). Each of these descriptions of care happen within a community context, not an isolated one. We can learn from Black feminists that care is integral to the survival of communities, and the individuals within them, and that while care for lived experiences matters, it is also a practice of care to let certain things go so as not to carry such a heavy burden in day-to-day living.

Neoliberal Feminism and Self-care

Over the past couple of decades, neoliberal feminism has grown to highlight care, mainly through notions of self-care and individual female empowerment. As an epistemological framework, neoliberalism is an "a way of seeing and not seeing. It claims that protected life is available to all, and that premature death comes only to those whose criminal actions and poor choices make them deserve it" (Hong 17). In doing so, neoliberalism broadcasts an illusion of life chances to all and blames individuals for their inability to access those life chances. Through this framing, feminism is centered on the individual. If a woman succeeds in the workplace, it is evidence that sexism no longer exists. But if a woman fails in the workplace, it is evidence that she individually didn't work hard enough. She is blamed for the failure of a sexist system.

Neoliberalism does not account for systems of power that oppress individuals who do not fit heteronormative ideals. Neoliberal feminism offers care as a commodifiable, branded product based on a feminism that sells: one that is "white, middle-class, cis-gendered, and heterosexual" (Banet-Weiser 13). It is all about visibility and not at all about depth. From this perspective,

Figure 15. Screenshot of feminist coffee mugs on Target.com, February 2023.

buying a cute coffee mug from Target that says, "feminist" is an act of self-care. Wearing a shirt that reads, "Empowered Women Empower Women," shows you care about yourself and your fellow women. Companies market their support for this sort of care by showing they are doing work to empower young girls. Nike, CoverGirl, and

Always are just three examples of businesses that have created ad campaigns to empower women, to encourage them that "self-confidence is attainable for all women; it is within our grasp; we just need to reach for it" (Banet-Weiser 54). But these campaigns hide the realities of systemic sexism and racism behind their messages. Inspirational quips on Instagram, self-care products branded for fierce females, and TikTok tutorials for the newest and best skin care tools – all of these are tools for neoliberal care. What we can learn from neoliberal feminism is that care can be commodified. By buying a product, one might feel they've done something to progress feminist agendas or to care for themselves without having to do the harder work of learning about and acting in response to multilayered oppressions or "collective feminist politics" (Banet-Weiser 180).

Women of Color Feminisms: Theory in the Flesh

Women of Color feminisms is like Black feminist theory in its focus on lived experiences, but while Black feminist theory centers on intersectionality and tends to draw from Black Studies the specific power structure and continued impacts of chattel slavery on Black people and on the experiences of Black women (Sharpe 22), Women of Color feminisms tend to focus on a concept called theory in the flesh and the experiences of women from a wider variety of ethnicities. I highlight a few key aspects of Women of Color feminisms that expose the need to care for the varied and unique experiences across women. In *This Bridge Called My Back*, editors Cherríe Moraga and Gloría Anzaldúa demonstrate a theory in the flesh through a collection of poems, personal essays, theoretical writings, artwork, and other creations from a range of contributors. Moraga reflects on the experiences of Women of Color in dialogue with Barbara Smith: "'How can we – this time – not use our bodies to be thrown over a river of tormented history to bridge the gap? […] A bridge gets walked over.' Yes, over and over and over again" (Moraga xxxvii). Anzaldúa further develops this living theory: "the physical realities of our lives – our skin color, the land or concrete we grew up on, our sexual longings – all fuse to create a politic born out of necessity" (Anzaldúa 19). A theory in the flesh refuses an "easy explanation to the conditions [they] live in" (19). This collection shares the stories of Black women, Latina women, Indigenous women, Asian American women, as well as many who identify as gay, lesbian, and bisexual[5]. While the collection does not define care explicitly, it theorizes a care for women through its collective call for a more inclusive, inviting, intersectional feminism. For instance, Barbara Smith defines feminism as a "practice to free all women: Women of Color, working-class women, poor women, physically challenged women, lesbians,

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[5] These identity labels are based on the contributors' own terms used in the original publication (1981).

old women, as well as white economically privileged heterosexual women. Anything less than this is not feminism, but merely female self-aggrandizement" (qtd. in Moraga and Anzaldúa: 57). The writers entreat readers to care more deeply across differences, and to take care not to minimize life experiences and material conditions.

Similarly, Sara Ahmed writes about a more caring and inclusive feminism. Speaking of the anti-trans movement that was happening in the mid-2010s, she claimed that a feminism that does not center the most marginalized is not one she wants to be a part of (*Living a Feminist Life* 234). Though she doesn't have the word "care" in the title, she ends her book with a survival toolkit, a way to care for oneself and for one another as feminist activists, whom she calls feminist killjoys. Care is a radical action that supports survival in a system designed to only privilege the few. It is an act of protest that an individual matters, and it is also an act of protest to refuse that only certain individuals matter (240). In this way, care is an act of warfare against injustices. Care is also the everyday ways we look out for others. A queer, antiracist feminism cares not by not equally valuing everyone, or the whole over individuals, but by valuing fragility and caring for the fragile, the shattered, and the marginalized as a way to build more just, feminist futures. From Women of Color feminisms, we can learn that practices of care involve recognizing the unique positionalities in the world and finding space to broaden the feminist movement to include these complex identities instead of erasing or changing them so they can fit inside a nicely packaged idea of "woman" to be deserving of rights or care.

Transnational Feminisms: Care as Labor

Transnational feminisms are made up of scholars from around the globe who ground their studies and critiques "in the political conditions and commitments of women from their own

contexts of injustice or oppression" (Pardy 2). Unlike a global or universalized feminism that smooths over differences, transnational feminisms foster solidarities across geographical contexts and recognize the state powers and other influences impact how feminists engage in activism (Alexander and Mohanty). Transnational feminists argue that care is labor – often invisible, unpaid, exploited, and unevenly distributed by gender, race, sexuality, and other measures of difference. Since the 90s, the globalization of capitalism has pushed many third world women into industrial jobs in which they are pressured to take birth control to avoid lowering production rates and thereby losing their jobs, but they are often unaware or unable to be concerned with the health risks (Federici). Care work done in the U.S. by third world women has been viewed as cheap labor with little value, though this work often keeps a household running and takes care of the children of that household. Some transnational feminists also strive to make visible the ways in which care labors are an essential part of social reproduction. Those that do care work are reproducing society through the culture, values, and stories they pass along to the children they care for (Katz). Capitalism relies on this social reproduction through care work, yet it does not monetarily value the people who do it (Fraser). From transnational feminists we can learn that an ethic of care is fraught with connotations of unpaid work as well as emotional labor. Care is multiple, layered, and complicated.

Crip and Disabled Complications of Care

Disabilities scholars complicate what it means to care by weighing some of its affordances and constraints. Many disabled people have experienced care as a means of control or oppression (Kelly). For example, in the not-so-distant past, the "Ugly Laws" put disabled people into "care facilities" to hide them away from public society (Piepzna-Samarasinha 19).

Family members meant to take care of a disabled person can end up controlling their daily lives and decision-making, stifling the disabled person's autonomy. Others are afraid to accept care because they may have their children taken away by the state, or because they may have to put up with queerphobia, transphobia, fatphobia, or sexphobia, or because they may not be U.S. citizens (Piepzna-Samarasinha 18-19).

On the other hand, collective mutual aid can provide support and care to disabled people, and multiply marginalized disabled communities are often the ones creating these collectives. In her book, *Care Work: Dreaming Disability Justice*, Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha proposes webs of care among disabled folks in which "people [contribute] as they can, not necessarily 'equally' or always" (28). Webs of care are interconnected and when they hold together, they serve a purpose. But they are also fragile; delicate. A web does not last long. What happens when these webs of care break down? People may also be more willing to give care than to receive it because accepting care is a vulnerable act, causing imbalances and feelings of guilt. Piepzna-Samarasinha includes excerpts of stories from disabled communities of care in her book, such as Romham of RAMP Vancouver, who reflects on the complications of caring for each other amid a range of disabilities:

> What does it mean when I can't support you in the ways you're supporting me? Does interdependency mean we do the same for one another at all times, as though there's even such a thing as 'the same' when it comes to this stuff? Is it a gentle ebb and flow? What if my ebb will never match your flow? What if it's sometimes a torrential downpour and one of us is drowning? What do we do then? (25)

Romham's is one of a collection of stories shared as a method to work out what care is and what it could be. The book entreats readers to think about how we can reconcile the uneven nature of

care in crip communities and what care would look like if the state or other organizations funded people to care for those who need it so that things like mutual aid were more sustainable long-term. From crip and disabled scholars, we can imagine a web of care strung together by so many things – a hangout, a resource share, a calendar to help with cleaning, a food distribution, etc. (28). We also learn to remember that care is not stable, nor is it always innocent or trusted by others with past experiences of injustice.

Queer of Color Critique and Critical Trans Studies: Who Deserves Care

Two areas of scholarship that are related, though unique, are Queer of Color Critique and Trans Studies. Queer of Color scholars such as Roderick A. Ferguson and Grace Hong critique the discrepancies between queer theory's claim to disrupt norms and queer theory's mainstream movements over time centering white homosexuality. Queer of Color scholars seek to broaden who and what is identified as queer – more by politics than by sexual identity alone. If to identify as queer is to disrupt the normative (Cohen), then queer theories must continue to disrupt normative policies that include some queer identities as acceptable, and others as unacceptable or even harmful (Puar). This discourse on homonormativity sees neoliberalism as a structure that succeeds in excluding many racialized and sexualized groups by "affirming certain modes of racialized, gendered, and sexualized life" (7). The Marriage Equality Act is a demonstration of this because it included some people like white gay males while excluding many others such as Trans People of Color. Care in such a system, Hong shows, is used as a conduit for violence because performances of care mask inequalities. For instance, the 1960s Moynihan report is famously known to claim a breakdown in Black families that could be fixed through attention to strengthening families, which really meant structuring them more like white heteronormative

families. This report and its resulting discourses were not genuinely interested in care for Black families in America, but in controlling Black people, especially given world relations at the time (Hong 20-1). Hong identifies this as a rhetoric of care that "renders such communities more deviant and punishable" when Black people and other marginalized groups don't live up to these "respectable" standards set forth in discourses such as the Moynihan Report (23).

Critical Trans scholars critique the exclusion of Trans experiences from queer and feminist theories, citing the life-threatening consequences of glossing over material and embodied differences among LGBTQ+ people (Spade). Critical Trans Studies center the material experiences of Trans people and exposes whose lives are perceived to be worth caring for in our society. Dean Spade argues that the path of legal rights and equalities taken by lesbian and gay rights organizations seeks to gain recognition and inclusion into the state institution, but it is not effective. He calls for transformative resistance that addresses the root causes of these violences, including how the law creates the conditions in which some people have more chance at life than others. Spade suggests a Critical Trans practice in process that moves flexibly based on mutual aid and centers the needs of the multiply marginalized. Hil Malatino reflects on the affect care has on Trans people as they strive to care for themselves and for one another during and after receiving institutionalized care (2020). For Malatino, care is not "a warm pleasant affection or a moralistic feel-good attitude" (Puig de la Bellacasa, qtd in Malatino: 41). Instead, it is "manifested in practice – action, labor, work – it is integral to our ways of doing" (Malatino 41). Care is maintenance work done for collective survival and at times that care fails because the Trans people practicing that care for each other are beyond exhausted. We can learn from these lines of scholarship to question uses of care for malicious intents. Additionally, we can critically

question whose lives are viewed as deserving of genuine care within our current system of power and recognize practices of care that push those boundaries to care for the most marginalized.

Care as Rhetorical

While I found myself reaching beyond the field of rhetoric for inspiration, frameworks, and on-the-ground practices to inform my care for community-engaged digital work, there are some scholars who theorize a feminist ethic of care within rhetoric that inspire me. One often looked to text is *Feminist Rhetorical Practices* by Jacqueline Jones Royster and Gesa Kirsch. They describe an ethic of care as a responsible rhetorical action that "requires a commitment to be open, flexible, welcoming, patient, introspective, and reflective. […] it is an attitude, a stance, an inclination to discover well-embodied truths and to revise old truths" (146). This feminist ethic of care includes an attention not to push desired results onto research findings and an obligation to "partner with [communities] as we join our world to theirs and work with them to set in motion a different, more fully rendered sense of rhetoric" (147). As I mentioned in Chapter 1, Maria Novotny and Dawn Opel also theorize care as a feminist rhetorical action. In their article, "Situating Care as Feminist Rhetorical Action for Community-Engaged Health Projects," they claim that in the past, care has shown up in feminist rhetoric as an ideological lens for critique. They argue instead that care is an activist response to a community need. In this way, care is a rhetorical action. They suggest that using a Feminist Participatory Action Research methodological framework allows researchers to respond to community needs with active care. While I follow a different path, I am grateful for these rhetoricians laying some of the foundational work for a CR praxis of care.

Matters of Care

By reviewing these definitions, practices, and examples of care, it is made clear that there are positive and negatives to be aware of; practicing care is no easy matter. I cannot tell a citational story about care without including a source that has become a beloved friend to me during this hard process. María Puig de la Bellacasa, who works across the disciplines of science and technology studies, feminist theory, and environmental humanities, calls for readers to think about "care" and "ethics" in necessarily more complicated ways in her book, *Matters of Care*. Her speculative thinking about care leads us to think of it as "a force distributed across a multiplicity of agencies and materials [that] supports our world as a thick mesh of relational obligation" (20). She doesn't offer her own explicit definition of care but thinks through a commonly used definition and what it means for human and more-than-human relations in our current world. This definition deems that care "includes everything that we do to maintain, continue and repair 'our world' so that we can live in it as well as possible. That world includes our bodies, ourselves, and our environment, all of which we work to interweave in a complex, life-sustaining web" (Tronto, qtd. in Puig de la Bellacasa: 3). Like others such as Ahmed and Piepzna-Samarasinha have described, Puig de la Bellacasa sees care as a fragile web of relations in which there is "both a doing and an ethico-political commitment that affects how we produce knowledge about things" (66). This reimagining of care offers a flexibility of and a need for multiple webs of care that work together to sustain our world as well as we possibly can realistically accomplish.

Care is not one static theory, nor is there such a thing as a universal ethic of good care. Care must be renegotiated again and again based on questions such as these: *who or what does the work of care that sustains the assemblages of worlds on earth? Who or what tends to neglect*

care for others? Which worlds are being maintained and at the expense of which others? The

term ethic, then, can be viewed not as a subscription to some universal moral but as a

commitment to the "hands-on, ongoing process of recreations of 'as well as possible' relations"

(Puig de la Bellacasa 6). Working towards "as well as possible relations" requires being in

relation with humans and nonhumans as we seek to care for each other. For me, this is where the

word "praxis" comes in, because we are not talking about implementing some ideal ethic of care

enacted from above or from some imagined utopia. Care demands recognition of the more-than-

human web of care in which we are enmeshed, complicities and all, and it demands action

towards a better reality for all (Haraway). In weaving together these different theories and

practices of care, I see a constellation like stars in the sky. Each one exists on its own, but when

we draw lines of connection, we get a picture of many ways to care that may help sustain living

and changing people/projects as well as those that may well be avoided (like neoliberal feminist

care). In the next section, I will discuss how I've implemented this constellation of care into my

own CR praxis of care.

A CR Praxis of Care

As I've worked on this community-engaged digital storytelling project, I found that a CR

methodology encouraged me to consider how culture and rhetoric are mutually constitutive.

Throughout this process, I have found that a praxis of care is also influenced by and influences

both culture and rhetoric. I returned again and again to practices of relationality, and of story as

theory, as I sought to care for the stories being written and shared through *Cuentos*. I also leaned

on constellative practices especially in the theorical and research work that grounded my actions

and on decolonial practices especially in the pedagogies of the community writing class (Chapter

3) and my own classes (Chapter 4). This has led me to theorize that feminist researchers working

on community-engaged digital storytelling projects can benefit from the guiding principles of CR. This praxis builds on the principles described in Chapter 1 and supports the *doing* of an ethic of care. In one of the founding texts of CR, "Our Story Begins Here," the writers say that critiquing should lead to *making*. Part of decolonizing practices is building: "We want to make something that people will use, rather than to take things apart only to show that they can be taken apart" (Powell et al. 11). Furthermore, feminist scholars such as Brittney Cooper and Sara Ahmed suggest that following critique there must be creation: "What you build is infinitely more important than what you tear down" (Cooper 275). I do my own building from the foundation of CR methodologies (Riley-Mukavetz; Arellano et al.) and pedagogies (Cedillo et al.) which are written by constellating stories and experiences for the readers to draw points from. By retelling some of my own "research experiences" alongside scholarship (Riley-Mukavetz 2014), I build a CR praxis of care in this section. First, I offer practices of care by making connections between the three tenets of care Novotny and Opel put forth in their article as well as principles of a CR methodology. Then I map out the praxis of care I embodied during this project and some tools that supported me in this endeavor. I wrap up with considering the complexities that come into play when trying to measure care.

CR Practices of Care

As I grappled with how to explain in scholarly words how I was enacting care throughout the life of the *Cuentos* project, I kept asking myself, *what is this…A methodology? A pedagogy? A research-creation? Something else?* Pouring back over scholarship I'd read, Novotny and Opel's article on care as rhetorical action and their incorporation of Puig de la Bellacasa's *Matters of*

Care moved me to be able to articulate my own practices of care. They suggest three main actions of care through their Feminist Participatory Action Research method (98):

1. Care makes bodies visible,

2. Care embraces participatory-centered methods to support the visibility of our participants, and

3. Care accounts for the researcher's personal experiences and affect in the doing of the research.

While these tenets are beneficial for more traditional research projects, the framing and context was a bit different than what I was doing for a couple of reasons. First, I started on this work from the community and reproductive justice. I did not start from rhetoric and composition, feminist rhetoric, or academia. I didn't bring an idea to the community. The promotores didn't come to me or to Rachel with a research study idea, either. *Cuentos* organically grew out of relationships. Second, it isn't a research study and there are no participants. As I describe in Chapter 1, I call this a research-creation mainly because the real deliverable is creative and the work I've done overall doesn't fit in a neat little box. The digital storytelling project is being shared by the community to celebrate the work of the promotores and is being used as a tool to support their educational curriculum at their home health parties. I don't think the promotores would describe it as a research study either. There also wasn't a pressure to be linked to advocacy through the community because it was rooted in the community's advocacy work. Third, the requirements demanded of me as a graduate student by the neoliberal university were a structural issue I couldn't really ignore. I considered this academic timeline a detriment to the community project; I did not consider *Cuentos* as a source for me to gather data for methods, results, analysis, and discussion sections of a paper. At times I struggled to be able to fully

engage with the community, somewhat because of the language barrier, but mostly because of my precarity of being a working graduate student and a parent.

Branching out from these tenets and guided by the lineages of care I detailed earlier and by a CR methodology, I came to find the practices of care that worked for me as I created and managed *Cuentos* and as I implemented it into my teaching. What I've learned through the actual *doing* of this work is that CR supports care as a valid, actionable response to rhetorical situations and it offers actionable practices of care that *do* the tenets of care listed above. Below, I articulate the four major practices of care and related actions that make up a CR praxis of care for researchers to apply to digital storytelling projects with community collaborators from marginalized communities on vulnerable topics such as reproductive justice.

Practice 1: Valuing story as theory highlights the lived experiences of community collaborators and calls academic collaborators to act on the implications of sharing a story in digital spaces.

A CR methodological practice of honoring stories as theories can shine a light on the realities of community members to the researcher and/or to others, and sometimes even the community collaborators themselves by validating their *own* story to themselves. Listening to and sharing stories is a valid knowledge-building practice, and in my case attention to story as lived theory revealed how some stories of reproductive justice are cared for, valued, and repeated, and how others are marginalized, ignored, and sometimes lost entirely (Barcelos; Vinson). The longer I listened to the stories of the promotores, the clearer it became to me that their stories theorized

their own unique place within the reproductive justice movement. I did my best to make these lived experiences visible on the site in ways that various stakeholders could learn from.

CR methodology also considers who is hearing a story and how they are hearing it (Arellano et al.), as well as the acceptable forms of evidence and appeals for that audience (Medina). I didn't want to throw the stories out into the digital sphere haphazardly. It was our main goal to make sure the stories, the reproductive justice page, and other contextual information was inviting and accessible for our target audience, which was the promotores' Latinx communities. I have continued to keep them at the center of my decision-making for framing the stories within the cite. Additionally, thinking critically and cautiously about who might come across a story and how they might react is imperative for researchers working with marginalized communities on digital projects. Not everyone who comes across *Cuentos* will be open to hearing a story about reproductive injustices, intimate partner violence, or even female empowerment written by Latina women. Valuing story as theory helps researchers to care for vulnerable stories and, by extension, care for the storytellers.

Practice 2: Recognizing and honoring relations brings attention to our intertwined embodied realities and calls us to respond with accountability and reciprocity.

Practicing relationality as an act of care brings attention to how we are related to our community collaborators, to groups of stakeholders, to the project itself, and to our own embodied realities as researcher-humans. It is by being attuned to these relations that we can recognize and act on the fact that the experiences of our collaborators are felt in their bodies and those often-invisible feelings can be brought to light. A CR methodology can offer practices of

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care that make bodies visible and respond to that by actively caring for those bodies. I learned from the promotores the value of showing up and being present as keys to strengthening trust and relationships, part of what they call confianza (more on this in Chapter 3). Riley-Mukavetz calls this "thereness" when she theorizes a CR methodology of relationality based on an oral history project that she did with multi-generational Odawa women from Michigan (2014). This takes time, effort, and trust-building. By starting from my relationships with the community and the people within it, I have applied methods that fit what the community wants or needs as those changed over time. Because I strived as much as possible to be in an equal relationship, not a researcher-participant relationship hierarchy, I had to be adaptive to community needs and be willing to reach outside my field of study to find support and/or solutions. And, due to many virtual meetings and gatherings, I've had to negotiate how relationality works in digital spaces, too (Johnson). Relationality also makes bodies visible in that we recognize our own relations with our own bodies. This extension of care to the researcher required me to reflect on my own embodied emotions while working on a project tied so closely to my personal experiences with reproductive justice. By attending to these material realities, we can more openly and honestly (and carefully) share about our work with others, too.

Accountability and reciprocity are two important relational acts of care. I am accountable to the stories being shared with me and the embodied realities of the people attached to them. As I worked alongside Rachel, the promotores, our translators, and employees from Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin (PPWI), I continually reflected on my methods and aims to make sure I was upholding the integrity of the project. In writing my dissertation, I decided one way I could be accountable to the promotores was to not gather data from the promotores to analyze. Even though I'd already taken tremendous care in this work, there could be negative outcomes that I

did not want to be responsible for. For example, gathering and analyzing personal information

from the promotores or their stories could cause them to have to re-experience traumatic events

and I was not prepared to offer counseling for this. Additionally, it is common for participants to

change their mind about how their stories are being used for research purposes (Gagnon).

Similarly, Cana Uluak Itchuaqiyaq cautions researchers working with Indigenous or other

marginalized populations that "good intentions do not equal good methods" (35). Accountability

as a part of relationality encourages us to reconcile with the aims of our research and causes us to

question if we should even be doing research. It is worth asking: Does the community want to be

involved in a research study, interviews, and a write up of results? Or does the community have a

need that you could support with your skills and resources in another way?

Reciprocity as an act of care helps researchers to continue turning their attention to the

community needs, desires, and goals. I needed to admit that I was gaining something from this

partnership. I was learning new ways to implement my scholarly skills in a community context

and was also gathering my own experiences to write about. What was the community gaining?

As Rachel and María write, "If there is nothing that is left behind for the community to use for

their well-being and for the community to thrive, the research should not happen" (Bloom-Pojar

and Barker 2022, 30). The promotores have often been eager to help PPWI and other funded

studies concerning Latinx populations due to the deep trust they've built with their communities,

but they often don't see any benefits to their communities from the results of this research

(Bloom-Pojar and Barker). From the beginning, I saw reciprocity as a necessary practice of care,

and I worked to make sure the promotores were gaining from their partnership with me. The

greatest example of this has been the website because though I am the creator, designer, and

manager of the site, I continue to pass back ownership to the promotores. I am grateful to work

with them on this and my goal has been to help make something to give them that they will use. Researchers should be thinking about small and big ways they can show reciprocity to their community partners who've let them into their space.

Practice 3: Building constellations of knowledges and practices supports community ways of knowing and fosters genuine collaboration.

Researchers can enact care by building constellations of knowledges and practices, which fosters more equal and equitable partnerships between parties. Constellating my own experiences, my affective responses to the community I'm working with, and my feelings about the work I am doing allowed me to hold those potentially competing affects together as I did the work. This can let researchers lay out a map of their motives and positionalities regarding the community-engaged work. It was important in this work for me to be reflexive and honest, to not exclude myself or my connections to this work. Trixie Smith et al. bring this up as well, asking, "How often are we expected to remove our physical self from our scholarship?" (55). We cannot remove ourselves from our writing, research, or community-engaged work. I practiced care for myself and for the project through reflexive activities like reflective writing and conversations with Rachel about my own embodied experiences in relation to our work. Additionally, drawing a constellation of knowledges and practices allows for more ways of knowing and being to be valued alongside the often-dominating perspective of the researcher and implementing these into community projects can greatly enrich the work. As such, constellation is a space-making practice of care that creates the necessary room for considerations of the researcher's embodied

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experiences in relation to the research project and in relation to the community while still valuing

their knowledges, practices, and ways of being.

This practice of care also involves building meaning together with participants. Rachel

and I did not give the promotores an article to read about the theory of reproductive justice and

have them write about it; they worked through their own experiences and came to shared

knowledge and definitions through that process. Together, we constellated stories written about

reproductive justice, stories their communities shared with them, and their own stories to create a

map of knowledges about reproductive justice for Latinx communities in Wisconsin.

Constellation also involves equally valuing different types of knowledges and strengthening the

bonds between them. By equally valuing the knowledges and expertise of community

organizations alongside academic scholarship and my own personal knowledges, I was able to

practice care for the promotores. When sharing about *Cuentos* to my class (Chapter 4), I did not

try to teach it to them, instead, I had my students bring their own knowledges about care, about

reproductive justice, and what they learned about the promotores together so that we could

collaborate on learning together. We practiced constellating multiple subjects, discourses, and

connections between them to honor unique voices that may at times be in contradiction but still

deserve to be heard (Gagnon 14). This constellation work can care for the experiences and

knowledges of community collaborators while at the same time not excluding other ways of

thinking or being.

Practice 4: Decolonial engagement decenters academia and recenters the community.

Researchers show care for their community collaborators by incorporating decolonial practices into their work. I am, like others, wary that "the term 'collaboration' often masks a darker reality: that of academic use which the participant has little to no control over, insight into, or ability to advise upon" (Novotny and Gagnon 2021, 495), The *Cuentos* project was created from the vision and desire of the community. Before we knew what the "thing" was that I was making, I was in conversation with Rachel and María Barker about what would be helpful or useful to promotores. I have also tried to decolonize ideas about ownership, though it has been tricky. The promotores have co-ownership of site, along with Rachel and UWM, and the promotores have full ownership over the direction of the site's use a tool to support their curriculum, CCmáS[6]. We can find new and more equitable research practices through a deconstruction of traditional methods and the creation of new methods. This might mean trying and failing at a few strategies before finding out what works for a specific project and community. You will likely find the answer within the community, though, not within academia. This shows care because scholarly things like method and methodology are de-centered and replaced by the practical needs of the community while also shifting the value of expertise from academia to the community.

Another significant facet of decolonial practices as a way to care is refusal (Tuck and Yang; Wilson). I practiced this by saying no to things, and I was receptive to the promotores saying no to things. For instance, at any point, the writers are still able to request that their story be taken down from the site. I have also been very intentional about how I talk about or present on *Cuentos* in academic spaces, aware that the "communities whose traditional knowledge these 'new' tools arise from can and should be able to say 'No, this isn't for you to use' in whatever

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[6] Cuidándonos Creceremos más Sanos (Growing Healthier Together).

way is appropriate to say it and be heard" (Itchuaqiyaq 47). As an outsider to the community, I need to accept those "no's" and pay attention to times when not saying "no" might not necessarily mean "yes" (Itchuaqiyaq 46). As part of finding new and decolonial ways to do this work, I have made difficult choices to refuse certain things as a way to care for the participants. For instance, we had planned a print version of *Cuentos* in spring of 2022, but we pushed it back, sending out a book proposal in January 2023 instead. It was important to me personally to try to have this as a C.V. line before graduating, but it was not important to the community in the short term. I also refused to analyze the stories of the promotores for this dissertation because I did not want to use promotores or their stories for my personal gain. Refusing certain research methods and strict academic timelines was hard as a graduate student needing a dissertation to graduate, but it was imperative for me to live out a CR praxis of care. Feminist researchers can care for their community partners through these decolonial practices that center community through new or different methods.

These four practices make up a CR praxis of care for community-centered digital storytelling projects regarding reproductive justice. By centering care as an actionable response to community needs, researchers can more ethically design and circulate such projects, as well as teach students or other secondary audiences to ethically engage with them. Chapters 3 and 4 will go into my implementation of this praxis of care during the curation of the digital storytelling project and during the implementation of the project into two of my classes to show how I cared for these vulnerable stories, community collaborators, and new audiences. Through this, readers will understand how I developed a CR praxis of care during my own engagement with these stages of the *Cuentos* project.

Tools for the Doing

This has been the hardest chapter for me to write. I've struggled to write about what the practices of care were while I was in the midst of doing them. I had to go through writing a lot of Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 before I could come back and write about my doings of care definitively. After working through all that, I decided that praxis, not method or methodology or pedagogy, was best suited to describe what I was putting forth. The Advanced English Dictionary defines praxis as "translating an idea into an action" based on the ancient Greek for action, activity, or practice:
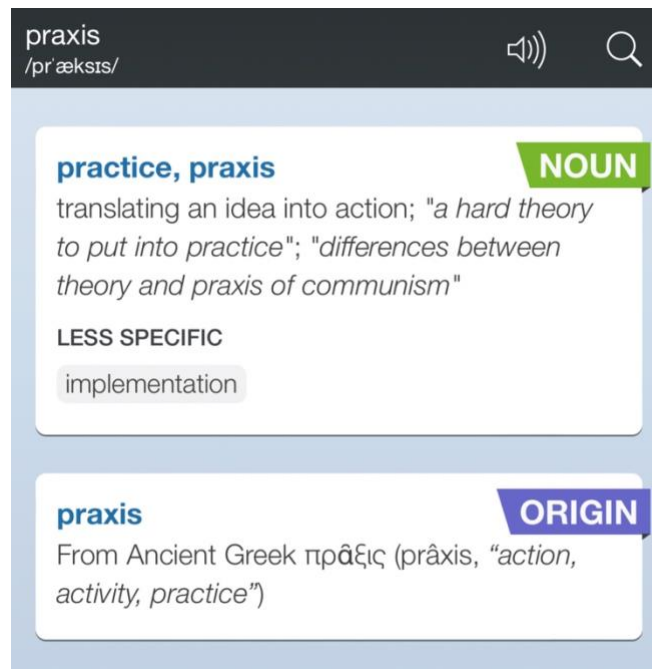
Figure 16. Advanced English Dictionary's definition of "praxis," April 2023.

To put care into action, researchers need some tools to support them, even if one of those tools is just their own selves. I often return to Ahmed's Feminist Killjoy Survival Toolkit at the end of *Living a Feminist Life* to remind myself what tools keep *me* going. That make living a feminist life possible. But what are the things that make the doings of a CR praxis of care possible? What tools can you put into your toolkit of care for stories and storytellers in a digital community-

engaged project? Below I briefly describe six of the items I've put into my own toolkit, though I would encourage you to reflect on what goes into your own.

Item 1: A Constellation of Care

As I reviewed above, there are multiple ways to theorize and practice care. It has been deeply beneficial for me to be aware of these, and others, because when I come to a project, it may be helpful to know how a community might respond to you saying, I *care about you!* They might be hesitant; they might have had bad experiences with care as control in the past. They might want to see me put my words into actions. It is wise to think about care in multiple ways since there are multiple ways to be cared for and to care in this world. What does care look like to you in the literal, on-the-ground, in-the-messiness-and-material-compliciteness-of-it-all?

Item 2: Stories & Relationships

I put these together because, at this point, you should have a sense of how they work on their own but also how they are really always tied together. As Riley-Mukavetz notes, "since practicing relationality is partly about how we embody and carry stories and relationships with us, it's important to recognize how stories impact bodies" (2014, 116). We tell stories to build relationships, and as we build relationships, we tell stories together. It is a circle. As I build relationships with community collaborators, stories are shared with me. And, when it seems right, I share parts of my own story to reciprocate that trust and confidence. These experiences impact our bodies, ourselves, and how we live in relation to one another.

Item 3: Queer Failure

I've learned from queer scholars, and from my own stories and relationships, that failure is productive (Halberstam). Sometimes you must sit in the mess of everything and embrace it. I see this as being paired well with decolonial practices though I recognize they are not the same. The more I have been willing to deconstruct practices, to forge new paths, to fail, the more I have opened this project and myself up to new and better possibilities. Not new or better like an always improving progressive narrative or a capitalistic agenda. New like unimagined. Better like community-centered instead of academic centered even though it means some difficulties for me in trying to explain the rigor of my work. Why does it need to be rigorous, by the way? I fully believe that I've failed my way to finishing this dissertation, and in doing so I've been able to put forth something creative, innovative, and meaningful.

Item 4: Real World Research Skills

I've done a range of research for this dissertation. I read extensively on reproductive justice scholarship, studied feminist and queer theories, delved into RHM and related areas of rhetoric, and familiarized myself with digital design studies. I have also googled "promotores de salud" and searched for national news coverage or other journalistic writing about them and/or about reproductive justice and Latinx advocacy. I archived posts on Instagram and Twitter when I thought they were relevant and scoured social media for stories of reproductive justice, keeping up with certain accounts to see what they're posting and promoting. I researched how to optimize our site's searchability and watched YouTube videos about best design practices, preparing a site for mobile viewing, and potential support for creating a bilingual site from scratch instead of using a browser's language options. I read up on PPWI and the promotores program here in Wisconsin and kept up with their email newsletters. If you are working with a community as a

researcher, consider what your role and skills means to them and to the project, not just to you or to your institution.

Item 5: Rhetoric

As a cultural rhetorician, I utilize whatever skills, knowledges, and strategies I've been trained in to help benefit the community. So, as you'll see in Chapter 3 especially, but also in Chapter 4, this meant applying the basics of rhetoric: returning again and again to the elements of a rhetorical situation as the project evolved and renegotiating my rhetorical choices. I bring up questions about audience, purpose, ethics, and circulation without using the jargon. I especially put my detailed eye for document design and visual presentation to use. Rhetorical skills can greatly benefit activist endeavors for reproductive justice, and I've definitely seen that to be the case in this digital storytelling project.

Item 6: Art and Creativity

Care is hard labor. It is, after all, maintenance work for our collective survival. Practicing care for stories and storytellers is labor. And the storytellers we care for as researchers are most likely also practicing multiple labors of care. In the case of the promotoras, they are often helping community members who are experiencing difficult and sometimes traumatic situations. On top of this, they are also caretakers for their children and their extended families, and many of them work additional jobs. So many layers of

Figure 17. A digital drawing of butterfly hugs (artist unknown), 2023.

labor. So many layers of care! Leaning into art and creativity can be encouraging and reviving for the community and for yourself in this work. Telling stories of reproductive [in]justice is emotionally heavy; being creative and gathering things that bring joy can be encouraging when the heaviness hits. One activity we did with the promotores involved a reflective drawing and mediation time. During writing times, Rachel played soft music in Spanish. At our community celebration launch event, we had a space for kids to color. Along the way, I've also curated my own archive of art to help me survive this whole process. A poem, a quote, a snippet of text, a painting, a song – anything beautiful to me goes into this archive to support me as I practice layers of care and I've tried my best to pack as much into this

Figure 18. A sticker of Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio Cortez, given to me by a friend before my MA defense (which was an analysis of her), 2019.

dissertation as I can. Artwork, inspiring people, music, memes. It could be anything. While I tend to avoid using the term "self-care," I needed to slow down and recognize how my own body carries this care, these stories, and this type of emotional-laden work alongside my own multiple labors of care as a mother, partner, teacher, researcher, and writer. How can we care for our bodies that do this care work?

Figure 19. The cover art for a lofi version of Mothica's album, Nocturnal (artist not named), 2023.

A Circle of Care

As I wrap up this chapter, I come to the messiest questions of it all for me: *how can you measure care? Does a praxis of care ensure that care will materialize, and if so, how? How*

much care is enough? There might not be a foolproof way to quantitatively measure how much care was practiced. But there are ways to measure care through a cultural rhetorics praxis of care:

1. Through the stories told,

2. Through the relationships built,

3. Through constellations fostered, and

4. Through new and different methods employed.

Keeping these CR principles in mind as evidence of care, we can ask ourselves reflective questions as researchers that get at the three areas of care I mentioned earlier: work/doing, feeling/affect, and ethics/politics (from Puig de la Bellacasa). Together with community collaborators, researchers can reflect on and renegotiate, if need be, the practices of care being enacted. For an example of negotiation of care, I was overly cautious about how the stories of the promotoras would be implemented into their home health parties, but I had to learn to pass along my knowledge and trust the promotores' decisions that they made for themselves. It is difficult to tell your own vulnerable story and use it as educational material for others and I was worried about how people might respond especially if a story mentioned abortion or intimate partner violence, which are complex topics within Latinx communities. The promotores practiced teaching with their story in training sessions to prepare themselves for doing it in the home health parties and made choices for themselves about how they would talk about their own stories. Care should never be about control, but about support. Below are some questions that researchers and community collaborators should reflect on together to help measure how care is or isn't being practiced. To be clear, a researcher should not read through these and check items off it as if it is a grocery list. Each area should ideally be evaluated by the community – either

directly or through some form of feedback. While this only begins to measure the impacts of care or level of care happening, it is a starting place for identifying how much care or what kind of care is being practiced in community-engaged storytelling projects about reproductive justice.

Care as work/doing:

- What are some specific ways that the community is being centered in the work/doings?

- What are the best methods for this specific community project? How am I working with the community to determine a tentative timeline, desired deliverables, and/or methods that serve the community interests?

- How will things continue if I as the researcher leave? How will the initiative or project continue if I leave or when it is time to turn it over fully to the community?

- What am I leaving behind – knowledges, skills, tools, attitudes, networks, etc.?

Care as feeling/affect:

- How do collaborators feel about our partnership? How do they feel about how their stories have been taken care of and attended to?

- How have targeted community audiences responded to the work and to me as the researcher?

- How are audiences taught to engage with the project?

- In what ways are the embodied experiences of community collaborators being recognized, honored, and supported? What can be improved?

Care as ethics/politics:

- How do we talk about ownership – of a site or other deliverable, of written stories and/or images, or of experiences?

- How do I share about the project with secondary audiences such as students, peers, or conference attendees?

- In what ways can I guide where and how stories are being digitally circulated as the life of the project ages?

- How do I write and publish about this type of work in a way that shares my experiences while honoring the community?

These questions are just a start. Researchers interested in implementing a CR praxis of care into their work with vulnerable communities should tweak these or develop their own questions or evaluative forms alongside these to help collaboratively measure the care they are enacting. Imperatively, the only way these acts of care can be measured is through the evaluation of the community partners. We ask these questions to get feedback from the community. As we evaluate the impact of our care, we find new ways to deepen it. It continues this way, like a circle.

Care is not one thing, nor is it inherently a feminist or feminine thing. Care is complicated, convoluted, and contextual. It is important to remember that while we theorize about how to care for communities sharing stories with us, that "they continue to live and deal with their lives" (Novotny and Gagnon 2018, 96). Storytelling is not linear, and bodies carry traces of where they've been and what they've experienced (Ahmed 2017, 247). Given this, feminist researchers can respond by practicing a CR praxis of care for the vulnerable stories being shared with them and for the storytellers sharing them (see Appendix A for an abbreviated

guide). We can be more care-full about the creation and circulation of vulnerable stories of reproductive justice in digital spaces, as far as our influence reaches. I take up this issue of how to care for stories once they're out in public digital spaces in Chapter 3 as I discuss the *Cuentos* project in detail, and in Chapter 4 as I recount the experience of implementing care as I taught *Cuentos* to two of my classes in a digital format. As the reproductive justice movement continues to gain attention and traction, I ask feminist researchers, especially those with rhetorical expertise, to "tell each other stories of different ways you can live, different ways you can be" (Ahmed 265). Tell new stories about care, about working with communities, about how to be a researcher. The promotores tell unique stories about different ways to approach reproductive justice and this dissertation tells a unique story of different ways to approach digital storytelling projects with communities who advocate for reproductive justice. But as we tell these stories, we must do so with care. Through a CR praxis of care, we can honor these stories and our relations with the storytellers. And when we apply this care to the people we are in relation with, we naturally ask more care-full questions about how to engage with them, how to honor their stories, and how to share their stories (or not) with others. In this way, research is a circle of relationality, not a straight line with a predetermined end point (Wilson). And, in this way, we come full circle.

Chapter 3: Caring for *Cuentos*

> *This is not a story to pass on.*
>
> —Toni Morrison (1987, p. 275)*
>
> *I knew that there were limits to what*
> *I could ask—and then what I could say.*
>
> —Audra Simpson (2007, p. 73)
>
> *We're telling all of you, but we're not telling anyone else.*
>
> —Fred Moten and Stefano Harney (2010, p. 5)

Figure 20. Three quotes from an article by Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, 2014.

These three quotes appear on the first page of Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang's chapter, "R-Words: Refusing Research" (2014). As part of the collection titled *Humanizing Research: Decolonizing Qualitative Inquiry with Youth and Communities*, the authors write about the ways in which research has been harmful and/or not desired by the often-marginalized communities being researched. Many times, academic research is not even the answer to the problem of a community. Still, some researchers go into communities, draw forth stories of pain and vulnerability, and then circulate those stories for their own personal and/or professional gain. This article has stuck with me for years now as I've contemplated my own actions as a researcher partnering with a community. To care for *Cuentos* through my work, affects, and ethics, I've asked myself questions like this: *How do I balance the risks of sharing their stories with their desire to educate and empower by sharing their stories? How can I honor the stories*

of community collaborators in digital spaces? How do I write about our shared story to outside audiences as the project continues to evolve?

In this chapter, I tell my story of implementing a CR praxis of care to the curation and management of *Cuentos de Confianza: A Community Writing Project for Reproductive Justice*. *Cuentos* is a bilingual and digital storytelling project that highlights the experiences of six promotores de salud (health promoters) across Wisconsin. The project was birthed out of a community writing class in the fall of 2021 with a group of promotores who elected to take the course. I was the teaching assistant to Dr. Rachel Bloom-Pojar for the duration of the semester. The goal of the class was to provide space for the promotores to reflect on and write about their journeys as community health experts and about their personal experiences related to reproductive [in]justice. María Barker, the director of the promotores, hoped it would also be an opportunity for the promotores to experience a higher education writing class. The class, titled "Escritura Comunitaria: Escribiendo mi Historia Como Promotor/a de Salud" ("Community Writing: Writing my Story as a Promotor/a de Salud"), included individual writing prompts, group conversations, reflective activities, and one-on-one conference times. The end of semester deliverables for each writer were 1-3 revised short stories, a brief biography, and accompanying images that could also be hosted on a digital site for those writers who were interested in pursuing that separate project. That separate project became what we now refer to as *Cuentos*. We also planned a series of community launch events to celebrate the writers after the completion of the class and to share their digital stories with their friends and families. As website designer and editor, I had an active role in how the site was designed and how the content was curated, but this also meant I held a large part of the responsibility for taking care of the stories hosted on the site.

Through this experience, I developed a CR praxis of care for digital storytelling projects about reproductive justice. In this chapter, I will articulate how I implemented this praxis for the promotores and their stories as the *Cuentos* project continued to shift and transform. A CR praxis of care is a flexible set of actions for researchers to center the lived experiences of community collaborators in all aspects of a collaborative project or work and to respond to sensitive and life-impacting community concerns such as reproductive justice. This chapter demonstrates how I embodied these actions of care while I grappled with the complexities of sharing vulnerable stories in digital spaces. By bringing attention to the threads of relationality woven throughout this project, sharing the story of how *Cuentos* came to be, and analyzing the rhetorical process of designing and circulating *Cuentos* across contexts, I show how a CR praxis of care attends to stories about reproductive justice being shared in digital spaces and the storytellers of those stories. This ultimately helps feminist rhetoricians act in response to issues such as reproductive justice and deepens genuine collaboration between academics and community. After offering a few takeaways, I will invite readers to experience the full digital site[7]. To begin, I'd like to share more about who the promotores de salud are and what they do.

The Promotores de Salud

While Promotores de Salud programs are present in communities across the nation and work with initiatives that span across health concerns, in Wisconsin the program focuses on training in reproductive and sexual health education. The historical lineage of promotores is traced back to Latin America, where the primary health education and care, and specifically sexual and reproductive health education and care of communities, has been carried out by

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[7] There are a few parenthetical references to specific cuentos in this chapter. However, I encourage readers to read and listen to each of the six stories and interact with the rest of the site at the conclusion of the chapter.

promotores (NLIRH 8). There are many different types of promotores programs across the U.S. The small number of them affiliated with Planned Parenthood, like Wisconsin's, are focused on "[bringing] sexual and reproductive health information and resources into communities that need them, building trusted relationships and decreasing barriers to healthcare access" ("Promotores de Salud"). In 2010, 80% of community health workers or promotores were women, and 30% were not paid (NLIRH 8). The majority of the promotores here in Wisconsin identify as female as well. The National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health (NLIRH), an organization that advocates for the reproductive rights of Latinas across the U.S., sees promotores as essential to the reproductive justice movement. Because promotores work within their own communities, they have already built trust with community members. That trust allows them to share educational information and to be a supportive resource for community members. As such, NLIRH claims that promotores can "provide leadership, peer education and resources to support community empowerment, or *capacitación*" (8*).* This is especially significant in communities with a high rate of immigrants from Latin America and the Caribbean, because promotores can act as "cultural liaisons" to outside decision-makers and/or to coalitional partners. In this way, promotores can "bridge a gap" between the U.S. healthcare system and the needs of immigrant families, which often include challenges such as transportation to services, understanding the healthcare infrastructure, and translating medical jargon into everyday language (15).

When understanding who the promotores are and the reproductive and sexual health education they do for their communities, it is important not to generalize the Latinx[8] population that the promotores work within and are a part of. There are many assumptions that might be made about Latinx communities in America: that they all speak Spanish, that they all speak the

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[8] Latinx is a gender inclusive term referring to Latino/a populations in the U.S. and it is the term used by the promotores in their community programming. Other common choices are Latin@ and Latino/a.

same kind of Spanish, that they all come from the same place, or that they all hold the same religious and political beliefs. But Latinx peoples and identities are diverse; they are not a monolith (Gutiérrez 222). There are a range of opinions about issues of reproductive and sexual health. For example, within Latinx communities there are people who support abortion and people who do not for a variety of reasons. There is also a spectrum of barriers to health services. Victoria Ruiz, a Latina advocate in California through the Raíz Project, recounts: "Even in our experiences trying to access reproductive health care, our varying identities pose different barriers along the way. For some of us, a barrier may be immigration status, while for others, it may be language accessibility. For others, it may be income inequality or lack of health insurance, and for some, it may be all of the above" (Ruiz n.p.). The director of research at the California Latinas for Reproductive Justice reported that "while the Latino community is the fastest growing group in the U.S., [they] have historically been the largest uninsured population" (Ena Suseth Valladares, qtd in Moll-Ramírez: n.p.). Due to the diverse nature of the Latinx population and the increasing need for healthcare services, it is imperative to provide culturally competent health care and education that responds to specific community needs (Silliman et al. 12). The promotores de salud help to do that.

The Promotores de Salud program in Wisconsin has been actively growing for over 20 years as it strives to provide culturally responsive sex education to Latinx communities across the state. Currently, the largest groups of promotores are in Milwaukee and Madison, but they have also been expanding outreach in rural areas around the state. The promotores work as paid consultants through the community education department of Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin (PPWI) to "provide culturally-competent sexuality education in Spanish to their own social networks" at fiestas caseras (home health parties) with cross-generational audiences

(["Promotores de Salud and Health Promoter Programs"](#)). These home health parties are hosted by a community member who invites family and friends to learn about and discuss topics surrounding sex and sexuality in a welcoming space with food, friends, and opportunities for important conversations. The promotores educate community members about sexual and reproductive health and wellness using a culturally relevant curriculum developed by María Barker, the director of the program, called [Cuidándonos Creceremos más Sanos](#) (Growing Healthier Together), or CCmáS for short. They do community tours where they visit and teach about organizations and services in their own community. They lead advocacy sessions in which they discuss happenings in the community and how people can actively participate. They

Figure 21. CCmaS logo.

translate health information from English to Spanish and from formal jargon to everyday phrases for people to understand. The promotores help people access healthcare services in ways that build on existing community knowledges "to improve their own health outcomes" (Bloom-Pojar and Barker 2020, 85). They also support community members in immigration and citizenship issues, such as providing voting registration information. During the Covid-19 vaccine rollout, they helped with educating community, correcting misinformation, and promoting mobile vaccination clinics. All this work is firmly rooted in the practice of confianza.

The promotores believe that confianza is foundational to their success. Confianza can translate to "trust" or "confidence" in English, but more dynamic meanings are lost in translation. The promotores view entering into confianza as the foundation of everything they do. While this practice is complex and fluctuates over time and context, it generally tends to

incorporate building relationships, sharing stories, and being present in the moment (Bloom-Pojar and Barker). Being present, physically, mentally, and emotionally, matters for creating trust and confidence. First, the promotores consistently show up – to community events, to Covid-19 vaccine pop up sites, to video calls or text chats. They are committed to showing up for their community even late at night and beyond what they are paid to do. Second, the promotores tell, listen to, and care for stories. They listen as community members share vulnerable experiences with them that they likely have not shared with anyone else. These stories often include infertility, loss and grief, sexual abuse and/or traumas. The promotores carry these emotionally heavy stories with them as they go about their work. They offer support and reciprocate story-sharing in relation to reproductive and sexual health and wellness which further builds trust. Third, the promotores build relationships with the people in their communities. This is a slow process that takes time and intentionality. They offer services such as the tours I mentioned to educate people on public resources and other support to their community outside of their designated curriculum. This is not just a job to them because they are working within their own community; it is a deeper commitment to both individual and group survival and growth.

Confianza also carries connotations of confidence at the individual and community level. The promotores see entering into confianza as building a sense of confidence and empowerment in the community and in themselves. This is significant because within the local Latinx communities, the promotores have found that families tend to value traditional gender roles ("Cuento de Gaby;" "Cuento de María"). The promotores seek to carefully dismantle this without causing fractures in their community relationships by encouraging the empowerment of women for themselves so they can better support their families and be seen as equals with men. Confianza is a process of empowerment by finding confidence from within and taking action for

what is right. But the individual and community concepts of confianza are not separate, they work together and influence each other. Through their relationships with each other, too, the promotores also found their own sense of empowerment growing ("Cuento de Kendy;" "Cuento de Joshy").

Because of confianza, the promotores are seen as trusted people with whom community members can go to about painful past and present situations surrounding reproduction and sexuality such as domestic violence or child abuse. This adds emotional labors to the promotores' already emotionally heavy work. Rachel and María write about this in their article, "The Role of Confianza in Community-Engaged Work for Reproductive Justice" (2020). Confianza is a community responsibility that comes with "additional pressure to help people, such as when individuals call the promotores late at night or request help in a multitude of ways that are not reflected in the health promoter job description" (Bloom-Pojar and Barker 92). These situations require emotional labor and care that healthcare professionals rarely offer. Most of the time, institutional providers "care only about the part of you that impacts their contractual work. They often do not want to hear your story, nor do they have time to sit and just talk with you." (89). This leaves a gap in necessary care. As mentioned in Chapter 1, these gaps in care often are filled by Black women, Women of Color, and Indigenous women. Through practices of confianza, the promotores act as a bridge between the narrow services healthcare institutions provide and the diverse needs of their Latinx communities across Wisconsin. While these labors are heavy, the promotores see them as essential to empowering their communities on the path towards reproductive justice ("Cuento de Elida;" "Cuento de Angeles").

Weaving Threads of Relationality

So how did I, a white woman who knows only basic Spanish, get involved with the promotores de salud? My connection to this project started as a small seed of an idea. In fall of 2018, which was in the second year of my master's program at UWM, I was in a seminar with Rachel called "Theories of Composition and Rhetoric: Language, Race, and Culture." During the semester, she shared about focus groups she was doing with the promotores de salud. I remember she was very excited that things were finally starting to come together in her research work. I was curious about her work but didn't think much more of it at the time. Fast-forward to spring of 2020, just before the Covid-19 lockdowns. A few of my peers told me about their experiences of doing internships for course credit with different partnering organizations. It was being promoted as a way to experience more public forms of writing and rhetoric since our program was transitioning to have a focus on public rhetorics and community-engaged work. In fall of 2020, while everything was still virtual, I emailed Rachel to see if I'd be able to do an internship with her to support her fellowship work with the promotores. I remember thinking that this was probably not the kind of thing the internship was meant for. I didn't know how it would relate to writing and rhetoric. Still, I expressed a desire to use my skills and resources to support a local community and to get more experience in the rhetorics of health and medicine, of which I was interested but didn't have much experience with at the time. Additionally, the fellowship was in partnership with PPWI, which I was curious about as I had witnessed their attempts to campaign for their services, care, and education outside of abortion services.

Rachel was open to the idea, so together we created the expectations for the internship. As my scholarly experiences and interests were related to public programming and digital rhetorics, we ended up developing an idea for a website that could highlight the work of the promotores somehow and – if it ended up working with the interests and priorities of the

promotores – could allow me to learn more about the ethics of digital design and of community-engaged writing projects. We thought this might be a supplement to in-person exhibits of some sort. Alongside my internship with Rachel, I also interned with PPWI's community education department during the spring 2021 semester. When I finished this internship, Rachel and I renegotiated my continued involvement in the project, which allowed me to work over the summer, through the fall, and into the next year (*And here we are, still working together!).* Throughout that time, we held regular meetings, first virtually but then at our local Stone Creek Coffee shop, where creative conversations over coffee, parfaits, and scones have built our relationship and have allowed us space to work through hard questions. The collaborative and community-centered essence of *Cuentos* required us to constantly grapple with the shifting purposes and intentions of multiple, changing, and imagined stakeholders over time.

From summer 2021 into fall, we prepped for and then held the community writing class I described at the beginning of this chapter for any promotores who wished to write about their personal journeys related to reproductive justice before and/or while being a health promoter. Facilitating such a class required us to reflect on how best to implement reproductive justice pedagogy into a community writing class that had never been taught before. Because María wanted this to be a realistic higher education experience, the course was created much like a college course: there was a syllabus, scheduled reading materials, and some pre-planned class activities. As I got involved in the class, I started having more interactions with the promotores, and out of the class I formed a connection with one of the writers, Gaby, based on some commonalities we had such as being younger working mothers and having a passion for reproductive justice work. Working with Rachel throughout this project has shown me how recognizing and honoring our relations brings attention to our intertwined embodied realities and

calls us to respond. This practice of care made me aware of and held me accountable to my relations – with Rachel, with María, with the promotores, and with reproductive justice work.

During this time, I had also taken time to build relations with María Barker, the director of the promotores and one of the writers for the *Cuentos* project. She was one of the PPWI employees who oversaw my training during their orientation, and I remember that one of the first things I noticed about her was that she is not afraid of asking critical questions about race, gender, and equity. She has also been supportive of acting at times where academics tend to be hesitant to act. While much of our interaction has been virtual, there are a couple of moments that have helped to build our shared story. The first happened during a meeting in which Rachel and I were sharing the early vision of a digital site with a few PPWI stakeholders. They asked some good questions about who would own the site and what the stories would be used for. Someone noted that the promotores sign release forms for photos and information shared in related to the CCmáS program to be used by PPWI, and it was then brought up that María's oral history of the program and curriculum was considered part of PPWI's story. I was surprised to hear that Maria's own story of creating and developing the program was viewed as PPWI's history, and therefore as their intellectual property. I asked some ethical questions about how these stories might be used be for PPWI marketing if our proposed site was hosted through them, suggesting that María's story should be hers to share where, when, and how she decided to share it. After this conversation, PPWI supported us moving forward with the project as something shared by PPWI and UWM. We also agreed to keep thinking through the questions about authorship, ownership, and how to prioritize the writers in the project. In a follow up to this meeting with just the three of us, María mentioned how she had not really considered her story to be *her own* in that way, that she should have control over how, where, and why it is shared. This

showed me how important valuing story as theory is because it highlights lived experiences of community collaborators, specifically, and calls on us to act on the implications of sharing stories, especially in digital spaces.

The second moment happened in the spring of 2022, when we invited the *Cuentos* writers to UWM to workshop the site and their stories ahead of our planned community launch event. I was observing María's confidence, strength, and loyalty to her community in her contributions to conversations. As everyone talked about future visions for *Cuentos*, she always recentered the work, bringing us back to the needs of and opportunities for Latinx communities in Wisconsin. Towards the end of this time, she must have been observing me, too, trying to keep up with the mostly Spanish conversation. She turned to look at me and said*: The language barrier would have caused many to quit. Why have you continued to stick with this project?* While caught off guard by the sudden attention on me, my response was that I wanted to uplift their important work and that I thought it was a good practice as a white woman to be the one in a room having to translate information for myself. But I have often reflected on my involvement in the project and thought, *it is a barrier*. For instance, I sat in on the community writing class all semester and scrambled as I tried to keep up with the Spanish dialogue happening via Zoom. I have often worried that someone else could better help the promotores and the *Cuentos* project. But with encouragement from Rachel and María, I have stuck with it because when each of us bring our unique skills and capabilities together, we can make something beautiful. And we have. This showed me how building constellations of knowledges and practices supports community ways of knowing and fosters genuine collaboration. This praxis of care levels out the skills, capabilities, and resources among academic and community partners and brings together the most useful of each in co-creation.

What I've learned from this process of building relationships is that relationality is a slow but essential process for researchers wanting to collaborate on community driven projects. When wanting to get involved in this type of work, researchers need to routinely check in with themselves and with their community collaborators to renegotiate if they should keep engaging or if they should step away. For *Cuentos,* I learned to ask hard questions about my involvement in the project, about accountability, and about reciprocity. I showed up, I was present. We listened to one another, we shared stories, and we grew together as we learned from each other. Now, we have a shared story built on the foundations of our relations. I also learned to recognize and think critically about the complex web of relations surrounding *Cuentos*. I was connected to Rachel who was connected to María who was connected to the promotores. I was connected to PPWI which is connected to the promotores. I was connected to the university and its resources which Rachel is also connected to while María and the promotores have little to no access to the resources accessed through the university. But they are connected to the communities we are trying to uplift and support and more closely connected to reproductive justice work. And I am a mother and Rachel is a mother and Maria is a mother and each of the promotoras who completed the community writing class and went on to publish their stories in *Cuentos* are mothers. These relations have bound us together in a story about layers care and I'm not sure yet what the ending will be.

Reproductive Justice Pedagogy in a Community Writing Class

Rachel and I approached the creation of the community writing class by incorporating a reproductive justice pedagogy to actionably care for the lived experiences of our Latinx writers. We tried to avoid potential experiences of dominance, surveillance, or control by approaching our pedagogy with care for the writers as full human beings who deserved support as they

worked through vulnerable topics that might come up in discussions and as they wrote about reproductive injustices. Throughout this process I developed practices of care, especially valuing story as theory and decolonial engagement.

Reproductive Justice Pedagogy and Care

So how did we as teachers implement a reproductive pedagogy into a community writing classes? Loretta Ross, longtime activist for reproductive rights for Black women, co-founder of the national reproductive justice organization SisterSong, and co-developer of the reproductive justice framework, states that reproductive justice pedagogy "is most suitably experienced as a partnership process in which the teachers serve more as facilitators than professors, helping the group achieve desired outcomes that enrich and enhance their lives, rather than fixating on a rigid syllabus that perfunctorily marches through selected topics." (Ross 2018, 177). Building on the educational pedagogies of Paulo Freire and bell hooks, reproductive justice pedagogy calls for students to "theorize their own subjectivity, and define their own multiple, intersecting realities" (175). In this way, the "lived experience of theorizing is fundamentally linked to processes of self-recovery [and] collective liberation (hooks 1994, 61). The goal is transformative action: individuals learn to develop their own praxis for advocacy and impactful change in their communities.

My method for accomplishing a reproductive justice pedagogy was by enacting practices of care. If the goal is transformative action, then teachers must avoid traditional hierarchies and competitions among students and should instead focus on removing obstacles that hinder the growth of "autonomy and self-determination" in students (Ross 174). Teachers must support students in learning multiple ways of knowing that allow them to "be more present in the world

with a transformed consciousness" (176). Reproductive justice pedagogy provides opportunities for action and reflection in dialogical relationships, much like the practices of CR. The more I learned about it, the more I drew lines of connection between reproductive justice pedagogy and CR pedagogy. Though each are unique, they both value lived experiences, encourage alternative or decolonial teaching practices, and focus on community or localized context. As the semester went on, Rachel and I tried, failed, and pivoted as need be in our quest to cultivate a caring space for the promotores to learn, discuss, and write about topics related to reproductive justice.

Making Space for Lived Experiences and Lots of Failure

The class began in September 2021 with 10 participants, plus Rachel and me. Even though Rachel and I tried to build flexibility into our course design, we realized as the semester went on that we had to reconcile our own (mis)conceptions about academic policies and expectations with our stance that a reproductive justice pedagogy is what would best fit what the promotores needed. They were volunteering to take this virtual community writing class, and while they did not pay to register for the course, they were also not receiving credit towards a degree. They were choosing to do this labor on top of the work of being a promotor/a, family responsibilities, and working at one or multiple other jobs. The participants were either bilingual and/or preferred to speak and write in Spanish. Some had never taken a college class. They also had varying levels of comfort with using multiple digital technologies simultaneously. We met this unique context with a dependence on flexibility, a willingness to fail, and a genuine effort to center the needs of the writers.

Soon after the semester started, we recognized the need to shift priorities and change the planned structure of the course, leaning into more fluid agendas and deadlines. We made time for practices of mindfulness and lowered assignment expectations from week to week. During week two of the class, which we called "Mi Cuerpo, Mi Cuento" (My Body, My Story), the promotores reflected on and shared experiences with sex, sexuality, and their bodies. To prepare, we spent time creatively thinking and writing about our responses to the question: *What makes you feel most connected to yourself and your body?* Pictured here is
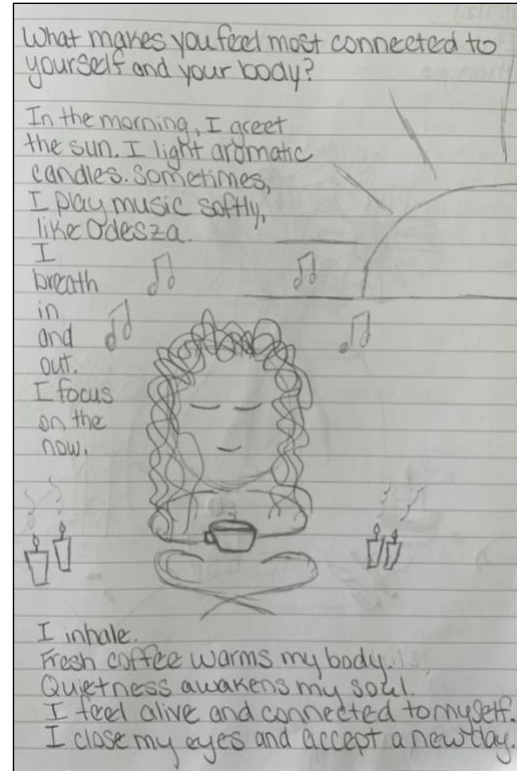
Figure 22. My creative response to the mindfulness activity, September 2021.

my own response in words and drawings. I wrote the following: "In the morning, I greet the sun. I light aromatic candles. Sometimes, I play music softly, like Odesza. I breathe in and out. I focus on the now. I inhale. Fresh coffee warms my body. Quietness awakens my soul. I feel alive and connected to myself. I close my eyes and accept a new day." These types of activities were important because we wanted to instill the practice of noticing our bodies before moving into a time of talking about embodied experiences that could be vulnerable, hard to put into words, and/or traumatic.

As the class went on, Rachel shortened the weekly class times and during some weeks she met with writers one-on-one instead of holding class at all. During our own weekly check-in meetings, we grappled with feelings of failure. We had gone from ten writers to only four who regularly engaged. We wondered if we would have anyone finish their stories by the end of the

semester. In fact, none had the proposed deliverables done in December. So, the class, or now the writing project as an extension of the "class," stretched into the spring semester as we continued working with writers individually to finish their stories in Spanish and English with accompanying audio recordings, author biographies, and images. The writers had the choice to continue on or be done, and while a few were less engaged, we were happy to have six writers complete their stories by the community celebration and launch event we hosted in June 2022.

Through what turned into a two-semester workshop-style class, we concluded that we were successful at enacting reproductive justice pedagogy by making space for the writers to process their embodied experiences and making changes to our course plans as necessary. This meant that we fell behind our linear academic plan, but it also meant that there was time for what was needed: opportunity to build relationships, space to write and not write and re-write, and support not only for the writing but for life during the writing process. Just like in all writing classes, writers experienced personal issues that delayed their writing or influenced their writing processes. As we were all mothers, we had a uniquely shared understanding of how life circumstances overshadow personal desires like finishing a writing class. Because we were not grading their deliverables, we were released from pressuring them to write when they needed to tend to their personal or family concerns. Using a reproductive justice pedagogy allowed us to be flexible with the goals listed in the syllabus in response to student needs and interests and in recognition of the deeply personal nature of the reflections on reproductive [in]justice. When I say "we," I wonder if I was more open to this sort of messy-failure-nonlinearity than Rachel was due to each of our positions. She was more responsible for how the class went and felt a different level of accountability to making sure the promotores thought the class was worth their time and efforts since they were putting time and energy into it. Because this sort of class could also lead

to other opportunities bridging community and university, there was some pressure to do well by standard academic measures of success, too.

By leaning into failure, we made space for the lived experiences of the promotores and for a community writing class in which writers moved towards transformative, liberating, action. Drawing on queer and feminist practices of failure (especially Halberstam, but also Ahmed), queer rhetorician Stacey Waite demonstrates how rejecting norms in the classroom, or failing, can open spaces for lived experiences to be valued alongside academic knowledges. She reflects on the embodied experiences of being queer and of being in a writing classroom, refusing to separate the two: "I do not believe the story of my scholarship is separate from the story of my life or the body I live" (Waite 15). The structure of her book also reflects this merging together, or constellation, in the way each chapter is an assemblage of fragments that include "personal narrative about growing up queer, theories of gender and composition, and analysis of the verbal and written work of students" (Bessette n.p.). Like Ahmed, Halberstam, and Waite, I see how normative structures limit what it possible. As we generated new terminologies, new policies, and new ways of being in the writing classroom, we made space for new and deeper classroom experiences. By enacting story as theory and decolonial engagement as CR practices of care, we were able to deconstruct the confines of the classroom to fit our writer's needs and were able to renegotiate the class from the center point of their stories. This is how we applied a reproductive justice pedagogy to our community writing class.

Collaboration and Co-Curation in Digital Formats

Though this is described as a "community writing project for reproductive justice," the "community" aspect of our community writing class was complicated. First, due to the

vulnerable stories that came up when reflecting on reproductive injustices, we found that once

we got to the writing and revising stage most writers preferred to work one-on-one or even alone.

This made sense given the time it can take to build confianza even amongst the promotores

themselves and the vulnerable nature of telling stories. Rachel provided support and guidance

where she was able to do so, having many phone conversations in which writers shared stories

with her that she passed along to me when appropriate. While much of their writing and revising

was not done collaboratively within the class, they were always keeping in mind their broader

shared community as their audience. To me, this still qualifies as a community writing project,

because the writers are part of the community of promotores, and they are each part of the Latinx

communities they support and educate. They are group of community activists writing for their

families, friends, and neighbors.

Second, the sense of class community may have felt fractured due to it being online. It

was originally planned to be at the Jackson Street PPWI location in Milwaukee, but it was

switched to be online in response to continued concerns about Covid-19 and in efforts to make it

more accessible to the promotores who were further away from the Milwaukee area. Almost all

the work throughout the fall semester and into the spring semester was done virtually – through

Zoom, email, phone calls, Google docs, and text chats. While the promotoras wrote their own

individual stories, we all collaborated on translating stories, creating content on other pages,

editing, and making design decisions. During the spring 2022 semester we brought an

undergraduate student onto the team to help translate content for the digital site. He translated

content from Spanish to English and from English to Spanish, meeting virtually with each writer

individually so they could review the work and offer feedback or corrections on both the Spanish

and English version of their cuentos. As I was working on the digital site, I also shared it with the writers during class and invited their feedback and suggestions that I then implemented.

This unique multi-layered experience taught me that a CR praxis of care supports researchers in being open to more flexible visions of collaboration, curation, and writing when working on community projects, especially if the projects are digital in nature and/or if collaboration is happening virtually. We collaborated on the curation of the site content across multiple digital platforms including Wix, Google Drive, and Zoom. We practiced translation and content curation as part of the community aspect of community writing. Each of us collaborated as co-curators of the digital storytelling site, with much of the content going from the writers to Rachel and back to the writer, then through our translator and back to the writer, then to me and then back to Rachel and the writer as needed. This process was messy, complicated, and complex. It took a lot of communication, trust, and time. Done through a CR praxis of care, we prioritized centering stories, sustaining relationships, constellating all our knowledges and abilities, and doing what works instead of being restrained by standard institutional expectations or methods. The work has been done with the intended audience always at the forefront of the rhetorical decision-making. This broader notion of community and writing recognizes the complicated dynamics of community writing projects, broadly speaking, and calls for researchers to think more openly about who is involved in their work and how they can make sure it is a collaborative, caring process.

Curating *Cuentos*

My relationship to the *Cuentos* project has morphed between intern, researcher, digital designer, teaching assistant, and website manager over the past two years. My main role has been to design and manage the digital storytelling site. This public, digital side of the project was

always an option and never a requirement for class participants to pursue because we wanted

them to have their written stories, whether they shared them publicly or not. All six writers who

finished the class did decide to publish their work on the site and consented to having their

stories in a printed version in the future. In this section, I explain how a CR praxis of care

impacted my rhetorical decisions throughout the digital design process with accompanying

images of the main pages of the site to demonstrate for feminist and rhetorical researchers what a

CR praxis of care looks like in a community digital storytelling project.

When researching platforms that offered website creation and design, I chose to use Wix

because of its capabilities and usability. Wix also allowed me to do a lot on the free version

before we had to commit to a paid subscription and had a good mobile site editor. The digital

storytelling site has been through multiple iterations, each of which I have built from scratch

using their website builder. Below is my first iteration of the site:

Figure 23. First visual iteration of the Cuentos website, 2021.

While doing this work has not involved hard coding, it has involved tedious layout changes and

updates; creation and movement of page items like container boxes, text, and decorative

elements; and lots of trial and error on everything from color schemes to font type to formatting

to layout of the individual pages. Because of the bilingual audience, unique purpose, and planned

circulation of the site, a template just wouldn't work for *Cuentos*. Most templates come with a

goal like selling merchandise, promoting a business, or displaying art exhibits. Our purpose

didn't fit any of their predesigned templates or categories. We needed to be able to customize

everything across the pages, so I designed the site from scratch.

My goal was to present something to Rachel and María as a starting point so we could

find out what we collectively wanted and what we didn't want. I started over with feedback on

what the overall feel of the site should be along with what content might be helpful for visitors to

the site. My next iteration is shown below:
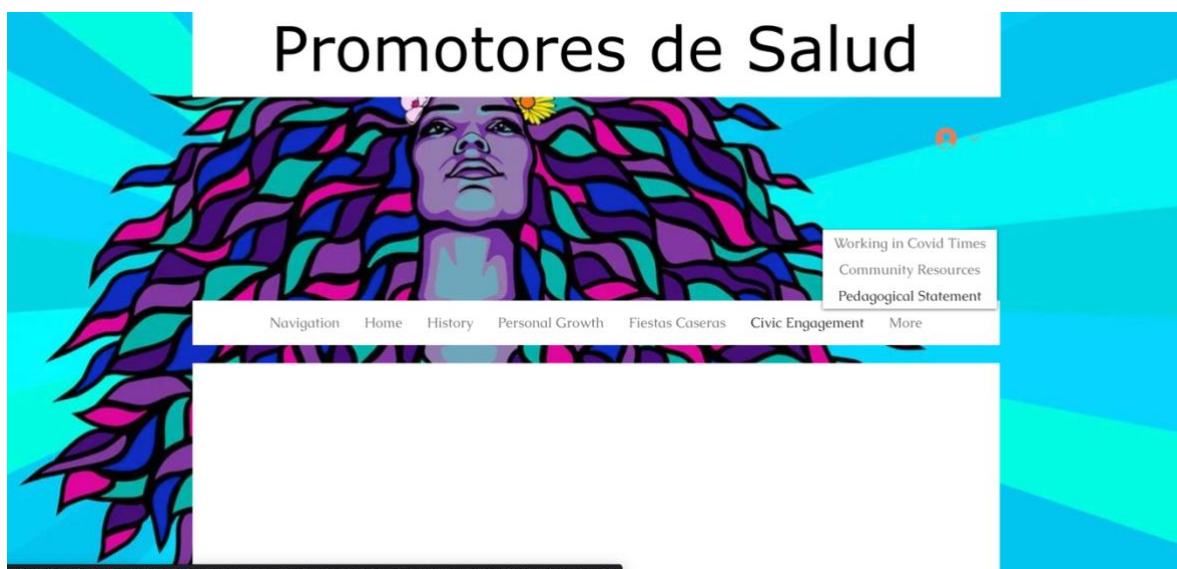
Figure 24. Second visual iteration of the Cuentos website, 2021.

This version had many more page ideas like a page to explain the fiestas caseras, a page for civic

engagement, and even a pedagogical statement for the community writing class[9]. Neither of

these earlier design ideas prioritized Spanish because we were still brainstorming how to best do

that. In our current iteration, I built the Spanish and English pages and elements at the same time

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[9] This was before the community writing class happened, though we were starting to plan for it.

to avoid force-fitting something from English to Spanish. While this led to more time-consuming work, it has allowed me to create a deliverable that the promotores feel is theirs to have for themselves, to share with their target audience, and to use at their fiestas caseras.

My digital design process has leaned heavily on design justice, introduced in Chapter 1, which "rethinks design processes, centers people who are normally marginalized by design, and uses collaborative, creative practices to address the deepest challenges our communities face" (Design Justice Network). Design justice seeks to name and dismantle the unequal power dynamics at work in the design of technologies, including digital technologies, and recognizes design as "a way of thinking, learning, and engaging with the world" (Costanza-Chock 15). While it may often be unintentional, designers tend to only take a small group of people into account when creating technologies. For example, it is now widely recognized that facial recognition is based on and works best for people who are white/Caucasian and male (Costanza-Chock). This leads to exclusionary technologies that harm and oppress most groups of people, especially multiply marginalized communities. Practicing design justice means not only including community members in the creation of what is being designed for them but creating it with them from their perspective and their desired outcomes. It means using design to empower communities and recognizing expertise based on lived experiences. The goal is to work alongside communities to build something useable and sustainable for them. As I discuss some of the key rhetorical decisions I've made while curating the site, I will show visuals of each of our main pages: "Inicio" (Start), "Confianza" / "What is Confianza?", "Cuentos" / "Stories", and "Justicia Reproductiva" / "Reproductive Justice."[10]

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[10] I intentionally list the Spanish titles first in all instances of listing both Spanish and English page titles to demonstrate our commitment to prioritizing Spanish. The visuals are in English for readers to be able to read them.

Inicio / Start

"Inicio," which in English translates to start or beginning, is the site's landing page. This is the page you will find yourself on when you open the website. This page in both Spanish and English, with Spanish purposefully on top. From the beginning of the process, I have centered Spanish because the promotores and their local communities speak Spanish and/or are bilingual and because language access intersects with reproductive justice. While we hoped English speakers would also engage with the site, our priority was to center Spanish speaking users because the target audience of the promotores was their largely Spanish-speaking Latinx community. Below is an image of "Inicio."

Figure 25. Screenshot of "Inicio," the Cuentos landing page, April 2023.

The text reads:

> *Cuentos de Confianza* is a bilingual (Spanish-English) community writing project about the experiences of promotores de salud (health promoters) on the path toward reproductive justice. This site uses both Spanish and English to speak to our multiple audiences and to recognize language as part of reproductive justice. To begin, click the Confianza button below.

Initially, I tried to have Spanish and English together on every page. But I found that it was confusing and overwhelming to read. I also worried about the length of these pages on the mobile version of the site. So, I separated the Spanish and the English, always privileging Spanish. I created tabs at the top of the site in Spanish, accompanied by English subtabs that appear when you hover over each tab. One issue this created was a multitude of pages to navigate, so I created a guided navigation through buttons to help users move through the site. The goal was to create a sort of digital exhibit that users would move through in a certain order: from "Inicio," to "Confianza," to "Cuentos," and then into the individual stories. From there, a visitor could choose to view the pages under "Acerca del Proyecto" / "About the Project": "Eventos" / "Events," "Comparte un Cuento" / "Share a Story," and "Justicia Reproductiva" / "Reproductive Justice." While visitors can navigate to other places using the menu across the top of the site, we recommend following our suggested navigation so that visitors read about confianza and our care statement before engaging with the stories.

Confianza / What is Confianza?

The "Confianza" page comes next to frame the stories and prepare visitors to read the stories with care. Unlike "Inicio," which has Spanish and English together on the same page, "Confianza" and all other pages are spilt into a Spanish page with an English option available for those who only speak and read in English. For example, on our mobile version of the menu, you can see that under "Confianza" is a subtab titled "What is Confianza?" that leads to the English version of the page, and the same pattern

Figure 26. Screenshot of mobile menu, April 2023.

for "Cuentos" / "Stories." Once on a page, you can also click on the pink button in the upper righthand side of the screen to toggle between the Spanish and English versions. In the image below, you would click on the "Español" button to go to the Spanish version of the page. We especially wanted to be sure that visitors to the site read the care statement on the "Confianza" page, which was developed in the community writing class by the writers with input from Rachel and me. I will ask you to read it at the end of this chapter.

🌿 **An Invitation to Enter into Confianza** 🌿

Español

What is Confianza?

Confianza can be translated to the English words trust or confidence, but it is much deeper than that.

- Confianza is the ability to speak openly with someone without feeling judged.
- The capacity to believe in yourself, in something, or someone
- "Confianza is more than just trust - it is a carefully constructed relationship between people who have taken time and care to get to know each other and build an open, trusting way of communicating between each other."

Below is our invitation for readers to enter into confianza by caring for the stories and people represented on this site.

Care Statement

Welcome to *Cuentos de Confianza*. Before exploring the pages on this site, we invite you to read our Care Statement to better understand this project and your responsibility as a reader. We believe that stories and the people who tell them should be respected and cared for. Each person's experience in the world is unique and worthy of value. When someone is willing to share their story with us, they are sharing part of themselves. So the process of sharing stories about our lives is a process of confianza (trust/confidence). If you are going to listen to or read the stories here, you are entering a space of confianza with our writers. Please take care of these stories and recognize that they reflect the writers' lives, identities, and relationships with other people. By sharing these stories, we invite you to learn, to grow, and to take action to fight for justice in your own community. We also hope that you see that your stories, your body, and your community are worthy of being cared for and protected.

Cuentos >

Figure 27. Screenshot of "What is Confianza," April 2023.

While someone could choose not to follow the site's navigational structure, my hope is that most readers will be prepped so that by the time they are engaging with the actual stories, they will understand their context and will be prepared to care for them. After reading the care statement, visitors are directed to click on pink Cuentos button which leads to the page hosting the writer bios, images, and access to their stories.

Cuentos / Stories

Once on the "Cuentos" or "Stories" page, you see a short framing paragraph, pictured

below. Scrolling down, you see the writer bios and accompanying images in alpabetical order.

Figure 28. Screenshot of the top of "Stories," April 2023.

After showing them an example, each writer put together a bio and a picture of their choosing.

The writers chose what they wanted to say to represent themselves. Originally this was part of

the class, but we needed more time with this. These came together just in time for the community

launch event. Some were more personal, others more professional, and each one was unique.

Below I include María's.
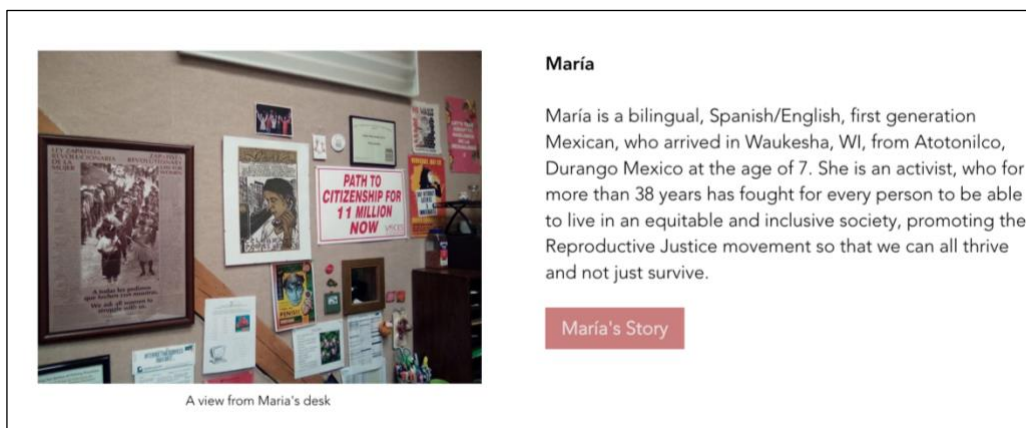
Figure 29. Screenshot of Maria's bio and accompanying image, April 2023.

Once you click on a story, you will be able to see the text, along with the audio option. Here I

share a screenshot of the top of María's story in English. Each of the writers wrote their story in

Spanish first, so each of the English story pages was built from the Spanish version, both in

content and in design. Our translator worked with each of the writers to translate their Spanish

cuento into English and to make sure that it reflected their personal voice in both languages.

Each story is also accompanied by an audio recording of the writer reading their story in Spanish

 on both the Spanish and English

pages. We encourage English

speakers to listen to the cuento in

Spanish as they follow along with

the English text.

When reviewing the site

before the launch event, one writer

shared how they liked that even

their younger family members
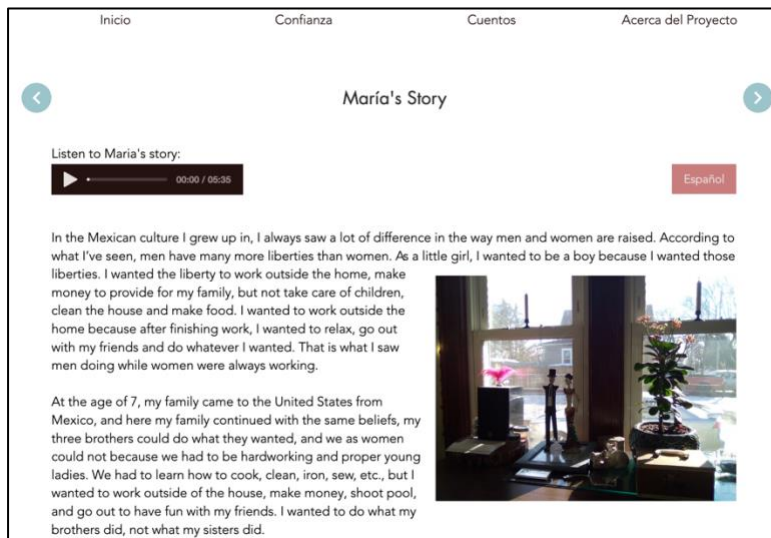
Figure 30. Screenshot of the beginning of Maria's story, April 2023.

who do not read and/or speak Spanish could be gently challenged to engage with the language

and culture of their families because of how the site is set up. This can provide conversation

starters about topics and experiences that family members such as children or grandchildren may

not have known about and can encourage strengthening of relational bonds. Hearing that

feedback encouraged me that I was on the right track. From the stories, a visitor might be

interested in the final tab they haven't viewed yet, "Acerca del Proyecto" / "About the Project,"

which has important information but which we didn't want detracting from the stories

themselves.

Acerca del Proyecto / About the Project

On this page, you can read a brief background on the project and view pathways to other pages that I nested under this tab: "Eventos" / "Events" highlight past and upcoming events such as the community event we held in June 2022 and an exhibit at UWM we held in April 2023, "Comparte un Cuento" / "Share a Story" invite others to consider sharing their story on *Cuentos*, and "Justicia Reproductiva" / "Reproductive Justice" explain what reproductive justice is and how the promotores de salud fit into its larger narrative.
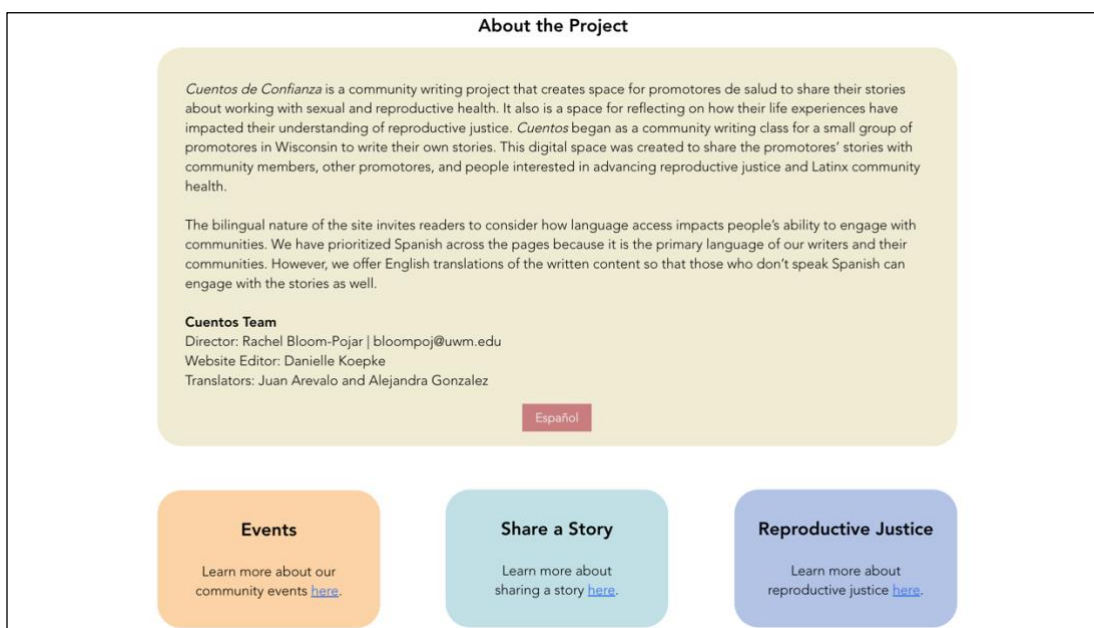
Figure 31. Screenshot of "About the Project," April 2023.

I knew that the initial target audience, close friends and family members of the writers, would likely access the site on their mobile devices and that the site would circulate publicly based on community sharing. As such, it was imperative that the content and design worked well for phones and that page lengths were kept shorter. Keeping the target audience and community context in mind, I tested navigation specifically for phone users and tried to keep project

background information brief but helpful if visitors to the site wanted to get that framing information. I don't include screenshots of the "Events" and "Share Your Story" pages here, but they can be viewed on the actual site, which I link at the end of the chapter. The last page displayed and discussed below is the "Reproductive Justice" page.

Justicia Reproductiva / Reproductive Justice

While the "Reproductive Justice" page is an important one, we didn't want it to dissuade visitors from the site or overwhelm them with information, so I nested it under "Acerca del Proyecto" / "About the Project." In earlier iterations, it was a main tab on the site menu, but Rachel and I concurred that while a secondary audience such as academia might be interested in it as a framing page, it didn't seem central to how we envisioned the target audience engaging with the project. Here is most of the page in English:

Reproductive Justice

Español

Reproductive Justice is an activist movement for full access to reproductive and sexual healthcare and rights. As SisterSong explains, "Indigenous women, women of color, and trans* people have always fought for Reproductive Justice, but the term was invented in 1994…by a group of Black women gathered in Chicago." Mainstream womens' rights movements have historically centered white voices, rhetorics of "choice," and abortion while ignoring other issues related to access, safety, and care that impact Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and other women and trans people of color disproportionately.

Reproductive justice (RJ) demands rights for every individual. Loretta Ross and Rickie Solinger define the core principles of RJ to be:

(1) the right not to not have a child
(2) the right to have a child
(3) the right to parent children in safe and healthy environments
(4) the right to sexual and bodily autonomy

These principles connect reproductive rights and health with quality education, fair housing, access to health services, immigration status and protections, and police violence.

The promotores de salud featured on this site work with Latinx and immigrant communities to improve education, resources, and advocacy for reproductive justice and sexual health. They are experts at creating confianza. With this ability to create trust and confidence with others, people often open up to them about vulnerable and sometimes traumatic stories. The promotores' own experiences with reproductive justice are multi-layered: at the same time that they're grappling with carrying the stories and challenges of others, they carry their own stories and experiences of reproductive injustices. Through the process of reflecting and writing about reproductive justice, we have emphasized the need to care for ourselves, our stories, others and their stories, too. In doing that, sometimes it is best not to share our stories with others if we cannot trust them with that part of ourselves.

This community writing project aims to create space for the promotores to reflect on and share their own stories—about how they came to be promotores, how they see reproductive justice as part of their work, and how they see their past experiences as impacting who they are today.
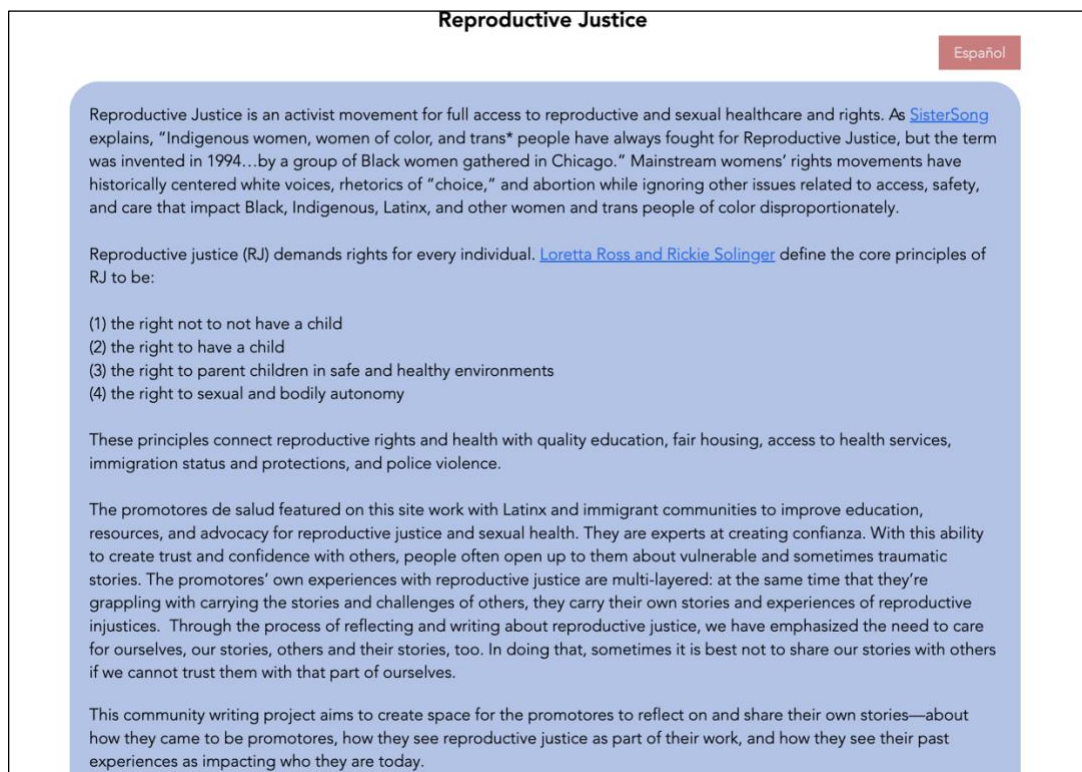
Figure 32. Screenshot of "Reproductive Justice" page, April 2023.

I've edited this page multiple times as I tried to make it readable and digestible for a largely non-academic audience. The important tenets stand out with the numbering so even if someone doesn't read the whole thing, hopefully they get the gist of it. The navigation of the site doesn't draw visitors to this page as a main point of focus, though secondary audiences might be more interested in it. For instance, a writer might share the link to their own story through a text message and that person might only open that one story and read it. While we wanted this page to be there and ready for when community circulation began, we didn't lead with it. However, it is important that it is here for two main reasons: 1) so that when the promotores use the site in their fiestas caseras, they can point to the page as a resource about reproductive justice and 2) so that the work and personal experiences of the promotores are clearly documented as part of the larger reproductive justice narrative.

The curation of the site has been an ongoing, collaborative process steeped in care, community review, and intentionality. Across many of the pages, you'll notice the incorporation of butterflies. In the class, the writers shared ideas about what kinds of decorative elements might be symbolic to them and something they came back to multiple times was the butterfly as a symbol of transformation, migration, and empowerment. You will find butterflies on many deliverables related to *Cuentos*, including this dissertation, as a reminder to all of us that transformation is possible.

Community Circulation: The *Cuentos* Launch Event

At the forefront of our vision for *Cuentos* was hosting a community launch party for the publication of the collected stories and the digital site. In June 2022 we were able to make that vision into a reality. Below is the English version of the event flyer and the Spanish version of

the event program, which I created with the help of our undergraduate translator. Held at

Figure 33. Flyer for the Community Launch Event, June 2022.

Escuela Verde in Milwaukee, it was a beautiful Sunday afternoon spent celebrating all the hard work the writers put into *Cuentos* over the past nine months. The writers invited whoever they wanted to be there, and we planned to have time to show people how to find and navigate the site on mobile devices. We had around 75 people come to celebrate the writers. There was delicious food, live music by a Latino PPWI clinician, and a brief ceremony during which each writer received a certificate of completion and a round of applause. Then if they wanted, they could say a few words.

We also created an anonymous questionnaire for attendees to answer while there were there. The thought was that the information would help us in potentially creating some sort of map or visual that represented those at the event that we may continue at other everts. The questions were:

1. Donde nacio? / Where were you born?

2. Done vive? / Where do you live?

3. Donde viven su familia? / Where does your family live (where are they from)?

Figure 34. Event program for the Community Launch Event, June 2022.

There were about 71 attendees to potentially fill out the questionnaire, outside of Rachel, me, and our families. 36 attendees responded to it. This is an encouraging result because there were a

good number of children there and because I didn't expect many to fill it out with everything else going on. If we had wanted more data, we could have asked an additional question about family, minors, or something else to get more accurate results. But, for our purposes and for this being a sort of preliminary exploration, it was helpful information. Below is a table of the results:
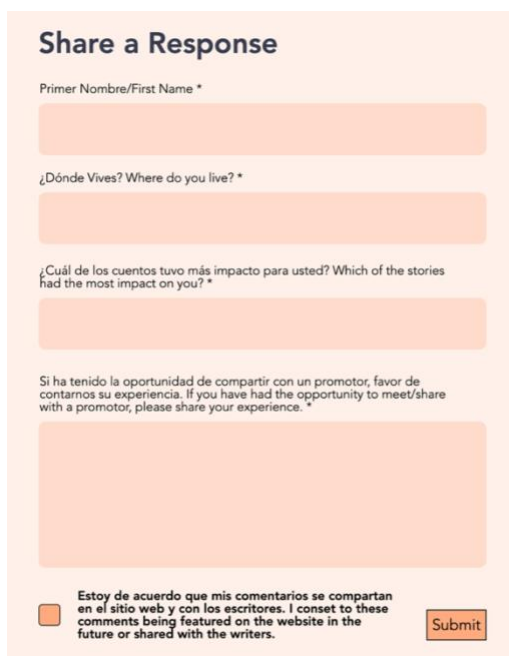
Table 1. Results of the Community Launch Survey.

Donde Nacio?	Donde Vive?	Donde viven su familia?
Argentina (4)	Deforest, WI (2)	Argentina (4)
Colorado (2)	Franklin, WI (2)	Colorado (3)
Guatemala (3)	Madison, WI (9)	Espana (1)
Illinois (1)	Mexico (2)	Guatemala (3)
Mexico (9)	Milwaukee, WI (14)	Indiana (1)
Peru (3)	Wauwatosa, WI (1)	Iowa (1)
The United States (1)	West Allis, WI (2)	New Mexico (15)
Venezuela (5)	Westlake Village, CA (1)	Peru (3)
Wisconsin (6)	Whitewater, WI (3)	Uruguay (2)
		Virginia (1)
		Wisconsin (1)

The data shows familial connections to a diverse range of locations including Peru, different states in Mexico, Indiana, Colorado, Argentina, Uruguay, Guatemala, Venezuela, and cities across Wisconsin. This supports what we've already experienced to be true: Latinx peoples are not a monolith and should be respected for their unique identities.

For me, this event overall was also a test of how well I had designed the site, especially the mobile version. I spent many hours tediously moving things around on the mobile version of

the site to make it mirror the web version while working best for mobile users. After walking

through the site with everyone, we encouraged them go to the site on their own phones using a

QR code and we were available if anyone had trouble finding or navigating the site. We also had

ear buds available for people to listen to the stories on their own. I was grateful to witness the

community coming around the promotores, reading through their stories on the site I had created,

and talking with them about their experiences of writing them. You can find pictures of the event

on the website on the Eventos and Events pages under the "Acerca del Proyecto."

   When reflecting on the event and especially the questionnaire, something I wish I had

already implemented was a feedback form on the site to invite readers to share comments about

Figure 35. Screenshot of Feedback Form, May 2022.

their experience of *Cuentos*. I thought such comments might be encouraging for the writers to read, and they also might be helpful in guiding the future direction of the site's community engagement since we planned to integrate use of the site into the fiestas caseras. Pictured here is a draft I created and sent to Rachel, María, and Joshy (the Health Promoters' Coordinator and one of the writers) for suggestions. It is in both Spanish and English because having two separate feedback forms might be confusing to people and

might lead to fewer people completing the form. An updated version will be rolling out in May

of 2023.

   Like everything else so far in this work, not all plans came to fruition. The plans to do

multiple launch events across Wisconsin did not go exactly as anticipated. We had planned to do

a series of in-person events, and we started in Milwaukee because it has the largest group of promotores. However, shortly after our June event, Rachel went on maternity leave and the promotores were busy with getting credible information on reproductive healthcare following the *Dobbs* decision and with other initiatives. We had also planned to have a printed collection of the cuentos for each writer to have at the time of the launch and some extra copies to give away at the event. That didn't happen either because we moved away from each writer writing multiple short stories due to the time needed to work through just one story and because once we had the finalized written stories and accompanying images, we no longer had enough time to send a collective draft to the printers and have it printed before the event. We also shifted our focus to planning for home health parties to include the use of *Cuentos*, which I will discuss more in Chapter 4. Reflecting even further back, we had brainstormed ideas of a more official traveling exhibit that would have banners displaying portions of *Cuentos* and listening stations for engaging with each cuento. At times, these moments where we chose to shift focus, drop an idea, or change a plan, felt like failure. But through a CR praxis of care, I saw saying "no" and embracing failure as a productive and thoughtful response to the community collaborators involved in the project. It was okay to fail to better care for the purposes, audiences, and circulation of these stories.

There are still plans to circulate *Cuentos* in different spaces, but we've continued to move slowly and cautiously due to our priority for care. I share this because I have learned throughout this process that when partnering with a community, there will be a lot of cool ideas that may very well never end up getting done. Perhaps, they may be attempted in the future. Perhaps they will serve as a springboard for other ideas. Part of doing community-engaged work is accepting failed attempts, changed directions, and nonlinear progress.

Reflections on Practicing a CR Praxis of Care

As I collaborated on this digital community project centered on vulnerable stories of reproductive [in]justice, it was important to me to deeply care for the stories and the storytellers, *and* for them to develop ways to care for *themselves*. Care for oneself, after all, is part of reproductive justice. María reflected on helping the promotores, many of whom are women, to accept that caring for themselves first allows them to better care for others. She writes, "At first, our health promoters could not understand the reproductive justice movement because they had always put others first, and they always came second, third, or fourth. The concept of needing to take care of themselves first was not anything they had considered, but when told how important it is for them to be well so they can take care of others, it made sense to them." (Bloom-Pojar and Barker 2020, 89-90). Throughout the class and after, we tried to make space for the writers to reflect on their own stories and on each other's. Often, this meant valuing time for conversation, relationship-building, and story-sharing over time for teaching, writing, and other agenda items. It meant caring for the lives of these women as they do the emotional labor of telling their stories.

These multiple layers of care were evident to me as I also worried about how I might write about my experiences without betraying the privacy of the writers. It's not really my story alone to tell, after all. Even as I tell my own story in relation to *Cuentos*, I cannot tell it without telling the story of the class, of the promotores, of relationships with Rachel, María, and the undergraduate student translators. I cannot write my dissertation, or this chapter, without telling our interwoven stories. It is not that I can't share my version of the story of *Cuentos* or circulate the digital site of the promotores stories. But practicing care for these stories means reflecting on why I want to share these stories to audiences other than their target audience, and for which

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kinds of purposes. I must be honest with myself about who may benefit, and about who may be harmed (Tuck and Yang). Caring for stories is not a simple task, and it gets harder when considering stories being circulated in digital spaces. Below, I reflect on three questions that came up repeatedly for me as I tried to learn how to practice care for the writers and for this digital storytelling project about reproductive justice. These questions can provide researchers support in thinking through the *how* of implementing a CR praxis of care specifically on digital storytelling projects with community collaborators on vulnerable topics such as reproductive justice.

How does the digital design reflect the priorities of the community?

First, the digital design reflected the priorities of the community because we collaborated creatively with them as co-owners. They wanted their families, friends, and communities to understand the important activist work they do as promotores. By striving to always center the promotores as owners of *Cuentos*, not just participants in it, we all have been able to work together towards their goals and appeal to their stakeholders through design choices. Second, the digital design reflected the priorities of the community because we returned again and again to the rhetorical situation. I've kept coming back to these seemingly basic rhetorical questions: *Who do they want to reach? What are the purposes of the writers and what exigence are they responding to? What do they want people to receive from their stories? How will the stories on the site be viewed and circulated digitally in the future, and how does the digital design impact how they will be read and responded to?* I have continually renegotiated the rhetorical context of *Cuentos*, trying to keep the writers' own goals for use of the site always at the center.

Which moments and spaces are not for us as researchers?

It became evident to me throughout this process that part of practicing is care not forcing myself into spaces where I would negatively impact the community. Good relationality is more than making friends; it comes with the responsibilities of accountability and reciprocity (Tuhiwai Smith*).* Being accountable required having the self-awareness to know when not to push into community spaces. For example, I have been interested in attending the fiestas caseras to see how the promotores integrate the cuentos into their community education on sexual and reproductive health. These gatherings are welcoming to people across generations and usually involve food, family, and fellowship. I'd love to observe how one of the stories opens up community conversation around a hard topic like intimate partner violence or mental health. However, as someone who is not part of the Latinx community, I would be an outsider who would need special treatment—such as translation—to be able to engage in that space. Though I believe I would be welcomed in, I know that I would offset the environment of confianza.

I've also grappled with which academic spaces or moments are safe for us to share about *Cuentos*, and which are not. Rachel and I have both taken a slow and intentional approach to circulating the project in our own digital social spheres and in academic spaces. I have shared about *Cuentos* at multiple conferences now, but it is difficult to do justice to the project in a fifteen-minute presentation and I tend to focus on my own experiences and lessons learned, not the content of the cuentos or some kind of analysis of them. Moments like these keep me acutely aware of who we are inviting to engage with *Cuentos* and how. The promotores have never included academics in their considerations of potential audiences. As the opening quotes in this chapter suggest, we can and should actively refuse sharing stories with certain audiences, and/or place boundaries around who gets access to stories.

How do we care for vulnerable stories as they circulate in digital spaces?

Because the promotores' stories include vulnerable and personal information, we had to prepare for and guard against the specific risks of sharing stories in digital spaces due to the ease of circulating, archiving, and manipulating for alternative purposes. These stories would be wonderful on Instagram, with eye-catching visuals and links to the individual stories. But once a story gets shared that way, anyone can grab hold of it, share it, critique it, or use it. Because the promotores work as consultants for PPWI, there is a good chance they would receive blowback from antiabortionists or others with malicious intent. For this reason, I suggested only using first names and not including pictures of themselves or their families on the site. However, each writer made their own different decisions regarding sharing personal information at all or of certain types. Some writers went back and forth about putting their first and/or last names out there. Others were fine with their name and picture being displayed but worried more about who they were referring to within their stories and how they might be negatively impacted. A few decided not to have any pictures of themselves but did include their names. It was hard to find the "right" answer because while I was being conscious of personal risks, I also recognized that there was power in their audience knowing who wrote each story. There is power in taking ownership over how your story will be publicly shared, which I experienced for myself in sharing part of my own story with you all. The writers were able to take control of their own narratives and the impact they want to make with them. In Chapter 4, I'll share more about this, including the educational toolkit we developed to guide academic audiences to engage with the site.

Caring for stories means acting on the fact that telling a story is a complicated, embodied experience (Novotny and Gagnon 2018). In one sense, our stories are our own because they are our personal, lived experiences. In another sense, our stories are not our own because they are always intertwined with the stories of others. The writers had to reconcile this messiness caused by the interplay between storytelling and relationality. How could they unravel their own story from the stories of community members who'd confided in them? Some writers found the need to check in with spouses, friends, or family members about how they were writing parts of their stories. Others worked through the complicated decisions of which details of a story should be told to public audiences. For example, the writers' stories include topics such as reproductive loss, personal struggles, suicidal thoughts, and sexual abuse. What I learned from observing these women share vulnerable experiences is that certain parts of their stories do not need to be shared in consideration of potential audiences and in consideration of the writer's own emotional wellbeing. We encourage all who enter the site to honor each cuento by reading them with care for the person behind the story.

Thinking through these questions allows me to continually negotiate how I am practicing care—for these stories, for these people, for these relationships. The four practices of a CR praxis of care don't have to relate 1-to-1 with these questions. Instead, they should be seen as ways to actionably answer these questions. Doing this can also reveal what is out of our control when we collaborate with communities on such projects. I cannot control every aspect of *Cuentos*—who views it, who shares it, who critiques it, or who judges it. And I shouldn't. All I can do is use my skills and knowledges to support and care for it with the needs and desires of the community in mind.

Project-in-Process

Cuentos de Confianza is a project in process. It continues to transform, shift directions,

and expand. A long-term vision we have is a printed collection of the cuentos with framing

chapters by both Rachel and me that would have Spanish and English text together. Another path

of expansion is adding more stories *Cuentos* by collaborating with other promotores either from

Wisconsin or from other states that María and Rachel have connections with. The promotores

have gone through training and will soon be incorporating the cuentos into fiestas caseras based

on themes that intersect with their CCmáS curriculum. And, even as I graduate, Rachel and I are

looking ahead to what our future collaboration will be. The story of *Cuentos* is much like any

other story: hard to contain in a simple formula but beautiful in its unwieldiness.

To conclude, I invite you to experience *Cuentos* for yourself. Go to

www.cuentosdeconfianza.com and begin with the "Inicio." Follow through to "Confianza" /

"What is Confianza?" to read our collaborative Care Statement, and then move on to the

"Cuentos" / "Stories," where you will find each writer's bio, accompanying image, and link to

their story. From there, choose a cuento (story) to start with. Once you open one, click the play

button to start the audio recording, following along with the text as you listen. Go through all six

cuentos by clicking the arrow at the top of the page, or by going back to the Cuentos tab and

choosing another. As you experience *Cuentos,* reflect on how language, care, and story are all

tied up with reproductive justice. Pay attention to your emotional responses to each writer's

story. I encourage you to take time to thoughtfully engage with *Cuentos* by reflecting on your

own embodied experiences with the stories and on the embodied experience of each writer

sharing their vulnerable story with you. By inviting you into confianza with these stories, I also

ask you to implement what you learn from them into actionable responses of care. Finally, I

invite you to look inward and recognize your own stories, your own body, and your own

communities are worthy of care.

Chapter 4: Applying a Cultural Rhetorics Praxis of Care in the Digital Classroom

Friday the 13th, March 2020. A day I will never forget. It was my last day on campus for over a year and a half. An extended spring break turned into weeks of Covid-19 lockdowns, then completing the semester virtually, and from there over a year of isolated living. Since then, I couldn't not notice how care expectations and access to care were unevenly distributed. Studies have found,

Figure 36. First siting of a "social distancing" sign in a grocery store, April 2020.

unsurprisingly, that women were publishing at a drastically decreased rate during this time (see Morton-Aiken and DeVasto). Caregivers were unduly burdened as their multiple care responsibilities were compressed into one space: the home. From the university, institutional messages of care were circulated to us as teachers – *show extra care for your students during this unprecedented time!* I tried my best. As a PhD student, a teacher, a tutor, a research assistant, a mother, a partner, and a human being, I was overwhelmed by labors of care. Online, I saw some amazing teacher friends post about using platforms like Twitch and Discord as alternatives to connect digitally with students. I was intrigued, but I was emotionally and mentally drained. I saved blogs, articles, and tweets on teaching with Discord as I came across them (see a more recent example: @kawaiilovesarah's thread) and as my creativity slowly started flowing again, I began scaffolding new course structures. This chapter tells the story of how I came to apply a CR praxis of care to teaching in digital spaces.

It is difficult to measure just how valuable digital platforms like Twitter, Twitch, and Discord have been throughout the Covid-19 pandemic as spaces to share stories, build

relationships, make connections, and try new things when people couldn't (or shouldn't) be meeting in-person. Being in connection with like-minded scholars has taught me so much in unconventional ways. For instance, Sarah Madoka Currie was a doctoral candidate and teacher at the University of Waterloo at the same time I was doing the same types of work at UWM. I appreciated learning "alongside her" in the digital space of academic Twitter as she worked through her concept of compassionate pedagogy[11] during the days when everything was virtual. Her community-centered and access-focused pedagogy views each student as a person with a full life outside of any one classroom and seeks to create policies and procedures that reflect that, especially regarding accessibility and equity (Currie 2022). Through Twitter threads she has shared her digital teaching practices that she implements on an application called Discord ([see here for an example](#)). Her action-oriented work is relevant to my development of a CR praxis of care for teaching in the digital classroom because while she called what she did at the time compassionate pedagogy, it is in many ways paralleled the practices I was developing in my own teaching at the time. And we were both still working on naming these pedagogical practices.

After the community launch event in June of 2022, Rachel and I decided to try implementing *Cuentos* into academic classrooms to decipher if academic audiences were potential stakeholders for the site. This was the perfect opportunity to further develop the practices of care I was experimenting with in my teaching on Discord to see how those practices it did or didn't support care for *Cuentos*, the promotores, and students in the digital classroom. In this chapter I trace the experience of teaching *Cuentos* in two of my courses, Health Science Writing and Rhetoric, Writing, and Culture: Public Writing for Social Action, as well as presenting on it in one graduate seminar of Rachel's. I grapple with the complications that arise

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[11] This work was further developed into Currie's 2023 dissertation, *The Mad Manifesto* (see Works Cited).

when trying to incorporate digital storytelling projects into the classroom in methods that care for the stories and relations involved. From this undertaking, I found that teaching with *Cuentos* in the digital classroom necessitated a CR praxis of care – for the vulnerable stories, for the promotores, and for my students who would likely have varying experiences with or opinions on reproductive justice that I didn't know about ahead of time. For me, Discord offered an alternative, creative space to enact these practices and teach students to do the same. By adapting a CR praxis of care for teaching that starts from story, builds a community of care, focuses on connections over critiques, and deconstructs power dynamics, feminist teachers can better support care for the incorporation of community storytelling projects into the digital classroom while also fostering care for and among students.

Applying a CR Praxis of Care to Pedagogy

Over the last six years of teaching, I have developed a cultural rhetorics pedagogy that seeks to support students as active members of the solution for a more caring, more sustainable world. By constellating my knowledges of reproductive justice pedagogy (Ross), feminist pedagogy (hooks), queer rhetorical pedagogy (Waite), and mad-positive course design (Currie 2023), I began developing practices of care through a CR lens on teaching. My goal as a teacher is for students to grow their range of communicative skills, practical tools, and critical awareness so that they can see not only the social injustices in this world, but also the seeds of possibilities within themselves to enact change through their own everyday actions. In this way, I embody the feminist call to build the world we are hoping for (Ahmed; Cooper). I've sought to center students as dynamic, complex humans with unique embodied experiences and positionalities that deserve to be honored and supported in the classroom as they move within an institutional system of unequal power dynamics. In my classrooms, whether in-person or online, I strive to

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know each student, understand their unique positionality within the class, and act on what I notice to care for my students as we all try to make it through the semester as well as possible. There are three pedagogical practices that overlap the pedagogies I listed above that have led me toward developing a CR praxis of care for teaching: debunking the myth that writing and technology are neutral, approaching teaching pedagogy as feminist praxis, and making space for community building.

Writing and Technology as Non-neutral

As a teacher of professional writing and composition courses, it is imperative for me to guide students in critical thinking and discussion about myths of neutrality in professional writing (Walton et al.) and digital design (Costanza-Chock). Our world is increasingly sociotechnical: the social influences the technical, and the technical influences the social. As such, it is not possible to detangle writers from their writing or from non-neutral technologies. Students need to learn not only about workplace reports, memos, and rhetorical analyses, but also about ethically communicating via more public and digital communicative methods. Professional communication must include the consideration of the digital rhetoricity of Facebook, artificial intelligence like chat GPT, and TikTok marketing techniques. Feminist scholars of technical and professional writing studies have claimed that neither language (Jones; Scott et al.) nor technology (Wajcman) are neutral. Myths of neutrality support a false narrative of objectivity within writing, multimodal composition, and digital technologies. This masks the truth: white heteropatriarchal norms dominate the field. Technical and professional scholars have specific rhetorical skills that can equip students to reorient themselves to and challenge these norms (Haas and Eble).

Additionally, the social justice turn within technical and professional communication calls for not only critique but action (Walton et al.). From my experiences of teaching classes including Business Writing, Health Science Writing, Strategies for Academic Writing, and Rhetoric, Writing, and Culture, I too have found that while it is important to make explicit the power dynamics at play within institutions such as the university and the classroom, it is even more important to build new ways of being teachers and students at universities and in classrooms. I encourage students to actively develop real world rhetorical tools and critical thinking skills that can benefit them in future career paths and in civic engagement. This idea of building or creating over mere critique is central to a cultural rhetorics pedagogy, which is why I've developed a CR praxis of care that results in course designs, grading practices, and syllabi policies that center care for students. More than that, because I teach students these practices of care, we multiply efforts to care for each other in our future classes, workspaces, and life experiences. This pedagogical practice led to the CR care practice of deconstructing power dynamics, based off the CR principle of decolonial practices[12].

Teaching as Feminist Praxis

While it may be common these days to claim a feminist pedagogy, I strive to embody it. Being a feminist teacher is being a feminist in the classroom as you teach. Feminist pedagogy should be actively lived: "Feminism is praxis. We enact the world we are aiming for; nothing less will do." (Ahmed 2017, 255). I follow the lead of Black feminists and Women of Color feminists who call for a recognition of embodied knowledges as expertise and for a dismantling

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[12] It must be clear that decolonial efforts should not be conflated with social justice initiatives broadly speaking. For pedagogical purposes, decolonial practices can support the deconstruction of old teaching practices and the building of more inclusive and equitable ones.

of oppressive systems of power that disproportionately impact Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (Hill Collins; hooks; Moraga and Anzaldúa). Because the classroom is often a space of power dynamics and inequities, I strive to create a space for more voices to be heard and respected. I do this by practicing care for lived experiences and stories. As I defined in Chapter 2, care is a web of doings, feelings, and ethics that sustains relations among humans, non-humans, and the world around us. Multiple webs of care work together, some more than others, to sustain these interwoven relations that support continued life and wellness. Before I knew this definition in words, I knew it in my actions in response to the recognition of students as dynamic and unique humans with family to care for, work to juggle, and other valid responsibilities that cause stress and complications during the semester.

This is reflected in my syllabus policies, class activities, regular semester reflective opportunities, and one-on-one informal conferences (called "coffee chats"). Students learn to value each other's lived experiences as sources of valid knowledge and grow to know themselves and each other more deeply from sharing stories in guided and informal activities. They also read from a variety of diverse perspectives in course materials. I prioritize seemingly menial tasks such as following up with students who I haven't seen or heard from because in the Age of Covid, this could be for a myriad of reasons – all of which are valid. Care for students means trying to unburden them from the stresses often placed on them by instructors. In these ways and others, care is a practice to support students in passing the class and gaining knowledge and skills that can help them after the class. This pedagogical practice led me to develop the CR care practice of starting from story, based off the CR principle of story as theory.

Making Space for Community Building

Building genuine community creates a more collaborative learning space for students. When students feel pressure about tests, essay scores, and every single graded item, they are not focused on the actual learning. They are in survival mode. This is like the banking model of education, which does not teach students how to engage in the workplace or in their communities but instead prepares students to know their place and to not ask challenging questions (Freire). By making space to build community trust, students are more willing to work collaboratively, experiment, stretch their thinking, and share their writing, all of which are encouraged in writing classes. While it takes time and patience, making space for community building can yield successful results.

I make space in my classes for students to build a trusted community by creating opportunities for students to engage in informal and/or fun discussions and activities and by placing value (literally, course credit) on actions of community care. It takes time and patience to build up trust and it doesn't always work for 100% of students in every class. There will be times some students don't want to connect or build community, because they just want to pass a class. That is okay, too. I facilitate community guidelines at the beginning of the semester that everyone adds to and commits to upholding so that all embodied knowledges are valued equally across differences. Every group of students is different and may need different spaces to connect at different times in order to form these trusted relationships. Offering opportunities for students to work through questions together, grapple with complex topics, and assist each other fosters a true community vibe. This pedagogical practice led me to the CR care practice of building communities of care, based on the CR principle of relationality.

Articulating a CR Praxis of Care for Teaching

These pedagogical practices framed my approach to teaching professional writing and composition courses before I developed them into a CR praxis of care for teaching. I teach students how to care by modeling it through what I do and what I ask them to do: I value their stories and embodied experiences (story as theory), I build relationships with them and support them building relationships with each other (relationality), I create connections across knowledges and lived experiences alongside students (constellation), and I deconstruct standard classroom practices and build more equitable, democratic ones together with students (decolonial practices). Doing pedagogy in this way lead me to the following adaptations from the praxis of care laid out in Chapter 2:

1. Valuing story as theory highlights the lived experiences of students and calls us to act on the implications of sharing from those lived experiences.

2. Recognizing and honoring relations brings attention to our intertwined embodied realities and calls us to respond within our class community.

3. Building constellations of knowledges and practices supports students' ways of knowing and fosters collective learning.

4. Decolonial engagement decenters institutional powers, including the instructor, and recenters students across differences.

I found that for students to learn these practices, the following "we" statements made more sense to them:

1. We start from story (story as theory),

2. We build a community of care (relationality),

3. We focus on connections over critiques (constellations), and

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4. We deconstruct power dynamics (decolonial practices).

To do this, I ask students to work alongside me to find which tools support these actions. Like my tools for practicing care in Chapter 2, this adaptation requires tools too, including queer failure, stories and relationships, and a constellation of care. Feminist teachers of rhetoric can develop what works best for them. I've found that the practices themselves come easily enough. It is figuring out how to support and sustain them that can be difficult.

I will share a story of how I navigated difficulties while striving to embody these practices. During the fall 2022 semester, one student joined my online version of Health Science Writing in week 10 because their instructor from the original in-person course would not work around their upcoming surgery[13]. I agreed to add this student to my already full roster and met with them multiple times as we collaboratively retrofitted some of my syllabus to what they had already completed for the other version of the course, even though the course themes and assignments were quite different. Instead of requiring them to catch up on 10 weeks of readings and activities, we narrowed down 2-3 imperative readings that would help them jump into the topic we were currently discussing. It wasn't a perfect transition, but we kept lines of communication open. They were transparent about how they were feeling, and I was transparent about what I expected of them as the semester went on. Together, we built out their own specific rubric for their final portfolio as it differed from others so that they don't have to do so much extra work. Peers showed great community care as they rallied around this student to support them and welcome them into our digital class space. Doing this required extra time and labor to

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[13] Later it was shared with me that this surgery was related to reproductive health, which is worth noting given the topics of the course, how the student was treated, and this whole dissertation.

be poured into relationship building, flexibility, failure, and community care: all elements of a

CR praxis of care applied to teaching.

Discord: A Digital Space to Apply a CR Praxis of Care

Through trial and error, critical research, and thoughtful experimentation, I have found

that Discord offers a creative and constructive space for a CR praxis of care to be applied to

teaching because this digital platform allows students to participate in flexible ways, build

communities of care, and collaboratively learn in a more democratic manner. Discord is a social

media platform that was first created with a focus on video game players who wanted to connect

during and in between playing games. It can be accessed on a web

browser or by downloading the application to a computer, phone,

or another device. Interaction is organized by "servers" that users

can join as well as a direct message feature. Servers can be

accessed through invite links or can be open to the public. Once in

Figure 37. Discord's logo, April 2023.   the server, there are text channels that function to categorize

conversations. Users choose their username and profile image and can communicate with text,

images, emojis, memes, GIFs, tags, links to videos and other symbolic expressions. Users can

also chat live via voice channels that include video/text options. Discord has expanded its

audience over the years, especially during the height of Covid-19, to be a digital space for

community organizations, friends connecting over long distances, and even teachers and students

(Alonso et al.). Though there has been some concern about privacy, trolls, and lack of security

features in the past, recently developers have added tools to create more secure servers for those

groups who desire a higher level of protection. The functionality of Discord servers allows for a

close-knit community feel with desired levels of security and privacy. I am a member of several academic communities on Discord: a server for dissertation writers through the CPTSC[14] graduate student committee, a server called Rhetorical Soup for those from the field avoiding Twitter these days, and a research server called D/ARC[15] that provides a wealth of information and blossoming community around research, writing, and teaching with Discord. There are campus-specific servers, too. UWM has several, including one for the Women's Resource Center and one for the LBGTQ+ Resource Center.

The continued impacts of Covid-19 on learning have exposed university Learning Management Systems (LMS) like Canvas and Blackboard for their lack of accessibility, usability, and creativity. Teachers asked questions about improving digital learning: *How can we invite students to learn in remote settings? How can we create a more welcoming digital environment?* Discord can be a space to try new ways of teaching and learning that better supports students. It offers both synchronous and asynchronous interactions over text, audio, and video, with more accessibility options than Zoom, Teams, or Canvas (Currie 2022). Students can use GIFs, memes, videos, emojis, file attachments, reactions, and more as accepted communication methods here. By using these expanded rhetorical choices, alongside more traditional symbolic expression, students demonstrate their rhetorical dexterity and awareness while having space for fun and genuine connection. The platform affords collaborative knowledge-building through both text and voice channels that are fully customizable. Students can also make deeper connections amongst themselves than in a standard asynchronous class, leading to a sense of trust that benefits activities like writing workshops or peer review groups. Most importantly, students can participate and catch up on conversations they missed if they

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[14] The Council for Programs in Technical and Scientific Communication (CPTSC).
[15] The Discord Academic Research Community (D/ARC).

were sick or away from the course for other reasons. Or, if they are exposed to Covid-19 but feel

up to it, they can engage in less formal ways that still show they are participating in our

collaborative learning.

For me, Discord has been an entry point into a CR praxis of care for teaching in the

digital classroom. I can practice care for students as full human beings with lives outside of

being a student and at the same time offer students a customized caring community space for

them to practice layered modes of rhetorical interactions. As I've continued to teach online,

applying a CR praxis of care to my teaching pedagogy has supported my goal of creating a

community space that cultivates the development of students as critical thinkers, engaged

community members, and caring human beings in and out of the digital classroom (see Appendix

C for my class Discord Onboarding and Directory). Pictured below is a screenshot of one of my
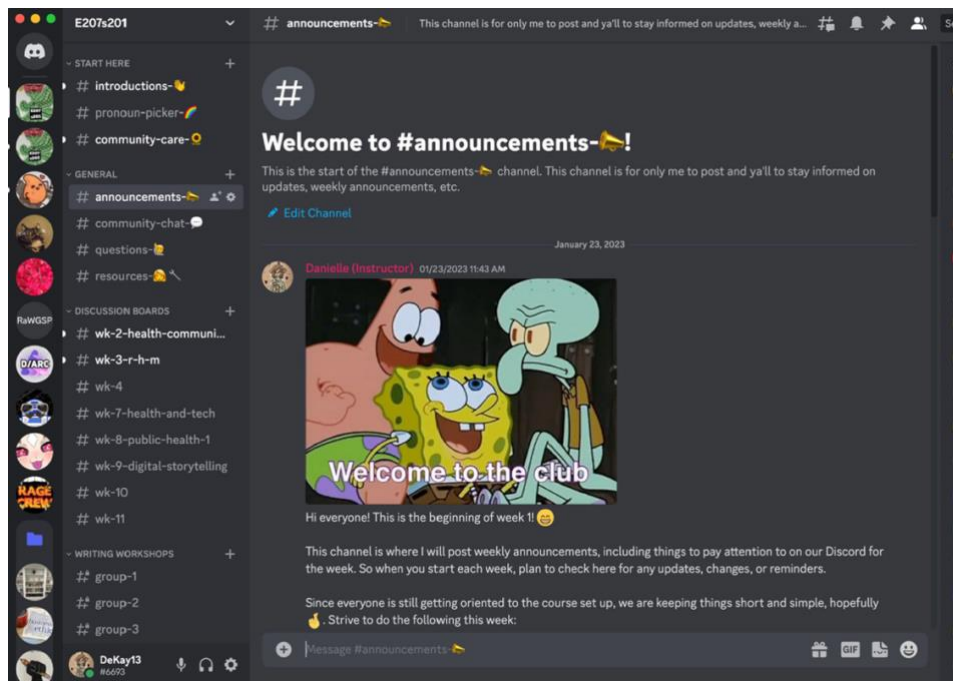
class Discord servers.

Figure 38. Screenshot of #announcements channel for Health Science Writing, January 2023.

It shows part of a weekly announcement post with a meme from the show SpongeBob that says, "Welcome to the club!" On the lefthand side, you can see the menu of channels for this server, which is for one of my Health Science Writing sections. On the very lefthand edge of the screenshot, you can see icons for other servers I am a part of. On the very righthand is the list of server members which is cut off so as not to show any identifying student information. *Looks cool, right?* What I've learned about using Discord as a teaching tool is that it is one thing to move your class interactions to a cool platform for students to have fun; it is quite another thing to be intentional about why you are using an alternative platform, about how you set it up and manage it, and about how students will engage on it. This takes thought and care.

To share the load of that care, my students and I collaboratively build community care guidelines each semester so that we have something to point back to as a reminder of how students want to be treated, how they hope to engage with each other, and ultimately how to collectively care for our digital class community. Below is my prompt for that channel, called #community-care:
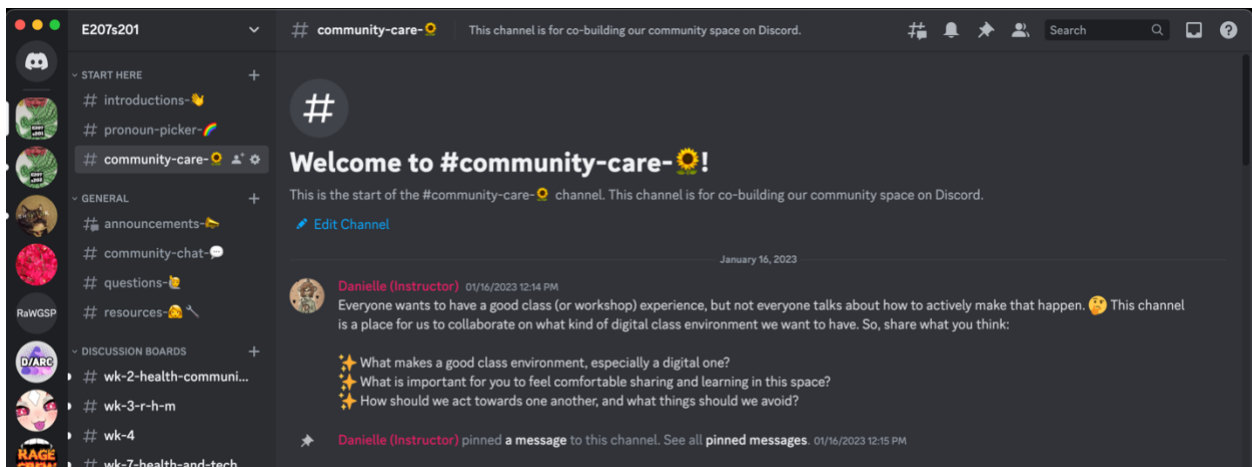

Figure 39. Screenshot of #community-care channel, January 2023.

✨ What makes a good class environment, especially a digital one?

✨ What is important for you to feel comfortable sharing and learning in this space?

✨ How should we act towards one another, and what things should we avoid?

When I compare their dialogue to my own pedagogical practices, their responses often overlap with the key principles of my CR praxis of care. Throughout the semester, students learn to care for themselves, for each other, and for the stories being shared by practicing these four actions of care I lay out as the foundation for a CR praxis of care for teaching: start from story, build a community of care, make connections instead of critiques, and deconstruct power dynamics. Below I give a brief example of how these practices show up in our Discord classroom.

Enacting story as theory or starting from story looks like this in our class Discord server: students value each other's experiences through their posts and responses on discussion board channels and we all learn in conversational style from each other's embodied knowledges instead of me teaching a theory as the only source of knowledge. For instance, in the second week of Health Science Writing, I ask students to do collective definitional work about core concepts of the course by sharing their own knowledges and experiences related to each of the words "writing," "health," and "sciences." By building knowledge from lived experiences, students learn to prioritize not only theories from scholarly texts but also theories from their own lives.

Enacting relationality in our class Discord space is framed as building a community of care. Students learn to value relationship building as central to the practices of learning, writing, and peer review. They build community through fun channels like #shareyourpets, #venting-time, and #memes, and we regularly review our community guidelines throughout the semester.

There are also points in the semester for me to demonstrate accountability and reciprocity by responding to their feelings about the community space and making changes to the Discord if it is not meeting community needs. At the mid-point of the semester, all students also review the class Discord and give a community care shout out to 1-2 students who have exemplified care for their peers. Building community up front relieves students later in the semester when they're looking for support, advice, commiseration, and motivation to make it through the semester and whatever else is happening in their lives while still earning course credit.

Enacting constellative practices for my classes means focusing on connections over critiques. This doesn't mean there is no critical thinking or critique happening. Instead, we seek to spend more time on building connections across texts, online sources, and media in our discussion board channels than time spent picking apart texts. We draw lines of connections across experiences to create a web of understanding among various knowledge bases. For example, in one of the discussion channels of Rhetoric, Writing, and Culture: Public Writing for Social Action, students share examples of hashtag activism and rhetorically analyze how their own examples and the example of their peers together teach each other about digital contexts for activism. In this way they build a constellation of knowledges together about the complexities of digital social justice initiatives.

Enacting decolonial practices happens when we deconstruct power dynamics to the best of our abilities and build new classroom practices, policies, and activities. One way I strive to do this is by designing the Discord space as a more level field of learning while recognizing I still must give grades through our LMS, Canvas. I integrate regular student feedback into improving the design and content of the server for each unique class and try to be transparent with them

about aspects that weren't working. We also have periodic community engagement check in's that give students the opportunity to express their feelings about their own engagement and we assess their engagement with my notes alongside their notes. This does not account for the decolonial practice of reparation, but these actions do strive to break down the traditional hierarchy of the classroom and open classes up to larger conversations about practices that deconstruct power and build new, more equitable classroom practices for students.

Throughout these trials of teaching via Discord, I have found that I often dig into my CR praxis of care toolkit and pull "queer failure" out as I try to care for students. I've created channels no one wants to engage with. I've cut engagement expectations like "conversation leader" because everyone is burned out. I've posted my weekly announcement a day late and had to be transparent with them about my own reality outside the [digital] classroom. The more I have been willing to fail, the more I have opened myself up to new and better possibilities, and to genuine support from my students. When we center community care for students, instead of rigorous classroom policies, it can mean some difficulties, complications, and failures for us as teachers. It is messy and sometimes unclear if things are working well. But through this failure, we keep the integrity of care for our students as human beings, and we demonstrate to our students more ethical ways of interacting and engaging with one another to take with them as they move toward their lives after college.

Implementing *Cuentos* into the Classroom

So how did I implement *Cuentos* into the classroom? As I was developing the materials and structure for these new courses for the fall of 2022, I was also interested in considering students in health-related writing courses as possible audiences for *Cuentos*. Because I had done

the work to structure my classes into digital communities of care, I thought they might be caring spaces to try teaching with *Cuentos*. Rachel and I had been brainstorming ideas of what should come next after we finished up the community launch event. Because *Cuentos* has always been attended to with community in mind, we spent a great deal of time considering how the project might grow or change over time, who might be other potential audiences for it, and what potential changes might mean for circulation and my continued involvement. We weren't sure if students were an audience or not. We asked some questions about potential paths forward:

- Should we create a community workshop for other Latinx, BIPOC, or women working for reproductive justice to have the opportunity to write their stories?
- Could I lead a class based on the *Cuentos* model but focused specifically for young mothers to allow me to offer more of my own personal experiences?
- Would we have interest from promotores across the country in writing their stories, and what would it look like to continue expanding *Cuentos*?

I wondered what we would gain – or lose – if we expanded, changed direction for, or altered *Cuentos* as it was originally created. I was also hesitant about how to share this important work with academic audiences like students or peers. I have taken great care about how I share about this work, because they are not my stories out there for the world to see. I haven't shared it on Twitter, Instagram, or Facebook for my own social networks to access. I have presented on *Cuentos* at a few regional and national academic conferences and have co-written a chapter on methodologies with Rachel about the role of confianza in caring for stories in digital spaces. But, in none of these spaces have I analyzed the themes or writing styles of the cuentos or discussed the writers as data points. Instead, I have shared what I have learned from the writers, from the

process of designing the site, and from the multifaceted experience of working on this project. As such, I wasn't sure how students would approach the stories as they are often taught to analyze and critique course materials.

Thinking about how students and other academic audiences might engage with *Cuentos*, Rachel and I envisioned an educational toolkit that teachers could use to incorporate *Cuentos* into their class if it fit well with the course content. We decided the best way to move forward with this vision was to start small and then reassess if academic audiences were key stakeholders for *Cuentos* or not. The courses we first taught *Cuentos* in were Rachel's graduate seminar, Seminar in Public Rhetorics and Community Engagement: Rhetoric of Health and Medicine (English 855), and my two undergraduate courses, Health Science Writing (English 207) and Rhetoric, Writing, and Culture: Public Writing for Social Action (English 240). All three were held online. We chose these for a couple of reasons:

1. We trusted ourselves to care for *Cuentos* as we shared it with our students.

2. Each course was related to themes of reproductive justice present in the cuentos.

3. They allowed for a slow roll out for us to reflect on before moving forward.

While this exploration was small in scale, what I've learned is that the most successful rhetorical power of *Cuentos* remains in its target audience – Latinx communities in Wisconsin and other health promotors. This is not to say that *Cuentos* cannot or should not be integrated into the classroom, but if it is to be done, it needs to be done with extreme attention to care, lots of framing time, relationship-building, and trust/confianza.

Over the summer of 2022, I developed the content for the educational toolkit that Rachel and I would use in our fall courses. My first draft was more detailed and extensive but upon

further review we decided to cut it down to the essentials to appeal to a variety of stakeholders. We wanted to provide enough framing and background information without being overwhelming or overcontrolling about how a teacher might chose to incorporate *Cuentos* into their classroom. Originally, my goal was to build a frame for community education materials first for the promotores to use to implement *Cuentos* into their fiestas caseras and then build university materials from those. I thought this would most prioritize the promotores' own design for incorporation of their stories. But the timing was not right for that. The community education materials needed more time to develop, and in Spanish first, and we needed the input of the promotores on how they thought their stories fit into the different themes of the CCmáS curriculum as it was in the process of being revamped.

In the fall of 2022, I was able to finalize the educational toolkit for university use and had the help of an undergraduate student on our team to translate it into Spanish. The educational toolkit includes a brief background on the promotores, an invitation to enter into confianza, a list of writing and discussion prompts, and some supplemental resources (see Appendix B for the full guide). Preliminary brainstorming had yielded other potential subject areas that *Cuentos* might fit within such as Women's and Gender Studies and Medical Spanish Studies. I also included *Cuentos* in my two online sections of Health Science Writing in the spring of 2023. Because the focus has been on the community education context for the health promotores, we have since decided that other higher education classes could be determined down the line.

As I prepared for my own courses, I decided that this type of work required certain methods of study such as critical observations and reflexive writing to understand the impact of the pedagogical use of *Cuentos* in the classroom as opposed to data analysis of students as participants in a study. By doing so, I closely followed Andrea Riley-Mukavetz's idea of

"dwelling and listening" to stories to form relationships with the stories and people that the words represent (2014, 115). Reading, reflecting on, and sitting with the student content produced as they experienced *Cuentos* for the first time was a way for me to dwell on and listen to what was arising from the collective learning about the promotores, reproductive justice, and intersections with related course topics. As such, I did not seek out Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval for this. I made this choice for several reasons. First, I worried that if I did an official "study" I would get skewed results in one way or another, especially with such a small sample size. Second, because there were graded assignments involved, I wanted to avoid asking students to complete voluntary (yet additional) labor without being able to compensate them. Third, I wanted students to engage honestly with the materials and didn't feel I needed to extrapolate "data" from them to be able to get a sense of how things went. Instead, I've relied mostly on reading their posts, replies, journal entries, and writing workshop feedback forms as well as writing my own observational notes and reflections. I also learned dialogically alongside them in our conversations in the discussion board channels. Then, I went back through my notes, highlighting common themes and moments that stood out as meaningful and writing reflexively about what was arising for me as a teacher and as a co-member of each of their learning communities. I've also shared what I was finding with Rachel and took notes on those conversations to help me sift through how everything went.

Teaching *Cuentos* in Two Undergraduate Courses

Cuentos was incorporated into two of my undergraduate courses: Health Science Writing (E207) and Writing, Rhetoric, and Culture: Public Writing for Social Action (E240). Both courses, the materials for which were developed fully by me from scratch, were held online and asynchronously. I incorporated *Cuentos* into these classes because the project directly related to

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the overall goals of each class – E207's focus on expanding notions of what counts as "writing" and who counts as a "health expert" and E240's focus on how rhetoric is applied across public genres to enact change or support activism. The pedagogical application of *Cuentos* offered undergraduate students from these classes the opportunity to learn from community health experts on important reproductive health issues through digital storytelling as a method and opened conversations about language barriers, access to health services, and caring for stories of vulnerable nature. In comparison to reading a scholarly article on reproductive health by medical professionals, making time and space for *Cuentos* in each of these classes showed students how they can learn from multiple types of expertise and from diverse rhetorical methods. And at the center of it all was the obligation to care for these stories and the lives they represent. In this section, I describe each of the courses, how assignments and activities were set up to frame and then engage with *Cuentos*, reflections on themes that arose, and discussion of how teaching *Cuentos* can or can't work in the university classroom.

Course Descriptions

Health Science Writing (referred to as E207) is a 200-level English class taught under the umbrella of professional and technical writing at UWM and is largely for undergraduate students going into the health professions. Students' majors included Biological Science, Nutritional Science, and Kinesiology and included foci such as diagnosis sonography, occupational therapy, and radiology. While there were some commonalities among the students, there were also particular interests and viewpoints. A few students were pursuing public health majors and one was pursuing a community engagement and education major. All students had taken an

introductory English course at UWM or elsewhere, meaning they had a baseline understanding of rhetoric.

Though there was no special topic or subtitle for this course, it was set up to bring together expanded notions of writing, health, and science to allow students to explore how rhetoric is at work in health-related communications. The main units were "rhetorics of health and medicine," "health and technology," "writing for public health," and "health and storytelling" and for each theme students completed reflective reading and writing assignments as well as

Figure 40. Health Science Writing logo, drawn by my older daughter, August 2022.

practiced creating health-related communications for different audiences to learn about intersecting genres like visual rhetorics, social media rhetorics, and online medical sites (See Appendix D for Syllabus). The health and storytelling unit, which lasted two weeks, is the one in which we learned from *Cuentos* using the educational toolkit and digital storytelling site as the main artifacts. Students critically reflected on the rhetorical techniques involved in digital storytelling and practiced care for each other's health-related stories in their Discord server. The purpose of including *Cuentos* was to show students an example of non-scholarly writing on important health topics and to collaboratively learn about how storytelling works as a rhetorical tool in communicating on health issues in marginalized communities.

Rhetoric, Writing, and Culture: Public Writing for Social Action (referred to as E240) is a 200-level English class for undergraduate students majoring in Rhetoric and Writing. However, there were students with majors such as Political Science, Film, Journalism and Media Studies, and Biological Sciences as well. These students have a wide range of experience when it comes

to rhetoric, though like my E207 students, most of these students had taken a foundational class on rhetoric: E101, E102, or an equivalent.

The special topic of the course, "Public Writing for Social Action," set up the course to bring together writing, social justice initiatives, and digital media together to allow students to explore how rhetoric is applied in public writing. Students completed reflective reading and writing assignments and practiced creating content for specific audiences to learn about genres such as public statements, visual rhetorics, social media rhetorics, digital storytelling, and news articles and blogs (See Appendix E for syllabus). These genres were also

Figure 41. Writing for Social Action logo, drawn by my older daughter, August 2022.

set up as multi-week units. Like my other course, *Cuentos* was the main artifact for a two-week unit on digital storytelling, during which students critically reflected on the rhetorical techniques involved in digital storytelling and practiced care for each other's stories in their Discord server.

Cuentos Assignments & Activities

Both courses had almost identical assignments, activities, and prompts over the two-week unit for *Cuentos*. In E207, the unit was called Health and Storytelling part 1 and 2. In E240, the unit was called Digital Storytelling part 1 and 2. I set up identical activities since both themes overlapped with similar aspects of the *Cuentos* project. In part 1, which was week 9 of the semester, students were asked to do the following:

1. Read the educational toolkit, "A Guide to *Cuentos de Confianza*."

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2. Follow the guide's suggested path through the site, reading and listening to each cuento and checking out the other pages.

3. Complete a journal entry (1–2-page reflective writing) responding to the questions provided in the toolkit.

4. Engage in the discussion board channel #wk-9-digital-storytelling on Discord by sharing and responding to others' health-related stories.

Each week, I post a weekly agenda in Canvas as well as a weekly announcement on Discord in our #announcements channel. On Canvas, I included a bit more background information on the promotores and the *Cuentos* project. Below is the Discord announcement with check list for week 9 tasks:
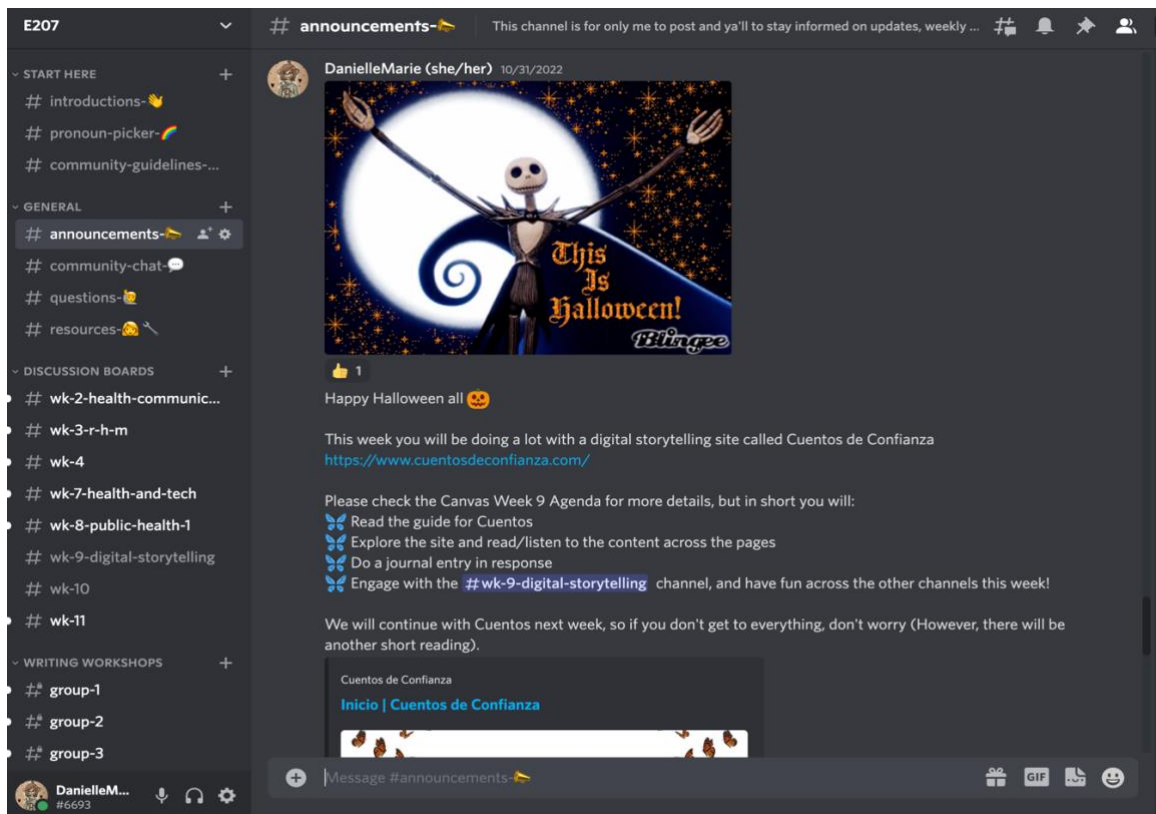

Figure 42. Screenshot of E207's week 9 #announcements channel, October 2022.

As shown here, I kept the butterfly theme of *Cuentos* by using the butterfly emojis here. The

Discussion board was a separate channel where they had conversations related to *Cuentos* by

telling their own stories. Here is a screenshot of my original prompt with the text below it:

Figure 43. Screenshot of E207's week 9 discussion board channel, October 2022.

Prompt: This week's topic has to do with intersections of health, public writing
for social change, and digital storytelling. Reflect on your own experiences with
health. Share (to the level you feel comfortable) one of your own stories regarding
health. It doesn't have to be categorized as "good" or "bad" and it can be anything
from a small moment to a larger life experience concerning you or someone you
know. As you do this, reflect on how you write this story you choose to share with
us. Have you disclosed this story to other audiences? If possible, reflect on how
you've crafted this story in different ways based on who you're telling, and in
what circumstances (aka rhetorical situation)?

I encouraged students to work through what they could in week 9, knowing that if they needed

to, they could continue working on things in week 10, which I hoped would take some pressure

off them and would give more opportunity for continued conversation. This also made sure I was

getting enough engagement to understand the pedagogical impacts of teaching *Cuentos*.

In week 10, the second part of the unit, we dove into deeper conversation about story,

trust, care, and the promotores, supplemented by a reading from Rachel and María. Structured

this way, students had extra time if they were a bit behind on things. Students were asked to do the following:

1. Read "The Role of Confianza in Community-Engaged Work for Reproductive Justice," and optionally: take a look at *Reflections*' other recent issues.

2. Engage in the discussion board channel #wk-10 on Discord.

3. Participate in your Writing Workshop group by sharing your journal entry from week 9 and giving feedback to two of your peers.

4. Complete your second Community Engagement Check-in on Canvas.

While on Canvas I do include some extra details and instructions for those tasks, you can see below the Discord announcement for week 10 from E240. It is identical to E207's.
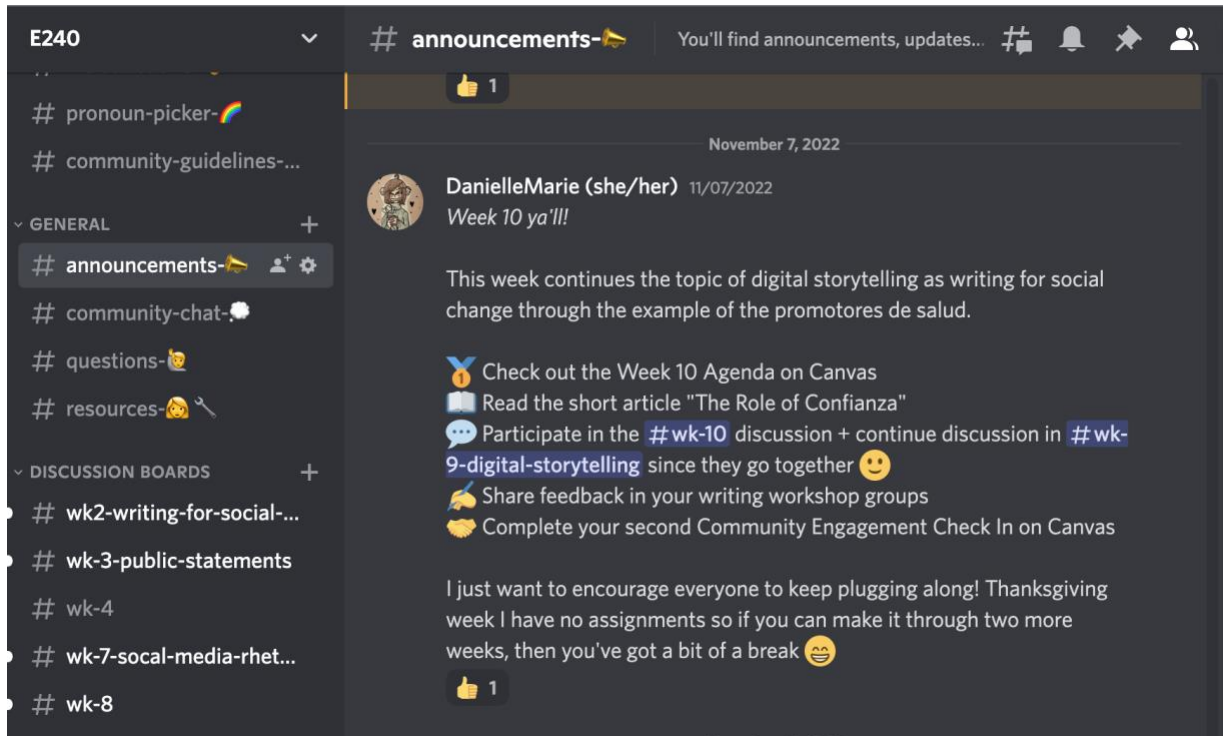

Figure 44. Screenshot of E240's week 10 #announcements channel, November 2022.

The discussion boards, as I mentioned, were just a bit different in their wording this time (see question #2 specifically). Below are the questions for E207 with an accompanying screenshot.
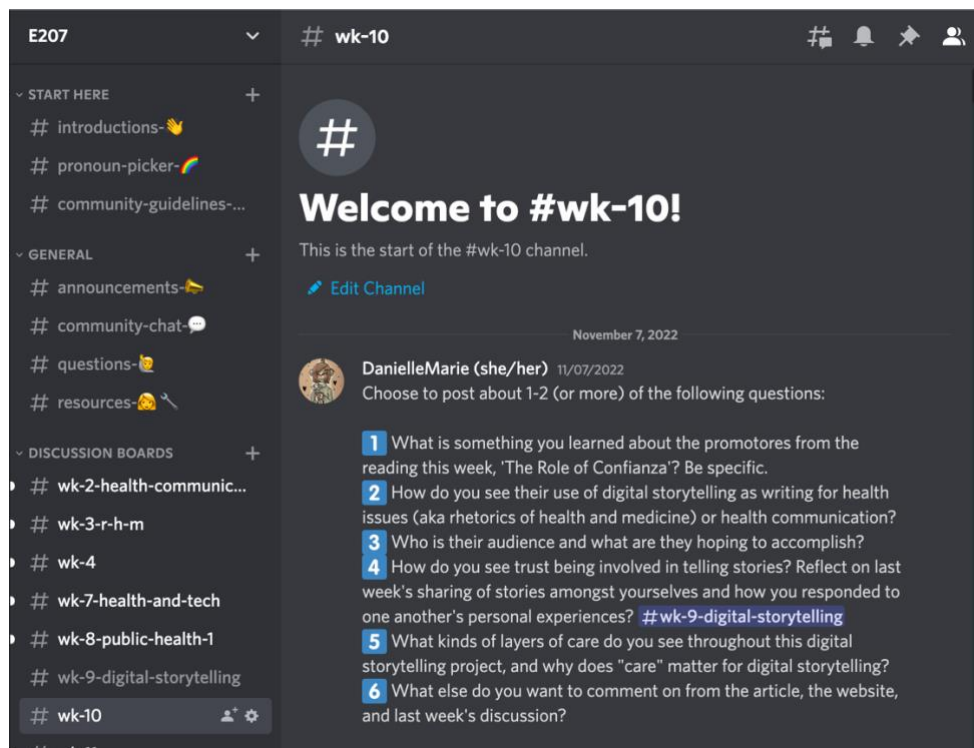
Figure 45. Screenshot of E207's week 10 discussion board prompt, November 2022.

Prompt: Choose to post about 1-2 (or more) of the following questions:

1. What is something you learned about the promotores from the reading this week, 'The Role of Confianza'? Be specific.

2. How do you see their use of digital storytelling as writing for health issues (aka rhetorics of health and medicine) or health communication?

3. Who is their audience and what are they hoping to accomplish?

4. How do you see trust being involved in telling stories? Reflect on last week's sharing of stories amongst yourselves and how you responded to one another's personal experiences? #wk-9-digital-storytelling

5. What kinds of layers of care do you see throughout this digital storytelling project, and why does "care" matter for digital storytelling?

6. What else do you want to comment on from the article, the website, and last week's discussion?

For E240, I changed question 2 to be: "How do you see their use of digital storytelling as writing for social change?" Week 10 was the week before Thanksgiving break, so students in both classes were able to continue working on these assignments during the days before the holiday break if they wanted to continue conversations or if they were behind on things.

E207 Themes and Observations

Out of 25 actively-involved students, 23 students engaged in the week 9 discussion board conversation, 21 students participated in the week 10 discussion board conversation, and 22 students submitted their week 9 reflective writing. Overall, E207 had shorter posts and fewer details than E240, though E207 had more total submissions and participants. This had been consistent in activities throughout the semester. As I dwelled on and sat with their writer's journal entries, Discord conversations, and my notes, I noticed some common themes and some interesting outliers.

In the writer's journal entries, there were some common themes and experiences that arose. There was a sense of awe that some students had as they reflected on the lives of the promotores. It seemed to be an eye-opening experience for many to read about the struggles some of the writers overcame to be where they are today, and many students noticed how their own experience of navigating a bilingual site gave them a small insight to the larger issues of

language access for Spanish-speaking people trying to access healthcare in Wisconsin. Words like *inspirational*, *empowering*, and *amazing* were used to describe the promotoras and themes that were noticed across the cuentos included female empowerment, overcoming barriers, family, hope, bodily autonomy, and gender norms in Latinx cultures. Students recognized how confianza required building relationships over time and that it was vital to be open to having someone in your home talking about sex with your family and friends. When it came to caring for stories, students wrote about how digital storytelling lacks some important nonverbal communication that oral storytelling has and the courage it takes to share vulnerable stories in public spaces. As listeners they saw they could be empathetic and caring by being open-minded and by not taking the experiences out of context.

In the week 9 discussion board, students shared a health-related story that they felt comfortable sharing with the group and reflected on how they might tell the story differently in different rhetorical situations. As I read back through this Discord conversation, responded to students, and took notes, I noticed how students made connections between their health story and their major field of study. Many of them noted how the story they share had inspired them to follow a health-related career path. A few students mentioned how doctors did not believe their descriptions of pain or other symptoms and a couple others noted their lack of choices when it came to resources for pressing health issues. There was a general recognition of how they avoided certain details or medical jargon when typing up their stories, and one student admitted this was the first time they had written out their story for anyone. We all came around one storyteller with support and care as they chose to share about a very serious family health story and their frustrations at how health is viewed and valued differently around the world.

In the week 10 discussion board, students read "The Role of Confianza" and choose 2 questions to respond to from the discussion board prompt. In this task, students seemed to focus much of their conversation on the article and not so much on the site anymore. They commented on what they learned about confianza: recognizing how it is emotional labor, that it goes hand-in-hand with reproductive justice, that it is a detailed approach to health literacy, and noticing how we had practiced confianza leading up to our week 9 discussion board. Other students were interested in how the promotores teach reproductive and sexual health education in a culturally responsive way and how healthcare issues cannot be separated from cultural aspects of patients and their communities. They were also intrigued by the fiestas caseras, and a few students made observations about how the promotores invest in the knowledge and experience that Latinx community members already possess to improve their health and understanding of health topics. Lastly, a few of them specifically commented on the website being a creative and unique resource for the promotores and communities to use.

E240 Themes and Observations

Out of 20 actively-involved students, 19 participated in the week 9 discussion board conversation, 15 students took part in week 10's discussion board conversation, and 15 students submitted their week 9 reflective writing. As mentioned above, there were fewer submissions and active participants than E207, though E240 had more in-depth writing, which has been consistent throughout the semester across the two classes. Like in E207, I spent a good amount of time dwelling on my notes and observations along with the students' journal entries and Discord conversations to pull together themes that were arising.

In the writer's journal entries, some of the initial reactions were interesting because while some students wrote about having strong emotional connections to the women through their stories, others wrote about how they couldn't really connect to the experiences of these women being mothers. Students tended to describe the stories as *eye-opening*, *captivating*, and *inspiring*, and named common themes like family devotion, personal growth, helping your community, and breaking down sexism. To this class, confianza seemed to be understood as a sort of connector, like a bridge, that connects communities with resources, information, and empowerment. It intersects with trust, autonomy, and feeling safe. Confianza can even build a digital environment where people trust, grow, build relations, and share their stories without fear. While navigating the site, students were reminded of how English is almost always privileged above other languages and how that impacts access to information and resources. To care for these stories, students thought that it was best to care for a story like it is your own. A couple students explained that readers should find ways to relate in a way that suggested a more active reading role, and other students advised that the writers should be asked before their stories would be shared in new or different online spaces.

In the week 9 discussion board channel, students shared a health-related story that they felt comfortable sharing with the group and reflected on how they might tell the story differently in across varying rhetorical situations. It was clear that students were acutely aware of their own rhetorical digital storytelling moves as they shared and responded to health-related stories. They mentioned things like cutting details of a story based on a less familiar audience, changing the story for workplace or classroom needs, and sharing more details after a diagnosis was withdrawn because there was less fear and anxiety involved. Students who posted later in the week also admitted that they were more willing to share details of their stories in response to

other classmates having already done so. Students commented on the complexities of writing about health-related stories such as lacking mental health resources, navigating peoples' assumptions about language abilities based on patient ethnicity, and questioning how to explain all the facets of emotional labor involved when caring for a family member who is ill. Multiple people gave content warnings, which was very thoughtful.

In the week 10 discussion board channel, student grappled with situations where healthcare professionals didn't always know what was best for a patient and where doctors didn't take time to build relationships or trust. An accompanying realization they made was that the promotores often do much more emotionally intense care than doctors do but get paid much less for this heavy work. There was one student who debated this, respectfully, because they've experienced many moments of great care from healthcare professionals. This comment was appreciated by others and good discussion happened to consider both sides of this. One response was that doctors should build better partnerships with groups like the health promoters to share their expertise, resources, and skills with each other to better benefit everyone. The home health parties, some thought, were really cool and unique. Stories, it seems, really helped to de-polarize hard topics both at the home health parties and online through *Cuentos* as some students were faced with topics that they had not thought would be classroom topics, such as abortion care and sexual health education.

Reflections on Teaching *Cuentos* through a CR Praxis of Care

Overall, there was something that rose to the top: the layered labors of care enacted in this process of care-fully implementing *Cuentos* into the digital classroom. I cared for the promotores, for their stories, for how my students would engage with the stories and experiences of the promotores, and for my students as they learned about intersecting issues including

reproductive justice, health and science, language, public writing, and access to care. I saw

students learn from my example and the course framework that care was central to what our class

was. They exhibited this in how they practiced care for each other and how they talked about the

cuentos and the promotores.

E207 and E240 Reflections

Reflecting on this experience, building the course design and content through a CR praxis

of care before the semester started made my incorporation of *Cuentos* into the class successful.

Because we started from valuing stories about ourselves not just as teacher and students, but as

people, students were already open to storytelling as a theory-building method. Students had

taken time to get to know each other through my intentional set up of Discord so that by the time

we got to week 9, they had fostered relationships with at least a couple other people and felt

ready to engage at a deeper level about vulnerable experiences concerning reproductive

injustices, which I don't think could have happened in week 1 or even in week 5. We had also

already practiced constellating knowledges in previous weeks and our collective understanding

of rhetoric was based on the principles of cultural rhetorics laid out in "Our Story Begins Here"

(Powell et al.). Finally, the deconstructed feel of the class, my role as more of a facilitator than

an instructor, and assignments that placed value on care and engagement allowed students the

freedom to participate in varied ways and even if they were behind schedule. This led to more

genuine responses.

The framing and overall theme of the course also influenced what students "looked for"

as they engaged with *Cuentos*. For example, I noticed that students from E207 were more likely

to include health-related language and concepts both in their own stories of health in Week 9 and

in their responses to "The Role of Confianza" and *Cuentos* in Week 10. Alternatively, students from E240 had more wide-ranging comments and questions, and they especially engaged a bit deeper in the rhetorical aspects of the site itself as an artifact. In each class, students had to be coaxed out of their orientation to the class a bit to expand what they "looked for" or thought was important. But overall, they caught on quickly to what I was asking them to do and because the courses had been framed through a CR praxis of care, they were familiar with the four practices of care we were looking to use as a guide for engaging with *Cuentos*.

The multi-layered focus on care allowed for our own community trust or confianza to thrive. In both classes, students' engagement in the week 9 discussion board conversation demonstrated their care for each other and for stories. Students cared for themselves by being thoughtful and intentional about what they shared, and they were careful about how they responded to each other's stories. Sometimes, students didn't even type a response but simply reacted with a heart or hug emoji. In my first read through of these discussions, I worried about if students were caring "enough." I thought students were being a bit surface-level with their stories and responses based on length and number of responses to each original post (I laugh at myself for having even thought this). But when I sat with them longer, I noticed more details in how posts and responses were written and reacted to with emojis and other symbols that showed a deeper care than I first realized. When I read through our community care shout outs, an assignment during which students had the opportunity to mention peers who modeled care for the class community, I was amazed at how many students noted specific instances from the week 9 discussion board conversation. They were grateful for how their stories were heard, responded to, and honored. This tells me that, while they didn't always explicitly note it with extra-long responses, they appreciated a caring approach to sharing vulnerable stories in digital spaces.

Finally, students across both courses continued to point back to *Cuentos* as something that had an impact on them. As I was reading through the reflections, discussion board conversations, writing workshop feedback, and community care shout outs, I had to keep reminding myself that its okay to take time with this and just listen to what these stories were telling me. My initial feeling was to rush through so I could get to the "writing" that I'd been feeling so anxious about finishing. But this kind of thing takes time. I had to tell myself that it was okay to go back through things, to write more than I thought I needed to, to really sit with these thoughts – from my students and from myself – to fully understand what the experience of *Cuentos* was like for everyone. My patience paid off at the end of the semester. In their final community engagement check in, students reflected on how they thoughtfully interacted with their peers on the discussion boards where they shared their own health-related stories. Many of students chose to include their journal entry about *Cuentos* as one of their meaningful pieces of writing in their final portfolios, and in their end of the semester reflective letters multiple students considered *Cuentos* an important unit that they learned from and will remember from this class.

All these things signal to me that this was a success. I was pleasantly surprised that both classes at least reached my expectations, if not exceeded them. I also had little to no pushback about spending two weeks focused on reproductive justice issues. Students were generally interested, engaged, or even passionate about the topics discussed. Woven throughout these reflections are the ways I was able to measure care and its impact in my classes: through the stories being told, through the relationships built, through constellations fostered, and through decolonial methods employed.

Measuring Care in the Classroom

Teachers eager to weave digital community storytelling projects such as *Cuentos* into their courses can benefit greatly from doing so with a CR praxis of care for teaching. While this takes more planning ahead of time, as well as intentional framing during the semester, it can positively shape how students will orient themselves to the project. How students engage with the project is important because stories about issues like reproductive justice deserve care and respect. Adapting the measures of care in Chapter 2 can give teachers a way to assess how care was attended to when incorporating such projects into the digital classroom.

Care as work/doing:

- How is the community being centered in the work/doings?

- What are the best methods for integrating the community project into the classroom?

- How are students being asked to interact with or write about the project?

- What framing, preparation, or other action is needed to set up the project?

Care as a feeling/affect:

- What does the overall class community feel like?

- How do students react or respond to the project and to each other?

- In what ways are the embodied experiences of students valued, cared for, and integrated into class activities?

- In what ways are the embodied experiences of storytellers being recognized, honored, and supported by students and teacher?

Care as ethics/politics:

- How do we talk about the stories and the lived experiences (people) they represent?

- In what ways can I guide where and how stories are being discussed so they are not harmfully critiqued or narrowly analyzed?

- How do I support students in deepening their own ethic of care?

- What actions support dynamic learning about the project to avoid the dangers of assuming that any digital storytelling project represents all peoples' experiences from that community?

Contemplating these reflective questions can help teachers to measure care and its impacts in their classrooms regarding the implementation of digital storytelling projects. However, teachers should adapt these measures to best support their specific class endeavors and, when possible, should receive feedback from students and should receive evaluation and guidance from the community as active collaborators as you continue negotiating audiences for the stories.

Challenges and Changes

This dissertation would look a lot differently if I would have gotten IRB approval to do an official pilot study. I imagine there would be quantified commonalties found if I sifted through data, analyzed points of connection, and wrote up results with quotes from participants. I could potentially include all sorts of information and could code responses and themes that arose for you to read with an accompanying graph that housed all sorts of numbers and plot points. However, I wanted students to feel like they could speak, write, and share freely without worrying about what I might critique or analyze about their words or experiences. I didn't want

to force something that wasn't there to prove a hypothesis or worry at all about finding a certain answer. I wanted to tell you a story about me teaching with *Cuentos* – mistakes, failures, and all. In a way, it is another vulnerable story I share with you all, hoping that you will hold it gently in your hands. My goal has been to describe the implementation of a CR praxis of care to teaching *Cuentos* and to share my reflections on its integration in a few specific classes so that we can better understand which other academic audiences might be suited as future target audiences for the project or how academic audiences might respond to similar community projects concerning vulnerable topics.

Another issue to consider for future implementation of *Cuentos* into a class is the feasibility of someone framing the readings, activities, and assignments regarding *Cuentos* from different pedagogical standpoints. I thoughtfully prepped my classes to be ready for *Cuentos* in the weeks beforehand. Though, not *only* for this reason, but I did build in a lot of time for growing a caring community environment on Discord so that students felt comfortable having discussions, sharing experiences, and giving workshop feedback in an online format before we got to week 9. Everything in my class fit together to include *Cuentos*. It was not forced into a curriculum where it did not fit, and it was not added on like an unrelated presentation at the beginning of a class before moving into the "real" content. The reason I note this is because Rachel and I have had multiple conversations about our hesitations with teaching *Cuentos* in other classes. We've both come to find that it may not work as well as we initially hoped because it takes lots of time, relationship-building, and care to do it justice and not every teacher is willing or able to enact those extra labors.

Sharing *Cuentos* in a Graduate Seminar

My own classes seemed to go well overall, but we were also interested to see how graduate students might take up *Cuentos* a graduate seminar. Rachel and I made one attempt at this in Seminar in Public Rhetorics and Community Engagement: Rhetoric of Health and Medicine. This 800-level graduate seminar is taken mostly by doctoral students in the Public Rhetorics and Community Engagement program and masters students in the Rhetoric and Professional Writing program within the English department at UWM. In the fall 2022, there were also students in programs like Creative Writing and Translation Studies enrolled. Most students had previous knowledges of rhetorical studies, and some were composition teachers at the undergraduate level. The class was held online synchronously once a week via Zoom and was largely discussion based. The themes included a range of health issues such as reproductive rights, community health, and rhetorical methodologies for research. The purpose of including *Cuentos* into this course was to demonstrate a community-engaged project that was relevant to RHM.

There were 8 students in attendance for the discussion of *Cuentos*, plus Rachel, me, and a peer of mine who also does work on reproductive justice. I only presented briefly about my work as we wanted most of the time and spotlight to be on the promotores' stories (view slides here). As Rachel had already prepped the class with information about reproductive justice and confianza, I focused more on sharing about my methods as website designer and manager, and the role I've played in our ethical engagement with the promotores, the project, and various stakeholders. Students engaged via video and the chat function. Below are the questions included in the educational toolkit that also framed the seminar's discussion:

1. What was your experience of reading and listening to the cuentos?

2. What themes, topics, or experiences did you notice across the cuentos?

3. How does confianza factor in the reproductive justice work of the promotores?

4. Share about your experience of navigating a site that is bilingual and favors Spanish as opposed to English. How does this relate to experiences of language and access?

5. What complications can arise when personal stories are shared and circulated online?

6. Review the Confianza and Reproductive Justice pages. What are some tangible ways to care for the stories that others might share with us?

Students had these questions ahead of time to prepare for class and were encouraged to write reflectively in response to the questions, but they were not required to submit anything.

There were a few interesting themes that arose from responses to the questions. Regarding question 5 specifically, students had conversation about privacy and the lack of control people have over things hosted in public digital spaces. We don't really have consent over how the website will be used now that it is out there. Additionally, the changing political landscape might cause people to be unwilling to share stories if a topic is hyper-visible, for example if feelings of animosity regarding reproductive justice grow in public opinion. Other themes included negotiating faith and reproductive justice, fluidity of identity and autonomy along the way to becoming a promotora, and the arcs of some of the cuentos beginning with feelings of shame or intimidation but ending more empowered and hopeful. Rachel also asked a specific follow up question to question 6 that was interesting: *did we care too much?* Those who answered said no, that they didn't feel that way. However, that did lead to comments about our lack of control over what happens to the stories in digital spaces as time goes on. When political moments arise, there is a sort of urgency or push to share these kinds of stories. But once out,

they could be used to exploit the promotores now or in the future. Perhaps, though, the site acts as a "container" to guard the stories from some of that.

Reflecting on this experience and my notes from the conversation, I was a bit shocked. I expected to have lots of questions when I was done with my presentation, even just about doing this kind of work as a graduate student. However, there were no questions. It was oddly painful to keep conversation going. When Rachel and I followed up about this at our next meeting, she said she felt similarly. She reflected on how those further in our program specifically were interested in RHM, but this group didn't seem to be at all. We speculated about if they didn't really see this as a community-engaged project that demonstrated rhetorics of health and medicine, or if they were tired, or shy, or uninterested. It was most likely a combination of these things. Maybe, it was an opportunity to take a break from more "dense" homework. Maybe, the environment mattered: a virtual graduate seminar on a Tuesday night in mid-semester November is much different than an in-person event with family and friends and food in June. Either way, it confirmed some of our hesitancy in sharing this educational toolkit across campus without careful selection. I wonder, *are graduate students an audience for Cuentos?* I think not, unless there is genuine interest and time to situate the project more closely to how I did in my undergraduate courses.

Continued Circulation

As I look to what is next, to *who* might be next as potential audiences for *Cuentos*, I'm met with questions: *Does there always need to be "future research"? Must there be future iterations of a study? Is there always another "who" to consider?* This is something I reflect on as I transition out of being a PhD student into the unknown. I taught *Cuentos* in my sections of E207 in the spring of 2023, but there was not time to dwell on and sit with everything in the

same manner before my deadline to send the dissertation off to the committee. I implemented *Cuentos* in very similar fashion as it yielded positive results in the fall of 2022. So, now what? Does this work only matter for as long as I carry it forward? It mattered, in this season, to the promotores, to their communities, to my students, to some fellow scholars. It doesn't need to be continually incorporated into university class curriculum to be meaningful. If we never taught about it or presented on it again, *Cuentos* would still be alive and well in the community.

The promotores have now gone through training on implementing *Cuentos* into the CCmáS curriculum for their community educational purposes. As I mentioned earlier, I will not be an active part of rolling this out, but I have been a supportive listener and brainstormer along the way as Rachel and I plan for this next chapter of the *Cuentos* story. The experiences that come from sharing *Cuentos* in the fiestas caseras are not for me, but I'm so excited to hear about how this tool supports the reproductive justice work of the promotores de salud in Wisconsin. We've also been working on a resources page to add to the site and keywords that signal which stories might be a good fit for which topics during home health parties. As for the university as an audience for these stories, I've come to find that *Cuentos* isn't for everyone. And that's okay. It's not meant to be. In our care statement, we note that sometimes practicing care and attending to confianza means not sharing a story with others. Still, as teachers we are excited to share about community endeavors, and so, for teachers looking to implement digital storytelling projects about reproductive justice, or about similarly heavy issues, a CR praxis of care can support you and your students in that endeavor.

Chapter 5: A Manifesto of Care for Reproductive Justice

It matters what matters we use to think other matters with; it matters what stories we tell to tell other stories with; it matters what knots knot knots, what thoughts think thoughts, what descriptions describe descriptions, what ties tie ties. It matters what stories make worlds, what worlds make stories.

- Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*

In her book, *Staying with the Trouble*, multispecies feminist theorist Donna Haraway challenges readers to imagine a world in which we commit to both living and dying with our more-than-human world, where we make new worlds out of the stories we tell and live out. She incorporates science fiction, feminism, and speculative thinking into her unique call for us to recognize our need for each other and to participate in building a more sustainable world. While it is a hopeful call, it is hard to look beyond our day-to-day to imagine what future worlds might be possible. We are living in a world where politicians are fighting to block the dispersal of information about abortion services by state employees in Wisconsin (Spears) just days after *yet another* school shooting resulted in the deaths of teachers and children in Nashville, TN (Cochrane et al.). We have seen evidence of women and children being forced to live in cages because of trying to seek asylum in America (Giaritelli). Black women continue to have the highest rates of maternal death across the nation and in Wisconsin. Trans people are at an increased risk as many states are moving to impose bills that threaten their lives, restrict gender affirming care or ban it altogether, and censor how gendered topics are talked about in schools (Human Rights Campaign). In our hyper-digital world, misinformation floods the feeds of our social media apps and news sources, sowing hate and division. People spread stories like wildfire for political agendas, often with no concern for the personal, lived experiences being thrust into

the limelight to be made an example of. Making a new world through stories seems like a disillusioned dream.

How, then, can we manifest a care that really matters in a world in which the few in power are working so hard against the survival of so many others? What's the point of individuals learning a radical way to care if we can't ever really seem to make lasting systemic changes? Why does it matter what we mean when we say we care? Why does any of this matter? If you're waiting for me to put forth a CR praxis of care as *the answer* to these questions or as *the way* to act in response to these injustices, you're gonna be waiting here for a while.

In this chapter, I pivot to some real-world implications of a CR praxis of care. Or to be more accurate, I offer you my speculative thinking about what such care could look like on a larger scale than what I was able to accomplish in this short time. What would it look like to manifest a widespread CR praxis of care as one way, among others, to more radically care for humans, non-humans, and the world around us? How can we strive to make this manifest? A manifesto is a "a public declaration of intentions" which comes from the Latin root meaning "to make public" (Advanced English Dictionary). A manifesto is a proclamation of motives or views of a writer or a speaker, whether one person or a group of people. It can also be viewed as a mission statement or a statement of belief. Further, *to manifest* is to make something appear or to reveal something. In this way, the revealing work of a manifesto makes apparent new concepts while at the same time disrupts or disorders others (Ahmed 2017, 252). In this chapter, I reflect on my failed attempt at a partnership with another community organization, speculate on what these practices of care would look like for academic and community members, and critically analyze some of the complications of care to manifest a CR praxis of care. By manifesting care as action in the ways described throughout this dissertation, feminist researchers and rhetoricians

can ethically and responsibly collaborate and even co-conspire with community activists in the movement for reproductive justice. The impacts of reproductive [in]justice touch all of us as people with bodies living in relation to other bodies – whether we want to have kids, or don't; whether we already have kids, or aren't able to; whether we are straight or queer; whatever our political standings and multiple identities are and whether we feel the impacts greatly or not (yet). This is a manifesto to move you, not just as scholars but as human beings in relation to others, to act on your declarations of care for reproductive justice.

Manifesting Care through Failure: Lola's Story

Manifesting care necessarily comes with failure. One person cannot care *enough* for everything and everyone all the time. In this way, failure is always already part of care. So, what does it look like to manifest care through failure? To demonstrate this, I'd like to share one of my own stories of failure as I worked toward what this dissertation would be. Around the time I was getting involved in the *Cuentos* project, I also spent time working with Lola's New Beginnings, a community organization that supports pregnant women and new mothers across Milwaukee County. I got connected with them through the relationship I built with Gaby, one of the *Cuentos* writers. As a bilingual health promoter and a prenatal and childcare coordinator (PNC/CCC) at Lola's, Gaby was interested in collaborating with me further based on our shared interests in caring for mothers and in reproductive justice, and because both of us were young, working mothers. We also realized through conversation that care and story were central to the work of the promotores, the PNC/CCCs, and to each of us personally. She suggested setting up a meeting with the digital media manager as we were curious about a potential partnership that could be beneficial for all parties.

Founded in 2020, Lola's is an emerging nonprofit organization located in south Milwaukee. Lola's provides services to pregnant women and mothers who qualify for Medicaid and BadgerCare Plus and they also help women to apply for BadgerCare. They currently support close to 450 women with around 60 PNC/CCCs. Many of these women are racially marginalized: some are refugees from countries such as Burma and Afghanistan and many speak a language other than English such as Spanish, Burmese, Hmong, and more. Women also come to Lola's with addiction issues, abusive partners, and other physical and emotional wellness concerns. The PNC/CCCs support each woman uniquely and strive to help them succeed as mothers. They are trained to visit women in their own homes and care for a variety of needs, including mental health and drug issues. There are PNC/CCCs who speak many of the languages present in Milwaukee County, but especially Spanish, Burmese, Hmong, and English. Lola's is unique in that it provides a wide range of support for the whole family, including classes for parents, clothing and furniture donations, new car seats and diapers, and an impressive number of community events throughout the year.

A Latina grandmother, mother, and daughter together created the vision for and reality of Lola's. The organization was inspired by the owner's mother, Lola, who always advocated for her community's needs. Currently, Lola's represents four generations of Latina activists supporting the needs of their community, especially the needs of women and children. They believe that empowering women strengthens the whole community as well as future generations. When I walked into Lola's for the first time, I *felt* this. I couldn't help but notice the small details incorporated to make the space feel more like home. There is a shared kitchen space for employees and clients, inviting couches and sitting areas, and roses painted on the tables,

Figure 46. The logo for Lola's New Beginnings, 2023.

cabinets, and walls. Lola, the mother of the founder and the inspiration for the organization, loved roses. The goal is to make anyone who walks in also feel like family. As I got to know some of the employees at Lola's New Beginnings, I noted how they centered relationships in their work. In researching different nonprofits who do this type of work, I've found that this is a unique feature of Lola's. They are not just providing a pathway to BadgerCare and other benefits, though those things matter. They take time to build relationships and help women with things like filling out applications for insurance, jobs, WIC, and housing, and things like finding mental and emotional health resources. They support mothers fully, no matter where they are in life, to be the best they can be.

Like my work with *Cuentos*, I wanted to build relationships first and see if a partnership would arise out of it. After a few scheduled conversations with the digital media manager, we agreed that I could support their work with my writing skills as they didn't have their founding story written down. I could also offer my digital design skills by aiding in updating the organization, structure, and design of their website which the digital media manager wanted to do but didn't have the time or the experience to do. Through their site, they hope to reach mothers who are eligible for their program, but also expand their reach to other stakeholders in the surrounding neighborhoods and to people or organizations who may not know how they can support Lola's through donations and partnerships. For my dissertation, I identified and wanted to learn more about the ways the organization centers story and relationality as practices of care

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while offering essential information, education, services, and resources for new or soon-to-be mothers and their families.

In the spring of 2022, I had planned to partner with both the promotores and with Lola's. But I began to see that Lola's was extremely busy doing this important community work. I wondered how much they would benefit from my dissertation writing. I wanted to help without thinking about getting something out of it for my dissertation in return. During the spring and summer, I offered my skills in a few ways. First, I was able to offer my knowledge and abilities with Wix to talk through strategies to optimize their current website. We did consider moving it to Wix from its original host site, but after I did some research, I realized it would cost a lot and would not be beneficial in some ways for them. Plus, the site would be down for an unknown length of time, and we worried about doing that. I reviewed the site and passed along my notes on suggested updates based on their audience and purpose. For example, something we discussed was how the site was built for mobile users which is great, but it did not translate well to desktop versions. Additionally, because of heavy template use, there were limits to what could be altered or added later, including text size, color, font, and image placement. I walked them through some strategies to work around that. Lastly, I offered my writing skills to document the unique story of Lola's for them to use on their site or other purposes. After multiple meetings, I crafted an email letter with questions to send to whichever employees they wanted to share versions of the story of Lola's. Then, I pieced together a collaborative narrative of how Lola's came to be and who they are as an organization. We had the owner review this and I was at the point of integrating that feedback into revisions when our interactions were interrupted.

After we had not been able to connect for a bit due to busy schedules and sicknesses on both ends, the digital media manager reached out in the fall of 2022 ready to continue our

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partnership. When they asked if I could meet to get things back on track, I had to say that I could not at that time. I was barely able to juggle the multiple roles I was in – teacher, dissertator, tutor, project assistant/manager, mother, wife – or the three publications I was co-writing, the campus organization I was co-chairing, or the reproductive justice collaboratory I was a member of (not to mention some heavy things going on in my personal/family life). There was just too much. I tried to keep this relationship open through email communication, and I believe that it still is. But I felt like I failed them.

It has been a practice of care to fail in this way – for Lola's, for myself, and for *Cuentos*. I could no longer do my best work for them on a volunteer basis while juggling multiple jobs and other responsibilities, and it wasn't fitting into my dissertation in the way I had hoped it would unless I pushed for a more aggressive timeline than Lola's was comfortable with. For instance, we had conversations about the labors of care enacting by care coordinators and how story and relationships come into play with the reproductive justice work that they do. I was curious to see the testimonials that the care coordinators receive after working with mothers, and I had been invited to go along to a home visit if the client was open to it in the future. However, there were too many boundaries to cross to get to that point of trust and my timeline didn't allow for that. They were also extremely busy with their many community initiatives and were not looking for extra projects to satisfy a graduate student's deadlines (understandably). As I considered all these things through a lens of care, I knew the right decision was for me to step away from the partnership, for the time being at least. This was difficult, and it still feels like a failure, but I couldn't put the same care and effort into both *Cuentos* and Lola's, and I was already more established with *Cuentos*. This failure allowed me to manifest care for *Cuentos* and quite literally made more time appear for me, leading to the completion of the site and the ability to creatively

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engage with community and academic circulation. Because we left our lines of relationality

intact, perhaps sometime in the future I will be able to come back around to working with Lola's

again when I can put more time, energy, and care into it.

Speculations: Manifesting Care as Action

We manifest care through our actions. A CR praxis of care has profound implications for

graduate students, faculty advisors, researchers and community collaborators, and teachers and

their students. By speculating on what it might look like to practice care in these relations, we

can also imagine how reproductive justice work in our current moment can be impacted on a

broader scale by these actions. Especially for those engaging in various versions of digital

storytelling projects that intersect with reproductive justice issues, manifesting care for the

stories and storytellers is vital. These speculations invite feminist rhetoricians to manifest care

wherever they find themselves: as graduate students, as advisors to graduate students, as

researchers with community collaborators, and/or as teachers to undergraduate students.

For Fellow Graduate Students (whose work doesn't quite *fit*)

As graduate students, we feel pressured to fit in or prove we deserve to be in our

programs and, in the process, we ignore caring for ourselves or centering care in our work. We

may want to add to research in our fields, fill a gap in theories, or expand pedagogical practices.

But we should not take our research skills for granted. We should not take ourselves for granted.

We can use our skills to better understand our own interests, how to name them, and how to find

potential projects and partners (in local communities, if we so choose) to ethically collaborate

with. I had to recognize for myself that I was doing meaningful work even if it didn't quite fit

into a neatly labeled category. My work has included various forms of research, public and

academic writing and other deliverables, pedagogical development and practice, community

engagement, and lots of rhetorical dexterity, critical thinking, and reflection. We can try new

avenues of research, writing, and engagement to find the best fit for doing meaningful work. I

hope this dissertation-research-creation forges a

new line of possibility for PhD students who come

after me, if you're okay with not quite fitting in.

But none of this matters if we don't take care of our

mental, emotional, and physical selves. Caring for

yourself along the way feels the most obvious and

the most overlooked action I could put forth for

graduate students. If you don't act with care toward

Figure 47. Sticker from Marquette University Writing Symposium, February 2023.

your own self, how can you ethically engage with

and care for others? Thinking back to Chapter 2, what are the items you'd put in your own

toolkit for caring for yourself along the way? How can your work, research, and writing align

with the matters you care about?

When graduate students manifest a CR praxis of care, we can recognize that certain

seemingly small actions carry meaning and potential. First, an action we can take is slowing

down. *I know, it's hard!* We are pushed to follow this aggressive, linear path and there is never

enough time. We are always looking to add *one more* C.V. line that might help on the job

market. But when we resist the urge to move so quickly through everything, we free up our time

and space for genuinely good relationships, collaborations, and projects. Second, we can show

up. There is value in being present, physically and mentally, and seeing what comes of it,

whether it is at a class, a conference, a volunteer opportunity, or a community event. If you are

engaging in community collaboration, showing up is also an important part of building trust. Third, we can use rhetoric as a reflexive lens for ethical engagement. We ask things like: *What are my own intentions? What are the needs and desires of the community I'm engaging with? Who are the multiple stakeholders involved, and what message or deliverable most benefits the community?* Putting your own skills to work on yourself clarifies how your institutional position fits, or doesn't, with your community-driven responsibilities. Fourth, we can build relationships. Schedule meetups. Talk over coffee or tea. Go to local events. Find value in making connections, whether or not they lead to a published paper, a research project, or a job opportunity. When building relationships became the foundation of my role as a graduate student, teacher, and researcher, I was able to sow the seeds for potential future collaborations without knowing what those collaborations would look like or who those collaborators would be. I didn't know when I initially emailed Rachel that I'd be where I am now, and I'm forever grateful I sent that email.♥

For Faculty Advisors of Graduate Students

Faculty members such as advisors, program chairs, and mentors who put these care practices into action can positively impact the students they work with, specifically graduate students. Those of you in such positions can apply a CR praxis of care for graduate students and for your programs which can result in positive culture shifts. First, building deeper relationships with graduate students sows seeds of future growth for your current and prospective students. You may not be able to do this with every student in your program, but with multiple faculty members taking time to deepen relations, many more graduate students can feel cared for. Fostering relations in which you practice accountability and reciprocity to your graduate students will not only support them but will also model caring actions for them to embody as they move

on to their careers after graduate school. Whether that may be in academia or industry, you will be passing on more ethical methods of engagement, research, and writing. You will also have made genuine connections with those who may become future colleagues, co-workers, or community partners. Second, while it is nearly impossible to decolonize the university at large, faculty advisors can make moves to support and guide graduate students who seek to do things differently. Embracing the actions of constellation and decolonial practices as ways to care for graduate students expands the support that faculty members can offer graduate students who want to explore interdisciplinary studies or non-traditional research methods. This can also encourage those who haven't thought about it to consider how new or alternative projects can support initiatives they may already be passionate about such as antiracist pedagogies or social justice in technical writing. For example, in seminars, faculty members model what matters to their graduate students through the materials, methods, and assignments they value. Shifting value to caring for graduate students requires building in time for thinking through and experimenting with new method/ologies[16].

Can you speculate what this would do? I can. Because over the last 2+ years, Rachel has adapted how she advises, mentors, and works with me in what I could only describe as a CR praxis of care. An entryway to community-engaged work, or perhaps an exit-way from traditional rhetorical studies (I'm not sure which, yet), was that internship opportunity I did. Placing graduate students in connection with entities outside the university and giving them experience with more public forms of research and writing while still in coursework is a great opportunity for them. It still counts as a course, so it wouldn't take up extra voluntary time that

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[16] For an example, see the digital archive I created in Dr. Maria Novotny's cultural rhetorics class, spring 2020 (URL: https://koepke13.wixsite.com/pandemicarchive). This paved the way for me to try web design with *Cuentos*. Thank you, Maria!

many graduate students don't have due to one or more jobs in addition to their studies. At the same time, they can build valuable non-academic skills and relationships. As our relationship grew, Rachel also agreed with meeting off campus. Meeting over coffee and scones, we were able to work together in a different way than meeting in her office or at the campus library. The space offered an atmosphere where we might chat about our families, our pasts, and our current situations in a more leveled

Figure 48. Black and white image of Rachel's and my table at Stone Creek, November 2022.

relationship than advisor and advisee. We developed trust as we shared stories with each other, which also deepened our relationship. During the community writing class, she welcomed the constellation of concepts from queer, feminist, and reproductive justice pedagogies and has sought to deconstruct many of the hierarchal practices that constrain community-engaged research, teaching, and advising. She has also continued to find ways to support my work as a graduate student through funding opportunities. And on a more personal level, she has honored and validated my own stories. Over time I have learned that I can trust her with pieces of my story that I don't share with many others. Faculty advisors only have so much time (*not enough time!*), so prioritizing care for graduate students may mean a reorientation to time management. A small-scale change could be faculty members prioritizing time to get coffee or tea with 1-2 graduate students instead of standard office hours. But a large-scale change could be faculty

members inviting students to join them in showing up for community projects or finding other ways to foster a CR praxis of care together.

For Community Collaborators and Researchers

Imagine if community collaborators and researchers at large adopted a CR praxis of care, or similar tactics under different names. There would be more collaborative projects that started from community needs and intentions and blossomed into community-owned deliverables or tools to use for their purposes and/or enjoy for their pleasure. Researchers would spend time building relationships in their local areas to see what potential partnerships might arise based on the skills and resources they could offer to support community endeavors. As Estrella Torrez advises, "The authentic engagement needed for community-engagement takes time to develop, needs room for critical reflection, and the space for patience and revision." (Torrez 152). Slower movement by researchers can grow trust and a more ethical foundation. Additionally, when researchers place value on and effort into the greater goal, which is often "collaboration to address social inequities," they practice reciprocity (Torrez 151). Community experiences would be uplifted, and communities would be cared for in practical ways that legitimately help them. Especially regarding communities centering Black, Indigenous, People of Color, and LGBTQ+ folks, academic collaborators would work to decenter themselves, or, if they are a part of the community, they would help to uplift their community's stories. Some stories might be shared but many other stories wouldn't be shared unless the community decided that audiences were deserving. This might lead to fewer stories circulating online because more people would be cognizant of the teller behind the story. And that would be okay.

In manifesting care, researchers would act on principles of refusal. We would trust that the stories and relationships of the community were more meaningful within their own context than within an extracted, academic one. We would reject the constraints of academic timelines such as graduations, dissertations, tenure tracks, etc. that hinder or decenter the real purpose of the work. Relationships would form and would last long term as collaborators continued on for as long as made sense, outside of the bounds of a research study or an article publication. Both community members and researchers would feel as equals – in knowledges, expertise, skills, and experience. Any research done or data collected would be given to the community for their benefit. And, just as importantly, sometimes we would just refuse to do projects. Some research, writing, and work would never happen because it could not be done in a way that honors the community, or simply because the community did not want or need it to be done, or because we as researchers couldn't do it with care due to our own constraints. Refusal can be hard, but it would build new paths of interactions and expectations for community-engaged researchers from a foundation of deep care for the stories, storytellers, and relationships.

For Teachers and Their Students

To my fellow teachers, imagine how the world itself might change if we sent more people into their communities equipped not with argument or persuasion, but with care. Since the beginning of Covid-19, not only have LMS like Canvas and Blackboard been exposed for their lack of accessibility, but some teachers have also been exposed for their lack of care for students. Unfortunately, as the university strives to move back in time to a "normal" classroom experience that doesn't exist anymore (nor did it ever really exist), there has also been a move back to harsh attendance policies, overloaded schedules, and confusing grading systems. Some teachers might

not have made changes to their course materials or policies except what the university specifically required during the height of Covid-19. As a writing center tutor, I have encountered rubrics, instructions, and assignments given to students that haven't been updated for up to 10 years. No one is perfect and I'm not looking for some kind of idealistic utopic classroom. But equitable teaching is a matter of care we must manifest through our actions. We already show students what matters by showing them what matters to us. We teach them what matters when we don't trust the reason they weren't in class, or when we won't accept their late work. What if we taught them that they mattered? That they *already have* experiential knowledges, writing practices, and research strategies? What if we showed them that what matters just as much as memorizing Aristotle's principles of rhetoric is creating a community of care to collaboratively learn within?

I began to manifest the results of using a CR praxis of care as a framework for teaching in the digital classroom as I shared with you in Chapter 4. But it took time to develop what I thought might work for my classes. I spent at least two prior semesters experimenting with this praxis before I named it something. Even now, there are weakness I know I could strengthen. But there is also strength in my weakness. By centering practices of care for my students and in my teaching pedagogy, I keep the most important priority – an active, responsive care for students as dynamic, uniquely complex human beings – at the forefront and everything else falls into place around that.

As you try, fail, and reassess – remember to care for yourselves, too! As we use alternative spaces such as Discord for this kind of teaching praxis, we as instructors must be mindful of boundaries to care for and protect ourselves. While Discord offers many opportunities for students, I have learned to be careful about how I interact with students on the server and

how much time I put into creative design pursuits. I am grateful to have had great experiences 99% of the time. Still, some students don't love using another digital platform for school and some refuse to engage with it. This happens in other class modalities, too. However, I had one very bad experience in which a student tried to severely take advantage of my care and kindness. They tried to argue that they turned things in on Discord instead of on Canvas though there was nothing to show that they did. They complained that everything was too confusing, that it wasn't easy to understand, that I made the class difficult by using Discord. They directly messaged me at late hours aggressively demanding me to give them the grade they deserved, which they thought was an A. Unfortunately, they refused to follow the requirements for the course as laid out in the syllabus and ignored my attempts to create new deadlines and extensions. The student tried to turn in fake assignments and insisted they were correct. Based on their final grade, their last-ditch attempt to harass me was to write a threatening email that I have since reported.

As instructors, we are often expected to perform intense labors of care for our students Or, maybe we expect it of ourselves. I know I do. We need to care for ourselves, too. Whether you use Discord or not in your digital classroom spaces, you can set up clear expectations or course requirements in your syllabus that you can point back to if need be. Make clear boundaries to your students and hold yourself accountable to them. For instance, I have set times they can video chat with me on our Discord server, or they can also set a meeting time with me. I ask them not to send any grade-related questions via Discord and tell them that I do not respond to messages between 9:00pm and 9:00am. I will also give them reminders that Canvas is where I grade things, though we use Discord as a community learning space. You are also a member of the class community space, so make sure you are also being cared for.

Up until this point, I've been specifically discussing academic settings and community-engagement, but we are more than teachers, students, advisors, and researchers. It can benefit us greatly to remember that. In the next section, I shift a bit to look more broadly at manifesting care for reproductive justice work that may or may not be related to the academy. In our current moment, it is hard to imagine that more caring ways might be possible. It may be easy to write these things about care, but to do them is much more difficult. To manifest these practices of care is *work*. But imagine the transformation of the reproductive justice movement through increased practices of care at these and other levels if scholars interested in supporting and advancing issues of reproductive justice take up these calls to action.

Fractures of Care

In manifesting care for stories of reproductive justice and the lived experiences those stories represent, we must also make manifest the fractures in these fragile webs of care. Here, I attend to some potential weaknesses of care that we should be aware of as we strive to manifest a CR praxis of care in the world. However, we should not be afraid of these fractures. Rather, in bringing them to light, we can embrace the fragile brokenness and strategize how to act accordingly.

First, care is not static. It is a doing, a feeling, and an ethic. As I demonstrated in Chapter 2, there are many definitions, theories, and actions of care. Putting together a CR praxis of care is not to say *This is The Way*. Even this praxis necessitates adaptability. Movement. Flexibility. Change. As an example, technological advances change how teachers might care for students in-person vs. online synchronous vs. online asynchronous classes, and over time that will continue to shift and change, necessitating a non-static care.

Second, care is not always reciprocal. Someone might say they care – about their family, about their friends – but what about the webs of care that sustain them, their family, and their friends that they don't notice on a daily basis? How do we even begin to try to reciprocate care for the land, water, air, and plants that make our lives possible? Robin Kimmerer writes about the impact of uncaring humans on the world in her book on Indigenous wisdoms, *Braiding Sweetgrass*:

> For the greater part of human history, and in places in the world today, common resources were the rule. But some invented a different story, a social construct in which everything is a commodity to be bought and sold. The market economy story has spread like wildfire, with uneven results for human well-being and devastation for the natural world. But it is just a story we have told ourselves and we are free to tell another. (31)

As Kimmerer teaches, sharing resources, an act of reciprocity, used to be common practice. We can make moves back to those reciprocal actions. We shouldn't look for something to be given to us in return for an action of care we've done. We won't save the world by planting one tree or lowering our individual plastic consumption. But Kimmerer suggests that the more we share the gift of reciprocity, the more its value increases. If we continue to pass around the gift of care, not expecting it in return, the value of care grows and will be gifted back to us eventually.

Third, care is not objective. To reclaim care from shallow connotations means "to keep it grounded in practical engagements with situated material conditions that often expose tensions" (Puig de la Bellacasa 11). Care is subjective and it is essential to realize that. For instance, saying everyone objectively cares about the wellbeing of children is not necessarily true. Yes, people care about children, but not all people care about the lives of all children in the same way. Most likely, they care about children that they know personally. There are also negative connotations to care that make it non-objective. A family member who uses care to

control a disabled person might hinder their autonomy in attempts to care for them because it is easier for them as "caretaker." We must critically think about when practices of care might cross over into control, and who gets to decide when that line is crossed.

Fourth, care is not apolitical. Who and what you care about says something about your politics and ethics. If someone cares for the rights of unborn fetuses more than for the rights of living children being shot to death in their schools, that says something about their care politics. If someone cares for equality in general, but doesn't think racism, sexism, and homophobia still exist today, that says something about their care politics. When you choose to care about an issue, you choose to be political. If I had hope for one thing from this five-chapter, 200-page story to stick with you, readers, especially those of you who know me IRL, I would hope for you to know and accept this: the personal is political and the political is personal. We cannot, and we should not pretend to, separate policies and laws into tightly packaged boxes that don't impact physical bodies and real lives. That is a nice story people tell themselves to avoid another story: that laws and policies only protect and offer freedom to a small group of privileged people in this country. But we can tell different stories.

Fifth, care is not an easy way out. Care is messy, tricky, and hard. Actionable, responsive care is not the easy answer. Sure, you could say, *I care about reproductive justice*, and call it a day. That's easy. You might even share an activist post on your social media accounts. This is the same practice of care many opted for during the protests in the summer of 2020 amid countless deaths by police violence of Black people including George Floyd and

Figure 49. Black square on Instagram during the protests of Summer 2020.

Breonna Taylor. Sharing a black square on your Instagram is an action, after all. But is it coming from an orientation to care that vividly honors story and relationships? One that seeks constellation and decolonial actions? #Activism is not enough. If it's easy, then it was just that. Easy. It doesn't mean care has to be terrible, painful, and draining. But sometimes it is. Care is work – muddy, messy, sticky, sweaty, time-consuming, tiring. *Work.*

Shining a light on these fractures of care is not meant to scare you away. Just the opposite. It is meant to draw you in to something genuine and real. I for one could use something real right now, no matter how messy. Sometimes, I don't want to care anymore because it physically and emotionally hurts. It is a choice to care. Care is fraught with complexities. But so is the world. So are people and our relations to our more-than-human counterparts. What if we tap into those complexities instead of tapping out? What if we embrace the complexities, the weaknesses, the mess? Maybe, we can build something beautiful from the mess.

Manifesting Care for Reproductive Justice: A World-Building Project

In closing, I find myself reflecting on paths traveled and on paths forward. When I began the PhD, I didn't think I'd write a dissertation about reproductive justice, nor did I think I'd push the boundaries of traditional research or writing. But my own reproductive chronicle has been tightly wound with my experiences of higher education as a scholar, researcher, and writer. Like cultural rhetorician Ruth Osario, "My mothering and scholarly stories are forever linked" (n.p.). For as long as I've been in higher education, I've been a mother. Over the course of my undergraduate, MA, and PhD programs, I've been a teenage mother, a single mother, a pregnant mother with a child, a mother using state financial assistance, a working mother, a mother who was an active-duty military spouse, and a first-generation-college-student mother. I tried to separate my identities as a mother from my identity as a scholar, but I have realized I cannot tell

one story without telling the other. My identities as a mother have led me to experience how laborious it is to care – for my children, for my partner, for my students, for my research, for my writing, for local communities, for my friends and family, and for the world. This also led me to connect with and care for the promotoras working on *Cuentos*. While I cannot pretend to have lived identical experiences as the promotoras, these commonalities of being women, mothers, and advocates for reproductive justice foster lines of relationality between each of our unique life experiences. As we look ahead to what's next for all of us, I will continue to strive to use my personal and academic privileges to support and uplift reproductive justice work happening in local communities and will continue to seek for paths toward justice.

Paths Forward

As of May 2023, the promotores de salud are beginning to implement *Cuentos* into their fiestas caseras programming. As they prepared for this together, they have been able to see how their own stories have the power to open up conversations about sensitive topics such as domestic violence, pregnancy loss, suicide, and sexual assault. They are navigating not only how to support community members who may want to share their similar experiences with them but also how to respond to community members who may not be fully on board with openly discussing these topics. At the beginning of May 2023, we published "Recursos"/ "Resources" pages on the website, too, which is a compilation of Spanish and English hotlines and other resources for people with general or mental health concerns. These were vetted by one of our undergraduate translators to make sure each resources catered to Spanish-speaking populations. I can't wait to see how the promotores use these six cuentos and the supplemental materials on *Cuentos* to educate and serve their local Latinx communities.

As my graduation draws near, Rachel and I continue to negotiate our partnership. For now, I plan to continue managing the website as we get more feedback from the fiestas caseras, and we will potentially have more writers to work with in the coming months. Both of our undergraduate translators are moving on to exciting new chapters as well. This partnership might not last forever, but I will whole-heartedly take everything I've learned from this experience into future work I do with digital storytelling and reproductive justice efforts.

As the circulation of *Cuentos* continues to expand, I have come to greatly appreciate how careful we've been with sharing the website with people. Anyone could come across it or search for it on Google. But our intentionality – to start with the writers themselves, then their local community, then their expanded communities and our smaller academic circles – is special. I noticed this vividly in April of 2023, when we finally hosted an exhibit of *Cuentos* at UWM. This long-talked-about event was held in the library's digital humanities lab and was open to

Figure 50. The butterfly I colored during the exhibit. Participants were encouraged to color, draw, and/or write a note to one of the writers as they listened to their stories, April 2023.

anyone. For four days, Rachel and I set up iPads, framing instructions, and a creative response activity at round tables. While there was not an overwhelming number of visitors, each person who came was someone that Rachel and/or I had built a relationship with. One or both of us sat down and talked with every single person who engaged with *Cuentos*. We were able to share the background of the promotoras, the care statement, and the story of how *Cuentos* came to be, so that they were orientated to the project with a lens of care. This clarified for us that *Cuentos* is

not for large, general academic audiences. Not everyone is a target audience for the stories of the promotoras, and we are okay with that.

Forging New Paths: Manifesting a World of Care

The unique experience of *Cuento*s, not the literal website, but the lived and shared experience of *Cuentos* – the story of it – is why I spend my time writing about care practices. It is why I try to articulate a concept as tangled, mucky, and hard to pin down as *care*. Working on this project has given me a glimmer of hope that people could care more deeply about other humans and non-humans in this world. Because maybe, a CR praxis of care can expand people's ideas of what it means to care for reproductive justice and related or intersecting issues. I don't write this for academic praise or to expand the field of rhetoric. I write this because people's lives are at risk due to reproductive injustices in our current moment and we as feminist rhetoricians have skills that can support community efforts in impactful ways. I write this for some of my fellow human beings who refuse to believe that the personal is political. Who don't think Trans people, and especially Trans youth, deserve a chance at life, autonomy, and care. Who don't think racism is still alive and rampant. Who think feminism has already done its job.

What if more human beings cared in radical fashion, not just for their own values, ideals, and loved ones, but for the values, ideals, and loved ones of people who were different than them? What if we cared more for our non-human relations? What if we saw constellation as a strategy to unite people to care across topics that might not matter to them personally but matter to others greatly? What if through sharing stories and building relations with care in mind, we grew to be more empathetic? What if we banded together in decolonial practices that truly gave reparations owed to Indigenous peoples and sought out more equitable, sustainable ways of

living in this world, of which humans are only a small part? What if we realized that our doings, feelings, and ethics of care are interwoven, that we can't just separate one small web of care from the others it is stuck to? Why wouldn't we want a radical care that bonded people together instead of divided them, that genuinely included people instead of excluded them under the illusion of acceptance, that built bridges across differences and saw each other's lived experiences as valuable, unique and valid? I believe if we live out these things, the result would be something great – it would build a new world. This is the wild kind of care that I hope for. One that is in the weeds, covered in dirt and grime. One that changes, shifts, morphs, and transforms. One that is deeply rooted in justice and in the recognition that we are only a very small, short chapter in the story of the earth.

Speaking of stories, there is a world-building story that has stuck with me since reading it for a dystopian literature course during my MA program here at UWM. Lidia Yukavitch's *The Book of Joan* is set in a dismal future – a small group of rich and powerful people have left the earth but stay tethered to it as a resource to keep them alive in space while those left behind struggle to survive a war-torn, ravaged world. The protagonist, Joan, is a girl with a special power, a force that connects her with the earth itself. To crush any thoughts of her leading a rebellion, she is left on earth and painted as a martyr who died for humanity's survival. From space, stories are written about her bravery; songs are sung about her heroism. With little to do but mark time until they die, those in space have turned to inscribing stories from earth into their skin like tattoos. At the end of the book, Joan sacrifices herself and her power – an act of care – to sustain others and to jump start the rebirth of the natural world. What readers are left with is a story of hope for a new world. The excerpt below comes from a character in space, Christine,

who has been tattooing the story of Joan onto her body as she prepares an uprising against their power-hungry leader. Christine reflects on the following as she grafts Joan's story into her skin:

> The way I see it, I have one answer left in my body: my body itself. Two things have always ruptured up and through hegemony: art and bodies. That is how art has preserved its toehold in our universe. Where there was poverty, there was also a painting someone stared at until it filled them with grateful tears. Where there was genocide, there was a song that refused to quiet. Where a planet was forsaken, there was someone telling a story with their last breath, and someone else carrying it like DNA, or star junk. Hidden matter. (96)
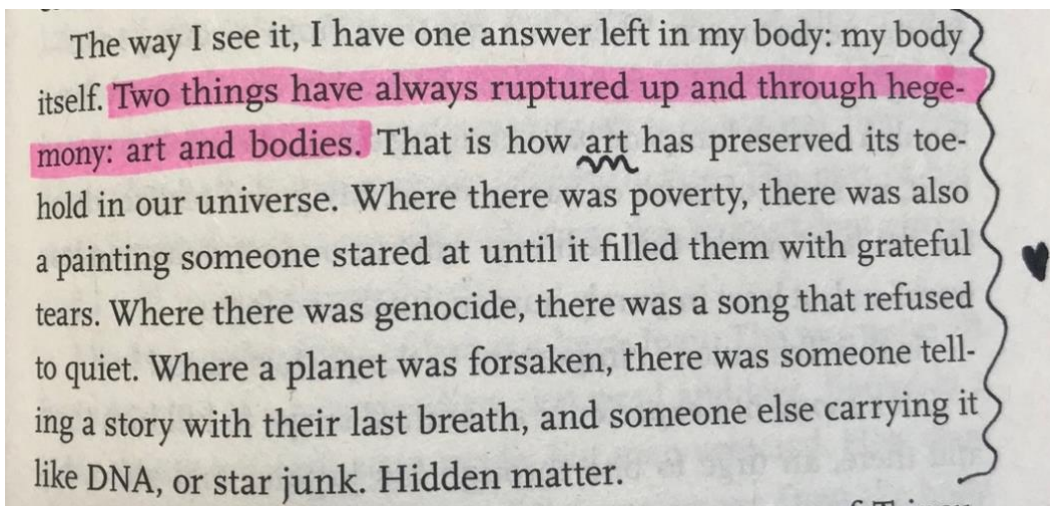
Figure 51. Excerpt from The Book of Joan, marked up by me, March 2019.

Art. Stories. Bodies.

For Christine, for Joan, and for us – when it is nearly impossible to find hope for a more just, more equitable, more sustainable future, we look to art, to stories, and to our physical bodies and the memories grafted into them like scars. Our scars tell stories, too, of who we were, of what happened to us, of what we hope will be better. They are reminders of what and who to avoid when building a new world, directions for paths ahead. They are lived theories. They are stories.

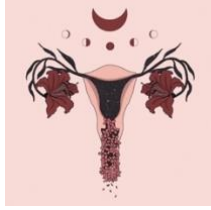You may be tempted to say, *okay Danielle, but that is fiction*. What is fiction, if not a story that tells us something about the world – how it was, how it is, how it might be? Look to our own current moment and you will see almost a mirror image of this excerpt can be written. Where there is misogynistic hate, there are also coalitions of women and Trans people building communities of healing. Where there is heteropatriarchal power and control, there are also alliances of grassroots activists creating pockets of mutual care and aid. Where whole groups of people have been excluded from basic human rights due to their racial, ethnic, sexual, gendered, religious, and/or disabled identity, those same people are passing along stories of survivance, joy, and hope. Over the past 6 years of my MA and PhD studies, I have come to honor stories for their sacred knowledges – told through narrative, prose, or poetry; represented through sketch, paint, or crafting; sung about with music; theorized through research, close-readings, and textual analyses. We can build new worlds through stories.

And this, my friends, is where feminist rhetoricians come back into the story. Whether or not you've been trained as a cultural rhetorician specifically, rhetoricians recognize the power of the written or oral word, along with myriad other symbolic expressions, to *do something* in this world – to inform, to bring awareness to, to persuade, to test knowledge, and to build community. Feminist rhetoricians are experts at critically analyzing the complexities of the context and are trained to pay special attention to the complicated realities of shifting power dynamics and of appealing to audiences across methods, genres, and modalities. These and other

skills, such as extensive research and writing abilities, make them – *make us* – prime candidates to care for stories of reproductive justice. Adding a CR orientation only intensifies these developed senses and skills and directs them towards action. In this way, feminist rhetoricians who practice a CR praxis of care are uniquely positioned to support and take part in the reproductive justice movement, especially regarding the myriad rhetorics of reproductive justice being created and circulated in news articles, community protest art, blog posts, Instagram stories, TikTok videos, posters and chants for activist marches, tweets, etc.

The stories we tell and retell have the power to build worlds. The promotores model this world-building potential. Their care work is flexible, changeable, and oftentimes vulnerable – always based on their community's needs regarding reproductive and sexual health and wellness. They are building the world they hope to inhabit, one in which Latinx communities in Wisconsin are centered and genuinely cared for. Some might call it utopic to imagine a better world, to hope for it. It is quite the pipe dream. But queer theorist Jose Muñoz calls utopia "an insistence on something else, something better, something dawning" (189). This version of utopia seems like it might just be reachable. Insisting on a better way, an always-not-quite-here-yet. Queerness itself is a future ideal, a map not only for a way of being but "a doing for and toward the future" that is centered on the experiences of the multiply marginalized (Muñoz 1). His vision of utopia is realized by dismantling heteronormative ways of being in the world. As we saw earlier, Ahmed believes world-building necessitates structures that are flexible, fluid, vulnerable, movable. And Cooper reminds us that rage is a tool not only for smashing the patriarchy but also for *building* because it helps us see "what kind of world we want to see, not just what kind of things we want to get rid of" (275). Like the stories of the promotoras, my story doesn't have a simple arc. Feelings of hope, rage, care, and anger jumble together in my experiences with reproductive

justice. But rage can be a world-building tool alongside care if we use it properly. *What kind of world do you want to build?*

I want to build a world where every person has the human rights to have children, to not have children, to parent children in safe and healthy environments, and to have autonomy over their genders and sexualities. In other words, I would like to see reproductive justice fully realized. I know forging paths to such a world will be hard work. I am grateful to have walked alongside Rachel, María, and the promotores de salud for a time. No matter how our paths may diverge, wind, or cross in the future, our relations will always be threaded together through our shared story of *Cuentos,* created with hope and care together as a graduate student, undergraduate translators, a faculty member, and community health experts. Now that our story is out in the world, we can't take back. In sharing this collection of stories, I pass it on to you. It is yours to sit with, share, and act on. *How will you respond?* I hope it encourages you to see that we can build a better world, small pockets at a time, if we each bring our skills, talents, knowledges, and experiences together in fragile but powerful intertwined webs of care.

Figure 53. My daughters walking on an old set of train tracks, Summer 2022.

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Appendix A: CR Praxis of Care

CR PRAXIS OF CARE

Care Definition
I follow Puig de la Bellacasa in my baseline definition of care as three overlapping and convoluted meanings: Care as labor, work, or activity; care as an affect or feeling, and care as a political ethic. Care is web of doings, feelings, and ethics that sustains relations among humans, non-humans, and the world around us. Multiple webs of care work together, some more than others, to sustain these interwoven relations that support continued life and wellness.

CR Praxis of Care
There are four main areas for practicing care based on the four major principles of cultural rhetorics: story as theory, relationality, constellation, and decolonial methods.

1) Valuing story as theory highlights the lived experiences of community collaborators and calls academic collaborators to act on the implications of sharing a story in digital spaces.
2) Recognizing and honoring relations brings attention to our intertwined embodied realities and calls us to respond with accountability and reciprocity.
3) Building constellations of knowledges and practices supports community ways of knowing and fosters genuine collaboration.
4) Decolonial engagement decenters academia and recenters the community.

Toolkit Suggestions
These items have specifically supported me in doing these care practices:

Item 1: A Constellation of Care
Item 2: Stories & Relationships
Item 3: Queer Failure
Item 4: Real World Research Skills
Item 5: Rhetoric
Item 6: Art and Creativity

What can support you?

Measuring Care
We can measure care through how the principles are being attended to:
- Through the stories told,
- Through the relationships built,
- Through constellations fostered, and
- Through new and different methods employed.

Care as work/doing:
- What are some specific ways that the community is being centered in the work/doings?
- What are the best methods for this specific community project? How am I working with the community to determine a tentative timeline, desired deliverables, and/or methods that serve the community interests?
- How will things continue if I as the researcher leave? How will the initiative or project continue if I leave or when it is time to turn it over fully to the community?
- What am I leaving behind – knowledges, skills, tools, attitudes, networks, etc.?

Care as feeling/affect:
- How do collaborators feel about our partnership? How do they feel about how their stories have been taken care of and attended to?
- How have targeted community audiences responded to the work and to me as the researcher?
- How are other audiences taught to engage with the project?
- In what ways are the embodied experiences of community collaborators being recognized, honored, and supported? What can be improved?

Care as ethics/politics:
- How do we talk about ownership – of a site, of written stories and/or images, or of experiences?
- How do I share about the project with secondary audiences such as students, peers, or conference attendees?
- In what ways can I guide where and how stories are being digitally circulated as the life of the project ages?
- How do I write and publish about this type of work in a way that shares my experiences while honoring the community?

Researchers should seek evaluation from their community partners through whatever form best fits. Tweak these questions or develop other questions alongside these to help collaboratively measure the care being enacted. Imperatively, the only way these acts of care can be measured is through the evaluation of the community partners, not by the researcher alone.

Appendix B: Guide to Cuentos (English Version)

A Guide to Cuentos de Confianza

This guide includes background information, navigation of the *Cuentos* site, suggested writing prompts and discussion questions, and some resources for further education. The URL for the project is www.cuentosdeconfianza.com. We encourage instructors to schedule 10-15 minutes for us to give a brief presentation to help prep your course for discussion. Please contact Rachel Bloom-Pojar (bloompoj@uwm.edu or Danielle Koepke (koepke13@uwm.edu) if you have questions or would like to schedule a time to plan your class for Cuentos.

Background

Cuentos de Confianza is a community writing project that highlights the stories of the promotores de salud and their connections to the reproductive justice movement. Promotores de Salud, or health promoters, are Spanish-speaking community health experts who educate and support the communities they are a part of. The promotores featured in this project are community educators and advocates for culturally relevant reproductive and sexual health education and access across Wisconsin. They do this as consultants through Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin, using a curriculum called CCmáS (Cuidándonos Creceremos más Sanos/ Growing Healthier Together).

The *Cuentos* project grew out of a community writing class in the fall of 2021 that was created for the promotores to reflect on their own journeys to becoming promotores and write about their experiences with reproductive justice. All participants were able to opt into the digital portion of the project, and the six stories highlighted on the site are the result. Since that time, we held a website launch party for the families and close friends of the writers. *Cuentos* continues to grow as interested audiences shift and expand. At the heart is uplifting the stories of the promotores, who work hard to support their Latinx communities in reproductive and sexual health matters across Wisconsin.

When visitors enter the site, they will be led through the Inicio, Confianza, and Cuentos tabs. We highly recommend reading La Justicia Reproductiva before reading the individual stories.

Entering into Confianza

An important part of the *Cuentos* project has been Confianza—which in English can mean trust or confidence, but in Spanish carries a richer and more dynamic meaning. Confianza is a slow process of building relationships that leads to sharing stories and life together. Sharing a story is a vulnerable and personal matter. We ask that you read our full care statement and take seriously the request to honor each of the stories as you read them, reflect on them, and discuss them together.

Writing and Discussion Prompts

The following prompts are meant for students to reflect on *Cuentos* either through writing or discussion. We encourage generative conversation about the content while recognizing and respecting individuals' varied emotional responses to vulnerable topics including reproductive injustices, domestic violence, sexual assault, thoughts of suicide, or pregnancy loss.

1. What was your experience of reading and listening to the cuentos?
2. What themes, topics, or experiences did you notice across the cuentos?
3. How does confianza factor in the reproductive justice work of the promotores?
4. Share about your experience of navigating a site that is bilingual and favors Spanish as opposed to English. How does this relate to experiences of language and access?
5. What complications can arise when personal stories are shared and circulated online?
6. Review the Confianza and Reproductive Justice pages. What are some tangible ways to care for the stories others might share with us?

Supplemental Resources

Below are a few helpful resources related to *Cuentos*. If you would like other suggested readings and materials, please contact us.

Bloom-Pojar, Rachel, and Maria Barker. "The Role of Confianza in Community-Engaged Work for Reproductive Justice." *Reflections: A Journal of Community-Engaged Writing and Rhetoric,* vol. 20, no. 2, Fall/Winter 2020. https://reflectionsjournal.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/V20.N2.BloomPojarBarker.pdf

SisterSong: https://www.sistersong.net/reproductive-justice
SisterSong Women of Color Reproductive Justice Collective was formed in 1997 by 16 organizations of women of color from four communities (Native American, African American, Latina, and Asian American). These women agreed on the imperative to advocate specifically for the needs of women of color on reproductive and sexual health issues that include but are not limited to abortion access and services.

Somos Latinas Project: https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Article/CS15621
The Somos Latinas (We Women) History Project (2012-2016) is an online collection and partnered book that documents the stories of Latinas in Wisconsin who have advocated for their communities and have impacted movements for education, civil rights, women's rights, immigrant rights, social justice at large, and domestic abuse victims.

Appendix C: E240 Discord Onboarding and Server Directory

English 240 Discord Onboarding

We will be engaging on the Discord server as part of our class engagement for the semester. I like using Discord because it is a more accessible platform than a lot of options you might be more familiar with over the past two years (i.e., Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Canvas, Skype). Additionally, it offers a more inclusive avenue for building community, which I highly value as an instructor and collaborator.

This platform is no cost, only requires your e-mail as verification information for account setup, gives more anonymity than other servers, prioritizes text over A/V components, and offers more low vision/reader/accessibility customizations. It also offers sub-server rooms for you to collaborate, work together, ask questions, and share insights while I'm not around (and I can be directly pinged if you wish). These are some of the reasons I prefer Discord to other digital technologies, and I am happy to discuss this in the workshop.

If you already have a Discord account:

1. Use this link to join the server: https://discord.gg/B2Qj4srj2s
2. Please change your server profile in this channel to appear as your name, or how you prefer to be referred to in this space (instead of DragonXxXSlayer420, unless you want that!).
3. If you're not sure how to change server profile preferences, navigate to our server, **E240**, and right-click your name on the user list [right-hand panel]. Select "edit server profile" from the sub-menu that appears and change your information accordingly.

If you do not have a Discord account:

1. Navigate to Discord.com and from the splash page, select "download for Windows". If you are trying to connect on a Mac computer, follow this link instead. Allow the file to download on your internet browser (it's only 80MB – the platform itself is optimized to run on even the slowest, oldest ancient laptops and tablets).
2. Click the finished download text, "DiscordSetup.exe" and follow the instructions.
3. Once you've downloaded the client (the interface server) or the mobile application, you will need to make an account. It will prompt you to do this the
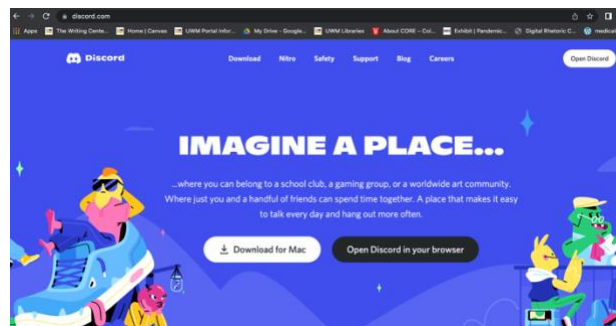
first time you open Discord. To make an account, select "Register" from the landing page and input any e-mail address you wish. Our server requires a verified e-mail, so please input an e-mail that you can access, like your university email. It may also require you to wait 5-10 minutes to be verified. This is an added security option.

4. Select a username, a password you'll remember, and any birthday that denotes you are 18 or older (for full server privileges). Navigate to your e-mail inbox to follow **a verification link that confirms you are the owner of that e-mail address**. Once you've verified your e-mail, you are almost done!

5. While logged into your account, use [this link](#) to add yourself to the server.

6. Please also follow the instructions given above to those already holding Discord accounts (changing your screen name for the classroom server, explained above, if you wish to use Discord for other servers with an alternative profile name).

7. You can also download the Discord app to your **phone** if you choose by going to your app store and searching for "Discord."

Navigating the Discord Server:

Once logged in, you can click or tap on our server icon to view the categorized channels. From the left-hand panel, you'll see several headings or "sub-servers." Each heading categorizes different channels for different uses. **Voice channels** (the category at the bottom) allow real time virtual conversations. I use this for "Coffee Chats" which are where I'll hold my office hours and a "Study Room" where students can connect with others while doing homework. For us, we will have breakout rooms here. A recent feature of Discord allows for chats within voice channels!

You also have access to several **Text-only channels**. For example, you'll see "introductions," which is a channel for introducing yourself and getting to know others. By clicking on a text channel, you will see a large expanse of text in the center portion of the screen (or, on your phone). Use the chat box in the bottom-center of the middle window to input text and press ENTER (or RETURN on some computers) to send the message.

Everyone on the server will see the message, and they can reply to you! Think of it like a giant group chat. The icons at the far right of the text entry window allow you to add emojis, gifs, images, or files up to 700MB to the text channels. You can also tag other members, including myself, by using the @ symbol and the person's name (for example: @DanielleMarie).

Each channel has a brief description of what it is used for. For instance, In the [#community-guidelines](#) channel, I will invite everyone to share community standards for our server, along with my own rules to make sure each person is respected and valued. We will be using the text channels to communicate synchronously and asynchronously. Please keep in mind **we all see the content** on these channels, so follow basic rules of public digital interaction (don't bully, no hate speech, no spam messages at 3AM – just be a good person). I say the same to my students.

To send someone a PRIVATE message (or DM), use the right-hand panel where users and online/offline status are listed. Right-click the name of the person you'd like to correspond with and select "Send Message". The message you send can ONLY be seen by that user. As stated above, these should also follow our community standards.

There is more to learn, but I find it is best learned through experience. You'll notice there are a ton of customizations here, including visual and audio options. For now, I'll point out that you can mute certain channels, or whole servers, to control what kinds of notifications you're receiving. You can turn off pings (notifications) for certain channels and can alter brightness, sound, and movement across channels. I promise we'll learn more as we work through this together!

This is meant to be a welcoming community space to connect and learn, so have fun with it. 😊 I'll be available for any questions you have as you begin to navigate our server, and suggest asking any questions in our #questions channel (under the Discussions heading) so everyone can benefit from sharing information.

Resources:
- How to Use Discord on a PC or Mac
- Using the Discord mobile phone app
- Our Discord Server Link
- Our Discord Directory

English 240 Discord Directory

This is our Discord directory, organized by category, which matches our server. You will also find brief explanations of each channel and suggestions for notifications. If it helps, use this to refer to when engaging on Discord.

Start Here
#Introductions – introductions to get to know each other at the beginning of the semester.
#pronoun-picker – choose your pronouns (instructions in the channel).
#community-guidelines – co-building our community space on Discord.

Notifications: **no**

General
#announcements – posts only by me: updates, announcements for the week, etc.
#questions – ask general questions here so everyone can benefit from the answers.
#resources – share resources about writing, researching, or other things.
#community-chat – a general chat channel for conversations regarding whatever!

Notifications: **on**

Discussion Boards

There will be a channel labeled after each week's topic (example: #wk2-writing-rhetoric-culture).

Notifications: **on**

Moderator Groups

These channels are for private chats among moderators. You will only see the channel you're in. If you are scheduled on your own, you won't be added to a group channel but can chat with me about any ideas or questions.

Notifications: **you choose**

Writing Workshops

Each of you will be organized into writing groups for peer review and collaborative writing. These channels will be **private**. You can only view the channel for your own writing group.

Notifications: **on**

Interest Groups

#fitness-and-health – all things fitness, health, and wellness.
#games-and-gaming – chat about games, gaming, fandoms, and more here.
#movies-and-shows – shows, movies: binge-worthy, all-time favs, etc.
#music – music rec, playlists, music news, concerts.
#pets – all things pets/furry friends (aka send me more animal TikTok's!)
#recipe-board – a spot to trade your fav recipes (or your recipe disasters), restaurants, etc.
#sports – a channel for all things sports.

Notifications: **you choose based on your interests**

Off Topic

#encouragement – what do you do when you're having a bad day? This is a place to share highs, lows, and encouragement.

#irl – share what you're up to In Real Life.
#memes – share your fav or trending memes, GIFs, videos, TikTok's etc.

Notifications: **you choose**

Voice Channels

- Coffee Chats (w/Danielle) – voice and/or video chat with me. Send a DM or email me to set up a time to video/voice/text chat here.
- Study Room – video/voice/text space to meet up with fellow students. I don't join this space. You can also plan a meeting time with others, just DM them.

Notifications: **no**

Direct Messaging (DM)

In the upper left-hand corner of the app, you'll see a chat box icon if you're on your phone. On your computer, you'll see the Discord logo. Tap/click on that to go to your direct messages.

Thank you all for engaging in kind and respectful ways on our community Discord! My goal is to keep working towards making it a space that feels like it belongs to you all, for both academic and fun purposes.

Appendix D: E207 Syllabus

English 207: Health Science Writing

Danielle Koepke, M.A. | koepke13@uwm.edu | Virtual Office Hours by appointment

Welcome

I recognize that each of us comes from our own unique background and that each of us learn in various ways. Your perspectives, identities, and ideas are welcome as long as they are not disrespectful or harmful to others. I support students' rights to their own beliefs, values, faiths, and ways of being in the world and I look forward to all of us working collaboratively to learn from each other this semester. My goal is to provide educational materials, practices, and strategies that you all can learn from while centering balance for your full lives outside this class. I care about your mental, emotional, and physical well-being. Please talk to me as soon as possible about specific learning needs and how I can best accommodate them while we strive to complete this semester. The more you communicate with me, the more we can work together to succeed in this class.

Course Description

Health Science Writing is a course that examines what health science writing is and why it matters. While some healthcare professionals may not call the documentation and charting they do "writing," it most certainly is. This course is designed to consider the avenues through which health information is communicated. Importantly, this communication continues to increase in digital spaces, including social media platforms. We will seek to think critically about issues such as who is thought of as a health expert, how information is translated across languages and cultures, and what happens during moments of communication breakdown. We will analyze questions like what makes "good communication" and how do visual and digital rhetorics play into health communication? Students will learn to identify rhetorical situations of health communication events and will also do their own health communication across genres and audiences.

Image drawn by my daughter, inspired by one of Rupi Kaur's poems about health and wellness.

This syllabus, schedule, and all course documents are subject to revisions and changes by the instructor as necessary

Course Learning Outcomes
- Develop an understanding of what encompasses health communication.
- Practice and improve critical thinking and writing skills.

- Engage in rhetorical analysis of health communication practices.
- Deepen considerations when communicating health information to different types of audiences.
- Exercise ethical awareness and care across complicated rhetorical situations

Asynchronous Learning

We will be interacting asynchronously across a couple of digital platforms: Canvas, One Drive, and Discord. Each Monday, you will have assignments and activities to work on and complete by each Sunday at 11:59pm. However, some tasks will need to be done before Sunday night, such as Discord discussions and interactions. More detailed information about the weekly interactions and requirements of this course can be found on Canvas under the Class Resources module.

Grading

Your assignments, projects, and participation will be assessed both based on the quality of the work and through the quality of your effort. I ask for your best work given your current situation, whatever that may be, and am always willing to work with individuals who have fallen behind or who need more flexibility. Your work will be assessed by yourself, your classmates, and me as facilitator. The course is organized into the following work:

Personal Health Journal (20%)
These reflective writings will be your space to think, question, and explore the intersections of rhetoric, health, and your major. You will write 8 journal entries based on thematic readings that are each 1-2 pages double-spaced. These will be assessed as "on target" (3 points), "approaching target" (2 points), and "missing target" (1 point).

Writing Workshops (20%)
Throughout the semester, you will engage in collaborative writing, reviewing, and revising. You will submit group feedback that demonstrates to me not only your writing but also your ability to give constructive encouragement and feedback to your group members.

Community Engagement (20%)
This part of the grade is paramount as writing can never happen in isolation. We all will interact via our class Discord server. This will be further explained on Canvas, but for now you should know that there is an expectation to find moments throughout the week to engage, not just on Sunday evenings. Engagement is assessed both by me and through each student's periodic self-assessments.

Community Care (5%)
Because this class is centered on collaborative work and community building, this percentage of your grade will be awarded by your own class community at the end of the semester. You will

reflect on the semester and nominate peers who were supportive and helpful to you and/or those who greatly added to the overall community vibe. Both nominating and being nominated go towards this 5%.

Final Portfolio (35%)
The final project will be a portfolio that includes work you've completed throughout the semester that you're most proud of. The portfolio should include a couple of your journal entries, peer review feedback, and the reflective response mentioned in Community Care. It will also showcase a few of the health communications genres you've learned about and practiced.

More details on the expectations for each of these areas are available on Canvas.

Course Policies
Late or Missing Assignments
I have always graded with grace, and even more-so as we continue living in a covid-influenced world. All assignments are meant to be beneficial and spaced out to avoid inducing unnecessary stress. I accept late work for full or partial credit depending on the situation and will work with students who communicate with me that they need more time for assignments.

Add/Drop Period
During the first two weeks of the semester, you may add or drop a course via PAWS. It is your responsibility to manage adds, drops, and section changes on PAWS during the University Add/Drop period. If you do not drop the course from your schedule but discontinue attendance after the withdraw deadline, you will receive an F.

Integrity
We strive to uphold academic honesty and integrity. Please use your own words with care when writing and contact me with any questions on quoting or citing others' words, images, and other creations. AI resources are not tolerated as writing tools.

Health and Wellness
We are learning through a time that continues to be heavily impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. While each of us may be affected to varied degrees, each of us has been and will continue to be affected in some way. My own classroom policy is that we treat one another with **care** and **empathy.** Even in an online asynchronous class, Covid impacts us. All students, faculty, and staff are expected to follow the university guidelines for Covid-19. Here is the [university policy statement regarding Covid-19](). If you have symptoms of Covid-19 or know someone you've been in contact with who has tested positive, please take time off as needed from this class. *You will not be penalized for prioritizing your health* whether it is Covid-related or something else.

OWC-B Requirement
UWM's Oral and Written Communication, Part B (OWC-B) requirement for this course is that students are expected to develop advanced skills in critical thinking, logical thinking, and the use of argument and evidence; the use of appropriate stylistic and disciplinary conventions in writing and/or speaking; critical analysis of information from primary or secondary sources for some portion of the speaking and/or writing.

Campus Support

Please do not hesitate to communicate with me about any concerns, questions, struggles, challenges, etc. you may have (in or out of class). I am happy to be accommodating and flexible about any needs you may have to help you be successful in this course. I recognize each of us may have various responsibilities and unique situations as we complete this semester. I'm willing to work with each of you and hope you're also willing to work with me. If you need financial or nutritional aid during this time, do not hesitate to reach out. I may not have all the answers, but I will find information, resources, or help as I'm able.

Resources
- UWM COVID19 info https://uwm.edu/coronavirus/
- Writing Center http://www4.uwm.edu/writingcenter/
- Accessibility Resource Center http://uwm.edu/arc/
- Health/Counseling/Substance Abuse Services https://www4.uwm.edu/norris/
- Sexual Assault Resources https://www4.uwm.edu/norris/mental_health/topics/sexual_violence.cfm
- Career Planning and Resource Center http://uwm.edu/careerplan/
- Enrollment and Financial Services http://uwm.edu/onestop/
- LGBTQ Resource Center https://sa.uwm.edu/lgbtrc/
- Military and Veterans Resource Center http://uwm.edu/mavrc/
- Norris Health Center http://uwm.edu/norris/
- Student Success Center http://www4.uwm.edu/ssc/
- Women's Resource Center https://uwm.edu/womensresourcecenter/

Semester Schedule

The schedule below includes highlights and important dates. Full readings and assignments can be found on our Canvas site.

Date	Topic	Important Notes
1/23-1/29	Getting Started	Get oriented to the class, Canvas site, and Discord.

1/30-2/5	Writing? Health? Science?	Personal Health Journal Entry 1
2/6-2/12	The Rhetorics of Health and Medicine pt. 1	Personal Health Journal Entry 2
2/13-2/19	The Rhetorics of Health and Medicine pt. 2	Workshop 1
2/20-2/26	The Rhetorics of Health and Medicine pt. 3	Personal Health Journal Entry 3
2/27-3/5	Health and Technology pt. 1	Workshop 2; Community Engagement Check In 1
3/6-3/12	Health and Technology pt. 2	Personal Health Journal Entry 4
3/13-3/19	Writing for Public Health pt. 1	Workshop 3
3/20-3/26	**Spring Break!**	No Homework Due!
3/27-4/2	Writing for Public Health pt. 2	Personal Health Journal Entry 5
4/3-4/9	Health and Storytelling pt. 1	Workshop 4; Community Engagement Check In 2
4/10-4/16	Health and Storytelling pt. 2	Personal Health Journal Entry 6
4/17-4/23	Portfolios pt. 1	Workshop 5
4/24-4/30	Portfolios pt. 2	Personal Health Journal Entry 7
5/1-5/7	Portfolios pt. 3	Personal Health Journal Entry 8
5/8-5/14	**Review; Portfolios Due!**	Community Engagement Check In 3 (due **Sunday 5/14** by 11:59pm)
5/15-5/19	Finals Week	Any late work due **Friday by 11:59pm**

Appendix E: E240 Syllabus

English 240: Rhetoric, Writing, and Culture
Public Writing for Social Action
Danielle Koepke, M.A. | koepke13@uwm.edu | Virtual Office Hours by appointment

Welcome
I recognize that each of us comes from our own unique background and that each of us learn in various ways. Your perspectives, identities, and ideas are welcome as long as they are not disrespectful or harmful to others. I support students' rights to their own beliefs, values, faiths, and ways of being in the world and I look forward to all of us working collaboratively to learn from each other this semester. My goal is to provide educational materials, practices, and strategies that you all can learn from while centering balance for your full lives outside this class. I care about your mental, emotional, and physical well-being. Please talk to me as soon as possible about specific learning needs and how I can best accommodate them while we strive to complete this semester. The more you communicate with me, the more we can work together to succeed in this class.

Course Description
Rhetoric, Writing and Culture is a special topics course that examines how rhetoric, writing, and media influence our thinking about race, gender, class, cultural identity, technology, and ideology. The special topic for this semester, "Public Writing for Social Action," is designed for students to critically analyze what counts as writing, who counts as writers, and how public forms of writing engage with various social actions including activism and advocacy. We will also engage in our own public writing to deepen our understanding of and practice the rhetorical dexterity required to communicate well across public rhetorics found in public spaces, especially digital public spaces.

Course Learning Outcomes
- Develop rhetorical analysis of public forms of writing, especially digital forms.
- Practice and improve critical thinking skills.
- Engage in collaborative public writing.
- Deepen understanding of writing for public audiences.
- Exercise ethical awareness and care across complicated rhetorical situations

Asynchronous Learning
We will be interacting asynchronously across a couple of digital platforms: Canvas, One Drive, and Discord. Each Monday, you will have assignments and activities to work on and complete

by each Sunday at 11:59pm. However, some tasks will need to be done before Sunday night, such as Discord discussions and interactions. More detailed information about the weekly interactions and requirements of this course can be found on Canvas under the Class Resources module.

Grading

Your assignments, projects, and participation will be assessed both based on the quality of the work and through the quality of your effort. I ask for your best work given your current situation, whatever that may be, and am always willing to work with individuals who have fallen behind or who need more flexibility. Your work will be assessed by yourself, your classmates, and me as facilitator. The course is organized into the following work:

Writer's Journal (20%)
These weekly reflective writings will be your space to think critically, question boldly, and explore curiously. You will write 8 journal entries based on weekly themes that are each 1-2 pages double-spaced. These will be assessed as "on target" (3 points), "approaching target" (2 points), and "missing target" (1 point).

Writing Workshops (20%)
Throughout the semester, you will engage in collaborative writing, reviewing, and revising. You will submit group feedback that demonstrates to me not only your writing but also your ability to give constructive encouragement and feedback to your group members.

Community Engagement (20%)
This part of the grade is paramount as writing can never happen in isolation. We all will interact via our class Discord server. This will be further explained on Canvas, but for now you should know that there is an expectation to find moments throughout the week to engage, not just Sunday evenings. Engagement is assessed both by me and through each student's periodic self-assessments.

Community Care (5%)
Because this class is centered on collaborative work and community building, this percentage of your grade will be awarded by your own class community at the end of the semester. You will reflect on the semester and nominate peers who were supportive and helpful to you and/or those who greatly added to the overall community vibe.

Final Portfolio (35%)
The final project will be a portfolio that includes work you've completed throughout the semester that you're most proud of. The portfolio should include a couple of your journal entries, peer review feedback, and the reflective response mentioned in Community Care. It will also showcase a few of the public writing genres you've learned about and practiced.

More details on the expectations for each of these areas are available on Canvas.

Course Policies
Late or Missing Assignments
I have always graded with grace, and even more-so as we continue living in a covid-influenced world. All assignments are meant to be beneficial and spaced out to avoid inducing unnecessary stress. I accept late work for full or partial credit depending on the situation and will work with students who communicate with me that they need more time for assignments.

Add/Drop Period
During the first two weeks of the semester, you may add or drop a course via PAWS. It is your responsibility to manage adds, drops, and section changes on PAWS during the University Add/Drop period. If you do not drop the course from your schedule but discontinue attendance after the withdraw deadline, you will receive an F.

Integrity
We strive to uphold academic honesty and integrity. Please use your own words with care when writing and contact me with any questions on quoting or citing others' words, images, and other creations.

Health and Wellness
We are learning through a time that continues to be heavily impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. While each of us may be affected to varied degrees, each of us has been and will continue to be affected in some way. My own classroom policy is that we treat one another with **care** and **empathy.** Even in an online asynchronous class, Covid impacts us. All students, faculty, and staff are expected to follow the university guidelines for Covid-19. Here is the [university policy statement regarding Covid-19](). If you have symptoms of Covid-19 or know someone you've been in contact with who has tested positive, please take time off as needed from this class. *You will not be penalized for prioritizing your health* whether it is Covid-related or something else.

GER Requirements
This course satisfies the following GER requirements. Click each hyperlink for more detailed information:
1) [Humanities Education Requirement]()
2) [Oral and Written Communication, Part B]()

Campus Support
Please do not hesitate to communicate with me about any concerns, questions, struggles, challenges, etc. you may have (in or out of class). I am happy to be accommodating and flexible about any needs you may have to help you be successful in this course. I recognize each of us may have various responsibilities and unique situations as we complete this semester. I'm willing to work with each of you and hope you're also willing to work with me. If you need financial or nutritional aid during this time, do not hesitate to reach out. I may not have all the answers, but I will find information, resources, or help as I'm able.

Some Relevant Resources:

- UWM COVID19 info https://uwm.edu/coronavirus/
- Writing Center http://www4.uwm.edu/writingcenter/
- Accessibility Resource Center http://uwm.edu/arc/
- Health/Counseling/Substance Abuse Services https://www4.uwm.edu/norris/
- Sexual Assault Resources
  https://www4.uwm.edu/norris/mental_health/topics/sexual_violence.cfm
- Career Planning and Resource Center http://uwm.edu/careerplan/
- Enrollment and Financial Services http://uwm.edu/onestop/
- LGBTQ Resource Center https://sa.uwm.edu/lgbtrc/
- Military and Veterans Resource Center http://uwm.edu/mavrc/
- Norris Health Center http://uwm.edu/norris/
- Student Success Center http://www4.uwm.edu/ssc/
- Women's Resource Center http://www4.uwm.edu/wrc/wrc_interim/interim/index.cfm

Semester Schedule*

Date	Topic	Important Notes
9/6-9/11	Getting Started	Get oriented to the class, Canvas site, and Discord
9/12-9/18	Writing? Rhetoric? Culture?	Writer's Journal Entry 1
9/19-9/25	Public Statements pt. 1	Writer's Journal Entry 2
9/26-10/2	Public Statements pt. 2	Workshop 1
10/3-10/9	Visual Rhetorics pt. 1	Writer's Journal Entry 3
10/10-10/16	Visual Rhetorics pt. 2	Workshop 2; Community Engagement Check In 1
10/17-10/23	Social Media Rhetorics pt. 1	Writer's Journal Entry 4
10/24-10/30	Social Media Rhetorics pt. 2	Workshop 3
10/31-11/6	Digital Storytelling pt. 1	Writer's Journal Entry 5
11/7-11/13	Digital Storytelling pt. 2	Workshop 4; Community Engagement Check In 2

11/14-11/20	News, blogs, etc. pt. 1	Writer's Journal Entry 6
11/21-11/27	News, blogs, etc. pt. 2	Thanksgiving week - lighter load
11/28-12/4	Portfolios	Writer's Journal Entry 7
12/5-12/11	Portfolios	Workshop 5
12/12-12/14	Portfolios	Writer's Journal Entry 8; Community Engagement Check In 3 (Submit by **Sunday 12/18)**
12/19-12/23	Finals Week	Portfolios Due Late work due **Friday at 11:59pm**

* This syllabus, schedule, and all course documents are subject to revisions and changes by the instructor as necessary. *