La Pasionaria: The Ethos of a Leader

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Abstract

*La Pasionaria: The Ethos of a Leader* was directed by Lois Agnew. This dissertation project inserts Latina activist Dolores Huerta into the feminist rhetorical tradition and traces the complicated ways in which *ethos* is constructed from multiply oppressed bodies within the context of social movements. Specifically, Huerta’s *ethos* formation is examined in order to identify the rhetorical strategies required when someone not only lacking power, but also purposefully silenced, is able to break through societal barriers and create change. The intent of this research is to build on the work of feminist rhetorical scholars and discover how attending to Huerta’s inescapable embodied identities provides a deeper conceptualization of rhetorical strategy. Through the rhetorical analysis of a variety of texts by, and about, Huerta I examine how she was positioned by others as well positions herself through language, and more specifically language that describes and/or defines her embodied identity categories.

Ultimately, as a study of *ethos* and how it is affected by identity this dissertation project argues that the body and the embodied identities associated with it significantly shapes how *ethos* can and is constructed. In examining how social justice activist Dolores Huerta constructed her *ethos* during the initial organization of the United Farmworkers Union I aim to both highlight the role of Huerta as a co-founder of the UFW and add Huerta as an important rhetorical figure of study in the field of Rhetoric.
LA PASIONARIA: THE ETHOS OF A LEADER

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I have been looking forward to writing my acknowledgements since I started working on my dissertation. Truth be told, I’ve found myself imagining how it would feel to write this long before I even had a dissertation project, perhaps even as far back as my first semester of course work. Now, as I sit here and write, I’m flooded with many emotions, but none more significant than gratitude. There is so much that goes into achieving the kind of accomplishment of earning a PhD, and I am grateful to all those that contributed to my success along the way. I could not imagine my life without the people and experiences I have gained in the last seven years! Syracuse the city and Syracuse the University will forever hold a special place in my heart.

This dissertation has been a work of collaboration to its core, but I want to start by acknowledging the support of my incredible husband, Gabriel Howell, without which I would have not had the confidence and opportunity to return to grad school. Little did we know our family would grow while in Syracuse. However, after many years of hoping, we found out after our first year here that we were going to have a baby! I delivered Jonas during my second year of course work and have been trying to keep up with him ever since. But this dissertation wouldn’t have come to fruition without them. Further, the support of my parents and sisters positioned me in life to be ready to commit to this kind of work and to make the decision to further my education. I am indebted to my family for their endless encouragement.

In 2008, once the cosmos aligned, and with the help of my family, we were Syracuse bound. And there began a rigorous, exasperating, and life-altering journey. Having earned my master’s degree after over a 10-year hiatus from academia, I was a returning student,
and I found myself struggling to find confidence as an academic writer. I often felt as if I were constantly playing “catch up.” Interestingly, there is a palpable cadence during coursework—a distinct ebb and flow to the knowledge gained and produced. And, to some degree, the echo of that cadence can be felt during exam prep and completion. But the work of a dissertation is different; it’s a sort of intellectual work that draws from all aspects of a scholar’s personal and professional life in equal measure. It takes self-discipline, self-trust, and a lot of personal and professional support.

After taking Lois’ class in my second year of coursework, and after working with her during my WPA internship during my third year, I knew I found the mentor I needed. As the Chair of my dissertation, Lois offered so much of her time and invaluable mentorship. She read and responded to my most raw and unpolished writing and thinking. She continually encouraged me to think deeply by asking tough questions that, while not easily answered, developed a greater understanding of both the value of the work that I was doing and the perspective that I offer. While providing me with intellectual and scholarly guidance, Lois also consistently supported my efforts to maintain a work/life balance. I am immeasurably grateful for the gifts Lois has given me over the years, especially her time, her unending patience, and her unwavering belief in my ability to produce meaningful work.

I truly couldn’t have had a better dissertation committee. Like Lois, Becky offered unwavering enthusiasm and confidence in my abilities and reminded me often through this multi-year endeavor that the work I was doing was not only interesting, but also a much-needed intervention in the field. Becky was one of my first mentors at SU and has continued to see me through this process with encouragement and guidance at the most pivotal
moments. And I will be forever grateful to Gwen Pough for both the advice she provided me professionally and personally. The transition from being a master’s degree student to a PhD student can be daunting for just about anyone, but there is a particular difficulty as a returning student of color 3000 miles away from home. Gwen helped me be unapologetic about sharing my experiences, and to know when to protect myself from institutionalized pressures.

In Syracuse, I also formed incredible relationships with my fellow cohort, grad students, and additional faculty who collectively offered a great deal of encouragement and guidance. Through coursework, I had the pleasure of learning from Drs. Lois Agnew, Collin Brooke, Margaret Himley, Rebecca (Becky) Moore Howard, Krista Kennedy, Steve Parks, Gwen Pough, Dalia Rodriguez, and Eileen Schell. I also had an incredible Maymester course with Minnie-Bruce Pratt that forever changed my orientation to writing and that sparked a deep love and appreciation for Creative Non Fiction. Not only was I able to forge close and meaningful relationships with faculty through coursework, but also I was very fortunate to work with Dr. Tony Scott as a WPA: Assessment Intern during my fourth year in the program. It was through the collective mentorship from faculty that I learned about the many facets of being a faculty member, and that I discovered the kind of teacher, scholar, and administrator that I am and hope to become.

Without a doubt each faculty member I had the opportunity to know and to work with at SU aided me in growing in an intellectual, professional, and personal capacity. In addition to the faculty, while at SU I was incredibly blessed to have met and become friends with my soul sisters! Now, Drs. Missy Watson, Anna Hensley, and Kate Navickas, have become such amazing friends that they are considered family. I could not be more
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so many more!

Next, I want to take a moment to extend my thanks Dr. Eileen Schell. Surprisingly,
my dissertation was not supposed to be a rhetorical analysis. Instead I had planned on a
WPA-centered project that took up writing assessment practices. However, because of one
critical moment with Eileen Schell, my dissertation project was born. My presentation for
the 2011 Feminisms and Rhetorics conference in Mankato, MN was a critique of the lack of
both Latina figures of study and scholars included in popular anthologies often used in
Feminist Rhetorics courses. The night before delivering my presentation I practiced with
Eileen, after which I was met by a troubling question. Eileen simply asked, “Well Nicole, if
you don’t do this work, who will?” I took this question very seriously. If I, a Latina who
believes my voice matters and who strongly believes many Latina voices matter and need
to be heard, if I was not doing this work, who would? I realized I needed to be part of the
intervention I was calling for. I needed to be a Latina voice, and I needed to bring in a Latina
figure of study into the field of Rhetoric. Thank you Eileen for pushing me from critique to production!

After much deliberation, activist Dolores Huerta became my primary rhetor of interest for several reasons, but none more important than the many connections we share. I like Huerta am from the central valley of California—although born in Dawson, NM Huerta spent most of her life in Stockton, CA just about two hours north of Fresno which is where I’m from—and I like Huerta never labored in the fields, but are very close to many that did, and I like Huerta continue to navigate building authority from a body that signifies multiple oppressions. Thank you, Dolores Huerta, for your activism and your rhetorical skill. I’m so grateful to have had the opportunity to get to know more about your important contributions to the United Farm Workers through my dissertation project. While it is true this dissertation had to be done for professional reasons, it had to be done for personal reasons, too. And it’s done!
Dedication

For Alina Simon, your love, faith, and strength continue to inspire all that I do. You're deeply missed, but not forgotten.
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La Pasionaria: The Ethos of a Leader

For six decades La Pasionaria (the passionate one), as she is also referred to, has personified leadership, courage, commitment to the cause of the downtrodden and powerless, and yes, passion for social justice.

~Mario T. Garcia

Introduction:

In December 1955 Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat to a White passenger in Montgomery, Alabama. While Parks’ protest was not the first action taken toward the civil rights movement, it was one of the first, and it received a great deal of attention. Gaining momentum from civil rights leaders like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. as well as many others, the late 1950s and 1960s was a time of change, protest, and, in many ways, unity in a time of fracture. Dolores Huerta and Cesar Chavez, leaders of the fight for farm laborers’ rights, called for better working conditions for farm workers during the late 1950s, a fight that lasted throughout their lifetimes. However, the height of the success of the UFW was primarily during the civil rights period. Huerta and Chavez were well aware of the cultural and political climate and were able to utilize the momentum from the movement to leverage their efforts. Nonetheless, the cultural climate alone was not enough to make the United Farm Workers (UFW) union and campaign a success. In fact, there were many previous attempts made to organize farm laborers long before Huerta and Chavez spearheaded the cause. In his book, Why David Sometimes Wins, community organizer and UFW participant Dr. Marshall Ganz identifies three junctures between 1901 and 1951 in which several labor associations, networks of radical organizers, and the American
Federation of Labor attempted to organize farm workers (5-6). However, each of these attempts failed in part because the union representatives were not seen as genuine allies.

Chavez and Huerta embodied identities that were shared by most of the community they were working to organize, and were intimately familiar with the working conditions experienced by the farmworkers. Ganz acknowledges, “Some observers point to the distinctive framing of the UFW ‘message.’ Farm workers, they say, responded to a call rooted in their religious, ethnic, and political culture more readily than to a ‘straight trade union’ approach” (7). While Ganz suggests that “some observers” recognize the importance of shared values between the farm workers and the UFW’s leadership, he stops short of describing the “straight trade union” and how their values differed. Ultimately, Ganz argues that the UFW was successful because of what he calls “strategic capacity,” and that “an organization’s strategic capacity is...a function of who its leaders are—the identities, networks, and tactical experiences—and how they structure their interactions with each other and their environment with respect to resource flows, accountability, and deliberation [emphasis added]” (8). Indeed, the ethos the leaders brought to the UFW and labor movement was equally if not more important to their success than was the historical moment.

This study is an examination of ethos and how it is affected by identity. However, it is also a study that lies at the intersection of rhetoric, feminist historiography, and critical race theory because it aims to demonstrate how ethos is complicated when being constructed from an “othered” body. More specifically, as the leaders of the UFW, both Chavez and Huerta spoke from bodies that were far less authorized than the rhetors that are most often studied—namely, White men—however, they were both quite successful in
constructing their authority and thus have remained the uncontested forces behind the success of creating the UFW.

In a social movement, the role of the leader—the public face, the icon, the rhetor—is not only crucial to the movement, but also shapes the rhetorical climate that runs through and around the movement. In their chapter, “Social Movement Rhetoric,” authors Robert Cox and Cristina R. Foust trace the evolution of social movement rhetoric (SMR) and argue that as the study of social movements gained flexibility “the idea of a discrete ‘social movement’ has become somewhat problematic” (620). Citing the importance of multiple figures, contexts, and rhetorical acts—especially as they relate to embodied and material rhetoric—in any given movement, and then theorizing about efficacy or strategy of SMR has become increasingly difficult. Thus, this study is not meant to analyze the farmworker movement overall, but instead examine how Huerta’s embodied identities affected her role as vice president during the creation of the UFW and her ethos construction. In so doing, turning to some early SMR scholarship in which the leader is placed central to analysis is useful for this discussion. More specifically, in “Requirements, Problems, and Strategies: A Theory of Persuasion for Social Movements,” Herbert W. Simons identifies the challenges leaders of social movements are tasked with addressing. As a co-founder of the UFW, like Chavez, Huerta was tasked with resolving and reducing rhetorical problems, which is one of the responsibilities of a social movement leader outlined by Simons (36). While Chavez is often celebrated as “the” leader of the UFW, I argue that as a team they were better suited to manage the complexities of organizing the farmworkers in the cultural climate of the 1960s and 1970s. Simons explains, “movements require a diversity of leadership types with whom any one leader must both compete and cooperate” (39). He further notes that
very few singular leaders have been able to meet the need of this diversity (45), and thus I claim that looking to Huerta as a leader alongside Chavez reveals how their team effort benefited the larger movement.

As the president Chavez was a very high profile member of the fight for farm laborer rights, however, this work focuses primarily on Huerta for two reasons. First, as pointed out by historian and editor of *A Dolores Huerta Reader*, Mario T. Garcia,

> The literature on Chavez is voluminous, and even though no major biography has yet been written on the great farm worker and spiritual leader, there are many books and articles about him. The same is not true of Huerta. Not only has no biography been written about her, but the literature on her is quite scant. As a result, her role in history is much less appreciated. (xv)

Since Chavez has been the focal point of most historical accounts of the UFW, this study examines Huerta as a co-leader in order to acknowledge the complexity involved in organizing a movement on a scale as large as the campaign for farm laborer rights. Regardless of the crucial role Huerta played in the fight for better working conditions and social justice, up until recently her work and efforts have been historically eclipsed by the more prominent role of Chavez. Thus, this project aims to bring Huerta out of the shadows and foreground the complex, crucial, and exceptional work she did. Second, one of the larger aims of this project is to continue the work critical race feminist scholars do of bringing women’s voices—especially women of color—to the field. Therefore, I primarily focus on Huerta rather than the duo.

As a Latina mother championing farm laborer rights, Huerta’s marginality offers a challenge to many of the traditional assumptions about who can—and should—be considered an effective rhetorician. Huerta skillfully constructs an *ethos* that cannot be dependent on conventional symbols of authority that are often afforded to White males or
those associated with powerful positions. While *ethos* is considered a key argumentative appeal (Hyde, xiv-xvii), it is also greatly affected by the embodied identity of the rhetor and the perceived proximity to bodies of power and authority. In other words, because Huerta embodied identities disassociated with authority, and that instead were associated with cultural scripts that undermine her credibility, she was challenged by additional obstacles for *ethos* construction. In her book *Refiguring Rhetorical Education*, author Jessica Enoch describes the concept of biculturalism as a perspective that acknowledges the power relations between a dominant culture and subordinate groups (123). While Enoch utilizes this concept to emphasize the rhetorical sophistication of Mexican teachers on the border of Mexico and United States at the turn of the 20th century, I find this a useful concept for considering the complexity involved in Huerta's *ethos* construction. In other words, because Huerta constantly had to negotiate the tension between normative definitions of her embodied identity and her position as a co-leader of the UFW, she often defied those normative definitions, thus requiring unique rhetorical strategies to emerge as she navigated the volatile climate of political protest.

This dissertation project looks at Huerta’s *ethos* formation in order to identify the rhetorical strategies required when someone not only lacking power, but also purposefully silenced, is able to break through societal barriers and create change. The intent of this research is to build on the work of feminist rhetorical scholars and discover how attending to Huerta’s inescapable embodied identities provides a deeper conceptualization of rhetorical strategy. Specifically, through the rhetorical analysis of a variety of texts by and about Huerta, I examine how she was positioned by others as well as positioning herself through language, and more specifically language that describes and/or defines her
embodied identity categories. Based on my examination, I find that Huerta must attend to—rather than ignore or contest—her most vulnerable and visible forms of identity in order to build her ethos and move beyond the physical markers she carries. Hers is thus a compelling case to consider as it speaks to the importance of negotiating between socially constructed definitions of identity and the embodied reality of those identities.

In what follows, I first locate the need for including Latina rhetors in the field of Rhetoric and Composition in order to call attention to the current gap in representation. In so doing, I also set the foundation for discussions in subsequent chapters that focus on challenges unique to Latino/as. I then provide some critical background information about Huerta and her role in UFW in order to provide a broad orientation to her, the movement, and the United Farm Workers Union. Learning where Huerta is from and how she got her start in organizing reveals a few key components that aid in the understanding of her complex identity. Drawing on the discussion of Huerta’s role in the UFW and the importance of the leaders of a movement, I focus on connecting Huerta and Chavez’s responsibility for creating exigence for the farm laborer movement. The final section not only demonstrates that the ethos leaders bring to a movement or organization is not discrete or confined to their own public/private identities but also further emphasizes the need to highlight and foreground the role of identity in order to better understand how rhetorical strategy is affected by the body.

A Call for Latina Voices: Adding to Feminist Perspectives and Disrupting the Black and White Paradigm

Feminist work on the history of rhetoric has become abundant over the last few decades. Beginning with Karlyn Kohrs Campbell’s 1989 anthology Man Cannot Speak for Her feminist rhetorics has brought in voices of rhetors that have been silenced all too long.
Adding to Campbell, Andrea Lunsford’s *Reclaiming Rhetorica* (1995) includes essays that consider the many contributions women rhetors were making despite their lack of recognition in the history of rhetoric. With each collection of women’s voices the male centered study of rhetoric was evolving, or as Lunsford states, “the essays in *Reclaiming Rhetorica* suggest that the realm of rhetoric has been almost exclusively male not because women were not practicing rhetoric—the arts of language are after all at the source of human communication—but because the tradition has never recognized forms, strategies, and goals used by women as ‘rhetorical’” (6). Opening up spaces for rhetorical inquiry remains a leading objective in feminist rhetorics, but as evidenced by Cheryl Glenn’s *Rhetoric Retold: Regendering the Tradition from Antiquity Through the Renaissance*, (1997) women that had access to “education and rhetorical accomplishments,” demonstrated that women were indeed rhetoricians in traditional conceptions as well. Nonetheless, as Kate Ronald points out, Glenn mapped new rhetorical territory by “defining the rhetoric of devotion, autobiography, the body, and silence” (142).

With the growing corpus of scholarship on women rhetoricians the subfield of feminist rhetorics was taking shape and growing exponentially with additional studies from Barbara Biesecker, Susan Jarratt, Nan Johnson, Carol Mattingly, and Lindal Buchanan to name just a few. While some of the texts above included African American women as figures of study, it was Shirley Wilson Logan’s 1995 anthology *With Pen and Voice: A Critical Anthology of Nineteenth-Century African American Women*, that exclusively focused on Black women’s voices and the rhetorical strategies that emerged from multiply oppressed bodies. Likewise the work of Jacqueline Jones Royster and Hui Wu were bringing attention to women of color and their unique contributions to rhetorical history.
The work of these—and other—founding mothers of feminist rhetoric paved the way for my inquiry into the ethos construction of Latina activist Dolores Huerta by not only expanding what counts as rhetorical, but also by demanding attention to “who” counts as a rhetorician.

The Latino/a voice has not been entirely silent over the history of rhetoric, but it has been quiet. Highlighting the issues unique to Latinos in education, Richard Rodriguez (1983) and Victor Villanueva (1993) offered some of the earliest autobiographical work detailing the challenges of biculturalism experienced in an academic setting. Villanueva, has continued to contribute immensely to the widening definition of what counts as rhetoric and has recently co-edited with Damian Baca an anthology of non-Greco Roman rhetoric titled *Rhetoric of the Americas 3114 BCE-2012 CE* (2012). In a similar vein to Villanueva, Ralph Cintron examines rhetorics of public culture in his ethnographic book, *Angel’s Town* that is a rhetorical analysis of everyday negotiations between a Latino/a community and dominant institutions. However, one early study from Lisa Flores directly informs this study because of her focus on expanding discursive space and identity. In her 1996 article, “Creating Discursive Space Through A Rhetoric of Difference,” Lisa Flores analyzes fictional texts and Latina literary authors and ultimately argues,

that a discursive space can be opened through a rhetoric of difference which allows a marginalized group to reverse existing and external definitions and to create their own definitions. The creation of one’s own identity which relies upon the material conditions of the people is more likely to reflect the culture of the people, rather than the dominant culture of the empowered. Such a process is necessary for those groups who experience the decentering associated with a lack of space of their own, as it is a means through which the oppressed can move themselves from the periphery toward their own center. (162)
Flores’s early insights into the rhetorical strategies employed by Latina authors—albeit through fictional narratives—laid the foundation for the kind of analysis I do in this study. Like Flores, Jessica Enoch also adds to the investigation of Chicana rhetorics in her articles “Defining a Chicana Feminist Rhetoric at the Turn of Century,” (2004) “Survival Stories: Feminist Historiographic Approaches to Chicana Rhetorics of Sterilization Abuse,” (2005) and of course, her book *Refiguring Rhetorical Education* (2008). In addition to the scholars cited above there are also new and emerging scholars adding to the field such as Cristina Ramirez with her 2015 book *Occupying Our Space: The Mestiza Rhetorics of Mexican Women Journalists and Activists 1875-1942*. Ramirez brings needed attention to the contributions of Mexican women journalists and activists that worked to shape the cultural and political climate both before and after the Mexican revolution. Additionally, Kendall Leon’s “Chicanas Making Change” and Aja Martinez's several articles emphasizing the importance of counterstory, code meshing, and the trappings of colorblind racism also continue to open channels for discovering contributions of Latino/a figures of study and rhetorics. While this is not an exhaustive overview of every study involving Latino/a rhetorics it does include many of the texts and scholars currently working in the subfield. These scholars among others made critical interventions in the field, and of course, their contributions continue to influence contemporary rhetorical theory. However, while gains have been made, many people of color remain underrepresented across disciplines, and there tends to be a specific and significant lack of Latino/a voices.

As critical race theorists Richard Delgado and Juan Perea have argued, our nation has been working for too long under a Black and White binary. Ian Haney Lopez and George Martinez further reason that because of treaties and geographic proximity, Mexican
Americans specifically have been classified as White when it suits the dominant group and as non-Whites when it does not. In “The Black/White Binary Paradigm of Race” Perea, argues not only that the current paradigm focuses on Black/White, but also because of that “other people of color” tend to either get categorized with Blacks or ignored altogether. Furthermore, Perea claims, “Only a few writers even recognize that they use a Black/White paradigm as the frame of reference through which to understand all racial relations” (346). The field of Rhetoric and Composition can be likewise critiqued in this context. Of course, Rhetoric and Composition scholars have begun the important work of examining race/ethnicity in rhetorical education and composition studies contexts as well as recovery and analysis of important historical figures of color. However, much of the work does exist within a Black/White binary. In other words, it is clear that our field includes many important works that examine the histories of Historically Black Colleges and African American rhetorical practices, which of course are inherently important to our field, but—as critical race theorists so astutely note—so too are the practices and experiences from those that are in the middle of the color spectrum. Thus, since Rhetoric and Composition as a field may be viewed as also remaining within a Black/White paradigm, there remains a dire need to insert Latina figures like Dolores Huerta into the scholarship.

With veteran scholars and emerging scholars alike there is promise for more and louder representation of the so-called “sleeping giant” Latino/a community. I place myself within this community as an emerging Latina scholar committed to not only inserting important Latina figures from the past into the present, but to also analyzing how rhetoric is deployed from bodies that defy symbols of power. In so doing, I also disrupt the
Black/White paradigm that remains in place within the field of Rhetoric and Composition. Including the voice of Latina figures, like that of Huerta, does not only serve to diversify our field, but it also serves to broaden our conceptions of *ethos* and rhetorical strategy by looking to the unfamiliar strategies and tactics utilized by traditionally marginalized bodies, strategies that are unfamiliar primarily because they have not been the focus of many rhetorical studies.

**Dolores Huerta and the United Farm Workers**

Dolores Fernandez Huerta was born in the mining town of Dawson, New Mexico in 1930, but moved to Stockton, California during her early childhood (Mexican American Biographies). According to author Frank Bardacke, Huerta’s upbringing was middle class and after her mother, Alicia Fernandez, found success as a Stockton businesswoman, Huerta was “thoroughly bilingual and bicultural, enjoyed some of the accoutrements of American middle-class life—dancing, piano, and violin lessons—and a spot in the Stockton High School orchestra, with the prized position of majorette” (119). In his 2011 award-winning book *Trampling Out the Vintage: Cesar Chavez and the Two Souls of the United Farm Workers*, Bardacke meticulously covers the rise and fall of the UFW through testimonies of farm laborers. Although Bardacke emphatically contends that the histories of the UFW have focused too narrowly on Chavez and his staff at the expense of the farm workers’ voices, he still dedicates several pages to Huerta.

When Huerta first got involved with the fight for farm laborer’s rights she was a young mother and schoolteacher. Though her work as an activist varied from participating in Chicano organizations to voter registration, Huerta worked in the service of others for most of her life, but it wasn’t until a few years after meeting Cesar Chavez that Huerta gave
up her stable job and income in order to volunteer full time for the UFW and fully commit to her activism. In 1962, Chavez resigned from a small community service organization in order to concentrate on working for farm laborers’ rights. Huerta and Chavez joined forces and after a few iterations created what is now known as the United Farm Workers (UFW) union. Together, the duo was instrumental in organizing farm laborers to fight against the oppressive working conditions prevalent in the agricultural industry. According to its official website, the UFW “is the nation’s first successful and largest farm workers’ union currently active in 10 states” (UFW.org). While the UFW was not able to maintain the same level of membership and influence as it once did, it remains an influential force in the negotiation of farm laborers’ working conditions and compensation and actively campaigns for immigration law reform and racial equality.

There is no doubt that Chavez is most closely associated with the UFW. However, the short and concise tracing of Huerta’s life and role in the UFW found in the Dictionary of Mexican American History (DMAH) suggests her significance in Mexican American History and her influence on the farm laborer movement. The DMAH emphasizes Huerta’s abilities as an internationally recognized negotiator, speaker, and politician. The DMAH also credits her aptitude in the many aspects of organizing, which ranged from picket captain to contract negotiator, as the reason behind her role as Chavez’s most trusted and able associate (166). Likewise, Bardacke explains,

In 1959, after [Huerta] left the AWOC, Fred Ross, who had brought her into the Stockton CSO [community service organization] four years earlier, added her to the short list of paid CSO staff. In a brilliant move, he hired her to be the CSO lobbyist in Sacramento. She was a pioneer in the state capital, for there were no other Mexican American women lobbyists. By the age of thirty, Huerta had found her vocation. She mastered the intricacies of the legislative process. (119)
Yet, despite her proven ability as a co-leader of the UFW, Huerta’s personal life was also brought into public discussions about her work, in effect blurring the boundaries between her public and privately held roles. Of course, her decision to leave a stable income and job as a single mother of seven—which eventually grew to eleven—and to do so in the service of others is nothing short of astonishing. However, her decisions as a parent were far more scrutinized in the public sphere than those of Chavez or the multitude of other male public figures, which also contributed to the constraints placed on her as a mother. The constraints of motherhood became especially evident when at times Huerta was a single parent, and her volunteer work led to her having to face various obstacles including arranging for childcare and even negotiating how to pay for basic needs such as food, clothing, and shelter.

Although Chavez was the president and “face” of the UFW, he and Huerta worked together as the driving public force of the union. Chavez was known for his quiet and serious demeanor, while Huerta was often described as fiery and passionate. Their collective strengths hence led the UFW organization to become known for both its persistence and fierce determination. Huerta’s work as an activist started years before she began her fight alongside Chavez, yet she remains a relatively unknown and understudied rhetor. Despite the general public’s lack of awareness of Huerta, as I argue in this dissertation, her role as a leader of the UFW provides interesting insights regarding how the rhetor’s body influences credibility as well as how embodied identities significantly influence both organizations and social movements. As the vice president, Huerta shouldered the responsibility for many roles within the UFW that were carried out in both public and private settings. Thus, Huerta generated an important and rich body of work
that demonstrates her ability to construct an *ethos* that is effective, embodied, and fluid. A few examples of her work as a public figure include: chief negotiator for farm laborer contracts, representative of the UFW in congress, spokesperson in a highly publicized debate with the International Brotherhood of Teamsters’ union, and of course, speaker at countless public events including many protest rallies. Because of her role as a public figure for the UFW, Huerta also caught the attention of the press and was featured in newspapers, magazines, and union trade publications. As a high profile executive committee member it is clear that Huerta’s *ethos* construction not only set the tone for how the public perceived her, but also how the *UFW* was perceived.

Huerta’s influence and role in successfully securing major farm labor reform, and her ability to do so, is exceptional because she was working from a marginalized body, and from a position generally eclipsed by Chavez. Her ability to successfully maneuver between communities and subject positions also stands as support for her inclusion in our field and the benefits we will gain from deeply analyzing her work. With the work of Huerta as the focus, this study will continue the disciplinary tradition of providing a fuller and richer understanding of what we understand about feminist rhetorics. As I will illustrate in this dissertation, Huerta’s rhetorical strategies help to show how explicitly attending to embodied identities strengthens rhetorical appeals, and especially *ethos* construction. In their recent work, Jacqueline Jones Royster and Gesa Kirsch map out the importance of accounting for the complicatedness involved in doing rhetorical histories and specifically call for the heightened attention to our embodied-ness. The authors posit,

Rather than distancing ourselves from the complexities of the embodied-ness, we suggest instead that we attend to it, reflect on it, observe it, and critique it and that we cultivate a stance amid the chaos of it all that enables robust inquiry while enacting ethics of hope and care. (149)
Further, as Patricia Bizzell asserts in the foreword to *Feminist Rhetorical Practices*, the kind of ethical approach Royster and Kirsch champion is not only critical to feminist rhetors/scholars, but to anyone who will do research in rhetoric, composition, and literacy in general (xii). Drawing on this call from Royster and Kirsch I am inserting Huerta into rhetorical history with this dissertation study because Huerta was a rhetorical force without embodying a traditionally authorized body. Or, to put it another way, I look specifically at Huerta and how she builds her *ethos* in order to better understand, analyze, and acknowledge her contributions as a Latina rhetor to rhetorical studies.

**The Critical Roles and Responsibilities of Leaders: Creating exigence**

Although *ethos* is only one of the modes of argument, it is arguably one of the most important and strongest influences on the overall rhetorical effect. In fact, Marshall Alcorn contends that character—as it is embedded in *ethos*—is not only part of argumentative strategy, it *is* the force of the argument (4). However, the rhetor’s character and her ability to identify as well as connect with an audience are intrinsically connected to the larger concepts of context and exigence. In their leadership, Huerta and Chavez focused on the conditions of farmworkers and then further linked their fight to the health and wellbeing of every American during the civil rights movement as a way to demonstrate the exigence for change. In this section, I will illustrate how Huerta and Chavez seized the moment of the civil rights movement to build momentum for farm laborers’ rights through several documents and interviews. My discussion serves the purpose of emphasizing the responsibilities of the leaders to excite the necessity of the cause and also negotiate the complex rhetorical situation they were in.
As part of the larger scope of rhetorical strategy, exigence, like ethos, is highly contextualized and constructed. In “Unframing Models of Public Distribution: From Rhetorical Situation to Rhetorical Ecologies,” Jenny Edbauer explains, “[E]xigence is more like a complex of various audience/speaker perceptions and institutional or material constraints” (8). In other words, exigence is created by both what is grounded in reality and what is perceived—with help from a rhetor—as urgent and/or important. Further, Edbauer plainly states, “there can be no pure exigence that does not involve various mixes of felt interests” (8). Instead of “pure exigence,” there is a mix of perceptions and concerns that come together to create a sense of urgency for action; therefore, part of the rhetor’s job is creating exigence.

In rhetorical situations creating exigence, even as it derives out of real material experiences and events, is often aided by a leader/speaker because people are generally resistant to change. As Alcorn argues, “Real people resist what they sense to be ‘rhetoric’ because the self seems to identify with particular feelings and ideas in an organized and predictable manner and actively resists other, opposing feelings and ideas” (16), but such resistance ultimately becomes an ally to rhetoric. In other words, because people prefer to remain in their current state of beliefs the only way to promote action is to persuade them to do so. Thus, rhetorical prowess becomes key to any social movement. The combination of real material experiences and events, a cultural climate that was ripe for change, and the charismatic leaders of the UFW made it possible for the labor movement to gain momentum and strength, which led to a real change in the living and working conditions for farm laborers. More specifically, for example, the cultural climate of the summer of 1969 was fueled by change, Nixon announced the withdrawal of troops from Vietnam,
Stonewall riots occurred, and Apollo 11 landed on the moon. With such societal change and a politically active population, the UFW was gaining momentum in the fight for better working conditions. By the fall of 1969 the UFW had launched a nationwide boycott and had scientific evidence that pesticide residue was being detected on grapes. In a handwritten memo to the active “boycotters” in September 1969 Chavez implores:

Enclosed you will find a packet of important information on pesticides. PLEASE SIT DOWN AND READ IT CAREFULLY RIGHT AWAY! Your staff and closest supporters should also read ALL of this material so that they can speak to groups on the pesticide problem.

You’ll find a sample pesticide lawsuit against a chain in the packet. With this sample suit, all you need are lab tests on grapes from the target store in your city, a volunteer lawyer, and a consumer (preferably a nursing mother) who is outraged over the pesticide residues on grapes.

Remember, the problem of pesticides is critical to all of us. YOU MUST READ THE MATERIAL WE SEND TO YOU AND INFORM YOURSELVES SO THAT YOU CAN BE EFFECTIVE IN MOBILIZING SUPPORT TO STOP THE POISONING OF FARMWORKERS AND CONSUMERS. I hope to see many of you soon. Cesar (al reves)  

While this memo is rich with elements to analyze, I’d like to draw attention to the tone of urgency created by Chavez in emphasizing the importance for boycotters being educated about the effects of pesticides and the process for bringing a lawsuit. Chavez creates that urgency by first offering very explicit directions to the boycotters to, “Please sit down and read it carefully right away.” With this direct order, Chavez demonstrates that time is of the essence and there is no room for putting off action. Additionally, Chavez leaves very little room for the boycotters to misunderstand which points are most critical by underlining and capitalizing specific text. Not only does this strategy draw the attention of the boycotters to very specific actions—reading all the material for instance—but it also provides them with the justification and necessity for the continued boycott. Lastly, the

1 Presumably the inclusion of UFW member Al Reves signature is to indicate a translation or dictation of the memo from Cesar Chavez.
strategy of selecting a “nursing mother” as a participant in a lawsuit against a grocer carrying infected grapes also suggests the exigence that was created by Chavez as the president of the UFW. In sum, by making stylistic choices both in form, annotation, and the language utilized in the memo, Chavez effectively created the exigence for the movement.

Although the memo above was generated by Chavez, it is important to know that Huerta was in charge of the boycott in the East Coast and administered similarly voiced memos while also building the exigence for a national boycott. Like Chavez, Huerta recognized that the cultural climate of the time and the increasing momentum of the boycott offered critical opportunities for securing support. Thus, Huerta utilized the cultural conditions—a politically active population, civil rights era, and the concern for American consumer—in order to cultivate the exigence for the farm laborers’ cause. For example, in a four-page memo addressed to the boycotters and signed by Huerta during the same time period, we see a similar tone of urgency and explanation. After providing an update on some successes, Huerta shares additional steps for bringing a lawsuit to chain grocery stores. Huerta details:

Once we are in the meeting with the Chain Management, we invite as many heads of organizations as will come. Then whoever set up the meeting or the head of the organization that is leading the group informs the Chain Management that a Consumer Suit is being prepared against that store for the following reasons:

1. (1) Bringing unsanitary produce into the city (grapes) that has been picked and packed under unsanitary conditions because (1) lack of toilets and washing facilities in the fields (2) many aliens have been brought in from Mexico to pick the grapes that have not had health examinations as the government requires (wetbacks) or commuters, and they are breathing and putting horrible tubercular[sic], venereal, and other germs on the grapes.

2. (2) Misrepresenting the produce in their stores to their customers. They have told customers that the grape is from Arizona, or other places, that the strike is over, or that the grape is union picked.
3. (3) They are pushing a product on their customers that their customers don’t want. Grapes. (Here refer to the records of delegations that went in to the stores to ask that the grapes be removed). The stores will say, “The customers buy the grape.” Then we answer, “Sure, because you misrepresented the product and lied to them.”

The Important thing about the Consumer Suit Threat is that the Suit is going to be filed in the name of some Big Name consumer against the store, ON BEHALF OF the consumers in your city. For instance: In New York, Shirly McLane [sic]… (2)

Like Chavez, Huerta also utilized specific methods within the text to build exigence. And again, the excerpt included is rich with text to analyze, but for the sake of this examination I’d like to draw attention to how Huerta was strategic both in the evidence she cited for the boycotters to collect, such as grocers stocking unsanitary produce, suggesting that the supply of grapes was from outside of California, and selling grapes despite being asked not to. Asking boycotters to acquire such evidence specifically also calls attention to the public health concerns created by the farm laborers’ conditions, as well as prioritizing what issues are brought to the public discussion. Thus, Huerta builds exigence among the boycotters who in turn build exigence among the general public by bringing lawsuits supported by well-known public figures—such as actress Shirley McLane.

Although the guidance provided from Huerta for establishing lawsuits against grocers and tactics to build consumers’ concern for public health significantly adds to the exigence for the movement, some of the tactics engaged in are controversial. For instance, in Huerta’s memo, it is also important to note the reference to “wetbacks.”2 This is an interesting point to consider because Huerta and the UFW were working to better the conditions for both documented and undocumented farm laborers, thus the focus on

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2 Wetback is generally understood as a derogatory term used to describe undocumented Mexican immigrants that entered the United States via the Rio Grande.
growers bringing in Mexican nationals might seem surprising and troubling. As a Latina and the researcher of this dissertation project, such a finding conjured visceral and unexpected reactions while conducting the analysis, reactions that I had to work through before acknowledging the slur. However, while it is imperative to acknowledge the effect of language on social beliefs—in this case Huerta perpetuated negative stereotypes of Mexican people entering the US illegally—it is also necessary to consider the social complexities of the time, and the situated identities of both Huerta and Chavez. In actuality Huerta, and Chavez, were both criticized for their actions against new undocumented immigrants, but what is not reflected within the memo was the significant tension between the growers and the workers regarding replacements brought in by growers to relieve the effects of the strikes. In other words, the growers’ choice to exploit and employ new undocumented workers in their fields all but nullified the power of the UFW strikes. The tactic of emphasizing the use of “unexamined” laborers was deployed in order to bolster public interest and support for the national boycott. It is, without a doubt, unfortunate that such a slur and sentiment was put forward but it also signifies the intense commitment the leaders maintained for building the effectiveness of the strike and protecting the farm workers from further oppression. Ultimately, both Huerta and Chavez provided exigence for the boycott when addressing their supporters and simultaneously offered the boycotters concrete methods for creating the same kind of exigence to the public they were working to persuade.

As is evidenced in both memos there is an intentional and direct appeal to public safety as opposed to an emphasis on the working conditions of the farmworkers. In effect, focusing on issues that affected the general public deemphasized the conditions of the
farmworkers and therefore broadened the concerned audience to potentially include “everyone.” Focusing on the general consumer added exigence to the farmworkers working conditions. Lastly, in the excerpt above the request to secure a high profile consumer to bring the lawsuit adds to the general appeal to the public and ultimately aids in creating exigence for the movement. Both leaders took up the urgency created by the dire conditions of the farm workers in order to create a legitimate, yet also orchestrated, sense of exigence for the farm laborer movement. Thus, not only were the co-founders tasked with constructing an effective ethos, part of that construction also influenced their effectiveness in creating exigence for the movement.

Conclusion

Dolores Huerta was—and remains—a strong force in the fight for farmworkers rights and social justice causes. She began her volunteer career as Chavez’s “most trusted associate” (DMAH), but was also a leader in her own right. In effect, this examination of Huerta’s ethos is meant to discover what happens to widely held conceptions of ethos when the rhetor embodies traditionally marginalized identities.

In this introduction I first called attention to the need that remains for inserting Latina figures into the field of Composition and Rhetoric; a need that has been noticed by many, but addressed by very few. Recognizing that there are few works that focus on Latino/a figures and even fewer that look specifically at Chicana figures, this introduction aims to bring into focus the significant role the body plays in rhetorical strategy. Thus, I also provided biographical information in order to offer some insight to how Huerta’s

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3 Chicana or Chicano is a term that refers to an American of Mexican decent and is often considered a politically charged. In chapter three I further discuss the important differences between terms such as Chicana, Hispanic, Latino, and Mexican-American.
upbringing and background inform how she might be understood by the broader public as well as how her identity is commonly defined. Huerta’s background and path that led her to be the inaugural VP of the UFW offer important insight to how she was able to obtain a highly political and visible role in a time when that was very rare for both Latinos and women. Further, because this examination of Huerta is meant to explore the ways in which her ethos was affected by and also affected the UFW, in the concluding section of this introduction I provide an example of a moment in which Chavez and Huerta collectively build exigence for their cause.

Drawing on the foundation of this introduction, chapter two traces the shifts that have occurred in discussions regarding ethos and ethos construction, discussions that begin with and incorporate Aristotle’s foundation of ethos and then explore the relationship between identity, location, and ethos. Placing the body as central to the discussion of ethos and rhetorical strategy required a careful approach to my archival research. Thus in chapter three I begin by recounting the experience of visiting the archives at Wayne State in order to emphasize the care taken in researching, selecting, and ultimately analyzing the documents included throughout this project. Further, as part of the care in both selection and analyses of textual artifacts by and about Huerta, in the closing sections of chapter three I focus on the methodologies that inform this study. In effect, I argue that Huerta’s body positioned her in ways that require both a utilization of identity categories, in order to reveal how identity affected her ethos construction, while simultaneously attending to how those categories are far too rigid to effectively account for her intersectionality.

Moving from the discussions of ethos and the methods and methodologies informing this study, in chapter four I analyze a variety of texts both by and about Huerta. More
specifically, I focus on a few key articles that demonstrate the centrality of Huerta’s appearance, which serve as entry points for deeper discussion regarding the prominence of Huerta’s physical identities to understanding who she is as a leader. It quickly became apparent that when reporting on Huerta and her role in the movement, many journalists focus on the very attributes of her body that are most vulnerable and thus important identities for Huerta to explicitly attend to as a public figure. In essence, the findings that emerge from chapter four demonstrate the prevalence of Huerta’s appearance and how such a focus set up her audiences to identify her in particular ways, and thus required Huerta to explicitly respond to such categorizations. In addition, what also became evident was that Huerta’s ability and opportunity to address the ways in which her body was positioned and defined in the public arena was significantly influenced by genre. Much of chapter five focuses on the important role of genre in establishing credibility because as Carolyn Miller conceptualizes genre is an integral part of the rhetorical situation and is not merely an organizational system. Therefore, in order to better understand and explore how rhetorical genre theory aids in ethos construction I examined a variety of texts from differing genres. Through the examination it became evident that Huerta was skillful at navigating the nuances necessary in representing her character to her multiple audiences in multiple formats. Connecting the insights that emerged from the first five chapters, in the concluding chapter I work to demonstrate that although ethos is strongly tied to the body it can also be, and often is, transferred between rhetors. Specifically by extending the feminist model of ethos outlined by Carolyn Skinner to include the powerful affect of spoken language as a mode of identification, I argue that Huerta’s ethos and that of the UFW lives beyond her body. In an effort to provide a brief example of how ethos can and does get
redeployed through language, especially when taken up by different rhetors, I suggest a site for future study in a brief examination of the slogan she first uttered, and that was subsequently adopted by the UFW, ¡Si Se Puede!
Chapter Two  
Conceptions of Ethos: Working to Understand the “Self”

Even though some scholars in the field of Composition and Rhetoric argue that conceptions of ethos were present before Aristotle’s articulation of the argumentative appeal (Smith), most scholarly discussions of ethos begin with Aristotle. This examination, likewise, includes a review of Aristotle’s conceptions of ethos, which I argue helps to demonstrate how theories of ethos have been taken up and continue to evolve. Thus, working from many of Aristotle’s founding principles of ethos, this study further nuances the concept by not only emphasizing the rhetor’s body, but also by emphasizing a rhetor that traditionally lacks authority.

Early conceptions of ethos often imagined a speaker/rhetor who maintained a large amount of agency and who was able to put forth a “character” that would be perceived generously by the audience. Admittedly, ethos is strongly determined and attached to the moral character of the speaker/rhetor. However, and important for the current study, “morality,” as prescribed by Aristotle, was reserved for an elite group that was highly exclusionary. In Aristotle’s Rhetoric, he explains,

[W]e must have regard not only to the speech’s being demonstrative and persuasive, but also to establishing the speaker himself as of a certain type and bringing the giver of judgement into a certain condition. For this makes a great difference as regards proof, especially in deliberative oratory, but also in court cases—this appearance of the speaker to be of a certain kind and his making the audience suppose that he is disposed in a certain way towards them, and in addition the condition that they are themselves disposed in a certain way to him [emphasis added]. (140)

This particular passage has been cited many times and has been utilized to demonstrate the importance of who the speaker is in building ethos. Thus, it remains useful to revisit because the passage demonstrates one of the ways ethos was first conceived, while also
offering evidence for the tumultuous and changing relationship between discourse and character. Given Aristotle’s time period, and evidence elsewhere in his teachings, the appearance of the speaker to be of a “certain kind” refers to the necessity of the speaker to demonstrate practical wisdom, virtue, and good will (Aristotle, 2.1.5). What has been inferred from some readings done through a more contemporary lens is also that the speaker be of elite status and—quite literally—be of noble blood in order to be speaking from a place that good moral character is even a possibility. Thus, what remains striking is that even when a rhetor is of the necessary bloodline, argumentative appeals in general and *ethos* in particular still must be constructed. Further, when rhetorical strategy was conceived, taught, and modeled, little attention was paid to the role of embodied identities because in Aristotle’s time—and for much of history afterward—political authority and power were primarily accessible to only a limited constituency of White males. More contemporary rhetoricians do in fact take up issues of the body, and this project adds to their work by examining how character, good will, and authority are constructed from bodies generally considered outside of an elite ruling class.

While the teachings from Aristotle remain critical to the study of *ethos*, conceptions of argument and the argumentative appeal have been and remain dynamic. Given that the evolving conceptions of *ethos* are essential to the current study, in this section I prevail on the work of rhetorical scholars that have examined *ethos* closely and that offer many useful perspectives for the study of Huerta’s *ethos* construction. As I will show, because *ethos* is a complex part of the argumentation process, theories of *ethos* are necessarily incomplete. In other words, because *ethos* is contingent on multiple variables a close examination of, or particular focus on, specific elements is likely to deemphasize some other elements of
influence. Nonetheless, placing an emphasis on specific components impacting ethos, as I do by making the body central to my examination, brings attention to subtleties affected by race, class, and gender, which may otherwise be overlooked or dismissed.

In the introduction to Ethos: New Essays in Rhetorical and Critical Theory, James Baumlin reluctantly defines ethos as concerned with the “problematic relation between human character and discourse” (xvii). Baumlin’s hesitancy in providing a definition acts as evidence of the complexity involved in identifying ethos as well as its sources. While determining or defining conclusively the complexity of ethos is not an attainable task, there remains a general agreement that ethos is an argumentative appeal that is deeply rooted in the combined understandings of both the rhetor’s and the audience’s sense of character. Or, as Baumlin further specifies, ethos “raises questions concerning the inclusion of the speaker’s character as an aspect of discourse, the representation of that character in discourse, and the role of that character in persuasion” (xvii). I begin with Baumlin’s carefully crafted and tentative definition of ethos because it offers a general understanding of ethos and emphasizes the collaborative process through which it is built.

Like Baumlin, Michael J. Hyde emphasizes the importance of audience in ethos construction but does so less reluctantly and with a greater focus on the importance of trust. He explains, “[t]he practice of rhetoric constitutes an active construction of character; ethos takes form as a result of the orator’s abilities to argue and to deliberate and thereby to inspire trust in an audience” (xvi). It is not until the rhetor is able to “inspire trust,” as Hyde identifies, that an effective ethos takes shape. Thus, presenting “good character” is essential to building trust between the rhetor and the audience, and one’s character will take shape over the course of a given rhetorical situation. However, trust, like ethos, can be
quite difficult to build and is influenced by a multitude of forces; perhaps none more important than the trust the rhetor has in him/herself. In other words, although *ethos* construction is a collaborative process and the rhetor must gain the trust of his/her audience to be effective, trust must also reside within the rhetor. For instance, like Hyde, in “Trust, Ethos, Transference: Plato and the Problem of Rhetorical Method,” author Robert Brooke argues that trust is necessary to building a rhetor’s *ethos*, and further argues that it must be established before ever uttering a word (150). Specifically, Brooke points out the significance of the speaker/writer’s trust in herself when he explains, “[i]n order to write, in short, we need to trust our processes of writing; we need confidence that our past experiences, our relationships with responders, and our composing processes will lead to successful work” (150). Placing the notion of building trust—as building *ethos*—is critical in relationships with both the audience and the self. Trusting the self and past experiences to act from an ethical and knowledgeable place is equally important to presenting oneself as trustworthy. One might argue then, that in order for Huerta—or any other rhetor for that matter—to be successful they must first, or at least additionally, gain their own trust before addressing and persuading others.

Extending Brooke’s claim that the rhetor must trust herself in order to in turn trust the composing process, it can be argued that Huerta needed to have a keen sense of her identity in order to confidently draw on her past experiences, relationships, and understanding of her audience. Or to put it more plainly, Huerta had to know that her experiences as a mother, Latina, and woman mattered enough to speak with authority to her audiences about the need for social change. Perhaps this is one of the key reasons Huerta had to be, and was classified so often as, passionate. Above all else she believed in
her “reading” of the situation because of her lived experiences alongside farmworkers and their children. Considering that trust plays a central role in ethos construction, the current examination of ethos takes into consideration multiple conceptions of the trust/ethos dynamic. In particular, my research into Dolores Huerta has compelled me to explore the ways in which the construction of trust and ethos revolves around the rhetors’ need to place themselves within a broader context, to define how they understand their own identities or “self”, and to acknowledge the importance of embodied identities. The subsections that follow—“Ethos as Derived from Location/Dwelling,” “Ethos as Construction of Self,” and “Ethos from a Feminist Perspective”—address these three rhetorical needs, respectively.

**Ethos as Derived from Location/Dwelling**

Despite Aristotle’s efforts to describe ethos and emphasize the importance of the appeal, Baumlin points out, “The very vocabulary of Aristotelian rhetoric remains slippery and unsettled. One cannot simply read the *Rhetorica*, and particularly its discussion of ethos, as if it were a clear, comprehensive outline of incontrovertible theory” (xvii). Attending to the cause for such apparent ambiguity in “Ethos Dwells Pervasively,” Craig R. Smith argues that Aristotle’s adaptations and evolutions of how he positions ethos predicates ethos as a dwelling place. Specifically, Smith contends, “[f]or Aristotle, it is a given: everyone has ethos whether it be noble or ignoble. Before one speaks, that ethos has an ontological dimension because it emerges from the way one makes decisions, the way one lives on a day-to-day basis, the way one dwells” (2). Ultimately, Smith argues that Aristotle is not contradictory or intentionally ambiguous about ethos, but instead taken collectively the *Rhetoric* and *Ethics* are, “inextricably bound and both are essential to
understanding Aristotle’s rhetorical theory” (16). Thus, read independently and/or without taking into consideration the context of Aristotle’s time, his discussions of ethos might seem detached and ambiguous. Conceptually, Smith aids the analysis of Huerta’s ethos by explaining that Aristotle

assumed the ancient notion of ethos as dwelling place, advanced it, and took for granted that prior reputation among the demos was important to credibility. Aside from broadening the intertextual understanding of ethos, [a close] reading demonstrates the importance of the concept in terms of pervasiveness in the speech text and its audience. (16)

In his conclusion, Smith claims, “for Aristotle, ethos dwells pervasively in the rhetorical situation” (16). When applying this concept to a rhetorical figure such as Huerta, it becomes evident that “prior” reputation may first be known—or perceived—through the recognition of embodied identities; a categorization that tends to assist audiences in constructing “who a person is” before actually knowing them.

Like Smith, scholars Michael Hyde, Nedra Reynolds, Julie Christoph, and Risa Applegarth have developed concepts of ethos that strongly prevail on ethos as a location or dwelling place. More specifically, Hyde adds to my discussion by describing ethos as a place in which people can deliberate and know together (xiii). The coming together and inhabiting space together in order to build ethos is especially interesting when considering Huerta because in many cases Huerta had to bridge external differences in order to establish common ground. In “Ethos as Location,” Reynolds explains that ethos requires the “writer” to locate themselves in terms of their identities and associations, as well as acknowledge they “are constructed by space and the spatial.” Reynolds goes on to explain that “a writer’s subject positions are determined by the space of the body, her geographical location, her shifting intellectual positions, her distance or closeness to others, to texts, to
events” (335-336). Reynolds points out the importance of both metaphorical spaces, such as identities, and literal spaces, such as geographical setting, in ethos construction. Drawing on Reynolds then, it can be argued that the physical locations where Huerta worked and lived also influenced her ethos. As Huerta became more entrenched in the fight for farm laborers’ rights, she built her ethos by changing her geographical location a few times—first by moving from Stockton to Delano, California; second, by moving and organizing the grape boycott in New York City; and then returning back to the Central Valley of California. Huerta’s physical body also was utilized to build her ethos, by standing in picket lines, marching in protest rallies, and living in the same material conditions as the farm workers.

Therefore, Huerta’s ethos was deeply enhanced by her habitual and material practices during the organization of the UFW. Similarly to Reynolds, Julie Christoph builds on the sense of place by arguing that not only do writers/rhetors need to locate themselves within particular contexts and locations, but they also have to account for their personal lived experiences (678). More specifically, Christoph suggests that by investigating the influence of the personal in argument, writer-scholars would better understand how the personal functions in and affects argument (678). As is demonstrated over the course of this dissertation project, Huerta’s personal life and experiences both greatly shape and are shaped by the audiences and genres she engages with when making arguments for the importance of farm laborers rights.

Finally, drawing on Reynolds and Hyde, Applegarth complicates the discussion of ethos by demonstrating the influence of genre in ethos strategy. More specifically, in her article, “Genre, Location, and Mary Austin’s Ethos,” Applegarth details the important role genre plays in establishing the credibility of a rhetor. Using the work of activist nature-
writer Mary Austin, Applegarth demonstrates how genre “shapes Austin’s efforts to develop her location in the deserts of the American West into a persuasive public ethos,” ultimately, concluding that, “ethos emerges in genre-specific formations” (41). Working in part from Applegarth’s argument, in chapter five I closely examine how Huerta positions herself and her identity dependent upon the genre utilized for her public address. Additionally, I argue that Huerta’s identities and political cause significantly influenced the genres she, and the UFW, had access to. While each of these scholars’ conceptions varies by emphasis, collectively they lay the foundation for this project. Considering ethos as a location or dwelling place therefore provides a useful analytic to expose the matrix of forces that come together as ethos. Yet, while this project works to further the discussion of how ethos is constructed, it does so cautiously and by acknowledging the complicated nature of the concept (Baumlin, xxvi) and the necessarily incomplete depiction of ethos advanced here.

Because ethos is as difficult to define as it is to empirically trace, any examination of ethos is necessarily limited. That said, however, examining ethos is also generative because it further theorizes how power and authority get established by rhetors. In other words, despite the indefinable nature of ethos, there are markers that can be identified and conceptualized based on our shared understanding of character and discourse. Further, it has been well established that ethos is tied to the body, which for a study on a racialized body such as Huerta’s is particularly necessary to consider. For example, James Baumlin explains,

According to Aristotle’s model of ethos, the rhetorical situation renders the speaker an element of the discourse itself, no longer simply its origin (and thus a consciousness standing outside the text) but rather a signifier standing inside an extended text. The rhetor’s physical presence and appearance, his
gestures, inflections, and accents of style, are all involved in acts of signification. (xvi)

As noted by Baumlin, Aristotle recognized the importance of the rhetor’s physicality, and such an understanding supports a reading of Huerta’s ethos that centers on the body. Additionally, it bears repeating that in Aristotle’s view, good character was an attribute that was presumed only an elite few could possess and ethos was negotiated only between audiences and speakers that shared privilege as well as access to public discourse. For example, as Reynolds reminds us, the orators and rhetors of Aristotle’s time in ancient Greece did not include slaves and women because they were not allowed to participate in public discourse (329). Like many others (such as Baumlin, Hyde, Fleckenstein, to name just a few), this examination of ethos is drawn from and deeply values Aristotle’s conception(s) of ethos, but also works to bring attention to how character and credibility are built when the body of the rhetor signals identities that have been traditionally disassociated with power and authority.

While it is certain that ethos is affected by seemingly less obviously embodied influences—say for example genre—and is constructed through a multiplicity of contexts, I argue that by looking at ethos through the body we are able to discover qualities that are often only subtly considered—if at all. As Kristie Fleckenstein contends in “Cybernetics, Ethos, and Ethics: The Plight of the Bread-and-Butter-Fly,” “Aristotle’s ethos morphs across borders, resisting all efforts to hold it stable” (326) and thus can be imagined as a “living network consisting of rhetor, text, audience, and context” (326). This notion—that ethos may be considered an information system of a living network—offers a useful analogy for understanding how embodied identities also influence knowledges because it draws attention to the lineages and experiences that connect people to one another. Try as we
might to distance ourselves from our bodies, even the ethos of an organization is often tied to the bodies it serves or the bodies of origin (think Apple and Steve Jobs). Thus, while Huerta’s ethos develops alongside both Chavez and the UFW’s character, it does so from very specific locations. Huerta had to negotiate audiences distinctly based on who she was in ways that differed from Chavez. That said, however, because ethos is dynamic and unruly there remains a recursive relationship between individuals, communities, and organizations. In other words, ethos is not based on one singular individual, but rather is mutually created through a network of knowledges, knowledges that when read through the body reveal the complex and interwoven ideologies that affect how character is defined and perceived.

**Ethos as Construction of Self**

Placing the body in the center of a rhetorical analysis can serve to reorient notions about and empower marginalized bodies, which may otherwise be seen and felt as liabilities rather than assets by those who encounter and inhabit them. Because discussions of ethos, and rhetoric, are often oriented from normative commonplaces that downplay difference and diversity, emphasizing the value in positions of difference is necessary in order to compensate for the lack of understanding and/or awareness of that value. More specifically, as Jay Dolmage suggests in “Metis, Mêtis, Mestiza, Medusa,” one of the significant consequences of leaving women out of the early rhetorical tradition is that values established by White men became the standard or norm for positions of power and authority. In other words, White men became understood as the “normal” vessels of authority and therefore their experiences and knowledges were privileged. Thus, attending
to the body was unnecessary since it was presumed that a “normal body” was that of a White able male (Dolmage 2). In his article Dolmage explains,

In order for this logic of normativity to function, the male body must remain relatively unmarked. This in turn relies on the supposed aberrancy of the female. Andrea Lunsford, Cheryl Glenn, Kate Ronald and Joy Richie, Sharon Crowley, and others have shown that the rhetorical traditions that have been chosen and taught in our modern milieu overlook—if not explicitly devalue—the female body. Aristotle famously wrote that female offspring is the first step toward “monstrosity”—“the first departure from type is indeed that the offspring should become female instead of male” (Generation 70). He states that “the female is, as it were, a mutilated male,” establishing man as the baseline and women both as pure aberrancy and as responsible for all deviation. (2)

As Dolmage emphasizes above, women were considered gross mutations of the male, and he further argues that women were considered disabled or deficient just by virtue of being female. Yet, Dolmage ultimately argues that from difference comes power by detailing three important examples of women’s distorted representations ranging from Greek myth to Gloria Anzaldúa’s concept of Mestiza (see footnote 3). In linking the relationship among the concept of métis, or intelligence/cunning, with the Goddess Metis, Medusa, and Mestiza consciousness, Dolmage works to place the body as central to and essential for defining rhetoric. Through this examination of Huerta’s ethos, it becomes evident that there are many opportunities to utilize the power of her “difference” in order to build her character through commonly held conceptions of her identity—especially in terms of “self” definition and re-definition—as well as by offering productive challenges to those conceptions. Or, for example, as I demonstrate in chapter four, Huerta draws on commonly held conceptions of woman as mother (or potential mother) and therefore naturally more concerned with the wellbeing of children and family than men are. She then continues with that course of argument to strongly suggest that women then are more trustworthy and looking out for
the best interest of others rather than themselves. In this scenario Huerta utilized the "different" and subjugated role of woman/mother in order to position the woman/mother as the moral superior over the typical male leader/legislator who she implies are by nature more ego driven. Thus, Huerta is empowered by her difference, and by extension, the difference of others that can relate to her.

However, before a rhetor, especially a marginalized rhetor, can utilize her difference, she must have a genuine sense of self. In the 1994 anthology, *Ethos: New Essays in Rhetorical and Critical Theory*, editors James Baumlin and Tita Baumlin bring together several works that examine *ethos* and explore the complicated relationship between language and human character. At least three of the sixteen articles emphasize the important role of a rhetor's understanding of "self" and its integral relationship to *ethos* construction, and through these three texts, it becomes evident that locating rhetors' sense of self is crucial to their ability to construct *ethos*. Specifically, in the introduction of their text, James Baumlin argues that because language is shaped by ideological forces, the "study of *ethos* must acknowledge the presence and play of ideology within a speaker's or author's self-representations" (xxii). Baumlin asks for the careful consideration of ideology and how it both shapes culture and is shaped by culture in the study of *ethos*; he also draws our attention to the importance of examining the "self" and how it is represented. Explicitly connecting embodied identities to the study of *ethos* is important and necessary because any rhetor's body and sense of self is deeply impacted by culture and "the presence and play of ideology." Like Baumlin, Marshall Alcorn examines the role of the self and self-representation in *ethos* strategy. Drawing on both Baumlin and Alcorn in this examination of Huerta's *ethos*, I look closely at her explicit representation of self in several forms of her
public address as well as consider how she defines the identities she embodies to her various audiences. Thus, I consider both how Huerta presented her “self” as well as argue that because a sense of self is central to ethos construction, identity and/or more specifically embodied identities significantly shape ethos. While it is unclear whether Huerta consciously or subconsciously developed her approach to self-definition, how she positions herself does become central to the analysis of her ethos construction. The scholarship of James Baumlin, Marshall Alcorn, and Jarratt and Reynolds, especially their work included in Ethos: New Essays in Rhetorical and Critical Theory, inform the analysis of ethos I present in this chapter. This is because I value that these authors illustrate the crucial role self-definition holds in ethos construction as well as lay out the evolution of critical changes in conceptions of ethos. One of the important observations Alcorn points out is that not only do conceptions of the self directly affect our understanding of ethos, but also those conceptions change over time and place. For example, if identifying a figure as a mother, we may have a temptation to overlay a stable definition of character that imagines a cisgendered homemaker; with that imagined figure we may assume a trustworthiness or credibility when speaking about parenting strategies or concerns related to the home. However, such a definition flattens the very complicated role of a real life mother and is highly contingent on the time that the image was invoked. The definition or characteristics of mother we imagine in the 1950s, after all, varies drastically from that which we might imagine today.

In addition, ethos is strongly influenced by the social situation in which the rhetor and audience are engaged, and, therefore, as Alcorn asserts, “it is a mistake to assume an inner core of the self that somehow grounds the various roles the self assumes” (5). In
other words, while Huerta was the VP of the UFW she consistently remained “a mother,” but how she represented herself and was represented as such varied greatly between social situations and purpose for the engagement. Thus, any discussion of self and ethos must also recognize that notions of “self” are always in flux and not autonomous. As I will illustrate more thoroughly in subsequent chapters, Huerta constructs her ethos by leveraging shared definitions of identity categories (Chicana, mother, woman), but in so doing also revises those very definitions. In a personal letter addressed to Chavez circa 1964 Huerta writes to discuss her move from Stockton, CA two hundred miles south of the heart of the organizing efforts in Delano, CA. In addition to sharing the status of her arrangements to move, Huerta also shares general updates regarding the status of their organizing efforts. Thus, while Huerta was writing to Chavez in a formal capacity her personal life was necessarily comingled—and emphasized—in the letter.

I am now working on having my kids stay with various assorted relatives for the next month and one half until school starts. If all goes very well, I will still be left with maybe one or two kids, depending on whether Ventura can make arrangements to keep the boys, anyways Vincent I would not leave anywhere because he would miss me too much. Then do you suppose I could make living arrangements with someone to put me and my one kid up for a month and one half, then I could pay room and board. (Dolores Huerta Reader 202)

Based on the quote above, it can be argued that in order to establish her ethos with Chavez, Huerta had to demonstrate her ability to manage her family alongside the organizing efforts, and thus, Huerta shared the details of making such accommodations. Building her ethos with Chavez was also necessary since an endorsement from him would translate into a great deal of support for the inclusion of Huerta in a leadership role.

While Dolores Huerta may be more than an educated, Mexican-American, religious, woman, and mother of eleven children, each of these classifications stands as cultural
symbols of identity that provide us with a clue to who she is and the knowledges that she is working from. Knowing Huerta, understanding Huerta, believing Huerta, is imperative to her *ethos* construction. Each element of who she is, where she’s from, and what she represents aided her and fellow farm laborer activist Chavez to garner support for their fight for farm workers’ rights. Hence, it is necessary to take into consideration Huerta’s multiple identities and how they intersect to create unique situations for her to negotiate.

In order to conceptualize the significance of embodied identities, and specifically, its influence on *ethos* construction, it is necessary to invoke intersectional theory, or intersectionality. Intersectionality, much like *ethos*, is a difficult concept to define, but is nonetheless important to understand. The term itself is most often credited as popularized by critical race feminist and foremother Kimberlee Crenshaw. In her groundbreaking 1991 article “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color,” Crenshaw makes evident the multiple oppressions that are often experienced by women of color along several axes. Thus, in its most basic terms intersectionality can be understood as a concept that acknowledges social inequities that are affected by a constellation of forces. While Crenshaw’s naming of intersectionality occurred in 1991, work engaged with accounting for and recognizing multiple oppressions began decades before. Specifically, in her article “Intersectionality’s Definitional Dilemmas,” sociologist Patricia Hill Collins points out, literary theorists like Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa were engaged in intersectional work, but did not have the term to use explicitly. Anzaldúa’s concepts of *mestiza* consciousness and border crossing ideologies have in fact become very central to intersectional studies and scholarship (Collins, 9). Thus, whether or not named as such, intersectionality work concerns itself with power relations and social
inequalities that are affected by a complicated matrix of personhood—often related to embodied identities but not exclusively. Collins offers this working explanation of intersectionality:

...a general consensus exists about intersectionality’s general contours. The term intersectionality references the critical insight that race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nation, ability, and age operate not as unitary, mutually exclusive entities, but as reciprocally constructing phenomena that in turn shape complex social inequalities. (2)

Intersectionality at its core is concerned with relationships of power and social inequalities and those concerns—as is evident in the above excerpt—often include much more than race and gender. What Crenshaw, Collins, and many other intersectionality scholars and practitioners identify is the severe problem caused by single axis thinking that creates an oversight of the multiple oppressions that are often experienced by women of color.

In her book, Pursuing Intersectionality, Unsettling Dominant Imaginaries Women and Gender Studies scholar Vivian May explains that working outside of single axis thinking and using a complex analytic is a difficult task, but is necessary. Specifically she argues,

Rather than a fixed method with set boundaries, hard-and-fast tenets, or predetermined subjects and schematics, intersectionality can best understood as an interpretive orientation that leaves these factors as open questions to be taken up, to help expose how subjection and dominance operate, sometimes subtly. (4)

In addition May describes intersectionality as “an analytical and political orientation that brings together a number of insights and practices developed largely in the context of Black feminist and women of color theoretical and political traditions” (3). Because ethos construction is predicated on character and credibility along with perceived authority and agency, any analysis of Huerta’s ethos requires attention to the multiple identities—or
matrix of identities—she inhabits in order to ascertain where and how she achieves her ethos.

It is important to note that while this project utilizes seemingly “fixed” categories such as Chicana and Woman, my intent is to focus on the solidarity of communities rather than sameness thereby preventing an essentialist approach. Intersectionality, as May explains, offers a matrix orientation for examining how systems of power operate. More specifically, May writes,

Intersectionality, for instance, contests several taken-for-granted ideas about personhood, power, and social change: in particular, its multidimensional “matrix” orientation is often at odds with “single-axis” sociopolitical realities, knowledge norms, and justice frameworks. (1)

Specifically, this project looks at how Huerta’s embodied identities affect her position as a rhetor and how being a public figure affected the notions of her embodied identities. More pointedly in her introduction May argues that intersectionality has several key qualities that must be kept in mind together (11):

4. [Intersectionality] is an orientation for engagement or praxis; it entails matrix thinking; it is relevant to and “about” all of us; and it is not neutral. (12)

5. [Intersectionality] is an epistemological project that contests dominant mindsets; and ontological approach that accounts for complex subjectivity and offers different notions of agency; a radical political orientation grounded in solidarity rather than sameness, as an organizing principle; and a resistant imaginary useful for intervening in conventional historical memory and prevailing social imaginaries. (12)

These broad qualities as May describes them demonstrate the intrinsically messy nature of doing intersectional work because it resists orderly definitions for conducting analysis and instead orients scholars toward an approach of “doing” work that identifies gaps, accounts for varied social positions, emphasizes the political underpinnings of everyday practices, and pushes back against dominant mindsets. In fact, drawing on Crenshaw, May she argues
that intersectionality should be approached as verb rather than a noun (19). Thus, my examination necessarily invokes intersectionality in order to “do” intersectionality.

Because intersectionality is an umbrella term it is useful to also consider three subcategories that are examined by Patricia Hill Collins: (a) intersectionality as a field of study, (b) intersectionality as an analytical strategy that provides new angles of envisioning social phenomena; and (c) intersectionality as a critical praxis that informs social justice projects (1). Of course, Collins acknowledges that these subcategories are interdependent, but nonetheless provide some additional scaffolding for understanding how intersectionality can be beneficial. While this work utilizes much of the theoretical framing provided by intersectionality it does so primarily through intersectionality as an analytical strategy and as a critical praxis as described by Collins. Taken collectively, Anzaldua, Crenshaw, Collins, and May, all offer critical insights for engaging in this project and examining the role of embodied identities on ethos creation. As detailed in the final chapter of Pursuing Intersectionality, Unsettling Dominant Imaginaries, May explains,

Intersectionality is a justice-oriented approach to be taken up for social analysis and critique, for political strategizing and organizing, for generating new ideas, and for excavating suppressed ones, all with an eye toward disrupting dominance and challenging systematic inequality. This entails actively finding ways to perceive/interpret/act against the pull of established, single-axis imaginaries and to engage in an ongoing effort to realize meaningful, collective justice via epistemic, ontological, economic, and structural change. There is also, therefore, a need to be wary of overly instrumental models of intersectionality and/or depoliticized applications that negate its political history and subversive potential. (228)

It is with this excerpt in mind that I acknowledge that my investigation of Huerta’s ethos construction is political and justice oriented. Although this project is meant to both enrich our understanding of ethos construction by emphasizing the significance in which embodied identity affects perceptions of character and demonstrating the immensely
collaborative nature of *ethos* construction, it is not politically neutral and instead is meant to also generate new ideas and disrupt/challenge dominant systems of inequity.

Additionally, May outlines four principles that I worked to maintain throughout my project and that she argues are required for scholars to do intersectional work:

1. Honor and foster intersectionality’s antisubordination orientation;
2. Draw on intersectionality’s matrix approach to meaningfully engage with heterogeneity, enmeshment, and divergence;
3. Take up intersectionality’s invitation to follow opacities and to read against the grain;
4. Set aside norm emulation as a philosophical/political/research/policy strategy. (228)

In order to best represent the qualities of intersectional work as laid out by Crenshaw, Collins, and May, the analysis of Huerta’s *ethos* construction was/is recursive. Therefore, the analysis of her *ethos* construction may never be deemed as final or complete but instead in flux along with our understanding of power and authority as well as how it manifests in mainstream understandings of rhetorical strategy and aptitude. For instance, strategies that were demonstrated throughout this project are Huerta’s keen awareness of her audience and her ability to craft her texts with her specific audience in mind. In a 1973 public debate with International Brotherhood of Teamsters Union representative Chuck O’Brien, Huerta tailored her responses to address claims by O’Brien as well as to inform the wider audience about the issues facing the farm laborers. In her opening statement Huerta shares,

> The organizing of farm workers in this country has a long and bitter history. Every effort that has been made has been broken by the powerful force of the growers with violence against the powerless, most of the time ethnic groups, such as the Chinese, Japanese, Filipinos, Mexicans, Mexicans, and Mexicans again. The Teamsters Union in 1961 tried to organize the farm workers. They set up an organizing office in Stockton, California, my hometown, put out a lot of effort and a lot of money and their effort failed. (*Dolores Huerta Reader* 219)
It is clear from the excerpt above that Huerta found unifying qualities in naming the ethnic groups most negatively affected by the labor conditions, and also made no effort to soften her contention with the Teamsters. Through both actions—naming the ethnic populations and by emphasizing the Teamsters failure—Huerta builds her ethos among supporters of the farm workers’ efforts, and among those that identified with her otheredness/difference.

Over the long history of the effort to name and/or define ethos that begins with Aristotle, it is not surprising that the need to qualify the embodied qualities of the identity of the rhetor was often considered unnecessary. However, while rhetors have—over an equally long history—always derived from a diverse set of cultures and communities, the focus on such qualities can rarely be located. Of course, as May cautions, even when intersectional work is done in earnest there are likely to be mishaps and flaws. One such critique May lobbies is against the inadvertent reification of neat and tidy categories.

Specifically May notes,

Oddly, critics often use nonintersectional lenses, or even anti-intersectional logics, to assess its alternative vision: via an either/or interpretive approach, intersectional both/and analyses are rendered illogical or dispensable, for example. Likewise, by using norms and measures that begin from an additive notion of identity or inequality, critics frequently obliterate its matrix thinking and cross-cutting vision of change. (13)

Most notably May points out the problematic nature of the “additive notion” of identity, and later argues the necessity to resist it. In other words, while it can be said that Huerta was indeed a woman, and Chicana, and a mother, these three categories of identity do not equally and always add up to some sort of a quantifiable level of oppression. Instead, May argues for an awareness that identities such as these are always at play but can—and often are—measured differently depending on the social context. Further, in an effort to account
for the complexities of identity I approach this project through a matrix lens which requires a great deal of zigzagging between the relationships formed by cultural norms as revealed through close readings of mainstream publications, the sense of self as revealed through the analysis of texts from Huerta, and the sense of audience as revealed through contextual analysis.

As Collins, Crenshaw, and May assert, among many intersectionality scholars, intersectional work is political, and as such is deeply affected by social and cultural shifts. Likewise, rhetorical theory is greatly impacted by cultural shifts, and thus post-structural theorists dramatically influenced rhetorical theory especially in regards to accounting for the complexity of “self” and the highly contextual nature of identity. In tracing the changes post structuralism brought to our understanding of self, Alcorn explains, “Paul Smith, a theorist describing the implications of certain Lacanian and Althuesserian ideas, suggests that a person can be ‘conceived as a colligation of multifarious and multiform subject-positions situated along, but not united by, temporal experience (32)’” (5). In other words, post structuralism deconstructed the image of the stable unified self so much that the self was conceptualized as only fragmented and socially constructed with little to no agency.

Alcorn argues that while there is no single stable self as seemingly referenced by Aristotle in the classical understanding of ethos, we are likewise not merely fragments of a self as suggested by poststructuralists. More specifically, Alcorn states,

The Aristotelian view envisions an overly strong self able to choose freely its own nature, able to become whatever model it can imagine...The poststructuralist view emphasizes the self’s lack of freedom, but in so doing it imagines an overly weak self. (6)

While Alcorn does value these views, he argues that they are not useful for a study of ethos and instead describes ethos as “a relationship existing between the discourse structures of
selves and the discourse structures of ‘texts’” (6). This point becomes particularly
important when discussing how ethos works from a marginalized position because the
discourse structures that influence the identities of marginalized people—or their sense of
self—often position them in oppressed or subservient roles. To further this point I return
to Alcorn as he explains the role of history and self-definition:

> Historical considerations of the self are important because we too often consider the self to be one thing, unchanging over time. This encourages us to believe that different ideas about the self reflect ideas about one and the same thing. It may be that there are many, distinctly different selves. Similarly, we often think of ethos as defining a single, stable relationship existing between language and the self. But if both language and the self undergo historical changes, then it must follow that ethos also undergoes historical change. Thus, the concept of ethos should not be imagined as some fixed reality approached by different perspectives. Rather, we should imagine different sorts of ethos assuming many shapes as these structures change over time. (6-7)

In effect, Alcorn is arguing that ethos itself shifts as our lived experiences shift. Therefore,
unslike the example of “mother” shared previously in which the definition of “mother”
changed with time due to the changing actions/roles that mothers engaged in, a more
explicit redefinition or shift can be witnessed in the (re)appropriation of terms that were
once derogatory such as Chicano.

Similarly to Alcorn, Susan Jarratt and Nedra Reynolds argue that although Aristotle
places the person/subject central to any discussion of ethos, it is still bound by the nature
of the “right” or “good” man. Moreover, Jarratt and Reynolds likewise question the degree
to which Poststructuralists swing the pendulum away from the central stable self by
arguing that individuals are merely a product of fractured discourse. Specifically, Alcorn
claims, “The self does not become each and every socially constructed discourse formation
it encounters; something within its own inner organization prompts the self to identify
with certain social forms and to reject others” (13). In essence, Alcorn argues that the self is
a combination of both mutable and immutable formations that are built in conjunction with
cultural discourse and therefore post structuralism is inadequate, but he falls short of
politicizing such shortcomings. Jarratt and Reynolds, however, focus our attention on
another, more political shortcoming of poststructuralism by arguing that the poststructural
authorless text only devalues the importance of recognizing that not all bodies are received
the same way by the audience—as if to say there is ‘one’ theoretical subject that is removed
from all “political and ethical realities” (38). Although it is clear that this study centers the
author in the examination of rhetorical strategy it does so by also considering the
poststructural view that the self is fractured. Thus, neither the Aristotelian conception of
ethos nor poststructural theories of self support the kind of intersectionality inhabited by
rhetors such as Dolores Huerta or UFW president Cesar Chavez.

In highlighting sophistic rhetoric and specifically tracing its connection to both
feminist standpoint theory and positionality, Susan Jarratt and Nedra Reynolds offer a
pathway for the inclusion of intersectional work and embodied rhetoric into the
conversation. Their contribution aids in conceptualizing the multiple ways of “reading”
Huerta’s rhetorical prowess. In “The Splitting Image,” Jarratt and Reynolds argue that
feminist rhetoric is supported through some of the earliest teaching of rhetoric from the
sophists. More specifically, according to Jarratt and Reynolds, “the essentialist definitions
and hierarchies of knowledge contaminating Aristotle’s rhetoric” are absent from sophistic
rhetoric; further, they assert that “rather than focusing on the split between a genuine, fully
formed character and its representation, sophistic rhetoric explains the process of
character formation through learning to speak to the interests of the community” (44).
However, it should not be overlooked that the sophists were cast out from favor in part because they “sold” their rhetorical education, which in effect called their ethics into question. While sophistic rhetoric fell out of favor early in history because many, especially Plato, critiqued the sophists for teaching and promoting deception, Jarratt and Reynolds argue that rhetoric does not teach nor endorse disingenuous discourse. Instead, they argue that sophistic rhetoric explains that a rhetor utilizes their multiple positions to connect with diverse audiences:

The alliance between feminism and (sophistic) rhetoric thus makes sense historically. It is precisely the concept of ethos in rhetoric that theorizes the positionality inherent in rhetoric—the speaker having been created at a particular site within the contingencies of history and geography. (47)

They continue to explain that they are not suggesting that a rhetor speaks from a location in between the stable moral notion of self and the constructed version that might be misleading or negatively deceptive to an audience; instead, they clarify that “this positioning is a constant awareness that one always speaks from a particular place in a social structure—an awareness common to rhetoric and to post-modern feminisms” (47).

In other words, sophistic rhetoric promotes ethical and moral demonstrations of the self, but also acknowledges the ways in which the self shifts in response to contextual demands. This observation by Jarratt and Reynolds is particularly significant for a marginalized rhetor like Huerta because, as we will see in subsequent analysis, Huerta, a formally educated woman, often voiced a deep suspicion for the indoctrinating function of education and cautioned potential supporters about being too rational, and consequently ignoring their intuition about “right and wrong.” Intersectionality aids here in conceptualizing how such fluidity can be accounted for and how some bodies are more practiced in shifting between senses of self thereby remaining genuine. Huerta indeed benefited from her
education, but also emphasized and deemphasized the role education played in her life in order to meet the contextual demands of the rhetorical act she was performing.

In their work, Alcorn and Jarratt and Reynolds argue that the rhetor’s “self” is neither autonomous nor stable, yet they also recognize that it is important to maintain some conception of the self in order to construct an ethos, even if that conception is shifting/fluid. Because of Huerta’s intersectionality, mestiza consciousness, and embodied difference her sense of self was necessarily projected to her audiences. As Nedra Reynolds argues in her article, “Ethos as Location,” in order to build credibility from a location in the margins, one must deal with his/her location explicitly. In other words, people who do not traditionally hold power (e.g. people of color, women, disabled people, etc.) are actually empowered by explicitly attending to the elements of their identity that put them outside of the realm of the traditionally powerful. As we will see, this is a strategy Huerta utilized often. Ultimately, Reynolds argues that ethos can “open up more spaces in which to study writers’ subject positions or identity formations, especially to examine how writers establish authority and enact responsibility from positions not traditionally considered authoritative” (326). Locating the body and how it affects her values is central to Huerta’s ethos construction as well as her self-definition. Because self-definition is intrinsically tied to qualities of character a rhetor can authentically emit—given that we cannot present ourselves effectively as someone we do not believe ourselves to be—it also demonstrates the complexity of establishing and recognizing the character of leaders of a social movement.

Acknowledging the importance of self-definition adds to the concept of ethos as dwelling because it places focus on the rhetor’s construction of “self” based on both
physical and cultural experiences. Accounting for the many aspects that affect ethos enriches the understanding of rhetorical strategy by drawing attention to both the constructed elements of rhetoric and those that are at work beyond construction. In other words, examining ethos specifically contributes to discussions of rhetorical strategy that move beyond performance and include crucial observations of cultural contexts that are—for the most part—beyond the control of the rhetor. In their important article, “Balancing Mystery and Identification” communication scholars Erin Doss and Robin Jensen closely examine what they identify as Dolores Huerta’s shifting personas in order to demonstrate her ability to connect to audiences. In their examination, Doss and Jensen foreground the performative nature of Huerta’s personas and do not include how Huerta’s lived experiences contributed to her sense of self-definition, and subsequently, character. Thus, I extend Doss and Jensen’s study by including the impact of Huerta’s lived sacrifice—her conscious choice to live in poverty for example—as aiding her rhetorical effectiveness. Doss and Jensen discuss Huerta’s shifts in appeals to the audience through the frames of persona in order to address the ways in which Huerta presented herself and her audience. The strategy of presenting her qualities and the qualities of the audience enabled her to exemplify the virtues that they shared which, according to Reynolds and Halloran, is necessary to ethos construction. Specifically, in “Aristotle’s Concept of Ethos, or if not His Somebody Else’s,” Halloran explains that, “To have ethos is to manifest the virtues most valued by the culture to and for which one speaks...” (60). Because Huerta’s identities required her to cross many borders both figuratively and literally, she was able to seamlessly and authentically speak to and include the values that she assessed or perceived as most dear to her audience. This quality also speaks to the social phenomena that are
affected by examining Huerta’s *ethos* through intersectionality. It is precisely because of Huerta’s intersectional identities that Huerta’s leadership effects social change by naming and attending to her identities of difference and utilizing her intersectionality to make genuine connections with her multiple audiences.

Like Halloran and Reynolds, Doss and Jensen also demonstrate the importance of sharing values with an audience in order to be rhetorically effective. Doss and Jensen closely analyze two texts from Huerta and the role of what they call her “shifting transcendent persona.” According to Doss and Jensen,

Defined according to three key elements, the transcendent persona (a) draws from a rhetor’s boundary-breaking experiences (“this might involve being the ‘first’ or the ‘only’ person to have accomplished something,” or at least the creation of a perception that this is the case), (b) requires the rhetor to both build discursive distance from audience members and maintain identification with them, and (c) is used to introduce an “alternative vision of society” that the rhetor has seen thanks to a transcendent experience. (4)

Ultimately the authors argue that Huerta was able to connect with her audiences genuinely despite her shifting personas because of her *mestiza* consciousness and the consequent fluidity of her character. While Doss and Jensen utilize the role of what they term personas, their work informs my analysis because conceptually persona and *ethos* are closely related. As Roger Cherry explains in his article, “Ethos vs. Persona,”

Two terms for describing self-representation—*ethos* and persona—are commonly conflated, despite the fact that there are good historical and conceptual grounds for maintaining a distinction between them. A historical examination of the two terms shows that *ethos* and *persona* derive from different traditions and therefore provide different (but complementary) perspectives on self-representation in written discourse. (232)

Further, Cherry distinguishes persona from *ethos* thusly,

With its roots in the rhetorical tradition, *ethos* refers to a set of characteristics that, if attributed to a writer on the basis of textual evidence, will enhance the writer’s credibility. *Persona*, on the other hand, traces its
roots through literature and literary criticism and provides a way of describing the roles authors create for themselves in written discourse given their representation of audience, subject matter, and other elements of context. (258-269)

Likewise this work extends the notion of mestiza consciousness from an individually based performance of self to a collaboratively negotiated construction of ethos. Doss and Jensen discuss Huerta’s shifts in appeals to the audience through the frames of persona in order to address the ways in which Huerta presented herself and her audience. Although their examination focused on how Huerta’s shifting personas facilitated her ability to “identify” with multiple audiences and thus aided in her rhetorical efficacy (2), their analysis also infers that through identification she was able to demonstrate the practical wisdom, virtue, and goodwill necessary for constructing ethos. Adding to the important findings offered by Doss and Jensen, this project builds on their work by departing from the more performative and individual basis of persona and instead moves toward a matrix orientation for analysis that engages with the collaborative practice of ethos construction vis-a-vis intersectionality. Thus, similarly, but also distinctly, I look specifically at Huerta’s ethos, or character and/or credibility, as a result of both the identity categories she embodies as well as her lived experiences placed within specific contexts. Working from a perspective that requires the incorporation of multiple lived, habituated, and embodied aspects in the discussion of Huerta’s rhetorical prowess leads to an enriched understanding of rhetorical strategy, especially in regards to marginalized rhetors.

**Ethos from a Feminist Perspective**

Scholars in contemporary feminist and rhetorical historiography, such as Gesa Kirsch, Jacqueline Jones Royster, Jessica Enoch, and Christina Ramirez, among others, call attention to the necessity of including historical figures often silenced or overlooked in
various disciplines. Further, feminist and cultural rhetoricians highlight the importance of representing historical figures as fully as possible in order to reveal the nuances of rhetorical strategy and, perhaps more importantly, to avoid the many traps of essentialization or of flattening out the experiences of “othered” populations.

Attending to the complexity of ethos as it is constructed from a marginalized body is one of the major concerns taken up in Carolyn Skinner’s recent book *Women Physicians and Professional Ethos in 19th Century America*. Skinner’s book, and more specifically her mapping of what she calls a feminist model of ethos, lays a crucial foundation for my analysis of Huerta’s ethos construction. After carefully detailing the process in which women physicians crafted a professional ethos despite being female and generally considered as unauthorized to be medical professionals, Skinner identifies five features that contribute to a feminist model of ethos:

1. A rhetor’s ethos is shaped by the material resources available to her and the popular beliefs about those of her social position. (173)
2. *Ethos* often is not crafted in response to a coherent and identifiable set of audience values but instead is composed in a dynamic context that includes multiple competing ideas about the “best” virtues; consequently, ethos formation frequently involves value negotiations as well as reciprocity between rhetor and audience identity constructs. (175)
3. *Ethos* and genre are intertwined. (177)
4. The *ethos* choices an individual rhetor makes influence not only his or her immediate communicative situation but also the broader context and the persuasive options available to other potential speakers and writers. (178)
5. *Ethos* can be collectively developed and deployed; consequently, a rhetor can develop her ethos indirectly, by shaping her audience’s perception of the group to which she belongs. (180)

Collectively, these features outlined by Skinner work to recognize the most evident ethos strategies employed by traditionally marginalized rhetors, and they add to our understanding of how the body is central to the discussion of ethos because, as indicated by Skinner, the body cannot be unaddressed. In other words, each feature—to varying
degrees—requires the recognition of the marginalized dimensions of the rhetor. While I consider each of the features outlined by Skinner in my examination of Huerta, I also add to her model by demonstrating the need for further developing how language and language differences, such as bilingualism or multilingualism, also affect ethos. To this point, in subsequent chapters, I argue that Huerta and the UFW were able to leverage their language diversity to symbolize a global and sustainable organizational ethos. For example, across the archival materials, letters from Huerta often (if not always) included salutations or valedictions that were written in Spanish and on occasion in Tagalog. The decision to include non-English terms and phrases acts as a significant symbol to both monolingual and multilingual audiences. Specifically, it appears that whether or not the recipient was Spanish speaking did not affect Huerta’s choice to include Spanish phrases that were integral to the organization, such as “Viva la Causa” (Long live the cause), “Viva el boycoteo,” (long live the boycott), and of course the phrase most associated with the UFW, “Si Se Puede” (Yes we are able). Of course there are many examples of how language serves as both connection to and distancing from her audiences, thus it is undeniable that Huerta’s cultural—and embodied—identity is not only highly visible, but is also an important element of her ethos construction.

Studies of marginalized rhetoricians, like the study of Huerta informing this dissertation project, could be considered a great source of empowerment for oppressed populations. This is because what is deemed rhetorical can be contested, and therefore so too can those who have access to authority. In particular, the notion of ethos gets muddled when the marginalized rhetor may no longer fit in with traditional notions, notions that are rooted in ancestral bloodline, educational pedigree, social class, gender, and racial identity.
Even if the rhetorical strategies utilized are seemingly traditional, the body of the marginalized rhetor can, simply put, look different than that of the historically traditional rhetor—that is, the White, upper-middle class, able-bodied, educated male. Calling attention to the body in rhetorical strategy or any conception of ethos requires us to acknowledge privilege as well as subordination. This acknowledgment aids in continuing the evolution of conceptions of ethos and expands what rhetorical tools are available to a variety of rhetors.

Because of the underlying tensions that can arise when seeking more inclusive practices in contemporary feminist and cultural historiography, it is critical to make clear that adding voices like Huerta’s does not serve to break the boundaries of traditional rhetorical strategy. Traditional and canonized rhetoricians are not replaced by including a more diverse range of rhetoricians in our scholarship. Instead, including rhetors like Huerta aims to bend the tradition, to evolve definitions, and, ultimately, to enrich the work that we do and the knowledge that we build. Therefore, this dissertation project aims to examine Dolores Huerta’s ethos construction in order to reveal how ethos is affected by the embodied identities of the rhetor, and in so doing continues to bend our understanding of character/ethos creation.
Chapter Three
Matrix Thinking: Intersectionality, Mestiza Consciousness, and Discovering Huerta

But for those who have made Plato and Aristotle the center of a canon and the architects of an epistemology, the body is a distraction or, worse, a deterrence to clear thought.

~Jay Dolmage

As discussed previously, looking to ethos construction and the power of moving people to action is important for understanding how power structures work and how they can be disrupted. Further, looking to Dolores Huerta aids in our understanding of how rhetoric works and, more specifically, how we might reframe our understanding of ethos construction. Indeed, one of the most central questions of this project is this: Where does Huerta’s ethos come from? Determining ethos and its construction is no small task and must be attributed to multiple sources, including the speaker/author, place, time, and political environment to name just a few. Tracing how ethos is influenced, constructed, or perceived can be so difficult that many might question the purpose of doing so. In fact, in their introduction to Ethos, James Baumlin and Tita Baumlin ask, “Does ethos remain in any way, a definable (or defensible) rhetorical concept? Is it at all useful?” (xxvii). Of course, one of the purposes of their anthology is to support that the study of ethos is indeed an important and useful endeavor, and the robust collection affirms the relevance of understanding ethos. This project contributes to the conversation and finds that ethos analysis is incredibly fruitful in part because it exposes how those who are disassociated with authority—bodies that do not typically inhabit public leadership positions—can and do make important societal change. More specifically, the study of ethos read through the lens of the body is especially significant for marginalized rhetors because their bodies and identities often work against them before they even address their audiences; thus, building ethos is a particularly precarious endeavor.
Analyzing Huerta for her *ethos* construction required a combination of methods because she is a living and historical figure. First and foremost, this work is archival and draws on archival methods not only for techniques in finding and tracing relevant texts but also for ethical guidance in the treatment of those texts. Likewise, maintaining an approach grounded in feminist theory brings an even greater attention to the necessity of reflecting on, and explicitly attending to, my own standpoint and inherent biases. Thus, reflecting on my own understanding of being Chicana is always at play with my analysis of how Huerta attends to her “Chicananess.” Lastly, it is important to point out that while this project primarily focuses on strategies of *ethos* formation, it is deeply informed by the work of scholars in fields that are invested in social justice and racial equality. In other words, while this work situates Huerta as a rhetorical figure in the field of rhetoric and composition, it does so by combining work from the fields of critical race theory and Chicana feminism along with feminist rhetorical theory and rhetorics of social movements. In sum, this project is a historical recovery and insertion of a Latina rhetor, and is a project that reveals the nuances involved in rhetorical strategy and *ethos* construction when centrally placing the body in the discussion. In effect this project places focus on the nuances of rhetorical strategy employed by Huerta that complicate the image of authority and require explicit attention to the embodied identities of marginalized rhetors, such as race, class, and gender in order to build credibility.

When considering the connection between “character,” as Marshall Alcorn and others have defined it, and the *ethos* of a speaker, the question, “Where does Huerta’s *ethos* come from?” becomes, “How did Huerta’s positionality, or more specifically, embodied identities affect her credibility or character?” The latter question not only firmly grounds
this inquiry into Huerta’s ethos construction in terms of her body and self but also guided the methods for this research.

**Looking for Huerta: Feminist Historiography and Searching in the Archives**

In her book, *The Fantasy of Feminist History*, Joan Wallach Scott argues that fantasy plays an important part in understanding and deconstructing gender roles. She defines fantasy as a reference to the “plays of the mind that are creative and not always rational” (Scott 48). Fantasy not only offers a way to understand the utility of gender categorizing but also the trouble with “fixed” categories because it fills in where rationality falls short and thus is flawed:

> [P]eople are not merely rational, goal-oriented beings, but subjects of unconscious desire—desire articulated in terms of, but not defined by, the symbolic, in which the relationship between signifier and signified can never be clear. Thus people aren’t mobilized according to purely objective interests, but rather according to interests created for them by collective fantasies. (19)

Scott’s infusion of fantasy into the work of historiography supports the call from Jacqueline Jones Royster and Gesa Kirsch to use critical imagination as a point for inquiry.

In Royster’s earlier work, *Traces of a Stream*, critical imagination is defined as a strategy for inquiry that acknowledges the limits of knowledge and allows for speculation. Specifically, in *Feminist Rhetorical Practices*, Royster and Kirsch draw on Royster’s earlier definition, and then emphasize that “the concept of critical imagination [is] an inquiry tool, a mechanism for seeing the noticed and the unnoticed, rethinking what is there and not there, and speculating about what could be there instead” (20). Royster and Kirsch provide several questions designed to clarify the scope, nature, and principles of the work of feminist rhetorical historiographer:
When we study women of the past, especially those whose voices have rarely been heard or studied by rhetoricians, how do we render their work and lives meaningfully? How do we honor their traditions? How do we transport ourselves back to the time and context in which they lived, knowing full well that is not possible to see things from their vantage point? How did they frame (rather than we frame) the questions by which they navigated their own lives? What more lingers in what we know about them that would suggest that we need to think again, to think more deeply, to think more broadly? How do we make what was going on in their context relevant or illuminating for the contemporary context? (20)

Many of these important questions continue to inform my approach to the analysis of Huerta's textual artifacts and lived history. Building on Royster's earlier work with critical imagination, Kirsch and Royster offer a way to approach archival work through strategic contemplation. More specifically, Kirsch and Royster point out that critical imagination is not an end point but is instead a "mechanism for enabling and energizing within scholarly processes a space for rigorous contemplation, with the effect actually of creating a generic space in which to use a literate form designed to draw methodically, vibrantly, and creatively from well-grounded scholarly work" (21). They assert that strategic contemplation as a methodological practice overlaps with critical imagination because it also focuses on withholding judgment and resisting hasty conclusions (85).

Strategic contemplation differs from critical imagination with its overt connections to both the body and to time. In other words, as Kirsch and Royster explain, "Strategic contemplation further suggests that we pay attention to how lived experiences shape our perspectives as researchers and those of our research subjects. We call for greater attention to lived, embodied experience because we consider it to be a powerful yet often-neglected source of insight, inspiration, and passion" (21). There are many questions that are central to strategic contemplation:
What do we notice when we stand back and observe? How do we imagine, connect with, and open up a space for the women—and others—we study? How does their work speak to our minds, our hearts, and our ethos? What is most prominent? What lingers at the margins? What can our own lived experience teach us? How do we respond to—and represent—historical subjects when we discover that we may not share their values or beliefs? How do we honor, or do justice to, those who no longer can speak back to us? How can an ethos of humility, respect, and care shape our research? How do past and present merge to suggest new possibilities for the future when we create time and space for contemplation, reflection, and meditation? (Kirsch and Royster 22)

Drawing on the questions put forth by Kirsch and Royster, my analysis of Huerta’s ethos construction took several turns and re-directions as I sat with the materials and considered what was rising as most prominent. For instance, in response to the question, ”What is most prominent?” I noticed that many of the materials included were periodical articles about Huerta and the work of the United Farm Workers (UFW). While conducting my analysis, I found that I continually returned to several periodical articles as representations both of how Huerta defined her identities and the ways in which her identities were defined.

The collective works of Scott, Kirsch, and Royster have greatly influenced the methodological approaches I adopt in this dissertation. Since much of the investigation in this dissertation requires both an attention to and problematizing of gender constructions, fantasy as described by Scott supports the utilization of gender and even race/ethnicity as key components of understanding ethos. In other words, we can understand Huerta and her ethos as being based on her own interests and her own established strategies for mobilizing others; however, we must also consider the various “collective fantasies” of Huerta held by others, including collective imagination pertaining to what it means to be a mother and a Chicana. This notion of fantasy, of course, can also be applied to contemplating the
subjectivities of researchers. Part of the reason I was drawn to researching Huerta, for instance, is because identity categories that include “woman” and “Mexican-American” mean something to me. Scott draws our attention to “fantasy” as part of the identification process, and, by extension, I argue that these fantasized definitions also influence ethos creation.

It was only after sitting with the information and allowing patterns to emerge—patterns that often placed Huerta’s identity as central to discussions of her work and role with the UFW—that I was able to visualize the connections between Huerta’s ethos construction and her embodied identity categories. As Royster and Kirsch explain, strategic contemplation reclaims meditation, which requires “taking the time, space, and resources to think about, through, and around our work as an important meditative dimension of scholarly productivity” (21). In effect, recognizing the centrality of Huerta’s embodied identities led to the inquiry of how Huerta’s race/ethnicity, class, and gender affect her ethos. Such an examination is part of continuing the work of inserting women—specifically ethnic minority women—into the growing and evolving rhetorical tradition. Moving beyond mere inclusion, this project also considers how her strategies add to our understanding of rhetoric, especially when deployed from a body disassociated with power and authority. However, before I could recognize or analyze the role of her embodied identities in her ethos construction, I had to first understand the time period, the labor movement, the working conditions of the laborers, the complexity of organizing people to action, and the sheer magnitude of the process. In other words, in the spirit of Krista Ratcliffe and others, “listening” to the archival material from the UFW and Dolores Huerta facilitated my understanding of Huerta’s rhetorical situation.
In the following section, I draw on Barbara L’Eplattenier’s “An Argument for Archival Research Methods” to share my process of collecting, viewing, and working with the archives found at the Walter P. Reuther Library at Wayne State University. L’Eplattenier argues that although scholars in the field of rhetoric and composition have worked with archives extensively, the field has historically lacked scholarship that provided clear methods for such work. Thus, L’Eplattenier provides necessary guidance for archival methods and ultimately provided much of the scaffolding needed for my recounting and sharing of the work done in and with the archives. In order to provide more support for archival work, L’Eplattenier, Alexis Ramsey, Lisa Mastrangelo, and Wendy Sharer co-edited the collection Working in the Archives: Practical Research Methods for Rhetoric and Composition. Each of the four sections in Working in the Archives offers practical and experiential knowledge about how to approach archival work and how to responsibly collect, process, share, and steward historical texts. Specifically, in Cheryl Glenn and Jessica Enoch’s chapter, “Invigorating Historiographic Practices in Rhetoric and Composition Studies,” the authors emphasize the value of working with archival material. They also call for researchers to contribute to the preservation and collection of archives and to consider how people outside of the formal institutions often involved—e.g., university libraries, librarians/archivist, and researchers—can be affected by the work being done with and shared through research. Glenn and Enoch’s call for adding to the network and awareness of archival materials is important, and I hope to contribute to Reuther Library by offering the images I took of varied documents included in Huerta’s files as possible additions to their digital archives. However, while contributing to the digital access to archival materials is important, it is Glenn and Enoch’s call to be aware of the
effects to those outside of formal institutions that I continue to be most mindful of with my work, especially as I consider a public audience. It is imperative that I maintain a respectful, measured, and thoughtful orientation to the knowledge and interpretations shared about Huerta, Chavez, and the people of the UFW.

In May 2013, I spent approximately one week examining the archives housed in the Reuther Library and worked with the collection, or series, titled, “Dolores Huerta Papers: 1970-1995.” According to the library’s website, “The Walter P. Reuther Library of Labor and Urban Affairs was established as the Labor History Archives at Wayne State University in 1960, with the goal of collecting and preserving original source materials relating to the development of the American labor movement,” and is “the largest labor archives in North America and is home to the collections of numerous unions and labor-related organizations” (About Us). The Dolores Huerta Papers consisted of 32 linear feet (32 banker sized storage boxes) of materials and even more when including audio/visual items. The Dolores Huerta Papers includes papers that “primarily deal with boycotts, strikes, and the ongoing struggle for workers’ rights and organizations involved in such matters” (Finding Guide). The Huerta series includes items that range from meeting minutes to radio show transcripts. I had several exchanges with the archivist in preparation of my trip to the Reuther Library and was able to arrange for a finding guide that listed the boxes between the earliest years of the UFW to just before 1980. I focused my inquiry on those years for three reasons: first, the UFW was just being developed; second, those were the years Huerta was most integral to the union; and third, it was the time period in which the UFW had its strongest political force. Narrowing my scope by time period was helpful, but nonetheless many materials remained to be canvased. During my
visit to the Reuther Library, I not only reviewed the documents included in the files
selected by time frame, but I also reviewed approximately eight items from the
audio/visual files not including miscellaneous photographs. While the audio/visual items
were compelling, many were sporadic in nature (clips that cut from speaker to speaker)
and/or incomplete. Further, the audio/visual files were required to remain in the archives
and therefore were not available for reexamination at a later date without returning to
Detroit. Therefore, for practical purposes I chose to focus my study on items I could
physically document by taking digital photos that I could return to for reexamination.

In order to record the research I was doing, I created a spreadsheet that included
the following categories: title of the collection, description of the document, title of the
document, publication, author, date, location/region of focus, media, box number, folder
number or title, whether or not I took a picture, and notes. Further, for documents I found
likely to be central to my research, I took pictures—since copies were prohibited—and
saved them to a zip drive. Upon returning home, I printed the images and amassed a
personal archive of 57 documents (totaling just under 100 pages total). In addition to the
materials I collected firsthand, I also examined the transcripts from Huerta’s testimony to
the U.S. Senate’s subcommittee on migratory labor and texts reprinted in the *Dolores
Huerta Reader* edited by Mario T. Garcia.

I spent nearly 23 hours over four days in the archives and countless more with the
artifacts that I have images of, and access to, since that visit. However, looking solely to
texts and documents from the past cannot provide a complete and objective outline of any
historical figure. Thus, during my research into Huerta’s rhetorical situation, I allowed
myself the space and time to work through the discovery of Huerta without making hasty,
predetermined conclusions. For instance, instead of looking for archival evidence of Huerta’s “fiery” nature—a term often used to describe her—I simply organized the archives by type, such as minutes, press releases, magazine articles about her, interviews, letters, memos, etc. While most of the documents held in the archives were in good physical condition, some like the meeting minutes were not comprehensible because Huerta took them in shorthand. In addition, statistical reports and minutes were simply not directly related to her ethos construction. Although it could be argued that those minutes illustrate that, as a woman, Huerta was well suited for the early “secretarial” role she had in the UFW, she of course developed beyond that role. But items such as meeting minutes and budget reports did little to demonstrate the critical role Huerta maintained and/or how she viewed her role on the executive board. Further, her testimony to the Senate’s subcommittee on migratory labor was far too extensive to add to this examination as it included responses from six sitting U.S. Senators, including Senator Walter F. Mondale, and would require significant contextualization of its own. While the subcommittee meeting was incredibly interesting, it warrants a study of its own—one that I hope to conduct at a later date.

During the examination of the research that I gathered, it became exceedingly clear that none of the leaders of the UFW or labor movement, including Chavez, were working alone. In other words, each speech, letter, and protest poster was often a combination of research, experiences, templates, and strategies from multiple sources. For example, it appears that a letter was supplied to allies of the boycott from the UFW, but no author was attributed and the signature line was left blank presumably for the ally’s signature. Of course, this is common practice for nearly any letter writing campaign; nonetheless, this
posed some difficulty in discerning whether Huerta—or any other UFW leader—was the one responsible for crafting the “boilerplate” memo. The archival materials also included “fact sheets” that contained test results from grapes that had traces of pesticides. The information from the fact sheets was often used in multiple texts as evidence of the danger of selling produce to the average consumer when the picking and packing processes were performed in unsanitary conditions. Because of the volume and variety of materials included, it was important that the materials I selected could be examined without much question of authorship and/or authenticity.

Understanding the magnitude of the work that the farm labor movement required made it difficult, if not pointless, to parse out what was “original” to Huerta or any of the other UFW leaders. Limiting my examination to documents that are highly likely to have been primarily authored by Huerta and/or include direct quotes from her yielded twelve periodical articles, eleven personal letters addressed to Chavez, several memos directed to Chavez and others within the UFW, and two speeches that she delivered. Additionally, it is important to remember that despite the fact that statements made or speeches delivered may have been composed collaboratively, Huerta was often selected to deliver many public addresses and thus lent her ethos and/or character to the larger organization. Therefore, when considering Huerta’s ethos construction, it became apparent that it was not constructed from only her character or being; rather, it was bound up with the UFW, Chavez, and the larger movement.

Working with and within the constraints and limitations presented by the archives brought to bear what Neal Lerner refers to as “the social process” that is part of archival research. In his chapter “Archival Research as a Social Process” from Working in the
Archives, Lerner explains that archival research requires a great deal of collaboration both in the sense of the reading and analysis of materials, and in the gathering and maintenance of documents:

What I have come to realize is that the social forces that shape archival research are many, from a researcher’s experiences and expectations, to contemporary events, to the choices made by those who have donated papers to an archive, leading to fragments of information that even the best archive will offer. In other words, archival research is not merely about the artifacts to be found but is ultimately about the people who have played a role in creating and using those artifacts, whether their authors, their subjects, their collectors, their donators, the readers, or a host of other players in the social worlds represented. (195-96)

Lerner’s observation is particularly important to consider when researching the work of Huerta because it emphasizes the social dimensions that were further affected by her embodied identities. Archival work and the collection of materials deemed important enough to archive is indeed a social practice. And while this project is not meant to deeply investigate the archival collection and maintenance process, it does beg the questions: How were these materials collected? What role did Huerta have in securing the collection? How did/does her embodied identities influence the collection? It remains perplexing that instead of having a robust collection of speeches that were delivered and crafted by Huerta, there were instead texts about her (such as periodical articles about her and the UFW), shared documents (such as form letters and boilerplate memos), and organizational documents (such as reports, meeting minutes, and templates). Again, while this study does not delve deeply into this inquiry, it does reveal the limited access to documents authored and delivered by Huerta despite her high-ranking office.

After piecing together the rhetorical situation Huerta was a part of during the creation of the UFW, I was able to determine texts that provided concrete examples for
examination. In chapter four, I primarily focus on artifacts that demonstrate the deeply influential force Huerta’s appearance and embodied identities occupied in establishing her character. I examine the elements that influence ethos based on perceptions of embodied identities, such as the categories mother and Chicana. These elements of ethos that I have conceived are generally constructed before the rhetor arrives and are likely to persist—albeit not without alteration—after the rhetor is gone. In so doing, I connect the role of collective fantasies and culturally constructed conceptions of identity to ethos construction. In chapter five, I add to the analysis from chapter four by examining the effects of both genres on how Huerta negotiated representing/defining herself in conjunction with, and in response to, her embodied identities. Over the course of chapters four and five, I look to traditional and non-traditional rhetorical texts both because Huerta was engaging in both sets consistently and because focusing strictly on traditional rhetorical acts negates the importance of less examined sites of rhetorical action.

Piecing together Huerta’s ethos strategies through these materials—as opposed to strictly traditional rhetorical acts such as the speeches she delivered—is rooted in feminist methods, which call for discovering alternative rhetorically useful channels. Most notably, in the 1990s Cheryl Glenn, Susan Jarrett, and Jacqueline Jones Royster argued that because women often lacked access to traditionally rhetorical positions, evidence of the rhetorical work women engaged in requires looking to new places. Although Huerta occupied the position of Vice President for the UFW—which gave her access to traditionally recognized rhetorical performances—she also occupied a body from a traditionally unauthorized position; therefore, it was enlightening to examine how she built her ethos through less
traditional channels. In *Women Physicians and Professional Ethos*, Carolyn Skinner comments on the obstacles women face building *ethos*:

Because women begin to speak and write from a different starting point than most men do and because they confront fundamental obstacles to being accepted as rhetors, women’s rhetoric often entails the development of alternative communicative strategies. This is especially true of ethos, since it is precisely the characteristics of a good speaker that have historically been denied to women. (171)

Huerta, like the physicians studied in Skinner’s text, utilized both traditional and non-traditional channels. Examining texts from a spectrum of delivery channels aids in understanding *ethos* construction, especially as it pertains to marginalized rhetors.

In chapter four, I use several texts from the archives to provide supporting evidence, but I focus my analysis primarily on interviews and articles published in periodicals during the time that the UFW was gaining strength. Included in the archives were twelve articles that featured Huerta: four magazine articles, five newspaper articles (of varying circulation sizes), and three newsletter/organizational publications (such as union publications). Interestingly, all of the publications included were written between 1968 and 1978. This may be in part because the peak of the UFW’s membership and political force was from 1973-1985. However, because of two large-scale boycotts, the years leading up to 1973 and immediately after were likely to carry the most public interest. After taking careful notes and recognizing the trends that were apparent across articles, especially those that included direct quotations from Huerta, five of the publications provided valuable data for examining her *ethos* construction by offering strong representations of how she was positioned consistently as well as how she positioned herself during the most pivotal years for the UFW.
While the periodicals demonstrate how Huerta was often positioned by others and how she responded to such positioning, in chapter five, I look specifically at the influence genre has on ethos and how Huerta works within and against the constraints and possibilities that genres present. More explicitly, I take in concert the conventions of genre, the notion of audience based on genre, and its rhetorical effects on ethos. For example, the eleven personal letters to Chavez anthologized in the Dolores Huerta Reader collectively demonstrate how Huerta’s multiple roles and identities affected her work with the UFW and how she consistently worked to assure Chavez of her commitment and ability to serve the cause. Huerta constructed her ethos for Chavez and, because of her consistent demonstrations of sacrifice, was able to gain his support for the more public perceptions of her character. Validation from Chavez likely provided Huerta with both the personal confidence to remain active and central to the UFW and served as an affirmation of her credibility in the public arena. While the relationship between Huerta and Chavez has been well documented as strong yet volatile, it appears that it was mutually beneficial for the leaders. Unlike the periodicals that I examined, the private letters offer a personally crafted sense of self by Huerta that—to the best of our knowledge—were not meant for public viewing. Unlike the letters, the interoffice memos included in the archives offered a view of an official channel of communication. Perhaps ironically, in the interoffice memo exchanges between the two leaders, there seemed to be more posturing of authority than the personal letters. Perhaps due to the official nature of the interoffice memo, both leaders appeared to demonstrate authoritative and sometimes hostile correspondence.

Lastly, in the archives I located five requests for Huerta to speak at engagements between October and December 1972 and one from February 1973. More often than not,
Huerta’s replies to those requests were enthusiastic but tentative. For example, in a response to Dr. Jan Howard of the University of California, School of Medicine San Francisco, Huerta writes the following:

Dear Dr. Howard,

Jerry Lackner just called and I hadn’t realized that you didn’t hear from us about the speaking engagement. I will try very hard to be there, and for sure there will be someone from the union will be there [sic] if I can’t. I have just taken on some new responsibilities and cannot see just yet how free my schedule will be in early December.

The response above was quite typical of her letters. Often, when asked to be a speaker for a special engagement, Huerta was very positive but also included a caveat that the UFW may need to send an alternate representative. While I was not able to determine why more requests for speakers were not contained in the collection I accessed, it can be assumed that Huerta spoke publically often whether by invitation or in an official capacity for the UFW. As previously mentioned, while at the Reuther Library I was able to view several video clips featuring Huerta and still photographs. However, while I did find clips of Huerta addressing various sized audiences I did not find complete speeches nor did I find transcripts of the clips/speeches. Nonetheless, based on Huerta’s position as Vice President for the UFW, various clips of her addressing the public, and cluster of speaking requests located in the archives, it is likely that Huerta often spoke at public engagements, yet I was only able to locate two complete speeches delivered by Huerta: the APHA speech delivered in 1974 and one speech tentatively titled “The Importance of Union Organizing,” audience and date unknown. Because the context surrounding the second speech was unavailable, I turned my examination to a speech included in the *Dolores Huerta Reader* that was delivered to University of California, Los Angeles students in 1978.

**Constructing Ethos: Intersectionality, Identity Categories, and Mestiza Consciousness**
As introduced in chapter two, intersectional theory and Vivian May’s matrix orientation to “doing” intersectional analysis undergird the analysis in this project. In effect, this work is purposefully political and argues that when rhetorical theory is read through the body it is transformed, especially when the body of the rhetor is traditionally marginalized. However, in order to conceive of the complexity that intersectionality brings to the study of ethos, it remains necessary to draw on a few generalized categories and classifications of identity. Of course, categories and classifications can carry several drawbacks, especially when used to classify people or communities. Classifications can have a homogenizing effect and can inadvertently focus the attention too narrowly on one aspect of a person or community. Nonetheless, identity categories can also be generative because they are often the first way we begin to understand or “know” a rhetor.

For example, in a 1968 letter addressed simply to “Boycotters,” Huerta writes an update of the boycott activity in New York. After sharing that the New York boycott was gaining momentum, Huerta describes one successful protest:

Richard had a swinging, loud, noisy, super-militant picket line going in a middle class area of the Bronx (white) and boy did it hurt. From this we have come to the conclusion that a brown or black line in an all white area is extremely effective.

As demonstrated in the excerpt above, Huerta identified the ethnic and racial identity of the protestors as influencing the effectiveness of the demonstration. Understanding the power in the embodied identities of herself and of the bodies involved was further demonstrated in the letter:

A “Leafleting Line” is different from a picket line in that it requires less people 2, 3 or 4 preferably the house wife type but others can also be used and they approach people and try to get to them before they go into the store and them the leaflet.
Again, in the passage above we see Huerta specifically request the use of protestors that “appear” to be housewives. It could be argued, then, given that Huerta identified the significance of how a person “appeared,” that she would also understand the importance of her own “appearance”—and by extension—embodied identities. That said, while it was tempting to examine Huerta’s *ethos* construction through discrete lenses, any such organization fell short when accounting for Huerta’s intersectional identity (Crenshaw and May) and the multiple parts of the “self” that were at play. Put more simply, Huerta is never only “a woman.” Any generalization made about Huerta that emphasizes her gender without also recognizing the interplay with other identity markers such as race and class only perpetuates static notions of womanhood and ignores diversity of experience. One of the largest pitfalls of working from discrete categories is an “essentialization” of people that share one—or multiple—identities.

Because this examination is not meant to essentialize Huerta or identity but rather to heighten the awareness of the complex nature of rhetoric and experiences, it is necessary to explicitly state two major premises informing the analysis for this research project: first, identity categories aid in the understanding of character/self; and second, identity categories are fluid and are part of a rich matrix of intersections between one another and the context. This work broadly relies on identity categories as an orientation to Huerta and the cultural scripts that she negotiated but also actively works to nuance how the intersections of Huerta’s identities work to build her *ethos*. In a speech delivered by Huerta in 1978 at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), Huerta appears to be encouraging an audience of Chicano students and/or advocates to believe big change can come from simple acts. Huerta shares the effectiveness of Chavez’s fast and the grape
boycott—what she refers to as “simple things.” In effect, Huerta demonstrates that seemingly easy actions, such as asking people not to eat grapes, proved to be very effective. By sharing the story of how Chavez and the UFW sparked change through simple actions, Huerta provides inspiration for young adults to feel empowered.

While the speech is rich with elements to analyze, some of which are further developed in chapter five whereby I emphasize the role of genre in ethos construction, I insert the following passage here to demonstrate how Huerta’s intersectional identities affected both her self-definition and her orientation to the audience. More specifically, in the following passage notice the ways in which Huerta positions the university and corporations together and in direct conflict with the raced and classed issues of the farm laborers, issues that she also aligns with the students in her audience.

And you have to remember that when you are dealing with corporations and you are dealing with businesses you can’t [sic], like when you go to school you are taught to be rational, to be objective, to believe what you read and to weigh things, and do all of these things. You have to be very careful when you are in school and learn all of these things because it can be an entrapment. Luckily, farm workers many times—because they don’t have school they go by their guts—they know what’s right and they know what’s wrong and they aren’t afraid to take action. (Dolores Huerta Reader 245)

When reading the above passage, it is also important to consider the following: first, Huerta was speaking to a Chicano audience that was likely attending UCLA; second, Huerta earned her teaching credential and was formally educated; third, Huerta was never a farm laborer. However, because of Huerta’s embodied identities—and most likely the embodied identities of the audience—she was familiar with the multiple oppressions experienced in the name of “rationality” and institutional authority. Thus, the point above becomes a site for connection rather than contention. In other words, while she and her audience were educated, they also understood the potential trappings of institutional indoctrination that
could interfere with basic social justice action. Despite being in a setting of higher education, Huerta and her audience could better relate to the farm laborers than to the powerful majority. “Doing” intersectionality as described by May allows for these kinds of contradictions to be witnessed and better understood as meaningful rather than mere inconsistencies.

Valuing and validating the individual and collective experiences—especially as they relate to identity—that we bring to our research and scholarship is often at the center of feminist and critical studies. It is difficult yet imperative to strike the delicate balance between acknowledging communal and shared experiences through race, gender, ability etc. while avoiding essentializing the very same populations who are most at risk of being misunderstood and oppressed. Abby Knoblauch addresses this in her discussion of embodied rhetoric:

[Embodied rhetoric asks of the rhetor, to reconnect our thinking with our particular bodies, understanding that knowledge comes from the body. But, lest we forget these are bodies both shaping and shaped by culture. And these bodies, and the cultures they inhabit, are complex entities, not to be reduced to singular essential tags such as “woman” or “Chinese.” (60)

This examination of Huerta’s ethos complicates and deepens the understanding of how ethos is constructed by marginalized people by focusing on the intricate and intersectional relationship of authority, credibility, and identification—all qualities that are imperative to ethos construction. It is by first examining the deeply woven relationship that can be partially understood through particular identity categories that we can then point to what is missed when we focus too heavily on those categories. In other words, we need to consider each identity category even if it is just to recognize their inadequacy because, as Joan Wallach Scott advises, “Normative categories seek to bring subjects’ fantasies in line
with cultural myth and social organization, but they never entirely succeed” (20).

Throughout this project, I often rely on Huerta’s most general and recognizable identity categories, Chicana (race/ethnicity), social class, and woman (gender).

Identity categories can also be seen as an important starting point for Kenneth Burke’s theory of identification because they represent a specific sense of self and other. While we may all agree that there is no fixed definition of mother, we do seem to understand and/or expect some commonalities among a group labeled as “mothers,” whether it is warranted or not. Likewise, categorizations of race, education level, and gender act as knowable representations of self and others insomuch as they provide keys to who we imagine that person to be. Although the meaning of any classification evolves over time and place, each label or name does appear to contain a kind of stable conception of the thing that it represents. In other words, classifications—especially as they relate to people—offer an opportunity for identification from audiences that share in the experiences of them. As we will see in the analysis provided in chapter four, Huerta and those that wrote about her often drew on some of the most common conceptions of her embodied identities in order to establish a connection with her audiences.

According to Burke, a key component to successful persuasion is identification. In *A Rhetoric of Motives*, Burke provides this example: “A is not identical with his colleague, B. But insofar as their interests are joined, A is identified with B. Or he may identify himself with B even when their interests are not joined, if he assumes that they are, or is persuaded to believe so” (20). When effective, rhetoric moves people to change. Burke argues that deeply identifying with the rhetor is necessary but also warns that identification does not predicate sameness or harmony (20-21). In other words, it is not a simple calculation that
creates a connection for “identification” between rhetor and audience but instead is a belief that there are shared values and trust between them despite their differences. This point from Burke is especially important when considering embodied rhetoric because it is not a forgone conclusion that identification is achieved simply because Huerta’s audience was—or was not—made up of people that shared her conception of motherhood and/or of people that shared her race/ethnicity. For instance, used here as both an example of the complexity of ethnicity and its significance, I draw on an excerpt from a 1973 interview with Huerta about the political involvement of Chicanos for a small Chicano Rights publication, *La Voz del Pueblo*:

> The worst thing that I see is guys who say, “Man, they don’t have no Chicanos up there and they’re not doing this or that for Chicanos.” But the “vatos” are just criticizing and they’re not in there working to make sure that it happens. We criticize and separate ourselves from the process. We’ve got to jump right in there with both feet.
> Most of the people doing the work for us are “gabachillos.” When we get Chicano volunteers it’s really great. But the Chicanos that come down to work with the farm workers have some hang-ups, especially the guys that come out of college. *En primer lugar, le tienen miedo a la gente.* [first of all, they are afraid of the people.] Unless they come out of the farm worker communities themselves, they get down there and they’re afraid of the people. (*Dolores Huerta Reader 173*)

It appears that Huerta did not avoid issues of contention within the Chicano community, especially when addressing a Chicano community specifically. Further, the excerpt above leads to several points regarding the necessity of maintaining a matrix orientation to this rhetorical analysis. First, while it is important to move beyond labels and categories especially as they relate to identity, those categories often serve as symbolic starting points because we first begin to “know” through naming. Thus, Huerta identifies the community she is referring to as Chicanos and continues to provide a general position that might be held by a particular faction. Even more telling is Huerta’s use of “vatos”—Spanish slang for
man, similar to dude or homie—and her decision to include the term “gabachillos”—a form of slang for young assimilated Chicanos—and the subsequent statement in Spanish. Each time Huerta switches from English to Spanish, we gain a slight understanding of the splintered identity category of “Chicano.” Second, in the excerpt above, we see another instance of Huerta’s suspicion of college and education, and, again, her audience is most likely Latinos attending college.

Huerta acknowledges the importance of solidarity by demonstrating the concern from Chicanos about political leaders not supporting their causes but also acknowledges the hypocrisy of the criticisms being made by Chicanos that are not politically active. Thus, Huerta leverages her identity as a politically active Chicana, and therefore is authorized to make such claims, albeit with the possibility of identification, division, and/or the in-between. Strategic use of identity categories has been a well-established technique for building connections and authority based on generally believed conceptions. That said, this technique is a slippery slope because, in an effort to build solidarity, there can be an inadvertent reifying of homogeneity among oppressed populations. Gayatri Spivak first coined the term strategic essentialism, which recognized the need to draw on essentialist definitions/thinking in order to promote solidarity and progressive action. Likewise, Adrien Wing explains critical race feminism:

> Critical Race Feminists (CRFs) are generally antiessentialism because the “essential” female is almost always white and middle class. However, it is understood that it is sometimes necessary to be strategically essentialist in order to avoid discussing experiences as simply “individual.” (7)

Wing exposes two key factors for understanding how to reconcile the need for solidarity while also maintaining that not all minority experiences are the same. First, Wing among many others recognizes that when asked to imagine “woman,” she is almost always White.
Second, there is strength in strategically drawing on shared experiences between people that can be categorized together. As discussed more thoroughly in chapters four and five, despite drawing on shared definitions, Huerta also worked to redefine the general perception of her roles. Thus in an effort to maintain an intersectional/matrix lens through this examination, I purposely focus on moments in which Huerta’s self-definition aided her ethos construction and even complicated the ways in which we might conceptualize ethos.

While May emphasizes the usefulness and importance of intersectionality, she also cautions that it is often misused or deployed superficially. Doing intersectionality requires fluid language and the ability to shift in perspective. One way to account for shifting between and among identities is by applying Gloria Anzaldúa’s concept of mestiza consciousness. Mestiza consciousness provides us with a way to discuss the fluidity of identity, whereas intersectionality asks us to consider the compounding effects of multiple identities.

Mestiza consciousness, as developed by Anzaldúa, “is a consciousness of the Borderlands” (Borderlands, 99). These borders are both figurative and literal, which Anzaldúa explains more specifically:

At the confluence of two or more genetic streams, with chromosomes constantly “crossing over,” this mixture of races, rather than resulting in an inferior being, provides hybrid progeny, a mutable, more malleable species with a rich gene pool. From this racial, ideological, cultural and biological cross-pollinization, an “alien” consciousness, una conciencia de mujer. (99)

Understanding the concept of mestiza consciousness sheds light on how and why Dolores Huerta could effectively and authentically emphasize varied attributes of herself that were dependent on her perception of audience. In thinking about the multiple identities that Huerta inhabits, we are forced to see the interplay of those identities with the targeted
audience. Part of the reason that Huerta was and is comfortable with shifting personae and/or emphasis is because she has lived a life on the borders. She is in a body that is already perceived as blended in multiple forms (such as race/ethnicity) and in multiple ways (such as cultural traditions/language). In Borderlands, Anzaldúa establishes the unique and often trying position of negotiating multiple identities, especially those that compete for supremacy:

The new mestiza copes by developing a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity. She learns to be an Indian in Mexican culture, to be Mexican from an Anglo point of view. She learns to juggle cultures. She has a plural personality, she operates in a pluralistic mode—nothing is thrust out, the good the bad and the ugly, nothing rejected, nothing abandoned. Not only does she sustain contradictions, she turns the ambivalence into something else. (101)

Like Anzaldúa, Huerta was born in a border state. As a child, she moved with her mother to the central valley of California—an area known for its diverse mix of Latinos and Anglos. Hence, Huerta was well practiced in negotiating which of her selves to emphasize. As established in chapter two, the study of ethos is primarily concerned with the rhetor’s credibility and quality, or habit, of character. Because of her experience as a Chicana growing up in communities that both embraced and rejected her based on cultural and gendered differences, Huerta acted from a mestiza consciousness. Huerta’s mestiza consciousness provides her with the ability to shift comfortably and—perhaps most importantly—authentically between cultures. Ultimately, mestiza consciousness provides a place/space in the mind/body from which she gains strength, ability, authenticity, and opportunities for genuine identification with her audience.

In this analysis, focusing on embodied identities, intersectionality, and mestiza consciousness emphasizes how marginality affects Huerta’s ethos construction. As a
Chicana and mother, Huerta often found herself defending her choice—and right—to be involved in the farm laborer movement. Attending to and claiming her marginality was an important part of Huerta’s ethos construction. In “Ethos as Location,” Nedra Reynolds acknowledges that “Claiming marginality has become a potent declaration of authority for those writers who have not historically occupied the centers of power” (332) but also asserts that it is not the only means in which credibility is built. Further, Reynolds points out that ethos is not constructed for any rhetor from or in a single location, and she recognizes that simply speaking from the margins is not necessarily empowering:

> Just as learners and writers shift positions continually, ethos is not constructed on a single site, from an unchanging vantage point on the margins. Another “site” for ethos can better highlight the multiple negotiations that go on between self and society, between writer and reader, between and among overlapping discourse communities. (332)

Reynolds draws attention to the importance of multiple negotiations “between the self and society” (332). And in order to consider how an effective ethos is constructed, it is imperative to examine how conceptions of identity are shaped by others and self-defined by the rhetor, as well as how those inform or relate to definitions from society. Therefore, any examination of Huerta’s ethos requires attention to her multiple identity categories in order to maintain an intersectional and matrix orientation.

In their article “Balancing Mystery and Identification,” communication scholars Erin Doss and Robin Jensen not only argue that Huerta’s shifting personae aided in her rhetorical efficacy but also argue that Huerta “leveraged her border experiences and ideology as rhetorical resources” (1). In effect, Doss and Jensen contend that by working from a mestiza consciousness, Huerta was able to shift personae in a manner that effectively influenced her audience to perceive themselves in a particular role (advocates,
care givers, supporters, etc.) and influenced them to “perceive her own exceptional normalcy” (Doss and Jensen 1). Doss and Jensen’s research offers detailed analysis of how Huerta’s ability to shift between identities aided her rhetorically, as also demonstrated by the excerpts included in this chapter:

Acting from a *mestiza* consciousness, Huerta had the ability not only to remain flexible, but, as Anzaldúa theorizes, to “shift out of habitual formations,” moving from analytical thinking to divergent thinking. These evolving patterns of thought were reflected in her use of diverse rhetorical personae, which allowed her to embrace a “more whole perspective, one that *includes*—rather than excludes” and that could persuade her audiences to embrace such a perspective as well. In this respect, her rhetoric elucidates both the potential consequences and discursive resources inherent in border living and boundary crossing [emphasis added]. (2)

As cautioned by May, it is important not to take on an “additive notion” to identities. In this example, Huerta’s ability to remain fluid aided her rhetorical prowess as opposed to compounding her oppression. In many cases, Huerta’s “Chicananess” and by extension *mestiza* consciousness was an asset instead of a liability.

In this work, I examine how the concept of *mestiza* consciousness informs our understanding of Huerta’s *ethos* construction and, through my analysis, I work to extend Jay Dolmage’s point that “Anzaldúa also, importantly, centers the body within her theory of knowledge, refusing the ‘dichotomy between ideas and feelings’ (Lu 24), focusing on Othered bodies, and suggesting that embodied difference is power” (19). Like Reynolds, Dolmage points out that utilizing the experiences of the body and including such experiences explicitly can, and often does, lead to empowerment. Through the analysis that follows, it becomes apparent that Huerta did in fact leverage traditional conceptions of her embodied identity in order to identify with her audience and establish her credibility.
However, because Huerta did not occupy her identity categories in-line with traditionally shared conceptions, she also simultaneously disrupted shared definitions.

Conclusion

In the introduction to *A Dolores Huerta Reader*, Mario Garcia shares, “Huerta understood what Chicana scholars called the triple oppression of Chicanas and other minority women: race, class, and gender. She understood that Chicanas, especially in farm labor, suffered from racism, class exploitation, and gender discrimination” (xxiii). What Garcia identifies as “the triple oppression of Chicanas,” as experienced by Huerta and other minority women, can also be understood through what critical race feminists call intersectionality. As suggested by Garcia, and as outlined in this chapter, intersectionality is critical to understanding Huerta, and by extension, her *ethos* construction.

In an effort to contribute to the long and complicated scholarship on the rhetorical construction of *ethos*, and to include Latina rhetor Dolores Huerta into rhetorical study, my research and methodological processes draw from a constellation of theories emerging from rhetoric, critical race studies, feminism, and archival studies. As discussed in this chapter, I treat archival research and intersectional analysis as a social process whereby Huerta’s identity markers and identification processes under investigation are attended to as constructions to be both defined and strategically problematized. Undoubtedly, such complexity is needed when investigating the embodied identities of marginalized rhetors and public figures.

Although identity categories could be considered too fixed and/or likely to essentialize communities, I argue that by using categories we can talk more explicitly about how intersectionality works. In effect using identity categories actually aids us in doing
analysis through an intersectional or matrix lens. Conducting my analysis through a matrix lens ultimately highlights contradictions and works to disrupt traditionally dominant definitions of identities. Further, I examine the not-always-rational ways in which rhetors such as Huerta may have to attend to their identities in order to build credibility from a marginalized body. More specifically, throughout this project I look to Huerta’s embodied identities and their relationship with *ethos* because often her appearance and her embodied identities were brought up in public discussions, and thus required direct attention.
Chapter Four
Inescapable Body and Self-Definition

Previously I traced the relationship between ethos and the self in order to illustrate the intrinsic tie between the two, and to demonstrate the usefulness of a study of ethos read through the lens of the body. More specifically drawing on the work of Marshall Alcorn, James Baumlin, and Susan Jarratt and Nedra Reynolds, I argue that how a rhetor understands and defines the self is significant for ethos construction. Considering how identities are often identified through general labels, such a mother, woman, Latina, I also argue that fantasized definitions influence ethos creation. By connecting critical race feminism’s concept of intersectionality, the role of identity categories, and Anzaldúa’s mestiza consciousness, I argue that the roles rhetors embody complicate, dictate, and nuance the rhetorical strategy that can be deployed from any given rhetor at any given time. Noting the critical role of the rhetor’s identity in the construction of ethos and the powerful effect of the body, in this chapter I focus on how Huerta was defined by others and emphasize how Huerta extends, bends, and ultimately redefines the identity categories that she most visibly embodied.

As demonstrated by the analysis in this chapter and the next, despite the intersectional and fractured nature of the self, it appears necessary to prevail on standard and sometimes rigid conceptions of identity when constructing an ethos. While I am not arguing that the self is made up of stable notions of identity, I do argue that it can be productive to consider normative conceptions of identity even if just to work against them. Poststructuralists swung the pendulum away from the central, stable self by arguing that individuals are merely a product of fractured discourse, but in so doing they also devalued the importance of recognizing that not all bodies are received the same by the audience—
as if to say there is ‘one’ theoretical subject that is removed from all “political and ethical realities” (Jarratt and Reynolds 38). Placing Huerta’s body in the analysis of her ethos construction forces us to look beyond conventional conceptions of authority and instead recognize that the self is a combination of both mutable and immutable formations that are built in conjunction with cultural discourse. In other words, utilizing classifications—either pushing against them or even standing in contradiction to them—is effective in connecting to and with an audience.

Drawing from Carolyn Skinner’s features of a feminist model of ethos, this chapter argues that Huerta prevails on her identity in part because it was an element of the “material resources available to her and the popular beliefs about those of her social position” (173). Skinner’s first feature of feminist ethos supports the analysis of this chapter by highlighting the necessity of marginalized rhetors attending to their social position. Thus, by first demonstrating the prevalence of public discussions of Huerta’s appearance, it can be reasoned that Huerta necessarily attends to her physical features. Additionally, Skinner posits a second feature of feminist ethos:

_Ethos often is not crafted in response to a coherent and identifiable set of audience values but instead is composed in a dynamic context that includes multiple competing ideas about the “best” virtues; consequently, ethos formation frequently involves value negotiations as well as reciprocity between rhetor and audience identity constructs._ (175)

As Skinner identifies, the identity constructs between the audience and rhetor are continually negotiated between them. I add to Skinner’s observation by also noting that the rhetor—in this case Huerta—strongly guided her audience’s perceptions of her identity categories by explicitly defining them whenever possible. In what follows, I am working from a perspective that Skinner’s feminist model of ethos is useful for understanding the
complex ways in which Huerta built her *ethos*. And therefore, after examining how Huerta’s appearance set up her audiences to identify her in particular ways, I move toward how Huerta responded to such categorizations.

**An Inescapable Body: Huerta’s Body as a Key to “Knowing” Her**

*Ethos* is deeply connected to the bodies that we are in. Thus, when physical descriptions of Huerta’s body are included in texts about her, they are not benign. While noting the physical distinctions or qualities of a rhetor is not inherently negative, the emphasis on racial, classed, and gendered qualities of the body could be interpreted as such. This could be especially true during the time period when Huerta was entering the public sphere as a leader of the farm laborer movement: a time in which women, the working class, and racial minorities were vigorously fighting for equality. As Susan Kates argues in “The Embodied Rhetoric of Hallie Quinn Brown,” considering rhetoric as “fully embodied” leads to the exposure of the politics embodied in knowledge; or, more specifically, drawing on Haraway’s use of situated knowledge, Kates explains, “Haraway describes the politics embodied in knowledge...in which the ideological implications of certain kinds of seemingly ‘disinterested’ knowledge are made explicit” (61). Recognizing that “certain kinds” of identities were valued differently than others—and, in the case of Huerta, were perceived as deficient—exposes the potentially even if inadvertent damaging effects of presenting Huerta through the physical descriptions that highlighted her embodied identities.
The fact that the body plays a vital role in rhetoric is not new. In fact, Debra Hawhee’s *Bodily Arts* demonstrates that the training of the mind and body were closely connected in ancient Greek culture, emphasizing the importance of the linkage. However, in the introduction to *Rhetorical Bodies*, a collection of essays featuring studies of embodied and material rhetorics, Jack Selzer makes the following observation:

> Even though rhetoric has long been concerned with the situatedness of literate acts and the real effects of discourse rather than with the ideal possibilities, the relationship of rhetorical events to the material world that sustains and produces them has not often enough been fully elaborated or clearly articulated. (9)

While Selzer acknowledges the work of many scholars that have included the body in discussions of rhetoric, he also supports the need to further theorize and make explicit those connections, especially as it pertains to marginalized populations. And while the works of feminist rhetorics scholars such as Enoch, Glenn, Kates, Logan, and Royster have placed the bodies of marginalized women in the history of rhetoric, there remains a need for continued attention to how intersectionality affects rhetorical strategy. As Jay Dolmage points out, often conversations in rhetorical studies continue to omit those that deviate from the dominant culture’s vision of “normal” and instead privilege bodies and identities that are able-bodied White men. I build on the work of these scholars by examining how Huerta’s embodied qualities are represented in multiple texts and how she defines and establishes herself in response.

It is hardly arguable that the bodies of female public figures are often unequally emphasized in discussions of their work which suggests that their bodies are central to knowing them and the work that they do. Thus, it may not come as any surprise that many of the articles written about Huerta begin by providing a physical description of her. In
other words, we are *introduced* to her through her physical appearance—as opposed to her official position in the UFW, her other credentials, or the event/work that she was doing that prompted the article. In this section, I draw on a collection of five articles from periodicals that represent a variety of distribution sizes and audiences. The periodicals included in this section serve two primary purposes: first, they provide evidence of the prominent role that Huerta’s body occupied for many audiences; and second, the articles serve as a starting point for subsequent analysis centered on how Huerta established herself in conjunction with, in response to, and in opposition to the most visible qualities of her identity. In all five articles, pictures accompany the text, and in four of the five, the pictures are prominently placed. It is likely that in the late 1960s and 1970s, much like it is today, including images in articles was standard practice; however, I highlight the presence of pictures in order to emphasize the unnecessary inclusion of a physical description in many of the publications examined. Organized by the reach of their distribution, each of these articles places her physical description in their introductions, and sometimes throughout the article, which suggests that Huerta’s body is as important for us to “know” as the work and/or role she was carrying.

*Seafarer’s International Union of North America, February 1968* [International distribution]

The first publication comes from the Seafarer International Union of North America (SIU), which was chartered in 1938 and strongly supported the efforts of the UFW, as reported in their publication. While specific circulation numbers for their publication were not available, the long history of their union and affiliation with the AFL-CIO demonstrates that they were a stable—and most likely formidable—union organization. Further, the SIU had an international audience with ties to older and larger seafarer unions (Bunker). Given
that the SIU clearly valued union membership, the right to protest, and advocated for safe working conditions, the journalist (anonymous) and publication can be considered allies to Huerta and the work of the UFW.

The five-page article features the UFW’s national boycotting efforts and Huerta’s role as head of the boycott team that had just arrived in Brooklyn, NY. The article served as an introduction to the campaign’s purpose and the poor working conditions of farm workers. The majority of the article focuses on the UFW as a whole and provides compelling evidence of the necessity for a national boycott by detailing the strikes in California that preceded the teams of boycotters arriving in Brooklyn. In addition, the article emphasized the need for united support of their efforts and introduces Huerta as a vital leader. On the first page of the article, Huerta is introduced thusly: “At the head of the boycott team is Mrs. Dolores Huerta, a dynamic, dark-haired woman of 37, mother of seven youngsters and vice president of the United Farm Workers” (“Farm Workers: The Union Makes Them Strong” 2). Not only does Huerta’s gendered role as mother precede her role as vice president of the UFW in the article, but so too does her hair color. This descriptive setup of Huerta is intended to help the reader understand her, and it functions to prioritize aspects of her. Moving from her personality and beauty to her role as a mother to her position as the vice president of the UFW, the article may suggest that Huerta’s administrative role is not necessarily to be understood as her most significant quality.


In 1974, after a decade of organizing and activism, the UFW successfully launched and facilitated a nationwide boycott of grapes that was estimated to include 17 million Americans and was gaining momentum in the lettuce and Gallo wine boycotts (UFW.org).
As the atrocious working conditions of the farm workers were gaining awareness, so too were the unhealthy and unsanitary processes in which the growers were engaging. As vice president and head of many of the boycott operations, Huerta was integral to the success the UFW was having, and it is not surprising that she caught the attention of The Nation Magazine. Now, with a 150-year-old history of reporting on events and figures that were shaping the political and cultural times, The Nation is the longest established publication that featured Huerta that I was able to find. In 1974, The Nation reportedly had 24,292 paid subscriptions and a total distribution of 28,842, which included magazines purchased by dealers and carriers as well as those given away for free as samples (The Nation, October 26, 1974 edition, 410). As evident through the paid subscriptions, the circulation of The Nation was robust and far-reaching. The magazine boasts its long history in a recent anniversary edition and describes the magazine thusly:

Our very first issue described “the conflict of the ages, the great strife between the few and the many, between privilege and equality, between law and power, between opinion and the sword.” This anniversary issue is a record of the last 150 years of that conflict—and as long as The Nation is around, that fight will go on. With your help, we’ll be fighting for another 150 years and beyond! (The Nation 150th Anniversary)

More specifically, in the 1960s to mid-1970s, the magazine was under the editorial direction of Carey McWilliams and was considered quite liberal. In the special edition of the magazine, Eric Foner writes, “The Nation fully embraced the militant phase of the civil-rights movement unleashed by the sit-ins of 1960.... The Nation became a voice of ’60s protest. And McWilliams’s own longstanding example helped to inspire practitioners of the decade’s engaged, radical journalism” (“The Nation and The Nation 150 Years” 42). Given the direction of the magazine, it is not surprising that journalists Barbara Baer and Glenna Matthews were granted a six-page spread to cover Huerta and the role of women in the
In their extensive article, Baer and Matthews include several direct quotations from Huerta, as well as other women that were working with the UFW. In total, Baer and Matthews bring in the voices of seven women, although most of the space is dedicated to Huerta.

In their article titled “You Find a Way: The Women of the Boycott,” Baer and Matthews begin with the following description:

Dolores Huerta, vice president of the United Farm Workers, was standing on a flat-bed truck beside Cesar Chavez. She didn’t show her eight-and-a-half months’ pregnancy, but she looked very tired from the days and nights of organizing cross-country travel plans for hundreds of people who were now waiting in the parking lot alongside the union headquarters at Delano, Calif. She leaned down and talked with children, her own and others. Small children held smaller ones, fathers carried babies on their shoulders. (232)

In this introductory paragraph, we are introduced to Huerta through her role as the UFW vice president, through her pregnancy/motherhood, and through her physically evident tiredness. Baer and Matthews place her administrative role first, as might be expected from a publication that has a history of supporting social justice issues and reporting on events, organizations, and people that were significant to the cultural and political moment.

Nonetheless, Huerta’s body is positioned, intentionally or not, as different and compromised—a classification and positioning that she frequently combats, which we will see in later analysis. The emphasis on not looking eight-and-a-half months pregnant again places focus on Huerta’s physical condition and specifically acts as a reminder of her female-ness. Of course, this kind of positioning is absent when we are introduced to Chavez in the excerpt above, as well as in the second paragraph of the same article below. Here, we are provided with more physical descriptors of Huerta:

People sang strike songs and Chavez spoke to them about the boycott. Dolores listened intently, nodding, brushing her straight black hair away
from her face from time to time and smiling softly at the children. A priest blessed the cars and busses. (Baer and Matthews 232)

Chavez is mentioned but not physically described; instead, the emphasis is put on his action of addressing the audience about the boycott. In contrast, the description of Huerta brushing her hair away from her face and smiling softly both feminize and sexualize her, especially when compared to a traditional male authority figure who might stereotypically be described as distanced, professional, in charge, or even hardened. For example, no mention of Chavez includes his role as a father or a description of him as a slight man, nor do the authors casually address him as Cesar but rather as Chavez or Cesar Chavez. And while this article does emphasize the important role that Huerta and other women played in the success of the boycott, the authors still position Huerta as “soft” while also addressing her as Dolores or Dolores Huerta in the article. The casual use of Huerta’s first name subtly works to deemphasize her authority and right to lead. Despite the article’s focus on the critical work that women were doing as part of the union, by including these specific physical descriptions of Huerta, Baer and Matthews contribute to the emphasis on women’s physicality and thus subtly demean Huerta’s ethos even while trying to bolster the important work she and others were engaged in.

Baer and Matthews continue to draw attention to Huerta’s physicality—as well as the physical descriptions of the other women interviewed for the piece—throughout their article. In fact, they include nearly an entire paragraph to positioning her body:

When Dolores began organizing, she already had six children and was pregnant with a seventh. Nearly twenty years later, there are ten children, and Dolores is still so slim and graceful we find it hard to imagine her in her youth, the age of her daughter. She has not saved herself for anything, has let the life draw and strain her to a fine intensity...Her long black hair is drawn back from high cheek bones, her skin is tanned reddish from the sun on the
picket line, and in her deep brown eyes is a constant humor that relieves her serious manner. (Baer and Mathews 233)

As illustrated in the passage above, the authors situate Huerta as a mature mother who somehow strikes a balance between tender and fierce: two qualities that strongly relate to character but are represented through her appearance. To be clear, the authors do not solely focus on Huerta's person. The majority of the six pages were dedicated to two purposes: first, arguing for the UFW's cause; and second, allowing Huerta's voice to be heard, which is discussed further in chapter five.


A year after being featured in The Nation magazine, the UFW was beginning to lose momentum and funding. According to Barbara Baer's later article “Stopping Traffic,” the UFW declined sharply in membership, falling from its peak of fifty thousand members in 1973 to just ten thousand by 1974 (Dolores Huerta Reader 97). However, Huerta continued to be sought after by reporters. Four years after its inception, Ms. Magazine dedicated five full pages to covering Huerta and her role in the UFW. Although Huerta was initially skeptical of feminism, she met Gloria Steinem and realized the value of the woman's movement. Huerta eventually joined forces with the feminist movement, albeit she reportedly did not share all the ideals especially those relating to birth control. The support from Steinem and the Ms. staff was verified when Huerta reflected on her time heading the boycott in New York City: “Gloria Steinem and the Ms. women at lunch time would come down and picket” (Clemmons 1-B).

Similar to the sanctioning provided by The Nation, being featured in Ms. signals Huerta as an ally to the readership of the magazine and orients the national audience to Huerta through feminism and social justice. In September 1975, Judith Coburn shadowed
Huerta for several days while she campaigned for union election rights for farm workers. *Ms. Magazine* was in its early years when it covered Huerta, and it was a wildly successful content-based publication that worked to minimize the influence of advertisers. On their website, *Ms.* describes its entry into the magazine landscape:

> *Ms.* was a brazen act of independence in the 1970s. At the time, the fledgling feminist movement was either denigrated or dismissed in the mainstream media if it was mentioned at all. Most magazines for women were limited to advice about saving marriages, raising babies, or using the right cosmetics. When the *Ms.* preview debuted carrying articles on subjects such as the housewife’s moment of truth, “desexing” the English language, and abortion, the syndicated columnist James J. Kilpatrick jeered that it was a “Csharp on an unturned piano,” a note “of petulance, of bitchiness, or nervous fingernails screeching across a blackboard.” (“About”)

While the *Ms.* article provides many rich details of Huerta and her role in the UFW, it also includes many aspects of her personal life. Given that *Ms.* is a feminist publication, it may not be surprising that Huerta’s physical description is minimal and is not found until the second page/sixth paragraph. Coburn sketches, “Dolores’s chiseled, burnt sienna face suggests more her father’s Indian/Mexican heritage than her mother’s Spanish blood” (11). In this description, we see an explicit linking of Huerta’s physical traits to her ethnicity and lineage but also an omission of her gendered attributes. When Coburn describes Huerta as resembling her father rather than her mother who had some Spanish blood, she overshadows the fact that her mother was also Mexican-American and not solely of Spanish descent—a detail that Huerta brings up in her own description of her mother. Thus, the colonized history of Mexico is overshadowed by the physical traits displayed by Huerta (and, evidently, her parents). While this description does not disparage Huerta, it does place her physical body in the discussion of her leadership and in effect foregrounds her race/ethnicity. While noting race, ethnicity, or gender is not inherently negative, there has
been a long history of discrediting the character of both women and Latinos. As Jessica Enoch points out in her chapter “Claiming Cultural Citizenship,” after Texas joined the United States, there were “virulent discriminatory discourses circulating the United States concerning ‘the Mexican’” (129). The history of negative depictions of Mexicans as lazy and unintelligent has lasted several generations and continues to be pervasive. Therefore emphasizing Huerta’s ethnicity to many readers—especially those that were not a part of the farm worker community—was a precarious move and may have caused additional obstacles to her claiming credibility and authority as a leader. That said however, because *Ms.* magazine was likely to have readers that were inclined to support social justice initiatives and the plight of people of color, it is also likely that such positioning offered Huerta the opportunity to provide counter-depictions of Mexicans. Although Huerta’s marginalized identities may have set her at a disadvantage in the public arena, they also offered avenues for social change when addressed.

*Tampa Times: February 1, 1978* [Regional: City-based]

The next article examined in this section comes from the 1978 *Tampa Times*. Unlike the preceding publications, the *Tampa Times* was a local Florida paper that was likely to have a less explicit affiliation with liberal or conservative politics. According to the *New York Times*, the *Tampa Times* stopped producing its daily newspaper in 1982 after a ninety-year run due to a lack of circulation. Just four years before its closure, staff writer Nedra Clemmons reported the story on Huerta and the UFW.

In 1978, the UFW was beginning to rebound from the decline in membership it suffered just a few years earlier. According to author Frank Bardacke, the UFW regained political influence in the late 1970s and early 1980s from organizing farm workers in
Salinas, CA, but ultimately collapsed in the mid-1980s (7). It is likely that because the UFW was building its second wave of momentum, Huerta again caught the attention of media outlets. Interestingly, in terms of readership, the *Tampa Times* is the most mainstream—as suggested by the main affiliation being geographical rather than an explicit ideological link—and was the strongest example of the explicit comingling of Huerta’s role of mother and UFW vice president. In the article “Dolores Huerta mothers 11 kids, one labor union,” journalist Nedra Clemmons begins, “She’s the mother of 11 children and one labor union, this small, unassuming, dark-haired person with the warm brown eyes” (1-B). By 1978, Huerta had been organizing the UFW and campaigning for farm workers’ rights alongside Chavez for sixteen years, yet her gendered physical presence and motherly role are inescapable conversation starters for Clemmons. As is apparent from its title, this article begins with a headline that immediately comingles Huerta’s mothering with the UFW and represents her leadership role in the UFW as an extension of her motherly identity. Clemmons’s choice to introduce the audience to Huerta through her physical description once again prioritizes Huerta’s body over her work, potentially de-legitimizes her authority by placing her strictly in a motherly role, and thus influences how Huerta needs to strategically negotiate *ethos* construction.

In contrast to the articles from *SIU, The Nation* and *Ms.*, the *Tampa Times* article was relatively brief, as it only comprised about one and a half pages. In that brief space, however, Clemmons nearly exclusively frames Huerta through her role as a mother. In this case, we see less of a connection between the value of the UFW’s cause and the leadership provided by Huerta and more on the connection between Huerta as a mother and vice president, which can be seen in the second paragraph of the article:
And Dolores Huerta is still the long distance manager of both [family and UFW]—roaming the country as the vice president of the United Farm Workers (UFW); crossing paths with the three children she already has following her union footsteps; keeping tabs on the other offspring who range in age from 1 to 27. (Clemmons 1-B)

Clemmons offers space for a direct quotation from Huerta, writing, “I’m trying to get all my kids to stay in the union,” but then closes the quotation by writing, “asserts the gentle but sturdy woman” (1-B). Looking closely at the *Tampa Times* article and the positioning of Huerta’s motherly identity by Clemmons is an interesting example of the complexity involved in constructing *ethos*. In this case, maintaining a matrix orientation—one that allows for contradictions and imagination—is necessary for understanding this article as an opportunity for Huerta to strengthen her character. As we will see later in this chapter, when given the opportunity and space to address how being a mother aided her in the UFW, Huerta often turned to her role as a mother as evidence of her genuine concern for the wellbeing of families and especially of children.

*Daily Pioneer, May 1974* [Highly local: university-based]

The last example is the shortest (approximately one half-page) and from the most localized publication. Located in the bay area, the California State University⁴ (CSU), Hayward’s newspaper, *The Daily Pioneer* most likely had a small readership given that at the time of publication the university was only approximately twenty years old. Today, many of the CSU campuses enroll 10–25,000 students each year, but in the 1970s the enrollment at most public universities was between 500–2,000 students. In 1974, Huerta was speaking at rallies and protests often and was working as hard as ever to maintain the UFW’s momentum. It is likely that in an effort to reach broad audiences and continue to

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⁴ In 2005 California State University, Hayward was renamed California State University, East Bay.
recruit from sites that were likely to be allies of farm worker rights, Huerta took the time to speak at a Cinco de Mayo rally at CSU, Hayward. In the article covering her speech, Huerta is described as “dressed in a pair of blue jeans and a red vest emblazoned with the UFW symbol. A small woman whose head barely rose over the podium” (Chui 1). While the description itself does not disparage Huerta nor does it overly genderize her, it does once again beg the question, “Why is a physical description necessary when a picture accompanies the article?” In this instance, there is an emphasis on Huerta’s outfit, and the emphasis on jeans—whether intentional or not—positions her outfit against a more professional authority figure who might wear a suit. However, because the description also suggests her working-class position, it does place her in the community in which she is advocating for change.

Given the location of the university and the culture of college students during the 1970s—largely affected by the civil rights movement and social activism—it is likely that the reporter Glennda Chui and the readership of the Daily Pioneer were sympathetic to the farm workers’ cause. Further evidence of the support from the intended audience can be gleaned from the fact that the CSU, Hayward held a three-day Cinco de Mayo festival in which several speakers and entertainers participated. In addition, the CSU system offered an alternative to more expensive private four-year universities, and often the student body was comprised of local residents. It is striking, then, that the description of Huerta peering over the podium—as she was positioned in the article—suggests a childlike physique or one who is small physically and therefore tangentially lacking authority, knowledge, and—depending on the audience’s conscious and subconscious notions of rhetors and ethos—even the right to speak. In this way, Huerta is clearly physically positioned as the opposite
of what an audience might imagine to be a traditional leader, vice president, or even a speaker. In other words, such an inclusion not only puts Huerta’s body firmly in the conversation but also demonstrates her as small and casual, which could function to diffuse or diminish her authority. Further, the description is an unnecessary distraction from the cause that Huerta was there to address. In contrast, when Chui introduced a male union organizer in a subsequent passage, she writes, “Preceding the Huerta speech was a short talk by Fred Eyster, a local UFW organizer who strode to the podium waving a ‘Justice for Farmworkers—Boycott Gallo’ sign” (2). The stark difference between the two introductions provides additional evidence of well-intentioned authors subtly undermining Huerta’s authority.

What is perhaps the most shocking trend across the five articles was that despite being allies, and/or the distributional reach of the publication, every instance of Huerta’s physical description was used as an introduction to her role as vice president in the UFW. However, because definitions of identities are variable and always in flux there are several possibilities for both negative and positive associations to be made about Huerta’s identities. Thus, the target audience of the publication played an important role in how those characterizations were taken up. For example, in the case of the *Tampa Times* article, a generous read of the physical descriptions of Huerta could humanize her or make her relatable to other mothers and women, which would therefore serve as an instance of positive ethos building. However, it is just as likely that such a positioning of Huerta undermines her ethos as a formidable contract negotiator and leader by perpetuating already-tenuous versions of her identities that are disassociated with power and authority.
In each article, Huerta is described as a small, raced mother and is often feminized and sexualized in so doing. The descriptions of her actions that place the audience’s gaze on her children or position her as Chicana all work to tell us something about who Huerta is and how public authorities (journalists) interpret her. What it reveals for audiences is highly variable because it will ultimately depend on whom the reader/audience member is and how she defines each of the categories labeled through her physicality (the readers and hers). Considering Haraway’s situated knowledge or Kates’s embodied knowledges, it is important to remember that audiences have consumed decades of cultural narratives that describe both women and ethnic minorities as deficient. Thus, calling attention to the embodied identities of Huerta, especially her ethnicity and gender, was particularly meaningful. In effect while there was and/or is a danger of that deficiency perpetuating the already-engrained conceptions of those categories, such positioning also provided Huerta the opportunity to rewrite those scripts.

Taken collectively, the trend set by the journalists is clear: we must know Huerta first through her physically identifiable identities and then consider the work she’s doing. Huerta’s embodied identities, especially as represented by others, affect her ethos by drawing the audience’s attention to her physicality and thereby opening spaces for Huerta to respond. The question then, shifts from how Huerta constructs her ethos to how Huerta constructed her ethos in response to her positioning by others. Despite the fact that these descriptions may subtly delegitimize her work and invoke cultural scripts that foreground her body, beauty, and motherhood, Huerta actually leverages the traditional definitions of her identity by rewriting those scripts with self-definition and subsequent redefinition.

(Re)Defining the Self: Huerta and Her Positioning of Self through Intersectionality
It is evident upon uttering her name or seeing her image that Huerta is identified as non-White. Her dark skin and eyes signal her Chicananess, and these qualities are often noted in articles written about her, as illustrated above. In this section, I continue to focus on how Huerta positioned herself by exploring the connection between Huerta's identity and her ethos in order to highlight the fragmented, fractured, yet also deeply entwined and blended nature of her identity. The following analysis of Huerta’s ethos construction will primarily examine direct quotations from Huerta responding to or explicitly (re)defining herself in a variety of textual artifacts, including the articles examined above, a printed interview, and personal letters.

Huerta’s fractured and commingled identity is one that, as a Chicana, I understand firsthand. As mentioned in chapter three, the naming and labeling is one way in which we begin to know a thing. As a result, the importance of labeling and naming oneself—or the power to define—is of particular significance to communities that lack power. The connection between naming and self-definition is especially critical for minority groups who have been labeled or named in ways that perpetuate oppression. The naming choice and/or self-declaration of the race/ethnicity of a rhetor can signal a great deal about how the rhetor views her own identity. Thus, the rhetor maintains some agency for self-(re)definition. For instance, Huerta refers to herself as Chicana on several occasions which suggests a conscious reclaiming of the term “Chicano,” a term imbued with political meaning and fractured definition. Because “Chicano” was once a term used to signify low class, Huerta’s ethos is partially constructed by her use of this term to identify her racial/ethnic heritage. Huerta’s role as a leader in the UFW and as their chief negotiator works to further reclaim the term that was once used to disgrace Mexican-Americans.
Huerta—along with many participating in the Chicano movement—complicates the
definition and expectations for Chicanos. Hence, we see Huerta work beyond her
prescribed place and historical version of “self” in society and construct a self that enforces
change. As even this brief example begins to indicate, Huerta’s intersectionality makes her
an excellent example for examining *ethos* construction as a fluid, not static, enterprise. As I
will demonstrate, while outside forces prescribe Huerta’s identity roles, she maintains
agency by both accepting those roles and then transforming them with her lived
experiences. Huerta thus changes the very definition of those prescribed roles, which
ultimately adds to her *ethos* construction.

Because identity categories are rarely innocuous, many heated debates have
occurred over what term to use to identify peoples’ race and/or ethnicity. In the
introduction to *Language of Oppression*, Haig Bosmajian addresses the importance of
naming and identification:

> The power which comes from names and naming is related directly to the
> power to define others—individuals, races, sexes, ethnic groups. Our
> identities, who and what we are, how others see us, are greatly affected by
> the names we are called and the words with which we are labeled… The
> word “define” comes from the Latin *definire*, meaning to limit. Through
> definition we restrict, we set boundaries, we name. (9)

Bosmajian exposes the issue of power that lies in terminology and especially that which
refers to one’s ethnicity or race.

Technically, Latino is not a race but rather an ethnicity. However, what that means
and to whom varies widely. For the sake of this project, what is important is the perception
of race/ethnicity by the rhetor and the audience. The differences between Chicano, Latino,
Hispanic, and Mexican-American are both connotative and denotative. In *De Colores Means
All of Us*, Elizabeth Martinez dedicates her first chapter to examining what she calls “the
great terminology question.” In an effort to answer the question, “what is Chicana/o?”

Martínez offers the following:

For starters, we combine at least three roots: indigenous (from pre-Columbian times), European (from Spanish and Portuguese invasions), and African (from the many slaves brought to the Americas, including at least 200,000 to Mexico alone). A smattering of Chinese should be added, which goes back to the sixteenth century; Mexico City had a Chinatown by the mid-1500s, some historians say. Another mestizaje, or mixing, took place—this time with Native Americans of various nations, pueblos and tribes living in what is now the Southwest—when Spanish and Mexican colonizers moved north. Later our Chicano ancestors acquired yet another dimension through intermarriage with Anglos. (1)

Martínez provides important details about the ancestry of Chicano/as, and builds from what Gloria Anzaldúa began over a decade before her. Anzaldúa brought attention to the many intersections of identity and the roles of ethnic and racial lineage in her groundbreaking book *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. Here, Anzaldúa describes the use of Chicano:

> When not copping out, when we know we are more than nothing, we call ourselves Mexican, referring to race and ancestry; mestizo when affirming our Indian and Spanish (but we hardly ever own our Black ancestry); Chicano when referring to a politically aware people born and/or raised in the U.S.; Raza when referring to Chicanos; tejano when we are Chicanos from Texas. (“How to Tame a Wild Tongue” reprinted in *Available Means*, 365)

Both Anzaldúa and Martínez highlight the political nature of choosing Chicano/a. Anzaldúa further explains, “Chicanos did not know we were a people until 1965 when Cesar Chavez and the farmworkers united and *I Am Joaquin* was published and *la Raza Unida* party was formed in Texas. With that recognition, we became a distinct people” (365). It is of no small consequence that Chavez and the farm labor movement were credited with bringing Latinos together and politicizing them. In fact, according to Martínez, the only significant difference between Mexican-American and Chicano/a is the political connotation. Martínez
explains, “Chicano/a once implied lower-class status and was at times derogatory. During the 1960s and 1970s, in an era of strong pressure for progressive change, the term became an outcry of pride in one’s peoplehood and rejection of assimilation as one’s goal” (1-2).

While Mexican-American and Chicano/a can be interchanged rather seamlessly, it is important to recognize that the choice to use one or the other is political and highly contextual. In other words, how these terms are understood or perceived can vary greatly depending on who is using them and when. Therefore, Huerta’s choice to label herself and others as Chicano was not only intentional but also political and strategic since it represented her as an empowered figure who held the kind of recognition and positionality for which she and Chavez were fighting.

While there are many documents from the Chicano Movement that can illustrate both the importance of naming and the significance of what it means to be Chicano, a small publication from Northern California plays a particularly important role in how we might understand Huerta and her ethos as a Chicana. In February 1970, a group of Chicano Movement activists launched a publication called La Voz del Pueblo. The paper grew out of the Frente Foundation, which was a group of Chicanos from the University of California, Berkeley and was meant to directly address issues surrounding the movement. In the first volume, second issue, author and activist Manual Delgado explains the Chicano Movement:

There is one issue concerning the Spanish-speaking American that is of such importance that it requires immediate attention by all concerned. This is the “Chicano Movement.”

Never before has so much confusion existed concerning the identity of our people. Never before has there been so much thought given to our independence, both economic and political.

The abundance of ideas and arguments now being presented as the “political thought” of Mexican Americans is as varied and complex as our cultural and racial heritage that make us a unique people. The development
of new symbols and the new meanings given to old ones has created more anxiety than the intended new meaning and intended new pride.

The Frente Foundation, along with their publication, *La Voz del Pueblo*, was geared toward an audience who was interested in, and part of, the Chicano Movement. Further, articles for *La Voz* were likely to be written by college-educated reporters who hoped to spread the word about the Movement and were looking to gain support. It is important to note the obvious choice of Delgado to call attention to the “Chicano Movement” but also to include the alternate classifications: “Spanish-speaking Americans” and “Mexican Americans.”

While it does not appear that Huerta was part of the Frente Foundation, she was interviewed by their reporters a few times and she was willing to be open with them. In an interview that Huerta gave to *La Voz del Pueblo* in 1973, the journalist reported that Huerta engaged “in an unusually candid conversation, little-known facts about her life and her work” (*Dolores Huerta Reader* 163). Again, because power and authority are also strongly related, understanding Huerta’s choice to use a specific term for her ethnicity, or that of others, is important. Indeed, Huerta reflects on her early education:

> I was a little bit luckier than most Chicanos because I was raised in an integrated neighborhood. All the Chicanos who went to school where I did are all making it. I grew up in Stockton but we weren’t in a ghetto. In our school, there was Mexican, Black, White, Indian, Italian; we were all thrown in together. (*Dolores Huerta Reader* 164)

Huerta continues to reflect on her educational experiences as they related to her ethnicity and ultimately shares, “I couldn’t be [politically] active in College though, because it was just too early. I was the only Chicano at Stockton Junior College” (164). Because we know Huerta’s audience was likely to also be Chicano, or people interested in the Chicano Movement, her disclosure of being in an integrated school in addition to the
acknowledgement of being the “only Chicano at Stockton Junior College” may have offered her readers a point of connection to her—a way to identify their experiences with hers.

While the political nature of Chicano is generally agreed upon, Latino, Hispanic, and Mexican-American are slightly more complex and nuanced. Latino/a and Hispanic are broader categories that include Mexican-American and Chicano/a, as well as those with links to over twenty countries, including Mexico (Martínez, 2). Martínez differentiates between the terms:

Many of us prefer “Latino” to “Hispanic,” which obliterates our indigenous and African heritage, and recognizes only the European, the colonizer. (Brazilians, of course, reject “Hispanic” strongly because their European heritage is Portuguese, not Spanish.) “Hispanic” also carries the disadvantage of being a term that did not emerge from the community itself but was imposed by the dominant society through its census bureau and other bureaucracies, during the Nixon administration of the 1970s. (2)

Like Bosmajian, Martínez highlights the role of power in definition that is maintained and typically possessed by those who hold authority. Civil rights activists have been concerned with naming for many decades because, as Bosmajian shares, “Self-determination must include self-definition, the ability and right to name oneself; the master-subject relationship is based partly on the master’s power to name and define the subject” (9). To take this point a bit further, we might surmise that self-definition, then, is crucial to knowing one’s self or selves. And knowing and genuinely believing one’s self is crucial to ethos construction.

The ability, or audacity, to be self-determinate and believe in self-definition can empower those like Huerta and Chavez and lead to real and sustainable change. Indeed, rhetoric and ethos are meant to spark change and to some degree control what counts as knowledge, and naming is one way in which we begin to know. Thus a self-determined and
collaboratively developed conception of identity—one that is negotiated and agreed upon rather than given—is important to theories of rhetoric or ethos. Huerta, Anzaldúa, and countless other Chicanas stand on highly contextual and shifting ground when it comes to understanding, valuing, and ultimately defining the self. Tracing the conflicted relationship of naming or labeling Huerta as a Chicana—or any other name for someone from Mexican descent—demonstrates the very fractured and complicated concept of who she is or how we might know her.

Likewise, ideographic terms such as “mother” or “woman” have, and continue to have, evolving and political definitions. As a powerful and political woman in the public sphere, Huerta was not living the traditional version of mother. Yet, Huerta often invokes the powerful conceptions of “woman” as ethical, patient, and polite. When Huerta speaks of womanhood, she often relies heavily on traditional conceptions that rely on the conflation of woman and mother. Lindal Buchanan and Carol Mattingly argue that women rhetors often utilized traditional conceptions of women in order to enter the public sphere. Buchanan describes this in more detail:

> Women were told that their inherent “submissiveness and domesticity” disqualified them from the contentious civic arena but that their “purity and piety” simultaneously made them men’s moral superiors and guides (Welter 152). Ironically, it was a sense of moral duty that eventually compelled (or justified) women’s movement from private to public locations. (109)

Likewise, Enoch, Kates, and Skinner support findings that many of the positions that women entered within the public sphere were occupations with precedence for female

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5 The “ideograph” was first conceptualized by Michael McGee in his 1980 article, "The "Ideograph": A Link Between Rhetoric And Ideology." I use the term here to signify terms that are imbued with strong cultural ideologies that are highly variable, yet are often deployed by speakers/rhetors as a unified concept.
involvement, such as teachers (Enoch and Kates) and physicians (Skinner). In each of the rhetorical histories from Buchanan, Mattingly, Enoch, Kates, and Skinner, the women who entered the public sphere also reshaped and evolved definitions of “woman.” In other words, the female figures recovered by these scholars and many others aided in the evolution of women’s acceptable roles by continually pushing, crossing, and redrawing cultural boundaries. Huerta, like many woman historical figures, often leveraged generalizations about women as the moral superiors of men to justify their inclusion in the struggle. Returning to the *Ms. Magazine* article from 1976, Huerta remarks, “Women have one advantage over men—their egos aren’t so involved. They can compromise to get what they want instead of forcing a showdown all the time” (13). Huerta relies on a communally agreed-upon definition of women that includes the absence of an ego, and in so doing, leverages the very stereotypes she often stands in contradiction to. Yet, this absence of ego positions her as trustworthy.

In looking at Huerta’s publicized interviews, we see a consistent focus on the traditional definition of woman in order to establish the benefits of including women in the campaign for farm laborer’s rights. Two years before the article in *Ms.*, Huerta discussed her role as a woman and chief negotiator in the UFW. In *The Nation*, Huerta shares her perspective on why women are effective negotiators:

I think women are particularly good negotiators because we have a lot of patience, and no big ego trips to overcome. Women are more tenacious and that helps a great deal. It unnerves the growers to negotiate with us. Cesar always wanted to have an all-woman negotiating team. Growers can’t swear back at us or at each other. And then we bring in the ethical questions, like how our kids live. How can the growers really argue against what should be done for human beings just to save money. (236)
Huerta depends on a very traditional conception of woman to make her case, illustrating how she/they use the traditional conceptions of woman to benefit the cause by appealing to the growers’ desires for the ethical treatment of women and children. In the height of the women’s movement, Huerta leverages the press about women involved in the boycott by explicitly addressing the tangible differences of having women participate in the negotiations. Keeping in mind the audience of the magazine and cause at large, Huerta appeals to women by describing them as they would like to see themselves: patient and relevant.

Noting Huerta’s conflation of woman with mother is particularly important given Huerta’s own positionality as both. When placing herself in the company of “growers,” Huerta’s body symbolizes their basic conception of women as mothers, or potential mothers, and thus influences the type of communication they can have. Additionally, by invoking her role as a mother and prevailing on a commonly held definition of mother, Huerta validates that her concern is for the greater good as opposed to personal interests.

In the 1978 interview with the Tampa Times, Huerta’s reliance on traditional roles for women was beneficial along two important strands of argument: first, it justified her inclusion in the movement; and second, it offered an important emphasis of the UFW’s commitment to non-violence. During the second wave of momentum for the UFW, one of the critiques that was lobbied at the organizers and protestors was that the farm workers were using intimidation tactics. However, records show that the UFW was not found responsible for any injuries of people involved in the negotiations and protests. Huerta used the concern for child welfare to bridge differences between socioeconomic classes. In addition, Huerta ceases the opportunity to talk to mothers about the work that she and the
UFW were doing, and, by drawing on the common areas that exist among mothers, she simultaneously appeals to both the male and female audiences that may question the protestors’ tactics. She does not claim to be an exemplary form of mother, nor does she impress upon the journalist the work that she was doing was outside of the motherly sphere. Instead, she embraces the categorizations of both wife and mother and then draws on the shared values of her audience. In the *Tampa Times* article, Huerta claims, “women talk in terms of children,” and then, “I can’t think of any woman who is married to a farm owner who would want to see women suffer” (Clemmons 1-B). Thus, Huerta creates a set of common values among her audience that would be difficult to argue against. Later, Huerta also explains, “Women provided an awful lot of leadership in keeping the strikes non-violent. Where you have women you also have children, and children bring out a different type of feeling,” (2-B). In this case, Huerta works to establish authority as a woman who places children first and is committed to nonviolent protest, and seizes the opportunity to prevail on traditional definitions of woman/mother to assist in building an effective ethos.

By virtue of being a Chicana in the middle of the civil rights era and fighting for farm laborers, Huerta was a living contradiction to many of the traditional conceptions of women. As mentioned in the excerpt from *Ms. Magazine*, Huerta was known for her “combativeness” yet emphasized women’s ability to be patient and non-egotistical. Huerta was able to inhabit these contradictory roles authentically, in part because of her *mestiza* consciousness and metaphorical border-crossing experiences. A valuable characteristic of difference comes from the power of not being bound by conventions—even if stable conceptions were utilized from time to time as commonplaces. Dolmage supports this point
by drawing on Anzaldua and the malleability of the mestiza. More specifically, Dolmage explains,

In response to antagonism and in the face of cultural forces that value “purity” and “coherence,” Anzaldúa recognizes the need to fan identity and a language with “a malleability that renders us unbreakable” (*Borderlands* 64). The Mestiza/Mestizo race is a vision of modern métis which, “rather than resulting in an inferior being, provides hybrid progeny, a mutable more malleable species with a rich gene pool,” resulting in an “alien consciousness” of the borderland all cultures at the same time (*Borderlands* 77). (Dolmage 19)

While Huerta prevailed on culturally agreed-upon definitions of selves or identities such as woman or mother in order to build ethos on occasion, she also opened up new spaces for identification through her extraordinary ability to contradict those definitions by example.

While gender was obviously one of the identities that Huerta consistently had to attend to, so too was her race/ethnicity. And as suggested thus far, none of these categories are discrete. In the following excerpts, note how Huerta works to leverage her appeal by drawing on experiences primarily from class and gender. Organized chronologically, the first excerpt is from the interview given to *La Voz del Pueblo* in 1973. As evidence of her rhetorical ability, Huerta utilizes *La Voz* as a channel to reach out to the Chicano public. As shared previously, *La Voz* was a small publication that reached advocates of the Chicano movement and as such was an outlet for Huerta to leverage her shared racial/ethnic experiences. Unlike her other magazine and newspaper interviews, Huerta attends to issues of race and ethnicity often and explicitly in the *La Voz* interview.

Early in the interview, Huerta subtly conflates race and class by stating, “When I got into High School, then it was really segregated. There was the real rich and the real poor. We were poor too, and I got hit with a lot of racial discrimination” (*Dolores Huerta Reader* 164). In this presentation of race and class, the punctuated point seems to be that she
suffered discrimination on two fronts as opposed to a single source. In the remaining several pages, Huerta speaks openly about the challenges that Chicanos face and the fractured state of the Chicano movement. Therefore, the next excerpt from La Voz emphasizes Huerta’s awareness of audience by offering a contrasting example of her attention to Chicano issues. More specifically, Huerta shares her perspective about the Chicano movement and argues that Chicanos are divided on which issues to address first and how. Further, she argues that more Chicanos need to get involved in politics in order for change to occur. Although Huerta directly identifies the farm worker issue as a Chicano issue, she certainly does not claim it is the only one and, in fact, later argues that disorganization is part of what continues to hold Chicanos back from being politically effective:

I know the farm worker issue is not the only Chicano issue. But in terms of the visibility of the Chicano issues, I think first of all there wasn’t an agreement among the Chicanos themselves on what the issues were. Some people talked about bilingual education, other people talked about something else. (Dolores Huerta Reader 171)

In this excerpt, we see Huerta directly address the complicatedness of prioritizing oppressions that needed attention but do not see an explicit attempt to downplay race or extend racial issues to class. The La Voz interview provides important insights into how Huerta presented herself when addressing an audience of readers who were likely allies of the movement and shared her ethnicity. Further, it also provides evidence of Huerta’s awareness of the potential pitfalls of aligning too closely with the larger Chicano Movement when addressing audiences that are likely not to be ethnic minorities or sympathetic to issues affecting ethnic minorities.
Returning to the detailed 1974 article in *The Nation Magazine*, in which the readership tended to be supportive of the civil rights movement and fighting inequity, Huerta presents the inclusion of women in the UFW as acceptable based on class values. The article titled “The Women of the Boycott” featured Huerta but also included interviews from other women involved in the boycott. Unlike the *La Voz* interview, Huerta spends little time discussing race and ethnicity with *The Nation*, but does offer the following:

(1974) Excluding women, protecting them, keeping women at home, that’s the middle-class way. Poor people’s movements have always had whole families on the line, ready to move at a moment’s notice, with more courage because that’s all we had. *It’s a class not an ethnic thing* [emphasis added]. (234)

In the above quotation, there is a clear linking of ethnicity, gender, and class, but she places emphasis on the wider-reaching issues of class. In this way, whether knowingly or not, Huerta demonstrates the intersectional forces at play when attempting to define based on fixed identity categories and thus effectively disrupts the attempt to disqualify women from being involved.

Likewise, in the final excerpt from the 1978 article in *Tampa Times*—the publication with arguably the least defined audience—we again see the grouping of ethnicity, gender, and class. However, this time Huerta emphasizes both gender and class over race.

Effectively, she demonstrates that the issues of the farm workers are not isolated to Mexicans:

(1978) With poor people—all poor people, not just Mexicans—because people are still in the survival stage, women take a much more active part in that. I’ve thought about that a lot. Like in mineworkers’ unions: most workers are men, but women have always had an active role. (Clemmons 2-B)
While it is evident through each of these examples that ethnicity and race are a concern for Huerta, she is also keenly aware of the interconnectedness of race, gender, and class and thus tailors her approach based on what are likely to be her audience’s values. Through her tailoring efforts, Huerta is able to construct an identifiable and relatable ethos that combats the damaging cultural scripts invoked by emphasizing her most vulnerable identity categories.

Beyond working within and against various definitions of her identities, Huerta also built her ethos by drawing on the authority of other rhetors. As a woman entering into the political sphere, Huerta often shared stories of how she was supported in efforts to organize. Instead of relying on her own authority, Huerta often builds her credibility by citing Cesar Chavez or other authorized male community organizers. For instance, when discussing her role as vice president of the UFW with a reporter from the American Report in 1973, Huerta quickly admits that she doubted herself but was affirmed by UFW President Cesar Chavez. While the circulation data is unknown for this publication, it does offer an example of the narrative that Huerta shared about her journey of becoming vice president. When asked, “Are people within the UFW movement surprised that a woman would rise to the position you hold?” Huerta responded with the following:

The hang-up was mine initially. During the first few years of my organizing farm workers, I felt I couldn’t be as effective because I was a woman. And Cesar was the one who really straightened my head out about that. He said, “If the farm workers could have organized themselves, then there would be no need for you to be here. The fact that they haven’t been able to do it means there is a need for you to be here.” The farm workers knew I was there to help them get their rights and, of course, they responded. And I think they would have responded to anyone in that position. As long as they know you’re honest and there to try to help them, why should they not receive you? At first I didn’t want to run for office because I didn’t think I could get elected; and yet the hang-up was mine. Cesar said, “what’s the matter with you? You’re one of the first persons to help organized the union. You should
run for office.” And I was elected overwhelmingly. (“Conversation with Dolores Huerta” 5)

Being officially sanctioned by Chavez affirms her authority and place in the union and movement and invokes Spivak’s concept of “strategic essentialism.” In other words, because Huerta was ultimately subservient to Chavez, she was still within the realm of a traditional woman’s place—albeit with a great deal of power, authority, and moxie. In fact, within the movement’s inner circle, it was well known that Huerta and Chavez were of equal force.

Approximately one year later in a 1974 interview with The Nation, Huerta credits her involvement with the movement to organizer Fred Ross, a well-known and important community organizer. In fact, across many official and unofficial biographies and short histories of Huerta, Ross is credited with recruiting her into community organizing:

If I hadn’t met Fred Ross then, I don’t know if I ever would have been organizing. People don’t realize their own worth and I wouldn’t have realized what I could do unless someone had shown faith in me. At that time we were organizing against racial discrimination—the way Chicanos were treated by police, courts, politicians. I had taken the status quo for granted, but Fred said it could change. So I started working (Baer and Matthews 232).

In the example above, we see three important ways in which Huerta continues to build her ethos. First, she explains that Ross had “faith” in her that she herself did not possess at the time. Second, she reinforces that she is just like anybody else as she makes the statement, “People don’t realize...” which indicates that many need to be encouraged to feel empowered to make change. Lastly, Huerta appeals to the feeling of powerlessness that is often faced by oppressed people, illustrating that she too once fell prey to such feelings but began to help work for change with the encouragement from others.
Returning to a key passage from her interview with *The Nation*, Huerta addresses how she began negotiating the contracts for the UFW:

> When Cesar put me in charge of negotiations in our first contract, I had never seen a contract before. I talked to labor people, I got copies of contracts and studied them for a week and a half, so I knew something when I came to the workers. Cesar almost fell over because I had my first contract all written and all the workers had voted on the proposals. He thought we ought to have an attorney, but really it was better to put the contracts in simple language. I did all the negotiations myself for about five years. Women should remember this: be resourceful, you can do anything, whether you have experience or not. Cesar always says that the first education of people is how to be people and then the other things fall into place. (Baer and Matthews 236)

Huerta refers to Chavez four times in the short span of the passage. She first uses him to demonstrate his confidence in appointing her to negotiations, but she also demonstrates her strength by sharing her opposition to his desire to have an attorney write the contracts. Choosing to share her interaction with Chavez in the manner that she did lends to her *ethos* construction by clearly illustrating the confidence that Chavez had in her; yet, perhaps more importantly, she simultaneously emphasizes her focus on the farm workers by disagreeing with Chavez and insisting on accessible language. Highlighting her disagreement with Chavez ultimately placed her allegiance to the farm workers first. While these are seemingly small moves, each of the illustrations of her interactions with Chavez builds the audience’s understanding of who she is and allows them to determine whether or not she is trustworthy. In other words, Huerta consistently utilized Chavez’s support to validate the tactics and strategies of including women in instrumental roles for the cause, which strengthened rather than weakened her credibility.

In the previous examples, the authorization from Ross and Chavez is explicit and direct. However, in several other texts, the authorization is implicit. Returning to the extensive 1976 article about Huerta in *Ms. Magazine*, Coburn dedicates several pages to
providing details about the rigorous and complicated schedule that Huerta kept and gives the reader a “birds-eye” view of a week in the life of Huerta. Interestingly, however, in the conclusion of the article, after sharing Huerta’s ability to remain positive and motivated despite multiple setbacks, Coburn closes with a quotation that Huerta gave from Chavez:

When she gets depressed, she says she thinks about the time 10 years ago when the union was down to fewer than 20 members and how they lost their first strike when the workers voted to go back without a contract. “That’s why Cesar always reminds us of that dicho: Hay mas tiempo que vida” (There is more time than life). (16)

Upon a first reading of this article, the closure with Chavez’s voice struck me as odd and troubling because it seemed to undermine the focus on Huerta. However, after closely considering how Huerta built her credibility, signing off with a quotation from Chavez proves to be effective because it both signifies solidarity between the two leaders and places the focus back on Chavez. Here again, we see Huerta’s acquiescence to Chavez’s leadership and to some degree the power of his validation of her leadership role. Further, perhaps it is precisely because Huerta embodies the identity of woman that she must develop a strategy to overcome its perceived deficit in order to build an authoritative ethos, a power that is granted by a more conventional version of authority: a man.

**Conclusion**

Huerta, intentionally or not, was often introduced to her audiences through her physical identity. This is true whether or not her texts were delivered through written text or in person, given that she inhabited an obviously raced and gendered body. Further, because Huerta inhabited a body generally disassociated with authority, part of her rhetorical strategy was necessarily attending to her most vulnerable identities directly. The preceding analysis suggests that like the strategies and features that Carolyn Skinner
identified as features of a feminist model of *ethos*, Huerta utilized the material resources available to her and negotiated constructed definitions of identity with her audiences. In effect, self-definition was critical to Huerta’s *ethos* construction and Huerta often leveraged the identity categories that historically were disassociated with authority to establish her credibility and right to be involved in the movement. In chapter five, I will continue to build on the foundation laid in this chapter to demonstrate how the genre of the texts featuring Huerta and/or authored by her both influenced her *ethos* construction and affected her interaction with multiple audiences.
Chapter Five
_Ethos and Genre: Purpose, Social Action, and the Rhetorical Situation_

Dolores Huerta worked to emphasize to her audiences shared values that were understood as part of her role as a mother or as a Chicana, yet she also had to attend to how she contradicted traditional definitions of those roles in order to maintain or establish authority. Huerta’s spoken and written language helps us to understand not only how she positioned herself to her audiences, but also how we as rhetors are read and the ways in which we are affected by the body we live in. Because our experiences are wrapped up within our bodies, rhetoric is embodied. In other words, our bodies are expressive of cultural meanings that impact how we are interpreted as speakers. Furthermore, because knowledge is situated, our embodied experiences contribute to those knowledges; thus, the knowledge claims we make are a result of our own positionality.

While Huerta shared the racial/ethnic identity with many of the farm workers that she recruited as members of the UFW, as a Chicana she did not share the ethnic identity with most of the audiences whom she was asking to join the boycott or to support the farm workers’ movement. Nonetheless, when recruiting support for the movement, Huerta addressed multiple organizations and audiences, which required a swift and interpersonal negotiation of identity. Much like the women physicians examined by Carolyn Skinner, Huerta was skillful in emphasizing the values she shared with her intended audience (177). Specifically, Skinner argues that “developing an effective professional ethos sometimes required reference not only to one’s expertise and authority but also to one’s status as a mother, an African American, a resident of a particular city, or perhaps all three at once” (177). I add to this argument by not only recognizing Huerta’s strategy of connecting to
audiences beyond professional affiliation but also by considering how Huerta defines and (re)defines each of the identity categories she consistently referred to.

In chapter four, I examined several texts from and about Huerta focusing on how Huerta's identities were established and utilized as keys to knowing her. Additionally, I demonstrated how Huerta defined herself in relationship to the identities that she embodied, as well as how she worked to redefine elements of her identity categories. To continue demonstrating the complexity of developing ethos, in this chapter I add to this analysis by specifically examining the role of genre in the construction of ethos. Looking to genre offers an additional layer to understanding how authors and rhetors must negotiate a variety of environments and conventions when building their ethos and how they often must work with and against social expectations to do so. Carolyn Skinner’s third feature of a feminist model of ethos states, “Ethos and genre are intertwined” (177). More specifically, Skinner posits that nineteenth-century women physicians adapted commonly utilized genres in the medical profession in order to help establish their ethos. For example, Skinner writes that women physicians “often emphasized their femininity in their health information texts, creating a new sort of ethos for the genre, one suited to the woman physician’s location between medicine and femininity” (79). Likewise, I argue that Huerta both skillfully utilized established genres to shape her ethos and simultaneously reshaped genres to better serve the social action that she was engaged in, which further established her credibility. Indeed, while genres are far more fluid than fixed, examining typified rhetorical actions situated in specific genres offers an important lens through which we might better understand the complexities of ethos construction.
In this chapter, I first use rhetorical genre theory to establish how genre functions as social action and as an imperative part of the rhetorical situation. Drawing on this conception of genre, I then revisit and further analyze the same key articles from publications examined in chapter four in order to demonstrate how the mediated genre of periodical articles significantly influences Huerta’s *ethos* in both subtle and dramatic ways. There is a range of genres that fall beneath what we might call journalistic genres such as features, human-interest stories, straight news, op eds, etc. My task in examining the specific genre of each text becomes complicated since many publications often do not indicate explicitly what sort of genre each article represents. That said, what clearly unites the articles I examine here are their focus on social issues and their heavy use of narrative and interviews. Save my analysis of the memos, letters, and speeches in the later parts of this chapter, each of the textual artifacts written about Huerta featured in periodical publications can be likened to features/human-interest stories and interview articles. Interview articles can be identified by the space dedicated to the subject’s voice and the subject’s responses to specific questions posed by the journalist. While an interview article will at times only include the actual interview questions and responses, a human-interest story will often include pieces of interviews that are mediated and curated with additional content. It is also true that human interest stories can sometimes focus on news coverage and extended journalistic investigations of so-called faceless current or historical events, however, most human-interest stories indeed have a face and focus on an individual’s or a group’s story. That is, human-interest stories focus on *humans* and *offer a story*. The social, human, and narrative aspects of human-interest stories make them prime candidates for examining *ethos* construction. Of course, because these genres are more fluid than fixed
and because other factors significantly influence the construction of a text this examination often includes features of the publication, content, and genre.

Furthermore, to complicate my analysis of genre in key periodical publications, I also explore what may be considered less mediated genres taken up by Huerta, including personal letters, interoffice memos, and speeches she delivered. My investigation of Huerta’s uptake of these genres further establishes the role that genre inhabits in the construction of ethos—especially when the rhetor has more control over the text that is crafted and how it is delivered. Anis Bawarshi explains that “when writers begin to write in different genres, they participate within these different sets of relations, relations that motivate them, consciously or unconsciously, to invent both their texts and themselves” (17). As Bawarshi points out, genre supports the invention of the writer; therefore, a text crafted and shared in a particular genre acts as a display of identity. Hence, highly mediated genres provide less opportunity for the rhetor to have agency over their identity and, by extension, the ethos they construct. Ultimately, examining the role of genre in the construction of ethos complicates the notion of ethos and the manner in which it can and is constructed.

**The Influence of Genre in Ethos**

Looking at Huerta as a rhetor, we are not only forced to attend to the roles of race, class, and gender in a discussion of ethos but are also enriched by doing so. Although Huerta inhabited a body disassociated with authority and power—at least in US dominant culture—her gendered, cultural, and classed identities were ironically often her biggest assets in building her ethos. Analyzing the ways in which, and to what extent, each of these categories were positioned and defined reveals the ethos strategies Huerta employed to
create channels of identification with her audiences, which allowed her to effectively sidestep the potential trappings of her intersectional subjugation. And, importantly, many of the strategies and possibilities for attending to her identity in order to construct her ethos were greatly affected by the genre in which she was represented. In her groundbreaking article, “Genre as Social Action,” Carolyn Miller examines previous conceptions of genre theory that considered genre as not much more than a cataloging system. Miller extends our understanding of genre by drawing attention to the rhetorical functions of genres. Specifically, Miller posits, “Genre refers to a conventional category of discourse based in large-scale typification of rhetorical action; as action, it acquires meaning from situation and from the social context in which that situation arose” (163). Recognizing that genre is a social action lays the foundation for understanding the critical role it played in building—or at the very least influencing—Huerta’s ethos. Further, Miller explains, “A genre is a rhetorical means for mediating private intentions and social exigence; it motivates by connecting the private with the public, the singular with the recurrent” (163). Miller’s extension of how genre functions rhetorically leads us to view genre as a meeting place that brings the private self into direct contact with the public audience, which positions genre as an agent that affects ethos.

Drawing on Miller, both Amy Devitt and Bawarshi continue to advance our understanding of rhetorical genre and fundamentally place genre as a significant concept for understanding rhetorical practice. For Devitt and Bawarshi, genre both shapes and is shaped by social situation. As Devitt explains in her article, “Generalizing about Genre,” “Genre constructs and responds to recurring situation, becoming visible through perceived patterns in the syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic features of particular texts. Genre is
truly, therefore, a maker of meaning” (94). In my analysis of the genres taken up by Huerta and/or were about Huerta, I seek to examine ethos construction through both genre and genre related elements.

Bawarshi supports this assertion when he calls into question focusing on only the traditional cataloging or container function of genre. Specifically, Bawarshi argues that genres are not merely “transparent and innocent conduits that individuals use to package their communicative goals” (23). Instead, he posits that genres “shape and help us generate our communicative goals, including why these goals exist, what and whose purposes they serve, and how best to achieve them” (23). Bawarshi’s claim generates an important consideration for how genre affects ethos. Genres shape writers in terms of what they write, why they write, and how they write. The genre an author uses to share their message determines the rhetorical expectations by which an audience may gauge the effectiveness of the rhetor and her message. Certain genres, like some journalistic genres, can be seen as more restrictive in their alignments to specific publishers, organizations, and sponsors, as well as their readership. Therefore, genre is certainly not innocent or benign, especially when we consider that genres—and the typified uptakes of them—helps determines the rhetorical rules that a rhetor will aim to achieve. While genres suited for private, everyday use may be understood as giving the rhetor more flexibility and agency in how messages are communicated and rhetorically achieved, in some journalistic genres the rhetor holds less control over what gets included, altered, or excluded. Genre, then, not only directly affects the ethos of a rhetor (as in how well the rhetor meets the communicative and stylistic expectations of the specific genre) but also affects the content included as well as the strategies that a rhetor might utilize in order to construct their message and their ethos.
It can be argued that genre influences audiences’ conceptions of the writer; this is further complicated when the audience experiences Huerta in certain journalistic genres. This is because *ethos* in journalistic genres is constructed not only by characterization of Huerta as a subject but by the rhetorical choices of the journalists writing; furthermore, additional factors such as the publication, the politics of the publication, the purpose of the piece, and the figure/rhetor’s voice are all intertwined with genre and, thus, all impact *ethos* construction. In other words, *ethos* construction as understood through a text rests on more than just the author/rhetor and includes the forces from other aspects of the genre and text. Likewise, while it may appear that an author is more or less in control of their strategies employed to build *ethos* in a speech or presentation, in actuality, there are undoubtedly other outside, seemingly unrelated forces, included genre itself, at work in any communicative act.

In her article “Genre, Location, and Mary Austin’s Ethos,” author Risa Applegarth recognizes the role of genre in *ethos* construction and argues that *ethos* strategies are indeed strongly influenced by genre. Not surprisingly, I found that a close study of several texts from a variety of sources (both about and by Huerta) offered a great deal of insight into Huerta’s rhetorical strategy. Pointedly, Applegarth explains, “[b]ecause genres organize rhetorical resources as well as structure rhetorical constraints, genres significantly shape one’s possibilities for ethos. Locating one’s text—and oneself—in a genre begins the work of locating oneself relative to a particular audience” (50). What Applegarth’s argument suggests is that it is imperative for a rhetor to understand the genre—and by extension the audience for a particular genre—in order to invent, construct, or emphasize appropriate values in a communicative act. As a result, the rhetorical moves
that Huerta made to attend to, define, or redefine her ethos varied depending on the genre with which she was working. For instance, unlike the more traditional genres of rhetorical study, such as the speeches and letters that I examine, the interviews and human interest stories featuring Huerta brought an additional dimension of mediation: that of the journalist, publication, audience, and, I argue, the genre. As discussed in previous chapters, Huerta necessarily attended to the positioning from or by the journalist that often revolved around her personal identities rather than her professional stature. We can further understand this positioning as a social act resulting from the negotiation of genre, audience expectations, and the author's wishes and constraints.

Ethos, then, is a negotiation between a generally perceived audience and the rhetor and is also—within particular genres—arbitrated through those that control the narrative. In the analysis that follows, I examine the ways Huerta's ethos was impacted by the variety of genres utilized by authors writing about Huerta, as well as those genres taken up by Huerta herself. I begin by continuing the analysis of the periodicals presented in chapter four and then add letters, memos, and speeches to the discussion in order to demonstrate the relevance of genre in ethos construction.

**Periodicals**

My use of “periodicals” in this chapter is meant to refer to the various genres we typically align to print journalism. More specifically, I use “periodicals” and “journalistic genres” as umbrella terms that include genres such as articles (news, trade magazine, interview, human interest), letters to the editor, opinion columns, advice columns, and feature stories. While each of these journalistic genres differ given their rhetorical situations, the features and rhetorical moves made in journalistic genres are often aligned, which in part explains
why we can read a magazine article out of context and still make out its genre. My focus here lies on interview articles and human-interest stories. Being featured in these sorts of journalistic genres offered several benefits for Huerta and the UFW, particularly due to the social and narrative features both include. Interview articles and human-interest stories, as distinct from news articles, lend themselves to humanistic appeal and, thus, ethos construction. Furthermore, they have the potential to serve as rhetorical education (for more on this, see Jessica Enoch’s chapter, “Claiming Cultural Citizenship,” and Cristina Ramirez’s article, “Forging a Mestiza Rhetoric: Mexican Women Journalist’s Role in the Construction of a National Identity,” which both illustrate how Mexican journalists used newspaper articles as rhetorical education). Furthermore, the promises of rhetorical education inherent in these genres are complicated by the negotiation between journalist and Huerta. I wish to explore the negotiation of ethos that occurs when the voices featured in the text are many—in this case, the journalist (presumably bodiless) as well as Huerta (the subject being featured) shape Huerta’s ethos by highlighting, defining, and redefining commonly held conceptions of identity through the power of print.

To demonstrate, allow me to return to the labor union trade publication examined in chapter four. The Seafarer’s International Union (SIU) demonstrates their support of Huerta and the UFW, thus acting as sponsor of both. The SIU’s magazine generally focused on issues facing seafaring workers, and they also endorsed actions by other industry unions. For example, in the edition that included the article about the UFW, the SIU’s table of contents was comprised of articles about the SIU taxi drivers’ division, the history of seafarers’ bravery, and an article that highlighted the use of anti-labor propaganda in education. It appears, then, that the purpose of the SIU’s magazine was to inform members
about the work of their union and share stories about their own industry, as well as to garner support for the work of other unions and the labor force. The purpose of the publication directly affects the length and content constraints framing the various articles within it. However, considering the role of genre in this example further demonstrates how the social contract between text and audience expectations can further impact content and, hence, how ethos is constructed. Given that the article Huerta was featured in was titled, “Farm Workers–The Union Makes Them Strong” in the SIU’s publication, it would follow that the focus would be on the movement and the UFW as strategic in order to reinforce the readers’ notion of strength in union membership. The general argument of the article itself supports this assumption. Indeed, although the article focuses in on Huerta, the majority of the text is dedicated to illustrating the critical role that union membership has played in the fight against deplorable working conditions. All that said, because Huerta stands out in the discussion and because the article includes a physical description of Huerta and an explicit linking to her as a “mother of seven youngsters” it is worth considering not just the ethos of the movement constructed, but also the ethos of Huerta. More specifically, as the genre of this featured article focuses on social phenomenon and can be likened to a human-interest story, it provides insight into the many ways in which Huerta’s ethos was constructed in print journalism and journalistic mediation of genre.

The inclusion of a feature article about the UFW and Huerta is in line with the publication’s purpose and its content; and it follows that such a feature story then focuses on the human enterprise of community organizing. Indeed, this lead story in this issue maintains the genre features of a human-interest article. Even in the issue’s table of contents, found in the front inside cover of the publication, we can see the human and
social focus as it includes a headshot of Huerta and a short “teaser” advertising the article about the UFW and Huerta, which reads as follows:

Headed by Dolores Huerta...their soft-spoken vice president, fifty AFL-CIO agricultural workers have set up camp in New York City. Here in the nation’s major market place, they are launching a national campaign to alert the public to the shameful plight of farm workers—the nation’s forgotten people. Their technique: A consumer-produce industry boycott of unfair farm products to pinch the pocketbook nerve of the industry that exploits them. Their goal: To mobilize sentimental [sic] behind their continuing struggle for union recognition adequate wages and decent conditions on the giant corporate farms. (“Farm Workers: The Union Makes them Strong” 1)

This excerpt first indicates how Huerta serves as the human focus or “face” of this larger organization and movement (the fact that her picture accompanies the piece further supports this notion). Further, by placing Huerta’s physicality up front in the text (when qualifying her as soft-spoken), it serves to shape the ethos and credibility of Huerta by recognizing her as the vice president of the union and positioning the work of the UFW as vital. Of course, it is typical for such a genre to begin with the person of interest. However, while this genre typically features a description of the subject, the approach to describing the individual is not dictated by the genre constraints, and so we cannot ignore the fact that physicality is what the journalist focuses on. While it’s not inherently problematic to begin with a description of embodied identities, we also cannot overlook its role in shaping Huerta’s ethos. Thus, while the social contract of genre expectations remain intact, because the position of vice president for the UFW was held by a “soft spoken” woman, the manner in which the journalist situated Huerta ultimately foregrounds her femininity. This, thus, represents a rhetorical mediation between the journalist, the genre, and the subject that results in a characterization of Huerta.
Similarly, The Nation magazine—a well-established magazine that covers social justice issues—shapes Huerta’s ethos by dedicating much of its six-page spread to direct quotations from Huerta. According the table of contents for the February 23, 1974 edition of the magazine there were five pages of editorials, four feature articles that varied in length and approximately ten pages of book and art reviews. Unlike the SIU lead feature article, the Nation placed Huerta’s article second in the features section. However, the magazine allocated the largest amount of space to the article about the women of the boycott. In addition, like the SIU article the Nation article ran as a feature that shared the characteristics of a human-interest story. As a feature article the space allocated and the narrative form provide a great deal of agency to the journalist and editor to make creative decisions. This is not a small point but instead bridges the publication a text is located in and the important role of genre. In other words, the expectations—or social contract—for the combined genres of a feature article and a human-interest story call for narrative to be a central characteristic along with the extended space for the article. Adding As Miller, Devitt, Bawarshi, and Applegarth have established, the genre of a text—and more broadly of discourse—both affects and is affected by the rhetorical situation that prompted it. Of course, in just about any print medium there are many choices that are required in order to run text, and, in the case of a magazine article like that of The Nation, such decisions are generally out of the hands of the featured public figure/rhetor. Therefore, the mediation from journalists and editors (e.g., what questions to ask and how much space to allot) frames the featured public figure in very specific ways. In addition, the curation of the rhetor’s words (e.g., what direct quotations to include and how they are arranged) also significantly shape how the rhetor is understood and trusted. Thus, the genre of the
feature/human-interest story includes characteristics of narrative that work to shape Huerta’s ethos in distinct ways.

The combination of human-interest and interview genre characteristics like that found in the The Nation’s feature article about Huerta, provided her the space not only to nuance and challenge many views of the identity categories that she inhabited, but also to teach and redefine those categories. Given the fluid nature of genre, as evidenced by Bawarshi, Devitt, and others, it is not surprising to see the combination of the feature article with human-interest and interview genre characteristics, but it is enriching to examine how those features opened up important opportunities for Huerta to directly address her embodied identities. The extensive space that The Nation allocated for direct quotations from Huerta influenced her ethos in primarily two ways. First, because of the already-established mission and typified actions of the Nation, it stood as evidence for the importance of Huerta and the UFW because the journalists sanctioned—or sponsored—Huerta’s voice by providing her with the space and opportunity to address issues of her identity in conjunction with her position in the UFW. For example, the second page of the article includes two columns with approximately eleven paragraphs. Of the eleven paragraphs, six consecutive paragraphs were directly from Huerta in response to questions presumably about her role as a mother:

I had a lot of doubts to begin with, but I had to act in spite of my conflict between my family and my commitment. My biggest problem was not to feel guilty about it. I don’t any more [sic], but then, everybody used to lay these guilt trips on me, about what a bad mother I was, neglecting my children. (Baer and Matthews 233)

Second, as is evident in the previous excerpt, Huerta utilized the space afforded to her by addressing some of the most contentious personal issues that she faced (e.g., being accused
of being a negligent mother). In so doing, Huerta utilized the interview genre to “invent”
herself as she responded to the journalist’s questions, which also allowed her to affect the
construction of identity categories. In addition, by the end of the six-paragraph section,
Huerta was redefining motherhood and what counts when generalizing about childrearing.
After detailing many of the benefits of being part of the UFW for her children, Huerta
provides a personal anecdote about her daughter who was invited to go shopping for new
clothes with a supporter of the UFW:

[My daughter] was really embarrassed. We never buy new clothes, you know, we get everything out of the donations...Her values are people and not things. It has to be that way—that's why everyone who works full-time for the union gets $5 a week, plus gas money and whatever food and housing they need to live on, live on at the minimum they can. (Baer and Matthews 233)

Over the course of the interview, Huerta often composed her views about motherhood,
race, social class, and womanhood in relation to the UFW and the fight for farm laborers’
rights. The opportunity to address such issues was, in part, due to the interview genre.
However, it is also crucial to note that while the interview genre generally includes the
voice of the person of interest and is prompted by specific questions posed to the
interviewee, the subsequent article can be structured in a variety of ways, such as a
question/answer form, exclusively quoted material, combination of narrative from the
journalist and quoted excerpts, to name just a few. Therefore, paying close attention to
both the features of a genre and the ways in which they are applied provides a greater
understanding of how ethos is affected by genre and genre conventions.

Like the article in The Nation, Ms. magazine also reserved a great deal of space to
Huerta’s voice and appears to be a combination of both human-interest and interview
genres, but was distinct in that it was explicitly part of the “People” section. Under the
heading of “Departments” it appears that *Ms.* magazine regularly featured prominent figures in the People section and dedicated more space than just about any other article in the magazine. The organizing scheme of *Ms.* sheds some light on the rhetorical influence of the layout. Specifically, the table of contents of *Ms.* includes four headings: Features, The *Ms. Gazette*, Departments, and Services. The Features section includes fourteen articles, and only one of which is longer than two pages. The short length of the articles included in the Features section appears to counter the expectations for features articles, which tend to be longer in journalist genres, but is likely to have been what *Ms.* readers had come to expect. Unlike the Features section, Departments seem to be a variety of special interest articles including the human-interest story in their People section. In contrast to the Feature articles, the People article about Huerta is five-pages with space taken by only two advertisements. As could be expected, as a human-interest story the article about Huerta was extensive and included several direct quotes from Huerta. The evident popularity of *Ms. Magazine* and its directed mission added value to the article about Huerta because it offered a large distribution channel as well as a direct link to likely allies. Additionally, featuring Huerta in their People section likely stood as evidence of her abilities to the *Ms.* audience. The readership of *Ms.* was likely to be interested in civil rights issues and sympathetic to the cause that Huerta was championing, but they may not have been familiar specifically with the plight of the farm workers. Both *The Nation* and *Ms.* offer a forum for Huerta to connect nationally to potential supporters. Because both the expectation for the content of the publication and the genre of the articles act as a location—or gathering place—in which participants are somehow connected, the inclusion
of Huerta and the framing of her significance in the movement strongly influenced her ethos.

Interestingly, the Ms. article featuring Huerta was printed in the November 1976 issue but was actually written over a year earlier. While the reason for the delay in running the article is not provided, the author did offer an update on the status of the UFW that included many victories in their organizing efforts. The disclosure regarding timing draws our attention to the broader context of the time and suggests that a human-interest story may have less pressure to be printed in a timely manner, thus emphasizing the influence of genre. In the stable notion of genre, magazine articles might be categorized as informational texts that rely deeply on timing. However, understanding that timing—and by extension exigence—can be constructed just as many other rhetorical appeals are, in this case, the disclosure from journalist Judith Coburn serves to reframe the context in which Huerta was covered. Perhaps included as an affirmation of the success of the UFW and Huerta’s role in it, Coburn clearly aligns herself with supporters of the campaign when she writes, “While UFW victories pile up, grower and Teamster lobbyists in Sacramento succeeded in cutting off funds needed to continue elections” (11). By framing the article through the successes of the UFW and Huerta and also the obstacles created by its opposition (e.g., growers and Teamsters), Coburn effectively adds to Huerta’s credibility and competence while also emphasizing the urgency of the cause. It is in part because this article is written under the expectations of a human-interest genre that the narrative could be so heavily influenced by the author.

Unlike The Nation and trade publication from SIU, Ms. had a highly publicized and contentious start. According to Ms. Magazine, its first issues were met with skepticism from
some, but the magazine out-performed their expectations. Ms. details their history on their current website:

And after the first regular issue hit the newsstands in July 1972, the network news anchor Harry Reasoner challenged, “I’ll give it six months before they run out of things to say.” But Ms. struck a chord with women. Its 300,000 “one-shot” test copies sold out nationwide in eight days. It generated an astonishing 26,000 subscription orders and over 20,000 reader letters within weeks. By the time Ms. celebrated its 15th anniversary in 1987, Reasoner, media soothsayers, and the nation had all been pressed to change their tune. (“About”)

Additionally, with one of the primary missions of Ms. being the advancement of women, it is not surprising that Coburn represented Huerta through a “groundbreaking” lens. Or rather, instead of focusing specifically on Huerta’s gender, Coburn emphasizes her race and cultural differences as well as her untraditional roles as examples of features that make her all the more “exceptional.” In journalistic genres the curation of the materials, or the decisions of how much of an interview to include, the narrative included that frames the direct quotes, and the arrangement of the article affect the ways in which the reader understands the person being interviewed. Likewise, the mediated nature of the interview genre, or more specifically the decisions of the types of texts to include, what questions might be asked, and the amount of space to allotted to the article also significantly influence how the reader views the person being interviewed. In the Ms. article we see a direct example of how the hybrid human-interest/interview article allows for the inclusion of the interviewee’s voice. For example, besides describing Huerta by her identifiable raced qualities, Coburn also directly asks Huerta about “the clash of cultures,” seemingly to address the racial/ethnic differences between feminism and traditional Latino/a values. Huerta replies with a supportive note on feminism and then addresses issues of class rather than race:
I consider myself a feminist, and the Women's Movement has done a lot toward helping me not feel guilty about my divorces. But among poor people, there's not any question about the women being strong—even stronger than men—they work in the fields right along with the men. When your survival is at stake, you don't have these questions about yourself like the middle-class women do. And in our culture, raising kids is the most important thing you can do, not like among whites. (Coburn 13)

While much of Coburn's article is a narration of what she observes over several days of shadowing Huerta, she also includes key passages from Huerta like the one above. The passage above—as framed and presumably curated by Coburn—provides Huerta with the space to respond to the question of a cultural clash, but Huerta deflects the focus from strictly racial tensions and instead emphasizes the intersectional nature of her position by foregrounding issues of social class.

Another feature of many journalistic genres is that of the headline. Each headline and subheadlines (those found within the body of an article) act as a rhetorical device that shapes the focus of the reader. Or to put it another way, headlines and subheadlines indicate what is most important about the content of the article. For example, Huerta's exceptional features are often emphasized through categorizations of her personality that are typically disassociated with her gender, class, or ethnic identities. And although many of the articles about Huerta make a point to address her intense personality as a critical element of who she is, the Ms. article draws attention to Huerta's willingness to be confrontational by running a headline on the fourth page of the article that reads, “Dolores Huerta is notorious in the union for combativeness” (Coburn 14). The prominent addition of such a headline signals Huerta's nontraditional characteristics and consequently adds to her feminist and authoritative character.
The features of the human-interest story, especially one that includes an interview, work collectively to shape the *ethos* of the interviewee along with the audience/readers, journalists, editors, publications, and of course the featured person. In each of the articles Huerta was positioned as an atypical but committed leader in the union. With the combination of both the publications’ missions and the journalists’ framing, it is apparent that all five articles were endorsing the important work of the UFW. Additionally, four of the five articles were published in periodicals clearly aligned with ideologies that are strongly connected to identity. Thus, because the genre of periodical articles, and more specifically human-interest/interview articles, allow for the journalist to craft a narrative around the interviewee and to include the voice of the interviewee it significantly influences *ethos* construction. Being highlighted, supported, and provided with the space to attend to issues of identity in the “allied” publications was likely to aid Huerta’s *ethos* construction among their targeted markets and serve as verification of her credibility. In other words, featuring Huerta legitimized her role as a knowledgeable leader in the UFW, particularly to the intended audiences, thus influencing her *ethos* construction.

As Miller points out in “Genre as Social Action,” genre is indeed more complex than a mere cataloging system. However, as she and several rhetorical genre theorists indicate, genre does act as a social norming structure in which we learn what is expected from specific forms of texts and what is expected in response to specific recurring situations (Bawarshi; Bazerman; Devitt; Miller). Thus, periodical articles—as evidenced by their need to be produced within specific timeframes—tend to be created in order to deal with time sensitive issues that would be of interest to their particular constituencies. Hence, the choice of an editor, journalist, or publication to include an article promoting Huerta and the
farm laborers’ cause contributed to the exigence for the movement and verified Huerta’s authority, but to what degree and efficacy was determined by Huerta’s level of participation in the genre. So while there are several commonalities among the periodicals that I have examined for this project—such as mediation, curation, section location, and the sponsorship of Huerta’s words—there are also substantial differences in each of the publications. Of course, some differences are more dramatic than others and not all are directly related to genre. However, it is important to consider the differences in each of the publication’s geographic circulation and reach, size of readership, and political affiliation. In addition, although many of the periodicals approach Huerta using typical journalistic methods by including pictures with the articles and including the voice of the journalist one small publication took a different approach, *La Voz del Pueblo*.

The representation of Huerta in *La Voz* appears to be crafted as a candid, deeply personal, and highly ideological invention of herself. According to Huerta, her political ideologies evolved as her priorities shifted toward working full-time for the cause. In the *La Voz* interview, she illustrates the degree to which her ideologies shifted when she affably prods, “See how middle class I was. In fact, I was a registered Republican at the time” (*Dolores Huerta Reader* 165). Recognizing her audience of primarily Chicano college students, and perhaps in an effort to persuade them to believe similarly, Huerta distances herself from her middle-class roots (or at least represents her conflict with them) in order to demonstrate her commitment to the farm laborers and their movement. Of course, she could emphasize her distrust of middle-class ideology despite having once been a part of it, in part, because of her expected audience. Because the *La Voz* interview article is strictly comprised of Huerta’s voice she is able to establish her credibility and legitimacy through
the text, and shares her gratitude for Ross’s influence on her life. Huerta shares, “I always hated injustice and I always wanted to do something to change things. Fred opened a door for me. He changed my whole life. If it weren’t for Fred, I’d probably just be in some stupid suburb somewhere” (165). Understanding genre as social action, especially in that the expectation of the audience needs to be met, and that it is an integral part of the rhetorical situation, it can be argued that the candor of her language “stupid suburb” and the memory that she chose to share serve as a way to connect directly to her audience and connect her audience to the exigence of the cause. In other words, because the features of the interview article set her up to speak directly to her audience of Chicano readers she was able to address them in a familiar and candid manner.

The Frente Foundation, and more directly its publication *La Voz del Pueblo*, was dedicated to raising awareness of Chicano issues and garnering support for the civil rights movement, and this orientation gave rise to Huerta’s ability and approach to composing herself through the interview article. She clearly shares her distance from the “suburbs” both metaphorically and literally because, as the vice president of the UFW, she made very little money and lived in sparse accommodations—a fact that she brings up often. Huerta’s choice to craft and share her fractured or conflicted self with the readers of *La Voz* also stands as a “case in point” of what Alcorn argues is a marker of effective ethos construction:

> The self resists change because self-structure tends toward homeostasis. But if self-structure explains the self’s resistance to rhetoric, it also explains the self’s seduction by rhetoric. I want to suggest that the unique psychological torque of modern rhetorical power can be explained as a mechanism “funded” by the divided character of modern self-structure. Modern forms of *ethos* can divide us from our habitual values because, as moderns, we are always divided, self-conflicted selves. (25)
In other words, utilizing the knowledge that she had about her presumed audience and then sharing and leveraging the change that she underwent and/or the conflict that she continued to struggle with demonstrated that she was trustworthy—a trustworthiness that was aided by the ideology of the publication itself. In effect, her audience could connect to her based on the disclosure of both resistance to and seduction of a specific rhetoric.

Whether a rhetor is standing in front of her audience or is reaching out to the readership of a given newsletter or magazine, she must compose her text with an audience in mind. Although the depth in which Huerta chose to share the conflicts that she experienced with the identity categories with which she was most associated, she did consistently attend to identity in order to pave connections with her various audiences. Again, while race/ethnicity and nationality can be sites of identification, they can also be sites of great conflict. As the analysis that follows indicates, in order to gain the kind of support and momentum needed to improve the working conditions of the farm laborers, it was likely that the UFW—and Huerta more specifically—chose to emphasize that the issues were about more than “just” race, especially when the audience was imagined as mostly White. Huerta’s cultural and racial identities were both obvious and fractured. That is, she spoke from a brown body and was able to transition between Spanish and English fluidly, and she could relate to middle class-values but chose to live a working-class life.

One strategy for managing her fractured and conflicted self was to emphasize her experiences that may be shared or considered more relatable by her audience.

Drawing on the expectations for her audiences, Huerta astutely connected the relationship between genre and her message. Or, to put it another way, conceiving of her audience based on her knowledge of a specific readership for a publication or audience for
a speaking engagement, Huerta was able to emphasize the relevant elements of her
identity. For example, in their article, “Balancing Mystery and Identification,” Erin Doss and
Robin Jensen analyze how Huerta addressed her audience for La Voz del Pueblo:

Huerta drew from the Chicana/o idea of la familia as a cultural collective, not
so much to encourage readers to join the union (although that was a goal)
but to help readers understand and identify with her as one of their own. As
Anzaldúa explains, Chicana/o culture tends to highlight “welfare of the
family, the community, and the tribe’ as ‘more important than the welfare of
the individual. The individual exists first as kin—as sister, as father, as
padrino—and last as self.” (11-12)

Huerta was comfortable and genuine when speaking from a mother’s point of view because
she embodied two very critical identities: mother and Latina. Huerta drew on cultural
values and collective notions of being that were rooted in her own raced upbringing. This
emphasis was not nearly as evident in many of the other interviews with Huerta and is
likely due to at least two important features of the genre and the unique rhetorical
situation that La Voz offered Huerta: first, the audience was primarily politically interested
Chicanos; and second, she was afforded the space to “speak” in depth about her personal
and professional experiences. Further, as the quotation above indicates, Anzaldúa points
out that Chicana culture emphasizes family—both biological and extended—rather than
the individual. Thus, drawing on shared values of “family” also builds a connection between
Huerta and the constituency that she was working in service of and addressing. As Doss
and Jensen point out, her dedication to the family is evident in her invocation of Chicana
tradition; specifically, we can see evidence of this in the following passage again from La
Voz, when she reminds her readers about communal family:

The idea of the communal family is not new and progressive. It’s really kind
of old fashioned. Remember when you were little you always had your
uncles, your aunts, your grandmother and your comadres around. As a child
in the Mexican culture you identified with a lot of people, not just your
mother and father like they do in middle class homes (Dolores Huerta Reader 167).

There are two important considerations to make from the passage above. First is Huerta’s direct invitation to the audience to share a memory of their uncles, aunts, grandmother, and comadres. Such an invitation suggests the expectation of her audience to share her ethnic identity and the cultural traditions that accompany it. Second, the term comadres is a Spanish term for godmothers and is used both to signify a literal godmother as well as a figurative godmother, such as close female family friends. Her choice to include comadres deepens her cultural connection with her audience. Huerta is clearly expecting her audience to be familiar with Mexican family traditions and appeals to their knowledge and acceptance of the tradition in order to justify her parental decision to leave her children with multiple friends and family while she was out championing change. In essence, making use of both the exigence that draws her audience to La Voz and their shared identities, Huerta portrays her audience as being loyal to family and likely to prioritize the health and wellness of children in a manner in which she becomes just like them and they become just like her. It is in this way that understanding genre as a shared location that brings both the rhetor and the audience to the same place, that it becomes a significant force in affecting her ethos.

The kind of shared languages—whether or not they are technical spoken languages, such as Spanish or English, or are accepted discourses within a given community—included in Huerta’s communicative acts appear to vary by genre as well as maintain a critical role in Huerta’s ethos construction. In many of the excerpts from Huerta that I have examined so far, it is evident that language is tailored to meet specific rhetorical aims. Repeatedly, Huerta demonstrates her awareness of the crucial function that language
nuance holds in successful argumentation. However, looking critically at texts in which journalists represent Huerta in periodicals leaves her voice generally less represented. Turning to less mediated forms of genre in which Huerta’s voice is central, the importance of her ability to manipulate language effectively becomes more evident. Bawarshi supports this assertion when he posits, “The genre function...comes to be and structures social action through its use, through the way its users play its language game. In such a sense is genre both and at once a concept and a material practice, framing our dispositions to act as well as enabling us to articulate and exchange these dispositions as language practices” (23). When genre is positioned as language practices and its practitioners are positioned as needing to “play” its language game, it reveals a few more key components to Huerta’s utilization of and negotiation with the genres that she most actively used. For instance, when Huerta chose to use plain language in union contracts, she was both breaking away from the accepted legalese that is typified in the genre and reshaping the genre based on its purpose or its intended action to be accessible to the workers that the contracts were representing. In so doing, Huerta builds her ethos among those that were granted access to the language of the documents that she composed, supporting the “defiant-hard as nails” ethos that she was known for by the farm owners and legislators. Unfortunately, the labor contracts, to the best of my knowledge, were not present in the Dolores Huerta papers at the Reuther Library and, therefore, are not available for a close examination. However, according to her own account in the interview for the Nation she states, “Cesar almost fell over because I had my first contract all written and all the workers had voted on the proposals. He thought we ought to have an attorney, but really it was better to put the contracts in simple language” (Baer and Matthews 236). While Huerta’s role was
undeniably crucial for the success of the UFW, based on the materials included in the
archives, her less-mediated rhetorical acts are less traceable than those of Chavez. The
preservation of materials through archiving, then, becomes particularly important and
served as one of the critical rationales for looking at the periodicals for data. In other
words, because journalistic genres were meant for public consumption, they also generated
a long-lasting and traceable record. In effect, the *preservability* of a genre further affects the
*ethos* of a historical figure.

**Letters and Memos**

The periodicals and their encased articles offer a site for examination of Huerta’s
*ethos* that is highly mediated and curated by multiple people. Hence Huerta’s control over
the content and structure was minimal. However, Huerta’s composition of personal letters
to Chavez and the memos between the two leaders offers a different kind of understanding
of Huerta’s character and credibility. According to Bawarshi, “Genres help organize and
generate our social actions by rhetorically constituting the way we recognize the situations
within which we function. In short, genres maintain the desires they help fulfill” (25). It
follows, then, that the personal letters and memos between Huerta and Chavez achieved a
particular social action. In many of the exchanges, the social action that was performed was
one of “reporting,” but the execution differed depending on the genre they engaged in. For
example, in both personal letters and interoffice memos, Huerta often shared precise
details with Chavez, ranging from dues owed and collected to the delegation of duties
among the membership. However, there were distinct differences in tone and length that
varied between the two genres. For instance in the personal letters Huerta often added
personal details that surrounded the issues that she was reporting on and often included
friendly valedictions. In contrast the interoffice memos were often shorter and more direct. Nonetheless, these exchanges demonstrated Huerta’s compliance in reporting to Chavez and were generally written in a professional, yet familial, manner. However, it is no secret that Huerta and Chavez were both well known for being strong-willed and often at odds.

Huerta and Chavez managed to work quite well together despite the contentious nature of their relationship, as evidenced by how often Huerta cites him both as an inspiration and as an antagonist. There is much evidence of the respect that the two leaders had for each other, as well as the volatile exchanges in which they engaged. The letters included in the Dolores Huerta Reader were written between 1962–1964 and reveal a great deal about their relationship and the strategies that Huerta enacted to establish her ethos with Chavez. While the collection does not include any letters authored by Chavez, the letters from Huerta provide insight both to how the genre of personal letters was leveraged by Huerta and the consistency of her strength of character. For example, although Huerta was frequently cited as fiery and tenacious, she was also known to acquiesce to Chavez, nearly always giving him the final word (Ganz). Perhaps in an effort to keep a united front or because she was not interested in being the head of the union, Huerta consistently reinforced the leadership of Chavez. On October 3, 1962, Huerta wrote what was likely to be one of her earliest letters to Chavez as a full-time UFW organizer. She opens the letter with a friendly salutation and expresses well wishes to Chavez which adheres to the typical conventions of a personal letter, but then she quickly offers a suggestion for action.

However, Huerta immediately follows up her suggestion with a clear deference to Chavez:

> I thought we might have a meeting of all our helpers and give them the results of [the] Fresno meeting, Sunday, then pass out the pledges and see how many they come back with.
However, I shall wait for your commands, General. So give me the word on the next line of tactic. The troops are restless. ("Letters Written by Dolores Huerta" 195)

Interestingly, across private and public documents, Huerta referred to the UFW as Chavez’s union and would let it be known that she was only another worker for the cause. This is a notable point because private and public genres function very differently. However, the personal letters—a seemingly private genre—do consistently demonstrate Huerta’s respect for Chavez despite their differences and often function as communicative devices to address those differences. Likewise, in her public speeches and news articles, or public genres, Huerta also was likely to speak of the union as Chavez’s. Nonetheless, she also understood her role as a leader and did not shy away from her work as a public figure or the opportunity to speak on behalf of the farm workers’ cause.

Two years after she wrote the letter cited above, quit her teaching job, and joined the organizational efforts full-time, Huerta writes the following letter:

Dear Cesar,

Since I had not heard from you I was worried about whether you were angry with me because I did not stay to finish the minutes. You probably noticed I was peeved at the last meeting because of the motion that was made at the C.U. meeting before my arrival and I was not to take the minutes unless authorized or some stupid thing, that will teach me not to stick my nose in where it does not belong. I was also peeved because you accepted the money from the citizen’s committee because I had already told Lou Haas (the governor’s secretary at whose house the deal was at that we did not want any of the money)...To further finish up with my peeves, since I am not the quiet long suffering type, I also resent it when you are not honest with me, and in this I refer to the newspaper thing with Tony [emphasis added]. ("Letters Written by Dolores Huerta" 203-4)

In the example above, it is clear that Huerta utilized many of the conventional moves of the genre of the personal letter. First, she indicates her care and concern for their relationship, thus emphasizing her “worry” about not hearing from Chavez; however, she quickly moves
past her state of worry and instead focuses on her frustrations. Huerta’s candid communication with Chavez through the letter demonstrates her tendency to voice her concerns rather than repress them. Although Huerta would often default to Chavez’s leadership, she also took the opportunity to voice her position on issues. However, her willingness to acquiesce to Chavez was consistent in how she defines herself in both private channels such as personal letters and more public channels such as the interviews she granted and speeches she delivered. Further, when provided the space to voice and be open with her communication—as afforded by the personal letter—we also see her working against the deeply held conception of woman as the quiet suffering type. Thus, in this private correspondence, she continues to define herself and redefine broadly-held definitions of women.

Huerta demonstrated her strength and tenacity through her private letters to Chavez, as well as the more public genre of interoffice memos. Given the typical function of an inter-office memo it is likely that only a few internal volunteers and/or employees viewed these communications such as the person who prepared the memo (as indicated by initials on the bottom of each memo) and those that delivered them. However, despite the knowledge that others would view the memos the pattern of confrontational exchanges between the two leaders is supported in a memo from July 11, 1970. Preserved on UFW memo letterhead, Chavez typed the following memo to Huerta:

For the 10 Billionth time, will you please let me know before you give orders to people to do things unless it is in your department. Its very important and a good sign of courtesy to do so. (“Memo to Huerta”)

Huerta’s handwritten response was included on the same memo:
For the 10 Billionth time, I have not given any orders to anyone outside of my Department. It is important as a sign of courtesy to check with me before you make false accusations. ("Response to Memo from Chavez")

What is evident in the exchange between Chavez and Huerta is that both leaders used the interoffice memo to voice frustration with one another despite its official standing. No doubt that without mobile phones and email there were limited options for the leaders to communicate immediately with one another, especially given the difficulty of contacting each other while they were out protesting, gathering community support, rallying, or conducting many of the other necessary actions for the cause. Although it is unclear how such an official correspondence may have affected others’ perceptions of the leaders in the organization, it remains likely that Chavez used the genre and its visibility to express his authority. With Huerta’s response and, in particular, her mimicry of the language used by Chavez, Huerta further established her fortitude within the organization. Unlike the more mediated texts from the periodicals, in which journalists framed the text shared from Huerta, the memos offer a more candid view. Of course, it is likely that neither Huerta nor Chavez anticipated that their memos would be read outside of the organization; nonetheless, they do offer some insight about the character of Huerta—one that is firm and fearless—while also substantiating the more public characterizations of her.

The work of the UFW was a colossal undertaking, and the logistics of managing multiple staff, volunteers, and supporters required constant communication. Considering the limitations on communication at the time, it is likely that the interoffice memo operated as a significant mode of communication between the two leaders. Therefore, it is not surprising to also see many business-as-usual memo exchanges between the two leaders. The genre invariably guided the exchange and was likely precipitated by immediate needs
of the UFW. For instance, in a memo to Chavez dated December 7, 1972, in a section titled “Problem Area,” Huerta writes the following:

Jack is having nightmares over 22 expenses. He feels Leroy [“+ others” handwritten in the margins] got a Blank Check on the expenditures and he is now in the position of having to honor all of the receipts especially gas receipts without any gas budget to relate it to. [“no admin control” handwritten] (“Memo to Chavez”)

While there is evidence of their volatile relationship, there is equal evidence of their ability to work well with one another. The inclusion of a phrase like “Jack is having nightmares” pushes against typical genre conventions of the inter-office memo—conventions that tend to be professional in tone as opposed to colloquial—and instead indicates the type of relationship that the two had. To be more specific, Huerta’s use of hyperbole demonstrates her casual treatment of the interoffice memo while simultaneously placing urgency on the issue of expenditures.

Six years later, Chavez looks to Huerta for her input after designating Richard Chavez as head of the International Relations Department. In a type written and brief memo dated April 12, 1978, Chavez writes, “I have assigned Richard Chavez to be in charge of the International Relations Department. We welcome your comments or suggestions.” Similar to the memo exchange above, Huerta’s response is handwritten and jovial: “I think he should take his wife (2nd one) on all out of country trips to help our family image.” At the time of this memo, Richard Chavez (Cesar Chavez’s brother) and Huerta were in a serious long-term relationship. Though they were never technically married, Huerta and Richard Chavez had four children together. Thus, it is likely that Huerta’s response to Chavez is a bit tongue-in-cheek, which further supports their push against the typical features of an interoffice memo and instead emphasizes the ways in which they blurred the boundaries of
the genre. In addition, this exchange further demonstrates the relationship between the two leaders, and Chavez’s willingness to seek Huerta’s advice openly through the official channels of the UFW. Perhaps more importantly, this exchange demonstrates Huerta’s rhetorical savvy. Whether or not she stated in jest or in earnest that Richard Chavez should take his wife on international trips, the role of family was important to Huerta.

In fact, regardless of the genre utilized, Huerta often remarked on the importance of connecting the UFW to family values—for example, through a commitment to providing safe and sanitary produce to children or the more social justice-oriented concerns with the families of the farm laborers. However, in the interoffice memo—as utilized by Huerta and Chavez—she was able to refer to herself as Richard’s second wife despite not actually being formally married to him. In so doing Huerta both blurred the definition of marriage and simultaneously indicates to Chavez that her relationship with his brother was

Unfortunately, any additional context surrounding the exchange is difficult to discern from the materials included in the Reuther Library archives, and no additional information was included in the Dolores Huerta Reader. It is also important to note the length of time, eight years, between the two memos. Despite the quantity of materials in the archives, shockingly few were texts from Huerta. In the archives that I canvased, there was one memo from 1970, seven memos dated in 1972 that were from Chavez to Huerta without any responses from her, and three from 1978. Of the eleven total memos included in the Huerta papers, only two included responses from her—both handwritten on the original memo from Chavez.

Both the letters and memos offer some insight about the role that genre plays in establishing the rhetor’s ethos by demonstrating how rhetors invent themselves through
particular language use, the qualities of identity that they share and disrupt, and the relationships they build through chosen modes of communication. Looking closely at the exchanges between Huerta and Chavez, it is evident that Huerta’s character remained consistent in both private and public spheres.

**Speeches**

In “Genre as Social Action,” Miller posits, “[E]xigence provides the rhetor with a socially recognizable way to make his or her intentions known. It provides an occasion, and thus a form for making public our private versions of things” (158). As demonstrated, Huerta’s dedication to the cause was fueled by deeply personal commitments to serving others and to improving the material lives of the people who worked in the fields. Thus, it appears that Huerta utilized as many genres as possible in order to make her “private versions of things” public. While it is certain that Huerta was aware of the conventions of the genres in which she engaged with, it is doubtful that she consciously considered how each genre might specifically influence her *ethos*; however, because of the social nature of genre, it did influence the perception of her character. Miller further argues, “Exigence must be seen neither as a cause of rhetorical action nor as intention, but as social motive” (158). Part of the social motive that facilitated the work of the UFW was that of the civil rights movement, and both Chavez and Huerta were able to draw on the kairotic moment to leverage the farm laborer movement. More specifically, from 1967–1970, the UFW was focused on coordinating an international boycott of grapes, and in February of 1968 Chavez began his first 25-day fast to demonstrate the UFW’s commitment to non-violent protest. Drawing on the exigence of the cultural climate, and evidenced by several documents in the
archives, it appears that part of the strategy of UFW leadership was to recruit support from existing unions and communities that would help spread the word about and garner support for their cause, as well as offer resources whenever possible. With the success of several years of protesting and the national boycott, both the union and the efforts of its leaders were gaining visibility. Simultaneously, the feminist movement was also gaining momentum and, with the combined cultural climate of civil rights activism, Huerta was starting to be sought after for interviews and speaking engagements.

Huerta’s notoriety was a blessing and a curse. It is quite possible that because she was unlike any other labor union leader, she was sought after by liberal-leaning publications and organizations in an effort to hold her up as a symbol of the changing times. Mario Garcia points out the following in the *Dolores Huerta Reader*:

> Huerta’s history reveals her to be an atypical labor organizer. First and foremost her gender distinguished her role. In general, very few women served as a labor leader in U.S. unions and certainly few held top positions. For these reasons, Huerta’s emergence as Cesar Chavez’s top lieutenant and coleader of the UFW makes her unique” (xx-xxi).

However, her unique position also emphasized who she was—a working-class Chicana and mother—rather than what she was doing—negotiating contracts, leading protests, and fighting for social justice. In what follows, I examine excerpts from two speeches delivered by Huerta and anthologized in the *Dolores Huerta Reader*. The first speech was part of the Annual Convention of the American Public Health Association and was delivered on October 21, 1974 in New Orleans, LA, and its full transcript is available in the Reuther Library archives. The second speech was given at the University of California, Los Angeles.

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6 The Reuther Library Archives included approximately fifteen separate thank-you letters that were composed from a boilerplate. Many of the letters were to other union groups that had provided support to the UFW.
(UCLA) in 1978 to, presumably, a group of politically interested and active students. The anthologized version of the speech was “transcribed from audiotapes with the permission of the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center and Library Archive, Chicano Studies Research Center, UCLA” (Dolores Huerta Reader 241). Both speeches were delivered in front of an audience who were sympathetic to the cause but who were unlikely to have members as entrenched in the movement as Huerta and other volunteers were. In effect, these speeches offered Huerta an opportunity to share the work of the union, build awareness for the cause, and solicit support. Again, here it becomes evident that the genre of the public speech played an instrumental role in her ethos development. The rhetorical situation, and specifically the genre, motivated both Huerta and the audience to be in the room together, effectively facilitating the possibility for connection between rhetor and audience. Further, public speeches allow for the rhetor to read the audience members energy and reactions, and make any necessary improvised adjustments to a prepared speech. In this way, the in-person speaking engagements offered opportunities for Huerta to connect to her audiences that fixed-texts such as printed journalistic genres did not.

Bawarshi explains this in terms of an activity system:

"Genre...organizes and generates its own field, tenor, and mode complex—its own site of action—in relation to other genres within a larger sphere of action or “activity system.” The genres that form this constellation function together to coordinate the dynamic relations that make up the larger activity systems. Within such systems, genres not only constitute particular participant positions and language practices; they also regulate how participants recognize and interact with one another." (38)

The genre of a public speech, then, allows for a direct connection between rhetor and audience since there is very little mediation by others. Additionally, because the audience members have likely encountered such engagements before, they are likely to have an
expectation for direct interactions. More specifically, Huerta utilized the in person speech events to emphasize language and culture in ways that were not available through print genres. In both speeches, Huerta invites the audience members to close with rally cries in Spanish: “vivas,” a term for “raising up,” and “abajos,” a term for “down with,” thereby invoking a material connection with her audience. Only through the genre of public address through speech could such a collective and embodied action be performed together.

As previously mentioned, the audience for the American Public Health Association (APHA) was likely to be sympathetic to the UFW cause. The current APHA website offers a history that situates their organizational values:

The American Public Health Association was founded in 1872 at a time when scientific advances were helping to reveal the causes of communicable diseases. These discoveries laid the foundation for the public health profession and for the infrastructure to support our work.

From our inception, APHA was dedicated to improving the health of all U.S. residents. Our founders recognized that two of the Association’s most important functions were advocacy for adoption by the government of the most current scientific advances relevant to public health, and public education on how to improve community health. Along with these efforts, we have also campaigned for developing well-organized health departments at both the federal and local levels. (“About APHA”)

With its organizational roots in fostering programs that protect public health, the APHA would likely be interested in both the health conditions of farm laborers and the common citizen.

Because they had similar goals, Huerta was able to quickly make clear and meaningful connections with the attendees. In the opening paragraph of her talk, Huerta thanks the organizers of the event and then shares Chavez’s health condition. Immediately following the health update of Chavez, Huerta offers the following:

I wish to bring you greetings and a hope for a very successful convention on your hundred and second convention to all of you who have dedicated your
lives to making life better for the world, for America. I think that your goals are very much like the goals of the union. We got into the business of organizing farm workers for mainly health reasons. It is no accident that the farm workers have an average life span of 49 years of age. And those of you who have worked in rural communities, I think know the reasons. Those you that don’t, I just want to give you a little picture of what health is like for a farm worker in a place where he does not have the United Farm Workers to represent him. (“Keynote Address before the Annual Convention of the American Public Health Association” 229)

Huerta indicates that she is familiar with the values of her audience and of the organization. In addition, she signals her awareness of its institutional history—as demonstrated by her recognition of the convention being their “one hundred and second.” In the opening statement, Huerta offers the expected thanks, attends to Chavez’s wellbeing, and expresses well wishes for the attendees of the conference, sufficiently satisfying the expectations for the genre. Acting as a “social code” (Bawarshi), the genre conventions—when followed—help to build the ethos of the rhetor. Of course, simply meeting the expected conventions does not translate directly into positive ethos construction; instead, it maintains the possibility for such construction.

During the speech, Huerta utilizes several typical but effective strategies in public speaking. Using personal narrative, Huerta shares three stories of farm workers who received misdiagnoses that lead to further—and avoidable—health complications. She then describes the health care provided by the UFW, focusing particularly on why the UFW’s healthcare system works well. Each of these stories made available through the spoken presentation provide opportunities for Huerta’s audience to connect with her. Huerta not only shares the stories of others but also includes a story of her own experience. After sharing that she had her “tenth baby in a hospital in Tulare County in California,” Huerta prods the audience with a question and some comic relief: “Now, some of you might
wonder how come I have ten children, right? One of the main reasons is because I want to have my own picket line.” The injection of humor often disarms an audience and tends to make the rhetor appear more relatable, which is particularly important for audiences who would be less likely to identify with having ten children. However, Huerta quickly returns to her serious message and offers very vivid and potentially shocking details to the audience:

But all kidding aside, it’s really nice to be able to go to a clinic when you are pregnant with your tenth baby and not have people look at you like you are kind of crazy. Or like you don’t know where they come from, or put pressure on you not to have any more children. Because after all you know Mexicans are kind of poor people and you shouldn’t have all that many kids. So that’s another good thing about our clinics. Because unfortunately, that pressure not to have children translates itself in county hospitals and places where people have no power into dead babies because those babies aren’t taken care of, and into very hard labor for mothers because they are trying to make it as hard on the mother as they can to have another one. And I guess I feel a little bit strongly about that because I’ve been in situations where I’ve seen children die, babies die, because somebody there thought they shouldn’t have been born in the first place. ("Keynote Address before the Annual Convention of the American Public Health Association" 232)

Although there are many forces at work in the excerpt above, I argue that the genre deeply influences Huerta’s ethos because it places the audience in her presence and allows for eye contact, for physical energy to be exchanged, and for Huerta to compose her message both beforehand and extemporaneously. Thus, as Huerta works to make connections with her audience, she can orchestrate shifts and points of both emphasis and de-emphasis. In this case, we see Huerta emphasize the importance of farm workers having their own doctors and clinics in order to provide the best health care to them. Huerta further supports the importance of identity and shared experience:

The doctors that come to work with us work the way that we do. We work for no wages. Our doctors get a little bit more for some of you out there that might be interested. But nevertheless it is a sacrifice. And that’s important.
Because you can’t help poor people and be comfortable. You know, the two things are just not compatible. If you want to really give good care to poor people you’ve got to be prepared to be a little uncomfortable and to put a little bit of sacrifice behind it [emphasis added]. ("Keynote Address before the Annual Convention of the American Public Health Association" 233)

Perhaps in an attempt to establish a stronger connection to the importance of identity and lived experience, Huerta draws attention away from racial/ethnic classifications and refocuses the audience on issues of class. In the above passage we also see a prevailing on conceptions of sacrifice. Returning to the work of scholars such as Lindal Buchanan, Carol Mattingly, and Carolyn Skinner, drawing on women’s morality—in this case, self-sacrifice—has been a strategy employed by women for generations in order to gain entrance into the public sphere. Because Huerta could not rely on assumed commonalities with audiences who were unlikely to share her racial/ethnic background, she often worked to establish places of commonality or identification that were less contentious and more identifiable than her ethnic/racial identity.

Huerta’s mestiza consciousness and agility in emphasizing the values that she shared with her live audiences especially provided key opportunities to exemplify her character and would elevate her audience through doing so. Like many rhetors before her, Huerta read her perceived audience and tailored her emphasis based on her expected or assumed values of the audience. We witness her ability to customize her explicit “telling” of herself by identifying the different levels of emphasis she places on race/ethnicity. In Skinner’s conceptualization of a feminist model of ethos, she argues that a marginalized rhetor’s “character is often constructed in response to a dynamic context that includes multiple competing ideas about the ‘best’ virtues; consequently, ethos formation frequently involves value negotiations as well as reciprocity between rhetor and audience identity.
constraints” (175). Further, Skinner argues that within the negotiation of values between
the rhetor and audience it is sometimes necessary or strategic for the rhetor to call for a
reordering of values (175). We see this demonstrated by Huerta to a small degree when we
see a privileging of class values over racially aligned ones.

In contrast to the speech delivered to public health professionals that belonged to
the APHA, Huerta’s presentation at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) was
most likely delivered to a variety of UCLA students. Based on a close reading of the text, it
appears that the purpose of Huerta’s speech was to inspire and teach; hence, the speech
was composed and delivered differently than the APHA address. Huerta is positioned
interestingly in the brief introduction from Terri Fletcher, a representative of the Campus
Farm Workers Support Committee. Ms. Fletcher began by thanking those that supported
the event and then shared, “We went to the Speaker’s Bureau to ask for funding for this and
they said, ‘Well we never heard of Dolores Huerta, so she couldn’t be that important.’ That
really shows how little they know” (“Speech Given by Dolores Huerta, UCLA” 241) Perhaps
ironically, this short acknowledgment of the Speaker’s Bureau’s ignorance served as a
segue to establishing Huerta’s credibility:

Dolores has been with the union since it started in 1965 [sic]. She is an
executive board member and a first vice president in the union. She has been
on the New York boycott; she’s worked in Florida; she is currently the head
of the Delano field office and is negotiating seventeen contracts right now.
She is the leading woman in the labor movement in this country today; she is
a very busy person and we are really lucky to have her here. (“Speech Given
by Dolores Huerta, UCLA” 241)

Huerta’s character was significantly affected by the introduction that foregrounded her
credentials and accomplishments. Not unlike the periodicals, but distinct from the personal
letters and memos, the occasion for speaking and the genre generated channels for
endorsement.
In response to her introduction, Huerta thanked Ms. Fletcher and thanked the audience for attending. In so doing, Huerta again confirms her awareness of and ability to display genre conventions. Unlike the APHA speech, in which she quickly established the shared values between her audience and herself, Huerta instead chooses to discuss her reflection on all that the UFW had achieved since she had been involved with it. After chronicling the progress made by the union, Huerta then moves from an informational style to one of inspiration:

You know I’ve been in the movement now since I was twenty-five years old, maybe some of you are younger than I was then, and I look back and I see all of the things we’ve done, and even to myself it’s hard for me to believe how we made the changes that we made by people that were like the poorest of all, people that didn’t know how to read and write, people who had no resources, and when we think of the changes that we were able to make for the farm workers, it’s really kind of a mindblower. (“Speech Given by Dolores Huerta, UCLA” 244)

This particular genre/social action—as defined by the rhetorical situation—led Huerta to invent herself differently than we have seen in the other genres utilized by her. More specifically, although Huerta and her role in the UFW are established, they are not emphasized. Instead, Huerta is guided by the purpose of motivating and mobilizing a young adult audience. In the excerpt below, note the direct invocation of doubt and powerlessness that many young adults experience:

Probably some of you think to yourselves that I’m not a Martin Luther King, I’m not a Cesar Chavez, I’m just plain old me, and what can plain old me do? Well, this is where you really have to think about it and about what plain old you can do. Plain old you can do a lot of things, you can make real great changes for this country, just plain old you—if you make a commitment. Just like farm workers have done, all of the changes that have been brought and farm workers have done is because farm workers have made a commitment and they lent their whole bodies to go out there and do something. It was, again, like during the Civil Rights struggle when people went in and sat in and got beaten up and what have you—it was their bodies that made that difference. (“Speech Given by Dolores Huerta, UCLA” 247)
In effect, Huerta works to counter the anticipated challenges from her audience in order to spark action. She continues with a powerful command: "So don’t ever think that plain old you can’t make the difference; it’s like dropping a little stone in a pool; it’s just a little stone, a little pebble, but it makes all kinds of waves that reach way out" ("Speech Given by Dolores Huerta, UCLA”247). Knowing her audience and the situation that brought them together, Huerta tailors her speech to meet both the expectations for the genre and the appropriate social action that she and her audience were there to achieve. While it is evident that genre significantly affected how Huerta approached her writing task and that she was aware of the complex formula that includes the rhetorical situation, audience, and purpose for any particular public address, she also displays an agility when drawing on her matrix of identities—never completely losing sight of how identity defines her and the audience.

One last example from a speech delivered by Huerta illustrates her ability to bend the boundaries of genre and develop a connection with the audience that moves from what might be expected to something unexpected. This excerpt is from a 1974 speech delivered as part of a Cinco de Mayo celebration at California State University, Hayward, and was covered in the college’s newspaper. While the speech was not printed in its entirety, the excerpts included do offer some insight into how Huerta built her ethos with a live audience. Huerta takes every opportunity to make obvious assumptions about the political activeness of her audience and brings them together as established fighters for the cause, not unlike herself. In this case, her audience was likely to include Latinos that were attending the university and others who were interested in the cultural celebration. As reported in the university newspaper, The Daily Pioneer, Huerta asserts the following:
No grower wants to sit down at a table across from a brown or black farmworker and have him tell him what to do. We don’t know our place—we dare to go out and vote. When farmworkers get their union they will be free people—free to participate in the political system. We’re going to change politics in this country. That’s why they want to get rid of us. (Chui 1)

The candor and vigor in her style and tone indicate a great deal of trust in and solidarity with the audience.

Because Huerta was standing before a group, she was able to foster solidarity by using “we” and “us” in an apparent assumption that the audience identifies with her. Yet, she also works to articulate why this is everyone’s fight and not just the farm laborers’ fight:

I tell people that every time they feed their faces a farmworker put the food there. I tell people “you are directly involved, you have the responsibility to come and help the people who have fed you.” A lot of times people are afraid to picket—they think they will feel awkward or funny. Remind people who don’t want to spend a few hours on a picket line that the farmworker walks thousands of miles a year stooped over, so they can eat. (Chui 1-2)

In the excerpt above, we once again see her appealing to the collective, and she speaks to her audience as though they are already part of her cause and community. Further, because this coming together was organized around the Cinco de Mayo celebration—a holiday that celebrates Mexico’s defeat of the French in 1862—her delivery appears to blur the expected conventions of a public awareness speech and the more emotional and inciting genre of public protest speech. Lastly, with the statement, “A lot of times people are afraid to picket—they think” (emphasis added), she clearly sets her audience apart from those who are afraid to picket by using the term “people” as a way to distance her audience from the general non-involved public. She then further distances them by using “they,” which implies that she recognizes her immediate audience as already being a group of activists.
The trends that become apparent when considering the excerpts from her speeches as a collective are unlike the more mediated and personal genres. When Huerta stands before her audience in person, it appears that she focuses more attention on appealing to the collective by building the character of her audience, a strategy that Skinner also identifies in her examination of the professional ethos of nineteenth century women physicians. While much of rhetorical study affirms the importance of audience, rhetorical genre theory suggests that, because genre is socially constructed, the audience is both influenced by the genre and influences the genre. Thus, before composing in a genre that has an audience who is as easily identifiable as that of an in-person speaking engagement, the rhetor imagines a version of the community that she will address directly. In so doing, rhetors imagine connections and places for identification. In the case of the speeches that I have examined for this project, Huerta effectively built her ethos by emphasizing the best qualities in her audiences and concentrating on constructing a unified sense of “we.”

**Conclusion**

Drawing on a key concept from Bawarshi in which he suggests that genre facilitates the invention of the writer by the writer (17), and through the analysis of the several genres that Huerta employed while campaigning for farm laborer rights, it becomes apparent that Huerta met her writing tasks with a keen understanding of how her identity affects her ethos. In many instances, Huerta had to define, redefine, and attend to her intersectional identity in order to bridge a connection to her audiences. Such a strategy, then, underscores how her identity invariably dictates her access to and participation within specific genres. As suggested through the analysis in this chapter, Huerta was
primarily granted access to genres that maintained a constituency who were already sympathetic to her cause.

Conceptions of audience as recognized through genre further emphasize Huerta’s ability to both set herself apart from her audience by way of some obvious exceptionalism and to closely connect to them by utilizing her ability to cross seamlessly between her multiple identity categories. Noting Huerta’s emphasis on the collective is significant in this examination because unlike many theories of social protest rhetoric, in which rhetors focus on building their own ethos, Huerta focuses her attention on building her ethos by propping up and borrowing ethos from the collective audience. Huerta rarely speaks about herself as an exceptional or prophetic leader; instead, she works to highlight how her audience is just like her and she like them. Whether we focus on Huerta as a woman, mother, activist, or Chicana, we see that Huerta consistently attempts to downplay or justify the issues that might create tension between the farm workers for whom she is working, rather than attempting to build an alliance to the middle- to upper-class constituency with whom she also consistently worked. Huerta steadily worked to establish her genuine interest and commitment to the cause and constructed an ethos that exemplified the values held by the majority of farm laborers. Interestingly, by positioning those values as connecting across racial and class lines, Huerta was able to appeal to diverse audiences. Huerta’s commitment was demonstrated repeatedly through a combination of her lived life—e.g., living on meager wages and sacrifice—and the professional work that she did through the UFW. Thus, by examining her ethos construction, we see that Huerta’s rhetorical efficacy is intrinsically tied both to her demonstrated commitment to the cause and to her identity.
Chapter Six
*Sí Se Puede*

As a study of *ethos* and how it is affected by identity, this dissertation project argues that the body and the embodied identities associated with it significantly shape how *ethos* is and can be constructed. In examining how social justice activist Dolores Huerta constructed her *ethos* during the initial organization of the United Farm Workers Union, I aim to both highlight the role of Huerta as a co-founder of the UFW and add Huerta as an important rhetorical figure of study in the field of rhetoric. As I have acknowledged in previous chapters, although much work has been done to include women and people of color in the field of rhetoric, there remains a lack of both Latina scholars and Latina figures of study. Thus, the first priority of this study is one of inclusion. However, beyond including Huerta in rhetorical tradition—insofar as she is recognized as a rhetorician—I also explore the influence of identity on *ethos* construction.

At the outset of this project, I anticipated that the rhetorical strategies available to Huerta for developing *ethos* would likely be different than those available to a White male figure. To what degree that difference manifested and to what effect remained to be discovered. Thus, this investigation had to begin by tracing how rhetorical thought surrounding *ethos* as an argumentative appeal evolved over its history. *Ethos* has been described as necessarily complex but also as a generative appeal to discuss. According to Craig R. Smith, before one speaks, *ethos* has an ontological dimension that is evident through decision-making and how lives are lived or what he calls “the way one dwells” (2). Smith’s point is one of the key considerations in this project because it suggests that much of *ethos* exists beyond the explicit textual delivery of communication and is equally shaped by the many attributes of lived behaviors and habits. Therefore, in this examination it was
not only important to consider how Huerta explicitly addressed audiences but also how she represented her commitment to the cause through her lived sacrifices in order to rightfully be an official leader in the organization. Additionally, while this study does not suggest that Huerta utilized a radically different approach from what is often included in rhetorical strategy in building her ethos, it does support the assertion that rhetorical strategy is crafted piece by piece—using pieces that can be rearranged by rhetors and audiences alike. The pieces can change shape and provide different meanings with shifting perspectives, especially with the passage of time. Therefore, as I argue throughout this project, it is apparent that ethos is constructed from a multitude of places. Further, as evidenced by James Baumlin and others, ethos is a difficult concept to define and examine; thus, any examination is only part of the puzzle and not the full picture.

Drawing on the work of Marshall Alcorn, James Baumlin, and Susan Jarratt and Nedra Reynolds, I argue that one critical piece of building ethos is how a rhetor understands and defines the self. Self-definition is integral to ethos construction because it ultimately constrains or expands the opportunities for a rhetor. Recognizing the significance of both definition and specifically self-definition, this dissertation project focused on how Huerta was defined by others and emphasized how Huerta extended, bent, and ultimately redefined the identity categories that she most visibly embodied. Although it was not in the scope of this project to detail every aspect of Huerta’s identity—a task that is unlikely achievable—this project worked to emphasize the role of the body in ethos construction and, because of this, it was necessary for this examination to be conducted through an intersectional and matrix lens. Because identity is shaped across multiple axes, the work of Kimberlee Crenshaw, Patricia Hill Collins, and Vivian May informed my
treatment of identity by providing the foundation for examining Huerta as a rhetorical figure who was positioned with multiple oppressions. A matrix orientation to intersectional identities and its relationship to self-definition is further supported by Alcorn and by Jarratt and Reynolds. They argue that although there is no fully stable sense of self, it is necessary to prevail on some categorizations in order to both recognize that not all bodies are perceived the same and to organize a sense of self even if it remains shifting and fluid.

My examination into understanding how intersectionality affects ethos is not neutral, nor is it strictly academic; in fact, this project and examination is quite personal. This acknowledgment remains one of the greatest challenges that I faced while conducting and producing this project and is one that I do not take lightly. Interestingly, however, I also believe that sharing a few embodied identities with Huerta—ethnicity, motherhood, and social class beginnings—offers opportunities for insights and understandings that otherwise may have been overlooked. As a Latina scholar and teacher, I have a vested interest in understanding how the body influences my ethos. As a Latina and mother, I have a vested interest in how my “motherly” ethos affects my authority. And as a monolingual Latina, I have a vested interest in how the lack of a shared language with those with whom I share a heritage affects my credibility. As both a personal and professional examination, this work presented challenges that I necessarily worked through and will continue to work through. That said, it is evident that intersectionality significantly influences ethos.

Huerta’s intersectionality both complicated and empowered her ethos construction by requiring, and perhaps more importantly, allowing her to define how her identity affected her leadership and character. Through a detailed close reading of several
documents by and about Huerta, it became evident that she often had to attend to her
personal roles affected by her identity—such as mother, Chicana, and woman—in order to
establish her credibility as a leader in the farm laborer movement. Such a discovery was
substantiated by the work of many feminist rhetorical scholars, such as Jessica Enoch,
Susan Jarratt, Gesa Kirsch, and Jacqueline Jones Royster among many others, and it was
particularly aided by the recent work of Carolyn Skinner and her outline of the five features
of a feminist model of ethos.

Drawing on Skinner’s first feature of a feminist model of ethos in chapter four, I
argued that Huerta strongly guided her audience’s perceptions of her identity by overtly
defining herself through her most recognizable identity categories. As Skinner’s first
feature points out, “[E]thos formation frequently involves value negotiations as well as
reciprocity between rhetor and audience identity constructs” (175). Examining several
periodicals that varied by type, length, and circulation and included articles featuring
Huerta and the UFW, it was apparent that Huerta was often introduced to her audience
through her physical appearance. Consequently, Huerta often attended to her identity in
order to establish her credibility. Self-definition was important for Huerta to speak from a
genuine position—thereby positively constructing her ethos—and it was equally important
for her audience to have trust in her as an authority. Emphasizing the role of Huerta’s
positioning by others and her self-definition and redefinition leads to new insights about
ethos—such as Huerta’s ability to leverage traditional definitions of her identity in order to
rewrite them—that affirmed the importance of the body in rhetorical strategy. Further,
focusing primarily on how Huerta was positioned by others raises questions about the role
genre held in the construction of ethos.
Prompted by the examination of texts in chapter four and by Skinner's fourth feature of a feminist model of ethos, chapter five connected the forces from the body, the rhetorical situation, and genre in order to demonstrate the significant influence that identity has on ethos construction in particular and rhetorical strategy in general. Skinner's third feature is that "ethos and genre are intertwined" (177). In chapter five, I look closely at the features of genre and argue that the genre in which Huerta acts significantly influences how she invents herself for her audience, gains access to her audiences, identifies with her audience, and is thus able to effectively build her ethos. Because identity affects genre along multiple axes—for example, which genres a rhetor can access and how the genre constraints influence and position the perception of both the rhetor's identity and the configuration of the audience it addresses—the body maintains an equally important role when considering how genre influences ethos.

Much of the analyses in this project were guided by Skinner's feminist model of ethos in part because it clearly outlines both the constraints and opportunities for marginalized rhetoricians. Skinner's analyses of how early female physicians worked to build their professional ethos in an unfriendly climate successfully accounts for many of the strategies that Huerta applied to her own ethos construction. However, because Skinner's site for analyses included female physicians who primarily communicated in English, the role of language and how it creates both barriers and connections between rhetors and audiences was understandably not part of her model. As part of this concluding chapter, I turn attention away from the analysis conducted within this project and consider the implications for future study by emphasizing the relationships among the body, spoken language, and ethos.
Huerta, the UFW, and the Transference of Ethos

In the introduction of this project, I shared some of the historical background and context of both Dolores Huerta and the United Farm Workers (UFW) union. However, the story of both Huerta and the UFW is far from over. Although at its peak, the UFW was stated to have over fifty thousand members (Bardacke and Baer), today the UFW currently has a membership of just over ten thousand (UnionFacts). Interestingly, over the last ten years, the UFW was reporting a membership that hovered around five thousand, and, in 2013, it experienced a growth spurt that nearly doubled its membership. While it is not within the scope of this project to determine the cause for this growth, it is relevant that the UFW continues its mission to improve the working conditions of farm laborers and farming practices—a mission that, unfortunately, still has exigence.

Huerta’s continued work toward social justice has also not waned. According to the Dolores Huerta Foundation, in 1988 when she was 58-years-old, Huerta sustained serious injury at the hands of a San Francisco Police Department officer while protesting policies of then-presidential candidate George H. W. Bush in San Francisco (“Dolores Huerta”). After a lengthy recovery, Huerta took a leave of absence from the UFW to focus on women’s rights and promote gender and ethnic equality in government representation (“Dolores Huerta”). Now at the age of 85, she continues to work toward “developing and advocating for the working poor, women, and children” (“Dolores Huerta”). While Huerta remains a prominent public figure, she is not yet a household name despite the recognition that she has received at local, state, and national levels. Most notably, President Clinton presented Huerta with the Eleanor Roosevelt Humans Rights Award in 1998, and President Obama presented her with the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2012, which is the highest civilian
award in the United States ("Dolores Huerta"). Huerta’s professional achievements continue to grow, and her legacy is one that will continue for generations to come. And, although few are aware of it, her voice and ethos continue to contribute to the rallying cry for hope and social justice in mainstream government, workforce, and even the media.

In each of the preceding chapters, I have worked to demonstrate the centrality of a rhetor’s body to the construction of her ethos. Looking to a public figure such as Huerta and an organization such as the UFW provided the opportunity to examine a Latina rhetor and social movement, while also demonstrating how the ethos created by the leaders of a movement can persist. In this concluding chapter, I emphasize the relationship between spoken language and the body in order to establish the significance of the UFW’s slogan, ¡Sí Se Puede! After sharing the origin of ¡Sí Se Puede!, I argue that although it remains the current slogan for the union, it has been redeployed and appropriated in a variety of ways. Further, by drawing on Skinner’s fourth feature of a feminist model of ethos, I argue that the effectiveness of the slogan can be traced back to the ethos of both leaders and specifically to Huerta as the originator. Thus, while the slogan appears disembodied from Huerta, it possesses elements established by her ethos, which is then transferred to those who use it.

**Language and the Body**

In the preceding chapters, I have primarily focused on the identities embodied by Huerta and their influence on her ethos construction. However, not only do the identities associated with the body affect ethos but the material and rhetorical actions of the body also significantly shape ethos construction. More specifically, both Huerta and Cesar Chavez consistently demonstrated their commitment to the cause with their bodies. Huerta stood
on the picket line, marched in several protests, and slept in the most basic of accommodations alongside her family who never went hungry but who also lived in very sparse conditions. Huerta was committed to the cause both ideologically and materially. Likewise, Chavez placed his body in the cause by protesting the working conditions of the farm laborers through a series of fasts. And, of course, he also participated in multiple strikes, marches, and protests. Chavez and his family lived on a very lean income, too. In fact, many of the families and individuals fighting for farm laborer rights placed their bodies in the fight by sacrificing materially and/or physically—for example, when they were brutalized on the picket line, during a march, or at a protest rally. Despite all these shared material, physical, and emotional sacrifices, Chavez without a doubt remains the most recognizable leader of the UFW.

As co-leaders of the farm laborer movement, Chavez and Huerta often shared many of their public roles and were a successful team, in part, because they spoke the “language” of the farmworkers. To be clear, language in this instance does not merely signify that both leaders were bilingual and spoke Spanish and English, as many farm workers were Spanish speakers. Instead, language also refers to the familiarity with what mattered most to farm workers and how to best present it. As Carol Mattingly asserts in the introduction to Well-Tempered Women, Temperance women were remarkably effective: “They presented arguments in comfortable, familiar language that made both women and men amenable to new ideas and evidence. Words are most effective when an audience admires its speakers and finds the messages non-threatening” (1-2). Utilizing strategy like that of the Temperance women, both Chavez and Huerta were trusted and admired by the farm workers because the workers admired the leaders’ commitment to fighting for the cause
and shared their language. Indeed, part of this language was the material and physical sacrifices—or similar lived realities—that Huerta and Chavez shared with the farm laborers. Language in all of its complexities was a significant element of Huerta's ethos construction and efficacy.

As evidenced in chapters four and five, Huerta advocated for using language that was familiar to the farm workers when drawing up her first set of contracts, and she explicitly argued that the language of the contract should be accessible to the people it is written to protect. Thus, Huerta avoided adopting the more formal and legal jargon of lawyers. In addition, when reaching out to and soliciting support from a variety of communities, Huerta often strategically utilized key phrases or terms in multiple languages to signal allegiance. For example, in a letter that she wrote requesting support for the grape boycott to Wendell Young, the president of the Retail Clerks Union now known as the United Food and Commercial Workers International Union (UFCW), Huerta closes her letter with “Sincerely and Fraternally yours, Dolores Huerta Vice President and presently working as East Coast Boycott Coordinator. VIVA LA HUELGA!” In this short valediction, it is evident that Huerta customized her text to fit the language of the recipient. As a fellow union officer, Young would certainly understand the importance of “fraternally yours,” in addition to the credentials offered by Huerta as the VP and East Coast Boycott Coordinator. Of course, “VIVA LA HUELGA,” or long live the strike, was also used to signify the bicultural community most affected by the farm laborer working conditions.

Huerta used shared or common language, then, to make connections both in terms of indicating an awareness of prominent discourse within specific communities and as an extension of the bodies who were being represented. Because Spanish is not the official
language of the United States and is not recognized as a native language of the US—despite the entangled history of the US and Mexico—the inclusion of Spanish or even Tagalog represents the “otherness” of the bodies involved in the movement. This tactic was utilized multiple times by including a variety of valedictions in Spanish, English, and Tagalog. Although the farm laborer movement worked and continues to work to improve the working conditions for all laborers, the primary community affected by and associated with the movement were Latinos. It is also important to acknowledge the integral contributions from Filipino UFW leader Larry Itiliong and the many Filipino farm laborers who were part of the fight. And, of course, there were also many White farm laborers and allies who were working to improve conditions. Thus, although the movement is commonly associated with the brown bodies of Latinos, it actually served and was served by a very diverse community.

As part of a larger movement, Huerta stood as a leader of the labor movement and a symbol of possibility. Her influence was strong in the UFW, as evidenced by the organization’s adoption of ¡Sí Se Puede! as their slogan in 1972. Huerta’s “fire” is represented in this statement, and her intersectionality is made explicit by her use of Spanish. Many of the leaders of the UFW were bilingual, and it is telling that most of their slogans were in Spanish: beginning with Viva la Causa (loosely translated as support/fuel the cause) and then Viva la Huelga (support/fuel the strike). As suggested previously, the UFW made a conscious decision to include multiple languages in their correspondences as a way to demonstrate the united cause for which they were fighting. The use of multiple languages acts as a distinct marker of inclusivity and as a symbol of genuine representation of the people for whom rights were being fought.
Not paying attention to multilingual texts has limited our understanding of rhetoric and certainly ignores the powerful role of language in Burkean identification. In her article “Changing Methods,” Jessica Enoch echoes this sentiment when reflecting on her choice to examine Spanish-language newspaper articles in her book *Refiguring Rhetorical Education*. Ultimately, Enoch argues that not including a text because it is not in English only limits our understanding of language and rhetoric (51). In the case of Huerta, bilingual texts often act as a conscious rhetorical means of connecting to her audience and representing the bodies for whom she was fighting.

Even though the leadership of the UFW was astute in customizing language based on the intended audience, the largest constituency of the UFW was and still is Latino; thus, Spanish text was nearly always part of communication—even if only in a valediction. This point is significant because the slogan of the UFW, ¡Sí Se Puede!, is in Spanish and thus remains closely associated both with the body who first uttered it and the bodies whom it represents. According to the UFW, after Cesar Chavez initiated a fast to protest the veto of an Arizona bill that would have protected farm laborers while striking and organizing, the leaders of the UFW met in Arizona to strategize. The atmosphere in the room was described as bleak and full of despair:

> When news of the law’s enactment reached him, Cesar returned to Arizona and began a 25-day water-only fast. The fast quickly took a physical toll. After a few days Cesar was bedridden. Resting on his back in a small room, with UFW co-founder Dolores Huerta by his side, Cesar was briefed by a group of local Latino labor and political leaders about political realities in the state.
>
> The leaders offered a refrain Cesar and Dolores heard many times: The grower lobby that dominated state politics, the Legislature and governor were so powerful, these Latino leaders declared, it couldn’t be beaten. Cesar and Dolores silently listened while they explained why the fast and efforts by farm workers would be fruitless.
“No, no se puede!” (“No, no it can’t be done”), they kept repeating in Spanish. Then Dolores responded, “Sí, sí se puede!” (“Yes, yes, it can be done”). Dolores immediately picked up the call and made the slogan the rallying cry for the farm workers’ campaign in Arizona. (UFW)

The excerpt above is available on the official website of the UFW and is located under the “Research-History-History of Sí Se Puede” tab. This is significant because in this official origin story, the credit for the rallying cry is attributed to Huerta. As the leader who possessed the energy, fire, and tenacity, Huerta was at that moment the leader who could infuse the organization with much-needed hope. There are two critical elements to note in the UFW’s origin story: first, it is only with the combined leadership from Chavez and Huerta that the UFW was able to rebound from such feelings of defeat; and second, Huerta was quite able to rally support. As a duo, the two leaders were able to demonstrate both their commitment to the cause and their perseverance. The fact that Chavez was weakened due to enduring a 25-day water-only fast and Huerta was able to rally the despondent group serves as a testament to the importance of their combined perseverance and leadership.

Interestingly, however, it is Chavez who inevitably becomes the greater focus of the origin story. Immediately following the statement that Huerta picked up the call and made it the rallying cry for the farm workers’ campaign in Arizona, the narrative turns exclusively to Chavez:

Following Cesar’s 1972 fast, during which he became so weak he was hospitalized, the UFW mobilized thousands of labor, religious and community activists, and collected enough signatures to force an election to recall Governor Williams. The governor escaped the vote with a partisan ruling by the state attorney general.

At a Mass ending the fast, Cesar’s said in a statement that was read for him, “The greatest tragedy is not to live and die, as we all must. The greatest tragedy is for a person to live and die without knowing the satisfaction of giving life for others.”
The state’s punitive anti-farm worker law is still on the books. Yet Cesar Chavez’s historic fast, the UFW’s activism and the message of Sí Se Puede! have fundamentally transformed Arizona to the present day. Cesar has passed, but his legacy of self-sacrifice—and the affirmation ¡Sí Se Puede!—is alive wherever farm workers organize and wherever people anywhere stand up nonviolently for their rights.

¡Sí Se Puede! (UFW)

Throughout my process of researching the UFW and Huerta, this kind of framing is a common formula that states what Huerta contributes and then highlights Chavez and his sacrifice to the cause. It is not surprising, then, that Huerta has remained eclipsed by Chavez and that the origin of ¡Sí Se Puede! has often been misrepresented as coming from Chavez. For example, in a 2008 brief *Time* article about Obama’s use of the slogan while on the campaign trail, despite the UFW endorsing then-presidential candidate Hillary Clinton, journalist Jay Newton Small begins, “When Obama invoked the specter of Cesar Chavez this week in a rally with the Culinary Workers Union in Nevada by proclaiming ‘Sí Se Puede!’ — Chavez’s legendary rallying cry — I was surprised.” Note the explicit attribution of ¡Sí Se Puede! to Chavez. I am certainly not suggesting that the saying belongs exclusively to Huerta or that it does not rightfully belong to the UFW and all those who fight for social justice. I am, however, arguing that while it is continually attributed to Chavez, or even the UFW, it still contains the energy and features of ethos that are deeply associated with its lesser known author Dolores Huerta. In order to demonstrate how a slogan might contain the energy and features of ethos from a person not immediately known to be the originator, I draw on concepts of rhetorical circulation. Although this is only an initial investigation of how rhetorical circulation might aid our understanding of ethos and more specifically how it can transfer between rhetors, it serves to further establish the significance of embodied identities.
In her article, “Unframing Models of Public Distribution,” Jenny Edbauer explores the rhetorical situation—as augmented by the concept of rhetorical ecologies—emphasizing the important role of networks and the circulation of rhetoric in order to better theorize how rhetoric works. In doing this, Edbauer provides a foundation for understanding the networks that provide connections for making messages meaningful. Like rhetorical genre theorists, Edbauer conceives of the rhetorical situation as fluid and heavily dependent on the networks that socially construct exigence. She suggests, “Rather than imagining the rhetorical situation in a relatively closed system, [a] distributed or ecological focus might begin to imagine the situation within an open network” (Edbauer 13). Further, Edbauer argues that while Loyd Bitzer’s definition of the rhetorical situation is an important and groundbreaking concept, its categories—writer, reader, and message—are too fixed (10). In order to better understand the complexity of rhetoric, we must also consider the lived social lives and connections that make up a social field (10). She posits, “To say that we are connected is another way of saying that we are never outside the networked interconnection of forces, energies, rhetorics, moods, and experiences. In other words, our practical consciousness is never outside the prior and ongoing structures of feeling that shape the social field” (10). Thus, the communicative acts that make up social discourse are necessarily embodied. When speaking, writing, drawing, or otherwise composing, social and cultural histories are transferred and shared through our lived interactions. Edbauer does not argue for a full reconceptualization of the rhetorical situation but instead offers her theory of rhetorical ecologies as an augmentation: “One potential value of such a shifted focus is the way we view counter-rhetorics, issues of cooptation, and strategies of rhetorical production and circulation” (20). Considering the
network of connections that it required to promote, circulate, and institutionalize a slogan like ¡Sí Se Puede! from its first utterance in a small room in Arizona to a redeployment by Barack Obama in his 2008 presidential campaign, then, requires an understanding of how rhetoric and, more specifically, ethos travels.

**Rhetorical Circulation**

In his December 2000 article “Composition and Circulation of Writing,” John Trimbur argues that an integral part of composing is the act of delivery and thus circulation. Specifically, he argues that “delivery can no longer be thought of simply as a technical aspect of public discourse. It must be seen also as ethical and political—a democratic aspiration to devise delivery systems that circulate ideas, information, opinions, and knowledge thereby expand the public forums in which people can deliberate on the issues of the day” (Trimbur 190). Further, he explains that “delivery must be seen as inseparable from the circulation of writing and the widening diffusion of socially useful knowledge” (191). Although Trimbur’s discussion of delivery and circulation was developed in order to argue that the writing process is more complex than merely a process in which authors perform the act of writing, his conception is also useful for a discussion of rhetorical circulation. In effect, Trimbur’s coupling of delivery and circulation aids in how we conceptualize the act of composing and how we might theorize the effect an author—and by extension her ethos—has on circulation. The modes of delivery for both the texts that featured Huerta and those that she delivered varied extensively. As Vice President of the UFW, Huerta testified in front of Congress, spoke at rallies, facilitated countless meetings, wrote letters and memos, delivered formal presentations and speeches, composed legal documents that ranged from contracts to suits, and granted
many interviews that were printed in periodicals, broadcast on TV and radio, and became part of documentaries. Of course, it is unlikely that this is an exhaustive list. Yet Huerta was constructing her *ethos* through each of her utterances, which acted as persuasive means for garnering support for the UFW. So while this examination takes up only a sampling of Huerta’s rhetorical acts, it does so in order to provide fodder for future analyses—for example, the transferability of *ethos*.

Connecting delivery to circulation as Trimbur does also creates opportunity for considering how the *ethos* of the rhetor influences the text. In this case, the text is the UFW’s official slogan, *¡Sí Se Puede!* In order to better understand the implications of Trimbur’s argument and specifically how it relates to a slogan, I return to Edbauer’s “Unframing Models of Public Distribution” in which she traces the rhetorical effects of Austin’s slogan “Keep Austin Weird” and how slogans work to define a city. According to Edbauer, in an attempt to disrupt the takeover of large chain retailers and restaurants in Austin, two local storeowners printed and distributed bumper stickers that read, “Keep Austin Weird.” While it is not within the scope of this project to offer a comparative analysis of Austin’s slogan and the UFW’s, it is useful to consider the source of the slogan for a moment. First, because Austin had recently gone through an economic shift caused by an influx of technology businesses, many small businesses were forced to close (Edbauer). Thus, the bumper stickers originated from two long-established and local storeowners. It could be argued then that the *ethos* of the storeowners and their stores, Book People and Waterloo Records, was part of the appeal of the slogan. Since they directly distributed the initial run of bumper stickers through their storefronts, it can also be argued that existing customers understood the larger implications of such a phrase. Once the slogan “Keep
Austin Weird” was circulated beyond its initial purpose—to slow the corporate takeover and spark interest in local retailers—it was co-opted and redeployed for alternative uses, which ranged from promoting a liberal arts education to bridging a connection between the wireless phone company Cingular and Austin residents. Yet it could be argued that the ethos imbued by the authors in the slogan remained, albeit fragmented, so that it lent its character to those who appropriated its use. Similarly, due to its deeply networked distribution, the UFW’s slogan ¡Sí Se Puede! maintains the ethos of its originator, Dolores Huerta. As I will explore further, because the slogan was attached to the bodies represented by the UFW, and the UFW took on the character of its leadership, it can be argued that Huerta’s ethos remains part of the force behind the slogan.

Expanding the conception of place and space to include networks as Edbauer does aids in re-conceptualizing how ethos might be transferred and shared. Specifically, Edbauer argues that moving away from a “site-model” of a city in which the city is defined by its boundaries and fixed elements like a container and toward a circulation or networked model emphasizes and better represents the negotiation of meaning necessary to define, or imagine, a community (11). Although it is not a city, the UFW acts similarly in that it contains a particular group of people—namely, farm laborers and those who support their campaign. In order to both avoid an essentialized definition of the UFW’s constituency and to recognize the heterogeneity of the organization, we are better served by positioning the organization as a network. In this way, the UFW is recognized as an organization of networked individuals who embody cultural and social histories both outside of the UFW and within it. As a network, we might better be able to trace how a slogan like ¡Sí Se Puede!
can simultaneously borrow and leverage *ethos* from Huerta as well as be transplanted and altered for a renewed use.

While the preceding chapters have argued that the body and Huerta’s intersectional identities are often sites of challenge, opportunity, and the in-between spaces, this chapter focuses on the significant and carnal linkage between identity and spoken language in order to emphasize the personally imbued force behind the slogan ¡Sí Se Puede! The work of the previous chapters demonstrates how the body, and specifically the identity categories attached to the body, influenced Huerta’s *ethos* construction—an *ethos* that is most commonly described as exceptional, passionate, and fiery. The adjectives most prevalently used to illustrate Huerta also persist as the force behind the UFW’s official slogan because, as Edbauer points out when drawing on Steven Shaviro, messages cannot be isolated from the ways in which they are distributed (10). Part of this project thus becomes examining how Huerta’s response to the downtrodden leaders circulated through and beyond the movement. In her article, “Survival Stories: Feminist Historiographic Approaches to Chicana Rhetorics of Sterilization Abuse,” Jessica Enoch argues that her methodological moves work “to press the boundaries of the rhetorical situation and investigate the various ways in which these Chicanas’ words were listened to and redeployed” (7). Enoch’s approach offers a process for investigating how Huerta’s words were listened to and redeployed. Redeployment is especially interesting when considering how ¡Sí, sí se puede! continues to be presented by the UFW and how it has been appropriated in more contemporary movements—perhaps most notably in Obama’s 2008 presidential campaign.
¡Si Se Puede! and the Obama Campaign: An Example

Fig. 2. “Rosita” Image from Robert Valadez. Fig. 3. Obama Si Se Puede Image from Obama campaign. Fig. 4. Si Se Puede, Tejas Image from Obama campaign.

With the hope and determination encased in ¡Si Se Puede!, it is not surprising that other communities and individuals fighting for change have taken it up as part of their own campaigns. For example, artist Robert Valadez’s painting “Rosita” (Fig. 2) combines the iconic image of Rosie the Riveter and the “We can do it” propaganda that called on women to join the workforce during WWII with the slogan ¡Si Se Puede! Valadez’s painting acts as a symbolic demonstration of the strength of Chicanas by replacing the White depiction of Rosie with a Mexican fictional pre-feminist archetype, La Adelita (Robert Valadez). More specifically, in Valadez’s painting, the woman wears a traditional Mexican white blouse that sits just off the shoulders and bears a bandolier full of ammunition. Upon closer inspection of the image, there is a subtle outline of a rifle included over her back shoulder, and the butt of the rifle rests close to her hip. However, what is most predominant in the portrait is the phrase ¡Si Se Puede! that spans across the top. Valadez explains his painting thusly:
The image is based on the very famous “Rosie the Riveter” poster from World War II. Here she is combined with another fictional pre-feminist archetype, La Adelita, a character of song and story who represented all the women who participated in the Mexican Revolution of the 1900’s. I paint her here with hopes that she may inspire a new Mexican Revolution. (Robert Valadez)

Valadez’s painting has circulated through social media sites and has also been made available as a poster. While the painting does not directly correlate to a current movement or campaign, it does serve as a symbol of empowerment and clearly reflects the feminist and Chicano movements.

 Adaptation, appropriation, and redeployment of specific texts such as Valadez’s demonstrate the generative and transferable nature of ethos. Applying Carolyn Skinner’s fourth aspect of a feminist model of ethos, which claims that an individual rhetor’s ethos permeates beyond the individual, I argue that because Huerta and the UFW imbued the slogan ¡Sí Se Puede! with qualities and characteristics most associated with the leaders of the movement, others who aim to make change or work for social justice can utilize the slogan and draw on these characteristics. Skinner explains, “The ethos choices an individual rhetor makes influence not only his or her immediate communicative situation but also the broader context and the persuasive options available to other potential speakers and writers” (178). In other words, speakers and writers outside of the initial context have access to the qualities of character that were developed by the rhetors who came before them through shared elements of identification. While Valadez’s portrait is a point of interest, a more widely known redeployment of ¡Sí Se Puede! was used in President Barack Obama’s first run for office (Figs. 3 and 4). It has been well documented that the 2008 Obama campaign ran on a platform of change and hope. The possibility for critical change in areas such as health care and social mobility along with hope for a more equitable
America seemed to be fueled by his campaign slogan, “Yes We Can” (Obama’s English translation of ¡Sí Se Puede!)\textsuperscript{7}. While it is not within the scope of this project to conduct a detailed analysis of how the slogan was deployed and its complex rhetorical effects, it stands as an example of how ethos can be transferred and redeployed.

In effect, because the Obama campaign took up the “Yes We Can/Sí Se Puede” slogan, it situated the campaign and Obama as the tenacious underdog. In order for the phrase first uttered by Huerta to be sought after and relevant, it had to possess the character from the people who propagated it—along with the social and cultural histories attached to them—in order to be effective. Tracing the social propagation of the slogan through interactions between individuals, then, would lead us back to Huerta. Meaning is negotiated mutually between rhetor and audience. As words, clichés, and slogans get redeployed, they are understood through the entities who endorse them and thus maintain the energy and feelings of the person—and eventually people and communities—who perpetuate them. Others who share and leverage similar ideologies, then, represent Huerta’s character. For example, running on a platform of change and social progress, Obama was able to borrow the ethos of Huerta—and by extension Chavez and the UFW who also worked for social progress—and align his struggle for the White House with that of the underdog. Despite Obama not being officially endorsed by the UFW and usurping the slogan, it was generally an effective means to generate excitement and hope for his campaign specifically because of both the connotation it possessed, as well as the network from which it derived.

\textsuperscript{7} For more see author Laurie E. Gries’ \textit{Still Life with Rhetoric: A New Materialist Approach for Visual Rhetorics} (2015).
Just the Beginning

It would seem that after six chapters this project is finished; however, the opposite is true. This project remains at its beginning stages because as demonstrated in this chapter, the effect of ethos on the redeployment of key phrases and actions continues to constrain and liberate the ethos strategy of rhetors. This brief outlining of how Huerta's ¡Sí Se Puede! has been taken up in recent years indicates that there is much more to be discovered. Ultimately, I chose to conclude this project by offering a brief example of what more can be learned about ethos through analyzing the circulation and redeployment of a seemingly disembodied slogan in order to reaffirm the importance of the material experience and physical bodies of rhetors. Even in a preliminary analysis, the examination appears to suggest that its bodily roots are not absent. Thus the continued attention toward the body, especially as it relates to identity, and its effects on rhetorical strategy remains an important and powerful site for discovery.
Bibliography


___. Personal Interview. 27 July 2013.


Nicole Gonzales Howell

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www.nicolegonzaleshowell.com

Education

PhD  Syracuse University
      Composition and Cultural Rhetoric, 2016

  Dissertation:
  “La Pasionaria—Ethos Formation, Dolores Huerta, and the United Farm Workers”

  My dissertation research is an examination of the contributions made to the understanding of ethos construction and rhetorical strategy by the United Farm Workers union inaugural vice-president Dolores Huerta. More specifically, I analyze how the roles embodied by Huerta affect her rhetorical strategies as vice president of the United Farm Workers (UFW) union and how those strategies aid in her ethos construction. In other words, this project looks to Huerta as an example of how people who are often disassociated with power can, and do, make significant societal changes.

  Chair: Lois Agnew | Committee: Rebecca Moore Howard, Gwen Pough

MA  California State University, Fresno
      English, Composition Theory, 2009

BA  University of Southern California
      English Literature and Language, 1996

Research Assistantships

University of San Francisco

Designed to provide experience for soon-to-be faculty, USF’s Ethnic Minority Dissertation Fellowship scholars are expected to complete their dissertation on a diversity related research topic, while teaching one course per semester in the school where they are placed. As a fellow in the Rhetoric and Language department this year, I have been invited to participate as a full time faculty member by not only attending all faculty meetings, but also participating in committee work and service university wide.
**Citation Project** http://citationproject.net  
Contribution Researcher, 2009  
The aim of the Citation Project is to use empirical data in determining sound pedagogical approaches to first year composition and research. As a contributing researcher, I coded student papers for the ways in which they engaged—or not—with their sources by first identifying cited text and then locating the information in the cited source. By working through student work in this fashion it became apparent that often students engaged in patchwriting rather than summary and/or synthesis of the sources being utilized.

**California State University, Fresno** Writing program assessment  
Contribution Researcher, 2008  
Conducted portfolio readings taken from a random sample of English 5A, 5B, and 10 portfolios. Assessed entry and exit level portfolios by providing a rating of 1-6 for five of the current program’s desired learning outcomes. The collected data was analyzed and used to assess the First Year Writing program.

**Publications**


**Conference Presentations * Workshop Facilitation**

Conference Presentations

**Embodiment, Interconnectivity and Public Struggle in Writing Education.**  
Conference on Community Writing: Boulder, CO, October 2015.

**Constructing Ethos: Dolores Huerta and Ethos Formation.**  
Conference on College Composition and Communication: Indianapolis, IN, March 2014.

**Looking Outside the Academy: The Rhetorical Strategies of Dolores Huerta.** Feminisms and Rhetorics Conference: Stanford University, CA, September 2013.

**Recovery and Redefinition: Imagining Dolores Huerta as a WPA.**  
Syracuse University Spring Teaching Conference: April 2013.

**WPA Work: Looking Beyond the Academy.**  
Creating Consustantiation between Teachers and Students Despite Disparate Rhetorics of Embodiment.

Feminisms and Rhetorics Conference: Minnesota State University, October 2011.

Cultivating Work and Life in CCR.
Invited panelist. Syracuse University Writing Program: September 2011

Judgment Days. Invited Reader.
Writers In-Between: Creative Nonfiction from the Writing Program: Syracuse University, May 2011

The Contested Space of Publication. Staging Tactical Interventions on Public Writing.
Conference on College Composition and Communication: Atlanta, GA, April 2011.

State University New York, Council on Writing: Binghamton University, NY, March 2011.

Workshop Facilitation

Assessing Student Writing for the World We Live In
Presenter: Nicole Gonzales Howell
University of San Francisco, Department of Rhetoric and Language March 2015

Assignment Sheet Workshop
Co-Presenters: Cathy Gabor, Nicole Gonzales Howell, Julie Sullivan
University of San Francisco, Department of Rhetoric and Language January 2015

The Citation Project: “Understanding Students’ Use of Sources through Collaborative Research.”
Co-Facilitators: Rebecca Moore Howard (Lead), Sandra Jamieson (Lead), Nicole Gonzales Howell, Missy Watson, Kate Navickas
Georgia International Conference on Information Literacy: Savannah, GA, September 2010.
Academic Employment Summary

2015-Present  Instructor, University of San Francisco
2014-2015  Ethnic Minority Dissertation Fellow, University of San Francisco
Summer 2014  Instructor: Summer Bridge, California State University, Fresno
2013-2014  Editor: Graduate Editing Center, Syracuse University
2011-2013  Consultant: Writing Center, Syracuse University
2009-2013  TA Writing Instructor, Syracuse University
2008-2009  Adjunct Faculty, Fresno City College
2007-2009  TA Writing Instructor, California State University, Fresno
Spring 2007  English Prep Instructor: Fast Forward to Academic Success, Title V, California State University, Fresno

Teaching Experience

University of San Francisco

Written Communication II | RHET 120
Instructor, Spring 2016
In Rhetoric 120 students learn to compose ambitious arguments responding to and incorporating sources of greater number, length, complexity, and variety. Students also (a) develop skills in critical analysis of challenging non-fiction prose from a range of disciplinary perspectives and subjects, with a particular focus on the linguistic and rhetorical strategies employed therein, and (b) conduct extensive research in the process of planning and composing sophisticated texts.

Written Communication I (Intensive) | RHET 110N
Instructor, Fall 2015, Fall 2016
In order to prepare students for the kinds of writing typically required in college-level courses and in civic discourse, RHET 110N teaches the composition of thesis-driven argumentative essays that respond to important social and academic issues. In addition to four units of classroom instruction, students learn and practice the writing process, from idea to final essay (e.g., pre-writing, drafting, revising, and editing) in a 2-hour computer writing lab each week.

Written Communication I | RHET 110
Instructor, Spring 2016
In order to prepare students for the kinds of writing typically required in college-level courses and in civic discourse, RHET 110 teaches the composition of thesis-driven argumentative essays that respond to important social and academic issues.

First Year Seminar/Rhetoric 195 | FYS/RHET 195
Instructor, Fall 2014 “Writing About Human Rights”
First Year Seminars are designed for students that are in their first or second semester at USF and count toward the university Core. In this course students will learn how to conduct academic research, strategies for reading and writing critically, and strategies for revision through the study of Human Rights.

Syracuse University

**Practices of Academic Writing | WRT 105**
Instructor, Fall 2010, Summer 2010 and Fall 2009 “Visual Representation: Race & Ethnicity”
WRT 105 is a required first year writing course that introduces students to the conventions, genres, and practices of academic writing. In this course, I focused on introducing students to academic research and writing through textual and visual analysis of representations of race and ethnicity in popular media.

**Critical Research & Inquiry | WRT 205**
Instructor, Spring 2010 “Textual Representation of Race & Gender”
WRT 205 is a research based sophomore level writing requirement that focuses on research methods, primary and secondary research, library research, and evaluating and working with sources. While much of my WRT 205 course was dedicated to having students work directly with sources we also consistently discussed explicitly the conventions of academic writing and how those conventions affected how they presented their research.

**Technical and Professional Writing | Writing 307:**
Instructor, Fall 2012
WRT 307 is a writing studio focused on professional communication through the study of audience, purpose, and ethics. More specifically, rhetorical problem-solving principles were applied to diverse professional writing tasks and situations by creating a robust portfolio of student work that ranged from a feasibility study to a formal class presentation.

**Advanced Writing Studio: Style | WRT 308**
Instructor, Spring 2012 “Stylistic Choices and Voices”
WRT 308 is a writing studio focused on the rhetorical cannon of style. As an upper division course for writing majors, I designed the class as a space where students could experiment with contemporary writing styles, designs, and editing conventions. Further, students practiced writing in multiple genres for different audiences, purposes, and effects which lead to rich discussions about the rhetorical, aesthetic, social, and political dimensions of style.

**Theory and Strategy for the Teaching of Writing | WRT 670**
CCR Consultant & Instructor, Fall 2010
WRT 670 is a year-long teaching practicum for TAs teaching the lower division writing courses (WRT 105 & 205) for the first time. As the CCR Consultant, I co-facilitated our weekly meetings with a seasoned professional writing instructor lead and was responsible for TA observations and assessment.

California State University, Fresno

Writing/Reading and Information Literacy | Summer Bridge Lecturer, Summer 2014
The Summer Bridge Writing/Reading course is designed to introduce and prepare students for first-year writing at CSU, Fresno (Engl 5A, 5B, and 10), and other college course writing demands. Students were exposed to a variety of reading strategies and offered opportunities to practice writing with many low stakes tasks. This course focused on introducing and practicing reading strategies that are informed, purposeful, and critical.

Accelerated Academic Literacy | English 10 Instructor, 2008-2009
Reading and writing in academic and public genres; special attention to rhetorical decision-making and critical analysis. In this face paced course I guided instruction in reading and responding to texts, while also teaching students how to participate in public and academic conversations via research in primary and secondary sources.

Academic Literacy II | English 5B Instructor, Spring 2008
As part of a “stretch program” English 5B was the second of a two semester writing requirement at CSU, Fresno. In 5B we primarily focused on research, analysis, synthesis, argument, and evaluation of texts. Students were supported in their analysis of the rhetorical qualities of academic writing by participating in portfolio evaluations of their classmates and reflective practices.

Academic Literacy I | English 5A Instructor, Fall 2007
English 5A was the first part of the stretch program at CSU, Fresno. In 5A students were able to practice reading and writing critically. In this course I worked to make explicit the processes of writing, and specifically academic writing, by focusing on reading comprehension; genre analysis; planning, composing, revising writing; and reflection.

Fresno Community College

Writing Skills for College | English 125 Instructor, Spring 2009 and Summer 2009
English 125 is designed to be an introduction to college writing course and emphasizes critical reading skills. In this course students were asked to read academic texts as well
as offer their personal experiences with language and literacy in order to develop their process of writing, revising and finishing short papers.

### Grants

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### Appointments and Service

#### Discipline

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#### University

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<td>Minor in Chicano Latino Studies advisory board member, USF</td>
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<td>2015-Present</td>
<td>CELASA member, USF</td>
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<td>2011-12</td>
<td>Graduate Student Organization (GSO) representative/senator, Syracuse University</td>
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<td>2011-12</td>
<td>GSO Family Issues Committee member, Syracuse University</td>
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<td>Spring 2008</td>
<td>Graduate Committee Representative, California State University, Fresno</td>
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#### Department

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<td>2015-Present</td>
<td>Assessment Committee Member, University of San Francisco</td>
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<td>Integrating Multilingual Students, Committee Member, University of San Francisco</td>
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<td>2010-2013</td>
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2011-2012  Major/Minor Committee member, Syracuse University
2011-2012  Associate Search Committee member, Syracuse University
Fall 2009  Founding member of CCR Graduate Circle, Syracuse University
Spring 2008  Students of English Studies Association (SESA) In-service Coordinator, California State University, Fresno
Spring 2008  Focus group participant, California State University, Fresno

Professional Affiliations

Coalition of Women Scholars in the History of Rhetoric and Composition (CWSHRC)

Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC)
  - CCCC Latino Caucus

National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)

Rhetoric Society of America (RSA)