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Collective Identity and Feminist Rhetorics:
19th-Century Relief Society Leaders' Use of Ethos-Based Identities as a
Pathetic Appeal to the Women
of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints

by

Tiffany Gray

Under the Direction of Lynee Lewis Gaillet, PhD

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

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ABSTRACT

Latter-day Saint women have led the Relief Society by implementing a rhetorical practice that seeks to unite the women of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. 19th-century Relief Society leaders began a rhetorical pattern of persuasion by utilizing ethos-based rhetorics found in their use of the collective identity 'Sister' and feminist identity of 'Charity Work.' As exemplified by commemorative acts of remembrance of the Relief Society's March 17th Birthday and the perpetuated use of the terms established by the first leaders of the Relief Society, Latter-day Saint women continue to invoke pathos as a relationship between speaker and audience over time and across generations, demonstrating not only a form of pathetic appeal intended to unite the women of the Latter-day Saint faith, but also denotes a rhetorical process of pathos characteristic of religious women's rhetoric and worthy of inclusion in the rhetorical canon.

INDEX WORDS: Ethos, Pathos, Identity, Rhetoric, Religious women, Relief Society

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2023

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Pathetical Appeal to the Women
of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints

by

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May 2023

DEDICATION

For my husband, children, and family. Thank you for never letting me give up and encouraging me to keep moving forward.

And, for all the Latter-day Saint women leaders who have labored to make the Relief Society a place of learning, growth, and unity for the women of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Thank you for letting me be a part of this journey.

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INTRODUCTION

“[The Relief Society’s] first duty is to look after and relieve the wants of the poor, to accomplish which committees are appointed to visit each family residing in their respective districts, at least, once every month, and report to the presiding officers. The cultivation of the members of the Society (which is composed of aged and middle-aged women) physically, mentally, morally, and spiritually, is another prominent feature of the institution, which has proved very beneficial.”
(Sketch of My Life 1)

-Eliza R. Snow, 2nd General Relief Society President, 1885

“Relief Society can help us turn away from the world, for its express purpose is to help sisters and their families come unto Christ... We are not women of the world. We are women of God... As sisters of Relief Society, we belong to the most significant community of women on this side of the veil.” (“We are Women of God”)

- Sheri Dew, Former 2nd Counselor in the General Relief Society Presidency, 1999

In 1842, the women of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints organized the Relief Society, an independent and unique women’s organization that provided both a literal and metaphorical space for the women members of the Church to practice their faith. With the assistance and support of their prophetic leader, Joseph Smith, the women sought to organize themselves and assist in the work of the Church by providing meaningful service from their area of influence; in other words, they desired to have a more significant purpose in contributing to building up Zion. Since then, the Relief Society has grown into a worldwide organization with Relief Societies originating in every congregation of the Latter-day Saint Church around the world. As an integral part of the Latter-day Saint faith and operating as the official auxiliary within the Latter-day Saint community for all women members over the age of 18, the Relief Society continues to support the efforts established by their 19th-century predecessors of uniting the women of the Church in their faith and helping them find meaningful ways to support the work of God on the earth.

For women members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the Relief Society provides opportunities for women of the Church to unite and find connection, support, and spiritual edification among all the women of the faith. As the mission statement reads, the Relief Society's purpose helps the women members "increase faith in Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ and His Atonement; Strengthen individuals, families, and homes through ordinances and covenants; and Work in unity to help those in need" (*Daughters in My Kingdom* 2017). From the beginning of the organization, Relief Society leaders have consistently spoken about the importance of unity within the organization and among the women of the Church by addressing the women of the church from the pulpit, through newspaper and magazine articles, and, more recently, through podcasts and social media posts. As a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and currently serving as a local Relief Society President in the Middle Georgia area, I have also both experienced and participated in the efforts of Relief Society leaders to rhetorically unite the women of the Church, oftentimes spending my efforts on trying to unite the women of the congregation by fostering a sense of belonging. However, I have found that encouraging a sense of belonging presents a struggle as not all the sisters feel like they 'fit in' with the other women, nor do they always find unity in the purpose of Relief Society. Given the Latter-day Saint beliefs of agency, where agency is an individual's ability to choose for themselves whether to follow God or not, and can do so "according to the dictates of [their] own conscience,"¹ women of the Relief Society also sometimes struggle to identify with one another as their varying lived experiences do not always coalesce with the body of women coming together for the religious purpose of supporting one another in their faith (Article of Faith 11). Therefore, instead of engaging in a single-pronged approach of uniting the women of the Church

¹ See [Agency and Accountability \(churchofjesuschrist.org\)](http://churchofjesuschrist.org) more information about the Latter-day Saint perspective on Agency

under a single identity, Relief Society leaders continuously engage in utilizing multiple ethos-based identity rhetorics to help the women of the Church find a way to connect with one another.

Using multiple identity rhetorics to help unite a group of individuals together is not unique to the leaders of the Relief Society or the Latter-day Saint community. Kristie Fleckenstein writes in “Aesthetic Daughter and Civic Mother: Collective Identity Rhetorics of the New Negro Woman,” about how late 19th-century African American leaders presented two competing collective identities of ‘Aesthetic Daughter’ and ‘Civic Mother’ as the New Negro Woman of the black public sphere. As Fleckenstein notes, while the black public sphere had “the resources to form a collective identity out of multiple voices,” resulting in the potential of generating multiple, but different, unifying identities for women of the African American community, it “also [had] the resources to fracture that identity,” and thus create points of division among African American women (251). However, as Fleckenstein indicates, the ethos-based identity of the New Negro Woman does not signify only one of the collective identities employed as more correct than the other, but instead represents “the necessary play of multiple identities, multiple sites of action, and multiple forms of agency” that 19th-century African American women needed to have available, as not all African American women viewed their position from the same position. Not only does Fleckenstein demonstrate the relationship between leaders and community members in establishing community identities, but she also implies that community identities must account for the multiple, intersectional points of relationality that community members utilize to function broadly within the identity/identities they associate with. Therefore, even though significant racial, historical, and contextual differences exist between African American women from the 19th-century Black community and Latter-day Saint women of the same era, Fleckenstein’s essay offers a template by which to

examine the use of multiple ethos-based identity rhetorics to unite women from a specific community together and still attempt to account for each woman's multi-layered sense of self.

For Latter-day Saint women, the ability to unite the women of the Church resides in the use of multiple identity rhetorics that create different but unifying spaces for the women of the Church to inhabit, and then perpetuate those established rhetorical patterns over time and across generations in the form of pathetic appeal. As evident from the quotes above by Eliza R. Snow and Sheri Dew, as well as in conjunction with the Relief Society Mission Statement, Relief Society leaders throughout the organization's existence have continuously attempted to engage in rhetorical and dialect exchanges, through various mediums, to teach and instruct the women of the Latter-day Saint faith about their role and mission as women in the Church. While the organization, membership, and application of the Relief Society has evolved over time to accommodate for the growth of the Church into a worldwide religion, the female leaders of the Relief Society continue to promote two parallel ethos-based identity rhetorics as they attempt to unify its female members. Under the collective identity rhetoric of 'Sister,' Relief Society leaders invoke the use of a gender-normative term that associates women both as siblings to one another and as daughters of God. Further, Relief Society leaders employ the feminist identity rhetoric of 'Charity Work' as a type of affinity-based relationality that focuses on uniting the women of the Church with a common focus on helping others. To further support these two established rhetorical practices, Relief Society leaders over time not only continue to preserve the use of their ethos-based identity rhetorics, but also encourage current female members to study the words and examples of their foremothers through commemorative acts of remembrance to help the women of the Church establish themselves in their faith today. In doing so, leaders of the Relief Society perpetuate the Society's rhetorical practice of pathetic appeal, where pathos

exemplifies the longevity and influence of the words, identities, and rhetoric set forth by their 19th-century predecessors.

Latter-day Saint women, like many religious women who maintain their identity by operating within the parameters of their patriarch-centric faith, often suffer marginalization within rhetorical studies as their rhetorical practices do not mirror the established standard for including women in canon of rhetoric. Rather than seek agency by standing against the male dominated hierarchy of their faith, religious women, like Latter-day Saint women, often seek access to authority by operating from the area of influence granted them within their faiths. (See Hogg's article "Including Conservative Women's Rhetorics in an "Ethics of Hope and Care" (2015); Royster and Gesa's *Feminist Rhetorical Practices: New Horizons for Rhetoric, Composition, and Literacy Studies* (2012) for more information on conservative women in rhetoric studies). However, of 19th-century Latter-day Saint women, Anne Ruggles Gere shares that these early women of the Church "represent an unusual type of feminism because they both resisted and accepted gendered roles. In the secular context they took up positions and activities that led them to demand rights for women...[and] at the same time...these women did not challenge the church's patriarchal structure" (4). Therefore, for the purposes of this thesis, my objective is to present the rhetorical practices of Latter-day Saint women as a paradigm of religious women whose identity is both in tandem with and supported by their religious beliefs, an argument that both supports and expands upon Gere's assertions. By examining 19th-century Latter-day Saint women's use of collective identity and feminist rhetorics within the space of the Relief Society, I further establish that Relief Society leaders maintain a pattern of pathetic appeal to Latter-day Saint women through commemorative acts of remembrance as an effort to unite the women of the Church over time and across generations. In demonstrating that women of faith

who do not necessarily seek agency by standing against a dominate power structure and instead find opportunity to operate from their area of influence, I echo the growing call by rhetoric scholars to study the rhetorical practices of all women from their respective locations of authority and identity as these spaces signify where women's rhetoric mostly resides.

Methodologies

The structure of my thesis builds upon the work and examples found in *Nineteenth-Century American Activist Rhetorics*, edited by Patricia Bizzell and Lisa Zimmereli. As the introduction indicates, Bizzell and Zimmereli present essays that “center around the foundational issues and moments of the nineteenth century and how they still manifest themselves today” (1). As an emerging scholar, I see Bizzell and Zimmereli's objective of bringing the past to the present by examining 19th-century activist rhetorical practices still employed today as an accessible way for me to situate my own research interests into the broader academic conversations of women and rhetoric. While my approach does not examine activist rhetoric practices of Latter-day Saint women, but instead attempts to look at how Latter-day Saint women have engaged in a rhetorical practice that is unique and innate to their work in the Relief Society, I find Bizzell and Zimmereli's approach not only applicable, but one that allows me to present the long-lasting effects of early Latter-day Saint women on the current rhetorical practices of Latter-day Saint women leaders regarding the woman identity within the faith.

Using a historical archival analysis of primary source material, my methodology for studying 19th-century Latter-day Saint women leaders' rhetorical practices includes examining Relief Society leaders' use of the ethos-based identities of “charity work” and “sister.” While my methodology aligns with aspects of archival studies, an effort that Lynee Lewis Gaillet describes

as recovery work that views “primary sources for creating knowledge rather than mere storehouses for finding what is already known,” my work also takes a feminist approach in trying to (un/dis/re)cover the lost, missing, or marginalized voices of religious and conservative women (298). Hui Wu notes that “feminist methodology of rhetorical history does not refer to an innocent research activity for research’s sake, but rather an intentionally radical effort to exert transformative power over research methods” (133). Therefore, while my methodology uses an archival approach as I am looking at Latter-day Saint women’s archives owned and produced by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to examine the ethos identities of ‘Charity Work’ and ‘Sister,’ I apply a feminist lens in my examination of these archives to present lost or under studied women from the Latter-day Saint faith.

Using primary source materials from various repositories and genres, I share the words of 19th-century Latter-day Saint women leaders beginning with the implementation of the Relief Society in 1842, and then moving forward to the reinstatement of the Relief Society in the Salt Lake Valley in 1868 and beyond. The Latter-day Saint Church recently created a digital archive for much of their source material. Currently, they house thousands of documents in their Church History Department and Library, while publishing many compilations under the title of *The Church Historian’s Press*, with a coordinating website by the same title. The archives include special interest collections, such as the *Joseph Smith Papers* (a collection of writings and accounts by or about Joseph Smith), and *The First Fifty Years of Relief Society* (a collection of women’s writings from the first fifty years of the Relief Society). Likewise, other special collections exist within the Church History Department, with work continuing to digitize much of the Church’s archival material. Brigham Young University and the University of Utah, both universities with strong affiliations to the Latter-day Saint Church, also house several Latter-day

Saint Church related collections, including digital archives of *Deseret News* and the *Women's Exponent*.

As I demonstrate in the following chapters from the archives of 19th-century Latter-day Saint women's discourses, Relief Society meeting notes, personal journals, and diaries, as well as scriptures and newspaper entries written by and about Latter-day Saint women, 19th-century Latter-day Saint women provide a strong example of rhetorical practice worthy of inclusion in the study and history of women in rhetoric. By examining 19th-century Latter-day Saint women leaders' use of the ethos-based identities of 'Charity Work' and 'Sister' in conjunction with the commemorative acts of remembrance of the Relief Society's March 17th birthday within the Relief Society as unique rhetorical ethe to help unify the women of the Church in their faith, I show how the rhetorical practices established by the early women of the Church extends to current practices today. Even as the Church has expanded to include worldwide membership, Latter-day Saint women leaders continue to utilize patterns of rhetorical engagement implemented by their 19th-century predecessors. In doing so, they engage in a form of pathetic appeal that demonstrates how rhetorical expressions and ethe established in the moment maintain relevance through reiteration and continuous use over time and across generations. Thus, by examining the rhetorical practices of Latter-day Saint women leaders over time, I show that the pervading themes of charity work and sisterhood from 19th-century leaders ties the current Latter-day Saint woman identity back to her ancestors, creating unified ethe that are as much ecological in nature as they are directly related to the Latter-day Saint beliefs of one's eternal identity. As such, I present an avenue for which scholars can look at expanding their own rhetorical analysis of women's use of pathos as found in the longevity of reception of women's pathetic appeals to their audience, indicating a unique woman form of rhetorical practice.

Regarding terminology, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has indicated a preferred moniker when identifying the Church and its members. Therefore, when appropriate the term ‘Latter-day Saint’ is used in place of the colloquial terms of “Mormon” or “Mormonism” to align with terminology used within the Latter-day Saint Church community.² Similarly, for purposes of clarity, the term ‘Relief Society’ is representative of both the first iteration of the organization in 1842, originally called the Female Relief Society, as well as its truncated title of Relief Society that became prevalent in 1872 when Eliza R. Snow, 2nd General Relief Society President, proposed dropping the ‘Female’ portion of the title.³

Chapter Layouts

By having a set-apart space in the Relief Society to engage in dialectic, religious discourse, 19th-century Latter-day Saint women found a unique opportunity to develop and implement a rhetorical practice all their own. As such, chapter one of my thesis establishes the scholarship regarding women in rhetorical studies and the methodologies often employed for including women in the canon. Further, I explain the need to expand the women’s rhetorical canon to include women who implement religious-centric ethe and the use of ethos-based identities in relationship to feminist and collective identity rhetorics. Additionally, this chapter provides a brief exploration of current scholarship on Latter-day Saint women, explaining why Latter-day Saint women deserve further academic consideration, while also offering a brief historical overview of the 19th-century Relief Society from its institution on March 17, 1842, to its reinstitution in 1868.

² See the Church’s Style Guide reference for further guidance on use of naming the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. *Style Guide – The Name of the Church*: <https://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/style-guide>.

³ See *Woman’s Exponent* 1872-10-15, vol 1, n10, pg. 74 for the news story explaining this proposed course of action. <https://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/WomansExp/id/2060/rec/10>

Chapters two and three examine how 19th-century Relief Society leaders, at both the local and general level, use their position of authority to try and unite the women of the church by invoking two ethos-based identity rhetorics. Chapter two examines the collective identity invocation of the term “sister” by Latter-day Saint women leaders as they attempt to unite the women of the faith under a gender normative identity, while also exploring the limitations of collective identity rhetoric when considering the intersectional identities of the individuals within a group or community. Chapter three addresses Latter-day Saint women’s use of the feminist, affinity-based ethos of “charity work” to unite the women of the faith through a feminist rhetorical bond focused on supporting social and community causes. By examining 19th-century Latter-day Saint women’s words as found in the written records of 19th-century Relief Society archives, including newspaper articles in the *Deseret News*, notes from the *Nauvoo Relief Society Meeting Minutes*, and compilations of discourses found in *At the Pulpit* and *The First Fifty Years of the Relief Society*, I show how 19th-century women leaders of the Church implemented a rhetorical practice of both collective identity and feminist rhetorics that are still utilized by Relief Society leaders today as part of the overall effort to unite the women of the faith.

Lastly, chapter four addresses the role of pathos in an ethos-based methodology, particularly as displayed through commemorative acts of remembrance. Using “Chapter 7: Time, Place, and Mormon Sense of Self” by Douglas Davies from Simon Coleman and Peter Collins’ *Religion, Identity and Change: Perspectives on Global Transformations* (2017), I explore the relationship between establishing a past connection with a current audience. Looking particularly at Latter-day Saint women’s commemorative celebrations of the Relief Society’s March 17th Birthday, I demonstrate that pathos works as an observable emotional response that can operate as a product of study over time and across generations. By examining how Latter-day Saint

women leaders today unite the women of the Church through the commemorative act of celebrating the Relief Society birthday, I show how women's pathetic appeals are best assessed in relationship to their longevity in application and study, thus providing an area of further consideration for academics and interested scholars in women's rhetoric.

By way of conclusion, I offer an invitation for scholars to consider studying religious women, like Latter-day Saint women, from the sphere of influence in which they operate. By demonstrating that Latter-day Saint women's rhetorical practices are a form of pathetic appeal that extends over time and across generations, I suggest further research opportunities regarding Latter-day Saint women, their rhetorical practices, and their broader connection to religious women's rhetorical engagement as a method for scholars to reconsider whose rhetoric counts and what counts as rhetoric regarding religious women's inclusion in rhetorical studies.

CHAPTER 1: ORIENTING WOMEN IN RHETORIC

In 1842, Joseph Smith declared: “The organisation of the Church of Christ was never perfect until the women were organised” (*The First Fifty Years of Relief Society* 495). At the time of this statement, the women of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints sought to organize into a women’s society so that they could help support the work of the Church. As prophet and patriarch leader of the Church, Joseph Smith operated as the mouthpiece of God, and therefore his support of the women to organize indicates not only his regard for the women of the Church, but also their divine right to form a society and have their own place within the faith.

Over the course of the history of the Church, other male leaders of the faith have also supported the rights, roles, and abilities of the women of the Church. In 1942, John A Widtsoe, a former member of the apostleship of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, addressed the importance of equality between men and women in the Church where “the place of woman in the Church is to walk beside the man, not in front of him nor behind him. In the Church there is full equality between man and woman. The gospel, which is the only concern of the Church, was devised by the Lord for men and women alike” (qtd in Kimball “The Role of Righteous Women”). Similarly, Russell M. Nelson, 17th Prophet of the Church, spoke about the important influence women are on the world by stating that “it would be impossible to measure the influence that...women have, not only on families but also on the Lord’s Church, as wives, mothers, and grandmothers; as sisters and aunts; as teachers and leaders; and especially as exemplars and devout defenders of the faith” (“A Plea to My Sisters”). As these quotes show, the male leaders of the patriarch-based faith of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

both value the place of women in the Church and rhetorically place them as needed, necessary, and equal.

As religious women, Latter-day Saint women help form part of the community of women who navigate their existence within the bounds of their patriarch-centric faith. In academia, however, these types of women often themselves relegated to a lesser position in academic study, as academic scholarship continues to maintain a hesitancy in examining women it views as submissive and oppressed. Yet, the support and encouragement that Latter-day Saint women continue to receive from their male leaders to speak and to speak from a position of authority affords them access to power within the bounds of their faith, demonstrating their significant contribution to the Church as women members. Further, the significance of these women accessing that right to speak and gaining the support of their prophetic leaders to do so, suggests that, at the very least, Latter-day Saint women, and at most, all religious women, are granted some right to speak from a position of authority all their own. Therefore, these types of women offer academics a unique woman figure to study as many women of faith speak from their identity as religious women who support the patriarch structures of their faith. Given the propensity of scholarship to negate the rhetorical impact of women generally, women's rhetoric scholars have continued to push the limits of rhetorical study to situate women in the canon; but even women's rhetoric academics struggle to include the work of religious women when that rhetoric is not built on the foundations of activism. Thus, by focusing on the nuanced ways in which women of faith do speak and by considering the religious identities these women operate in when they speak, scholars can uncover a rich and engaging rhetorical practice characteristic of religious women and one worthy of further academic consideration.

Making Space for Women in Rhetoric

That women have suffered exclusion from the study of rhetoric is a known fact among rhetoric scholars. Academics, such as Andrea Lunsford, Cheryl Glenn, Carol Mattingly, Charlotte Hogg, and Letizia Guglielmo, have written about and discussed methodologies that not only express a pathway to include women in discourses regarding rhetorical practices, but also have identified unique, and very woman specific, forms of rhetorical engagement that support the inclusion of women in rhetorical history. In *Reclaiming Rhetorica*, Lunsford explains that the essays about women's rhetoric in the collection "do not attempt to redefine a "new" rhetoric but rather to interrupt the seamless narrative usually told about the rhetorical tradition," - a tradition that "has been almost exclusively male not because women were not practicing rhetoric...but because the tradition has never recognized the forms, strategies, and goals used by women as "rhetorical" (6). While Lunsford suggests that she and the essays in *Reclaiming Rhetorica* are not seeking to redefine a "new" rhetoric, her call for the inclusion of women in the study of rhetoric due to its male centric tradition does assert that rhetoric scholars need to look beyond traditional modes of rhetorical study to find women's forms of rhetorical practice.

Echoing Lunsford's call to look past conventional rhetorical studies, Cheryl Glenn encourages scholars to look to emerging theories and methodologies as a potential pathway to read women into the history and canon of rhetoric. By asking scholars to consider 'Who drew the map?' of what and who counts as having and utilizing a rhetorical practice, Glenn teaches that maps are subjective to the drawer, as "no one map can ever tell the truth," because each map only offers a perspective of history, not all available perspectives (65). Therefore, to read in 'new,' alternative, or different voices into the rhetorical canon, Glenn argues that scholars must look to methodologies that allow space to consider voices and examples of rhetorical practice

that have suffered silence, erasure, and/or marginalization. Utilizing the methodologies of historiography, feminism, and gender studies to examine “not only a new history of women but also a new rhetorical history,” one that is more inclusive of missing voices, Glenn asserts that feminist rhetoricians revitalize “rhetorical theory by shaking the conceptual foundations for rhetorical study itself... [as] feminist historiography is performative – it *does* something” (69). As Glenn indicates, women’s rhetoric scholars *perform* the work of examining other, non-traditional, non-male forms of rhetoric when they broaden the rhetorical territory of what counts as rhetoric by using methodologies that allow them to do so. Harkening back to Judith Butler’s landmark work in *Gender Trouble* where “identity is performatively constituted,” Glenn’s feminist notions, when applied to the study of rhetoric, offers the opportunity to not only read women into the history of rhetoric, but also to do so on their own terms (25).

However, Glenn notes that we cannot just laundry list women as “additive histories” to rhetoric; their words and acts must mean something (69). For many scholars, this call to find women in rhetoric has resulted in a continued focus on activist women – women who represent feminist ideologies of standing against hegemonic powers by engaging in rhetorical acts that attempt to parallel the work of men as a demonstration of equality in rhetorical ability. While this approach allows for the inclusion of some women in the history of rhetoric, the practice remains exclusionary to a degree because it fails to acknowledge the voices of women who fail to meet the threshold of traditional feminist standards. According to Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, part of the problem for feminist rhetorical scholars in looking past activist type woman figures has more to do with the fact that “[w]ell-behaved woman seldom make history” because women who “[play] by the rules, even the unspoken rules, in a person’s community,” lack acknowledgement for their place in society (198). Instead, as Ulrich suggests, ‘well-behaved women’ end up overlooked in

both the archive and in academic consideration, resulting in more dominate women figures who overtly and publicly stand for or against the status quo serving as the exemplars of women's rhetorical ability and practice. In other words, 'well-behaved women' often go unnoticed because scholars and society fail to recognize these women and their modes of rhetoric as rhetorical. Therefore, the fight for the inclusion of women in the history of rhetoric requires scholars to consider not only which women to include, but what counts as their mode of rhetorical practice as well.

From the foundations laid by Lunsford and Glenn on finding both new examples and new methodologies for women's rhetoric, women's rhetorical scholars further call for a re-examination of various forms of rhetoric that have suffered marginalization in preference of other types of rhetorical study. To justify expanding rhetoric to include alternative modes of rhetorical example, Christine Sutherland recounts John Tinkler's distinction between different modes of rhetorical practice set forth by Cicero, where the dominate and heavily favored rhetoric of "*contentio*, which is concerned with judicial rhetoric," has overshadowed the less studied "*sermo*...[which] has to do with private or semi-public unofficial discourse" (10-11). Given that the rhetorical mode of *sermo* considers private discourse often found in letters, diaries, and social exchanges – forms of rhetoric better associated with women's rhetorical practices – Sutherland asserts that this underutilized form of rhetoric allows for "the inclusion of women's discourse" as it "brings the tradition back to its own roots, rather than adding something new and alien" (11). Thus, by adding Sutherland's approach of grounding women's rhetoric in historical precedents to Lunsford and Glenn's call to examine emerging theories of reconsidering established boundaries of rhetorical practices, scholars can now consider the different genres of rhetorical engagement

that women traditionally utilize, particularly the modes often overlooked in preference of other, more dominate forms.

Making Space for Conservative and Religious Women in Rhetoric

Given that women's place in society has traditionally resided in the private sphere, *sermo* provides an opportunity to study women's rhetoric both in the place and manner historically available to them. Letter writing, diaries, discourses in the parlor, at the pulpit, and clothing attire choices represent all examples of a *sermo* rhetorical practice and serve as areas most prevalent and expert to women. Carol Mattingly states that, "As we have learned more about women and come to appreciate a larger and more diverse group of rhetors, we are also learning to think in less dichotomous ways and to recognize that the evidence traditionally used to value rhetors simply does not always apply to women" (105). Hence, Mattingly's assertion encourages scholars to use non-conventional sites and modes of rhetorical display that better demonstrates women's available forms of rhetorical ability. In doing so, she not only provides a way to read women into the canon, but also a way of identifying rhetorical practices representative of distinctively woman rhetorical genres.

While progress continues to occur in (un/dis/re)covering the voices of women often left out of the archives of rhetoric, some women's rhetoric scholars further call for a broader examination of the probative value of rhetorical display by all women, including those from diverse backgrounds. Given that the woman rhetorical experience comes in many different intersectional forms, scholars, such as Carol Mattingly, Lisa Shaver, and Charlotte Hogg, ask for an expansion of women's rhetoric to include conservative and religious women, while scholars like Jaclyn Jones Royster, Gloria Anzaldua, and Hui Wu call for more study on women of color and from different socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds. Despite these calls for greater

inclusion of women voices in the canon of rhetoric, however, Charlotte Hogg notes that, regarding conservative and religious women, scholars persist in maintaining the focus of limiting women's rhetorical study to feminist methodologies and theories that result in exclusionary practices, demonstrating that the field of rhetoric and composition retains:

...a continued reluctance to engage conservative women who fall outside our feminist framework...[where] amid smart calls for and descriptions of expansiveness, binary constructions of women as either feminist or not persist, perpetuating the practices we strive to dismantle and restricting possibilities for meaning making. (393)

While Hogg's sentiments extend to women of color and diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, her statement ultimately suggests that scholars' furtherance of employing the woman feminist figure as the standard voice of women's rhetoric establishes a pattern of women's rhetorical study that struggles to move beyond the level of activist women who only represent one style of woman and one mode of rhetorical exigence. Therefore, to overcome the limitations that feminist methodologies present to women's rhetoric, scholars need to not only look to widen the boundaries of rhetoric, but also of feminism as well.

Reconsidering Women's Ethos-Based Identities

To expand feminism with a broader focus on the woman figure, many scholars now attach an ethos-based identity to their feminist readings. Stemming back to Butler's examination of gender as performative, where "gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a *stylized repetition of acts*," Butler provides a foundation for how women's rhetoric scholars can move feminist rhetorical studies beyond acts by activist women only and, instead, find opportunity to examine women's rhetorical acts in the places and spaces where women's presence historically exists (179). Expanding upon Butler's notion, Kathleen

Ryan, Nancy Myers, and Rebecca Jones petition for a rethinking of ethos by examining rhetorical acts through a feminist ecological approach. As Ryan, Myers, and Jones explain, a feminist ecological model examines the places, embodiments, and various modalities of women's rhetorical acts as potential locations of rhetorical study (2). They offer that:

Feminist ecological ethe open up new ways of envisioning ethos to acknowledge the multiple, nonlinear relations operating among rhetors, audiences, things, and contexts" in which marginalized persons, communities, and rhetorical practices can now find relevance and purpose in the rhetorical tradition. (3)

For women rhetorical subjects, this approach allows for the examination of their rhetorical acts from an ethos-based methodology that relates the various ethe women portray, an allowance that expands feminist rhetorical studies to include more women's rhetorical acts found in the various places and spaces she traditionally inhabits or navigates.

The process of establishing a woman rhetor's ethos requires scholars to consider the several avenues of identity that women occupy, as well as to account for past assigned ethe set forth from community memory or prior scholastic analysis. Simon Coleman and Peter Collins establish that identity "is constructed...through expressions of 'difference'" where "ethnic, national and many religious identities help define 'I' by placing it against a backdrop of 'we' as well as 'they'" (2). For rhetoric scholars, understanding how individuals and communities construct identity lays the foundation to understanding not only how an individual perceives their own ethos, but also how communities and scholars interpret and remember them. In relating the feminist approach of remembrance through collection and recollection, Letizia Guglielmo sets the premise for examining women's ethos according to where and how they speak by exploring the relationship between the speaker and her audience, where the audience is both the

community in which she originates or is associated with and the reader/scholar seeking to ‘remember’ her. Guglielmo notes “[as] a feminist rhetorical act, *re-collecting* creates opportunities to expand the process of recovering women’s work by also looking for opportunities to disrupt or destabilize established memories created by prior acts of recollection and public remembrance” (3-4). Thus, through the process of recollection and *re-collecting*, Guglielmo establishes that memory impacts ethos when accounting for community reception of woman’s efforts to assert autonomy over her own identity.

Feminism in relationship to ethos provides a useful lens to examine women’s modes of rhetorical practice. In tandem with feminism, both Guglielmo and Ryan, Myers, and Jones explore the dynamic relationship between ethos and community, where the acts of the woman rhetor inherently relates to her perceived role within society. By exploring the relationship between memory and remembrance, Guglielmo indicates that some collective identity ethos ascribed to marginalized groups are superficially assigned, either individually or collectively, due to acts of remembering where “memories created through the act of recollection and may become, in turn, part of public memory” at which point “a figure’s reputation may become fixed by historical record” (5). Similarly, just as prior community-assigned identities or relational ethos affect remembering women’s work, so does prior scholarly interpretation of women. Such is the case in my research on the clothing styles of 19th-century disreputable women in relationship to the Flash Dress fashion style. In examining non-standard forms of rhetoric, including police records and court documents, Melissa Ballanta and Alana Piper examine how scholars unintentionally misappropriated an ethos on lower-class women. They write:

[Because] disreputable women in flash dress have attracted little from historians...Historians of prostitution tend to refer only briefly to sex workers’ sartorial

style... Problematically, too, the small number who do investigate the dress practices of working-class women have tended to do so as part of a search for advance evidence of the 1920's 'Modern Girl. (58)

As Ballanta and Piper explain, examples of 19th-century low-class women not only suffered from missing in historical investigation, but they also consistently experienced appropriation as precursors to the 'Modern Girl' because of their Flash Style dress. As a counter to the pre-'Modern Girl' narrative, though, Ballanta and Piper detail that most of the 19th-century disreputable women – such as thieves, prostitutes, and factory girls - created their fashion style out of whatever they could get their hands on, or, “To put this another way: flash women made eclecticism into an aesthetic virtue out of necessity” (63). For Ballanta and Piper, the call to recognize the misappropriation of 19th-century disreputable women as setting the stage for modernity, requests that scholars look even further past Glenn's boundaries of what counts as rhetoric and Sutherland's call to consider different forms of rhetoric, to also include records like police files and court documents, where information regarding understudied populations and peoples more likely reside. Additionally, Ballanta and Piper encourage scholars to consider their own perspective and position that they bring to their research to avoid misappropriation of an (un/dis/re)covered voice to help overcome the chance of misremembering or under-establishing a woman rhetor's ethos.

When viewed from this light, the study of ethos reaches beyond the character identity of the individual, and instead, directs attention to the lasting effects of collective identity ethos, or an ethos that several women find themselves associated with – whether by choice or consequence. Ryan, Myers, and Jones emphasize that the idea of “ethos dwells not just at specific locations but also in the speaker and audience relationship” where, as Craig R. Smith

maintains, “determining the audience’s beliefs is the key to successful adaptation in terms of building credibility. In this way ethos dwells not only in the speaker...but also in the audience” (qtd. in *Rethinking Ethos*, 7). Thus, the relationship between woman(en) speaker(s) and her/ their audience plays an integral part in not only establishing an ethos or ethe from positions of identity, either individually or collectively, but also in developing the speaker(s) pathetic appeal of persuading the audience to accept the desired ethos-based identity they are asserting.

As scholars seek to expand rhetorical study boundaries to include non-dominate modes of rhetoric, such as *sermo*, they can more aptly (un/dis/re)cover women’s works that suffer from the effects of marginalization, silence, or erasure. Similarly, through an ethos-based framework centered on identity as it relates to feminist and collective identity rhetorics, scholars now have multiple avenues for examining the many ‘ethe’ that women inhabit. Finally, in studying the reaction to or perpetuation of women’s ethos as found in community responses of remembering and scholars’ efforts of collecting and re-collecting, scholars can better assess the pathetic appeals of women rhetors both in their given context and overtime. By laying the foundation of how scholars have endeavored to include women’s voices in the canon of rhetoric, I am establishing the scaffolding for both how and why Latter-day Saint women not only belong in women’s rhetorical studies, but also by what means and abilities they demonstrate their rhetorical skill.

Current State of Latter-day Saint Women’s Scholarship

While current scholarship from various academic veins on Latter-day Saint women has grown significantly in the last twenty years, like many religious, well-behaved women, Latter-day Saint women have suffered some level of distance in feminist academic discourse in part due to their religious identity and generally favorable approach in maintaining the patriarch traditions

of their faith.⁴ And, despite recent calls from previously explored scholars to expand rhetorical studies to include women “who may not seek to empower themselves or others yet hold rhetorical sway,” a tendency persists to study and present examples of Latter-day Saint women primarily from the perspective of Western feminist ideologies (Hogg 397). In addressing gender dynamics within the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints from a Women’s Studies approach, Joanna Brooks, Rachel Hunt Steenblik, and Hannah Wheelwright edited *Mormon Feminism: Essential Writings* (2016), a compilation of essays about feminist thought in the Mormon tradition since the 1970’s, which they define as “core Mormon feminist writings,” written by Mormon feminists who attempt to question, solicit change and equality, or challenge the traditional patriarchy organization of the Church (1). While the focus of their compilation presents Mormon Feminists over the last fifty years, Brooks, Steenblik, and Wheelwright focus on a specific group of women from within the Latter-day Saint faith that offers a singular rendering of Latter-day Saint women. In this same academic vein, and from a rhetoric and composition perspective, Tiffaney Kinney’s *Legitimization of Mormon Feminist Rhetors: A Pan Historical Analysis* (2021), explores the rhetorical approaches of four Latter-day Saint feminists over the history of the Church who embraced feminist ideologies or engaged in activist movements against the Church’s doctrines, only to find themselves either released from their leadership positions in the Church or excommunicated from the faith entirely. While both of these works represent necessary research in their respective academic fields, as both bring forward the voices of women who seek equality while attempting to navigate their faith, Brooks, Steenblik, and Wheelwright’s compilation as well as Kinney’s monograph lean heavily on

⁴ See Scribner’s *Epideictic Rhetoric and the Formation of Collective Identity: Nineteenth-Century Mormon Women in Praise of Polygamy* (1998); McDannell’s *Sister Saints* (2018); Bradley’s *Pedestals and Podiums* (2005) for more details.

established feminist practices of looking to feminine examples within a religious context that attempt to gain access to authority either by challenging the organization and structures of their beliefs or who engage in traditional activist methods to achieve autonomy.

Similarly, my own research on the Mormon Women's Oral History Project from Claremont Graduate University (MWOHP), a growing archive of oral history interviews from twentieth and twenty-first century women from the Mormon tradition, also indicates a lean toward feminist perspectivism by some Latter-day Saint academic scholars. I originally came to the MWOHP archive by way of Dr. Caroline Kline, current director of the MWOHP. She indicated that the collection may offer potential source material for my research on the rhetorical practices of Latter-day Saint women; her guidance into the MWOHP archive introduced me to current scholastic efforts regarding Latter-day Saint women and provided insight into the research efforts of oral history gathering and archival work. As Claudia L. Bushman, original director of the project and well-known Latter-day Saint historian scholar, explains, the initial purpose of the MWOHP collection focused on gathering histories from a "wide group of Mormon women" from around the world and making their words accessible to interested academics and individuals (*Mormon Women Have Their Say*, xiv).

As a collection, the source material is nascent in its development, where the archive shows that a majority of the first gathered histories came from Latter-day Saint women who reside in the Western United States, indicating the need for continued oral history gathering for the collection to reach Dr. Bushman's expectations of representing Mormon women from around the world. However, based upon my own initial research into the archive, I also noted that some partiality does appear to exist in the interviews regarding feminist thoughts and ideologies. For example, my analysis on ten of the histories transcribed into English, interviewed by Caroline

Kline, and present in January 2023, found that nine of the ten interviewees have college degrees, with eight of the ten holding advanced degrees. While these are impressive educational feats for any grouping of women, they do not represent the educational statistics of Latter-day Saints generally, as only 33% of all members of the Church have a college education.⁵ Further, the oral histories in the collection with advanced degrees also maintained a proclivity towards feminist thought, with many expressing a desired ordination into the male-held Priesthood hierarchy. As Oral History 026 stated, “I don’t think it’s a matter of if, it’s a matter of when” that ordination for women will occur (11). While true that some Latter-day Saint women desire more access to authority within the power structures of the Church through ordination, the over representation of well-educated women who ascribe to this desire within these interviews makes it challenging to determine if the sentiment towards ordination is as broad as these interviews indicate. However, even though these interviews indicate a potential over representation of one demographic within the Latter-day Saint community, like the work of Brooks, Steenblik, Wheelwright, and Kinney, the work of the collection undertakes necessary research as it contributes to the gathering of (un/dis/re)covered voices often marginalized from the annals of history, rhetoric, and archival collections.

While the current efforts of the Mormon Women’s Oral History Project offer scholars and interested individuals the opportunity to engage in primary source gathering and archival research, Caroline Kline’s most recent work about the collection displays the struggle scholars encounter when they attempt to assert their own positionality on their research. Entitled *Mormon Women at the Crossroads: Global Narratives and the Power of Connectedness* (2021), Kline

⁵ For more details see “Where do Mormons Rank on the List of Most Educated Religious Groups?” *LDS Living*, 2016, ldsiving.com/where-do-mormons-rank-on-the-list-of-most-educated-religious-groups/s/83640.

explores recently collected oral histories of Latter-day Saint women from Mexico, Botswana, and non-White Americans. Early in her introduction to the work, Kline explains that her academic feminist positionality guided her research in gathering oral histories with women of color from non-white, non-traditional Latter-day Saint backgrounds. However, during her interviews Kline explains that she discovered that her Western feminist focus of gender equality does not mirror the concerns of non-American, non-White Latter-day Saints. Instead, Kline shares that the women from Mexico and Botswana felt their lives centered less on issues about gender equality and more on the need for “non-oppressive connectedness,” forcing Kline to pivot her research focus (9). For scholars, Kline’s recognition of her own research perspectivism represents the broader implications that researchers face when they have a story they want to tell, but instead find a different story present. Therefore, in reading Latter-day Saint women into the archive of women’s rhetorical studies, scholars need both a broad study of materials and women to gain a full understanding of the Latter-day Saint woman narrative; and, more importantly, as Kline demonstrates in *Mormon Women at the Crossroad*, scholars need to bring forward their words as they are and let the archives speak for themselves.

From this rendering of current scholarship on Latter-day Saint women, evidence indicates that scholars continue to engage in a feminist reading of Latter-day Saint women into the archive. Yet, unfortunately, by maintaining and perpetuating a feminist methodology that continues to exclude women who do not fit the established feminist model, some Latter-day Saint women voices still end up missing from the narrative – particularly women who do not subscribe to feminist thought, yet actively engage with their patriarch religious faith from their available positions of power. Therefore, this thesis proposes to bring forward and help bolster the representation of Latter-day Saint women who maintain their religious faith by embracing more

traditional gender roles, but who also navigate their identity by rhetorically establishing a space and place through the Relief Society for Latter-day Saint women to gain access to authority within the power structures of their faith and religion. To achieve this end, I share in the remaining chapters of this thesis how Relief Society leaders since the 19th-century demonstrate a rhetorical practice of communal unification using ethos-based identity rhetorics found in sisterhood, charity work, and commemorative acts of remembrance to help support the women of their Latter-day Saint community. In doing so, I demonstrate how Latter-day Saint women, like many religious women, have crafted a unique rhetorical practice to create a unifying woman identity for all the women of the Latter-day Saint faith that provides access to power by maintaining their traditional religious beliefs through the spaces and places of their religiosity.

Before delving into an in-depth analysis of Latter-day Saint women's practices, I offer a brief overview of the 19th-century history of the Relief Society as an introduction into the Latter-day Saint women's organization regarding the motivations and efforts for how and why Latter-day Saint women initially asserted themselves and eventually sought to organize into a women's society.

The Relief Society: A Historical Overview

The pattern of using multiple ethos-based identity rhetorics in the Relief Society began as a rhetorical tactic used by women members of the Church even before the inception of the Relief Society. However, given the dynamics of the early decades of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and their move to the Utah Territory in the late 1840s, I share a brief history of the Relief Society by examining its implementation as two events – first, as an initial effort to organize a space for the women of the church, and second, as a reinstitution to unite the women of the Church in the Utah territory. As both events demonstrate, 19th-century Relief Society

leaders began a unifying rhetorical practice within the space of the Relief Society that uniquely encourages their traditional position in the Church as religious women within a patriarchal-based faith but also utilizes patterns of rhetoric to help women of the Church gain access to authority within the power structures of their faith. With support – and to some degree, a level of failure – from the early presiding male leadership of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young in helping the women organize themselves into a women’s organization ordained by God, 19th-century female leaders of the Relief Society not only gained the right to speak, but to speak from a position of authority within their faith that continues today.

The Female Relief Society, 1842: Organizing the Women of the Church

The first iteration of the Relief Society, originally called the Female Relief Society (FRS), began in Nauvoo, Illinois, on March 17, 1842, under the direction of Joseph Smith, prophet, and founder of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.⁶ Female members of the Latter-day Saint Church desired to assist in the building of the Nauvoo Latter-day Saint Temple and sought approval from Joseph Smith to organize themselves as a women’s group to raise funds to contribute to the work. However, after the women petitioned J. Smith for support to start their women’s group, J. Smith asserted that he desired the women not to “pattern a Latter-day Saint women’s organization after the women’s societies that were prevalent and popular at that time,” but instead asserted that they would organize in a “divinely inspired and authorized manner” (*Daughters in My Kingdom* 12). With this charge, Smith situated the ladies of the Church into a quorum, similar to the Latter-day Saint male-oriented Priesthood. At the first

⁶ The Church was originally called the Church of Christ at its founding in 1830, but changed its name to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 1838. However, the Church suffered several fissures throughout the early history of the faith, with multiple offshoots from the primary organization including the Church of Christ, Community of Christ, and Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. See Bowman *The Mormon People* further details.

meeting of the FRS, the women present elected and sustained Emma Smith, Joseph Smith's wife, as the first president of the organization, with Sarah M. Cleveland and Elizabeth Ann Whitney serving as her counselors. As the female members united themselves under the title of Female Relief Society, Emma Smith declared to the women in attendance that "We are going to do something extraordinary..." (*At the Pulpit* 12). Thus, under Emma Smith's governance and leadership, the Female Relief Society embarked on the work of charity and sisterhood as sanctioned by the patriarchal leadership of the Church.

Growing up a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, I received a religious education that emphasized the importance of Joseph Smith and Emma Smith's words from this event as a moment of "Godly" recognition and awareness of the female position. However, as Kenneth Burke notes, the power of the words spoken in the moment "owe their convincingness much more to trivial repetition and dull daily reinforcement than to exceptional rhetorical skill," or, in the case of the start of the Relief Society by Joseph and Emma Smith, "divine" inspiration (*The Rhetorical Tradition* 1290). Therefore, even though the March 17, 1842, initiation of the FRS serves as a poignant event of "prophetic" and "Godly" declarations spoken by the presiding leader of the Latter-day Saint Church and his wife to the dedicated women of their faith, the significance and consequence of Joseph and Emma Smith's words are only observable with how they have resonated with the female members of the Latter-day Saint Church over time.

The first two years after the inception of the FRS demonstrates the immediate effectiveness of J. Smith and E. Smith's pronouncements regarding the significance of the FRS and the role of women in the Church. From 1842-1844 the Female Relief Society reached "a membership of more than 1,100," with membership initially requiring a "petition to

belong...based on their goodness and virtue” (*Daughters in My Kingdom* 15). However, despite a required level of goodness to receive membership, Lola Van Wagenen comments that the first FRS iteration contributed to “Mormon women” receiving an education in “all the doctrines of the restored gospel...[which] signaled a new era” as Latter-day Saint women gained participation in the “Church governance through the “religious franchise,”” as all members – male and female – obtained voting privileges to signal support or opposition to church proceedings (32).

Furthermore, most of the known history about the actions taken and the messages shared during early FRS meetings comes from the *Nauvoo Relief Society Minute Book*, the meeting minute book that Eliza R. Snow, first secretary of the Female Relief Society, recorded the meeting minutes of the society from 1842 to 1844. During the FRS’s first meeting, Joseph Smith counseled the Relief Society Sisters to keep accurate minutes of their proceedings as “The minutes of your meetings will be precedents for you to act upon – your Constitution and law” (*Nauvoo Relief Society Minute Book*, 17 March 1842). From this call to action, Snow performed meticulous notetaking that gives various accounts of who spoke and what they taught during the early FRS meetings. Snow’s minute records shows that while the original mission and purpose of the Female Relief Society focused on serving the poor and helping provide much needed materials for building the temple in Nauvoo, Joseph and Emma Smith also instructed the sisters of the Church to “increase faith and personal righteousness, strengthen families and homes, and seek out and help those in need” (*Daughters in My Kingdom* 17). As Snow’s records indicate, the greater purpose of the FRS provided the opportunity for the women of the Church to gather not only in the effort of service to those in need, but also in spiritual communion with one another as sisters in Zion. Thus, the pathetic appeal of the 19th-century women leaders in the FRS began with a broad support among the women of the faith as demonstrated from the reception of the

words of the female leaders of the faith by the increase in membership and Snow's careful notes of the early FRS meetings.

Unfortunately, the initial Female Relief Society only lasted two and half years. After Joseph Smith's death on June 27, 1844, the entire structure of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints suffered many fissures including the dissolution of the FRS. Many of the leaders of the Church were not in Nauvoo, Illinois, when Joseph Smith died and some level of confusion over successorship regarding who should take over in Smith's place erupted. In August 1844, Brigham Young, by a vote of hands of the members of the Church, became officially instated as the succeeding President and Prophet of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Over the next several years Young focused on officially moving the Latter-day Saint Church forward by migrating the members of the Church from Illinois to the Salt Lake Valley in the Utah Territory. During this time of transition, the faithful female members of the Church remained dedicated to their commitment to aid the poor and spiritually uplift one another until the Female Relief Society' reinstitution in the Utah Territory over two decades later.

The Female Relief Society, 1868: The Right to Speak

While an officially sanctioned churchwide Female Relief Society did not reorganize until 1868, several individual congregations in the Utah territory attempted to organize local Relief Societies beginning in 1854. Brigham Young sanctioned the creation of these local Relief Societies and encouraged the women to work with the bishops of their respective wards, but by 1858 most of them fizzled out and dispersed (See *The First Fifty Years of Relief Society* for more information). However, despite the failings of these new Relief Societies in Utah, Brigham Young recognized the need for the women of the Church to organize into a supportive women's quorum to help meet both the needs of the women in this new land and the needs of the growing

Utah Latter-day Saint population. Therefore, on December 8, 1867, over twenty years after the Latter-day Saints began moving to the Utah Territory, Brigham Young presented a talk to the members of a ward in the Old Tabernacle of Salt Lake City and called upon the women of the Church to unite themselves again as a Relief Society.⁷ Young spoke on the need for individual congregations to take up the responsibility of caring for the poor and needy of their respective wards, with Young directing the Bishops – the head male leader of each ward – to preside over this effort. Young states that the local wards need to take on the responsibility of caring for their individual needy and poor by supplementing the cost of these efforts and help remove the financial burden from the general church tithing fund. To aid the bishops in meeting the needs of the poor, Young calls for the reinstatement of the Female Relief Society as a support to the bishops from the female membership in providing care to those in need.

While Young’s 1867 address asked the women of the faith to reorganize into Relief Societies to help their wards in charitable work, the reorganization of the Female Relief Society in Brigham Young’s Utah also operated as dynamic and necessary occurrence for the female members of the Church at that time. Due to an anticipated influx of travelers and settlers to the Utah area because of the completion of the trans-continental railroad, Young desired to unify both the men and women in their faith and commitment to the doctrines and religious teachings of the Church to solidify Utah as a Latter-day Saint stronghold (“The First Fifty Years” 248). In conjunction with Young’s concerns regarding the forthcoming arrival of non-Latter-day Saint residents, the nature of polygamy – the marital practice of one man marrying multiple women that many early Latter-day Saint members engaged in from 1831 to 1890 - often placed women

⁷ The term *ward* is what each individual congregation is called in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. For more on the structure and organization of the Church see *Organizational Structure of the Church* at newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org.

in a position of independence and responsibility for their own care when their husbands were called away to tend to Church affairs or to their other families (Van Wagenen 33-4). Thus, Latter-day Saint women needed a support structure that provided both guidance and direction on how to follow Young's goal to strengthen Utah for the Latter-day Saint faith, as well as how to provide for the socioeconomic needs of themselves and their community.

Even though Brigham Young sought to reorganize the Female Relief Society by uniting and bolstering the women of the Church in their faith and foster a sense of responsibility for building up the Latter-day Saint communities in Utah, Young also desired to maintain the patriarchal power structure of the Church. Young's initial 1867 call for the reinstatement of the FRS started as an appeal to the women of the faith by complimenting their abilities and talents, stating that "We have many talented woman among us, and we wish their help in this matter [of providing for the poor] ...you will find that the sisters will be the mainspring of the movement" ("Remarks" 1867). However, Young follows this compliment with an encouragement to bishops to "give them [the sisters] the benefit of your wisdom and experience, give them your influence, guide and direct them wisely and well..." indicating the intention to maintain patriarchal authority over the women's organization ("Remarks" 1867). Young further maintains this same position in a later address on April 8, 1868, stating, "I wish you [the Sisters], under the direction of your bishops and wise men, to establish your relief societies, and organize yourselves under the direction of the brethren..." ("Remarks" 1868). Thus, by contrasting between complimenting the women, but sustaining the male authority figure as the guide, Young seeks to promote the woman's place within the Latter-day Saint faith as submissive to male authority, but also embrace the movement to unite the women in the efforts of charity.

As Prophet and leader of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Brigham Young operates from a position of authority, both as an earthly figure and man of God. Young's position regarding the FRS serving under the male bishop reinforces the Latter-day Saint patriarchal religious power structure built around the Priesthood. Members of the Latter-day Saint Church believe that the Priesthood is both "the power and authority of God" and that "God gives [the Priesthood] to man to act in all things necessary for the salvation of God's children" ("Priesthood"). For Latter-day Saints, the Priesthood functions as the faith's central organization structure. Available to any worthy male member over the age of 11 and whose purpose and authority comes from God to administer to the members of the Church, the Priesthood and its accompanying quorum form the basis for which all decisions and revelations regarding the Church and its members originate. The foundation of the Priesthood stems from the Latter-day Saint belief that Jesus Christ gave the Priesthood to his apostles before his death, but ultimately took the Priesthood from the earth after the death of the original apostles. Latter-day Saints further believe that Joseph Smith restored the Priesthood to the earth, where it now extends down to all worthy male members to act in authority from God. Different levels of "keys" exist within the construct of the Priesthood; however, only the Prophetic head, inclusive of the Prophet, his counselors, and a quorum of twelve apostles – all men – maintains all the "keys" of the Priesthood.

With the presiding authority for exercising the Priesthood "keys" rests with the uppermost level of leadership in the Church, Latter-day Saint members recognize the head of the Church, or the Prophet, as both the literal and figurative mouthpiece of God. Included in the Latter-day Saint canon of scripture, *Doctrine and Covenants* Section 1, verse 38 reads "What I the Lord have spoken, I have spoken, and I excuse not myself; and though the heavens and the

earth pass away, my word shall not pass away, but shall all be fulfilled, whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same.” From a rhetorical stance, members of the Church view the words literally spoken or presented by the Latter-day Saint Prophet as being directly from God and therefore serves as a form of prophetic rhetoric. Scholar David Tracy refers to prophetic rhetoric as “god-terms,” an expression derived from Kenneth Burke’s *Rhetoric of Religion*. As Tracy explains:

...The prophet hears a word that is not his or her own. It is the Other...Only on behalf of that Other may the prophet presume to speak her or his warnings, interruptive proclamations, predictions, and promises. Driven by a perfection-language needing god-terms to disclose this Other who or which speaks through the prophet, she or he cannot but speak. (188)

According to Tracy, Brigham Young’s position as Prophet of the Church in the mid-19th century provides him with a direct connection to the “Other,” or God, which in turn, supplies him with the necessary “god-terms” to command authority over the members of the Church. Thus, Young’s rhetorical practice of reasserting the patriarchal power structure of the Church with his request to restart the FRS not only fits within traditional Latter-day Saint religious belief, but also reflects a belief that this hierarchy order is the will of God.

Interestingly, whether due to the distance between the wards, the slowness of communication at the time, or a lack of conviction in following Young as the Prophet, research indicates that only a handful of wards heeded Young’s 1867 and 1868 call to reinstitute the FRS (*First Fifty Years of Relief Society* 262). Therefore, despite holding the position as Prophet of the Latter-day Saint Church, Young required the help of a female representative to speak to the women and enlist them in the effort of restarting the Relief Society. To aid him in this work,

Brigham Young called upon Eliza R. Snow, the previous secretary of the Nauvoo Female Relief Society and one of his plural wives, to serve as ambassador to encourage bishops and female members of the Church to fulfill the charge of forming Female Relief Societies in their wards (Derr 388). By asking Eliza R. Snow to engage with the women of the Church to start local Relief Societies, Young essentially gave Snow the right to speak on his behalf.

As the new mouthpiece for encouraging the women of the Church and their bishops to restart the FRS, Eliza R. Snow possessed three attributes that increased her effectiveness to achieve Brigham Young's desired goal. First, as an original member of the first Nauvoo Female Relief Society, Snow possessed a level of creditable authority as a founding member of the organization. Second, Snow owned the *Nauvoo Relief Society Meeting Minutes* that served as both a historical record and template used to "introduce the Relief Society to bishops and church members unfamiliar with its history and workings" (*The First Fifty Years of Relief Society* 240). And third, as a woman, Eliza R. Snow literally embodied the female figure that she was trying to persuade to take up the work of the Relief Society. As Aesha Adams-Roberts, Rosalyn Collings Eves, and Liz Rohan describe, Snow engaged in "apostolic rhetoric," where "unlike a prophetic voice, in which the prophet-speaker is positioned above and outside his audience, an apostolic voice positions the speaker within a spiritual community" (46). Given Snow's womanly state, her physical embodiment made her an equal with the women she sought to persuade. Therefore, Snow's effectiveness at not only restarting the Relief Society in Utah, but also at laying the foundation for the organization that now has membership around the world, came from her authoritative position as one of the first members of the initial FRS and her role as keeper of the *Nauvoo Relief Society Meeting Minutes*, as well as her physical woman-ness that embodies all that the Relief Society stood for. Since Snow could directly insert herself into the community of

the women as both an authority figure and a communal member this granted her greater access to speak from her own authoritative position. Thus, under Eliza R. Snow, the Relief Society organization grew throughout the Utah territory, with a concerted effort focused on uniting the women of the Church to meet the various charity needs of their wards and Latter-day Saint communities.

While the 19th-century iterations of the Relief Society ran under the direction of their male Church leadership, a Church-wide organizational structure that continues today, they also maintained a level of autonomy over their own societies. The structure of the Relief Society, both in the 19th-century and today, comprises of a female leadership team of “a president and two counselors, set apart by priesthood leaders,” as well as “committees [of women who] visit the ward[s]...to assess needs and collect donations for aiding the poor” (*The First Fifty Years of Relief Society* 182). Further, like the organizational structure instituted during the first establishment of the FRS and patterned after the Priesthood quorum, Relief Society members have voting privileges within the FRS that allowed them to sustain or refute any action or individual within the society. The Relief Society also has a hierarchy structure within the Church with a General Relief Society Presidency who oversees all the Relief Societies throughout the church, followed by Stake Relief Society Presidencies, and then Ward Relief Society presidencies. In each case the president defers to their presiding male authority leader (i.e. Stake Relief Society President is under the Stake President, and so forth). Thus, even though the Relief Society falls under the jurisdiction of the bishop at the ward level, the work and effort of the Relief Society maintains a level of control over their area of influence and authority.⁸

⁸ See “Relief Society General Presidency” on churchofjesuschrist.org for more details.

Although unique to the Latter-day Saint Church, the Female Relief Society began like many women's religious organizations in the nineteenth century where participation in women's religious organizations afforded them the opportunity to, as Lisa Shaver indicates, "emerge from the domestic sphere and...engage in social activism that contravened accepted gender norms" ("Stepping Outside" 49). For Latter-day Saint women, Latter-day Saint scholar Martha Sonntag Bradley notes that "in carrying out charitable work, [the Female Relief Society] was in step with what other nineteenth-century American women were doing [through women's organizations] in contributing to the larger world while they carried out their own home responsibilities" (10-11). Even though Bradley and Shaver agree that nineteenth-century women's religious organizations provided an opportunity for women to engage in social causes, their arguments differ in support of what that engagement meant for traditional gender roles and women's right to speak beyond the domicile. Unlike many other religious women organizations, however, Latter-day Saint women's participation in the Female Relief Society came with direct support from their prophetic leadership, where their work in the FRS paralleled their roles and responsibilities at home instead of overcoming them. Even still, by providing Latter-day Saint women a space and forum in which to engage in religious discourse and participate in the work of community and social causes, 19th-century Latter-day Saint women, like many religious women of their time, found an opportunity to claim a level of agency and autonomy while maintaining their religious convictions, making them notable contributions to the study of women in rhetoric.

CHAPTER 2: COLLECTIVE IDENTITY – SISTERS IN A SISTERHOOD

Prior to the removal of the Latter-day Saints to the Salt Lake Valley, Brigham Young declared in 1845 that “The exodus of the nation of the only true Israel from these United States to a far distant region of the West, where bigotry, intolerance and insatiable oppression lose their power over them – forms a new epoch” (“Epistle to the Brethren of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints”). As Young’s words imply, the members of the Church who left the official territory of the United States and moved onward to the distant lands of ‘the West,’ parallel the actions of the people of Moses as they left Egypt in pursuit of a promised land. Matthew Bowman explains that Brigham Young’s words lay the foundation for a unique, Latter-day Saint identity as modern-day Israelites, where “[the Latter-day Saints] were no longer merely another denomination, a Christian sect, but a nation, a new Israel, a people bound as much by heritage and identity as belief” (*The Mormon People*, xix). By depicting the Saints as modern Israelites, Young firmly utilizes a collective identity rhetoric for the purpose of unifying the members of the Church by providing a pattern for them to view themselves as Latter-day Saints.

Defining Collective Identity Rhetoric

Collective identities within the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and by extension the Relief Society, play an integral part of both the religion’s inherent beliefs as well as the primary construction method for unifying the members of the faith into a cohesive religious body. However, before delving into the use of collective identity rhetorics implemented by the Church and the Relief Society, I provide a brief exploration of what collective identity is and how I intend to view it in this chapter. Collective identity is a sociology term for explaining how individuals identify themselves in relationship to a group or movement with which they

associate with.⁹ As David Snow and Catherine Corrigan-Brown explain, collective identity constitutes “a shared and interactive sense of ‘we-ness’ and ‘collective agency,’” where an individual identifies as part of a ‘we’ when engaging in actions or motions with their collective group or community (175). Sociologists Francesca Polleta and James Jasper further Snow and Brown’s definition of collective identity by noting that “an individual’s cognitive, moral, and emotional connection with a broader community, category, practice, or institution...[is] expressed in cultural materials [including] names, narratives, symbols, rituals, clothing, and so on...[and] carries with it positive feelings for other members of the group” (285). Thus, for Polleta and Jasper, like Snow and Brown, collective identity develops from the individual’s perspective in relation to the group, where the individual determines their connection to the collective identity they associate with.¹⁰

While the individual’s perception of their identity as it relates to their community functions as a key element of collective identity, some scholars view the relationality of the individual to the group as more of a dialectic exchange, where the group’s collective identity emerges from a mutually developed relationship. Simon Coleman and Peter Collins explain that identity is determined “through expressions of ‘difference,’” but that an individual’s understanding of difference “emerge[s] through social intercourse with others” (2). According to Coleman and Collins, identity relationality results from “the allocation of identity in relation to the self [as being] an inevitable outcome of human interaction and – at times – a more self-consciously adopted stance in relation to others” (2). Therefore, as Coleman and Collins signify,

⁹ See Eder’s “A Theory of Collective Identity Making Sense of the Debate on a ‘European Identity’” (2009); Perrson “The Individual and the Collective: A Discussion of Identity and Individualism” (2010) for more details on Collective Identity theory.

¹⁰ Polleta and Jasper explain that not all cultural materials or associations indicate a collective identity, therefore scholars must assess the “circumstances in which different relations between interest and identity, strategy and identity, and politics and identity operate” to better understand an individual’s relationship to a group, movement, or community (285).

identity constitutes not only the individual's understanding of their identity in relationship to the group but also the society's communicated identity expectations to the individual, indicating that the collective group, society, or community that establishes a relatable identity for the group plays just as influential a part in generating the community's collective identity as the individual members do.

The development and implementation of a collective identity for both a group and individuals in a group remains a matter of debate among psychologists and sociologists. While some view the collective identity as inherent to individuals – often described as primordial or structural 'essentialism' - who collectively align due to similar forms (e.g. woman, man, Black, etc.) or interests (e.g. Asian-Americans, stay at home moms), other social science experts view collective identity as constructed, either by leaders or distinct individuals within a particular group (e.g. religious leaders) or by outsiders, such as scholars, media, or historians (e.g. January 6th insurrectionists, abolitionists).¹¹ Therefore, given the wide variety of definitions and perspectives regarding collective identity from social science scholars, for the purposes of this thesis I explore the implementation of collective identity within the Relief Society from a constructionist position by analyzing 19th-century Relief Society leaders' utilization of the collective identity term of 'Sister' as a means to unify the women members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Additionally, I demonstrate how 19th-century Relief Society leaders invoked the use of feminist ecological ethe and apostolic rhetoric to successfully unite the women of the faith in the 'Sister' collective identity, and further examine how Relief Society leaders over time have continued to maintain their 19th-century predecessors' collective identity

¹¹ Much of these definitions are derived from both the *Encyclopedia of Critical Psychology's* chapter "Collective Identity" by Jamie Franco-Zamudio and Harold Dorton (2014), and the *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences* chapter "Collective Identity" by David Snow and Catherine Corrigan-Brown (2015).

rhetorical practice. Finally, I show that, despite Relief Society leader's efforts to support Church doctrine by endorsing the 'Sister' collective identity, this singular collective identity has limitations due to the intersectional identities of women in the globally expanding Church, thus signifying the need for Relief Society leaders to engage a second form of rhetoric to unite the women of the Church more completely.

Establishing Collective Identity Rhetoric within the Relief Society

As discussed previously, the patterning and implementation of collective identity rhetorics within the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints began early in the Church's history. Similarly, the Relief Society has employed collective identity rhetorics since its founding in 1842. While not a focus of this thesis, polygamy is often an explored topic regarding the woman identity within the Latter-day Saint Church, particularly as it relates to how women of the Church and Relief Society actively defended the practice during the 19th-century. In exploring Latter-day Saint women's use of epideictic rhetoric to form a collective identity in support of polygamy, Robbyn Thompson Scribner notes that "Mormon women living in polygamous marriages...participated in the justification of the practice" by often praising and defending it in their writings or at pro-polygamy rallies (3). In doing so, they collectively identified themselves as polygamists or polygamy supporters. Anne Ruggles Gere likewise writes of the rhetorical identity tactics employed by 19th-century Latter-day Saint women to, as Gere describes, 'construct devout feminists' (3). Gere explains in "Constructing Devout Feminists: A Mormon Case" that 19th-century Latter-day Saint women often toggled between two conflicting gendered identities as they both "enact[ed] and eschew[ed] feminist principles," such as speaking in support of polygamy while also advocating for women's suffrage or participating in women's clubs while also supporting their traditional gender responsibilities in

the home (4). While Gere's essay offers a broad study of identity rhetorics employed by Latter-day Saint women, the space of the Relief Society as a location for rhetorical and identity engagement lacks acknowledgement in her argument. In preference of honoring the work of Mormon clubwomen from various, non-religious based women's clubs, a space more traditionally explored by rhetoric scholars of 19th-century women, Gere offers only a single nod toward the Relief Society, writing: "Their identity as *Mormon* clubwomen remained ever-present even though they distinguished themselves from the more overtly religious Female Relief Society" (13). Gere's lack of inclusion of the Relief Society due to its 'more overtly religious' nature speaks to the issue that this thesis attempts to address regarding religious women's rhetorical practices. For Latter-day Saint women, the space of the Relief Society represents the location where many women of the Church found access to authority and a right to speak from within their patriarch-centric faith; minimalizing the organizations influence due to its religious basis fails to examine Latter-day Saint women's – and by extension, all religious women who participate in religious women's groups – rhetorical practice from their own terms and in their own spaces. Thus, to build upon Scribner's examinations of Latter-day Saint women's collective identity rhetorics and to offer a broader reading of the Relief Society's role in helping Latter-day Saint women engage in collective identity rhetoric beyond Gere's study, this chapter examines how 19th- century Latter-day Saint women leaders utilized collective identity rhetorics within the space of the Relief Society to unite the women of the Church.

While several collective identity rhetorics are found within the space of the Relief Society, the collective identity rhetoric presented in this chapter is built upon Relief Society leader's use of the gender-normative, collective identity rhetoric of 'Sister(s)' in a 'Sisterhood.' The basis of gender identity in the Relief Society comes from religious doctrines and ideologies

of the Latter-day Saint Church as found in Latter-day Saint scriptural interpretations and a belief in modern revelation. From a doctrinal perspective, Latter-day Saints believe that gender is ordained from God as determined by one's biological sex at birth (See the following Latter-day Saint scriptural references regarding gender affirming identities as determined by biological sex at birth: *Bible* – Genesis 1: 26-27; *Book of Mormon* – 2 Nephi 26:33; *Doctrine and Covenants* – Section 20:18).¹² Further, modern revelation found in the Church's 1995 *The Family: A Proclamation to the World* reaffirms the Church's ideology on gender as based upon biological sex where "all human beings—male and female—are created in the image of God... [where] gender is an essential characteristic of individual premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose." Thus, not only do Latter-day Saints believe in the inherent relationship between gender and biological sex, but they further assert that gender and one's biological sex are eternal in nature as well.

While the woman identity within the faith stems from her biological gender as determined at birth, family and ancestral relationships also play an integral in the Latter-day Saint faith. The Latter-day Saint *Doctrine and Covenants* 131 and 132 teach that marriage is a celestial law and is part of a new and everlasting covenant of sealing ordinances, where families are sealed together through eternity. This belief comes from the Latter-day Saint ideology that all people on Earth are literal sons and daughters of God, thus making all people siblings to one another both spiritually and temporally. Thus, from these beliefs and by orienting gender identity

¹² Religious scriptures for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints include *The Bible*, *The Book of Mormon*, *The Pearl of Great Price*, and *The Doctrine and Covenants*. For clarity, Latter-day Saints believe *The Bible* to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly; they believe the *Book of Mormon* is an ancient religious text that Joseph Smith uncovered near Palmyra, New York, and then translated into English; *The Pearl of Great Price* is both believed translation from ancient Papyri from Jerusalem that Joseph Smith came into possession of, as well as inspired revelation regarding the creation of the world; *The Doctrine and Covenants* is considered modern revelation through Joseph Smith the Prophet, but also includes other declarative statements from later Latter-day Saint Prophets. See churchofjesuschrist.org for further details about scriptural beliefs.

within the Latter-day Saint Church as based upon the biological sex at birth, the gender identity for the Relief Society applies the traditional use of the term ‘woman’ as it relates to the sibling role of ‘sister’ within a family. Therefore, the gender-normative, collective identity of ‘Sister’ represents a unification of all biological women within the Latter-day Saint faith as ‘Sisters’ because of the belief that women are both daughters of God and spiritual siblings to one another.

The Relief Society Collective Identity of ‘Sister’

The tradition of referring to women in the Church through the collective identity of “Sister,” as found in early records of the Relief Society, remains a staple rhetorical practice in the Latter-day Saint community today. However, the practice of addressing women of the Church as ‘Sister’ predates the start of the Relief Society. In 1831, while on a journey from Fayette, New York to Kirtland, Ohio, and traveling with other men and women members from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Lucy Mack Smith – mother of Joseph Smith – found herself in the position of taking charge over the group of Saints as they attempted to find transportation across the Erie Canal. To rally the members together, L. Smith declared, “Brothers and Sisters, we have set out just as Father Lehi did to travel by the commandment of the Lord to a land that the Lord will show unto us if we are faithful, and I want you all to be solemn and lift your hearts to God in prayer continually that we may be prospered” (At the Pulpit 1). While Lucy addresses both men and women in her call to bring the travelers together, her invocation of referring to them as ‘brothers and sisters’ reinforces the Latter-day Saint collective identity that all members in the gospel are siblings. Thus, in this early instance of rhetorical engagement in the Church, L. Smith not only utilizes the ‘Brother’ and ‘Sister’ monikers to refer to members of the faith by maintaining the formal addressing of others in accordance with the Church’s religious beliefs, but also sets a pattern of precedent for future Latter-day Saint women leaders to follow.

In perpetuating the practice of referring to members of the Church by their respective gender-sibling identifier, 19th-century Relief Society leaders continued the practice of utilizing the ‘Sister’ collective identity to organize the women of the faith. While little exists of Emma Smith’s writings as the first Relief Society President, secondhand accounts of her words exist in the *Nauvoo Relief Society Minute Book* and indicate a consistent pattern of using the collective ‘we’ pronoun when addressing the women of the Nauvoo Female Relief Society. Her most notable, and previously referenced, quote found in the initial entry of the *Nauvoo Relief Society Minute Book* states that E. Smith spoke to the women present that “we are going to do something extraordinary” (12). While not an explicit declaration of the word ‘sister,’ E. Smith’s use of the collective ‘we’ implies the ‘sister’ unity that she attempts to establish by joining herself with the woman present. E. Smith’s patterning and use of the ‘we’ pronoun sets her at an equal position to the other women of the Church by rhetorically joining herself to them through use of ‘we.’ Therefore, by inviting all women of the Relief Society into the work of the Relief Society by using a ‘we’ pronoun, Emma Smith effectively connects the other women of the Church to the collective identity of ‘Sister.’

Eliza R. Snow, second president of the Relief Society after its reinstatement in 1868 in Utah, also used the collective identity rhetoric of ‘we’ and ‘sister’ to address the women of the Church by promoting harmony between the women members. In an address to the 17th Ward of Salt Lake City, Snow uses the first-person plural to teach that “the organization of the Female Relief Society places the sisters in positions to bring into exercise and thus develop all of our faculties: thus in doing good to others, we benefit ourselves...My sisters, let us cultivate ourselves, that we may be capable of doing much good” (*At the Pulpit* 42). By using “we” in tandem with ‘sisters,’ Snow rhetorically joins herself with the women of the Relief Society

together as one collective identity, where they – the women of the Church – exist as ‘Sisters’ in the work of the gospel. As Aesha Adams-Roberts, et. al, note, Snow’s rhetorical use of “extensive first-person plurals” allows her “to establish a particularly sanctified sense of community among Mormon women” as she operates both from a position of authority as the Relief Society leader and as a normal member of the Relief Society due to her embodied womanly ‘sister’ identity (52). Thus, by identifying the women in the congregation as “my sisters,” Snow identifies the collective identity that she wants the women to refer to one another – as sisters – in a united Female Relief Society Sisterhood.

Zina D. H. Young, who worked alongside Eliza R. Snow and served as the third Relief Society President beginning in 1888, also maintained the rhetorical practice of using the first-person plural within the context of the Relief Society. In her address to the Lehi Relief Society on October 27, 1869, Z. Young states that while not practiced in the art of public speaking, she is “pleased to look upon the face of my sisters...” She then teaches the women that “we serve a just God...” and instructs them to “let us seek after the Spirit of God and learn to bear all things with each other...” (48). As patterned after E. Smith’s use of “we” and Snow’s use of “my sisters,” Zina further perpetuates the unification of Latter-day Saint women under the collective identity of ‘Sister’ both in the Church and in the Relief Society. As demonstrated from the records of these 19th-century prominent Latter-day Saint women figures and Relief Society leaders, the practice of referring to women members of the Church and the Relief Society as ‘Sisters’ began and developed as a rhetorical practice of collective identity rhetorics that sought to unite the women of the faith. For Relief Society leaders today, the rhetorical practices of Lucy Mack Smith, Emma Smith, Eliza R. Snow, and Zina D.H. Young provide a patterning of rhetorical engagement that helps Relief Society leaders unite the women of the Church in the collective

identity of ‘Sister’ as the moniker aligns with their religious beliefs while also maintaining the rhetorical practices of their predecessors.

Right to Unify through Collective Identity: Feminist and Apostolic Ethos

My position in this chapter on collective identity rhetorics identifies how leaders of the Relief Society utilized the specific term ‘Sister’ to try and unify the women of the Church throughout the 19th-century. However, invoking the term ‘Sister’ while serving in a leadership position does not guarantee positive reception without an authoritative ethos attached to the speaker that the audience can both relate to and support. In re-examining the position of authority that each of the previous Relief Society leaders held prior to taking on their roles as leaders of the Church’s women’s organization, patterns of feminist ecological and ‘apostolic’ ethos emerge. According to Ryan, Myers, and Jones, feminist ecological ethe:

...acknowledges the dynamic construction of relationships within and across locations and between people as constituting knowledge and values. Ethos is neither solitary nor fixed. Rather, ethos is negotiated and renegotiated, embodied and communal, co-constructed and thoroughly implicated in shifting power dynamics. (11)

Thus, as Ryan, Myers and Jones indicate from a feminist ecological position, Lucy Mack Smith, Emma Smith, Eliza R. Snow, and Zina D.H. Young demonstrate their rhetorical ethos when considering their position of authority in relationship to or against the power structures of their faith.

Lucy Mack Smith and Emma Smith have established ethos, in that they are both related, mother and wife respectively, to Joseph Smith, the prophet and founder of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Their ability to petition for a collective identity stem from their authoritative ethos of relationality to the prophetic leader. Similarly, Eliza Snow and Zina D.H.

Young can also claim some level of authority from this position, given that each were one of Joseph Smith's plural wives. However, Snow and Z. Young's position of authority in reinstating the Relief Society in Utah finds stronger recommendation from their connections to the original Nauvoo Female Relief Society as both Snow and Z. Young obtained membership in the initial Female Relief Society. Further, Snow also possessed the original meeting minutes book from the first society which served as the ultimate source of authority on the Relief Society because she occupied the ethe as both a founding member of the Relief Society and the possessor of the meeting minutes that Joseph Smith declared as the Relief Society's "Constitution and law" (*Nauvoo Relief Society Minute Book 8*).

As mentioned in the 'Historical Account' in chapter one of this thesis, Relief Society leaders also possess an authoritative ethos regarding their use of what Adams-Roberts, et. Al, describe as "apostolic rhetoric." As Adams-Roberts, et al., explain, the responsibilities of an apostolic rhetor include the rhetorical practice of "translating the word of God for community members and helping them understand the practical implications of the word..." (46). In other words, apostolic rhetors engage in apostolic rhetoric which includes translating and interpreting the word of God for the laypeople of the congregation. However, the right to act as an apostolic rhetor does require an extension of authority from a person or being with greater authority than the rhetor. In a revelation from Joseph Smith in July 1830, Emma Smith received a pronouncement that "[she] shalt be ordained under [Joseph Smith's] hand to expound the scriptures, and to exhort the church" (*Doctrine and Covenants 25:7*). During the March 17, 1842, inaugural meeting of the Relief Society, Joseph Smith reiterated these commands to Emma and the other women present and then extended the command to "expound the scriptures, and to exhort the church" to all the women of the Relief Society (*Nauvoo Relief Society Minute Book*

8). As the first elected president of the Relief Society, E. Smith's capacity to operate as an apostle of God, which included teaching scriptures and doctrine to the women of Relief Society, came directly from her prophetic leader. As such, Emma Smith and by extension all women of the Church both past and present receive not only an opportunity to teach and interpret scripture but also a commandment from God to do so.

Eliza R. Snow demonstrates the same 'apostolic rhetoric' throughout two specific accounts published in *The Deseret News* on April 18th and 20th, 1868, in support of her call for reinstating the Relief Society in Utah. In these published accounts of her addresses, Snow reminds the women of the Church that the Relief Society has an ancient origin under the identity of the "elect lady" as described in the New Testament and has authority to operate under the Priesthood leadership of the Church ("Female Relief Society" 18th). Thus, in translating and applying the word of God to the sisters of the Church, which includes all female members, Snow demonstrates her authoritative knowledge of the scriptures and fulfills her divinely appointed responsibility to, like Emma Smith before her, support the authority extended to her from her prophetic leader. To further solidify her authoritative 'apostolic' and feminist ecological ethos, Snow also asserts her position as one of experience, by again commenting on her possession of the recorded minutes from the original Relief Society meetings. She expresses her desires to "communicate a few hints that will assist the daughters of Zion in stepping forth in this very important position" of becoming 'Sisters' in the Relief Society and the Church, and to also join her in the mission of 'apostolic' rhetoric to expound the scriptures and develop their own position of authoritative ethos ("Female Relief Society" 18th). Thus, Eliza's effectiveness as an "apostolic" rhetorician derives from her authoritative position of serving in the initial Female

Relief Society as well as her expounding of the scriptures to draw a connection with the other sisters through their divine sisterhood.

‘Sister’ Collective Identity: A Continued Practice Today

The custom of referring to one another using the collective identity of ‘Sister’ continues today within the space of the ‘Sisterhood’ of the Relief Society. Recent examples of using the term ‘Sister’ in relationship to the Relief Society demonstrate how the rhetorical practice has carried on over time and across generations. Part of the Relief Society Declaration released in 1999, states that “[a]s a worldwide Sisterhood, we are united in our devotion to Jesus Christ, our Savior and Exemplar. We are women of faith, virtue, vision, and charity...” (*The Latter-day Saint Woman* xi). In conjunction with the Relief Society Declaration, the Relief Society General Presidency released the Relief Society Purpose Statement in 2017 which provides more direction on the objective of the Relief Society Organization. The Statement reads:

Relief Society helps prepare women for the blessings of eternal life as they: Increase faith in Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ and His Atonement; Strengthen individuals, families, and homes through ordinances and covenants; Work in unity to help those in need.

(*Daughters in My Kingdom* 2017)

While the emphasis of Relief Society as a “Sisterhood” has changed over the preceding 20 years, the last line of “Work in unity” retains the notion of Latter-day Saint women laboring together as Sisters in the Relief Society.

In April 2022, during the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints’ bi-annual General Conference, then General Relief Society 2nd Counselor Reyna Aburto spoke about the women’s relationship to the Relief Society by addressing the way in which women of the Church view their collective identity as part of the Relief Society. She states, “Relief Society is not limited to

a room in a building, a Sunday lesson, an activity, or a presidency at the local or general level. Relief Society is the covenant women of the Church; it is *us—each of us and all of us.*” Like the Relief Society Purpose Statement, Sister Aburto’s comments emphasize that the Relief Society is not just a physical space for women of the Church to gather but is also the figurative embodiment of each female member of the Church as ‘Sisters’ in the gospel. This perpetuation of the use of ‘Sister’ as a collective identity over time demonstrates a broader appeal to pathos, or the emotional appeal of Latter-day Saint women leaders to their current women peers and to future generations of women in the Church. As demonstrated from the 1999 Relief Society Declaration, 2017 Purpose Statement, and Sister Reyna Aburto’s talk, Relief Society leaders today continue to use the collective identity of ‘Sister,’ either explicitly or implicitly, just as their 19th-century predecessors did, to attempt to unite the women of the Church and emphasize a place of belonging for all women members of the faith throughout time and across generations.

Gender Identity: The Limits of Collective Identity Terms

From a rhetoric and composition perspective, my examination of 19th-century Relief Society leaders’ use of the term ‘Sister’ to forge a unifying collective identity for the women of the Latter-day Saint Church reveals that collective identity association can result from a symbiotic relationship between community leaders and the current and future community members. In the case of the Relief Society, the community leaders exhibit their ability to effectively create a collective identity for the individual members by presenting an authoritative ethos and encouraging a communal sense of belonging. In turn, the community members reflect a successful reception of the collective identity by continuing to use the collective identity term(s) over time and across generations. For Latter-day Saint women in the Relief Society, the

perpetuation of utilizing the term ‘Sister’ since the Relief Society’s inception indicates their positive reception of the ‘Sister’ collective identity.

However, despite the propagated use of the gender-normative collective identity ‘Sister’ within the Relief Society and its support of Latter-day Saint religious ideologies that all people are spiritual siblings, simply being related does not signify that a sense of familial connection to the collective identity will resonate. For example, Jane Manning James, one of the first African American women to join the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, sought to find a place within the Latter-day Saint women’s community in Utah in 1869, by embracing their high collar, long sleeved, simple black dress fashion. As Max Perry Mueller describes:

From [Jane’s] choice of fashion to her stern, unsmiling face and stiff pose, Jane Manning James’s image...is the model of Mormon Respectability...Despite her blackness, James asserts that she has successfully conformed to the standards of piety and bodily discipline that should earn her a place in the white, Mormon sacred community... (212).

Yet, as Mueller further explains, James’s desire to belong to the collective identity of the ‘Sisters’ of the Church suffered from issues of racism that left James without complete acceptance into the established Latter-day Saint woman persona (Mueller 212). Even though Jane Manning James emotionally embraced the Relief Society’s ‘Sister’ collective identity, she lacked the physical embodiment of what Relief Society leaders sought to establish for the 19th-century Relief Society ‘Sister’ standard.

While past precedence of limiting which women could belong to the 19th-century Relief Society exists, efforts to broaden the ‘Sister’ collective identity began to evolve in the Church during a time known as ‘Correlation.’ Beginning in 1908 and continuing through the mid-1970’s, general Latter-day Saint leaders sought to limit confusion about official teachings and doctrines

of the faith and to unify the curriculums and auxiliaries of the Church to “build consistency in messaging across the Church,” due extensive membership growth throughout the world (“Correlation”). Some Latter-day Saint scholars, particularly scholars who research and write about women in the Church, view ‘Correlation’ as a negative point of progression for Latter-day Saint women, arguing that women’s autonomy and authority over the Relief Society diminished due to the centralization of the Relief Society organization into the main structures of the Church (See Brooks, et al, *Mormon Feminism: Essential Writings*; Kinney’s *The Legitimization of Mormon Feminist Rhetors* (2021)). However, other Latter-day Saint scholars note that as the Latter-day Saint Church began to experience world-wide membership growth, it needed to address the changing dynamics of world-wide leadership availability and a crisis of budgetary and curricular conflation. As Matthew Bowman explains, correlation “eliminated a great deal of overlapping effort, relieved the growing administrative demands placed on the president of the church, created a strong support structure, and streamlined programs that aided Mormons in other nations as they sought to root the church in their own communities” (196). Therefore, since the time of correlation the Church has focused its efforts on uniting members of the Church around the world by presenting a consistent message of official doctrines and teachings through a centralized Church power structure, curriculum, and budget.

While ‘Correlation’ provided the opportunity to easily run the functional parts of the Latter-day Saint Church – especially on a world-wide stage – the issues of women feeling a sense of belonging in Relief Society continues to remain a struggle for many women members of the Church. Unlike the racism issues that Jane Manning James faced in the 19th-centurey Relief Society, much of the struggle for women to connect with one another in Relief Society today stems from their differing backgrounds as women, including cultural, political, and ideological

variance between one another. On a positive note, current Relief Society leaders recognize the disconnect between the women, as some continue to express a desire to see a wider range of women represented, considered, and acknowledged in discussions about what it means to be a ‘Sister’ in the gospel. Sister Sharon Eubank, former General Relief Society 1st Counselor, shared during an interview regarding family makeups in the Church that “I think family is the building block of society...but I want my experience of not living with a husband and children right now to be recognized [in the Church] and accommodated” (qtd. in Whitehurst and Meyer “Mormon women’s influence expands despite priesthood ban”). As a woman in the Church who has never married or had children, Eubanks represents the kind of ‘Sister’ persona not commonly called to serve in women leadership positions in the Church, as historically Relief Society women leaders came from pioneer stock families and exemplified the Church standards of women married in the Latter-day Saint temple and often the mother of several children. Yet, as Eubanks indicates, not all women in the Church – and more broadly, all women everywhere – fit into the perfect, model version of what personifies a woman ‘Sister’ in Relief Society and therefore requires a broader definition for the collective identity term or the use of a second unifying identity to truly unite the women of the faith.

By orienting the female membership under a collective gender identity of ‘Sister,’ the Relief Society attempts to establish a unified ‘Woman’ term that unites the women of the Church both individually and collectively. However, while the term ‘Woman’ implies a shared similarity in all things that are woman, the ‘Sister’ identity assumes a shared experience of Latter-day Saint women as women in the Church. Yet, as Donna Haraway observes “... gender, race and class cannot provide the basis in ‘essential’ unity. There is nothing about being ‘female’ that naturally binds women” (295). Given that each Relief Society female member has a distinct relationship to

the term ‘Woman’ unique to her own perception, joining the collective woman identity of ‘Sister’ can feel limiting because not all ‘Sisters’ in the Church have experienced the gospel in the same way. Judith Butler notes of gender relationality that, “If one “is” a woman, that is surely not all one is; the term fails to be exhaustive... because gender is not always constituted coherently or consistently in different historical contexts, and because gender intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual, and regional modalities of discursive constituted identities” (3). Per Butler’s claim, the term ‘Woman’ is not all encompassing of what constitutes the woman identity because it lacks recognition of the parallel layers of identity that women inhabit. As such, the ability to unite the women membership of the Latter-day Saint faith under the gender-normative collective identity term ‘Sister’ suffers limitations due to the lack of uniformity in womanly identity among the female members. To adjust for the disconnect, Donna Haraway offers that rather than seek a unification through identity, coalition work allows women to seek relationality through affinity; in doing so women find greater unity in purpose rather than biological or gender makeup (296). Therefore, even though Relief Society leaders have found success in utilizing the collective identity rhetoric of ‘Sister’ to unite the women of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, as exemplified by the continued practice of the gender normative identity today, Butler and Haraway indicate that Relief Society leaders may find greater accomplishment uniting the women of the Church by engaging in an affinity-based identity rhetoric. Luckily for Relief Society leaders, the practice of rhetorically uniting the women of the Church has historically included multiple modes of identity rhetorics, including the collective identity of ‘Sister’ as explored in this chapter, and the affinity-based feminist identity of ‘Charity Work’ as found in chapter three.

CHAPTER 3: FEMINIST RHETORIC – CHARITY WORK AS AFFINITY-BASED RELATIONALITY

In July 1842, Jane Neyman applied for membership into the Nauvoo Female Relief Society but was quickly denied admittance due to earlier accusations about two of her daughters falling to the seduction of older, licentious male members. Despite the rebuff, Neyman continued in her membership of the Church and eventually moved to the Utah territory with the other Saints. In January 1868, Jane found herself called to serve as the first Relief Society President in the city of Beaver. According to an interview with Mathew Grow, when Eliza R. Snow, under the direction of Brigham Young, sought to reinstitute the Relief Society in 1868, she initially reached out to previous Nauvoo Relief Society members and asked them to start and lead local Relief Societies (“Be Forbearing and Forgiving”). However, according to Grow, even though Neyman never obtained membership in the FRS in Nauvoo, Snow felt that because of Neyman’s prior association with the city of Nauvoo and her dedication to the gospel Neyman represented the best connections to the original Relief Society to lead the start of the Beaver Relief Society in Utah.

Upon receiving this calling, Neyman wrote a letter to the sisters in Beaver, petitioning them to join the Relief Society. However, in her message, she calls the women “the honorable and benevolent ladies in Beaver,” instead of the traditional ‘Sisters’ often invoked by other Latter-day Saint women. Further in her letter, she describes that the Relief Society of Beaver will engage in charity work “for the relief of the poor and afflicted among us; and for the mutual benefit of each other to encourage faithfulness in the cause of truth, and all Christian graces; to visit the sick among our sex and administer to their wants both temporally and spiritually” (qtd in

At the Pulpit 50) Whether by choice – given her initial lack of admittance to the initial Relief Society organization in Nauvoo – or by purpose – as her opening appeal is to the ‘honorable’ and ‘benevolent’ ladies, which speaks to women who are both duty bound and charitable, - Jane’s letter to the women of Beaver demonstrates a feminist rhetorical practice of invoking an affinity-based relationality of charity work to unite the women of the Church that Relief Society leaders continue to use today.

Establishing ‘Charity Work’ as a Feminist Rhetorical Practice

As a feminist, affinity-based relationality rhetoric, ‘Charity Work’ as a rhetorically uniting identity provides the foot hold for how 19th-century Latter-day Saint women found access to authority and exercise of agency within the power structures of their faith. 19th-century Latter-day Saint women sought for the opportunity to help and assist in the work of building up the Kingdom of God but chose to do so as women dedicated to and supportive of the patriarchy power structure of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Through the implementation and organization of the Relief Society as sanctioned by their male, Priesthood leaders, but overseen by their female, Relief Society counterparts, 19th-century Latter-day Saint women found both the literal and metaphorical place and space within their faith to not only engage in supporting the work of the Church, but also in developing a rhetorical practice unique to their identity as women in the Church. While chapter two of this thesis explores the use of the collective identity of ‘Sister’ as a woman identity utilized by Relief Society leaders to unify the women of the Church, the feminist affinity-based identity of ‘Charity Work’ provides a deeper level of connection for the women of the faith as it gives them an intersectional purpose of uniting together as both women and faithful members engaged in a specific work. For grounding purposes regarding feminist rhetoric and affinity-based relationality, I first explain in this chapter

what feminist theory is (including how affinity-based relationality operates in feminist theory). Second, I examine how rhetoric and composition scholars apply feminist theory to establish precedents in understanding feminist rhetoric. Third, based on the definition of feminist theory and its past precedence in rhetoric and composition, I detail how I use the term(s) throughout this chapter, followed by examining how 19th-century Relief Society leaders worked to unite the women of the Church through the feminist, affinity-based identity of ‘Charity Work.’ Lastly, I demonstrate how ‘Charity Work’ rhetoric carries on today within the Relief Society, ultimately showing the effectiveness of Relief Society leaders’ pathetic appeal to unite the women of the Church through ‘Charity Work’ over time and across generations.

Feminist Theory and Affinity-Based Relationality

As a theory of criticism, feminist theory considers the role of gender and sex within a given text, often focused on studying how the text engages with marginalized people who reside outside the axis of power. Originating in the 18th-century, with many scholars attributing its first presence with Mary Wollstonecraft’s *A Vindication of Rights of Woman* in 1792, (See Zeigler’s “Feminist Theory”), scholars view feminist theory as a theory with different layers of application, depending on the context and purpose of its use. As Jo Ann Arinder explains, feminist theory can function as both an independent theory or a sub-theory of critical theory, where critical theory operates as a collection of theories built upon the purpose “of destabilizing systems of power and oppression” (*Feminist Theory*). Arinder adds that because feminist theory “considers the lived experience of any person/people, not just women, with an emphasis of oppression,” it serves as a lens for scholars and researchers to discover how “people interact within systems and possibly offer solutions to confront and eradicate oppressive systems and structures” (*Feminist Theory*). For Arinder, the focus of feminist theory centralizes on

identifying oppressive power structures that fail to account for or acknowledge a person or people whose lived experiences represent intersectional identities not included in more dominant systems.

While feminist theory's primary purpose identifies oppressive power structures that create, through standards of laws, study, and practice, systems that result in exclusion by limiting access to power and agency, the role of intersectional identities serves as foundational to understanding how oppressive power structures dominate, and, more importantly, who they dominate. According to *The Bloomsbury Handbook of 21st-Century Feminist Theory*, feminist theory seeks to understand the lived experiences of a person or people through their various intersectional identities by examining how the individual or group recognize their own identity, difference, birth, body, affect (emotions), sex, and life experiences in relationship to the dominant power structures they are subjected to. Aida Hurtado, author of *The Bloomsbury's* chapter "Intersectionality" in feminist theory, writes that intersectionality "describe[s] intersections between identities in the modes of oppression," describing that intersectionality helps to explain how an individual has many overlapping identities, each of which may be subject to oppression singularly (e.g., woman) or plurally (e.g., black woman) (159).

Given the intersectionality of people and their various overlapping identities, finding commonality among individuals within a community remains challenging as each member's intersectional identities may not coalesce with their community's identity – particularly if member's from the community have experienced marginalization or oppression. As previously explored, uniting individuals under a gender-normative, collective identity, like 'Sister' in the Relief Society, has limitations, as the identity does not account for the existence of intersectionality beyond the familial relationship. Therefore, to better account for

intersectionality, uniting individuals together must come from a second unifying identity, like affinity-based relationality. Carmen Perez argues:

“We have to be intentional about being intersectional; about stepping outside our expertise and finding our liberation bound [up] with others – whether it is climate change, reproductive justice, immigration reform, criminal justice reform, indigenous rights, these things impact us all. Instead of working in silos we have to coordinate our efforts a little bit better and be more intentional about intersections.” (qtd. in Hurtado 160).

As Perez indicates, to account for intersectionality, individuals must work together on social projects from their intersectional identity, as doing so will result in greater understanding and contribution towards overcoming oppressive practices against marginalized groups, individuals, or intersectional identities.

Perez’s sentiments mirror those of Chela Sandoval’s *U.S. Third World Feminism*, in which Sandoval argues that the theory of oppositional consciousness – a form of affinity-based relationality – “can be generated and coordinated by those classes self-consciously seeking affective oppositional stances in relation to the dominant social order” where “...the subject-citizen can learn to identify, develop, and control the means of ideology, marshal the knowledge necessary to “break with ideology” while also speaking in and from within ideology...” (2). For Sandoval, the theory of oppositional consciousness approaches unifying identities not from a position of collective gender identity where limits exist due to the inability to account for intersectionality, but in opposition to the prevailing hegemonic ideology that reinforces the connotations for incomplete identity associations. Focusing on Sandoval’s notion of ‘affective oppositional stances,’ she encourages and acknowledges that conflicts between white and third world feminists resulted in “the refusal of U.S. third world feminism to buckle under, to submit

to sublimation or assimilation within hegemonic feminist praxis” (3). By not succumbing to a gender appropriated affiliation, and instead focusing on uniting under an effort of resistance, Sandoval argues that oppositional consciousness allows for differences to unite in the cause of resistance against the prevailing dominate power structure. Although Perez and Sandoval do not directly state their call to action as a form of identity through affinity-based relationality, I view their positions as petitions for people to unite through acts of affinity, where individuals come together in a feminist identity that recognizes their parallel identities and unites them together in a common cause instead of association by one of their singular intersectional identities.

Feminist, Affinity-Based Identity Rhetoric(s)

The concepts of feminist theory, intersectionality, and affinity-based relationality all apply equally to multiple subjects of study, including law, political science, sociology, psychology, and the humanities. For rhetoric and composition scholars, these terms and their coordinating definitions provide a lens by which to examine both the words spoken and rhetorical acts performed either by, for, or against individuals, groups, or peoples to better understand who struggles with marginalization and how they express or display that marginalization through rhetoric. In seeking to (un/dis/re)cover the voices missing from histories and narratives, rhetoric scholars apply feminist methodologies and understandings to reconsider the boundaries of what counts as rhetoric and whose rhetoric counts. In using feminist methodologies in her own studies, Cheryl Glenn emphasizes that remapping the boundaries of rhetoric to include women requires that scholars not place women in the canon as “merely compensatory or additive histories of women rhetoricians. Instead, any remapping must locate female rhetorical accomplishment within the male-dominated and male-documented rhetorical tradition that it interrogates” (69). As Glenn indicates, adding or including women in rhetorical studies requires the grounding of

women's rhetoric in past precedents of the rhetorical canon – a standard and practice developed almost entirely from the male perspective. However, Joy Ritchie and Kate Arnold counter Glenn's assertion by noting that a reconsideration of rhetoric itself must occur to include women in rhetorical studies. For Ritchie and Arnold, including women in rhetoric necessitates a broadening of Aristotle's definition of "rhetoric as the "discovery of the available means of persuasion,' ...[as this] acknowledge[s] that [women's] presence demands that rhetoric be reconceived...to mark the ways in which women have discovered various means by which to make their voices heard"; for women, Ritchie and Arnold affirm, 'available means' also includes consideration of unique settings and situations like "the kitchen, parlor, and nursery; the garden; the church; the body" (xvii). Ritchie and Arnold further stress that scholars must reassess what counts as rhetoric in relationship to the lived existences of those they interrogate by acknowledging the forms of rhetoric available to those who have traditionally resided outside the parameters of the prevailing, dominant perspective. Therefore, for rhetoric and composition scholars, the work of Glenn, Ritchie, and Arnold establish a foundational practice of calling for the expansion of rhetorical study to include women, while also reevaluating the constitutions of rhetoric to include studying the locations and types of rhetoric where non-traditional voices are found.

A more recent application of feminist methodologies in rhetoric and composition include study in the works of remembrance and memory. As one of the five canons of rhetoric, memory serves both as the mental space within the mind to recall images or ideas for use in discourse and discussion and as a rendering of the public's perception about a past event, experience, or people. As Letizia Guglielmo emphasizes, the public perception – referred to as public memory – builds upon the "...prevailing value systems [that] play an important role in shaping history and public

memory and may often determine who is remembered and when,” signifying that memory is influenced not only by the individuals who engage in rhetorical acts, but also by how society, scholars, and future generations examine, interpret, and represent past rhetorical acts in the public sphere (5). For scholars of rhetoric and composition, Guglielmo’s reminder requires consideration, not only of which voices are remembered, but also how they are remembered and for what purposes. Similarly, and for the purposes of this thesis, I interpret Guglielmo’s basis of memory work and recollection as an indication of pathetic appeal, where the effectiveness of past rhetorical act(s) by or within a community exist through the perpetuation of those rhetorical practices by future generations. Therefore, by applying a feminist identity methodology through affinity-based relationality as they relate to the continued practice of rhetorical acts across generations, I examine how 19th-century Relief Society leaders use of ‘Charity Work’ as a feminist, affinity-based identity unites the women of the faith together in a common cause, where the women unite not necessarily to work against the prevailing patriarchy structure of their faith, but instead, through the affinity-based relationality of ‘Charity Work.’ In doing so, Latter-day Saint women find opportunity to exercise agency and authority in their faith by engaging in a rhetorical practice of ‘Charity Work’ rhetoric that continues today.

19th-Century Relief Society Charity Work: Authority from the Divine

As the official women’s organization within the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the Relief Society’s original framework began with a focus on charity work as one of its primary purposes. Prior to Joseph Smith’s support in organizing the Relief Society, the women of the Church found themselves desirous to aid in the efforts of building the Latter-day Saint Nauvoo Temple. Margaret Cook, Sarah Kimball, Eliza R. Snow, and other women decided to organize a women’s group for the purpose of sewing clothes and needed textiles for the men who

worked on building the temple as the ladies noticed that the men's clothing appeared tattered and worn through.¹³ After drafting a constitution for a women's society, much like those emerging throughout the United States in the 19th-century, Cook, Kimball, and Snow brought their newly organized constitution for their women's group to Joseph Smith for his input and approval.¹⁴ However, rather than offer his outright support, Joseph Smith instead stated that "...this is not what the sisters want, there is something better for them. I have desired to organize the Sisters in the order of the Priesthood. I now have the key by which I can do it." J. Smith further explained to the women that "their offering is accepted of the Lord, and will result in blessing them" (First Fifty Years 4.10). As prophet of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Joseph Smith's role as the representative of God to his people placed him in the position of authority to speak with 'prophetic rhetoric.' Richard Crosby describes Smith's traditional use of prophetic rhetoric as "revelations [that] tended to frame God's injunctions as acts of omniscience and omnipotence and whose language channeled the voice of God himself" (2). Therefore, Smith's declarations to Margaret Cook, Sarah Kimball, and Eliza Snow that their desire for a woman's organization not only fell in agreement with J. Smith's own desires for the women of the Church, but were also divinely appointed and 'accepted of the Lord.'

In obtaining consent from God through Joseph Smith to organize, the women of the Church also possessed a second line of divine authority to begin their women's group. (*Nauvoo Relief Society Meeting Minutes*). At the origination meeting of the Relief Society on March 17, 1842, the women present elected Emma Smith, Sarah Cleveland, and Elizabeth Ann Whitney to

¹³ See Bowman's *The Mormon People*, Chapter 3; The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints publications *Saints* Volume 1, *Daughter's in My Kingdom*, and *Relief Society the First Fifty Years* for more details.

¹⁴ The 19th-century saw robust opportunity for women in the form of women's organizations, often developed to support the efforts of temperance, charity work, and community or religious organizations. Anne Ruggles Gere, Lisa Shaver, and Carol Mattingly have written extensively on this topic.

serve as president, first counselor, and second counselor, respectively, with Eliza R. Snow as the secretary. During this meeting, Joseph Smith referenced a special revelation received from God in 1830 specifically for Emma that described her as “an elect lady, whom I [God] have called” (*Doctrine and Covenants 25:3*). J. Smith further expounds this revelation to the women by explaining that Emma’s calling as an ‘elect lady’ is not for her alone, but that “others, may attain to the same blessings,” if they desire to commit to the work of their God and serve (“Nauvoo Relief Society Minute Book” 8). To completely demonstrate the role and position of the ‘elect lady’ identity as a point of authority, Joseph Smith also quotes 2nd John verse one from the Bible, which describes the “elect lady and her children” as those to whom John writes to. Smith explains that an ‘Elect lady’ represents all women “elected to preside” in God’s kingdom, similar to Emma Smith’s election to preside over the newly instituted, divinely authorized Relief Society. Thus, for the women of the Church and the Relief Society, the right to access power and authority within their patriarchal oriented faith did not come through seeking independence from their presiding priesthood leaders, but rather through divinely appointed authority from God as presented through their male prophetic head by providing the women of the Church autonomy over their own organization and their efforts to offer charity to those in need.

Relief Society Charity Work: Over 180 Years of Affinity-Based Relationality

During the first meeting of the Relief Society, the newly elected Relief Society leaders set forth in establishing the purpose and work of the organization for the women in the Church. At the inaugural meeting, Emma Smith declared “We are going to do something extraordinary- when a boat is stuck on the rapids with a multitude of Mormons on board we shall consider that a loud call for relief – we expect extraordinary occasions and pressing calls” (*Nauvoo Relief Society Meeting Minutes* pg. 9). As E. Smith’s words suggest, she encouraged the women to

consider the importance of their work in the Relief Society and to provide aid and assistance to those from their Mormon community who need relief. From this first meeting, Emma Smith set the precedent and standard for how women of the Relief Society would regard their purpose in the Church and then encouraged them to act accordingly.

Most of what the known commentary regarding the charity work of the Relief Society in Nauvoo exists in the *Nauvoo Relief Society Minute Book* where Eliza R. Snow often recorded those in need of charity and which Relief Society sisters received instruction to meet those needs. For example, the March 24, 1842, entry states, “Mrs. [Phebe Ann] Hawkes arose to represent Mrs. Drury as an object of charity, being sick and destitute of food” (19). Another example is found in the entry for June 16th, 1843, where Phebe M. Wheeler – acting as secretary of the Relief Society on behalf of Eliza R. Snow – wrote that many of the women of the society wanted to contribute to the building of the temple by providing clothing to the men building the temple and textile goods to help furnish the temple once completed. This June 16th, 1843, entry then proceeds to list all the women willing to go and get supplies or to sew the different needed garments and textiles for the temple. The *Minute Book* lists that “Sister Jones said she would be willing to go about an solicit material.../ Mrs. Dufree said...she is willing to go abroad with a wagon & collect wool.../ Mrs. Granger willing to do anything, knit, sew, or wait on the sick, as might be most useful” (91). As the *Nauvoo Relief Society Minute Book* demonstrates, early 19th-century Relief Society women and their leaders promoted a sense of identity for the women of the Church by encouraging them to engage in charitable works that contributed to their belief of building up the kingdom of God.

Much like the first iteration of the Relief Society in the 1840’s in Nauvoo, Illinois, the reinstitution of the Relief Society in Utah in the late 1860’s also focused on ‘Charity Work’ as an

affinity-based relationality for the women of the Relief Society to unite under. In 1868, Brigham Young called upon the women of Church to reinstitute the Relief Society so that they could aid the bishops of local wards in addressing the needs of the poor and the needy. Using Young's appeal as her guide, Eliza R. Snow undertook the task of encouraging the women from local Latter-day Saint congregations to reorganize local Relief Societies and again engage in the work of charity. In a two-part printed address in the *Deseret News* on April 18th and 20th, 1868, Snow lays out that the "object of the Society is...to do good...not only in relieving the wants of the poor but in saving souls" ("Female Relief Society" 18th). Further in the article, Snow uses charity rhetoric to complement her apostolic rhetoric, and thus firmly establish her feminist ecological ethos, by recounting the Saint's past experiences of the tragedies suffered by members of the Church in Nauvoo and subsequent expulsion from Illinois. Rhetorically, Snow's relating of the difficulties suffered by the Saints intends to serve as a reminder to the women about the past difficult experiences their fellow members had to endure as well as to connect the work of charity to the modern-day Israelite identity that Young promoted previously, as described in chapter two. Thus, by bringing their hardships to the forefront and connecting it with their historical, divinely related religious ancestry, Snow importunes the women to remember their own struggles and become "instrumental, through the blessing of God, in preserving the lives of many" just as the original society sought to do despite their adversities as well ("Female Relief Society" 20th).

The number of charitable undertakings of the Female Relief Society grew between the years of 1868 and 1870 as Relief Societies grew in congregations throughout Utah. With that growth, charity rhetoric by Relief Society leaders also took on a broader scope during this time. Addresses and speakers began to rhetorically adjust the work of charity by relating charity to not

only helping the poor, but also to serving within a family and promoting women's personal growth. On February 8, 1869, Brigham Young addressed the 15th Ward in Salt Lake City regarding the organization and duties of the Relief Society. Young compares the sisters of the ward to Mother Eve, encouraging them to follow in her example as the "mother of all human beings," and engage in the rights and privileges of procreation ("An Address..." 7). With those rights, Young defines that women hold a higher responsibility over the rearing and education of their children, noting that women should set the standard for appropriate behavior and speech for their children. Young further advises the women of the 15th Ward Relief Society to "look after the education of their children...to encourage their children and create interest in their minds in relation to education..." ("An Address..." 7). Following these remarks, Young then extends the need for education to women, encouraging them to develop a working knowledge of how to care for the health of their children. Likewise, he expresses the desire for women to educate in practical matters like mathematics, bookkeeping, telegraphing, millinery, and basket weaving, by depicting how each of these educational pursuits will allow Latter-day Saint women the opportunity to develop essential skills that can contribute to meeting the needs of their community. Lastly, Young suggests that the women of the Relief Society should help "teach their girls what their duty is, and train them so that they will be a profit to themselves" ("An Address..." 8). Although not considered a leader in the Relief Society, Brigham Young's role and position as the prophet of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints makes him an authoritative figure for the women of the Church generally. Thus, through this address Brigham Young establishes that charity work begins with training inside the home, and that the female members of the wards bear the responsibility of not only teaching the attributes of charity to their

children, but to also develop those attributes within themselves through education and productivity.

Young takes the rhetoric of charity a step further in his address to the 15th Ward Relief Society by promising to offer financial capital to their venture of opening a mercantile store. Young comments that by allowing the women to become educated in various abilities, they will then possess the skills necessary to both run the store and produce the goods sold. He also reminds the 15th Ward sisters that the goal of all the profits of the store should go to the needs of the poor through the bishop of the ward. With Young's proposition to the 15th Ward Relief Society to provide funds for their desired goal, he rhetorically promotes that women can seek service opportunities outside the sphere of domesticity. For scholars, Young's promotion of women pursuing an education and working outside the home places Latter-day Saint women of the 19th-century in a unique position to "represent an unusual type of feminism because they both resisted and accepted gendered roles" (Gere 4). But, for 19th-century Latter-day Saint women, accepting both roles of traditional and revolutionary responsibility meant not only overcoming conventional gender roles, but also following a divine command to do so as the charge to become educated and work outside the home in the cause of charity came from their prophetic leader. Like Joseph Smith's support and revelatory commands to the women of the Church during the first iteration of the Relief Society, Brigham Young's words in this address operate in much the same way by offering autonomy and responsibility to the women of the Church to exercise agency and authority over the locations in which their existence is divinely situated.

The role of charity work within the Relief Society continues today throughout the entirety of the Relief Society organization. Prior to 1880, Relief Societies throughout the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints operated independently of one another, focused solely on fulfilling

the work of the Relief Society according to the guidance and instruction of their locally elected Relief Society leaders, but in coordination with Eliza R. Snow and other women asked to assist in establishing Relief Societies throughout Utah, and eventually the world. Beginning in 1880, the Relief Society experienced a reorganization by calling Eliza R. Snow to serve as the General Relief Society President, effectively created a hierarchy structure for the Relief Society organization parallel to the order of the Priesthood. While Relief Society leaders are not ordained to the Priesthood like their male counterparts, they do serve as leaders at the respective tiers of responsibility addressed in chapter one of this thesis. Thus, Latter-day Saint women leaders have the right to exercise authority in their role as presider and leader over their respective level in the Relief Society organization.¹⁵ Even though the structural organization of the Relief Society having a general president over all the Relief Societies did not occur until 1880, the Church generally recognizes Emma Smith as the first Relief Society with all subsequent General Relief Society Presidents numbered accordingly.

In 1910, Emmeline Wells became the fifth General Relief Society President, having served many years with her predecessors in the Relief Society organization. After moving to Utah, Wells became editor of the loosely affiliated magazine to the Relief Society called the *Woman's Exponent*, where Wells utilized her power of the press from 1875 to 1914 to publish materials related to the mission of the Relief Society and their work in charity as well as publish pro-suffragist material and editorials. In November of 1913, Wells published a declaration in the *Woman's Exponent* declaring that she and her counselors, Clarissa S. Williams and Julina L. Smith, remained committed to “preserving the principles upon which the society had been founded” (*Daughters in My Kingdom* 63). Wells wrote:

¹⁵. See *Daughters in My Kingdom* and *Relief Society: The First Fifty Years* for more details.

We do declare it our purpose to keep intact the original name and initial spirit and purpose of this great organization, holding fast to the inspired teachings of the prophet Joseph Smith when he revealed the plan by which women were to be empowered through the calling of the priesthood to be grouped into suitable organizations for the purpose of ministering to the sick, assisting the needy, comforting the aged, warning the unwary, and succoring the orphans. (qtd. in *Daughters in My Kingdom* 63)

As part of her efforts to preserve the purpose of the Relief Society, Wells and her counselors also embraced the motto “Charity Never Faileth” as depicted in the July 3, 1913, entry in the *Relief Society general board minutes, 1842-2011*. Rooted in scriptural connections, Wells’s application of this three-word phrase from 1st Corinthians 13:8 and from the *Book of Mormon* in Moroni 7:46 encompasses the mission and purpose of the Relief Society by defining how charity work operates; in other words, ‘Charity Never Faileth.’ By pairing the motto with a scriptural reference, Emmeline Wells set a course for future Relief Society leaders to build upon their predecessors’ work of encouraging the women of the Church to never fail in providing aid the sick and afflicted, chastening those who fall astray, and working together in unity and support of their faith in Christ.

At the bi-annual April 2021 General Conference for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, General Relief Society President Jean B. Bingham spoke directly to the women of the Church at the women’s session of the conference. In addressing the ways in which the sisters can better serve Jesus Christ in a ‘higher and holier’ way, Bingham describes charity work by the sisters as giving “care for those in need by truly ministering, [and] expressing love through simple service. We share the good news of the gospel with those who need peace and strength... We work to unite families for eternity on both sides of the veil,” where ‘the veil’ is a

reference to the Latter-day Saint belief that a metaphorical veil separates those who are alive on the earth from those who have passed on or who have not come to earth yet.¹⁶ As Bingham's talk expounds, the role of charity work for the women in the Relief Society does not only apply to the worldly causes that the women engage in, but that their efforts of charity work have eternal value and consequence. Bingham furthers the definition of charity work to include work done in the temple by the sisters – through baptisms for the dead and sealing ordinances for the dead – as a form of charity work for the deceased by performing saving ordinances for those who have passed on before they could receive them.¹⁷ Thus, the rhetorical use of charity work within the Relief Society has grown over time both to address the immediate needs of those members in want of relief from temporal suffering and pain and to provide relief and charity to all generations across all time and into eternity.

Charity Work: Affinity-Based Relationality Over Time and Across Generations

Since its inception, the space of the Relief Society operates as the Church's women's religious organization to help the women of the Church find meaningful ways to contribute to the needs of their community. While the definition of charity work has broadened over the course of the Relief Society's existence to include work for the self and the community; the community and the home; the temporal and the spiritual, the role of charity work as an affinity-based relationality remains constant. Beyond providing definitive areas of where and how sisters can engage in charity work, Relief Society leaders consistently promote the unifying identity of 'Charity Work' as the cause under which the women of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints can find a sense of belonging and purpose. Through the premise of 'Charity Work,' Relief

¹⁶ See *churchofjesuschrist.org* Gospel Topics for more information about 'the veil' as found in topics such as the temple, premortal and eternal life, and veil itself.

¹⁷ See *churchofjesuschrist.org* Gospel Topics on ordinances, baptism for the dead, and sealings for more information.

Society leaders provide opportunities for women to gather, converse, instruct, and encourage one another in their roles and responsibilities as women and sisters in their faith. Given the limiting nature of the collective identity of ‘Sister’ due to the terms lack of recognition of each woman’s intersectional identities as explored in chapter two, the feminist rhetoric of affinity-based relationality found in ‘Charity Work’ provides a more purposeful identity under which the women of the Church can unite. As the Latter-day Saint Church has grown into a worldwide religion, so has the Relief Society, suggesting the need for Relief Society leaders to recognize the differing backgrounds of its membership, including cultural, political, and ideological variance between world nations and its citizenry. However, in uniting the women of the Relief Society through two unifying terms of the collective identity ‘Sister’ and the feminist, affinity rhetoric of ‘Charity Work,’ Relief Society leaders began a practice in the 19th-century of bringing the women of the Church together for a united purpose of sharing their faith, time, and talents with those needing comfort and relief – a time honored practice that demonstrates effective/affective pathetic appeal that carries over time and across generations.

CHAPTER 4: PATHOS – OVER TIME AND ACROSS GENERATIONS

In 1869, Emily Hill Woodmansee wrote a song titled *Song of the Sisters of the Relief Society* to include as a hymn for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Today, the song is called *As Sisters in Zion* and is sung regularly in gatherings of women members of the Church around the world, but the history of how the song came to be is one that speaks to the continuous efforts of Relief Society leaders to pathetically appeal to the women of the church over time and across generations. Emily Hill Woodmansee, like many of the pioneer Latter-day Saints in the mid-1800's, experienced many trials and struggles crossing the plains of the United States after the Church's expulsion from Illinois and Missouri. As part of the Willie Handcart Company, Emily, along with her sister Julia, struggled through persecution, threats of Indian violence, harsh natural environments, and starvation all for the hope of reaching the promised haven of the gathered saints in Utah. Much of the known information about Emily's experience in traversing the plains comes from her personal journals and historical accounts written by Latter-day Saint scholars, such as Paul Lyman's *The Willie Handcart Company: Their Day-by Day Experiences* (2006) and Andrew Olsen's *The Price We Paid: The Extraordinary Story of the Willie & Martin Handcart Pioneers* (2006). While Emily's journey and experience as a pioneer in the Willie Handcart Company offers a notable story all its own, Debbie Christensen, a great-great granddaughter of Julia Hill (Emily's sister), chose to write a short historical account entitled *As Sisters in Zion: The Story Behind the Song* (2012) for the purpose of sharing the experiences of Emily's journey from the perspective of how these experiences contributed to Emily's writing *Song of the Sisters of the Relief Society*.

For those outside the Latter-day Saint community, Emily's song carries no real weight as other Christian sects or different denominational churches do not typically sing or possess *As*

Sisters in Zion in their religious songs' repertoire. However, for Latter-day Saint women of the Relief Society, Emily's song under the title of *As Sisters in Zion* has become an anthem for women of the Church, as it depicts the qualities of unity as sisters who engage in charity work together. To understand the significance of Emily's song, I share a brief history of how the song came to exist today. As Debbie Christensen relates, Emily's experiences in crossing the plains were one of survival, which included helping her sister Julia, and a widow named Mary Campkin and her five children, survive the 1,300-mile journey from Iowa City to Salt Lake City, all while pulling a handcart loaded with supplies, but without the aid of a male family member, friend, or associate. To survive the journey, Debbie explains that Emily, Julia, and Mary relied upon one another to move forward in their journey and to uplift one each other when one or another felt they could not go on (Location 228, e-Book). Prior to crossing the plains, Debbie Christensen details that Emily and Julia had already traveled a significant distance as they originally came to America from England in the spring of 1856, along with 760 other members of the Church; all these members gathered together for the purpose of joining their fellow Saints in Utah, or, as they referred to it, Zion (Location 105, e-Book). As a poetess, Emily wrote and published many poems in Church and personal publications about her life experiences, many of which Debbie includes in *As Sisters in Zion: The Story Behind the Song*. Unfortunately, as Christensen shares that, Emily's *Song of the Sisters of the Relief Society* became lost in the files of the Church History Department for almost a hundred years before it came forward as a religious song for the women of the church. Christensen relates that Michael Moody, a member of the Church tasked in 1985 with updating the Church's hymns, "searched for a suitable theme for the sisters of the Relief Society. [During his search] Emily's poem was located, taken out, and put to music by Janice Kapp Perry" (Location 701, e-Book). Under Perry's efforts, the title of the song changed

to *As Sisters in Zion* and involved some changing of the words to better fit the music, but Perry kept most of the original phrasing and intention of the message that Emily originally penned.

Included here are the words from the updated version of the song:

1. As sisters in Zion, we'll all work together;
 The blessings of God on our labors we'll seek.
 We'll build up his kingdom with earnest endeavor
 We'll comfort the weary and strengthen the weak.

2. The errand of angels is given to women;
 And this is a gift that, as sisters, we claim:
 To do whatsoever is gentle and human,
 To cheer and to bless in humanity's name.

3. How vast is our purpose, how broad is our mission
 If we but fulfill it in spirit and deed.
 Oh, naught but the Spirit's divinest tuition
 Can give us the wisdom to truly succeed. (*Hymn 309*)

For Latter-day Saint women, *As Sisters in Zion* serves not only a mantra to sing during Relief Society meetings; it epitomizes the rhetorical gathering of the women's Relief Society identities. The updated title incorporates the collective identity of 'Sister' while the message of the song focuses on the affinity-based relationality of 'Charity Work,' both of which encompass the mission and purpose of the Relief Society.

Given that Emily Hill Woodmansee wrote the words to the song in 1869 while Janice Kapp Perry wrote the music that now associates with it in 1985, the coming together of these two generational arrangements demonstrates the desire of current Relief Society women to connect with their predecessors. In doing so, Relief Society leaders today continue to use the rhetorical practices of collective identity and feminist rhetorics displayed in *As Sisters in Zion* as an act of commemoration to pathetic appeals instituted by their foremothers. Therefore, by examining the practice of commemoration utilized by Relief Society leaders to connect current women of the Church to their predecessors, I explore how commemoration works as an act of remembrance indicative of an effective rhetorical practice of pathetic appeal. To accomplish this objective, I first define pathos from its Aristotelian grounding in connection to current scholarship, followed by examining the works of commemoration as an act of remembrance that exhibit pathetic appeal. Lastly, using Douglas Davies' "Time, Place and Mormon Sense of Self" chapter from Simon Coleman and Peter Collins *Religion, Identity and Change: Perspectives on Global Transformations* (2017), I briefly explore the commemoration practices within the Relief Society organization by examining the commemorative celebration of the March 17, Relief Society Birthday. By examining this act of remembrance, I demonstrate how Relief Society leaders today perpetuate their 19th-century predecessors' rhetorical practice of pathetic appeal through collective identity and feminist affinity-based relationality to unite the women of the Church over time and across generations.

Pathos: Emotional Appeal between the Speaker and the Audience

In the study of rhetoric, pathos functions as one of the three rhetorical appeals used to persuade an audience towards a particular thought, idea, or end. In conjunction with logos (the logic of the argument) and ethos (the quality, character, and validity of the speaker), Aristotle

defines pathos as the emotional effect of the speaker on the audience as the audience relates emotionally to the logos of the content in accordance with the ethos of the speaker (*On Rhetorica* Book 2). In other words, pathos directly relates to the emotional connection between the speaker and the audience, where a rhetors ability to persuade correlates with their ability to appeal to the audiences' emotions. With emotions as the primary focus of pathetic appeal, the rhetor's consciousness of their ability to sway an audience emotionally operates as the primary objective, as emotionally moving an audience increases the likelihood of the audience's movement to action. George Pullman explains that "motivation comes from emotion" which results in "motion [and] movement," and ultimately a willingness on the audiences' part to engage in some level of emotional response (*Persuasion* 86). While emotions may occur internally and on a personal level without an obvious visual response, Pullman further describes that emotions "are often displayed for the benefit of the group...[and] often serve...the rhetorical purpose of affirming our identity and affiliation" (*Persuasion* 88). Therefore, according to Pullman, the effectiveness of the rhetor's emotional appeal manifests itself by the audience's observable emotional response in relationship to the rhetor's rhetorical act of persuasion.

The idea of an observable emotional response speaks to the notion of needing to 'see' emotions displayed by the audience. Aristotle details to some degree the types of emotions that may result from pathos by providing opposite emotions (e.g., anger/calm; friendly/enmity; shame/shamelessness, etc.), and detailing the types of people that the audience may find relatable to the respective emotions, and then explaining how, as a rhetor, to bring the audience into that state of mind (*On Rhetorica* Book 2). However, observable emotional responses by a/the audience does not necessarily limit itself to the rhetorical moment, including the time, place, and location of the rhetorical act where a pathetic appeal occurred. As communication styles of

rhetoric have expanded to include more mediums of delivery, so has the impact of rhetorical persuasive appeal between rhetor(s) and their (un)intended audiences. In describing the use of periodicals by members of the American Female Moral Reform Society (AFMRS), Lisa Shaver describes that “for female reformers [periodicals] provided a way to establish ethos, create awareness, promote a cause to a broad audience, and attract supporters,” (*Reforming Women* 8). As Shaver indicates, the AFMRS intentionally sought a broader appeal outside the original intended audience through use of periodical publications. Thus, by using various forms and different mediums of rhetorical delivery, rhetors’ sphere of influence is no longer limited to the moment of rhetorical address, but now extends outward to individuals, groups and communities not traditionally considered part of the rhetors’ ‘audience.’ Further, while Shaver’s *Reforming Women* focuses on the first twenty years of the AFMRS and their rhetorical tactics, Shaver points out that the work of the AFMRS still impacts the work of women’s rights today, given the “problems [that] still exist more than 170 years later” regarding today’s different moral standards and expectations for men and women (9). Therefore, a rhetor’s emotional impact on an audience does not suffer restriction to a particular time, place, or location, as the continuation or perpetuation of specific rhetorical tactics from a previous era can also serve as an example of an observable emotional response.

Pathetic Appeal: Acts of Remembrance as Observable Emotional Responses

While observable emotional responses indicate a public or visual display of emotion as they relate to the pathetic appeal of a rhetor to their (un)intended audiences, other forms of observable emotional responses include acts or practices of remembrance, particularly in the form of commemoration, where past moments, experiences, or events are commemorated with the intention of developing a filial connection between a modern audience and a past individual,

event, or experience. Letizia Guglielmo describes acts of remembrance as parallel to acts of recollection, where the term “re-collecting...highlight[s] the active process of searching through a collection of information to (re)make those memories” (3). As Guglielmo signifies, acts of re-collecting and recollection operate as processes of remembering that function both as an active act of collecting materials that speak to past events, as well as an active act of remembering or honoring past events or experiences. Through acts of recollection and re-collecting regarding women in rhetoric, Guglielmo describes this process as a feminist rhetorical act that “creates opportunities to expand the process of recovering women’s work by also looking for opportunities to disrupt or destabilize established memories created by prior acts of recollection and public remembrance” and thus creates a space to not only remember the past as it has been passed down, but to also search for lost voices missing from the narrative and add them back in, thus establishing a richer collection of remembrance (3-4). Thus, acts of remembrance through commemoration, provide opportunities for communities to remember their traditions and to engage in the remembrance act of Guglielmo’s ‘re-collecting’ to uncover voices of individuals lost from memories about the past.

While paying homage to a prior event or experience through commemoration represents an act of remembrance, these acts often serve a broader purpose of uniting a community together with an objective of guiding the narrative about how a particular individual, organization, or event is remembered. Jessica Enoch, in writing about the origins of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) and their efforts to unite the country against the influx of immigrants coming into the United States in the late 1800s, explains that the memorial efforts of the DAR in 1892 directed “equal measure to both the Revolutionary past and their socioeconomical present, since they sought to change their contemporary moment through their

remembrance just as much as they worked to recover those memories of one hundred years previous” (207). Specifically, the DAR’s focus of memorializing the Revolutionary War sought to create a specific narrative about the war that intentionally addressed the political and social issues of their present day. Therefore, as demonstrated by the DAR’s memorializing efforts, the act of commemoration provides opportunities to place known stories into conversation with current events, while simultaneously seeking to generate a narrative that attempts to unite a community around a common purpose. Ultimately, acts of commemoration demonstrate pathetic appeal, in that, current speakers attempt to unite a current audience to their predecessors’ experiences and practices with the purpose to pathetically appeal to their audience and generate an observable emotional response that connects the present to the past.

Latter-day Saint Acts of Remembrance: Pioneer Trek and Sea Trek

Acts of remembrance through commemoration, offer occasions for current leaders, communities, or organizations to unite present-day audiences to their past by engaging in commemorative activities that honor a prior event or tradition. In doing so, communities attempt to create a basis of relationality between a past and the present to develop a unified identity that spans time and generations. Doug Davies explores the interaction of time and place in relationship to identity within the Latter-day Saint faith in his chapter “Time, Place and Mormon Sense of Self” from Simon Coleman and Peter Collins *Religion, Identity and Change: Perspectives on Global Transformations* (2017). Davies writes that “[t]ime and place frame and foster human identity just as the cultural enhancement of religious creativity forges destiny from mere duration,” suggesting that time and place provide the location for developing one’s individual or collective identity, while culture and religion provide purpose and meaning to that identity (107). Davies further relates the concept of the “ritual generation of time,” where ritual

events “generate a distinctive sense of time” as commemorative experiences attempt to unite one’s present sense of identity with a prior established identity from generations past (108). As Davies indicates, commemorative events function as a unifying rhetorical experience because they seek to connect identity over time periods and across generations.

For members of the Latter-day Saint Community connection to their pioneer heritage contributes to their sense of identity and self, particularly with members in the United States and Europe. Many of the early members of the Church emigrated from England and western Europe to join the Saints in America, first in the mid-West in the 1830s and 1840s, and then in Utah beginning in 1847. In April 1997, a 150th anniversary commemorative trek of Latter-day Saints crossing the plains of the United States from Omaha, Nebraska, to the Salt Lake Valley began. Originally called “Faith in Every Footstep,” the commemorative trek took 93 days to complete, with Saints and individuals joining in the experience for hours, days, and weeks at a time, as well as many participating for the trip’s entirety (Gaunt and Ballard “Letting the World Know”). Today, the trek experience continues as a commemorative experience by local congregations throughout the United States as part of their summer youth conferences. The youth, adolescents ages 12 to 18, join ‘family’ groups where they dress in pioneer fashion and walk upwards of 30 miles over a 3-4 day ‘trek’ through the wilderness (but, not usually the same path that the pioneers traversed, as these conferences are held locally across the United States), all while pushing or pulling a handcard. A second commemorative trek, known as ‘Sea Trek’ occurred in 2001, where members of the Church - mostly Americans - flew to Europe, and boarded a sailing ship to cross the Atlantic in commemoration of their ancestors’ journey to America (Davies 114). As Douglas Davies explains, “...they were expected to perform physical tasks and not merely be passengers, something that came as a shock to some individuals...[However] these negative

experiences enhanced their positive appreciation of their ancestors' commitment" to their faith (114). Thus, for Latter-day Saint members, 'Sea Trek,' just as with the re-enacted "Faith in Every Footstep" pioneer treks in America, provided members of the Church – or, at least members of the Church living in America of European descent – an opportunity to celebrate their heritage and evoke an observable emotional response in honor of their ancestry as a reaffirmation to their religious convictions.

50th Commemorative Anniversary: Relief Society Birthday, March 17, 1892

While the commemorative experiences of the 'Faith in Every Footstep' pioneer trek and 'Sea Trek' demonstrate the pathetic appeal potential of commemoration as a form of rhetorically uniting the Latter-day Saint community, these singular events show some level of limitation in terms of relatability to Church members who live outside of the American tradition.¹⁸ For example, women of the Relief Society who live outside the United States, with no real connection to the challenges of pioneer women crossing the plains or the Atlantic Ocean voyage, may struggle to relate to the pioneer commemorative experiences. Therefore, connecting the women of the Church to their predecessors through commemorative acts of remembrance requires Relief Society leaders to look beyond the pioneer heritage identity of the Church, and instead find other modes of rhetorical commemorative acts that speak more broadly to the varying and different lived experiences of the Relief Society women. As previously explored, the collective identity 'Sister' has limiting unification abilities, as Donna Haraway observes that "... gender, race and class cannot provide the basis in 'essential' unity. There is nothing about being 'female' that naturally binds women" (295). However, for women of the Church of Jesus Christ

¹⁸ See <https://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/article/what-are-the-countries-with-the-most-latter-day-saints> for more details on Latter-day Saint memberships around the world.

of Latter-day Saints, commemorative acts of remembrance exist as part of their work and participation in the Relief Society. Therefore, even though the Relief Society focuses on uniting the women of the church as sisters in the cause of charity, the Relief Society organization itself represents a potential site of unity for the women of the Church as a place and space for women to gather and commune with God, together.

To honor the space of the Relief Society for the women of the Church, Relief Society leaders encourage local Relief Societies around the world to engage in the commemorative act of celebrating the March 17th Relief Society Birthday. One of the earliest commemorative Relief Society birthday celebrations occurred on March 17, 1892, in honor of the 50th anniversary of the start of the Relief Society. As depicted in the March 15, 1892, *Women's Exponent* article entitled "The Jubilee Celebration," the 50th anniversary of the Relief Society took place as a jubilee celebration to recognize "the most important event in the history of the women of Zion..." (Wells 132). For background information, the *Women's Exponent* operated as an all-women run newspaper in Utah during the late 1800's as a communicative tool for Relief Society news and women's rights activist publication, as well as a distributor of information for Relief Society organizations throughout the Church, even though it never published as an official publication for the Church itself. As editor of the *Women's Exponent* starting in 1875, Emmeline B. Wells often wrote articles on behalf of the Relief Society in promotion of its work and purpose, while also using the *Women's Exponent* as a platform to promote stories and opinion pieces about women's rights and suffrage, as well as to refute claims against the Church's practice of polygamy (See Kinney *Legitimization of Mormon Feminist Writers* (2021); Bowman's *The Mormon People* (2012); Madsen's article *Emmeline B. Wells: Romantic Rebel* (1985) for more

details). For Wells, the 50th jubilee celebration in honor of the Relief Society also meant honoring the methods of communication utilized about the celebration. Wells writes:

...one can easily see how essential and almost imperative it is, that such a great body of women [as found in the Relief Society] with common interests residing in different localities, and in many countries should have special representation through the press, and through a newspaper of their own. (“March 15, 1892,” 132)

As these sentiments indicate, Emmeline Wells believed the work of the *Women’s Exponent* provided a unique delivery method of communication about the women of the Church and in the Relief Society. Her views about the *Women’s Exponent* parallel those of the AFMRS that Lisa Shaver explores in *Reforming Women: The Rhetorical Tactics of the American Female Moral Reform Society, 1834-1954*, where the AFMRS of the 19th-century also used periodical publications to promote and disperse their ideas on moral reformer. Just as the AFMRS used *The Advocate* to promote new auxiliary formations, accomplishments, and exchange ideas, the *Women’s Exponent* for the Latter-day Saint women in Utah set out to accomplish much of the same purpose (Shaver 8).

Returning to the March 15, 1892, *Women’s Exponent* article, Wells declares that the lessons of the jubilee “will possibly teach, or is likely to impress upon all that of love and union” (132). She further writes that, as a place and space of unity, the Relief Society “has almost made a band around the world [and] is joined and linked in all its several branches in one great whole, one almost perfect circle” where “the Society everywhere observes the same uniformity of purpose and practises the same benevolence, extends the same genial sympathy to the needy, the sick and the suffering, whether the language is in English, French, German, Hawaiian or whatever tongue is used” (133). Wells finishes the article with, “That this Jubilee celebration will

more firmly and closely unite the hearts of the sisters” as celebrating “this occasion on the same day all over the world wherever there are branches of a Society whether large or small is an event of peculiar significance, and one almost unheard of in the annals of history” (133). As Emmeline Wells signifies, the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Relief Society throughout all Relief Societies around the world – as, by this time in 1892, Relief Societies existed from the Pacific Islands, across North America, and in Europe – served as a unique commemorative event as it united the women of the Church as sisters in honoring their divinely recognized place in the Church under the Relief Society. Moreso, Well’s words offer insight into her regard for the opportunities available to women through the Relief Society, as she views the charity work of the Relief Society as having no boundaries or limitations due to race, language, or location. Thus, by uniting the women of the Relief Society around the world through the 50th commemorative anniversary of the Relief Society, Emmeline Wells establishes a rhetorical practice of unity not limited to the American traditions of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, but instead focuses on the pathetic appeal of uniting the women of the Church under the Relief Society around the world as sisters engaged in charity work regardless of time, race, language, or location.

Relief Society Birthday Commemoration: A Continued Observance

As a rhetorical act of remembrance, the Relief Society’s yearly birthday commemoration continues today for the purpose of uniting the women of the Church together in remembering the opportunities that have come to women from God through the institution of the Relief Society. In 2022, the tradition continued with General Relief Society leaders encouraging the women of the Relief Society around the world to honor the 180th anniversary of the Relief Society by engaging in acts of service, as these acts parallel the overall mission of the Church to teach people about

Jesus Christ. On the General Relief Society 1st Counselor's social media Facebook page, Sharon Eubank, former General Relief Society 1st counselor wrote of the commemorative event by rhetorically asking, "What better way to honor [the Relief Society's] mission of extending the pure love of Jesus Christ into the world than by joining a service project in your community?" (Eubank). Reyna Aburto, former General Relief Society 2nd Counselor furthered Sharon's post, by commenting on the General Relief Society's 2nd Counselor Facebook page that the "Relief Society sisters have enormous potential to do good in the world," as they engage in the Christlike efforts of charity work (Aburto). In relation to identity, both Eubanks and Aburto assert that Relief Society exists as the place and space for women of the Church to engage in charity work and develop faith in Jesus Christ. And, as Sharon Eubank contends, even though Relief Society "may not always succeed on every front...the potential of the Relief Society is so huge that even the idea of a space like this existing for women everywhere makes me happy. WE are Relief Society, and we can be a powerful force for change in the world" (Eubank).

By declaring that the women of the Church not only inhabit the space of the Relief Society, but are the literal embodiment of the Relief Society, Sharon Eubank effectively attempts to unite all the women of the Church in commemorating the Relief Society birthday by attaching the Relief Society identities of 'Sisters' and 'Charity Work' to the physical body of each woman. Even further, Eubank declares that "all women everywhere" have a place in the Relief Society, indicating that the Relief Society belongs to all women of the world and not just those women members of the Church. Thus, by declaring "WE are Relief Society," Sharon Eubank expands upon Emmeline Wells' decree that Relief Society exists everywhere throughout the world by adding that all women – not just members – around the world across all time make up the Relief Society as well. In doing so, Sharon both perpetuates the rhetorical practices established by her

19th-century predecessors of unifying the women of the Church under the ethos-based identities of ‘Sister’ and ‘Charity Work,’ while also increasing the scope of the Relief Society to include all women, over time and across generations.

In annually commemorating the March 17th Relief Society birthday, Relief Society leaders throughout its history have encouraged the women of the Church to remember their heritage as ‘sisters’ of faith engaged in ‘charity work.’ When approached from this perspective, the commemoration of the Relief Society birthday operates as an observable emotional response that connects a present-day audience to past events through rhetorical acts of remembrance. As Douglas Davies reminds, these acts of remembrance operate as a commodity of time where “the ritual generation of time ensures a sense of involvement with the past that is, theologically and philosophically, deemed to be foundational” to the work of the Church and its members. Thus, for women of the Relief Society and their leaders “the past serves the commitments of today’s believers as they reach back to validate the past and take from it the means of vocalizing today’s historical convictions” (Davies 117). And, as Relief Society leaders throughout its existence have declared, the work of the Relief Society belongs to and is a part of all women, everywhere, across all time, all generations, and throughout all history.

CONCLUSION

“...I realize that we are sisters in very deed, children of the same Heavenly Parent...let us begin to cultivate more and more the spirit of love and kindness and forbearance one with another.”

(“Sisters in Very Deed”)

- *Rebecca E. Standring, Lehi Relief Society Secretary, 1871*

“How remarkable that whether we are in the Conference Center or in a chapel in Mexico or in a branch in Lithuania, we are sisters in Zion with a great work to do. And together, led by a prophet of God, we will do it!” (“With Holiness of Heart”)

- *Bonnie D. Parkin, 14th General Relief Society President, 2002*

Each section of this thesis starts with a collection of quotes or an anecdotal story of, by, about, or including Latter-day Saint women. These quotes and stories introduce the Latter-day Saint women’s rhetorical foundations and how their lived experiences as faithful women in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints impacted the development of their rhetorical practice within their faith. By employing ethos-based identity rhetorics, 19th-century Latter-day Saint women leaders began a unique rhetorical practice within the context of their faith for the purpose of uniting the women of the Church in common identities that encouraged them to find relationality as women and daughters of God. Through the place and space of the Relief Society, Latter-day Saint women continue to find great opportunity to speak, receiving both support and divine authority to do so from their patriarch leaders. As demonstrated from the perpetuated use of the collective identity rhetoric of ‘Sister’ and the feminist, affinity-based relationality rhetoric of ‘Charity Work’ within the space of the Relief Society and engaging in acts of remembrance through commemoration of the March 17th Relief Society birthday, Relief Society leaders throughout the history of the Church continually seek to unite the women of the Latter-day Saint faith over time and across generations.

As a paradigm of religious women’s rhetorical practice, Latter-day Saint women represent a distinct brand of religious women who operate their right to speak from within the

parameters of their patriarch structured faiths. As this thesis shows, Latter-day Saint women's rhetorical practice provides scholars with a strong example of how religious women, whose ethos and identity directly correlate to their religious beliefs and their support of the male hierarchy of their faith, engage in rhetorical discourse to both support and ameliorate their position within their faith, but do so within the contexts and spaces available to them. As demonstrated, religious women have a voice, and their words are often found in records that are not traditionally considered locations of rhetorical engagement. However, their voice is strong, relevant, and faithful.

Including religious women in the dialogues of women's rhetoric, and more broadly, in the canons of rhetoric, exhibits a work that scholars must continually and consciously seek to accomplish. While religious women's rhetoric does not fit the feminist model of what women's rhetoric scholars traditionally utilize to bring women into academic study, religious women do engage in rhetorical discourse, but usually in locations and through modalities that require scholars to think outside the metaphorical boundary of rhetoric and employ different methodologies or broader readings of potential rhetorical exhibition. Unfortunately, failing to bring religious women's rhetoric into academic study results in the perpetuation of exclusionary practices, as scholars who limit the examination of religious women's rhetorical practices set a precedent for what counts as rhetoric and whose rhetoric counts. By neglecting to include religious women in women's rhetoric, we as scholars miss the opportunity to examine the rhetorical practices inherent to women who are not necessarily pushing to change their position or access to power, but instead embrace rhetorical discourse from their area of influence. Therefore, just as women's rhetoric scholars over the last forty years have fought to include

women in the canons of rhetoric, women's rhetoric scholars today must work just as diligently to include religious women's rhetorical practices in the conversations as well.

In closing, I offer my own anecdotal story about a recent experience I had that spoke to me on a personal level both as an emerging rhetoric and composition scholar and as a woman member in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. On Saturday, February 25, 2023, I had the opportunity to virtually attend a symposium on women, religion, and records. Hosted by the Church Historian's Press, the printing division of historical publications for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the symposium brought together academics from around the United States to discuss the different kinds of records kept by, about, or for religious women and what these records teach us regarding different religious women's lived experiences. During the symposium, a special panel was conducted in honor of the late Dr. Kate Holbrook, a managing historian for the Church History Department and a "leading voice in the study of Latter-day Saint women" (*Symposium on Women, Religion, and Records*). The academics who spoke on behalf of Dr. Holbrook's work, influence, and achievements, also shared how scholars and academics interested in Latter-day Saint women's research can follow in Dr. Holbrook's footsteps by continuing to research the documents that she helped to excavate and bring more Latter-day Saint women forward as evidence of the richness that religious women bring to the history of the world. Ann Braude, renowned women's studies theologian from Harvard's Divinity School, spoke as part of the panel and offered a closing remark that speaks directly to the heart of my thesis. In speaking of her association and work with Dr. Holbrook, Dr. Braude said, "As a tribe of intellectuals – and the tribe is very small – seeking to bring religious women into academic study, we need to build bridges with others, just as Kate did, and help them see the worth that all religious women bring to the academic community." I never had the opportunity to meet Dr.

Kate Holbrook; I have read many of the compilations she contributed to, including *At the Pulpit* and *The First Fifty Years of Relief Society*. I am sorry to have missed making her acquaintance and her association. But I find myself as an emerging scholar hopeful to continue to contribute to the same kinds of work that Dr. Holbrook engaged in, the work that Dr. Braude is calling on scholars to embrace, and to join the ‘tribe of intellectuals’ seeking to bring religious women into greater academic relevance. As I continue my journey in rhetoric and composition studies, I hope to accomplish just that.

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