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Analyzing the Rhetorics of Wine
Ethnographic Research of Wine Community Narratives

by

Bailey McAlister

Under the Direction of Mary Hocks, PhD

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

Doctor of Philosophy

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2023

ABSTRACT

In this dissertation, I explore the effective communication and rhetorical practices of sommeliers and wine professionals. Using interdisciplinary work and ethnographic study, I analyze the general narrative of the wine community in order to draw conclusions about the rhetorics of wine. Specifically, I argue that professionals in the wine community utilize a unique expertise founded on managing relationships between the wines, the experiences, and the wine community, and that these rhetorics are crucial to the industry's success. To support my argument, I conducted personal interviews with seven wine professionals during the summer of 2022. These primary sources inform my rhetorical analysis of the general narrative of the post-2020s industry. Through my analysis, I demonstrate that individuals in the wine community are reshaping the industry to be more accessible, inclusive, and sustainable. They are achieving this by balancing tradition, innovation, and community-oriented goals. Overall, my research highlights the importance of understanding the rhetorical situation of wine culture, which is quickly evolving in response to changing societal values and technological advancements. My work contributes to both the fields of wine communication and the humanities and underscores the need for research that establishes intersectional connections between rhetoric, the digital humanities, and the wine industry.

INDEX WORDS: Rhetoric, Rhetoric and Composition, Humanities, Digital Humanities, Ethnography, Communication

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2023

Analyzing the Rhetorics of Wine
Ethnographic Research of Wine Community Narratives

by

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Office of Graduate Services
College of Arts and Sciences
Georgia State University
May 2023

DEDICATION

I humbly dedicate this to Grammy and Babs.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I appreciate the help of my committee members Drs. Hocks, Holmes, and Gu; the Provost Dissertation Scholarship opportunity; the Bâtonnage Forum Mentorship program; and every one of my colleagues and friends who shared their narratives with me.

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1. RHETORIC AND THE POST-2020 WINE COMMUNITY

Introduction

Scholarly research being done in the early 2020s reflects a singular learning experience that deserves to be showcased for interdisciplinary audiences. As a digital Humanities researcher, I have had the privilege of connecting with individuals exploring intersectional relationships between our work and the work of other industry professionals inside and outside of academia. As our academic conventions shift with the demands of current circumstances, I have noticed an increase in these interdisciplinary endeavors, perhaps as a result of the widespread phenomenon of intersectional support, care, and reciprocal respect that has come from our experiences as intra- and post-pandemic researchers.

When I began my doctoral research in 2018, my work lacked a clear goal for how it could engage with and impact my community of research: the wine industry. I came to my program with a goal of dissecting the rhetorical practices and effective communication of wine professionals, communicators, and sommeliers to display the intricate system of argument expression and relationship management going on in the wine industry that, to me, uncannily reflected the practices of Humanities students studying rhetoric and composition. I have always gravitated towards industry research that prioritizes casual conversations as rich excavation sites for extracting timely notions on how rhetoric and composition play out in our daily lives. But in these early stages of research, it was clear that my work lacked exigency. I was easily able to make a case supporting playing with the communication structures and rhetorical strategies of wine professionals, but there was no clear purpose for why the illumination of these interdisciplinary connections matters and how this work could influence the Humanities or the wine industry.

One thing, however, was truly clear to me: the learning, discourse, and communication happening in the food and drink industry create a unique rhetorical situation where audiences

are persuaded both by the natural character of the substance and by the rhetorical skills of the professionals within the community. Wine itself manifests its own means of rhetorical persuasion; it has a history of credibility across cultures and appeals to our human sensibilities. When engaging in the rhetorics of wine, professionals utilize the known characteristics of the wines, but their unique expertise comes from “knowing culture,” as Longinus puts it – from their understanding of the relationship between the wines, the experience, and their audience.¹ The experience of drinking wine includes pairing food, unearthing memories, and awakening new sensibilities, so rhetors of wine influence these experiences using their repertoire of knowledge and their human communication skills to bring their audiences not merely to approval, “but to ecstasy.”²

Like the field of rhetoric, wine includes an innate cultural sense of community engagement, as wine is meant to bring people together, and the wine industry depends on interpersonal and interdisciplinary relationships in order to progress and evolve. This attitude is especially prevalent in wine communication; as wine business writer Pierre Spahni puts it: “Few other businesses support a coterie of [communicators] in such an intimate fashion.”³ Public engagement and collaboration continuously contribute to the progress of wine rhetoric because of the rhetorical situation’s centralization on narrative storytelling. “Stories,” says Master of Wine Susan R. Lin, “are central to humans establishing connections and emotional association, whether with other people or with objects or concepts.”⁴ From my own experiences in the industry, narrative is what drives the community – from consumers to winemakers – towards stronger relationships with each other and with wine. This kind of environment helps facilitate a creative space ripe for narrative research and community-focused rhetorical analysis.

¹ Longinus, 223.

² Ibid., 223.

³ Spahni, *The International Wine Trade*, as quoted in Matasar, *Women of Wine*, 131.

⁴ Lin, “The Power of the Story.”

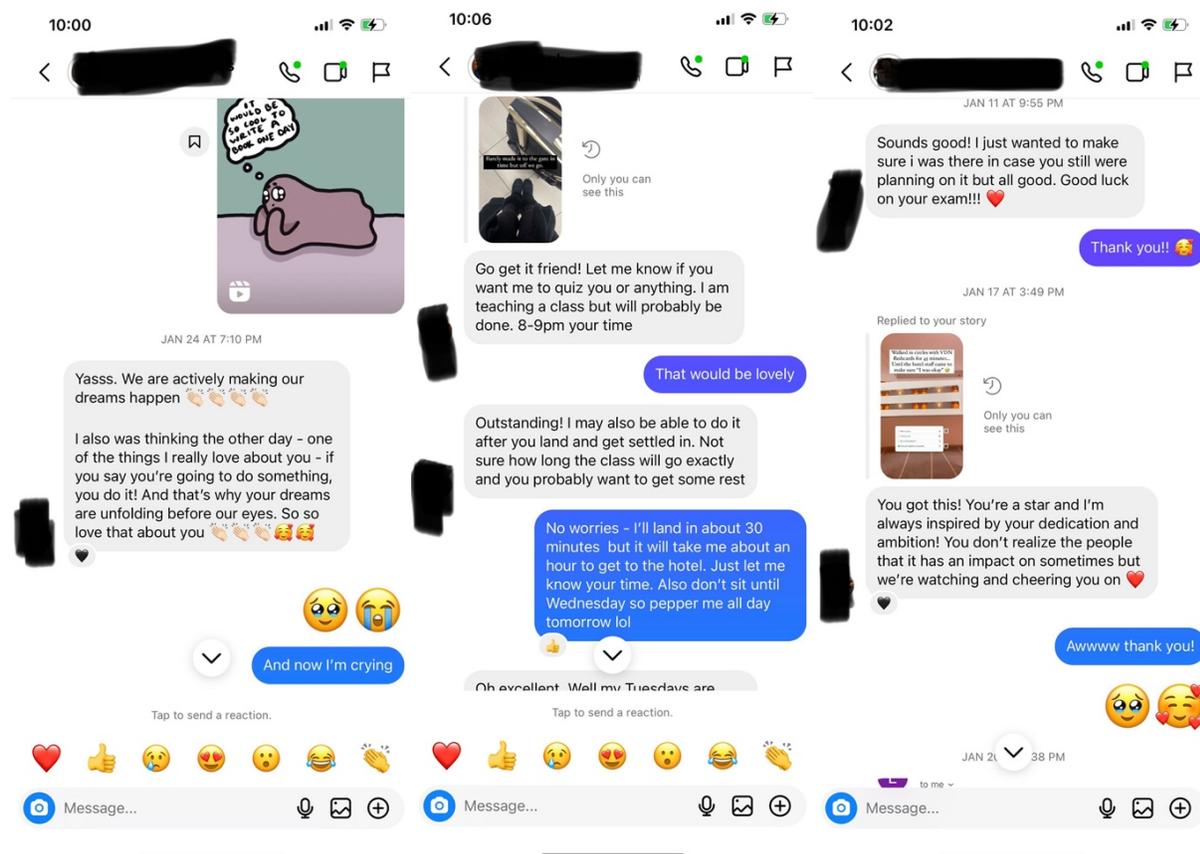
In an effort to become more involved in this community so to understand and develop a community-oriented purpose for my research, I joined the Court of Master Sommeliers in 2019 by studying for and passing their entry-level examination. This scholarly experience resembled what Patrick Dunleavy calls the “classic model of PhD” research, a “sorcerer’s apprentice” approach where “students come to sit at the feet of an individual . . . a great man or woman in their field who long ago wrote a big book.”⁵ In the case of the Court of Master Sommeliers – Americas (CMS-A), these great individuals were seasoned Master Sommeliers who communicated wine education through traditional structures (i.e. the CMS-A Introductory Sommelier Course and Exam Guide) sold at a steep price of six-hundred dollars and delivered electronically. These were the official requirements for undertaking a sommelier certification, but just as graduate research includes more than just books and papers, this educational experience involved an extensive amount of community support.

Dunleavy describes the modern process of academic authorship as highly interdisciplinary and multidimensional. Graduate students engage in social practices like classroom discussions, “sitting in repeated research seminars, interacting with lots of different staff members, getting reactions to trial papers from seminar colleagues,” and building relationships with peers that are vital to a comprehensive academic research experience.⁶ From my experience and from following other wine professionals’ experiences on social media, the process for studying wine is similar to what Dunleavy describes of Humanities scholarship. There is an accurate vision of the student sitting solo at a desk, deeply buried in books and multimodal media, perhaps writing flash cards, and sipping a glass of Beaujolais (while of course memorizing that it is Gamay-based and comes from the French region south of Bourgogne that contains 10 different Crus). But what people in the wine industry, myself included, want the world to know about is the huge mountain of camaraderie that stands strong

⁵ Dunleavy, *Authoring a PhD*, 6.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 7.

behind every individual's educational venture. An example of this can be seen in the following responses to my friend's Instagram stories about her journey towards wine certification.



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This camaraderie is imperative to success in wine education and is the most important component of the general narrative of the wine community. This interpersonal, intersectional support is what drew me to the industry and inspired me to dedicate my research to sharing the narratives of wine professionals, communicators, and sommeliers. Like all grand narratives, the wine industry is shaped by the narratives of the community, with some individuals having more or less rhetorical power. Over the early 2020s, professionals across industries have been

⁷ The Winey Redhead, "You got this!" Instagram. Images description: Local Atlanta wine communicator known as The Winey Redhead on Instagram uses her Instagram stories to update the community about her educational journeys. When traveling for a wine exam, she posted stories of her daily activities on her trip, highlighting her excitement and nervousness. She received numerous supportive direct messages from the Instagram community, examples of which are pictured. "Yasss. We are actively making our dreams happen." "Go get it friend! Let me know if you want me to quiz you or anything." "You got this! You're a star and I'm always inspired by your dedication and ambition!"

carving new roles in their communities and exploring different ways of communicating and collaborating, resulting in a “[shift in] business models” that better “accommodate” these professionals’ lives holistically.⁸ The rhetorical situation of wine culture is quickly evolving and presenting new opportunities for diverse individuals to add their voices to the conversation and start new ones. Scholars of rhetoric are meant to seize opportunities like this where we can challenge ourselves to be vital contributors of community service, responsibility, ethics, and communication. My experiences in the wine industry during the past few years have inspired me to seek work that establishes sustainable connections between humanities research and wine communications.

My work deals with effective communication and rhetorical practices of sommeliers and wine professionals. This interdisciplinary work that aligns with the work of modern-day rhetoricians has always helped propel things forward, as the role of scholars of rhetoric involves applying theoretical practice to real-world issues. The goal of my research here is to rhetorically analyze the narratives of wine professionals in order to draw conclusions about the rhetorics of wine: the communication strategies available to those working in the wine industry. Since the beginning of 2020, the wine industry has been undergoing a revolutionary transformation where new communicators are gaining credibility and changing the general narrative of the wine community. Understanding the current rhetorical situations in wine communication requires particular analysis of individual narratives, so I sought conversation with key individuals behind the industry’s major recent changes to learn about their roles in the wine community.

Wine Rhetoric

When I discuss wine rhetoric, I use this term to define the specialized skills, knowledge, and language wine experts use to navigate arguments about wine and shape their own narratives. Wine rhetoric does not simply reference the ontology of the subject; instead, we are

⁸ Paley, “Wine Professionals Don’t Want a Return to Normal.”

talking about an entire culture of communication, a community made up of individual memories and experiences that we bring together for the sake of the drink. However, the tastes of wines and the persuasive language describing these tastes represent only surface-level rhetorical situations in the wine industry. Larger conversations with greater exigency focus on what drives the wine industry, who has the authority on the standards of taste, and what brings the wine community together.

These rhetorical conversations - along with the current kairotic situation - help compose narratives that determine the progression of wine culture and the universal standard of taste in the community. The pre-2020 rhetorical situation of wine often positioned wine consumers as the audience, and the wine rhetor's goal was essentially to make a sale. But the 2020 vintage came with many challenges and much unprecedented change from the COVID pandemic, and wine professionals are seizing the opportunity to instigate change. Wine rhetoric, especially in light of 2020's influence on new community roles, involves much more than buying and selling. Wine professionals use rhetoric not only to propel the narrative of the wine but also to develop their own personal and professional narratives. The ultimate goal of using wine rhetoric is not to simply make a sale, but to authentically influence the community's evolving cultural taste and negotiate an ethical distribution of power in the industry.

Pre-2020 State of the Rhetorical Situation

The rhetorics of the late 2019 food and drink industry can be characterized by a few patterns. First, like in most industries, wine professionals use a combination of face-to-face and digital strategies to communicate with and persuade audiences. But wine - and food and drink in general - calls for a special balance between the physical and the digital, as communication in this industry relies on a physical, tasteable object. Even before the pandemic, many industries preferred digital communication practices, as digital communication can alleviate work, save time, and practically solve a lot of problems. But industries focused on substances, food, and alcohol always rely on an element of physical interaction because of the nature of

their subjects. The wine community had embraced many digital and technological innovations pre-2020, but the classic rhetorical situation of discussing and tasting wine in person remained the main stage for rhetorical development.

The physical affordances and limitations of wine help balance digital and face-to-face communication. The early 2000s brought many new opportunities for prospective wine communicators - digital marketing, virtual consulting, and online media production to name a few. But the traditional setting of the floor sommelier in a restaurant giving advice to diners about best pairings remained most prominent in our pre-2020 perspective of wine rhetorics. In my experience, this is the rhetorical situation many sommeliers would reminisce on when thinking about their roles in the community. This interaction of delivering expertise in the moment while the audience is experiencing the wine is the rhetorical situation most wine communication skills have been measured against. These in-the-moment experiences are where wine professionals would gain expertise and passion for their subject, whether it was practicing with real audiences or being transported back to the first time they themselves first tasted a particular wine or pairing. These physical interactions are the core of wine culture and have largely defined how rhetoric is used.

But many wine professionals took advantage of online spaces during the 2010s, using digital media and technology to automate and expand aspects of the wine industry. Most of these endeavors have been focused on building repositories of inventory, product reviews, or wine knowledge. This idea has been around since the onset of the digital revolution, as companies like Wine-Searcher (founded in 1998) have sought to utilize the affordances of born-digital encyclopedia platforms as a means of directing online consumers to distributors. But the 2010s marked a new era of wine communication where start-ups like Vivino (founded: 2010) and Winc (founded: 2012) launched digital marketplaces aiming to be a one-stop-shop for wine lovers. These platforms helped wine businesses access a global audience of consumers who could connect with wines and wine knowledge otherwise unattainable.

Some companies, however, focused more on building an educated community of average wine consumers. Many had begun to realize the long-term effects of conventional gatekeeping in the industry - the main disadvantage being an overall loss of interest in wine especially among younger consumers. To combat this, companies like Wine Folly (founded: 2011) began initiatives to simplify convoluted wine tasting practices and normalize wine learning for casual consumers. Over the last decade, Wine Folly has remained one of the most prominent sources for free, digestible, and credible information about wine, regions, tasting, and pairing. But even Wine Folly could not resist the opportunity to capitalize on the digital marketplace of global wine lovers, eventually merging with Global Wine Database in 2019 to utilize consumer data in new ways.⁹

Tradition Versus Innovation Beyond 2010

These trends reflect another prominent pattern in the pre-2020 rhetorics of wine: focus on capitalistic achievement as the rhetorical goal of wine communication. The buying and selling of valuables influences rhetorical communication in many industries, a perspective where stronger skills in rhetoric equates to increasingly successful sales. Operating under the idea that wine sales are what propel the industry forward every year, it makes sense that good wine communication was seen as a strong set of rhetorical skills used to persuade audiences to make purchases. For individual wine professionals, these skills have included subject knowledge, rhetorical delivery, audience awareness, and an efficient amount of practice - all strategies traditionally valued by rhetoricians throughout history.

But one of the most important traits a wine professional needs has always been credibility. The sommelier's ethos in the rhetorical situation can determine whether or not the audience trusts them enough to be influenced by their rhetorical skill. In the situation of a floor sommelier and a restaurant patron, much of the individual's credibility would come from the

⁹ Wine Folly, "About Us."

environment, as the restaurant who hired the individual often lent credibility to their expertise. Wine professionals were a reflection of the prestigious food and drink organizations they worked for in addition to their own identity, which made rhetorical identification a matter of combining sellable personality traits. These professionals' rhetorical skills focused more on their ability to sell the narrative of the brand - the region, estate, vineyard, etc. - than their ability to translate their own narrative relationship with the wine. The key to being a good communicator in wine, as I was told by my sommelier course instructors in 2019, is knowing as much information about the history of wine trends and the current trends so that one can be prepared for whatever audiences want next.

However, general interest in “plummeting,” according to the experts interviewed in Tina Caputo’s “What the Wine Industry Gets Wrong” for *SevenFifty Daily*.¹⁰ Damien Wilson, chair of Sonoma State University’s wine business program, argues that wine marketing strategy must shift towards promoting “authentic” stories behind wines rather than focus solely on profit.

Most producers are eager to try and exploit what they’re referring to as premiumization of the market, but what that’s done is set the entry point at a cost that is too high,” explains Wilson. “While profitability is up at the top end of wine’s markets, the foundation of its success—penetrating the market with an increase in new consumers—has eroded to the point that it’s now jeopardizing the industry’s long-term viability. This is likely to be the first generation that is poorer than the previous generation, so we are going about it the wrong way.”¹¹

In Wilson’s perspective, a strategic balance between traditional methods and innovative practices will help enhance future wine marketing communications.

When we think of the language used by initiates when they’re talking about wine, they don’t talk about elements of regionality, nuances, and complexity . . . Recognizing that

¹⁰ Caputo, “What the Wine Industry Gets Wrong.”

¹¹ Ibid.

[social interaction] element of wine and coming up with packages and products that are conducive to that situation is really one of the keys.

Within the framework of wine as a business, considering younger consumers more holistically and developing a balance of rhetorical strategy will help the industry survive going forward.

2020 Cultural Changes and Social Movements

In this research, I am looking at the transformative effects of the 2020 vintage, meaning, in wine terms, the year of time that influenced agricultural and social results. This year came with a multitude of challenges, and one of the biggest factors has been the COVID pandemic. But I want to specifically note that, though the pandemic set a lot of transformations in motion, it was not the only factor leading to a widespread transformation in the wine industry. The pandemic caused unprecedented changes in dining culture and altered the food and drink industry forever, similar to other industries dealing with physical services, foods, and experiences. This already sets up this time frame as rich for academic research, as a dramatic disruption of the status quo allows us to reflect on our practice and rebuild differently. Our new cultural practices reflect the solidarity we've grown over the past few years, and many current arguments display the universal need for sustainable interdependence and reciprocal community engagement.

Political and social movements hit a high in 2020 - many in preparation for the long-awaited 2020 presidential elections. Political tensions on top of a health crisis inspired individuals to reflect on their values and reconsider personal and professional future plans. Two of the biggest social revolutions in American wine history happened in 2020: the summer's Black Lives Matter movement and the *New York Times's* sexual harassment exposé.¹² These movements ignited and inspired people in wine to take charge, expose prejudicial leaders in the industry, and instead assert their own voices into the conversation. While systemic change

¹² Moskin, "The Wine World's Most Elite Circle Has a Sexual Harassment Problem."

takes time, quick shifts in rhetoric in regards to issues of inclusivity, opportunity, and authority have already happened. According to Chasity Cooper of *SevenFifty Daily*,¹³ hundreds of organizations have implemented programs and scholarships aimed at giving women, queer individuals, and BIPOC more career opportunities in the industry, and many of the industry's stale and/or predatory authorities were discredited by the end of 2021. These movements have illuminated or changed what wine rhetoricians and audiences value, thus changing the rhetorical situation going forward.

Post-2020 Kairotic Situation

For wine, sustainability has become important both in viticulture and interpersonal relationships. By the end of 2020, many American winemakers were revamping their sustainability practices - not just because of the pandemic, but also because of the natural disasters like California wildfires destroying the crop. Wine writer Jancis Robinson, in her November 2020 article "Americans Lead on Sustainability," argues that American winemakers seem to understand the value of environmental sustainability but need to start incorporating social sustainability as well.¹⁴ Social sustainability - according to *Wine Enthusiast* writer Amber Lucas - is the "enduring mental and physical impacts that an industry has on everyone [involved]."¹⁵ Many agree with Lucas that environmental and social sustainability are intersectional, and a true commitment to sustainability in wine means embracing inclusivity, diversity, and sharing authentic narratives.

Some wine professionals believe that innovative technology and digital media can help the industry move towards these goals. A couple decades into the digital revolution, we are still figuring out how to balance digital media in wine communication and practices. The early 2020s have revealed strategies for more and less effective uses of technology and digital media. In his

¹³ Cooper, "Last Year, the Drinks Industry Made a Commitment to Diversity."

¹⁴ Robinson, "Why Americans Lead on Sustainability."

¹⁵ Lucas, "Social Sustainability and Inclusivity."

“Ecommerce Strategy Playbook,” Empire Merchants’ Brian Becker outlines a few of these strategies. His main argument supports traditional practices in forming local relationships while also noting the importance of online collaboration: “Through omnichannel digital activation and local market collaboration with distribution partners, suppliers can optimize and build lasting brand equity in the digital ecosystem.”¹⁶ This kind of “multifaceted approach,” along with managing digital inventory and user-friendly experiences, are the types of strategies adopted by forward-thinking wine organizations during the pandemic. Wine organizations who have embraced digital media as a tool for socially distant communication rather than lamented the digital as a temporary replacement of in-person interaction continue to contribute to the industry’s current evolution. 2020 proved digital media a vital tool for survival and communication, and many innovative ideas in digital media were born from the pandemic. This phenomenon continues to influence the evolving rhetorics of wine today and is shaping the future of rhetoric for wine professionals.

Narratives and Community

The most important aspect of wine rhetoric is that its study can help illuminate timely communications issues in the community. As the 2020s continue to offer more opportunities for widespread change in the wine industry, the narratives of wine professionals become important elements in understanding new rhetorical situations. These rhetorics can teach us about the needs and values of the community and help communicators understand modern rhetorical purposes. Enlightenment rhetorician Giambattista Vico argues that this is “the blood” of rhetorical study, as timely demands for scholarly research “should circulate, like a blood-stream, through the entire body of the learning process.”¹⁷ Analysis of timely narratives allows scholars of rhetoric to collect valuable stories in their repertoire of discourse practice, similar to how a wine

¹⁶ Becker, “Ecommerce Strategy Playbook.”

¹⁷ Vico, “Study Methods of Our Time,” 866.

drinker curates their bottle collections. From these story cellars, rhetoric researchers can extract knowledge on the truths of the community and how communication strategies can lead towards these truths. Narrative research helps reveal these truths, rhetorical analysis can help communicators restructure perspectives to fit our evolving world. In this ethnographic research of community narratives, careful attention will be given to balancing the knowledge of both traditional and progressive sources. Like a sommelier might pair a juicy Chablis with salty Gulf Coast oysters, this research will juxtapose different perspectives to develop new ways of thinking and experiencing the rhetorical situation.

Our current circumstances have a lot to teach us about rhetoric, communication, and interdisciplinary education. This research project will explore timely conversations with leading voices in wine communications and modern strategies for rhetorical effectiveness with a goal of learning more about how rhetorical contributes to community-oriented communication practices. “As for the aim of all kinds of intellectual pursuits,” as Vico says, “One only is kept in view, one is pursued, one is honored by all: Truth.”¹⁸ Understanding the truth surrounding issues in modern communication, education, and research calls for application of new and traditional frameworks. This research project will present new insight within the frameworks of timeless rhetorical perspectives outlined in the literature review: rhetorical taste and cultural rhetorics.

Rhetorical Taste

Taste, as an element of rhetoric, is an important framework for study of wine communication strategies. Creative fields - art, writing, literature, music, food, wine, etc. operate under a standard of understood cultural, rhetorical taste. This idea originated in the Scottish Enlightenment period through rhetoricians like Hugh Blair, David Hume, and George Campbell. Their theories will be explained in detail in the following literature review. To give a brief overview: we produce content that meets set standards of quality, beauty, or greatness, and

¹⁸ Vico, “Study Methods of Our Time,” 867.

credible authorities can influence these standards with the right leverage of rhetorical power. When authorities within a creative community assert effective arguments, they persuade audiences to develop and change their own creative opinions. Enough widespread persuasion leads to a transformative shift in community-wide taste, which can then dictate how the community moves forward. Taste determines community values, audiences' desires, and who has a voice in the conversation, so understanding a community's sense of taste - or better, having some rhetorical power over taste - is advantageous for rhetoricians.

Modern Cultural Taste in Wine

Modern taste in wine is the historical development of our interaction with wine throughout the centuries, and it varies across cultures. Most European cultures often have ceremonial and familial relationships with wine, whereas other communities around the world are new to wine or do not interact with it much at all. In the U.S., our history with wine is layered and complex, and our current tastes reflect our equal affinities for traditionally renowned varieties and American-grown innovations. Much of our wine culture centers around California (plus Oregon and Washington), but strong food and drink culture in cities like New York and Atlanta makes them hubs for wine distribution and education. Diversity in the wine industry has become one of the community's top values, as traditional, elitist perspectives have fallen short of evolving audiences' attention. Globalized business marketing remains influential in the wine world, but our shared cultural tastes, especially since 2020, are increasingly prioritizing alternative trends, sustainable methods, and local flavor and influence, as this dissertation project will demonstrate.

Post-2020 wine drinkers gravitate towards experiences that resonate with them personally and are looking for true, authentic reasons to cultivate relationships with wine. Standards are questioned, styles are blended, accessibility is changing, and elitism has no place. Sadhbh O'Sullivan describes this transformation in cultural taste as a new way of thinking

about wine as an “Aspirational Lifestyle Choice.”¹⁹ Rather than thinking of wine as an elite culture reserved for few, wine drinkers all over the world are translating wine into “something much more palatable” that makes sense to the individual based on their identity. This long-coming phenomena started in the 1960s (when the entry point for wine became more financially accessible) and has been propelled by digital media in the past decade. The leaders of these shifts in taste are, largely, women - thanks to years of pushback against the industry’s “pungent mix of sexism and snobbery.”²⁰ Overall, diverse perspectives in the American wine industry who have maintained a strong sense of identity throughout the early 2020s are sculpting the current rhetorical situation for wine communicators.

Identity and Taste

Identity has become an increasingly important factor in wine communication for both wine professionals and wine consumers. Rhetorically, this is not surprising, as shifts in cultural taste always come with shifts in rhetoric and discourse, which leads to a large reshaping of people’s narratives and senses of self. But like any revolution, some are quick to embrace new narratives and others need more convincing. It takes compelling arguments to persuade audiences to adopt entirely new perspectives, and individuals making these arguments need more than just strong rhetorical skill. Pre-2020 arguments of wine, as seen in the common floor sommelier scenario, followed the classic structures of Aristotelian rhetoric - logical points and a hefty amount of emotional appeal delivered by a credible wine authority. But post-2020 arguments rely more on Burkean theories of identification, as true persuasion in wine demands an understanding of both the rhetor’s and the audience’s identities; a sustainable, reciprocal relationship between the parties; and a palatable translation of the pleasurable complexities wine offers. As communicators in the wine industry continue to learn better methods of

¹⁹ O’Sullivan, “How Instagram Made Wine.”

²⁰ Ibid.

balancing rhetorical strategies to fit current audiences, we can learn new ways of developing community connections through cultural taste.

There is a current opportunity for people in wine to establish new methods of rhetorical strategy that have the power to change our narratives of cultural taste. Some find this opportunity daunting, especially those accustomed to the success of traditional pre-2020 industry roles. But many find this period of wine as a long-awaited space for shifting the standards of taste to reflect a more authentic narrative of who drinks and discusses wine. Over the past few years, many American wine professionals have already taken this opportunity to establish new wine narratives. For example, a new wave of the women in wine movement seems to have exploded. Women are coming together all over the country to continue large conversations about the future of wine at events such as the yearly *Bâtonnage* Forum, a women-led educational experience for wine professionals about our unique challenges in the field. Similarly, people of color in wine remain diligent in widening opportunities for BIPOC - especially in Atlanta with local organizations like the Hue Society focusing exclusively on amplifying Black, brown, and Indigenous voices in the industry. Values that gained importance in 2020 persist, especially our tactical use of digital media to transcend geographical location as we build larger and larger communities. Across the industry, Americans in wine are searching for authentic, sustainable means of connecting and communicating within this new era of cultural taste.

Opportunities for Research and Conversation

As someone who began developing a dissertation thesis in March 2022, two years into a global pandemic and one year left as a PhD student, I identify with my colleagues wavering towards burnout in regards to academic research. When it comes to seizing the real opportunities for reciprocal, deliverable results in my work, I became inspired by modern scholars of rhetoric like Dr. Elizabeth Thorpe at SUNY Brockport. Thorpe hosts a podcast called

Kairoticast with a goal to “show that rhetoric, with all its big, academic and effective sounding ideas, is really quite applicable to our everyday lives.”²¹ Thorpe identifies the shared perspective of today’s rhetoricians as looking towards “The Banality of 2022” shadowing our prospective research.²² The “tragic frame” of doing research in the early 2020s makes us question rhetorical goals, but Thorpe reminds us that society values our work not from our cyclical, interpersonal conversations in times of mundane peace but because of how we teach our communities to exercise powers of rhetoric while navigating our own academic agency during transformative cultural challenges.

As I have explored different primary and secondary sources to evidence the phenomena I see unfolding in my communities, I have found many research methods and principles that make Thorpe’s real-world rhetorical goals attainable and position rhetoricians as agents of change. In the early days of my research, whenever I would get stuck on an idea or undergo bouts of writer’s block, I would put on the latest episode of *Kairoticast* to inspire me. Thorpe, along with many other contemporary rhetoricians discussed in this project, helped provide me with motivation during this lengthy research endeavor and reminded me why my research matters. By interrogating our community roles as scholars, teachers, rhetors, and learners, we strive towards a goal of developing sustainable collaborative spaces where diverse perspectives share power in the evolving rhetorics of our communities.

²¹ Thorpe, “Welcome to *Kairoticast*.”

²² Thorpe, “The Banality of 2022.”

2. AERATING THE GRAND NARRATIVE OF WINE

Literature Review

This literature review aims to situate my work, which focuses on a non-academic community and is interdisciplinary in nature, within the field of rhetoric and composition and digital humanities scholarship. The rhetorics of wine stem from a general narrative of taste traditions, evolving vocabulary, and foundational camaraderie. A few scholars have analyzed and categorized the elements of wine communication, most notably linguist Adriene Lehrer who published two editions of *Wine and Conversation* in 1983 and 2009. Lehrer is one of the first literary individuals who started considering wine as an academic subject. In her first edition of *Wine and Conversation*, she applies conventional linguistic analysis to wine communication. In the second edition, in Part I, she includes theories from her first edition but applies them to new research scenarios. She discusses multiple experiments in Part II and uses a combination of linguistic knowledge and wine knowledge to make assumptions about the function of language in the wine community in Part III.²³ Parallel to her work, I would like to use a combination of academic knowledge and wine experience to make assumptions about the function of rhetoric in the wine community. However, Lehrer's approach is strictly linguistic. Her analyses tend to focus more on the specific terms wine drinkers use to make textual meaning of subjective characteristics, not on the way wine rhetorics define cultural taste and contribute to the current narrative of wine.

Instead, this research aims towards a goal of increased visibility not necessarily for the language of wine itself but for the historical figures currently shaping the rhetorics of wine to better reflect the diverse community of those who engage in it. This structure of my research more appropriately parallels the work of Ann B. Matasar who composed a book dedicated to the "Women of Wine: The Rise of Women in the Global Industry" in 2006. In this book, Matasar

²³ Lehrer, *Wine and Conversation*.

establishes a “historical context for appreciating women’s contributions to the modern wine industry” and illuminates the connections between women leaders and historical progress in the industry.²⁴ The highlight of her book, what I am most aiming to replicate in my research methods, are the fourth through ninth chapters in which Matasar showcases the work of modern individuals by relaying primary source information gathered from personal interviews. The knowledge and experiences discussed in these interviews and shared in her book have “given life to this work,” says Matasar.²⁵ Her goal to “create greater visibility for the remarkable women who are influencing today’s wine industry” was met because of the work’s focus on primary resources and, most importantly, Matasar’s dedication to making friends in the industry in order to generate the kind of continuous conversations that reveal timely truths about the progress of the community.²⁶

My approach to the subject of wine communication is rhetorical and community-oriented; I seek to analyze effective communication and rhetorical practices of wine professionals themselves. Like Matasar, I want to highlight the important role of women in the wine industry, as women have been at the forefront of digital and social media, working together to expand rhetorical strategy to be more inclusive, authentic, and equitable. But I also want to display the role of men, nonbinary, and queer people in shaping wine rhetoric, as everyone’s diverse perspectives provide imperative insight into the general narrative of the wine industry. As a lesbian, I want to use my position in academia to uplift my queer community and solidify our resilient existence in the general narrative. To put it in the words of one of my interviewees, Luke Wylde, who took extra effort to make sure I correctly use their pronouns (“They/He/X – in that order”), “Given the state of the world, more of us trans/non-binary/fluid folks need to proudly take that position.” Additionally, as a proponent of diversity and representation, I want to clearly

²⁴ Matasar, *Women of Wine*, 3.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, ix.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, ix.

highlight the role of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) voices in my community and across the country. Black individuals in Atlanta particularly have been fundamental in transforming wine culture so that it detaches itself from white- and patriarchal-dominated exclusivity and more accurately represents the diverse individuals involved in my local wine community.

From my perspective, wine is a substance of pleasure essential to human life and, as such, can be marketed, manipulated, and empowered by persuasive rhetoric. A rhetorical analysis of wine communication requires a layered foundation of the traditional and modern rhetorical aspects wine professionals use in participating in and provoking conversations about wine. In this chapter, I help situate my work within Humanities studies by giving an overview of the theories in rhetoric and composition that found this research. First highlighted are classic, Burkean, and Enlightenment rhetorical concepts. Then, an overview is provided of how narrative and camaraderie are used in modern wine communication to influence cultural taste. Within this discussion is the time scope and the community-oriented goals of this research, which are rooted in cultural studies. The chapter ends with an introduction of my own activity and scholarship within wine communication, connecting these efforts with academic concepts in cultural studies and rhetoric and composition.

Classic Rhetoric: Ethos and Pleasure

Wine communication exhibits classic structures of Aristotelian rhetoric. His definition of rhetoric, an ability to see the available means of persuasion, applies to the rhetorical situations of wine professionals as they learn about, talk about, sell, and drink wine.²⁷ Wine particularly emphasizes the concept of pleasure, a natural response to human activity that Aristotle considers an essential part of life.²⁸ According to Aristotle, pleasure drives people towards

²⁷ Aristotle, "From Rhetoric," 182.

²⁸ Ibid., 202.

persuasion because, once we've tasted something pleasurable, we are looking for a way to taste it again.²⁹ Wine itself uses its own persuasive tactics to elicit pleasure, but wine professionals are the ones who use crafted rhetorical strategies like metaphors to enhance audiences' wine experiences. Rhetorical strategy emphasizing memory and metaphor allows complex wine knowledge to be translated into simple, universal experiences that wide audiences of wine drinkers can understand. Metaphor and pleasure work hand-in-hand, as Aristotle theorizes, because metaphors create knowledge in the most pleasurable ways.³⁰

The role of the rhetorician, Aristotle argues, is to use these strategies to interpret the standards of pleasure for the community.³¹ But in many communities, wine communities especially, standards are based on subjective tastes and individual experiences, so dealing with the rhetorics of wine requires a strong foundation of ethos within the community. Immediate rhetorical situations involve strategic use of memory, metaphor, and pleasure, but a truly credible rhetorician in wine shares a part of the community narrative. Wine's general narrative is made up of individual life stories that wine professionals can share, identify with, and analyze to develop effective rhetorical strategies. Audiences join the conversation with individual, unique palates, and to please their tastes, wine professionals must be able to understand the audience's expectations and desires. The result is an intertextual dialogue where wine rhetors rely more on identifying with their audiences than a set structure of persuasive argumentation.

Burkean Rhetoric: Identity and Conversation

Because of this relationship between wine rhetor and audience, the rhetorics of wine prominently display strategies of Burkean identification. Burke argues that identification with one's audience creates a relationship where the rhetor's oneness with the audience allows new

²⁹ Aristotle, "From Rhetoric," 203.

³⁰ Ibid., 204.

³¹ Ibid., 219.

insight into how this audience can be persuaded.³² In wine, identification is vital for persuasive effectiveness, as the subjective nature of wine can render classic rhetorical strategy useless in many situations. Not only is being able to read a person important for establishing a connection, but the art of identification also allows wine professionals to engage in the “social intercourse” of wine.³³ These social spaces reveal moments of “pure persuasion” where wine rhetoricians can express their own pleasure, creating an opportunity for an authentic relationship formed over wine.³⁴ These relationships help develop sustainable rhetorical effectiveness and mimic the connections wine professionals have with their own mentors and colleagues.

In modern wine rhetorical situations, Burkean identification strategies are becoming more and more necessary for rhetorical effectiveness. Wine professionals certainly develop credibility through gaining certifications and partnering with prestigious organizations. But slowly over the past couple of decades and then rapidly since 2020, people in wine are realizing that industry-specific expertise only goes so far in conversation with the average person. Burke’s emphasis on understanding one’s audience has become the pillar of post-2020 wine communication as wine professionals are learning and relearning audiences’ interests in wine. Many scholars in the field of rhetoric use pieces of Burkean rhetoric to describe aspects of community-oriented cultural rhetorics, as will be discussed in the rhetorical analysis section of this project.

Enlightenment Rhetoric: Taste and Culture

The art of tasting wine involves singular, objective experiences that contribute to an overarching understanding of taste. A wine’s own physical taste holds as much power over its audience’s pleasure as effective communication does, making it a unique subject for rhetorical analysis. However, the tastes of wines and the persuasive language describing these tastes

³² Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives*, 20.

³³ Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives*, 56.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 267.

represent only surface-level rhetorical situations in the wine industry. Larger conversations with greater exigency focus on what drives the wine industry, who has the authority on the standards of taste, and what brings the wine community together. These rhetorical conversations - along with the current kairotic situation - determine the progression of wine culture and the universal standard of taste in the community.

A cultural standard of taste - as opposed to gustatorial taste - is the main part of wine that rhetoric can influence. The concept of a standard of taste dates back to the Scottish Enlightenment era of rhetoric in the late 1700s. Rhetorician Hugh Blair defines taste as “The power of receiving pleasure from the beauties of nature and of art” in “Lectures on Rhetoric.”³⁵ A standard of taste, according to Blair, is the universal sense of beauty born from community culture and upheld by taste authorities. These authorities use “natural sensibility to beauty” and apply educated reasoning to uphold or establish a standard of taste for their communities to measure beauty against.³⁶ By engaging in these taste practices, communities generate a rhetorical power system where those who efficiently navigate taste conventions directly influence the evolution of the whole community’s standard of taste.

David Hume, Blair’s contemporary, argues that the human quest for a standard of taste occurs naturally in his essay “Of the Standard of Taste.” His philosophy reiterates the Protagorean theory of relativism, which argues in favor of many different subjective truths rather than one universal truth. Just as our individual gustatorial tastes determine our relationship with wine and food, Hume argues that our personal opinions determine our truths. Specifically, in regards to the standards of taste, he defines delicacy as our sense of “finer emotions” and positions delicacy as the concept that leads one to rhetorical effectiveness.³⁷

³⁵ Blair, “Lectures on Rhetoric,” 955.

³⁶ Ibid., 955.

³⁷ Hume, “Of the Standard of Taste,” 835.

Similar to how a more delicate palate allows one to distinguish gustatorial tastes, the delicacy of rhetorical taste is the key to making a rhetorical impact. Our individual true standard of taste, Hume argues, is “founded only on experience and on the observation of the common sentiments of human nature.”³⁸ This philosophy parallels many wine professionals’ learning experiences in the wine industry where they continuously hone their craft by practicing tasting new wines, creating new pairing experiences, and meeting new people.

The path to wine education is influenced by the resources at hand and the individual’s effort to make observations, and their credibility - their authority on the standard of taste - comes from the rhetorical strategies they have learned. For this reason, Scottish Enlightenment theories of taste will be used as a framework for rhetorical study, as expressed in one of my recent publications, “Scottish Enlightenment Philosophy as a Theoretical Framework of Wine Rhetoric,” for *Brolly Journal of Social Sciences*. In this essay, I argue that modern wine rhetoric embodies all of the persuasive communication skills developed by wine professionals, and the rhetorical skills they develop are reflective of Hume and Blair’s theories on Taste and beauty. Though these fields do not usually intersect in formal education, exploring wine rhetoric through the lens of Scottish Enlightenment reveals the purposeful methodology behind their practice of persuasive argumentative and situates Enlightenment rhetoric in the current conversation of wine communication.

Wine professionals use their experiences to develop knowledge, expert skills, communication tools, and an ever-evolving repertoire of wine words and phrases that help them navigate the standards of taste. Many objective factors - ethnographic history, winemaking practices, terroir, and available resources - influence a community’s wine taste standards, but wine professionals hold the power to shape their community’s perspective of and response to these elements, situating wine professionals as modern-day rhetoricians. Therefore, an analysis

³⁸ Hume, “Of the Standard of Taste,” 837.

of the rhetorics of wine would be an enriching way of engaging with the community and understanding industry-specific rhetorical strategies. However, 2020 ignited the exigency behind these sentiments by causing an industry-wide shift in rhetorical strategy. Now, because the rhetorics of wine have undergone (and are still undergoing) this transformation, rhetorical analysis of the new state of wine communication is imperative for understanding where the general narrative is headed.

Wine Rhetoric: Narrative and Camaraderie

In 2019, sommelier and winemaker Rajat Parr was interviewed by sommelier organization GuildSomm about how he gained the rhetorical skills and practical experience that led him to becoming a renowned expert in wine. He first describes his initial shift from student to proficient when he was working under Larry Stone, a professional known as a wine virtuoso by his many protégés.³⁹ In this position in the late 1990s, Parr was immersed in the “tight-knit” wine community and inspired by Stone’s humility and persistence. Parr recounts that Stone would consistently ask him questions and encourage him to research the things he did not know, which, in the “pre-Google” days of wine, meant reading a lot of books and engaging with other members of the community. As Parr moved up in the wine industry, he applied this community-engaged approach to his own educational practice: “I thought it was just obvious that I had to teach whoever wants to learn.” Parr believes that anyone “as thirsty” as he was in the beginning deserves to share his knowledge and expertise, and he defines the wine community as one based on “paying it forward.”⁴⁰

Parr’s anecdotal account very accurately reflects the community-engaged learning journey of most wine professionals. While books and courses on wine help build fundamental knowledge and credibility, wine professionals’ biggest learning experiences come from working

³⁹ Parr, “Finding Your Niche.”

⁴⁰ Ibid.

different jobs, meeting new people, and authentically engaging with their comrades in the community. As Parr puts it: "It was a force. We were all tasting together . . . It was camaraderie. There was a lot of friendship. There was a lot of sharing knowledge because we knew that individually we could not know it all. All I knew is that I had to keep learning."⁴¹ These ideas of camaraderie, education, and continuous learning shape the community-oriented goals in this industry and serve as the foundation of modern wine rhetoric.

As professionals move forward in the industry, their gained understanding of fundamental wine concepts becomes their first step towards breaking down, interrogating, and sometimes - changing these concepts. Most wine professionals take on multiple different roles throughout their industry careers, but for many, the goal remains the same: to strengthen their relationship with wine. For wine professionals looking to make a name for themselves in the industry, their focus shifts from understanding particular wines to understanding the state of wine in general. In his latest book with Jordan Mackay, *The Sommelier's Atlas*, Parr's transition from wine student to cultural influencer is clearly displayed in his approach to cultural taste. The authors explain that rhetorical practice in wine "concentrates discussion, tasks the memory, and draws us ever more fully into the relationship with the wine in front of us and wine in the larger sense."⁴² The natural progression of gaining wine expertise leads one towards discovering their own identity in the world of wine, allowing them to play with different means of advancing wine culture and influencing cultural taste.

The ultimate goal of using effective wine rhetoric is to create a foundational credibility suited for making lasting changes in the standards of taste in wine - to go from student learner to accredited wine authority. According to Parr and Mackay, this inevitable evolution in wine professionals' journeys runs on our "heartfelt love of wine and wine culture."⁴³ Like any

⁴¹ Parr, "Finding Your Niche."

⁴² Mackay, "Introduction," 2.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 4

rhetorician honing a craft, wine professionals gain passion for their subject as they experience breakthroughs and revelations in their education. Inevitably, says Mackay, the “natural question after *How does this wine taste?* becomes *Why does it taste like that?*”⁴⁴ The journey to answer this question happens through “nonscientific” means, Parr and Mackay argue, and instead involves peer education and social interactions with individuals across the industry.⁴⁵ Taste is not decided by a single individual. It is a culmination of experiences, values, pleasures, and desires of people who drink and talk about wine. For wine professionals, taste becomes less about personal preferences and more about the community’s relationship with wine. Taste, Mackay says, “has many definitions. Yes, we are writing about the taste of wine. Yes, we are also chronicling a series of journeys dedicated to the art of tasting wine and food.”⁴⁶

Building the general narrative of taste in wine requires listening to these kinds of individual life stories and experiences. But even with camaraderie and inclusivity as top priorities, many unheard narratives slip through the cracks due to the industry’s legacy of exclusivity and elitism. Fortunately, the wine industry includes a spectrum of organizations dedicated to amplifying unheard voices and providing support to those who need it most. One of the most notable of these organizations is the Roots Fund founded by Ikimi Dubose-Woodson. While many wine organizations focus on providing funds, scholarships, and opportunities for people of color, Roots Fund attacks systemic inequities by supporting mentees through education at every step of the career building process. Supportive education, rather than one-time opportunities for access, is what Dubose-Woodson believes to be the key to success in wine.

In a recent interview with *Wine Enthusiast*, Dubose-Woodson laid out her plan for the future of her work with the Roots Fund. Right now, the organization invests in mentees by

⁴⁴ Mackay, “Introduction,” 2.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

educating them on every aspect of the wine industry. Dubose-Woodson coaches individuals through writing their own business plans and gives them mentors for distribution, sales and marketing, legal advice, and more. This coaching and education offsets the effects of generational knowledge wealth and gives these individuals more authority over the industry standards of taste. Like Parr, Dubose-Woodson feels compelled to share her knowledge, to invest in her mentees by giving them “all the jewels and gems” she got from her own educational journey in wine. Moreover, she lends credibility by uplifting individuals to believe in their own stories. “You have no choice but to step into your light,” Dubose-Woodson says of her mentees, “Because we try to eliminate everything that’s kept you in the dark.”⁴⁷ Her beliefs illuminate the power of rhetoric in wine, and her efforts reflect the wine community’s mentality of continued shared education.

Education in wine can take many forms, and, as Parr argues, some of the most impacting education comes from engaging in conversations and building camaraderie. At the local level, I have seen Parr’s and Dubose-Woodson’s arguments play out through Kelly Cornett’s podcast, *A Cork in the Road*. Cornett is a wine consultant and media specialist in Atlanta who strives to learn everything she can about wine through the narratives of thought leaders in the southeast wine industry. Her podcast features voices from different corners of the industry, and her goal is to collect stories and amplify voices in order to educate her audience about how tastemakers shape the evolving industry standards, values, and practices. Cornett believes that cultural taste extends beyond drinking and selling wine and is widely connected to social justice, politics, agriculture, and more: “Wine is my people. It’s my community. It’s my relationship with people. It is how I travel and explore the world.”⁴⁸

Cornett’s sentiments reflect the theories of Parr and Dubose-Woodson and directly correlate with my research goals of listening to key figures and understanding the impact of

⁴⁷ Dubose-Woodson, “Community Breeds Support.”

⁴⁸ Cornett, *A Cork in the Road*.

wine communication strategies on evolving cultural taste. The goals of this research are to thoroughly explore the rhetorical situations of the current-2020 wine community and rhetorically analyze communication strategies to help inform the future of scholarship in rhetoric.

Considering the elements of modern wine rhetoric, this research project adopts traditional rhetorical perspectives within new frameworks that fit the current kairotic situation.

Time Scope

In the years following 2020, standards of taste are continuously being redefined while wine professionals develop new methods of effective rhetorical delivery. My research continues during this pandemic era, an environment that presents extraordinary research circumstances according to scholars Fay Niker and Aveek Bhattacharya. Their sourcebook, *Political Philosophy in a Pandemic*, asserts an argument for using the COVID pandemic to develop theories, philosophies, contexts, and questions for research. The essays in this anthology individually address a range of political issues that beg for further research in light of their post-2020 state. As Onora O'Neill mentions in the forward, "Some changes that have been introduced to deal with the pandemic may last after it has ended, and other changes may turn out to be necessary or desirable."⁴⁹ Niker and Bhattacharya argue that this pandemic research is possible because, "in dramatically disrupting the status quo, crises invite us - individually and collectively - to take stock, to reflect, and . . . to consider how to redress, repair, and rebuild our societies."⁵⁰ Additionally, crises demand drastic action. They "inject more agency" in our community discourse and enhance the exigency of our rhetorical situations.⁵¹ Overall, *Political Philosophy in a Pandemic* reflects the solidarity we've grown that strengthens our arguments for better community practices and displays the universal need for sustainable interdependence and reciprocal community engagement.

⁴⁹ O'Neill, "Forward," xiv.

⁵⁰ Niker and Bhattacharya, "Introduction," 2.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 2.

Adam Swift, a contributing author in *Political Philosophy in a Pandemic*, argues in favor of using the COVID pandemic as a theory and context for research. In his essay, "Pandemic as Political Theory," Swift describes the pandemic as a real-life thought experiment, saying that we could pose the pandemic as a "dramatic scenario used to explore a wide range of normative considerations," such as how to make political decisions in uncertain times or how to balance the interests of demographically different communities.⁵² I want to expand Swift's theory to include other normative considerations outside of general politics. Specifically, I want to argue that the COVID pandemic is a useful context for my research in wine communication and community engagement, as it has shown which communication strategies and community engagement practices are able to withstand unforeseen circumstances and industry-wide transformations. However, I want to explore these rhetorics beyond the scope of the pandemic, as future research on this topic will not be viewed through a pandemic lens, but through the lens of the new normal generated by our responses and actions during the early 2020s.

Community-Oriented Goals

When the general narrative of a culture's lived experiences and rhetorical practices shifts this exponentially, a rhetorical analysis can offer a productive means for understanding communication change and considering new possibilities for the future. The exigency behind this mentality comes from Rainer Winter's concept of a *conjunctural analysis of culture and power*. Winter defines this kind of study as a "transdisciplinary approach" and defines it as "the analysis of lived experiences, social practices and cultural representations, which are considered in their network-like or intertextual links, from the viewpoints of power, difference and human agency."⁵³ He indicates that participatory, personal interactions with community members is necessary for a comprehensive understanding of the state of the wine industry. To

⁵² Swift, "Pandemic as Political Theory," 257.

⁵³ Winter, "Cultural Studies," 247.

³⁷ Ibid., 248.

contextualize this environment of participatory observation, Winter argues it is necessary to examine social practices, relationships, and audience-centered media of the community. Winter positions me, the researcher, as “inside culture,” arguing that I must consider the “complex, contradictory, and many-layered context of reality in the global era of the twenty-first century.”³⁷ At this point in my research, I have developed a foundation of professional relationships, education, and digital communication to contextualize my rhetorical, ethnographic analysis of rhetorical power in wine culture.

At the beginning of 2020, only a few months following my sommelier certification, I became active in Instagram’s wine community and launched a wine tasting Patreon subscription service. While the Patreon began as a platform for hosting virtual tastings during the 2020 quarantine, it evolved into a space for my dissertation writing process, self-publications, and works of creative expression. After receiving the Provost Dissertation Fellowship in the summer of 2022, I compiled “PDF Roundup” posts to document my grad school journey for my cohort and future cohorts (an example can be seen below).

AUG 15, 2022 AT 12:45 PM

PDF ROUNDUP

[This post is a part of a series of updates for my Provost Dissertation Fellowship cohort. In this space, I am transparent about my own goals and experiences for the benefit of other researchers who may gain insight or learn from my mistakes.]

Conferences and Publications

During spring 2022, I presented at these conferences:

- [DHSI](#) "Digital Communication and Rhetorical Practices in the Wine Community"
- [NEXUS](#) "Methods for Reciprocal Collaboration in Community-Engaged Rhetorics and Research"
- [NJCEA](#) "Changes in Community-Engaged Composition Pedagogy"

I was also interviewed by Dr. Dan Dissinger University of Southern California for his [Writing Remix](#) podcast. Once I see my episode up on the website, I'll add the link here and add it to my CV.

I've been asked to write a chapter for an upcoming graduate research guidebook, *Radical Transparency: Perspectives on Graduate Education in Rhetoric and Composition*. My chapter draft (which will be based on Chs. 3 and 4 of my diss) is due at the end of October, and the book will be published sometime in 2023.

I'm always looking for new conference and publication opportunities, even when I already have a few in the works. The pandemic has really limited my conference options over the past couple of years, so I'm making up for lost time during the final stretch.

Research

My main goal this summer was to have half of my dissertation drafted - and I met the goal! I finished Ch. 3 at the end of July and have already started working on Ch. 4.

So far, I have interviewed:

- Vanessa Raymond of [Telesomm](#)
- Kelly Cornett of [A Cork in the Road](#)
- Alex Schrecengost of [Virtual With Us](#)

Every individual I interview gives me new insight into another aspect of the world of wine. I plan on finishing up these interviews by the end of August, and I'm excited to learn new things from these narratives.

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⁵⁴ McAlister, "PDF Roundup." Image description: this is a screenshot of a text-based blog post highlighting the early steps and goals of my research. The text is accessible at patreon.com/posts/pdf-roundup-70552949 (also referenced in the References).

Professional Writing

This summer, I started writing entertainment articles for some extra income. Fortunately, I was a [Bâtonnage Mentee](#) earlier this year, so I got to network with a lot of wine communicators in the industry, and they gave me tons of tips about how to set yourself up as a freelance writer.

- Own your audience. Have a public-facing website or blog for your audience to follow (or a Patreon!)
- Be confident but don't take rejection personally. Most of us academics have already hardened ourselves to rejection, so this one is easy.
- Read and abide by style guides. Again, academics are great at reading the prompt, and this is very similar.

I've been at it for about 4 months now, so here's my report for those of you actually interested in freelance writing. I've sent pitches to a few publications and only heard back from one, [Paste Magazine](#), and this is because I went to undergrad with one of the editors. When people say it's all about who you know, they are 100% correct.

I've been talking with a new local publication, Rough Draft ATL, about doing a sake column for them. We went back and forth a few times, but it seems like they've ghosted me for now.

TLDR: Freelance writing is fun, helps strengthen your writing muscles, and serves as a refreshing escape from wordy academic writing. However, how much you make depends on how much you can hustle, and rejection is rampant.

Pedagogy

My last semester as a grad student teacher ended very anticlimactically. Candidly, the last couple days of the semester are usually spent doing unpleasant things. Final projects have already been graded and most students have moved on from my class to focus on their more difficult classes and final exams. I spend most of this time responding to emails from students who were MIA all semester and trying to pass the class at the last minute.

But last week I got an email from the Center for Teaching and Learning with a thank-you letter from a student.

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⁵⁵ McAlister, "PDF Roundup." Image description: this is a screenshot of a text-based blog post highlighting the early steps and goals of my research. The text is accessible at patreon.com/posts/pdf-roundup-70552949 (also referenced in the References).



Hi Professor McAlister!

I just wanted to take the time to thank you so much for being such an amazing, understanding professor and working with me on my assignments this semester. I had a lot to juggle this semester and having you as a professor brought so much comfort and ease to my mind. It is nice to know that there are such great professors in the world who genuinely care and want to see me succeed. Thank you so much for being you and I know you are going to make the best Doctor ever! I am wishing you a lifetime of success, love and happiness to come. xoxoxoxoxo

CETLOE would also like to thank you for the dedication you show to your students and your teaching. You make GSU a wonderful place to teach and learn! We encourage you to add this letter of appreciation to your annual review materials. Congratulations on receiving this acknowledgement!

This was a really cool message to receive considering our last month of class was online while I had COVID. I didn't think the course stuck with any of my students this semester, but apparently it did.

I will say that I am feeling SO much relief going into the fall semester with no classes. It's nice to have more time to fully devote myself to my research. But teaching is a huge part of who I am, so I am also going to use this break to reflect on and revise my pedagogy. It's difficult to do these kind of big revisions when actively teaching, so I feel like I finally have a chance to get organized.

TLDR: Teaching is rewarding and students are inspiring, but not teaching for the first time in 7 years will give me a much-needed break.

Job market

Is it common to procrastinate hitting the job market? I updated my CV, LinkedIn, and website over the summer. But actually getting into searching for jobs, building applications, and setting up interviews feels super daunting. One of my goals for August is to have at least three applications running for academic positions.

Where to look for jobs? I've been using [Higher Ed Jobs](#) and the [MLA Job List](#). Right now, I am working on an application for a rhet/comp position at FIT.

I'm not super particular about what I teach, but I am VERY particular about where I move. My fiancée and I are aiming to use my job as a means of getting out of the country, so I'd ideally like a position somewhere outside the U.S. However, I'm open to moving to another city here in the meantime while I build up my credibility.

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⁵⁶ McAlister, "PDF Roundup." Image description: this is a screenshot of a text-based blog post highlighting the early steps and goals of my research. The text is accessible at patreon.com/posts/pdf-roundup-70552949 (also referenced in the References).

My location requirements:

- English speaking
- Affordable (housing, transit, food, utilities, etc.)
- Less or no legal discrimination against cannabis users
- Better healthcare

Additionally, I am putting myself out there in the non-academic job market as well. I know that the world of academia is supposed to open up once I actually get my degree, but my decade of experience in the field so far has given me little confidence that this actually will happen. So, I'm keeping one foot in academia and one foot in wine, and the path I eventually choose will depend on the highest bidder.

I've been talking with a wine company owner who is looking to hire a couple of cofounders to help her bring the company to the next level. So I will be pursuing this opportunity to gain more experience in wine communication (and to finally have a real income!).

TLDR: The academic job market is scary - but you just gotta get in there. Having non-academic opportunities is advantageous (and necessary, in my opinion).

August Goals

- Finish conducting interviews
- Start Ch. 4
- Submit 3 academic job applications
- Submit wine company job application
- Meet with *Radical Transparency* about my chapter draft
- International Journal of Digital Humanities special issue submission
- IDEAH DHSI 2022 special issue submission



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Through my work with Patreon and my interactions on social media, I connected with Bâtonnage Forum at the beginning of 2022, and their mentorship program has given me more opportunities for primary research and community engagement than I would have ever gotten on my own. This mentorship launched the major networking I have done with wine professionals all over the country and helped me gain a credible voice in the wine industry.

⁵⁷ McAlister, "PDF Roundup." Image description: this is a screenshot of a text-based blog post highlighting the early steps and goals of my research. The text is accessible at patreon.com/posts/pdf-roundup-70552949 (also referenced in the References).

To integrate my work within public spheres of wine writing, I started writing for *Paste Magazine* in May of 2022. This magazine has been my space for playing with different ways of discussing wine and exploring interdisciplinary connections between wine culture and other concepts. My first *Paste* publication, “Feelin’ Great: Wines for Celebrating 19 Years of Outkast’s Speakerboxxx/The Love Below,” was a synthesis of hip-hop music and wine tasting where I developed a wine list to pair track-by-track with a revolutionary album by Atlanta music icons Outkast. Following this article, I wrote about a spectrum of topics ranging from more social justice focused articles about queer and Indigenous winemakers to more entertainment-style articles about wines to drink during specific seasons. Being a wine journalist has helped me stay solidly woven into the evolving and intricate web of wine communication, as I now receive weekly emails from wine marketers about the latest trends in wine, emerging voices in the industry, and innovative digital and technological advancements.

Drawing from Winter’s cultural research approach, I continue my work within a community I “cogenerate” and “co-construct.”⁵⁸ It is important that this research balances the affordances of my participatory perspective and the varied perspectives of other community individuals, as my own ethos will be strengthened by positioning others’ voices to the forefront of this narrative. Methodologically, says Winter, this means facilitating both group discussions and qualitative personal interviews with thought leaders in the community. While I position myself as a researcher through digital efforts, these cultural texts must be viewed not as “discrete entities” but as a part of a community-wide contextual setting.⁵⁹ Power relationships must be questioned and rhetorical roles must be interrogated in order for new ethnographic research methods to “empower those who are being researched.”⁶⁰ At the start of 2022, I felt embedded and welcomed within the wine community, but my experiences and interactions had

⁵⁸ Winter, “Cultural Studies,” 249.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 253.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 257.

only given me a partial understanding of the rhetorical situation. From there, I sought a robust rhetorical and social analysis, and I used my dual identity as student and sommelier to find opportunities for impacting, reciprocal, rhetorical research.

Conclusion

By exploring the intersections of educational fields and engaging with our communities, scholars of rhetoric collect resources and facilitate research that reciprocally helps us navigate narratives and find our voices. Our narrative ethos develops from continued conversations and sustainable relationships with our intersecting communities, and through community-engaged research, we construct our environment and establish our narrative. Within our new state of communication, reevaluation of traditional power structures helps reshape the narrative to reflect authentic community roles and values. My goal is to collect narratives from value-driven wine communicators about the ways they are shaping the world of wine and future standards of taste. The wine industry is a remarkable community of rhetorically effective educators, communicators, and tastemakers, and their stories reveal their incredible impact as modern rhetoricians.

3. COMMUNITY-ENGAGED PRINCIPLES FOR DIGITAL HUMANITIES RESEARCHERS

Research Methods

In May of 2022 when I started writing this methodology section, I was determined to develop a framework that necessitates community engagement, encourages rhetorical listening, and drives my research towards practical deliverables. Almost halfway through my dissertation research year at this time, I had cultivated a strong foundation of rhetorical theory and a network of relationships within the wine community. The next step was to create a plan to help me gather individual stories, examine wine community roles, analyze rhetorical strategies, and draw conclusions about post-2020 cultural taste in wine. Over the summer, I began interviewing wine professionals on their recent experiences in the industry, and I transparently disclosed the timeline of my research and the working pieces of my research methods. These conversations created a co-developed methodological framework where participants, in their feedback to my ideas, helped guide me towards best practices for research results that could authentically benefit the wine community.

This chapter serves as an outline for community-engaged research methods for rhetoricians with a goal of reciprocal, deliverable results. These methods are tailored to my community of interest, the wine industry, but I aim to draw connections between these theories and other disciplines, and I want any community-engaged researcher to be able to apply these methods to their research practices. As a digital humanities researcher, I outline all of the digital tools and technology used in this project and aim to provide an example of how digital media and technology enhances community engagement in academic research. This research values authentic community feedback and practical relationship management, and these methods encourage researchers to seek multiple opportunities for communication, participatory observation, and reciprocal education.

In this chapter, I will first cover the rhetorical theories that ground my work, particularly focusing on identification, practical application, community-oriented ethnography, and knowledge mobilization. Then, I will detail the methodological principles of my research plans based on Janine Butler's principles for community-engaged research and my Humanities research values of rhetorical listening, reciprocity, and accessibility. Lastly, I will discuss the details of my research process, which began with gathering "small stories" from social media and recording participatory observations and lead up to conducting personal interviews and then rhetorically analyzing this data through a narrative lens. Through these methods, I combine qualitative digital and physical research strategies to integrate all spaces of communication and develop my role as a participatory researcher in the wine community. My multi-identity as a student-teacher-sommelier allowed me to come at this research project from different valuable angles and has helped me conduct effective research throughout the process.

Rhetoric and Composition Foundations

Modern Rhetorical Theory

Elizabeth Thorpe of *Kairoticast* recounts the history of social rhetoric in her May 2020 episode "What IS Rhetoric?" According to Thorpe, scholarship focused on the timely, social aspect of rhetoric took a huge step in American rhetorical philosophy during the mid-1900s. During the second world war, thanks to Kenneth Burke, we began thinking of rhetoric less as "what decision I can convince you to make or what action I can get you to take," but instead as "who we are together."⁶¹ Burke helps illuminate the community-engaged heart of rhetoric: rhetoric helps us identify with each other and become moved to make decisions, and our standard of taste is based less on "procedural argument" and more on "who we are as people."⁴² This is the concept that truly opens wine professionals' rhetoric up for academic

⁶¹ Thorpe, "What IS Rhetoric?"

⁴² Ibid.

investigation because it calls for rhetorical analysis of people's stories and the narratives they create.

Thorpe, in this same episode, uses hypothetical rhetorical scenarios to display how different narratives can persuade audiences towards varying decisions. She points out the belief that "we make up who we are by talking about ourselves" and argues that, as a society, we define the identities of people, objects, concepts, and phenomena through our perception of different narratives.⁶² Just as a wine professional's expertise depends on their individual wine journey, our community standards of taste depend on the narratives we experience and are told. Thorpe's points here show how wine professionals rely on not one pillar of rhetorical strategy but a set - a layering of experience, ethos, and pleasure that all contribute to the ongoing rhetorical situation and the evolving community narrative.

The transformation in our society's relationship with wine - more specifically, our access to wine insight - is due largely in part to the digital innovations that have changed how we communicate with one another. Community learning is no longer limited to the influence of solely geographical environment but is instead expanded by the affordances that the internet, social media, and multimodal media allow. Digital communication comes with entirely new systems of rhetoric and rhetorical strategy. In Thorpe's words:

Important people take to Facebook to make a long post, to Twitter to make a short statement, or to Instagram to release an image or a video with text to go with it. Rhetoric in the digital age is bringing the oratorical, composition, and visual together in a hyper form of rhetoric that, while following the rules of rhetoric as we understand it in many ways, appeals to us in new ways.⁶³

These new ways of appealing to each other's sensibilities influence the development of community taste. A culture of wine based on new standards of taste is continuously open for

⁶² Thorpe, "What IS Rhetoric?"

⁶³ Thorpe, "The Digital Future of Rhetoric."

rhetorical analysis. Thorpe argues that our current community culture defines us, structures our lifestyles, and is a part of our identities. These elements determine the community's relationship with wine, and that, according to Thorpe, "is what makes it rhetorical."⁶⁴ This theory supports Winter's argument that a comprehensive rhetorical analysis of post-2020 wine rhetorics must include both the physical and the digital - not as separate entities but as parts of a complete state of communication.

Identification

Thorpe takes this argument further in "Identify Yourself" by connecting our personal rhetorics and identities to the things we consume. She argues that, in some ways, media defines us and our communities because our interactions with different media are a "personal statement" about who we are and which communities we do and want to belong to.⁶⁵ She also argues that these rhetorical practices apply to all of our consumption habits - even those beyond multiple channels of new media. Particularly, she notes that our relationships with alcohol are a matter of personal and community identity building, saying that "we are what we consume."⁶⁶ She defines beer as the "all-important marker of a person," arguing that our personal choice of beer, wine, or spirits makes a statement about who we are and who we can connect to.⁶⁷ While these Burkean principles of identification can be seen here in this beer example, this kind of rhetoric is still new to the wine industry, as wine has historically been considered an exclusive rather than an equalizer. This is something modern wine communicators are hoping to change.

Connecting identities, according to Thorpe, "is essential to rhetoric in a post-Aristotelian world. By that measure, who you are is paramount to how you communicate and are

⁶⁴ Thorpe, "The Digital Future of Rhetoric.

⁶⁵ Thorpe, "Identify Yourself."

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

persuasive to another.”⁶⁸ Through this argument, Thorpe illuminates the intersectionality of wine, rhetoric, and community and how these influence a wine professional’s own identity and role within contemporary conversations. Practicing Burkean rhetoric plays out in the research process through the researcher’s identification with different sources and textual evidence. In her research manual *Becoming Rhetorical: Analyzing and Composing in a Multimodal World*, Jodie Nicotra relays the importance of building a foundation of credible sources, particularly noting how the Burkean parlor metaphor reflects modern researchers’ interactions with multimodal sources. The ongoing process of engaging with sources is not a “one and done linear procedure,” Nicotra notes, but instead a “continuous, recursive process involving multiple steps” and multiple channels of media.⁶⁹ Therefore, not only does my identification with primary and secondary sources affect the research process, but the way my identity changes and expands through internalization of source material is important to highlight for future researchers.

Identification has become a large part of my own rhetorical strategy during this research. Identification helps researchers understand their communities of research, as researchers can practice rhetorical identification in order to become one with their community.

The purpose of identification, according to Kenneth Burke, is that it should “lead us through the Scramble, the Wrangle of the Market Place, the flurries and flare-ups of the Human Barnyard, the Give and Take, the wavering line of pressure and counterpressure.”⁷⁰ Identifying with audiences and with each other allows us to understand the relationships we’re building with these individuals. These relationships are a researcher’s foundation for reciprocal, community-engaged research.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Nicotra, *Becoming Rhetorical*, 262.

⁷⁰ Burke, *Rhetoric of Motives*, 20.

Community-Oriented Ethnography

In traditional rhetoric and composition studies, community-engaged projects generally fit under a category of research that seeks partnerships between academic entities and non-profit organizations. During this research process, many non-profit wine organizations have been highlighted as foundational sources, including the Batonnage Forum Mentorship program who helped me jumpstart my career as a professional wine communicator and the Roots Fund who provided me with fundamental theories for practical application. But I want to expand this concept of community-engaged ethnographic research to include intersectional and interdisciplinary partnership endeavors that mimic the nature of non-profit work by prioritizing community strengthening and relationship management. Furthermore, I aim to adjust my original usage of community engagement as an umbrella term for community-oriented goals and provide more accurate and defined details of how my academic work has impacted and continues to impact public spheres.

During the pandemic, many wine professionals like myself oriented their goals towards community engagement over financial or social profit while operating within capitalistic structures. An example of this is shown in my own venture into the world of live streaming on Twitch. Live streaming, as a method of rhetorical delivery, allows a communicator to informally present arguments and creative expression for a live virtual audience who has the capability of interacting in real time with the communicator via text chatting. Within live streaming spaces, however, capitalistic goals are decidedly presented to communicators, as platforms like Twitch consistently encourage streamers to be aware of the strategies they can hone to monetize their practice. Having no experience with live streaming and Twitch from the communicator's side, I approached this new rhetorical platform as a learner seeking social experimentation and purposefully deprioritized potential financial gain in favor of potential community expansion.

Livestreaming on Twitch has helped me understand and define the nature of community engagement in regards to this research. Firstly, this practice helps situate my work within the framework of open-access education and not-for-profit communication efforts. Within a livestreaming space, I am able to use informal and conversational rhetorical strategy to deliver educational and/or socially progressive arguments with a live audience, allowing me to practice skills in the kind of give-and-take rhetoric Burke describes. Audiences are able to engage in the conversation in a more social-media-esque manner without having to provide their money, subscribed consumership, or even their physical presence. In these conversational spaces, I get to practice my professional development in modern multimodal forms of rhetorical strategy and maintain my awareness of current cultural trends, which ultimately informs my ethos as a community-engaged researcher.

Secondly, these experiences with Twitch help showcase the multimodal nature of post-2020 rhetorical delivery and comprehensive cultural studies. Setting up a live stream usually involves communication across multiple platforms, including posting announcements on Instagram, LinkedIn, and Twitter; directly messaging potential participants via Instagram, Discord, or iMessage; and verbally discussing the planned live stream with members of the community, as demonstrated in the images below.



Comments

- stephanie.dentler 20w
To get the full kid cuisine experience you have to pick one with a dessert that should be eaten warm
- 1 like Reply
- Reply to stephanie.dentler...
- caitiecoco 20w
@stephanie.dentler bold to assume that kid cuisine is still popular enough for multiple options to be available at Publix
- 1 like Reply
- stephanie.dentler 20w
@caitiecoco ha! I would hope there were better options by now, but maybe theyve just focused on their bestseller - nuggets, corn, and pudding that should be cold
- 1 like Reply

- telesomm.app 20w
Mmm kid cuisine. Lunchables 4 life. PB&fluff is ready for its comeback.
- 1 like Reply
- mcalibai 20w
YES lunchables - charcuterie for kidz
- 1 like Reply
- abriadenise 20w
Lo! Most of 90s snacks I can't eat today! I'm going to have to modernize them 🤪
- 1 like Reply

⁷¹ McAlister, "ONE WEEK from today," *Instagram*. Images description: McAlister posts a collection of media, including the Tank Garage Winery wine cork pictured. Not pictured (but accessible via the post on Instagram) are photos of food, memes, and a short video of McAlister eating and discussing 90s snacks. The caption describes the theme of the upcoming live stream (90s snacks and wine pairings) and provides the date, time, and location of the stream.

Through this example, I aim to display an expanded framework of community-oriented research that intersects rhetorical theories of identification with communication practices in ethnography. The individual goals of different instances of social media engagement vary, but the overarching goal of orienting myself within the digital wine community is to develop an ongoing awareness of the current rhetorical situation and to demonstrate methods of open-access education and collaboration within capitalistic structures. Both of these goals are foundational for my ethos as an ethnographic researcher of wine industry communication practices across physical and digital spaces.

Rhetorical research of a particular community's communication practices goes deeper than traditional textual rhetorical analysis. In addressing communication as a facet of identity, we utilize Burke's theory of identification, allowing us researchers to identify with our community of research and take advantage of the opportunities our multi-identities offer. But community individuals are also entering into this research relationship, and their identity expression must be valued and respected. Ethnographic research with community-oriented goals needs special focus on ethics and researcher ethos, as our participation affects research results and influences research participants. Before doing any analyses of rhetoric for the sake of helping improve communication within a community, careful thought needs to be given to the realistic needs and desires of the community.

Knowledge Mobilization

Rhetoric, in this research, has many roles and meanings. It is the subject of study, the method of analysis, and the strategy used to collect research. In order to envision an openly accessible, collaborative deliverable for this research, I must think about rhetoric as a reciprocal cycle of meaning-making for both the rhetor and the audience. In a way, I imagine rhetoric as

(*cont.*) Comments from McAlister's family, friends, and colleagues are displayed in the other photos, including a friend's argument that "To get the full kid cuisine experience, you have to pick one with a dessert that should be eaten warm."

an exchanging of gifts, similar to Marilee Mifsud's concept of "Rhetoric as Gift/Giving." I use rhetoric as a tool for researching communication and study the exchange of rhetorical power as communication patterns shift, and my goal is for research participants to gain power from my research. This reciprocal mentality "enacts a rhetorical hospitality, a sumptuous expenditure of surplus meaning, whether produced by host or guest, speaker or listener."⁷² As rhetoric aids me in my research, I strive to deliver useful rhetorical strategies to my community so that they too can utilize its power.

In their presentation at the 2023 Implementing New Knowledge Environments conference, researchers Moore, Battersby, Ashton, and Crooks of Simon Fraser University define this kind of give-and-take research approach as "knowledge mobilization."⁷³ Ethnographic research with a goal of interdisciplinary reciprocity helps mobilize a two-way exchange of knowledge that results in practical deliverables for enhancing the research's real-world impact towards current issues. Knowledge mobilization uplifts less traditional methods of research such as social media engagement, personal interviews, and narrative analysis as practices that help close the time gap between research dissemination and social action. Most importantly, this method aligns with principles of facilitating spaces of openly accessible knowledge founded on ethical and relevant individual input from interdisciplinary voices.

Methodological Principles

Principles for Ethnographic Research

To contribute to the rhetorical scholarship of real-world situations, I sought authentic conversations with thought leaders in wine through personal interviews. This research endeavor demanded a system of methods based on principles that reflect this project's main goal: to amplify community voices shaping the rhetoric of the wine industry. I have developed three

⁷² Mifsud, "Rhetoric as Gift/Giving," 105.

⁷³ Moore et al., "Reporting and Assessing Knowledge Mobilization."

main principles for community-engaged rhetorical research in the wine community based on Janine Butler's "Principles for Cultivating Research Studies Within Communities." In 2019, Butler shared these principles to help researchers in rhetoric get the most accurate, authentic, and insightful results from conversations with their communities of research. For this project, she conducted case studies with d/Deaf individuals in a community Butler herself belongs to. She attributes special researcher insight from her participatory role in the community but points out the need for comprehensive expertise of community rhetorics, which requires multiple perspectives. As a wine communicator myself, I too value the insight I bring to the research as a participatory observer, and Butler's argument shows how my ethos is enhanced by uplifting the narratives of others in my community.

The first principle begins with setting up the research environment. For Butler, this means creating a physical layout that facilitates research participants' "access to communication and interactions with others."⁷⁴ In my research methods, this principle defines my goal to create spaces for conversation that support as many communication preferences as possible. Fortunately, virtual meetings and video conferencing have become widely accepted methods of professional interactions over the last couple of years. Wine professionals across the country seemed very inaccessible to me when I started this research pre-pandemic. But post-2020 I was able to build sustainable, personal relationships with industry individuals all over the country through more attention to social media and more willingness for virtual conversations. This allows the kind of perspective where both digital and physical environments are used as tools for the most effective communication.

The second principle calls for recognizing the expertise of those being researched - as individuals and as a community. Butler argues that this is the most authentic method of developing theories about a community and drawing practical conclusions about realistic

⁷⁴ Butler, "Principles for Cultivating Research."

rhetorical situations. Again her methodology supports a “culturally sensitive approach” to research in which the researcher’s goal is to “improve the circumstances” of people in the community and enhance authentic communication.⁷⁵ In Butler’s case studies, participant and community expertise largely informed her research, and she believes this approach is necessary for any participatory observer looking to make an impact in the community.

My final principle was to communicate my research participants’ narratives accurately and authentically. This goal is based on Butler’s belief in “translating and transliterating participants’ rhetoric” in a way that best conveys their story.⁷⁶ For Butler, this principle becomes very literal, as she holds the responsibility of translating between English and ASL (or a combination of both), and she must make choices about how to describe emotions, expressions, and gestures that do not correlate with textual words. My research, on the other hand, relies more on fragments of narrative and my decisions to weave the fragments together in specific ways. Butler’s final principle reminds me to reflect on my methods and especially my biases, as I come into these conversations with preliminary theories based on my own experiences in the community. The idea, she argues, is to cultivate diversity and “honor the expertise” of the community by committing to authenticity.⁷⁷ This methodological principle creates a sense of dual ethos in the foundation of this research - a credibility gained from confidence in my own rhetorical skills and respect for my community’s true story.

Rhetorical Listening

In theory, Butler’s principles are the ingredients for a well-founded, ethically-motivated research methodology. In practice, however, conversations between a researcher and her participants are far from predictable and involve many different factors that could enhance or derail data collection. A well-organized research plan does not necessarily account for every

⁷⁵ Butler, “Principles for Cultivating Research.”

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

participant's response to rhetorical discourse; therefore, researchers must adopt rhetorical practices that welcome destabilization of power structures and instances of dysfunction as opportunities for authentic rhetorical listening.

Rhetorical listening - defined by Krista Ratcliffe as a "trope for interpretive invention and more particularly as a code of cross-cultural conduct" - helps participatory researchers handle the contradictions and gaps that come up in their research processes.⁷⁸ As ethical researchers, we facilitate spaces and conversations so that the most effective, authentic thoughts can be expressed. But practical researchers must understand that identification is often difficult to achieve, that power differences influence our ability to listen, and that rhetorical effectiveness is subject to the kairotic situation.⁷⁹ Applying true rhetorical listening, according to Ratcliffe, means adopting a "stance of openness" to whatever gaps or contradictions arise in the research process and striving to be an "apprentice of listening" rather than a "master of discourse."⁸⁰

The lens that rhetorical listening offers makes a big difference in how I collect data from primary sources and how I navigate conversations in personal interviews. Ratcliffe's concept of openness reflects a natural trait I have developed from conducting research in a pandemic - the idea that being truly, fully prepared involves accepting unpredictability and inevitable deviation. Rhetorical listening means engaging with the rhetorical situation and responding based on how things play out rather than how things were originally planned. Identification is vital, but identity is multifaceted, and authentically engaging with my research participants involves learning their stories and discerning where my research fits into their narratives. Ultimately, my research is not meant to illuminate any brand-new concepts that this community is not already acutely aware of. Instead, the goal of my work is to provide an accessible platform of evidence-based knowledge and a glimpse into ongoing conversations in the wine community. Listening to the

⁷⁸ Ratcliffe, *Rhetorical Listening*, 17.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 2-3.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 24-25.

needs of this community allows facilitation of research deliverables that reciprocally benefit individuals across disciplines.

Reciprocity

As a wine professional myself, I have sought to intertwine my journeys towards a PhD and towards a wine career by applying what I learn during the research process to the wine jobs I took on. My goal has been to create a reciprocal relationship of knowledge distribution where I use my research to enhance my work performance while using my work learnings to inform further research. As I started interviewing wine professionals for my research, we developed lasting friendships that extended outside of academic work. By the fall of 2022, I had landed a position working with Vanessa Raymond, one of the first people I interviewed earlier that year. I also hosted wine events with two other interviewees, Jett Kolarik and Chris McLloyd, and attended amazing events thrown by Kelly Cornett and Amanda Kimbrough, interviewees as well. While these interdisciplinary, intersectional efforts are a meaningful step towards a reciprocal research relationship, I am hoping that my dissertation project more thoroughly demonstrates ways that my work can practically benefit the wine community, as this community has supported my journey from the start.

The truth behind authentic reciprocity reaches far beyond methodology and extends into the researcher's ethos. Two decades ago, a couple of years later after Ellen Cushman made her groundbreaking argument for "The Rhetorician as an Agent of Social Change," scholars Katrina Powell and Pamela Takayoshi built upon this idea by shifting our thinking "from the methodological to the ethical" and focusing on the relationship researchers and participants build together.⁸¹ Instead of considering what reciprocity means methodologically, authentically community-engaged researchers should more so consider what kind of "person we want to be

⁸¹ Powell and Takayoshi, "Accepting Roles Created for Us," 397.

in working with others.”⁸² This way, we are receptive to new community roles constructed for us through our projects, roles that aren’t “understood within the construct of ‘giving back’” but instead are developed through communication and continued interaction with community members.⁸³

Right now, I am conducting research in an era where community roles are constantly shifting, evolving, disappearing, and newly emerging. In the wine industry especially, the frequent changes in industry roles help wine professionals develop their professional identities, make connections between their skills and interests, and move into positions that allow them freedom, success, and a voice in the community. My interactions within the wine community thus far have contributed to these changes, as I’ve filled different roles over the years and encouraged my colleagues to interrogate their own roles to understand who they want to be in the wine industry. Keeping Powell and Takayoshi’s concept of ethics-driven reciprocity, I aim to continue these relationships with the wine community as I develop my research and professional writing further.

In today’s rhetoric studies, reciprocity has been redefined and applied in many different contexts. Recently, Dawn Opel and Donnie Sackey provided an overview of reciprocity as a guiding principle of community-engaged research” in 2019’s fall issue of *Community Literacy Journal*.⁸⁴ They outline four main components of reciprocity-based research methods: reflective consideration of community needs, recognition of how we gain access to non-academic communities, involvement of community members in data interpretation, and a commitment to effectuating change. In addition to committing to an overarching ethos of reciprocity, I have used these principles to develop and meet the goals of this research project. Community needs have been the foundation for my research questions (listed below in the next section), and

⁸² Powell and Takayoshi, “Accepting Roles Created for Us,” 398.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 399.

⁸⁴ Opel and Sackey, “Reciprocity in Community-Engaged Food.”

therefore the goals of this research to effect change in the community that support the needs of the individuals I researched and my own needs as a wine professional. As discussed in the following sections, community members have helped co-generate my frameworks for data interpretation, and their access to the conclusions of my work has been made a top priority.

Accessibility

As an academic, I believe my research should serve my community through openly accessible learning. Both of my fields, wine and rhetoric, have histories of gatekeeping information and excluding access to knowledge. In her podcast episode about “Teachers,” Thorpe reminds us that rhetoric was originally only taught to the elite until the Sophists encouraged the idea that anyone wanting to learn should be able to access education and that rhetoric teachers should get paid for their service.⁸⁵ In the wine industry, traditional authorities have held power over knowledge, education, and certifications that those interested in wine can pursue. But recently, thought leaders in wine have been questioning conventional gatekeeping tactics and making wine education more openly accessible. This leads to a similar question circulating in modern Humanities studies: How should we (ethically) disperse and engage with research in the Humanities?

At the 2022 Digital Humanities Summer Institute, Luis Meneses hosted a conference panel on open digital collaborative scholarship. His stance is that “open digital collaborative scholarship in the Arts and Humanities is significant for facilitating public access to and engagement with research.”⁸⁶ This sentiment stuck with me, and I have made it a goal of my own dissertation research. Like wine education, scholarship in the humanities relies on reciprocal relationships - a cycle of mentors sharing their knowledge with students.

⁸⁵ Thorpe, “Teachers.”

⁸⁶ Meneses, “Open Digital Collaborative.”

Community-engaged research requires the same perspective, as reciprocity is the heart of authentic community engagement. In order for my research to positively impact the wine community, I as a researcher must identify with my participants, participate in the community, and collaborate with everyone to understand the general narrative.

After adopting this perspective, I continued to seek out academic organizations working towards public scholarship and accessibility in the Humanities. I presented my research methods at the New Jersey College English Association conference and the NEXUS Interdisciplinary conference at the University of Tennessee Knoxville in the spring. Feedback and questions from these presentations helped me include additional frameworks and sources to my research methods, and I was able to more clearly organize a plan for personal interviews. In the fall of 2022, my interview findings were presented at the 2022 Mid-Atlantic Popular and American Culture conference where I was able to connect with two other panelists, one researching cannabis language and the other researching breweries through a feminist lens. My goal was to find interdisciplinary connections like these within my research networks, and I feel fortunate that I was able to connect with the researchers on this panel. This experience motivated me to seek Humanities organizations outside of the U.S. to gain new cultural perspectives on my work.

. Through these efforts, I was able to connect with the Implementing New Knowledge Environments (INKE) research network, an organization with a goal of “fostering open social scholarship [and] academic practice that enables the creation, dissemination, and engagement of open research by specialists and non-specialists in accessible and significant ways.”⁸⁷ In networking with other humanities scholars across the globe, I realized that our post-2020 globalization of knowledge - in academia, the wine industry, and other disciplines - calls for open accessibility as a means of gauging credibility, expressing emotional intelligence, and

⁸⁷ INKE, “About INKE.”

representing diverse perspectives. The INKE network has provided me with a platform for connecting with like-minded individuals in the humanities, and I was able to present my research deliverables at their January 2023 conference for valuable feedback. Most importantly, the individuals I became friends with at this conference shared their work with me, and many of them have become foundational sources for my rhetorical analysis in Chapter 5.

Research Questions

This dissertation research explored the following questions:

- What roles do subject experts play in shaping, sustaining, and changing the rhetoric of the industry, and how are these roles influenced by unprecedented phenomena in the community?
- As wine professionals, how have our responses to the recent changes in the early 2020s demonstrated our negotiation of rhetorical power, and what does this reveal about our community's relationship with wine (and what this relationship could be)?
- How can we use multimodal rhetorical analysis to learn about a community's rhetoric, and how does rhetorically analyzing cross-discipline research reciprocally benefit ourselves and our communities?
- As researchers, what can we learn from the rhetorics of wine, and how can we use rhetorical strategies to foster beneficial community-engaged research and enjoyable relationships in interdisciplinary spaces?

I sought to answer these questions through ethnographic research of the U.S. wine industry via multiple channels. I gathered public data as a participatory observer in physical and digital wine spaces, and I reached out to prominent wine professionals for personal interviews. Data from personal interviews became the foundation of my project, as I was able to rhetorically analyze

the narrative of wine communication through information gathered from these primary sources and through the relationships we formed during the process.

Ethnographic Methodologies

The nature of this research called for an ethnographic approach, as I retrieved information from sources in their natural contexts and drew conclusions about cultural phenomena in wine. Over the past decade, scholars have made distinctions between traditional ethnography and digital netnography. Netnography, defined by Kozinets, Dolbec, and Earley, “approaches cultural phenomena in their local contexts, providing windows on naturally occurring behaviors ... and a detailed representation of the lived online experience of cultural members.”⁸⁸ These authors also note that netnography emphasizes my role as the researcher and requires my immersion into the “computer-mediated context of study.”⁸⁹ While I have adopted many of the practices Kozinets, et al. mention, I am allowing my research process to diminish the line previous scholars have drawn between physical and digital interactions. The development and distinguishing of netnography as an approach to digital ethnographic research makes sense in a society where computers and digital technology offer an entirely different space from the physical world. But now in the early 2020s, physical and digital spaces have merged, and the digital naturally occupies the physical world. Therefore, an ethnographic approach to this research automatically includes physical, digital, and social behaviors and phenomena.

This is not to say that the digital does not offer many new channels into the culture of a community that the physical world might lack. There are certainly distinctions between face-to-face interactions and interactions on social media. However, both of these kinds of interactions have become necessary for staying relevant in the post-2020 world of wine, and, in this

⁸⁸ Kozinets et al., 262.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 263.

research, both physical and digital interactions will be treated as equitable, authentic methods of communication. Rhetorical identification can occur both physically and digitally, and digital identification between me and other members of the wine community has served as the main foundation of this ethnographic research. Through both social media and face-to-face interactions, I've immersed myself in the community and adopted the traditional participatory-researcher role that authentic ethnography encourages. This project pieces narratives together through individuals' expressions in real life and online, treating all of these instances as equal methods of story sharing.

Social Media

Interview data was supplemented with insight gathered from social and digital media from 2019 to 2023, and this information was used to fill in gaps in the general narrative or to evidence phenomena in my participants' narratives. To integrate this information, I used Alexandra Georgakopoulou's *small stories* approach to qualitative research. Georgakopoulou points out that typical research interviews privilege only one type of narrative, and she argues that this data must be supplemented with "stories that present fragmentation and open-endedness of tellings, exceeding the confines of a single speech event and resisting a neat categorization of beginning–middle–end."⁹⁰ These stories can be gathered through different digital platforms based on where the research community shares fragments of their stories. In this project, snippets of social media have been included as a way for audiences to visualize the ways in which social media enhances identity expression and provides spaces for interpersonal support.

In her own practice, Georgakopoulou has interacted with her research community as a "lurking participant" of social media.⁹¹ She agrees that using ethnography is an advantageous

⁹⁰ Georgakopoulou, "Small Stories," 267.

⁹¹ Ibid., 272.

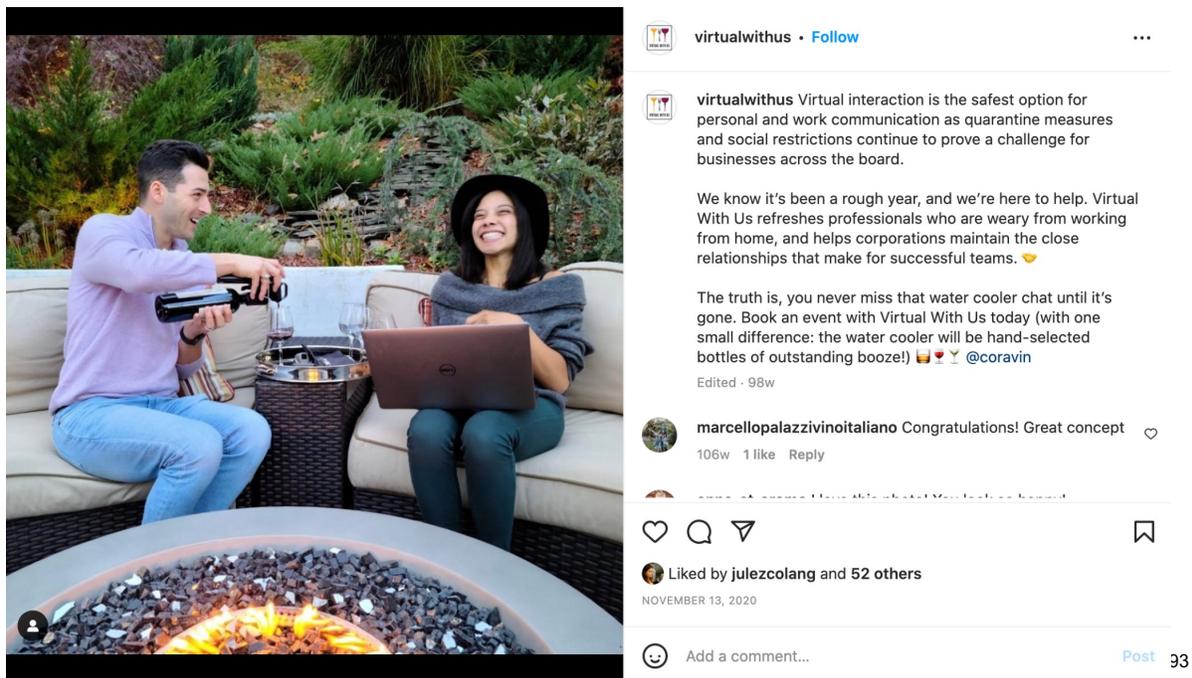
method of research in these cases because it allows the researcher to work with the “ever-shifting landscape of social media.”⁹² Social media became a vital lifeline during the pandemic, and tons of wine professionals used Instagram to communicate, educate, learn, and stay relevant. Over the past couple of years, I’ve watched as the dynamics between different wine professionals on Instagram shifted and as sparks of ideas grew into innovative projects. Instead of viewing Instagram as merely a tool for research, I’ve created a presence in this online community that reflects my authentic ideas and sentiments. These Instagram accounts are extensions of wine professionals’ identities; therefore, social media was integrated into the general narrative in real time as it developed.

Participatory Observations

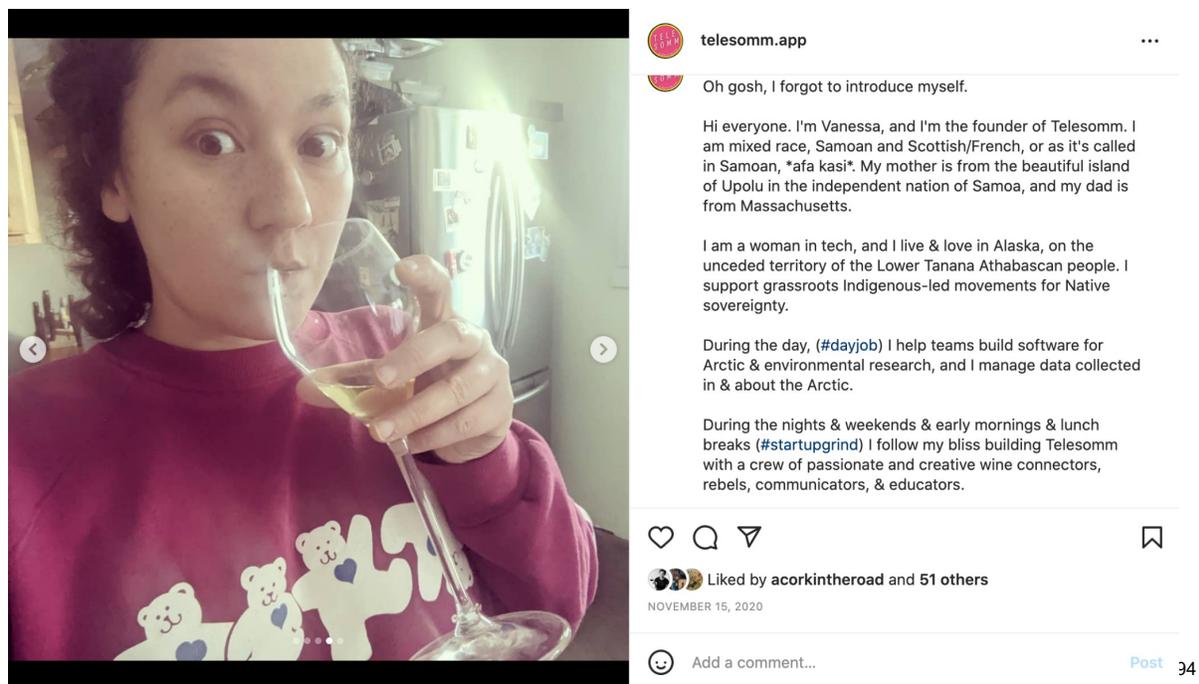
In 2019, I created an Instagram account to document my journey of studying wine. Almost immediately, I joined the Instagram network of wine professionals and started making connections with people through wine. During 2020, this network became a vital part of the industry since digital communication was some individuals’ only means of communication. I watched innovative wine professionals challenge conventional limitations and develop new ways of communicating about wine in a new era of cultural taste. To list every single new wine communication idea born from or revived during the 2020 quarantine would take up this entire dissertation. In summary, many wine communicators recognized the need for sustaining the community’s connection to wine during 2020 and took opportunities to systematically change what that connection could entail; common themes and areas of interest in the community included interpersonal and intersectional community support, attention to diversity and inclusion, and increased awareness of social sustainability efforts. Some business professionals - such as Vanessa Raymond of Telesomm and Alex Schrecengost of Virtual With Us, pictured

⁹² Georgakopoulou, “Small Stories,” 272.

below - decided to follow their own entrepreneurial endeavors to develop new virtual platforms for wine experiences.



⁹³ Schrecengost, "Virtual interaction is the safest option for personal and work communication," Instagram. Image description: an Instagram post from virtualwithus on Nov. 13, 2020 featuring a photo of Alex Schrecengost and a friend outside drinking red wine from stemmed glasses and sitting on beige couches around a fire pit. Alex is laughing with her laptop on her lap and her friend is pouring wine from a bottle. The caption begins, "Virtual interaction is the safest option for personal and work communication as quarantine measures and social restrictions continue to prove a challenge for businesses across the board." She then describes how her company helps people remain connected during periods of distance with virtual events featuring hand-selected beverages.



Similarly, with my own entrepreneurial experience on Patreon, I used this space to play with different methods of building community in virtual environments during periods of social distance. I was incredibly surprised at how popular my virtual monthly tasting groups became. Each month, we focused on a different wine (usually chosen by the participants at the last meeting based on wines they were curious about), and everyone explored the wines together in a very Socratic approach to learning. Seeing how personally impacted my tasting participants were by these monthly gatherings, I have taken this experience as primary evidence of wine as an essential means of building and sustaining the community. This, I have realized, is the purpose of wine communication - bringing people together in a community through rhetoric and narrative.

⁹⁴ Raymond, "Hi everyone. I'm Vanessa, and I'm the founder of Telesomm," Instagram. Image description: an Instagram post from telesomm.app on Nov. 15, 2020 featuring a photo of Vanessa Raymond wearing a red and white sweatshirt with cartoon bears and drinking a stemmed glass of white wine. The caption begins, "Oh gosh, I forgot to introduce myself. Hi everyone. I'm Vanessa, and I'm the founder of Telesomm." She then describes her multi-cultural background, environmental research career, and start-up business.

Personal Interviews

With my foundation of ethnographic data already gathered from social media, I utilized my role as a digital wine communicator to connect with interviewees from Georgia, Oregon, New York, and Alaska - all of whom were enthusiastic about being a part of this project. I interviewed seven professionals in the wine industry about their experiences during and since 2020. These individuals have been chosen primarily because of their influence of cultural taste over the past couple of years and their willingness to authentically share their story. Of the seven people I reached out to, all seven individuals agreed to participate. These professionals' backgrounds range across different areas of the industry, and they represent a diverse spectrum of genders, races, sexualities, and locations – see the table below.

Name	Pronouns	Location	Role
Kelly Cornett	She/her	Georgia	Wine Company Founder and CEO
Amanda Kimbrough	She/her	Georgia	Sales Representative
Jett Kolarik	They/them	Georgia	Wine Associate
Chris McLloyd	He/him	Georgia	Sales Representative
Vanessa Raymond	She/her	Alaska	Wine Company Founder and CEO

Alex Schrecengost	She/her	New York	Wine Company Founder and CEO
Luke Wylde	They/he/x	Oregon	Winemaker and Winery Owner

Each interview structure followed Daniel Turner’s “General Interview Guide Approach,” prioritizing flexible composition, interchangeable delivery, and adaptable questions to create a more personal approach to each interview.⁹⁵ Beginning with interview preparations, I reached out to my first participant via Instagram to ask about her interest in learning more about the project. The document included in [Appendix A](#) was developed to send to potential participants with more details on the research project. In this document, my goals were to clearly and thoroughly explain the research process and goals to “alleviate problematic circumstances” in the interview sessions.⁹⁶ Here, I broke down my research questions for a straightforward explanation of the goals of my research. In-session research questions included:

- How did you end up in [location]?
- How did you connect and communicate with people in new places when you were new to your role?
- What would you say your community role is now?
- What are the big points in your narrative you feel are important to share?
- What roles do digital media and technology play in your work?
- How does [company] help wine professionals share their stories?
- How do you think cultural taste has shifted over the 2020s?

⁹⁵ Turner, “Qualitative Interview Design,” 755.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 757.

However, these conversations were not limited to these questions and often deviated from any original plans. The purpose of these interviews was to generate organic conversations to help enhance my understanding of the narratives behind trends in wine communication.

Interview Participants

My selection of interview participants developed over the first three months of 2022. Since 2019, I had kept a running list of possible interview participants, but I also needed to keep in mind the scope of my ability to connect with these individuals and to develop a diverse and accurately-representative participant pool. Fortunately, local Atlanta podcast *A Cork in the Road* focuses on innovative voices in the U.S. wine industry, acting as almost a public-facing version of my own research where host Kelly Cornett interviews wine professionals and collects their narratives to build a general narrative of the modern wine industry. Being from Atlanta herself, Cornett was one of the first people I reached out to because of her work's similarities to my research and because of her geographical proximity to me.

From the *A Cork in the Road* podcast episodes, I was able to select other participants based on their particular roles as influential voices of change in the wine industry. Chris McLloyd was featured in a live episode (2.14) from the summer of 2020, so he was also one of the first people I connected with. Over the 2021 Christmas break, Cornett released an episode (5.10) featuring Amanda Kimbrough, another Atlanta wine industry icon. The sentiments Kimbrough expressed about credibility and representation in the industry made her a valuable connection. To gain perspective outside of Atlanta, I found *Cork in the Road* episodes featuring non-Southeast professionals in the industry. Vanessa Raymond stood out immediately because of her community-oriented goals similar to my own. But instead of being easily accessible due to geographical location, Raymond was accessible because of our digital proximity to each other. Over the first few years of the pandemic, Raymond and I had become friends via Instagram, and I had been following the growth of her small, born-digital business Telesomm. I

admired her business goals of providing practical work for wine professionals, diversifying the food and drink community, and developing digital platforms for approachable wine experiences and conversations. Raymond became an invaluable connection for my research and eventual professional development.

Through Raymond, I was able to connect with Jett Kolarik. Kolarik works with Raymond at Telesomm and happened to be a Wine Associate at my favorite local wine shop, 3 Parks Wine. Kolarik and I had already connected via Instagram as well, so connecting with her for research was convenient. 3 Parks regularly hosts meet-the-winemaker tastings with wine professionals from all over the world, and I met my participant Luke Wyld during his tour for his personal wine project, Lares Wines. Lastly, I connected with Alex Schrecengost through a Batonnage Forum mentor of mine who knew her personally. One of the biggest challenges was trying to find Indigenous individuals for potential interview participation. Indigenous perspectives are important to me, but there are few Indigenous wine professionals in well-known positions throughout the country, and I was unable to connect with any Indigenous individuals via Instagram, email, or personal reference. To address this gap in representation, I used Indigenous frameworks in my interview discussion and analysis, as articulated in Chapter 4.

Narrative Analysis

Prior to their interviews, these participants were sent an Informed Consent document (see [Appendix B](#)) to review and agree to. During the interview sessions, I took notes in electronic documents and by hand in a research notebook. General perspectives were highlighted in the notebook, and direct quotes were typed in the documents. Data coding was done by hand on printed copies of interview notes. I reviewed the typed and handwritten notes from each interview and highlighted key terms from these initial conversations. From here, I used Kathryn Rouston's phenomenological approach to "Analysis Interviews." "Qualitative research is based on fundamental assumptions of phenomenology," according to Roulston, "in

that research examines the life world as experienced by humans.”⁹⁷ Qualitative researchers of ethnography are to prioritize reflecting on what the data means and discerning “horizons of meaning, invariant properties, or meaning units of a particular lived experience.”⁹⁸ Through “writing and rewriting,” a researcher can distinguish these meaning units from the data.

Following this method, I wrote annotations on my list of interview notes, circling and highlighting related terms and sentiments. I compiled these terms in a table organized by each interview participant (see [Appendix C](#)). From these lists, I grouped related terms together and developed these four units of meaning: stories, ethics, camaraderie, and conversations.

- *Stories* - the ability to share the story of wines, people, and ourselves
- *Ethics* - business and communication practices built on authenticity, reciprocity, equity, and sustainability
- *Camaraderie* - openly accessible learning through shared experiences of diverse individuals
- *Conversations* - the opportunity to use rhetoric to discover truths about wine

Wine communicators have indicated that these are the foundational pillars needed for sustained success in the new world of wine. These elements are not necessarily new ideas - wine professionals have long used tools like camaraderie and stories to bring success to themselves and their communities. But going forward, in light of our cultural revolution, the wine community seems committed to uplifting valuable stories, sustaining ethical business practices, promoting education through camaraderie, and engaging in conversations about important - and sometimes difficult - topics.

Conclusion

Implementing these rhetorical theories, community-engaged research principles, and ethnographic methods helped me gain a more comprehensive understanding of the larger

⁹⁷ Roulston, “Analysing Interviews,” 302.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 303.

rhetorical situations in the wine industry to supplement with my own anecdotal experience. In the end, my research participants became valuable components of these research methods, as their continued friendship allowed me to reach back out to them throughout the composition process for feedback and check-ins. Near the end of this process, all participants were emailed a draft of the following chapter along with a note asking them for voluntary feedback on the accuracy of their narratives (see [Appendix D](#)). Using these methods, this project has situated these individuals as valuable sources of information to support the analytical conclusions and arguments presented in the next three chapters.

4. THE FUTURE OF WINE RHETORIC

Primary Research

The wine industry in the early 2020s can be characterized by the plethora of opportunities for professionals to restructure conventional norms and generate new methods of making, selling, drinking, and talking about wine. These opportunities mainly stem from those in higher positions using their power to create a more diverse and representational community. In her article “Why We Need More Women Working in Wine,” wine writer Sophia Longhi discusses the actionable impacts of facilitating diversity and prioritizing accurate representation.

I admire the work of many men in the wine trade, but as someone from any minority community will tell you, it’s different when you see yourself in the people you admire. Watching Amanda Barnes host a tasting on Chilean wines at the London Wine Fair, attending a masterclass by Rebecca Gibb MW, seeing Amelia Singer present the wines for Celebrity Cruises at Taste of London, interviewing Sarah Jane Evans MW at the Decanter World Wine Awards – all of these experiences spurred me on to pursue a career in wine because I felt it was possible. I think this is something that men (particularly white men) take for granted, because there are white men in positions of power everywhere, sending the message that it is possible and normal.⁹⁹

Longhi goes on to discuss the unique qualities women possess that make us valuable assets to the wine industry. She refutes the counterargument that some demographics might seem to have a “leg up” in this new environment of diversity and representation by noting that men have traditionally had this advantage for years and that structural change will take a long time.

These sentiments are echoed in Janice Williams’s article “Meet The New Generation of Black American Vintners” and Tori Latham’s “The World’s First Queer Wine Festival,” both

⁹⁹ Longhi, “Why We Need More Women.”

published during the summer of 2022. In her article, Williams amplifies the voices of Black professionals in wine like Cherie Law who notes that “Investors aren’t just throwing money around at Black women,” meaning systematic revisions must occur in order to move towards true equity in the field, such as the business education efforts of the Roots Fund. Latham, in her article featuring an announcement about the 2022 Queer Wine Fest that happened in Willamette Valley that July, points out the need for more queer voices in the industry. The event was hosted by Remy Drabkin, lesbian winemaker and co-founder of the non-profit Wine Country Pride, an organization with goals to “support the queer community and for scholarships for LGBTQ youth.” These kinds of organizations help queer kids get the support and guidance they need to become successful young adults confident to enter their fields of interest. Overall, progressive wine leaders seem dedicated to transforming the industry to be more diverse, inclusive, representational, and accessible.

These efforts create a general atmosphere of genuine care and respect for people and communities. But in 2022, many in wine communication were still struggling to find the best methods of integrating these newfound community values into wine marketing for new audiences. In VinePair’s podcast, hosted by CEO and Cofounder Adam Teeter, Editor in Chief Joanna Sciarrino, and writer-educator Zach Geballe, the team discusses the economic results of outdated marketing strategy in their episode “Further Exploring Wine’s Challenges With Younger Consumers.” Geballe argues:

One of the main reasons for [wine’s decline in popular culture] is that wine, prior to the last, say, 10 to 15 years, I’ll put it at, really did have a pretty significant chunk of the market to itself, and that was for the kind of drinker who wanted their drinking to be a prestigious thing that said something about themselves. Most other categories of beverage alcohol, with the exception maybe of something like single malt whiskey and really just Scotch, didn’t connote the same sophistication that a fine wine did. When we hear this refrain from the wine industry, don’t worry, we’re not worried, millennials, Gen

Z, they'll age into drinking wine. What they're really, I think, trying to say is they will, at some point, want to associate themselves with the prestige that comes from fine wine. What those people have missed is that there are so many kinds of beverage alcohol now that convey a similar level of sophistication and prestige, be it certain craft beers, be it lots and lots of things in the spirit space . . . But [wine is] not a market that can afford to be just writing off a good chunk of a demographic.¹⁰⁰

As cultural taste changes, wine, according to VinePair, seems to adopt this mentality that younger people are less interested in wine because they have yet to grow into it. Teeter notes this perspective and makes an insightful comparison:

There's another very large organization in our world that makes this same argument. The Republican Party. Oh, you're just going to get older and you're going to make more money and you will age into being a Republican. You'll see when you make more money that you don't like it going to your taxes and you're going to feel like the smarter person and you're going to become a Republican. Guess what? That's not happening and the millennials and Gen X and Gen Z, for sure, are staying left, center-left even, but left. Everyone has seen that, and guess what? One of the owners of an old-school wine publication is one of Trump's biggest donors. That was a thought. To be sophisticated, you drank wine, you smoked cigars, and you voted Republican. That's not the case anymore.¹⁰¹

Teeter's comment here shows the intersectionality becoming more and more prevalent in wine communication. For wine as a business, the technical, day-to-day success comes from making sales, but as a community essential, the continued and sustainable success for the industry depends on the rhetoric being used to strengthen the community of wine drinkers. Moreover,

¹⁰⁰ Geballe, "Wine's Challenges with Younger Consumers."

¹⁰¹ Teeter, "Wine's Challenges with Younger Consumers."

from Longhi, Williams, and Latham's articles, we can see that outdated conservative claims are quickly losing popularity in favor of community-oriented progressive values.

However we end up reviving the public's positive perception of wine culture, it is clear to many wine communication professionals that there is a strong "need to engage younger, increasingly multicultural consumers" who represent the diverse spectrum of individuals who hold relationships with wine.¹⁰² The current U.S. wine community is made up of consumers, winemakers, and educators who hold multidimensional roles and offer culturally diverse perspectives, allowing researchers the opportunity to listen to and share narratives from various valuable viewpoints. When my search for research participants began, I had a preliminary list of especially prominent voices in wine communication who seemed to be a best fit for possible personal interviews based on their influence in social media spaces. As I gained different timely opportunities to virtually connect with and personally meet some of the most prominent communication influencers, I ended up with a case study sized interview pool of seven individuals representing different racial and ethnic backgrounds, geographical locations, gender and sexuality identities, and professional roles. These industry voices are defined in this research project as wine communicators, as their shared trait is the continued influence they have on shaping rhetorical taste and effective communication in the industry.

In this chapter, I provide an overview and analysis of the major themes that emerged from seven interviews I conducted in 2022. This framework parallels Ann Matasar's work in *Women of Wine* (2006) but on a smaller scale, diving into interpersonal conversations with an intimate sample size within a more precise geographical scope. From these narratives, four major themes have been drawn that define what is needed for these individuals' continued success in the industry: stories, conversations, ethics, and camaraderie. The interviewees represent perspectives from all over the U.S., and the rhetorical analysis of these narratives in

¹⁰² Caputo, "Rethinking the Language of Wine."

the following chapter will be supplemented with data from digital and social media spaces. However, a distinguishing characteristic of this narrative research is the participatory lens through which these stories are shared, as I will explain how my own relationships with these individuals grew over the course of 2022 and how this experience has shaped my own narrative as a researcher, writer, and sommelier.

First, I will explain the methodological gaps in this research and discuss how this gap has been addressed in the general structure of the discussion. Using Margery Fee's research on Indigenous principles of respect and narrative, I relay my research participants' stories and synthesize their information with relevant sources in digital media. This synthesis of data is oriented within the major phenomenological themes (stories, ethics, conversations, camaraderie) of the research, demonstrating the prevalence of these elements in wine rhetoric. To conclude, I will reiterate the major findings from these personal interviews to set up a framework for rhetorical analysis in Chapter 5.

Methodological Gaps

Every wine communicator I spoke with indicated their ongoing commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in regards to success in the industry. These professionals are accustomed to mentors helping them move up in their careers, so they are determined to continue this pay-it-forward culture by opening doors for new members of the community. The sentiment of caring came up in almost every interview I conducted. Wine communicators come from a culture of individualism - a competitive, sales-oriented mindset developed by the business side of wine that for many years treated wine as a commodity and wine communicators as merely cogs in a capitalist machine. But as wine communicators have embraced their roles as thought leaders in the U.S. industry, they have become more adamant about making wine sustainable - agriculturally and socially.

Decolonizing Frameworks

However, one of wine's biggest issues in the wine community is lack of credibility and representation. Many agricultural and social sustainability practices in the U.S. wine industry adopt Native American principles without crediting Indigenous people, and this widespread misrepresentation largely influences the rhetorical situation. In my research, it was difficult to find scholarly secondary sources to support this claim, and I was unable to receive feedback from any Indigenous professionals in wine. Fortunately, I was able to find some information that, when synthesized through this argumentative lens, indicates possible weaknesses and inaccuracies in Americans' general perspective of regenerative agriculture's origins.

In their article "Indigenous Origins of Regenerative Agriculture," the U.S. National Farmers Union explains Indigenous ideas on intercropping and polycultures, water management, and permaculture - clearly showing that these perspectives existed before colonization.

Long before the arrival of Europeans [in America], Indigenous populations protected local ecosystems and preserved biodiversity through land management and farming practices. European settlers did not arrive at an 'untouched land,' an idea known as the 'pristine myth' of the early Americas. Charles Mann, the author of '1491: New Revelations of the Americas Before Columbus,' notes how the pristine land myth obscures the reality that Indigenous Americans actively shaped the environment around them.¹⁰³

In the U.S. today, many winemakers are committing to practices of biodiversity and regenerative viticulture – systems that prioritize agricultural sustainability over time along with social sustainability in managing ethical relationships with those who are a part of the winemaking process. Certifications for biodynamic farming can be obtained through organizations like

¹⁰³ Heim, "Indigenous Origins."

Demeter, who “provide an assurance to consumers that the product has been certified to a uniform standard.”¹⁰⁴ While these are positive steps towards better socioenvironmental ethics, it is difficult to find biodynamic certification organizations who note the parallels between these standards and Native American agricultural innovation. Heim argues that:

Diverse farming systems are central to today’s regenerative agriculture movement – but the concept is far from new. For hundreds of years, Indigenous Americans have planted more than one crop together in a practice known as intercropping. Intercropping is based on synergy in which the physical aspects of each plant complement one another and improve each other’s health and growth. A combination of corn, beans, and squash known as the ‘Three Sisters’ was cultivated extensively by the Iroquois in the Northeast. In this system, the corn stalks provide a natural trellis for the beans to grow on, which in turn help the corn grow by adding nitrogen to the soil. At the same time, the squash vines act as a “living mulch” that maintains soil moisture and prevents weeds from growing.

I personally remember learning about the “Three Sisters” farming strategy in grade school. But as a graduate researcher, most of the information I can find on the history of regenerative agriculture in the U.S. is accredited to Rudolf Steiner.

Steiner, according to Hilmar Moore in an article for the Biodynamic Association, grew up in the “mountains, among peasants whose way of life stretched unchanged into past centuries.”¹⁰⁵ He adopted the peasants’ “clairvoyant perception of nature” and was said to have such “clairvoyant ability” of his own that he “could not speak of his experiences with anyone because they would ridicule his comments as suspicious.”¹⁰⁶ Steiner felt a spiritual link to the physical world and sought to find simpler explanations for human social systems. However, in

¹⁰⁴ Demeter, “Biodynamic Certification Marks.”

¹⁰⁵ Moore, “Rudolf Steiner.”

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

Moore's article, the author presents a gap in their explanation of Steiner's work and skips from his student years to his middle-aged years, saying "we cannot go farther here into the philosophical underpinnings of Steiner's work." This is perhaps because, by researching Steiner's manifestos further, one could come across one of his more radical theories like those in his essay "The Five Root Races of Mankind:"

In the whole Universe which surrounds the Earth and together with the Earth forms a single whole, we can distinguish seven of these normal Spirits of Form. There are therefore seven Spirits of Form or seven Elohim. If we wish to form a conception of these seven Elohim with their various missions and their task of establishing Harmony or Love as the ultimate mission of the Earth, we must clearly understand that these seven Spirits of Form cooperate in such a way that . . . collectively they would fashion the real Ego-being. But as other spiritual Beings cooperate with them and diversify this uniform humanity, it was found necessary to make special preparations in the Cosmos.¹⁰⁷

While this philosophical thinking may serve as a foundation of one's personal assumptions about the unknown universe, Steiner used it as a pseudoscientific explanation of race and ethnicity. He believed that each race, even the culture of ancient (and mythological) Atlantis who "could not adapt itself to later evolution," is formed by a specific astrological element (i.e., "The Semitic people are an example of a modification of collective humanity. Jehovah shuts himself off from the other Elohim and invests this people with a special character by cooperating with the Mars Spirits").¹⁰⁸ Steiner asserts that the Caucasian race is "oriented chiefly towards the sense-world" and therefore able to reach "stages of higher Cognition, Imagination, Inspiration, and Intuition, in so far as the Jupiter Spirit originally modified the character."¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Steiner, "The Five Root Races of Mankind."

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

Of Native Americans, Steiner supposedly thinks very highly, as he believes their culture “preserves a memory of that great Atlantean civilization which could not adapt itself to later evolution.” This, too, is Steiner’s reasoning for the inevitable extinction of the “Red Indian” in America, as he believes they clung to “the old Atlantean epoch . . . when a man could look up to the Sun and perceive the Spirits of Form through a sea of mist” rather than accept the notion of cosmic superiority “which makes the White Man great.”¹¹⁰ Steiner apparently “recognized Native American culture for its ancient roots and wisdom,” but in developing his theories for regenerative viticulture later in his life, Indigenous principles nor innovations are credited.¹¹¹ From the research I was able to gather, it seems that Steiner was indeed intimate with people of many cultures and happy to learn from their individual expertise. But unfortunately, his theological manifestations about the cosmic origins of races and ethnicities and the “Atlantean” origins of Natives render him as a dangerously unreliable scholarly source. We are left putting the fractured pieces of his work together to draw our own conclusions, taking into consideration that Steiner valued sustainable and simple agricultural structures, spent time conversing with and analyzing Native Americans, preoccupied himself with unfounded claims about white superiority, and asserted revolutionary ideas in biodynamic farming late in his life without specifically citing his sources.

Indigenous Innovation and Perspectives

Amanda Kimbrough, one of my interviewees, was the first person to bring this to my attention. Currently working for Avant Partir, Kimbrough is known in my local Atlanta community as an authentic, realistic representative of the wine profile she curates, and her personally-hosted industry get-togethers are popular spaces for networking, entertainment, and togetherness. But what sets Kimbrough apart is her unique approach to wine rhetoric. Rather

¹¹⁰ Steiner, “The Five Root Races of Mankind.”

¹¹¹ Ibid.

than focusing on what is trendy to her audience, she seeks out truths that she can translate to her community. One of these truths is about regenerative viticulture in U.S. winemaking: “Presenting it as Steiner’s invention is colonialism. It’s not true, and it takes away from Indigenous value and contribution.” Kimbrough encouraged me to conduct further research on this and, most importantly, to prioritize Indigenous concepts in my analysis of current innovations in biodynamic viticulture and trending efforts towards sustainability.

Native Americans practiced sustainable agriculture and regenerative viticulture before colonists arrived, yet few Indigenous people hold high positions in the wine industry. Considering how important their community’s practices are to the future of wine, it would benefit the industry to include more Indigenous voices - yet few have taken the effort to make this happen. In general, the exclusion of diverse voices has been a main contributor to the industry’s slow progress in regard to rhetorical expression and community development for years. For hesitant wine explorers, their lack of confidence in what they already know about wine keeps them from entering the community. This sentiment seems to have trickled down from elitist thought leaders who put excess effort into maintaining conventions and formal certifications instead of more practical efforts towards learning new audiences and creating new knowledge. Culture, people, and the environment are constantly evolving, so these gatekeeping efforts have only hindered the wine industry’s growth towards higher profits and stronger community ties. In order to discuss the general narrative of wine in a way that does not repeat the cycle of underrepresentation of Indigenous influence, I will use Indigenous principles of respect to frame this discussion of individual narratives in the wine industry.

Respect and Narrative

In her essay “Respect or Empathy? Affect/Emotion in Indigenous Stories,” researcher Margery Fee makes an argument for decolonizing our theories surrounding the structures of narrative research to instead be more conscious of Indigenous approaches to respect and

storytelling. In my interview research and analysis, the concept of caring came up multiple times in many conversations, but it was a challenge to orient this notion within traditional Western structures of rhetorical study. Through Fee's framework, she calls for the "recognition of diverse configurations of affects/emotions and their representations," specifically noting that the "major difference in distinguishing these Indigenous worldviews from Western ones can be summed up by the frequently repeated word *respect*."¹¹² This word seems to define the general atmosphere towards caring for people and environments that many of my interviewees expressed in their narratives. By Fee's definition, respect, as a concept within Indigenous frameworks of relationship management, is a vital aspect of interpersonal communication:

A respectful relationship with the living world is necessary not only for physical survival but also for emotional and ethical balance: a good life. In these accounts, humans take their place in the web of being belatedly and far from power. The land and animals, plants and spirits, are other-than-human persons with the ability to reason and feel; sensitivity to these complex beings is crucial. Thus, one's emotional life extends far beyond one's family and friends. 'All my relations,' as the Lakota prayer puts it, extends from slugs to the stars. For human relations at least, the mainstream promotion of empathy might seem analogous to respect. However, as Karsten Steuber argues, many philosophers see the dominant notion of empathy as 'epistemically extremely naïve' because 'it seems to conceive of understanding as a mysterious meeting of two individual minds outside of any cultural context.' Empathy, at least as here defined, ignores cultural differences; respect, I will argue, takes them into account, if only by avoiding any presumption to know them without deep experience.

This Indigenous concept appropriately distinguishes the kind of care for community that people in the wine industry are trying to encourage, as opposed to the surface-level performativity that

¹¹² Fee, "Respect or Empathy?" 205.

naturally forms within capitalistic frameworks. Many in the wine industry are aware of the public's trending attention towards sustainable environmentalist action, especially among younger consumers. So, it is not difficult to find U.S. winemakers who boast performative sustainability efforts and conventional biodynamic certifications in their attempt to appeal to current audiences. But true care for the community is reflected in this Indigenous principle of respect – the idea that managing reciprocally respectful relationships paves the way for community survival, ethical practices, and emotional balance.

Furthermore, the kind of understanding of community and environment necessary for implementation of true respect in one's communication principles involves acknowledgement of narrative as the foundation of community building. Fee argues,

Putting answers together out of such bits and pieces is difficult, but stories open up interpretive possibilities, rather than closing them down. Interpreting a story based on a different worldview from one's own requires a great deal of context. As Julie Cruikshank says of the Yukon elders she worked with, 'If I expected to learn anything, they implied, I needed to become familiar with pivotal narratives 'everybody knows' about relationships among beings who share responsibility for maintaining the social order.' Once she learned the stories, she saw how they formed a 'cultural scaffolding' for the tellers' lives. However, the point of learning the context is to be able to apply the stories to one's own personal situation, rather than (as in the academy) producing a more abstract and general interpretation.¹¹³

Here Fee describes the precise goal of this research project: to use narrative not to prove a preconceived general framework but indeed as the framework for rhetorical study, so these narratives can provide rich spaces of identity expression and truth telling where credible source information can be gathered. In an attempt to avoid producing a "general interpretation" of these

¹¹³ Fee, "Respect or Empathy?" 205.

narratives, I use Fee's principles to apply Indigenous frameworks to the ethnographic study of these wine professionals' stories, hopefully helping fill the gap left by the lack of Indigenous voices in this research.

Narratives

In January of 2022, *SevenFifty Daily* reported that many beverage professionals were entering 2022 with “a sense of optimism and a renewed determination to change the things that are under their control.”¹¹⁴ But admittedly, in hindsight, 2022 was not the most encouraging year. While many individuals had been able to utilize their post-2020 experiences to find their creative identity, others fell under a new pressure to start something revolutionary or perish into irrelevance. This created a cultural conflict between producing something valuable for the community and finding value in oneself for something other than what one produces. But some, like Early Mountain Vineyards Ambassador Lee Campbell, argue that interrogating these systems will help us move towards a more “holistic way” of dining, pairing, and drinking and away from arbitrary goals. In Campbell's words: “I don't want to just drink-drink-drink and eat-eat-eat. I want to enjoy the full experience again.”

These narratives, collected over the summer of 2022, tell the story of this process of redefining holistic experiences in wine for different people in the industry. Their stories contain differences, but their arguments for truth, community, and survival bind them together. Mostly, our shared commitment to learning from the process reflects our pandemic survival method of maintaining mindfulness in the face of uncertainty. Modern wine communicators are determined to embrace the reasons why wine initially captivated their interest, and many believe that focusing on community engagement above all else will be the key to the industry's future success. But in an industry where experts and novices have historically been separated by

¹¹⁴ SevenFifty Daily editors, “What Beverage Pros Are Doing Differently.”

gatekept knowledge and generational wealth, synthesizing what everyone brings to the table can be a challenge, especially when many are asking: who has the authority to talk about wine?

When it comes to well-known, established ethos in the wine industry, Amanda Kimbrough is the authority many in my local community turn to. Her personal ethos is strengthened by her rich background in food and drink and her identity as an Atlanta native, but her authority comes from her relationship with the community. The biggest problem with many self-proclaimed wine authorities, Kimbrough argues, is that they are “afraid to build community out of fear of losing their audience.” Rather than perpetuating rhetoric that assumes an audience yearning for knowledge at the foot of an expert, Kimbrough enters conversations as a community member, prioritizes integrity in her storytelling, and aims to authentically represent the credible sources behind the wines she supports.

According to Kimbrough, 2020 was a revolution for wine because it displayed the toxic homogeneity and individualism that ruled the industry’s rhetoric. But even now, she argues that we are only “halfway there” in terms of widespread systematic change. Wine, according to Kimbrough, is already an understood essential to the community, evidenced by bottle shops remaining open in the early days of the pandemic and overall pandemic wine sales taking only a small hit compared to other industries. But our cultural perspective of wine as an authentic reflection of community will only shift when people dig deeper into conversations about authority, leadership, and representation, according to Kimbrough. Making small adjustments to our practices will only go so far - but rethinking our multifaceted relationship with wine is what will eventually, in Kimbrough’s opinion, cause a “big reckoning” in our future. Once we break through these barriers, it is important that we then turn around and destroy barriers for others. “If their idea of diversity means there is only one open seat for a woman at a table of men,” says Kimbrough, “then let’s just make the table bigger.”

These insights gained from our post-2020 experiences show how wine communicators have responded to the new revolution in wine, but we need innovative minds to articulate how

to strengthen our relationship with wine going forward. We need diverse perspectives and comprehensive representation in this industry in order to deal with the inevitable and unprecedented challenges ahead. Established authorities need to not only amplify new voices, but also reflect introspectively about their own rhetoric, as Kimbrough explains:

I used to really push natural wine. It's a good model for how we could do things better, but it is not a more moral choice. Now, I'm talking about all the ways natural wine fails. Natural wine isn't woke - it's white. Biodynamics was appropriated from natives, and most people are not even acknowledging how natural wine needs to do better. Whose land are you on? Who do you hire? We need to be hiring natives. We need to be giving land to indigenous people.

This is merely one example of systematic rhetoric in need of renovation. Unquestioned and arbitrary practices in the industry abound, and creative thinking is needed for us to “loosen our grip on what we know to be true about how wine is made.” For Kimbrough, this means being more “realistic in our rhetoric” about wine by shaping wine communication with a goal of reaching more people. She believes that holding space for personal, relationship-building conversations is the way to shape wine communication and amplify people’s narratives.

Conversations

Dedicatedly sharing the narratives of wine professionals across the Southeast U.S. is Kelly Cornett, host of *A Cork in the Road* podcast. Her podcast launched in 2019, but it took off in 2020 because of what she saw as a “need for connection” in the wine community. Through her platform, Cornett interviews people in wine and shares their stories with her audience, using digital communication as her main tool:

The *Times* used to be the only way people knew what to drink. But people aren't getting their news just from *Wine Spectator* or *Wine Enthusiast* anymore. Now it's Instagram,

it's podcasts, it's people sharing. It's more of a digital social media world that's influencing how people choose what to drink.

In 2020, Cornett realized the power of her platform in its unique ability to represent people in the wine community. She also noticed the lack of diversity in the industry when it came to the narratives being shared in mainstream wine culture. But fortunately, she also saw that people seemed more inclined to start conversations about these issues, saying that "Human rights movements in 2020 have changed the way people think about wine." She believes in reflecting diverse perspectives on her podcast because this creates a more accurate general narrative that represents the spectrum of identities drawn to the wine industry.

Identity, in Cornett's opinion, is the most important aspect of a wine communicator's rhetoric - especially in the modern wine world. In the digital age, and particularly the post-2020 age, knowledge about wine is less exclusive and more accessible to the wider wine community. Cornett is a big advocate of accessibility in wine education, arguing that the wine community is strengthened when more people are educated about their relationship with wine. Standing out as a wine communicator means interrogating one's own wine narrative and finding what Cornett calls "your corner of the world." Her argument on wine rhetoric is:

Everybody can learn [about wine]. You can digest wine information. The difference is in how it's presented. That comes from the person delivering the message. Everyone can tell you something - only a few people are going to resonate with you. Personality is so important.

Identity and narrative are what sustain interest in wine, and representing everyone in the community helps strengthen the general narrative. In Atlanta, Cornett sees many wine communicators "weaving the human factor into the industry." She believes that Atlanta is a hub for "wine for good" - a cultural perspective of utilizing one's platform in wine to advocate for bigger issues in the community. Her goal is to use her podcast to tell the stories of diverse

individuals so that her community can become the place people look to for new ideas, talent, and audiences.

Cornett's goals reflect her attention to the whole identity of each wine professional she interviews. As a researcher, Cornett gathers comprehensive data on her interviewees so that she can describe them accurately in her media and ask detailed questions during the interview session. But as a communicator, Cornett's approach generates a personal friendship with her interviewees, as she focuses not only on their professional achievements but also on their personal feelings about their journeys. In her data collection methods, Cornett prioritizes both intellectual information and emotional information, treating all of these as valuable components of one's narrative. I was able to experience this first-hand when Cornett interviewed me on her podcast (episode 86) in September of 2022. Her consideration of my emotional intellect during the interview was evident in the questions she asked and her responses to my input. Of my interdisciplinary work, she said, "You are learning a lot through the outside experiences that we just talked about in your own personal exploration. But it is weaving into your world basically full-time with this dissertation . . . That is so cool."¹¹⁵ Her praise here demonstrates her enthusiasm not just as a researcher but as a friend, and when I told her about my receipt of Georgia State's Provost Dissertation Fellowship, she said, "Wow that is such a big deal. That means you're not grading or preparing curriculum or anything, you just get to focus on your paper. Wow, congratulations."¹¹⁶

Cornett believes that this authentic friendship building is what sets the Atlanta wine community apart from other parts of the country. In this episode with me, she made sure to mention her ardent support of my academic work:

I'm still smiling about the opportunity to have been a study participant in this whole big project. And I'm going to read this, because I went back through my emails, and I found

¹¹⁵ Cornett, "Episode 86 – Bailey McAlister."

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

the first note I received from you . . . I found it, so I'm going to read it because it's super cute. 'Hi, I'm a PhD student conducting interviews with people in wine for my dissertation research. I have been listening to your podcast nonstop and would love to speak with you about setting up an interview sometime later this summer. Let me know if you're interested. Thank you!' I don't think I asked any questions; I just wrote you back immediately: YES. This was the best little message. It was through my website, and I just thought it was a really cool idea.¹¹⁷

Cornett takes the effort to demonstrate her enthusiasm for her community and everyone's work towards making the community stronger. Her conversational strategies reflect her attention to community members' emotions, as evidenced when she asked "How are you feeling about what you've collected?" in regards to my in-progress research. Cornett's approach to conversational rhetoric reflects Indigenous perspectives on the intersectionality between reason, emotions, and respect:

Mainstream names for emotions may be misleading or limited. In these Indigenous worldviews, emotions and reason have been connected to the idea that humans are part of a relational system where every living being is expected to sustain the others as kin, physically and emotionally.¹¹⁸

Through her podcast, Cornett helps create this "relational system" of friendship, networking, and camaraderie in the Southeast wine community. Her transparent support of and interest in her community members' work is an ideal example of how these emotions-based concepts can be woven into interdisciplinary research and professional development.

Respect, as an Indigenous concept, is defined in Fee's discussion of Native communicators' beliefs:

¹¹⁷ Cornett, "Episode 86 – Bailey McAlister."

¹¹⁸ Fee, "Respect or Empathy?" 207.

E. Richard Atleo, a Nuu-chah-nulth thinker, sees respect as ‘not a concept of human origin’ but rather a principle or moral law that derives from and binds all creation (16). In both his and mainstream accounts, morality and emotion are closely linked. Philosopher Ronald de Sousa writes that emotions have been seen as ‘a dangerous threat to morality’ by some, while others see them as central to ethical life . . . Respect requires reflection before speech or action. A related word, deference, also includes the notion of restraint—of deferring or controlling one’s emotional response. The emphasis on respect in Indigenous accounts of emotion, then, leads to a broad difference with the mainstream, where the frank expression of one’s feelings is often seen both as a virtue and as a way to overcome misunderstanding and past trauma.¹¹⁹

Through this definition, we can relate the Indigenous concept of respect to the rhetorical situation, highlighting this authentic perspective of community care as potential foundation of rhetorical strategy – as opposed to positioning emotions and actions in different spheres. Applying respect to rhetorical purpose means developing communication goals that aim to uplift the community through reflection of our emotional reasoning and response to community-wide phenomena. In considering emotions and feelings in one’s personal self-development, a communicator becomes better equipped to understand and address the realistic needs of the entire community.

Ethics

Jett Kolarik, like Cornett, also believes the Atlanta wine community to be a fusion of social action and community-wide care. They see the city as a cultural hub for innovative movements in wine, especially for those who want to work at the intersection of wine and other passions. Kolarik’s narrative began in different industries - initially going to school for photography, working in restaurants, studying wine, freelancing for NPR, and eventually ending

¹¹⁹ Fee, “Respect or Empathy?” 209-210.

up in 3 Parks Wine shop in late 2020. At this point, the general culture of the shop had shifted significantly. In-person shopping and tastings were paused, and online orders, deliveries, and curbside orders were the primary focus. Kolarik was impressed by the shop's commitment to embracing the kairotic situation - especially in their business value of digitizing the wine search experience.

3 Parks made it a priority to update all of the wines on their website, and one of Kolarik's main jobs was inputting inventory and wine descriptions. They were committed to facilitating a smooth online experience, but they continued to pay adequate attention to other methods of connection - creating outdoor seating for tastings and setting up multiple phone lines for consultations. Kolarik could see that maintaining connection with the community - locally and digitally - was key to continued success in their career role as a wine associate and individual role as a wine communicator. They eventually heard about Telesomm through a friend in the wine community and reached out to Raymond for partnership. Now, Kolarik continues working as a wine associate and freelance photographer and consistently explores more community-oriented roles based on their interest in different social issues.

Kolarik believes that one of the most important aspects of their narrative is their dedication to serving their queer community. Outside of wine, Kolarik has been a dedicated volunteer counselor for the Trevor Project, a nonprofit organization focused on suicide prevention for LGBTQ youth. The organization "provides 24/7 crisis support services to LGBTQ young people."¹²⁰ Kolarik, in their volunteerism with this and other LGBTQ-focused nonprofits, demonstrates Fee's arguments in favor of more care-based storytelling methods, as evidenced in the statement, "The story isn't telling the children what to think or feel, but it's giving them the space to think and feel."¹²¹ This argument along with Kolarik's activism together illuminate the

¹²⁰ The Trevor Project.

¹²¹ Quoted in Fee, "Respect or Empathy?" 219.

perspective of all aspects in our lives being interconnected and therefore invaluable to the authenticity of our narratives.

Kolarik is especially interested in discovering more ways to support these intersectionalities in themselves and their communities. In regards to the wine industry, Kolarik's personal goal is to "bring more people to the table" when it comes to wine accessibility and education. Particularly, they aim to fuse their long-time passion for social change and queer identities with their interests in wine. Kolarik's favorite thing about being a wine associate is helping people find their "wine identity" - creating an authentically "personal and individualized" wine exploration experience to guide people through their relationship with wine.

I want the table to be big and weird and rowdy. I want everyone to feel comfortable asking questions. No more gatekeeping. I've seen how much representation matters. You just have to find what you like. Fuck anybody who makes you feel like you're drinking the wrong wine. There's something for everybody.

Kolarik has found that certain identities have long been excluded from wine and is determined to facilitate wine experiences that instead cater to these marginalized identities. One way they do this is by marketing queer winemakers and helping facilitate queer wine tastings. In 2022, 3 Parks invited Oregon-based winemaker Luke Wylde to host a tasting for the latest wines from their personal project, Lares Wines. Not only is Wylde a queer winemaker himself, but his wine label is meant to inspire personal expression and creativity - something he feels is most important for people coming into their queerness.

Serendipitously, I was able to meet Wylde at this tasting, and they enthusiastically agreed to participate in my research. Like Kolarik, Wylde wants to use his platform to elevate marginalized identities and integrate queerness into the wine community. After a decade in various roles in the industry, Wylde's passion for winemaking exploded during the pandemic. The limitations on traveling and socializing helped them "unlock the opportunity to be creative" and "dig deeper into loneliness" to come up with new kinds of wines. He had just come out as

queer a couple of years ago, and he finally felt like he was able to express his authentic self. This personal revelation gave them the determination to inspire others to follow the same path. Like Cornett, he quickly realized that the social movements of 2020 were inspiring people to be more open about diversity and accessibility in wine. For Wylde, this was an opportunity that could not be ignored:

We've been seeing a cultural revolution happening around us. It would be naive for me to ignore that and just kind of go about business as usual - especially as a white business owner. I can't ethically go backwards. Morals and ethics have to be a part of how things are done. Until we address broader cultural problems around access and diversified food, we're not going to have an equitable distribution of how wine gets to be enjoyed by people.

Wylde points out that wine's history of gatekeeping is unique to this industry, as we do not often reinforce these kinds of barriers in other drink industries. The entitled exclusivity of wine culture has been, in Wylde's opinion, a "huge detriment to any real growth we could see as an industry." Like Kolarik, Wylde sees their role as an opportunity to help solve this problem by bringing more people to the table and reciprocally intersecting their personal identity with diverse perspectives.

Through his story, particularly his revived enthusiasm for morals and ethics, Wylde helps demonstrate the difference between Indigenous perspectives of respect and empathy. Fee notes:

If I am empathetic to someone, I appear to be virtuous by demonstrating my sensitivity to others, even fictional or distant others. This empathy does not require action, reciprocity, or even meeting the other face-to-face. Respect, on the other hand, is a kind of deference: in this system politeness consists in personal modesty and recognition of the other's autonomy. Deference politeness is akin to diplomacy, which is how Atleo talks about respectful relations (7). To be diplomatic is to be tactful, to consider the

other's feelings and the power of the interests they represent to protect or forward the interests of one's own community.¹²²

An example of this in wine communication is the distinction between those who utilize performative marketing tactics to please an audience who favors ethics and those whose goals are founded on ethical principles and therefore use marketing strategy to best demonstrate these principles and amplify others' actions towards these goals. Not only do these kinds of rhetorical strategies exemplify Indigenous values of community-oriented respect, but they help facilitate camaraderie within communicative spheres where individuals support and uplift each other in different rhetorical situations. Similar to how Cornett and I traded personal interviews, people in the wine community demonstrate this interpersonal care through the actions they take towards building and bettering their communities.

Camaraderie

In my local community, I have had the opportunity to listen to stories of how people are strengthening interpersonal relationships through facilitating camaraderie. Like Kolarik, Specialty Wines representative Chris McLloyd's background also includes many non-wine-related endeavors. McLloyd grew up in Florence, South Carolina, and his grandfather grew muscadine vines in his backyard and made his own wine to be shared with friends and family over casual dinners and conversation. McLloyd, however, did not get into wine professionally until later in his career. While he studied music entertainment business in school, he worked in restaurants and fell in love with wine - a classic story of many wine communicators in the industry. He moved to Atlanta for a change of pace and completed a few wine certifications to get his foot in the industry. Fifth Group distributor ended up hiring him and providing him with substantial wine training as a foundation for his career.

¹²² Fee, "Respect or Empathy?" 218.

Early in 2020, McLloyd made the shift to retail and gained insight into how the wine sales system works on a business-to-consumer level. This ended up being an incredibly fortuitous decision, as restaurants and bars shut down only months later and entered an extremely arduous recovery period. Safe in his retail position, McLloyd took advantage of his extra time by practicing tasting constantly. He made friends with other wine shop owners and learned about his own tastes and preferences in the industry. Learning from others was not new for McLloyd, but during the pandemic is when he truly realized how important interpersonal relationships are for success in wine. In 2020, there was a significant uprising in the demand for more non-white voices in the wine industry, stemming from the summer's new wave of the Black Lives Matter movement. Following horrifying instances of police brutality in the spring, people of color all over the U.S. exhibited outrage and demanded immediate reform - many taking it upon themselves to create spaces for their voices to be heard. For McLloyd, these spaces took the form of casual happy hours with other BIPOC in the Atlanta community.

McLloyd made a lot of new friends at these happy hours, and he describes the entire experience as "eye-opening." The gatherings were informal - people would talk, share stories, play games - but what the group was learning from each other was invaluable. "Camaraderie-wise," McLloyd says, "me being African American, I had no idea there were so many people from my community in wine." The more people he met, the more he appreciated how generous people were with their time, and he gained a revived passion for using his own platform to diversify the wine industry. "Representation matters," says McLloyd. He is dedicated to advocating for more communities of color in all aspects - especially in higher levels of business. He also believes that consumers are more and more interested in opening "crazier bottles" that they would normally hold onto for a few years. It seems that the zeitgeist across wine communities is rooted in seizing opportunities. Rather than sitting back and waiting for change, wine professionals are taking advantage of the unpredictable, quickly evolving kairotic situation to facilitate friendships and positively influence wine culture.

But one of the biggest roadblocks in this noble quest for diversity, accessibility, and representation is wine communicators' lack of confidence in their personal identities - an issue resulting from decades of industry standards that deprioritized personal feelings in favor of capitalist values. The U.S. wine industry has the opportunity to become a community essential, an industry that does not rise and fall with economic circumstances but instead kairotically perseveres through sustainable relationships with individuals who are part of a culture that values togetherness, seeks out diversity, and truly cares about community members. For Wyld, Kolarik, and McLloyd, this means exploring their personal identities to discover what they can bring to the table. For Kimbrough and Cornett, this means amplifying voices to create accurate representations of the community. Gaining credibility comes from developing confidence, but in an industry where credibility and competition have been historically intertwined, it is difficult to shake this individualist cultural perspective.

Alex Schrecengost - founder of Culture With Us, a professional networking platform - believes that confidence is what shapes identity and instigates social change. The social movements of 2020 inspired her to start this business as a means of providing work, education, and networking for out-of-the-job sommeliers, especially those in marginalized communities. She saw her business as bigger than a simple events service, but instead as a means of transforming wine culture's "group think" to one more founded on diversity, equity, and inclusion. Being straightforward about her business goals helped her gain an authoritative voice, and she argues that diversifying perspectives and implementing sustainable practices are inherently vital components of any business practice. DEI associates advocating for people and business leaders considering employees' mental health are the ingredients for a well-balanced business model in Schrecengost's perspective. She feels that the pandemic taught us "to be grateful for community and to try and help when you can." She now constantly asks herself the question "How can we help each other?" and uses this notion to drive future goals.

But Schrecengost's biggest initiative is accessible learning. "Education," says Schrecengost, "is what boosts confidence. [It's] understanding your value and understanding where your morals lie. You can decide from there how you want to learn." Wine education in the U.S., according to Schrecengost, has been at a slow pace for a long time, and she attributes this to historical competitiveness and exclusivity. But her goals are to reach out to people who are studying wine and to act as an authoritative example of an open-access wine educator. Schrecengost believes that her confidence in herself - her decision to put her values first and speak her views openly - is what has helped her succeed as a business owner. Now, she gets to use her platform to help others speak up for themselves and to facilitate wine learning in the ways she believes it should thrive.

Stories

The camaraderie style of education and professional development in wine isn't new to the industry - in fact, before the digital age, learning from mentors was one of the primary ways wine communicators gained authoritative insight. But in the post-2020 wine world, communicators are opening up their perspectives about education and authority. When it comes to wine exploration and tasting, wine professionals have the power to enhance these experiences through their ability to relay wines' and winemakers' narratives. This power does not come from official certification or formal education by themselves; it comes from the individual's relationship with this knowledge and their personal choices in sharing these narratives. Furthermore, there are many quality wines that are not developed through conventional methods, yet their stories showcase the reasons why the wine is uniquely special. Underrepresented narratives of wine and people contain the same potential for connection with curious individuals as mainstream narratives. The power of the wine stories is the foundation of many wine professionals' careers – and this power also influences people outside of the traditional industry.

A sociotechnologist who founded a digital wine platform out of passion for wine, Vanessa Raymond has a unique role in the digital wine community that made her story a must-have source for my research. Her background is in technology and environmental research, but she developed a love for wine when she lived in Bulgaria as a Peace Corps volunteer. She describes the culture of wine as a community essential in Bulgaria - as opposed to a luxury or commodity. Her host family displayed a casual, familial relationship with wine making it at home for family get-togethers and pairing it with local cuisine and conversation, similar to what McLloyd recounts of his childhood experiences with homegrown wine. This cultural tradition, according to Fee, reflects the beliefs of the Nlaka'pamux people, one of the First Nation communities of British Columbia:

The land itself has emotions . . . The land and everything living on it has an emotional life dependent on relationships with others, including human beings. And listening to the elders tell stories is how children and young adults learn to become human so that they can sustain themselves, their communities, and, above all, the land.¹²³

This perspective positions all elements, people and environmental entities included, as interdependent and therefore containing vital emotional influence in community narratives. This is an essential framework for progressive, sustainable wine practices, as the processes behind wine depend on the relationships between agriculture, climate, kairos, and people. Inspired by this traditionally un-American idea of wine as a community essential, Raymond returned to the U.S. with plans for new career endeavors in wine.

Raymond has always been a firm believer in technology as an access tool, especially as a means for amplifying our voices. She argues that digital and social media are “ways to have conversations that we couldn’t have before,” and she wants to use these tools to open up wine accessibility. This aspiration led her to create Telesomm, an online platform for connecting wine

¹²³ Fee, “Respect or Empathy?” 211.

communicators with wine lovers in the community. Wine communicators have individual profiles on the platform where they can develop virtual and in-person tasting experiences related to their expertise and interests. Wine consumers then use the platform as a booking service to set up consultations, tastings, and dining experiences with the “telesomms.” Additionally, the company hosts in-person events with community organizations and partners with wine organizations aimed at supporting marginalized people in their wine careers. Through Telesomm, Raymond aims to change the rhetoric of wine and taste culture. She believes in providing wine professionals with “purposeful, meaningful” work where they can showcase their rhetorical skills, and she wants their audiences to be more confident and educated about wine.

Raymond is especially interested in creating experiences where people feel like they are being cared for - but her ultimate goal is a socially sustainable method of long-term care between individuals in a community. While other wine companies concentrate on wine itself, Raymond’s business strategy focuses more on wine rhetoric - facilitating conversations and amplifying others’ voices in order to support a rhetorical shift that favors the authentic and diverse stories behind the wines. In her vision, cultural taste in wine represents the authentically eclectic methods of experiencing wine and the vastly diverse spectrum of people who learn about it. This is a culture of storytelling where wine drinkers continuously fall in love with wine by learning new stories behind it - reflective of how sommeliers and wine communicators sustain their passion for wine because of the way it renders our roles as permanent scholars, always learning.

Research Implications

For the next part of my research project, I must consider the multimodality of modern wine rhetoric in my rhetorical analysis of this community’s narrative. As a community of wine professionals, we need to effectively utilize the personal and digital communication strategies we have gained from the past couple of years to start brand new conversations about wine and its intersection with different parts of our culture. Changing the future of wine starts with

innovative, contemporary rhetoric that helps establish community-wide ethos strong enough to transcend boundaries and awaken our senses. As sources, these narratives provide valuable “food for thought” within this research, which Fee believes to be the underlying purpose of sharing and listening to people’s stories; the stories act as “meaningful resources [to] provide useful models of how to behave in a way that respects difference while allowing listeners to ‘think for themselves’ about their own relationships and responsibilities.”¹²⁴ Studying these perspectives and sentiments within this community has helped me apply many rhetorical and cultural frameworks to public discourse, and the next step is to orient this research within Humanities studies through rhetorical analysis.

¹²⁴ Fee, “Respect or Empathy?” 220.

5. RHETORIC, RESEARCH, AND REVOLUTION

Rhetorical Analysis

Currently, the wine industry is at the beginning of widespread revolutionary change in communication practices and rhetorical strategy. In her article “Rethinking the Language of Wine,” wine writer Tina Caputo embodies the collected voice of many wine industry professionals calling for a “more inclusive wine lexicon” that accurately reflects the diverse, multicultural, and underrepresented identities of people who engage with it.¹²⁵ This movement has gained increasing traction over the past few years, but the sentiment is far from new. In the 1980s, Dr. Ann C. Noble from University of California Davis developed the Wine Aroma Wheel out of her passion for “how to best communicate with naïve wine consumers as well as facilitating clear communication between wine industry professionals.”¹²⁶ She noticed that many of the conventional wine descriptors like “round” and “elegant” did not make sense to new wine students, so she collected more approachable vocabulary and organized it in a visually stimulating way.

¹²⁵ Caputo, “Rethinking the Language of Wine.”

¹²⁶ A.C. Noble Wine Aroma Wheel.



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Since then, many wine organizations have adopted this structure and created their own tasting wheels. These efforts stem from rhetorical strategy that embraces novice and often younger audiences by understanding where people are in their wine journey instead of recycling the same stale rhetorical strategies. Some wine professionals believe that deconstructing and recomposing these basic language structures surrounding wine, particularly to make wine more accessible for future audiences, is imperative for the very survival of the industry.

Communicating with audiences from different cultures “isn’t about describing wine in some universal way,” says Caputo, “but meeting [audiences] where they are.”¹²⁸ She believes in “tailoring” language to suit different audiences, citing Graft Wine Shop co-owner Femi Oyediran’s sentiment: “Different strokes for different folks.”¹²⁹ The movement to restructure the rhetorical and communication strategies surrounding wine will involve building upon the work of

¹²⁷ A.C. Noble Wine Aroma Wheel. Image description: As a contrast to traditional list formats of wine descriptors, Noble created a visual database of wine words using a color-coded wheel. On the inside of the wheel are the main categories – chemical, pungent, floral, spicy, earthy, etc. – of wine aromas. The outer circles of the wheel go into more detail, breaking down the main categories and offering detailed aroma descriptors such as tobacco, green beans, violet, menthol, saline, and hazelnut.

¹²⁸ Caputo, “Rethinking the Language of Wine.”

¹²⁹ Ibid.

Noble and other influential wine communicators to critically think about how these strategies play out in current rhetorical situations. As the wine industry progresses, new tools in digital media and technology combined with new perspectives on cultural rhetorics and community-oriented goals will help communicators reach more diverse audiences.

We are at a pivotal point in wine communication with a spectrum of opportunities to interrogate widespread rhetorical structures and rebuild our communication strategies to better serve and represent the community. In rethinking our language, as Caputo calls us to do, our plans for redevelopment can be strengthened by careful analysis of the rhetorical strategies currently being used and encouraged by community-engaged leaders in the industry. From the narratives collected and detailed in the previous chapter, I aim to draw conclusions about which rhetorical elements these individuals believe will contribute to a more progressively successful wine industry. In this chapter, I will develop a multimodal rhetorical analysis through a cultural rhetorics framework, highlighting the strategies in knowledge acquisition, relationship management, and credibility building that contribute to progressive rhetorical effectiveness in wine communication.

Cultural Rhetorics and Multimodal Rhetorical Analysis

Building upon Rainer Winter's arguments in "Cultural Studies," cultural rhetorics scholar and professor Dr. Jennifer Sano-Franchini supports the pursuit of interdisciplinary work in rhetoric and composition in her chapter for Ridolfo and Hart-Davidson's *Rhetoric and the Digital Humanities*. Of cultural rhetorics specifically, Sano-Franchini argues:

Cultural rhetorics theorizes how rhetoric and culture are interconnected through a focus on the processes by which language, texts, and other discursive practices like performance, embodiment, and materiality create meaning . . . Cultural rhetoricians draw from across disciplinary boundaries because diverse fields of study offer important insights about the relation between culture and knowledge. Moreover, cultural rhetorics

is based on the premise that rhetoric has been and will always be a culturally located practice and study.¹³⁰

Here, Sano-Franchini indicates that rhetorically analyzing the communication practices of industry-specific discourse allows researchers to draw meanings from research that have the potential to positively impact the community. Situating rhetorical study within a specific, timely context helps researchers find the intersections between academic theory and rhetorical practice, thus guiding us towards impacting community roles with opportunities for further community-oriented research.

For this research, I have developed a multimodal rhetorical analysis of the communication practices of wine industry professionals using ethnographic information gathered from social media, personal interviews, and my anecdotal perspective as a professional wine communicator. Multimodality is important in analyzing the rhetorics of wine, not only because of innovations in digital media and technology but also because of the multimodal nature of wine as food, culture, and rhetorical influence. Therefore, rhetorical elements analyzed will include text, visuals, conversations, digital media, academic concepts, and industry sentiments.

Research Questions and Goals

In her exploration of the potentials of cultural rhetorics research, Sano-Franchini lists these questions:

What does a rhetorical approach to culture offer? What becomes visible when we think about culture and rhetorical and knowledge-making contributions? And, conversely, what becomes visible when we locate rhetorical situations as existing within cultural frames? How does culture order discourse? How do our intellectual genealogies inform

¹³⁰ Sano-Franchini, "Cultural Rhetorics and the Digital Humanities," 52.

and affect the work that we do? What kinds of texts that have not been traditionally accepted for study in the rhetorical tradition should be accounted for?¹³¹

From Sano-Franchini's suggestions, I have developed two research questions to guide the goals of this rhetorical analysis:

- How can we use multimodal rhetorical analysis to learn about a community's rhetoric, and how does rhetorically analyzing cross-discipline research reciprocally benefit ourselves and our communities?
- As researchers, what can we learn from the rhetorics of wine, and how can we use rhetorical strategies to foster beneficial community-engaged research and enjoyable relationships in interdisciplinary spaces?

These questions build upon the first two research questions explored during personal interviews and establish this project's roots in rhetoric and composition scholarship.

Pairing

The overarching narrative of wine being analyzed here is a fusion of ethnographic data gathered from personal interviews, participatory observations in digital and social media, and interpersonal conversations. During this research, I have continually noticed the juxtaposition of elements that together illuminate one narrative. In wine, this is a foundational concept of our work: pairing, or the art-science of creating new experiences through combining simple elements. In rhetorical study, this is a new practice I am embracing to apply to this rhetorical analysis. At the core of the concept of pairing is the fundamental desire to generate new ideas by purposefully noting the connections between elements - even if these elements on their own might seem contradictory to one another. Pairing allows opportunities for new experiences and revived enthusiasm for known entities. Furthermore, this guiding principle of pairing reflects my

¹³¹ Sano-Franchini, "Cultural Rhetorics and the Digital Humanities," 53.

research standpoint as an interdisciplinary researcher and my goal of developing practical cross-discipline research strategies.

While the application of pairing to non- food-related elements is not a brand-new concept, the wine community is currently experiencing a period of revived interest in exploring these connections. In her *Forbes* article “Champagne and Music For Valentine’s Day,” Master of Wine Liz Thach highlights some of the ways wine professionals are applying the concept of pairing to more abstract situations in wine experiences. She highlights the work of Krug Champagne House Director Olivier Krug who feels like his role is “similar to that of a symphony conductor,” constantly blending and fusing elements to develop renowned and new experiences.¹³² Krug has expanded this idea even further by diving into academic research with the Institut de Recherche et de Coordination Acoustique/Musique (IRCAM), a French organization dedicated to scientifically studying music and sound. Krug created a special tasting room for tasting Champagne and pairing it with different kinds of music, and his at-home tasting kit, Krug Echoes, includes bespoke compositions for each new vintage by internationally renowned musicians such as Ryuichi Sakamoto. Similarly, in my work for *Paste*, my pairing lists like “Feelin’ Great” showcase the singular connections between wine and music, specifically noting the original experience generated from pairing known elements. These instances display the benefits of noticing and analyzing how different entities work together and applying this analysis to other spheres. For Krug and myself, these unique pairings not only create new experiences for others but also greatly enhance the fun of our personal experiences working in wine.

Overall, the data gathered from recent communication practices in the wine industry shows that people in this community juggle multiple elements at once in all aspects of their lives. While this can be a challenge, it leads to a more holistic approach to purposeful work and

¹³² Quoted in Thach, “Champagne and Music for Valentine’s Day.”

personal goals, and wine communicators strive to demonstrate these benefits for new audiences in how they present arguments about wine. The following analysis of rhetorical elements in the general narrative of wine will show how rhetorical strategy can follow the principle of pairing to result in a balanced understanding of oneself and one's audience. For each discussion of logical, emotional, and ethical appeals, multimodal elements will be juxtaposed, and the resulting pairing experience will be discussed in terms of how this research informs rhetorical study in the Humanities. To conclude, this analysis will be applied to the current kairotic situation and what this research could mean for the future of communication and composition education.

Logos

Throughout its history, the wine industry has included multiple avenues for acquiring, recording, and sharing information. In many ways, the wines themselves act as liquid archives for gathering data about terroir, winemaking, and cultural influences. When visiting Jose Maria de Fonseca winery in Setúbal, I was shown large barrels of fortified wine that are purposefully kept as they are for specific amounts of time so that, when eventually tasted, they impart the authentic characteristics of their vintage that help tell the wine's story. This idea of wine collections as databases has been expanded over the past few decades as innovators in digital media and technology find new ways to catalog wine information. This data, when interpreted by professional wine communicators, expose the logistics behind the wines that help inform audiences' understanding of these wine narratives.

Challenges in Wine Tech

In the early 2020s, we seem to have been hit by another wave of the digital revolution. Our immediate increased reliance on digital media and technology skyrocketed our evolution towards digital innovation, creating yet another layer of perceived division between old and new methods of communication. The pre-pandemic digital revolution helped generate conversations

about education, accessibility, and representation in the wine industry, but the post-pandemic new wave has inspired conflicts over expedited phenomena including authentic credibility, digital business strategy, and artificial intelligence (AI). As we navigate our post-2020 world of wine communication, we are experiencing a rocky point in our relationship with technology as wine professionals trial different wine tech ideas.

Many of these new ideas offer strategies for personalized inventory of wine - using well-developed algorithms, digital databases, and/or AI to create digital profiles of wines for consumers to choose from. Countless apps exist for these purposes with slightly different approaches to data collection. Many platforms simply act as a digital encyclopedia of wine (Wine-Searcher),¹³³ some prioritize sales and delivery (Drizly),¹³⁴ others take a more educational stance (Delectable),¹³⁵ while some attempt to do it all (Vivino).¹³⁶ But it's clear that the hyper-digitization of wine is hindering the industry's technological potential, as many of these new apps are not achieving long-term financial success. In 2022, the up-and-coming wine education platform Pix failed to secure another round of funding after a promising start. Soon after, one of the biggest wine personalization and distribution platforms, Winc, filed for bankruptcy after going public only a year before. Wine writer Alder Yarrow argues that this is because the wine industry "lacks the imagination and inclination to participate in the kinds of digital transformations that most other industries have found essential over the past few decades."¹³⁷ Essentially, while wine business innovators are quick to fund new artificially intelligent platforms because of AI's cultural prestige as a forward-thinking and money-making strategy, they clearly lack the structural perspective necessary to understand the core advantages AI and other technologies offer the wine industry.

¹³³ Wine-Searcher, wine-searcher.com.

¹³⁴ Drizly, drizly.com.

¹³⁵ Delectable, delectable.com.

¹³⁶ Vivino, vivino.com/US-CA/en.

¹³⁷ Yarrow, "Pix Wasn't the Only Wine Tech Failure."

Regardless, the wine community seems to be aware of the exigency of effective digital rhetoric for the survival of the industry. Digital media and technology are essential for wine's growth, but as Yarrow blatantly puts it, "the question is whether they'll get to it before they've lost the game, and all their digitally-native customers are entrenched customers of other types of beverage alcohol."¹³⁸ Another prominent voice in the online conversation known as Wine Roland, wine technologist and writer of the *Digital Wine Newsletter*, argues that these are issues across disciplines and industries, as the venture capitalist market is becoming increasingly afraid of investing in start-up innovations. For wine tech, Roland believes there is a lack of communication and ability to clearly express organizational vision and identity. He argues that these issues can only be addressed through widespread revision of business models and reflection on "if all that technology they've bought in the last years is good for them or not."¹³⁹ The question is no longer about whether or not to use digital media and technology in wine, but instead: how do we rebalance our relationship with digital media and technology to instigate the long-term survival of our community?

Similar Challenges in the Academic Humanities

This sentiment is paralleled across industries, as innovations in digital media and technology offer new, yet sometimes overwhelming, opportunities for widespread evolution in traditional practices. In the digital Humanities, academic scholars explore ways that digital media and technology influence rhetorical practice, composition, archival research, and other important aspects of human-centered communication. Lai-Tze Fan, professor of technology and social change at the University of Waterloo, argues that our current explosion of digital innovations merits increased attention to these subjects. "As a field of scholarship," says Fan, "the digital humanities are increasingly important to understand and develop, as they are

¹³⁸ Yarrow, "Pix Wasn't the Only Wine Tech Failure."

¹³⁹ Wine Roland, "Wine, Tech, and Money."

uniquely attuned to the wide-ranging impact of digital media and culture.”¹⁴⁰ But, similar to wine tech, the Humanities also struggle with our relationship with digital media and technology, as our teachings are under constant scrutiny for the practical purposes they serve.

One of the hottest topics in early-2020s rhetoric and composition scholarship is AI, as recent enhancements in these technologies have caused many to question the structure of traditional composition pedagogy. Fan argues that the overall “epistemological differences between digital technologies and the humanities are in one way exemplified by the relationship between the database and the traditional narrative.”¹⁴¹ Rhetorically, Fan notes that database and narrative are often historically positioned as opposites, which accounts for the current perspective that AI works against (or even threatens the existence of) narrative composition, as it represents a database of digital knowledge that humans’ narrative thinking can never quantitatively match. These kinds of perspectives – in the digital humanities, the wine industry, and beyond – deserve closer examination in Fan’s opinion, as further analysis of how AI and human sensibilities work together can “reveal more complexity” in the purpose of these relationships.¹⁴²

Recognizing Affordances and Limitations

Through analyzing the many human-based and digital tools available to enhance logical appeals in wine rhetoric, one can apply the concept of pairing to efficiently juxtapose the affordances and limitations digital media and technology offers. The first step, Fan argues, is reflecting on the rhetorical purpose of the message:

¹⁴⁰ Fan, “On the Value of Narratives.”

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid.

In using digital tools and methods to represent literature, then, digital humanists must ask whether the methodological prowess and scope of digital tools risk any loss of literary- and humanistic-based reflection and interpretation.¹⁴³

Using wine rhetoric as an example, we can practice our interrogation of these rhetorical purposes and the best tools available for effective persuasive communication by asking questions about the wine's relationship with the audience. What is the difference between the learning opportunities available in Jose Maria de Fonseca's collection of fortified wine versus a digital database of wine? While both venues offer the same result (enhanced understanding of wine), the learner's journey towards this understanding happens in different ways. One method offers experience-based evidence at the expense of anecdotal anomalies, and the other method offers quickly-derived and likely peer-reviewed evidence without providing a personal, human-centered experience. Both methods need not be deemed superior or inferior but rather used purposefully towards the audience's individual needs.

Within this framework of thinking, new tools in digital media and technology are not "natural enemies" of more traditional learning methods but instead "dynamic" opportunities for alternative and progressive rhetorical effectiveness.¹⁴⁴ The key to applying different methods efficiently is reflection of rhetorical purpose within each situation. Operating under a one-size-fits-all perspective of the latest digital innovation results in losing rhetorical relevance over time, as evidenced by the "wine tech graveyard" in the industry.¹⁴⁵ AI innovations in wine tend to leave some wondering about the purpose of wine communicators and sommeliers within these new frameworks of knowledge, while these very same questions plague Humanities scholars in the age of AI composition. In practice, the art of pairing traditional methods and technological advances is challenging for professionals across disciplines, which guides Humanities

¹⁴³ Fan, "On the Value of Narratives."

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Yarrow, "Pix Wasn't the Only Wine Tech Failure."

researchers towards dissecting and analyzing the affordances and limitations of the latest digital innovations to see where simpler, older, or non-digital methods better meet the goal of the individual experience. Conclusively, the question lies not in which methods are superior but in how these methods can work together going forward.

Pathos

These conflicts exemplify the ongoing challenge wine communicators endure where they must balance seemingly contrasting sentiments to develop new ideas and experiences. To do this, wine communicators focus on identifying with the narratives behind the wines and, more importantly, establishing these connections for their audiences. We have already seen multiple examples of how Burkean practices of identification are used in wine communication, and interview participants have indicated that connecting identities reflects their principles of sharing stories and engaging in authentic conversations. Kolarik even noted that helping others discover their “wine identity” is their own favorite part of being a wine communicator. Much of these identification strategies are employed through wine communicators evoking pleasurable memories from their audience through pairing. But not only do they use pairing to combine substances - they also pair abstract elements together by developing metaphorical language that helps audiences juxtapose gustatorial taste, abstract sensibilities, and individual experience. Metaphor has long been a fundamental element of wine communication, and current industry professionals are applying theories of respect and relationship management to this rhetorical strategy to help wine become more accessible to broader audiences.

Contrasting Sentiments

Balancing contrasting sentiments seems to be one of the most foundational rhetorical strategies for wine communicators, but this strategy applies to other disciplines as well, especially in regard to digital media and technology. In the digital Humanities, Fan points out

that we tend to categorize humanistic, narrative processing as the opposite of digital, technological innovation:

On the one hand, we live in an information age that privileges technological progress and that is tasked with the creation, storage, and management of large amounts of data. On the other, our (western) traditional methods of interpreting information are grounded in humanities philosophy — through theoretical, interpretive, and reflexive methods of understanding history, tradition, culture, and storytelling.¹⁴⁶

In periods of drastic digital innovation, our fear of being left behind with the old narrative leads us to over-digitize our methods of communication and knowledge sharing. This is the challenge many disciplines are facing in these post-pandemic years - grappling with the fast-evolving desires of our audience while still processing our own understanding of the new rhetorical situation. But Fan's arguments, however, remind us to reflect on rhetorical purpose and work within these affordances and limitations to discover the most appropriate styles of rhetorical strategy. Utilizing digital media and AI technology to develop vast databases of information is one means of practicing effective communication skills, but "given that machinic operations are designed to produce outcomes, quantify data, and otherwise offer answers," Fan asks, "Is it possible for methods of quantification to represent, for instance, the depth or affect of a metaphor?"¹⁴⁷ Here, Fan chooses to identify both the advantages of digital media that support our goals and the limitations that illuminate the persistent value of humanistic and narrative thinking.

To face these conflicts, Fan challenges us to use the very technology that instigates our concerns to reveal gaps best addressed by more simplistic or traditional methods. Namely, to study the rhetorical influence of metaphor in industry-specific discourse, a researcher can analyze both a communicators' strategies and a digital repertoire of metaphorical wine

¹⁴⁶ Fan, "On the Value of Narratives."

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

language, juxtaposing information from both spheres to draw timely conclusions about how all of these tools work in realistic rhetorical situations. Currently, many wine communicators are inadvertently applying these theories to research metaphors in wine, as evolving communication practices show that this foundational rhetorical strategy calls for consistent revisions for growing audiences. Wine writer Miguel de Leon addresses this issue in his 2020 article “It’s Time to Decolonize Wine:”

When I go to wine tastings, I feel like I have to make a conscious effort to play down my brownness. I cherry-pick my vocabulary, reaching into the word box of white somm-speak . . . Language is a particular challenge, considering English is my third. Traditional wine tasting grids and wheels are biased to Eurocentric flavors, and crucial wine vocabularies can center on foods completely foreign to my Very Asian Palate, like the description of body akin to the fat content of milk products or the essence of a flavor component wrapped up in a fruit I have never even heard of. (Seriously, what in the actual fuck is a gooseberry?)¹⁴⁸

This sentiment reveals the problematic outcomes of allowing rhetorical strategies to plateau. In rhetoric, metaphors are meant to display connections between two otherwise unrelated elements, and communicators who utilize metaphor do this to create personal connections for their audiences. But in the situation described by de Leon, certain metaphors can have the opposite effect. Wine communicators cannot apply identification strategies with unrelatable metaphors, and access to entire digital databases of metaphors is not helpful if these databases are filled with the same Eurocentric examples.

In these circumstances, reflection on the tools and technologies available is necessary for revising communication strategies for enhanced effectiveness. Revitalized and representational rhetoric can be implemented into, for example, a digital database of wine

¹⁴⁸ de Leon, “It’s Time to Decolonize Wine.”

metaphors, but this kind of systematic change calls for wine communicators to first explore and reflect on their audiences' narratives. The story behind the audience member, like de Leon's anecdotal experience as a multilingual Filipino American, presents a purpose for rhetorical restructuring, allowing communicators to orient their strategies within "wine's present realities."¹⁴⁹ These realities include the ever-present need to manage the balance between contrasting sentiments in regard to business practices, sustainability measures, and more. Interrogating the teaching and learning behind these systems, de Leon argues, is how we understand how to restructure them.

Rethinking Metaphors and Marketing

In general, our goals as researchers of rhetoric are to learn sustainable strategies for effective communication and to educate others on these strategies. When studying wine marketing in the U.S., we can see where these strategies fall short of long-term sustainability. Regarding wine specifically, de Leon asks, if "this is an agricultural product that can adapt quickly to market trends," then "why is wine education so slow to adapt?"¹⁵⁰ The issue here is not that wine is unmarketable to some audiences, but that wine education is still gatekept from many communities. American wine culture often prioritizes strategy in small rhetorical situations of delivering a pungent message with a quick turnaround for success rather than a more overarching rhetorical situation of educating audiences towards genuine interest in the message for long-term engagement. In marketing, this can be shown by comparing and contrasting the multimodal rhetoric of the images below.

¹⁴⁹ de Leon, "It's Time to Decolonize Wine."

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.



TASTING NOTES

Flavor: strawberry, lemon & peach. A refreshing blend of Cabernet Franc, Pinot Gris & Dry Riesling.

Feeling: refreshing & light

WHENEVER, WHEREVER

With VINNY, you can finally enjoy quality bubbly wine wherever you go, but this can is more than meets the eye.

Besides straight from the can or over the rocks (pinky up of course), VINNY can be used in a spritz, mimosa, or just add a splash of your favorite liqueur and stir for something fruity and delicious.

Follow us on Instagram!
@VINNYwines

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¹⁵¹ VINNY Wines, “VINNY Rosé Info Sheet.” Image description: a slender, pink and white can labeled “VINNY: New York Bubbly Rosé.” To the right, the text describes the wine’s tasting notes: “Strawberry, lemon & peach. A refreshing blend of Cabernet Franc, Pinot Gris, & Dry Riesling.” Underneath the tasting notes is a section titled “Whenever, Wherever” with a paragraph underneath: “With VINNY, you can finally enjoy quality bubbly wine wherever you go, but this can is more than meets the eye. Besides straight from the can or over the rocks (pinky up of course), VINNY can be used in a spritz, mimosa, or just add a splash of your favorite liquor and stir for something fruity and delicious. Follow us on Instagram!”

BUBBLY WHITE BUBBLY ROSÉ WHITE SPRITZER ROSÉ SPRITZER

Meet Eleanor

Meet Eleanor! Light and bright, our rosé is one of strawberries and dreams. Unbelievably delicious and almost impossible to sip, so please try to savour.

All orders placed before 23rd Dec will be entered into our [Kip Weekend Escape Competition](#)

Grapes: Pinot Noir
Born in: Kent - Hampshire
ABV: 11.5%

TASTING NOTES +
OUR PROCESS +
DELIVERY INFORMATION +

VEGAN FRIENDLY ENDLESSLY RECYCLABLE NATURALLY LOW IN SUGAR

TASTING NOTES +

OUR PROCESS -

HARVEST
After nurturing our Pinot Noir grapes as if they were our own (which they are) we carefully hand-pick the juiciest berries from our vines.

DESTEM
The stems and other non-grape materials are removed in preparation for crushing.

PRESS & MACERATE
The grapes are then pressed and left to macerate (soften) for a few hours to take on some of the colour from the skin. Then pressed again and the juice collected.

FERMENT
The juice is fermented to make our rosé wine. The yeast we add eats all the sugar present, creating alcohol and CO₂. While this happens, we wait. For months. Oh, the Torture.

Bubbly Rosé Wine (250ml)
Light & Bright

8 Cans ▾ ADD TO BASKET £46.00

Meet Eleanor
Meet Eleanor. Light and bright, our rosé is

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The first image is the visual of an American canned rosé with its profile information. This text is focused on time and flexibility, offering the audience advice on when they could drink this wine (at any time, according to the heading) and how they could drink it (mixed with a range of drinks, including the audience's unspecified "favorite liquor"). The message behind this profile is rooted in a short-term rhetorical situation, essentially concocting a concentrated mix of rhetorical strategy aimed at the kairotic moment, which says *choose this wine now no matter where you are going next*.

¹⁵² We are the Uncommon, "Bubbly Rosé Wine." Image description: three images. The first image is a beige can featuring a regal, humanistic swan wearing a Victorian-style hat and clothing. The wine is labeled "The Uncommon: Wine of England." The second image shows that on the webpage, beneath the can, the text says "Meet Eleanor! Light and bright, our rosé is one of strawberries and dreams. Unbelievably delicious and almost impossible to sip, so please try to savour." Beneath this description is a large amount of technical information about the wine, including the grape (Pinot Noir), the region (Kent - Hampshire), and the ABV (11.5%). Options to expand sections outlining the tasting notes, winemaking process, and delivery information are available on the webpage. The third image displays the text available when clicking the "Our Process" section, which gives detailed and digestible information about harvesting, destemming, maceration, and fermentation.

The second set of images details the profile of a European canned rosé - clearly offering more educational content for the audience. The rhetoric includes catchy gimmicks (humanizing the wine's personality with an elegant, feminine name) and conversational banter ("While this happens we wait. For months. Oh the Torture.") similar to the first profile. But this rhetoric offers a much larger amount of factual information behind the wine's character which not only shares a narrative but allows the audience enough insight to make an educated choice. The text's simple breakdown of complex, industry-specific processes helps deliver the message: *know what methods generate good wine and see for yourself how we employ those methods*. This rhetorical strategy might result in delayed rhetorical success in the immediate kairotic situation, but it plays to the overarching and evolving rhetorical situation and manages a likely stronger, longer relationship with the audience by inviting them into the community via knowledge.

This example displays the need for American wine communicators to adopt the perspective of wine as a community essential. Through this lens, communicators can learn more sustainable methods of marketing wine to evolving audiences and establish wine as a human connector rather than an exclusive luxury. However, this still leaves the issue of non-white, non-Eurocentric representation in wine, a problem that many wine communicators believe can be addressed by researching more diverse rhetorical strategies. Being "realistic in our rhetoric," as Kimbrough says, means prioritizing consideration of those historically left out of wine conversations in our communication strategies. These sentiments reflect Sano-Franchini's arguments regarding cultural rhetorics in that developing this kind of strategy involves complex thinking about innovative practices that aim to grow and represent the community. Rather than thinking inwardly about how rhetorical strategy can improve one's persuasive pull over an audience, wine communicators can prioritize outward thinking towards how rhetorical strategy can establish human connections that make the entire community stronger and more inclusive.

Of this community-oriented style of rhetorical strategy, Sano-Franchini argues:

It is not simply the rhetorics of race, nor is it cultural studies, critical race theory, cultural philosophy, or cultural studies of technology. It is not ‘minority’ rhetorics, or ‘alternative’ rhetorics. Cultural rhetorics is an interdisciplinary field of study, a scholarly practice, and a category for interpreting the world around us.

Her use of the term “scholarly practice” indicates that community-engaged rhetorics involve continually thinking about communication strategies that evolve with the changing states of the rhetorical situation. In wine communication, this means that, rather than implementing trendy marketing tactics that aim for one-off appeals to audiences’ sensibilities, American industry professionals need to consider their overarching goals for managing sustainable relationships with audiences and, most importantly, their contributions to community-wide goals of camaraderie and ethics in the world of wine.

Metaphors Beyond Words

In rhetoric and composition study and pedagogy, these implications might indicate the need for a general overhaul of how persuasive argumentation is structured. De Leon’s arguments do not stop at merely replacing old metaphors with new ones; his overarching argument demands universal restructuring of *how* we want to articulate wine information and *who* we want to give this knowledge to. For rhetoric and composition, particularly in introductory courses, this same argument can be applied as we rethink how information on persuasive argumentation is structured and who benefits from learning this information. In the U.S., modern rhetorical situations display the polarizing results of our long-term perception of rhetorical persuasion as a battleground. In her article “Dancing Over Dueling,” linguist Kate Dzubinski points out examples of argument as war in English: “you can take a position, defend a position, your point can be attacked, you can have different strategies, and win or lose an argument.”¹⁵³

¹⁵³ Dzubinski, “Dancing Over Dueling.”

She then presents an alternative framework for teaching argument, citing George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's sentiments in their 1980 publication *Metaphors We Live By*.

In their vision, communicators and counterarguments are not viewed as opponents but rather dancers in a performance:

Participants are seen as performers, and the goal is to perform in a balanced and aesthetically pleasing way. In such a culture, people would view arguments differently, experience them differently, carry them out differently, and talk about them differently. But we would probably not view them as arguing at all: they would simply be doing something different. It would seem strange even to call what they were doing 'arguing.' Perhaps the most neutral way of describing this difference between their culture and ours would be to say that we have a discourse form structured in terms of battle and they have one structured in terms of dance.¹⁵⁴

While this is an extreme example of linguistic restructuring, the theories expressed here display an intriguing alternative to how we discuss persuasive argumentation. In addition to our understanding of surface-level metaphors, Dzubinski argues that large rhetorical structures like this also act as overarching metaphors we use to critically think about communication strategies. "When we link an abstract idea, like an argument, to a concrete one, like a physical battle," says Dzubinski, "our understanding of the abstract idea is affected by what we know about the concrete one."¹⁵⁵ Her point here is that the general narrative of argument as war "highlights competition but hides the possibility of an argument where the goal of both participants is to come to an agreement."

Restructuring our metaphorical understanding of persuasive argumentation is an undertaking that starts with how we teach introductory students about rhetoric, similar to how "rethinking the language of wine" will likely call for larger restructuring of how wine

¹⁵⁴ Quoted in Dzubinski, "Dancing Over Dueling."

¹⁵⁵ Dzubinski, "Dancing Over Dueling."

communicators develop introductory experiences for novice explorers. In her conclusion, Dzubinski argues that war - “with its winner and loser, with the idea of wounds and casualties” – is actually a counterproductive means of teaching rhetorical persuasion because this framework does not promote “relational harmony” between communicators and audiences.¹⁵⁶

Inadvertently, she reiterates the idea of pairing in communication, calling instead for a rhetorical framework in which our goals are “closeness rather than domination.” In wine communication, professionals use their expertise to create pairings between their knowledge and their audience’s, developing metaphors that reveal connections between what audiences already know and the learning they want to achieve. This strategy once again prioritizes growing an educated community rather than sustaining the divide between expert and novice. In rhetoric and composition pedagogy, this kind of restructuring might even alter the relationship between teachers and students, allowing for shared knowledge experiences where everyone feels like they are learning and growing as communicators.

Ethos

Reconstructing rhetorical strategy allows rhetoricians to interrogate our rhetorical purposes and discover new ways of integrating our process into our messages to prove credibility. For wine consumers, understanding the narrative behind the wine has become increasingly important in their purchasing choices. In his article “Four Ways to Think About Wine,” *Times* writer Eric Asimov outlines methods of thought that lead to a more comprehensive understanding of our relationship with wine. He starts by calling audiences to “think of wine as coming from the earth,” to begin our analysis of a wine with where and how the grapes were grown.¹⁵⁷ Winemakers who expose their viticultural practices, particularly highlighting the ethics behind their relationship with the crop and the land, illuminate telling

¹⁵⁶ Dzubinski, “Dancing Over Dueling.”

¹⁵⁷ Asimov, “Four Ways to Think About Wine.”

qualities about their winemaking process that audiences can connect with their own values and ethics. This can help guide our community rhetoric towards consideration of wine as a holistic part of our lifestyle.

Furthermore, Asimov encourages us to “think of wine as food.” Those who have standards for the food they choose should apply “the same standards to it as [they] do to the other ingredients [they] bring into [their] home,” as unethical or cost-cutting winemaking practices can decrease the quality of wine.¹⁵⁸ But with wine, Asimov notes, one “cannot look at the ingredients label” as with other foods, and therefore researching the narrative of a wine might call for more extensive effort towards communication with wine specialists.¹⁵⁹ Asimov motivates consumer audiences to seek out wine communicators who can effectively relay the narratives behind their wine choices so that they can assess wines based on their identities, desires, and personal values. Wine communicators’ audiences are interested in how they identify with a communicator’s rhetorical purpose and, therefore, how they reciprocally relate to each other. This has created a rhetorical situation in which ethos is co-generated based on the relationship between ourselves and our communities.

The Learning Process

These practices, according to Asimov, help wine drinkers facilitate enhanced experiences for themselves, allowing us to “think of wine as an adventure.”¹⁶⁰ Learning about the narratives behind the wines not only helps affirm buying choices but helps develop our knowledge of wine in general. Pursuing this learning is what Asimov and many other wine professionals believe to be the purpose of cultivating wine relationships. The process of becoming educated about wine is one of the most, if not the most, important components of

¹⁵⁸ Asimov, “Four Ways to Think About Wine.”

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

one's relationship with wine, as this shared learning experience is the reason wine has been part of our lives. In Asimov's words:

This is part of the joy of wine. Unexpected flavors and textures may lead you to new and different discoveries, expanding your realm of experience and adding to your understanding of what's possible and what's wonderful. Familiar comforts will always have their place, and even they can lead in unexpected directions if, for example, they reflect the idiosyncrasies of a particular vintage. Like interesting people, good wines are characters. They may not speak in news anchor tones, but they always have something interesting to say.¹⁶¹

In regards to rhetorical ethos, Asimov's argument indicates the need for wine professionals to act as credible and authentic storytellers for consumers. This new era of wine education where knowledge is shared more openly can cause some to question where rhetorical authority lies. If demonstrating knowledge in conversation and sharing the story of wine processes are wine communicators' methods of displaying credibility, then the divide between officially-certified expert and novice learner dissipates. Rhetorical authority, therefore, is not proved through exclusionary education and certification but instead through one's reputation as a human-centered educator with community-oriented goals.

Rhetoric and Community

A significant shift in our cultural perspective of the self and the community will rely on our rhetorical appeals to human sensibilities - considering both our feelings and the community's sentiments as one cycle of maintaining and renegotiating balance. While individual viewpoints remain influential, realistic rhetorical revolution must come from the authoritative organizations who employ and support wine communicators. Ikimi Dubose-Woodson, a foundational source for this research, has based her business principles on this kind of rhetoric

¹⁶¹ Asimov, "Four Ways to Think About Wine."

in her development of the Roots Fund. She is committed to facilitating reciprocal community relationships that encourage widespread rhetorical success in wine education and communication. Her argument is:

Community breeds support at the utmost level. When you can sit in a room of your peers and study freely without ego or judgment, more people will learn. To make the learning easier, we can correlate many things to our culture so you're able to make it relatable. This builds community - when you have a network to rely on, you can build upon yourself.¹⁶²

This kind of thinking causes a shift in our perspective surrounding wine education where, instead of treating learning as an accumulation of knowledge, we consider successful learning as experiences that help build emotional intelligence. Wine communicators invoke strategies of maintaining multiple options for human connection by balancing their awareness of self and of audience. Through this perspective, rhetorical success relies not on communicators' mastery of this balance but on their authenticity in sharing their learning process towards it.

Narrative and Identity

Thus far, this analysis has shown how modern wine communicators pair and juxtapose rhetorical elements to reach different audiences. More importantly, these examples demonstrate the importance of balance in all aspects - winemaking, rhetorical strategy, education, etc. - in order to develop reciprocal, sustainable communication practices that result in a more educated audience, a more authentically engaged communicator, and more enriching wine experiences for the community. Inadvertently, wine communicators also display potential methods of managing traditional concepts and progressive innovations by reflecting on the innate goals of their rhetorical strategy. Intersectional research of these rhetorics can show us the similarities

¹⁶² Dubose-Woodson, "Community Breeds Support."

between disciplines and the contrasting sentiments present in our culture that inform our navigation of communicative spaces.

Dr. Maurice Charland, professor of Communication Studies at Concordia University, applies this idea to his work in bringing “classical rhetorical theory into conversation with contemporary thought,” as argued in his essay “The Rhetorician’s Identity.”¹⁶³ Charland’s argument is that “identity [can be] produced rhetorically through narrative” when rhetoricians employ Burkean principles of identification.¹⁶⁴ Particularly, Charland notes the difference between this method of developing communicative authority as opposed to strictly Aristotelian methods of establishing ethos.

Aristotle’s conception of ethos differs from that of identity because it is non-essential, but based in one’s performance . . . Each of these domains is constituted in practices directed toward the realization of internal goods, goods inherent to the practice rather than the product of the practice.¹⁶⁵

Charland emphasizes the rhetorician’s relationship with their professional development, arguing that it is the process itself that creates rhetorical ethos. Moreover, the rhetorician’s reflection on and interpretation of their communication development helps constitute rhetorical ethos.

Communicators who deprioritize ethical goals in favor of gatekeeping knowledge, personal glory, or ulterior motives will naturally develop an ethos that reflects this character.

Similar to this situation, the products of winemaking also reflect their process, as Asimov points out that “when [a wine is] altered in production, [it] no longer offers a faithful documentation. The result might be delicious, but it’s lost a dimension of its character.”¹⁶⁶ Truly high-quality wine is “is a recording of a time and place as interpreted by the people who grew

¹⁶³ Concordia University, “Dr. Maurice Charland, PhD.”

¹⁶⁴ Charland, “Rhetorician’s Identity,” 27.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 28.

¹⁶⁶ Asimov, “Four Ways to Think About Wine.”

the grapes and made the wine.”¹⁶⁷ From Asimov’s perspective, the process matters almost more than the product, as the process largely determines the intrinsic value of the wine. In the same way that Asimov calls wine drinkers to engage with and reflect on their wine drinking experiences to enhance their own learning, Charland argues that this kind of practice helps rhetoricians develop credibility within their community.

Excellence in sports or the arts can bring fame and fortune, but these are not constitutive of excellence in themselves. Indeed, as we are too often reminded, external goods may undermine or corrupt practice. Other external goods follow harmoniously from internal goods. Excellence in shoemaking often yields excellent shoes. Rhetorical excellence does not guarantee persuasion, but persuasion may follow. Similarly, the rhetorician’s aretē might very well promote good citizenship, even as the rhetorician’s practice might be informed by an interest in good citizenship. This is possible because the citizen is also a character instantiated in practices.¹⁶⁸

Continuously engaging with our communities and our internal structures helps build strong rhetorical practices. As a communicator, building ethos means not only taking the time to learn about the diverse perspectives of our audiences, but also making an effort to define the purpose of our rhetoric in why it is important to us. This connection - this genuine, human relationship between communicators and their audiences - is a benefit accessible to everyone in the community, regardless of their role in the rhetorical situation. Making human connections is the reason for rhetorical study, and these connections can lead to new experiences that inspire us to nurture our identities and our roles within our communities.

¹⁶⁷ Asimov, “Four Ways to Think About Wine.”

¹⁶⁸ Charland, “Rhetorician’s Identity,” 31.

Community-Oriented Goals

The invaluable connection between the self and the community is embedded in rhetorical study, as Devon Moriarty argues in her essay “Building a Better Barn: A Community-Oriented Approach to Rhetorical Scholarship.” Moriarty acknowledges that finding one’s role within the community can be an underlying goal of Burkean identification:

Kenneth Burke’s ‘identification’ presumes that form is the basis for identifying with those whom we hope to persuade, and that when we identify with others, we become consubstantial with them. This ‘consubstantiality,’ this idea of being one with others while simultaneously being a unique individual, is the embodiment of community . . . Identification is important because it’s this rhetorical co-existence of the symbolic that exerts power in the world, suggesting that community is constructed only through successful identification with others.¹⁶⁹

But Moriarty expresses that contemporary rhetorical study has “brushed up against the notion of community while never fully addressing it.” She cites well-known rhetorician Carolyn Miller, specifically calling attention to Miller’s argument that “community is rhetorically constituted, accommodating difference and division in the hopes of achieving emotional solidarity that drives political action.”¹⁷⁰ However, Moriarty then juxtaposes Miller’s argument with that of Smaro Kamboureli in “Public Intellectuals and Community.”

Kamboureli rejects the traditional notion of community as constructed through identification with others, and proposes one that is thoroughly rhetorical, that accommodates subjectivity and binds together those sharing a sense of purpose. The ‘enactment of subjectivity as citizenship,’ appears to be purposefully ambiguous, as it moves away from a community that comes together based on shared goals (as in

¹⁶⁹ Moriarty, “Building a Better Barn,” 72.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 72-73.

Habermas's Communicative Action), and towards one based on action and experience—it's a community based on doing rather than being.¹⁷¹

Here, Moriarty argues that comprehensive community-oriented rhetorical study must include consideration of its potential influence in the community itself.

Although the notion of community has always operated within the peripheries of the rhetorical canon, I would argue that it deserves a central place in rhetorical studies, because how one identifies oneself and engages with others is always within the context of communities. Communities allow us to categorize ourselves and others, and they act as a rhetorical constraint, limiting what arguments can be used and what may be found persuasive. But they are also liberating in their social power in that they foster belonging and security, and can, through the multiplicity of voices and coordinated action, enact change.¹⁷²

Through this argument, Moriarty makes claims that echo the community-oriented goals of this research: to research cultural rhetorics as a means of learning about how intersectional conversations can foster enjoyable, interdisciplinary relationships.

From Moriarty's perspective, a researcher's holistic understanding of their role within the rhetorical situation must also include reflection of the non-conventional learning experienced in alternative spaces and fields. She notes that her own experiences as a professional in marketing and as a researcher of social media inform her view of herself as a communicator and especially as someone who has the potential to educate others about rhetorical study. Furthermore, her personal identity characteristics regarding background and demographics also contribute to her ethos and self-reflection, and she argues that her "dual identities" help her situate roles for herself within multiple ongoing conversations.¹⁷³ Parallel to the idea of pairing

¹⁷¹ Quoted in Moriarty, "Building a Better Barn," 73.

¹⁷² Moriarty, "Building a Better Barn," 74.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 76.

(particularly in regards to juxtaposing contrasting sentiments), Moriarty demonstrates that her multidimensional identity characteristics are not “in conflict with one another” but rather consubstantial in her development as a rhetorician.

Not only does this argument support wine communicators’ call for more authentically engaged interactions in persuasive communication, but Moriarty’s points raise questions about how community-oriented rhetorical study can practically impact interdisciplinary communities. For wine communicators, self-reflection on their evolving practice of balancing rhetorical strategies helps them more deeply engage with the processes behind the wines they work with. Studying wines’ stories allows these communicators to insert themselves within the general narrative of wine communication, giving them a voice in the conversation surrounding camaraderie and learning. For researchers of rhetoric within the academic Humanities, the arguments discussed here reveal potential methods for recomposing teaching and learning structures to allow for more opportunities to reflect on the rhetorical situation and to thoroughly enjoy the process of developing ourselves as communicators.

As researchers of rhetoric, we can use intersectional, community-engaged research to learn truths about how the kairotic situation affects our ability to connect with each other. We can use the affordances of cross-disciplinary education to learn new things about traditional concepts by pairing unconventional and sometimes contrasting perspectives together to reveal new ways of thinking. Our continuous passion for new, engaging connections with other people and disciplines helps guide us towards methods of reproducing the most insightful experiences in evolving situations. The rhetorics of wine display an enriching example of what it means to pair elements together for an enhanced experience, and the process behind this rhetorical development shows communicators of all fields the significance of our relationships with our communities.

6. A NEW ERA OF RHETORICAL SCHOLARSHIP AND LEARNING

Research Implications

This rhetorical study of wine communication practices has truly opened my mind towards opportunities for collaboration and community engagement in the Humanities, particularly the Digital Humanities. In sharing their narratives and allowing their sentiments to be analyzed through a rhetorical lens, the wine professionals involved in this project have illuminated multiple possibilities for using narrative research and interdisciplinary conversations to discover insightful ways of recomposing learning structures and credibility processes across fields. Their experiences have shown the importance of reflection on our own and others' narratives as well as the need for harmonious balance of diverse and contrasting sentiments.

Through uplifting stories, promoting ethical views, building camaraderie, and facilitating ongoing conversations, communicators can strengthen a community's rhetoric. In the wine industry, many communicators and organizations have already figured out large-scale ways of employing these principles. Kelly Cornett has based her entire *A Cork in the Road* podcast on making individual connections with people shaping the industry. Vanessa Raymond's company Telesomm utilizes databases of people and knowledge to facilitate personal relationships and help build wine identities. All of my research participants, from the officially-certified to the self-taught, understand how to read databases, stories, and people to help guide the wine community towards a progressive future. But most importantly, every one of these individuals openly acknowledges other community members as helpful mentors on their journey and permanent voices in their stories. In amplifying others' voices, wine communicators develop their own unique identities within a diverse, sustainable community environment.

The early 2020s have been an example of the long-term consequences of imbalance in communication strategies. For years, communications scholars have grappled with our opinions on artificial versus emotional intelligence, old versus new technologies, closed versus open

sources of information, the self versus the audience, etc. These kinds of issues will continue to overwhelm our critical thinking energy unless we are enthusiastic about learning new ways of balancing the rhetorical elements of the modern world. Through this analysis of wine rhetoric, we have seen examples of wine communicators' strategies to pair contrasting sentiments rather than lament their differences. Pairing seemingly contrasting sentiments is a perspective that extends beyond wine rhetoric and can be applied to other spheres of communication lacking strong reflection and balance. In interrogating our structures of communication, we reflect on our practice at a level that reveals insight on how to balance the affordances and limitations at hand. The important question we, as rhetoricians, must ask ourselves is: What rhetorical strategies can be used to foster beneficial community-engaged research and enjoyable relationships in interdisciplinary spaces? The answer relies on our comprehension of how our communities' communicative practices have recently evolved and where this evolution is heading.

In this final chapter, I will reiterate the idea of ethos as a process, this time orienting this perspective within timeless rhetorical philosophies of truth, relativism, and narrative. Using these research discoveries, I will discuss my conclusions about rhetorical delivery in our current "age of acceleration," focusing on specific strategies that address our shifting cultural perceptions of time and literacy. The pedagogical goals of this research will be outlined in terms of what I have already had the opportunity to implement this year along with what strategies I plan to bring to future teaching endeavors. As a Humanities researcher dedicated to lifelong learning, I end this dissertation with a reflection on my individual role in rhetoric and composition and my commitment to open social scholarship.

Self-Reflection and Community Roles

As cross-discipline researchers with multiple roles within and outside of academia, one of the most valuable things we can learn from community-engaged research is the importance

of interpersonal balance and intersectional relationships. Our continued ethnographic research of our communities must always be oriented towards understanding and managing diverse perspectives, and effective management of the self in balance with the kairotic situation is a key skill in establishing and sustaining an impacting role within the community. Successful rhetoricians in wine maintain supported roles in the wine community through their authentic passion for the substance and the way it brings people together. Their credibility is not based on the amount of knowledge they have but on their strategic processes for learning and sharing knowledge with others. This research has displayed how feeling and exhibiting care towards one's community is a simple foundation for building relevance. But these findings have also shown that true community care cannot be manifested without a healthy balance of self-care and self-reflection of one's goals. Rhetorically, this theory allows communicative power to shift naturally and presents more opportunities for us to renegotiate this power as the kairotic situation evolves.

In practice, this system of developing sustainable, reciprocal community identities means "accepting the roles created for us" as Powell and Takayoshi put it, embracing the constant shifts in the kairotic situation and the consistent inclusion of all aspects of ourselves as communicative beings. For the wine industry, community roles are still being developed and revised as we learn the demands and affordances of post-2020 cultural taste. The major shift in community roles in wine is one exhibition of the Great Resignation of the early 2020s, a widespread phenomenon experienced across industries. What we have learned from this shift in community roles is that artificial enthusiasm is unsustainable and that care cannot be artificially produced at all, as the very definition of care entails a humanistic origin rooted in active respect for another. As individuals, we have diverse insight and skills that can be utilized for professional success, progressive action, and deliverable community benefits. But we also contain multitudes of experience, memory, feeling, care, and expression that exhibit intrinsic value simply for their vital role in our communication processes. The process, then, becomes

the reason for engaging in rhetorical conversations, as these communication processes help us develop our identities and build relationships.

Ethos as a Process

Valuable processes of communication have been sent to the forefront of rhetoric and composition pedagogy over the past few decades, as many in our field agree that we learn more effectively when we teach writing as a process rather than writing to produce. As audiences, we now apply this concept to our analyses of communicators' credibility and authenticity in that we use our understanding of a communicator's process to define their ethos. If new versions of art, media, and services can be artificially created and easily copied, then our value of these elements must rely on knowing the processes behind them. As communicators, we enter spaces of opportunity for personal, empathetic understanding, so we are learning to use others' stories as prolific archives of knowledge and information.

In the wine community, this learning shows the reasoning behind wine lovers' increasing interest in wines' stories. In a world where wine and wine knowledge are continuously more accessible to wider audiences, our best way of determining what to drink is to learn about where it came from, who made it, how they got it to us, and why they want us to have it. Many in the wine business have attempted to convince audiences to only care about a single element of a wine's story as they develop gimmicks aimed to capitalize on terroir, brand prestige, or winemaking trends. But post-2020 audiences, in our sheer exhaustion from long-term cultural perpetuation of inauthenticity, are more aware of artificially-manufactured emotional appeals and determined to instead discover the truth behind our relationships with people and substances.

Truth, Relativism, and Narrative

Classically, rhetoric was often used as a means of pursuing and discovering truth - though the ancient Greek philosophers argued extensively about the definition of truth, which

sentiments were indeed true, and whether or not an absolute truth existed. Truth has once again come to the forefront of communication studies, as falsehoods and false information abound in the post-2020 digital age. In these circumstances, it seems most logical to adopt the perspective towards truth argued by the anonymous author of *Dissoi Logoi*: multiple versions of the truth exist, and one sentiment can be true for one person and simultaneously false for another.¹⁷⁴ This is an especially important perspective in wine rhetoric, as so much of this field is based on subjective opinions and cultural taste. Every person has a singular experience with different wines, so effective wine communicators must accept their audiences' diverse – and sometimes contrasting – truths and work within these rhetorical frameworks.

In their rhetoric, wine communicators employ Protagoras's theory of *relativism*, which allows audiences to choose their own experiential truths based on their palates and memories and gives rhetoricians' the responsibility of managing audiences' relationships with these truths. Through this reciprocal relationship with the community, wine communicators gain the rhetorical power to promote ethical winemaking and wine sharing practices, encourage openly accessible education, and amplify the voices of underrepresented people in wine. In our revived utilization of rhetoric as a means of discovering truth, we remind ourselves of the intrinsic values of studying community narratives and rhetorical strategy: simply, the opportunity to undergo the process of listening to others' stories and analyze methods of communication that help guide us towards truth we can experience together.

Furthermore, uplifting narrative as the focus of communication and education, we allow more opportunities for communicators to use their repertoire of stories as evidence of their commitment to reciprocal learning. Modern audiences seem to prefer a more Socratic method of learning in which our measure of rhetoricians' effectiveness has shifted away from how much more they know than we do and towards how successful they are at helping us understand the

¹⁷⁴ "Dissoi Logoi," 52. Note: my personal belief is that Protagoras wrote or, at the very least, heavily influenced this work.

truth. As communicators, our strength comes from our literacy of communication systems and our ability to translate knowledge into narrative expression. In wine communication, this involves growing an educated audience through accessible wine education so that wine lovers know how to choose wine they care about and why they should care about each wine choice ahead of them. Giving the audience the freedom to choose their experience helps the industry authentically understand the demand of current consumers which will ultimately help us better predict and prepare for shifts in cultural taste. This also allows us to meet audiences where they are in their own education and to help fill in the gaps of learning for those seeking further education through conversation.

The Digital Humanities

For persuasive arguments to effectively reach modern audiences, practices rooted in historical gatekeeping must be revised and replaced with new cultural perspectives supporting transparency. A progressive first step can take the form of publicizing accessible knowledge and information or publicly supporting policies in favor of open-access learning. However, influencing a widespread shift in cultural practices involves dissecting and dismantling the internal gatekeeping perspectives that our fields innately perpetuate. Learned practices that cause us to fearfully protect our insight, neglect to communicate, and conceal in-progress learning until it meets our arbitrary expectations for exposure are what continue to prolong cultural gatekeeping in our fields. But my research findings have shown that knowledge progresses when we consider our skills and insight as elements of a shareable narrative we can use to form relationships with others, not as experts in front of an audience but as dedicated learners within a community. This calls for shifting our mindset from fear of the unknown to excitement over what is left to learn, willingly sharing our knowledge to both reveal the gaps in our own comprehension and uplift the entire community towards higher understanding.

Rhetorical Delivery

As demonstrating the process behind our arguments becomes increasingly influential in modern rhetorical strategy, rhetorical delivery too becomes more important. Choosing how to deliver knowledge affects one's ethical stance on accessibility, as communicators are able to influence ongoing renegotiation of rhetorical power. In many ways, technological and digital advances have helped normalize approachable education and decrease opportunities for gatekeeping and exclusivity, as we have seen in the wine industry. When large components of historically exclusive knowledge become publicly accessible, we can more clearly see which elements of education are most valuable in current practical situations. Other elements are left up to criticism over what purpose they serve, and we, as communicators, are able to focus on our roles' global purposes in helping educate our community. For example, information on classic pairing experiences - Champagne and oysters, Cabernet Sauvignon and steak, Sancerre and goat cheese, etc. - can easily be found today through a quick internet search. Therefore, wine professionals no longer need to spend excess time merely translating this information and can spend more valuable effort on teaching the reasoning behind these pairings, the methodologies to use when exploring different pairings, and the opportunities for exceptions to these rules.

This perspective of edu-communication can help us best understand the roles technology and digital media play in our quest for widespread cultural knowledge. In Plato's time, he believed the invention of writing would restructure our minds and ruin critical thinking forever. But other classic rhetoricians publicly supported writing, as it offered new opportunities for human connection. Similarly, these sentiments are echoed in the wine industry in regard to the acceleration of new digital technology. But, while modern wine communicators should embrace the advantages offered by new tech and artificially intelligent systems to reach widespread audiences, this does not mean that everything about wine must be digitized. We have seen the consequences - loss of community interest, lack of sustainable financial

investment, and, in some cases, total bankruptcy - of passionless, gimmicky AI systems that attempt to dehumanize wine experiences. It is clear that the wine community still desires human-centered learning experiences with credible wine communicators who use their expertise to help us strengthen our relationship with wine and develop our wine identities. So, instead of trying to aimlessly digitize all wine communication efforts, wine communicators consistently relearn how to balance their utilization of digital tools with the human sensibilities they bring to the rhetorical situation.

Age of Acceleration

In rhetoric and composition, understanding the balance of traditional and newfound perspectives is imperative in developing one's ethos as a communicator. Shifts in cultural innovation can cause major permanent changes in our ways of thinking and communicating which in turn creates entirely new rhetorical situations to explore. This exploration is challenging and can be very daunting for some, as shown in numerous situations throughout the history of our field. In the 1980s, rhetorician Walter Ong pointed out the correlation between our response to computers with Plato's response to writing in ancient Greek rhetoric. Ong argues that writing restructures the ethos of our arguments, as writers cannot be directly reached after proposing an argument in the same way speakers can be. "Texts," says Ong, "are inherently contumacious."¹⁷⁵ Regardless of how much or how strongly one refutes a text, it will remain the same. However, Ong believes that oration offers a "context of give-and-take between real persons" that books do not, which is the biggest difference between the two communication systems. He argues that "writing is passive" and does not necessarily connect with the authentic, kairotic situation.¹⁷⁶ These differences are what show the value of both tools for communication in different contexts and display how a communicator's ethos changes with new methods of delivery.

¹⁷⁵ Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 78.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 78.

In Ong's time, computers were seemingly "passive" as well, offering a more permanent argumentative stance but in a situation less connected to the opportune moment. Over the past forty years, however, we have seen how the development of real-time technology has given digital media a kairotic situation nearly identical to live oration (i.e. Twitch). Digital platforms' ability to accelerate media gives our communication strategy the advantage that print and writing supposedly took away from oration: timing. A writer is kairotically removed from an audience behind a written or printed text - but a digital communicator can use technology to immediately connect to a global audience in a single moment.

Dan Keller, author of *Chasing Literacy*, defines our current circumstances as living in a "culture of acceleration" where communication strategies "appear, change, and merge" at a strikingly faster rate than before.¹⁷⁷ Delivery, Keller argues, has become increasingly ignored over the years "due to its attachment to speech."¹⁷⁸ But digital media and modern technology have brought delivery back to the forefront of the rhetorical canons, and speed has become a "defining feature" of contemporary rhetoric.¹⁷⁹ Our systems of developing literacies, Keller argues, are forever altered by the affordances of our digital communication technologies, and we engage in critical thinking faster but perhaps not as deeply. Kairos gains a whole new meaning in this context, as we are both benefited from new kairotic opportunities and limited by their fleeting nature.

The conflict and confusion surrounding our relationship with digital communication technologies comes from our culture's timely existence at a point where we are still internalizing digital literacy. Had Plato viewed writing not as an evil attacking the human mind but as an indifferent, revolutionary tool for communication in the new and modern world, he might have recognized how much writing had already begun restructuring his thought processes.

¹⁷⁷ Keller, *Chasing Literacy*, 74.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 90.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 69.

Nowadays, many fear digital media and technology in a similar manner - worrying about its impact on the human mind as an artificial new way of creative expression. But Ong encourages us to view the artificial as advantageous for rhetorical development, as “utterly invaluable and indeed essential for the realization of fuller, interior, human potentials.”¹⁸⁰ Conclusively, it seems that blatantly acting against natural evolutions only causes more conflict, while embracing opportunities to learn new systems gives us the very tools needed to reflect on which structures serve our communities and ourselves best.

Perceptions of Time

Furthermore, as the world evolves, new technologies will continue to influence our communication practices whether they have our support or not. In her article “Our Relationship with Time is Changing,” Lily Rothman describes our pandemic-derived general sense of feeling like “something weird was going on” during the early 2020s. She notes that this feeling comes from our relationship with time and process, as the pandemic likely disrupted old perceptions and routines and resulted in completely new perspectives. Over the past three years, Rothman argues, “what had once seemed as sure as the ticking of a clock was exposed as mere social construct.”¹⁸¹ In experiencing influential disruptions to our previous understanding of time, we came to realize that “mere humans” have the power to shape these fundamental perceptions, and therefore we as individuals “might have some control over [our] own experience of it.”¹⁸²

In Rothman’s perspective, when “people say they don’t have time, what they mean is they don’t have control.”¹⁸³ This lack of autonomy can come from many sources, “a demanding boss, an internal voice, or existential-level problems such as climate anxiety,” to name a few.¹⁸⁴ As we reconstruct our own internal structures of communication processes and rhetorical

¹⁸⁰ Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 81.

¹⁸¹ Rothman, “Our Relationship with Time.”

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

delivery in the age of acceleration, Rothman encourages us to reflect on which systems facilitate more enjoyable experiences for ourselves and more beneficial practices for our communities. “In Indigenous societies, for example,” Rothman argues that there are “alternatives to the kind of clock-based living that can feel natural but isn’t.”¹⁸⁵ She cites artist Jenny Odell and points out her “epiphany” that “time was not so much hers as it was created within relationships.”¹⁸⁶ Rothman then compares this sentiment with the concept of siesta, a “time-use norm that only exists as long as a culture decides collectively that it should.”¹⁸⁷ These arguments are important to communication researchers’ analysis of effective rhetorical delivery, as audiences’ perceptions of time influence their abilities to be persuaded, to identify with certain arguments, and to maintain interest in a communicator’s message.

Community becomes the foregrounding element of rhetorical delivery in these early-2020s rhetorical situations, as our memory of the “absence” of community ties has opened our understanding of how our relationships with other people truly shape our perceptions of time. The process, therefore, becomes the face of the argument, as modern audiences critically think about how they identify with communicators’ processes towards persuasion. This cultural shift, Rothman argues, might actually be a positive outcome overall because we know that “our days can be shaped instead by community – and maybe that’s a better way to live.”¹⁸⁸ The rhetorician’s credibility, in these current rhetorical situations, becomes more oriented in their argumentative process and their narrative’s ability to interlace with others’ stories. The rhetorician becomes a connector between an audience member and their community of interest, and we have the power to offer our audiences enjoyable experiences that lead towards stronger community bonds.

¹⁸⁵ Rothman, “Our Relationship with Time.”

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

This current framework calls for rhetoricians' careful reflection of their communication goals and progress towards reciprocal relationships. Again we are shown the benefits of applying the Indigenous concept of respect to modern rhetorical strategy, as our current kairotic situation demands critical reflection of how we balance multiple arguments, diverse perspectives, and contrasting sentiments. Rothman relays Odell's methods for managing her new perceptions of time and process:

Living in the now without thinking about it so much that it can't be enjoyed; seeing time as a series of moments, each as rich as the meaning we put into it. She finds that balance in nature, in collective action, in friendship—appropriate for someone who now defines time as both the context for and the output of relationships.¹⁸⁹

Applying this perspective to Keller's arguments about living in an age of acceleration can help guide us towards more meaningful communication experiences through pausing to reflect on our relationship with our audience and community. From this view, communicators' goals are to show their process of interacting with sources as a means of evidencing their arguments and expressing their genuine interest in cultivating reciprocal relationships. Our evolving process of balancing knowledge and relative opinions shows our credibility and allows us to act as examples for other communicators.

Pedagogical Goals

Ultimately, a communicator's goal is to connect people with other people, their ideas, and their stories. Therefore, it makes sense that the most effective communicators hold authentic relationships with everyone in the rhetorical situation - from the primary sources they converse with to the past voices they choose to uplift to the audiences they aim to reach. Strategically, this means that modern communicators take advantage of mindfully chosen and often multiple means of delivering arguments conversationally, textually, and digitally to live and

¹⁸⁹ Rothman, "Our Relationship with Time."

future audiences. These efforts will help them best transmit information from their sources to their audiences and will theoretically lead towards a more informed and interconnected community of learners.

Going forward, specific rhetorical strategies will change, lose relevance, or appear, and the best way to maintain rhetorical effectiveness is through Krista Ratcliffe's rhetorical listening. Just as an individual's identity "cannot be reduced to a single identification," a set of circumstances will not remain tied to stagnant rhetorical strategies, as people and situations evolve constantly every day.¹⁹⁰ Understanding the audience means more than "simply listening for [their] intent."¹⁹¹ Instead, effective modern rhetorical strategy calls for:

Listening to discourses not for intent but with intent - with the intent to understand not just the claims but the rhetorical negotiations of understanding as well. To clarify this process of understanding, rhetorical listeners might best invert the term *understanding* and define it as *standing under*, that is, consciously standing under discourses that surround us and others while consciously acknowledging all our particular - and very fluid - standpoints.¹⁹²

In her argument, Ratcliffe encourages a perspective of rhetorical humility. The most effective rhetoricians come to the situation on the same level as their audience, and they trust their own insight, purpose, and commitment to their community to effectively guide people towards valuable truths. This humility helps open communicators' minds to reflection of their own narratives in a way that motivates consistent self-improvement without acquiring excessive amounts of self-doubt or imposter syndrome. Through this perspective of rhetorical listening, individuals develop naturally powerful community roles able to evolve rhetorically as the kairotic situation unfolds.

¹⁹⁰ Ratcliffe, *Rhetorical Listening*, 51.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid*, 28.

¹⁹² *Ibid*, 28.

Becoming Rhetorical

In our current world of rhetoric and composition studies, it is less important to teach hyper-specific methods of rhetorical strategy and more important to instill in students the value of *becoming rhetorical*. In my pre-2020 first-year composition courses, I spent a lot of time at the beginning of the semester demonstrating for students how everything is an argument. But post-2020 students are highly aware of the arguments surrounding them and are largely desensitized by the blatant persuasive tactics present in every embedded advertisement, campaign, and biased story they come across. “Becoming rhetorical,” according to Jodie Nicotra, means “honing [the] ability to recognize, analyze, and respond appropriately to any situation.”¹⁹³ In regards to recognizing specific rhetorical situations, students’ abilities seem to have been enhanced by the pandemic, as many are now hyper-aware of their stance as a persuadable entity perpetually vulnerable to attacks from those interested in their money, time, skills, or support. But their enthusiasm towards responding to these arguments has been weakened from being constantly positioned as an arbitrary, replaceable audience.

This has made all of us increasingly aware of the arbitrary and replaceable texts found in modern communications. Students might find less value in learning language conventions and traditional methods of composition, as plenty of AI systems already have this knowledge, and therefore passable pieces of composition can easily be artificially generated by programs like OpenAI’s ChatGPT. But just as Lai-Tze Fan calls us to consistently consider whether an employed technology risks loss of “humanistic-based reflection and interpretation,”¹⁹⁴ we must encourage our students to do the same. Digital humanities researchers, therefore, must embrace technology and digital media’s ability to open our minds towards new critical thinking through artificializing aspects of communication we might take for granted.

¹⁹³ Nicotra, *Becoming Rhetorical*, 3.

¹⁹⁴ Fan, “On the Value of Narratives.”

In their chapter for Emerald Group's *Student Engagement Handbook*, researchers Janet Strivens and Rob Ward argue that the purpose of higher education is to give students "the tools and dispositions to take well-calculated risks, work with partial information, and always remain open to new knowledge and new interpretations of old knowledge."¹⁹⁵ This sentiment has been adopted into my teaching philosophy as the purpose of engaging with rhetoric and composition. As conventional constructions of persuasive argumentation (even those that previously founded my own rhetorical development) dissipate, I reflect on the effects of these frameworks and look forward to the new – albeit overwhelming – strategies for helping students find their voices in the evolving world of communication. Learning, like everything else discussed in this work, is relative to the kairotic situation and each individual's experience, and therefore my role is to facilitate the most fruitful learning experiences for my students so that they may have the opportunity to find as much enjoyment in studying rhetoric as I do.

Public Cynicism

In December of 2022, *Atlantic* writer Stephen Marche presented an argument for reform in the Humanities in his article "The College Essay is Dead." His main point is that both humanists and engineers have been deepening the rift between their fields for decades and that we will all need to work together to combat this new post-2020 age of artificial intelligence. However, while Marche calls for open-mindedness, he presents the Humanities' and Sciences' "mistakes" in a very narrow view, reducing some of the past decade's most innovative engineering endeavors - FTX, Twitter, Meta - to "failures" because of their financial losses in the end and defining the Humanities college experience by the amount of students who end up regretting their choice of major. A more narrative approach to analysis might position these tech giants' experiences as necessary learning processes towards more sustainable digital and social media, highlighting their peak moments of social engagement as successes and their

¹⁹⁵ Strivens and Ward, "Reflection as a Strategy."

eventual downfalls as rich narrative insight for future innovators. Moreover, pointing out the decrease in humanities funding and student interest to an audience of educators, “some of the most overworked, underpaid people in the world,” only adds to this audience’s frustration rather than presenting any practical, forward-thinking solutions.¹⁹⁶ Overall, while his intent to call the disciplines together is agreeable, his argument remains stuck in this archaic frame that presents a binary of disciplines instead of a spectrum of interests, values individualism and capitalistic achievement over community engagement and narrative, and measures success by production of increasingly lucrative products rather than ability to navigate experiential processes.

Audiences’ responses to Marche’s article reflect this sentiment, as writers like Christopher Rim of *Forbes* counter argue that these narrow perspectives “misrepresent the value of the humanities as a discipline” by focusing on product over process.¹⁹⁷ Rim reminds us that traditional essays are mainly summaries of broader academic experiences, asserting that “seminar discussions, theoretical inquiries, stages of peer reviewing, [and] oral defenses” are the “foundation upon which essays are constructed.”¹⁹⁸ But even Rim’s perspective here remains rather narrow. He defends the Humanities as a discipline because it “[requires] students to investigate their unique identities and the role of those identities in the theoretical conversations into which they intend to enter.”¹⁹⁹ But his tone towards academic learners and his use of the term “theoretical” situates the college experience as this space of limbo between conceptual ideas and the real world that lies beyond, keeping students out of professional spheres of practical application. This sentiment parallels the pre-2020 perspective towards wine professionals where individuals were not considered true sommeliers or wine experts until they had officially achieved specific certifications or career positions, disregarding the real-world issues these professionals face in their daily lives.

¹⁹⁶ Marche, “The College Essay is Dead.”

¹⁹⁷ Rim, “The College Essay is Very Much Still Alive.”

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

In reality, the ongoing study of rhetoric and composition creates opportunities for students to engage with themselves as critical thinkers and with their communities as stewards of practical and beneficial research. The products of their learning are only a small component of their experience, whereas the relationships they develop through the process of composition and rhetorical study more comprehensively reflect the value of their learning. In their essay “Working Students in Higher Education,” scholars Julie Wintrup, Kelly Wakefield, and Elizabeth James describes these valuable relationships as “developed over time and through shared activities and interests, between individuals, groups, associations, and organizations,” meaning that these experiences can lay the foundation for ongoing learning post-graduation.²⁰⁰ Furthermore, Wintrup, et al. point out that integrating students’ comprehensive activities – including any extra-curricular, professional, recreational, or non-academic endeavors – with their academic learning enhances their experiences in composition classes, as they are given opportunities to “reinforce engagement in practice as a unifying concept and to establish [themselves] as co-researchers and co-producers of work.”²⁰¹

Anecdotal Reflections

As a lifelong student myself, I can attest that students’ identities are multifaceted and that academic learning represents but one component of our roles in our communities. Many of my students have been working professionals like myself, meticulously balancing academic progress alongside professional achievement. Furthermore, their individual passions and personal engagements are components that make up who they are as learners, and these elements enhance authenticity in the classroom community when students are given a platform to express themselves. Students’ perspectives of engagement can be enhanced when classroom discussions and activities relate to practical application, professional development, or

²⁰⁰ Wintrup, et al., 202.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 216.

authentic identity expression. But the makeup of this kind of curriculum relies on the teacher's grasp of modern, real-world phenomena, and we educators often fear that we cannot catch up to the current conversation quickly enough to be able to confidently teach new rhetorical strategies in the rapidly evolving world of communication.

In early 2023, after a year of working on this dissertation, I took up both an invitation to join the Implementing New Knowledge Environments conference and to do a teaching seminar at the University of Victoria. I looked forward to the conference as a chance to share my research and hear about the work of other intellectuals in my field, yet I dreaded the task of distributing my so-called expertise to an audience of modern students. In both cases, I had the opportunity to discuss my passions, share knowledge, and practice give-and-take rhetoric in engaging conversations. But my perspective of one sphere as a gathering of like-minded researchers and the other as a performance of my skills before a judgmental audience is what kept me from initially viewing the entire experience as the chance to connect with different communities with a goal of building stronger relationships through rhetoric. The spark that continues to drive my passion for rhetoric is the experience of using language to enhance human connection, and this passion is not gained through academic achievement but instead through all of the valuable learning this discipline invariably bequeaths to me time after time.

What I brought to this seminar ended up being not a presentation of my expertise but instead a conversation about my process of constantly finding new ways of applying academic theories to my professional endeavors, as shown in [Appendix E](#). The students were given the floor to discuss their experiences with rhetorical delivery in multimodal spaces, and I encouraged them to express the different ways their work intersects with their academic goals, just as my academic research informs my role in the wine industry. We used the example of livestreaming on Twitch, a multimodal platform for facilitating live conversations with digital communities, to display the affordances and limitations of different rhetorical situations. While Twitch is not a platform I have much experience with or expertise in, in my quest for expanding

my online audience, I embraced Twitch because of its role as a multimodal tool for interactive conversation and rhetorical expression. The learning objective of this seminar was not to teach my own expert handling of a rhetorical situation but instead to demonstrate how I am navigating new methods of rhetorical delivery to pursue my goal of building community.

Developing reciprocal community relationships is the purpose of studying rhetoric, and strong, sustainable communities rely on individuals from diverse fields at varying points of their narratives on all sides of the rhetorical situation. Positioning our community roles as opposite of other roles - such as teachers versus students - perpetuates a stagnant understanding of how learning works and how knowledge is created and shared. But viewing our roles as fluid spaces where we use our shared passions as means of achieving educational goals helps us develop confident identities and invaluable relationships. If we want our passions to be recognized and our expertise to be valued, we must enter the conversation with humility and a commitment to progressive learning.

Implications for Future Research

As I integrate what I have learned from this research into my pedagogical practices, I am restructuring some of my more conventional methods of teaching rhetorical argument and critical thinking to meet the needs of modern students – and the demands of modern audiences. Founded on principles of relativism and narrative, my goal is to reiterate focus on argument as a process, showing students that balancing relative sentiments can be achieved through deep engagement with narrative. These skills can be built through careful attention to reflection, but, as Strivens and Ward point out, “Reflection, like student engagement, is an oft-defined term which still ends up meaning different things to different people.”²⁰² The opportunities I give students for reflection must coincide with composition goals, course objectives, and clear assessment. In their chapter, Strivens and Ward highlight examples of reflection-based writing

²⁰² Strivens and Ward, “Reflection as a Strategy,” 332.

activities that demonstrate deep levels of critical thinking and suggest theoretical frameworks for assessing learning.

Stop and Think

Strivens and Ward's term for these strategies, "stop-and-think," actionizes the process of reflection and directly addresses Keller's "age of acceleration" by offering an alternative to modern normalized thought structures. The phrase comes from the extra effort it requires to engage in this kind of learning:

The comment 'You have to stop and think — it's hard!' was allegedly made by a child on his Instrumental Enrichment programme many years ago: for us it captures the essence of a truth many teachers have come to accept. There are learning strategies which have the effect of shifting the learner's focus of attention, refocusing on the 'how' of learning rather than the 'what'. They are often experienced by the learner as effortful — needing a greater degree of concentration, a sharper focus of attention. They are however powerful in their effects, enabling the learner to generalize from immediate experience; to make new connections and see new insights within information already acquired; or to access different strategies to attack problems.²⁰³

Here these authors describe the value of reflection-based learning and writing strategies; not only do they capture students' attention and work with the effects of accelerated literacies, but they help students practice valuable learning methods for evolving rhetorical situations. As students navigate modern spaces of communication, stop-and-think strategies help them notice elements of the rhetorical situation that might have been previously overlooked. These methods allow students to be more aware of the cultural frameworks of communication and how these perceptions work within the kairotic situation.

²⁰³ Strivens and Ward, "Reflection as a Strategy," 333.

Strivens and Ward note two main dimensions of stop-and-think strategies: chronological and contextual. First, we ask where the activity places the learner chronologically – remembering the past, considering the present, or looking towards the future. Then, we ask whether the learning activity is done individually or with a group. Learning goals and assessments can be formed around these two parameters, as different chronological and contextual activities will result in different types of student engagement needed. Moreover, pairing different aspects together can serve alternative purposes based on what kind of thoughts and feelings the experience generates. For instance, a teacher might use individual reflection on past learning processes as a means of gauging student comprehension, whereas peer review activities that address parts of the writing processes might be used for facilitating student engagement. In general, Strivens and Ward argue that these stop-and-think strategies give teachers the power to “detach attention from the immediacy of experience” and encourage students towards reflective thinking.

Open Social Scholarship

These strategies represent one example of how I plan to implement my research learning into my teaching practice. Overall, my educational goals have been influenced by the way this project has shown me the value of becoming rhetorical, not just as a means of entering conversations but as a consistent practice for maintaining my voice in these conversational spheres. Moreover, I have gained a revitalized passion for amplifying the voices of others to enhance the authenticity and influence of these conversations. In a Twitch stream conversation with Devyani Gupta, winemaker and viticulturist for Valdemar Estates, she relayed a common metaphor in the wine industry that has stuck with me. The metaphor is a vision of an individual climbing ladders towards success, each ladder leading to a platform with another ladder up to higher successes. But after reaching a new platform, before reaching for the next ladder, it is the individual’s responsibility to stop, look back down, and pull the next person up that ladder first. This sentiment has guided my research principles throughout this process and supports

my ongoing commitment to building a multilevel system of ladders and platforms where interconnected individuals enjoy learning experiences with each other.

One of the first steps to building an interdisciplinary, multilevel community of learners is adopting a cultural perspective towards openly accessible and highly intersectional knowledge and education. In their article “An Open Social Scholarship Path for the Humanities,” authors Arbuckle, et al. make an argument for openly-accessible knowledge in the Humanities so that we may “pursue more open, and more social, scholarly activities through knowledge mobilization, community training, public engagement, and policy recommendations in order to understand and address challenges facing digital scholarly communication.”²⁰⁴ They argue in favor of developing intersectional systems and organizations meant for these purposes so that humanities researchers “can address broader social issues in a relevant and timely way.”²⁰⁵ The best practices for developing relevant course curriculum that address real-world issues students face might not always be clear, and understanding these evolving situations requires consistent and authentic communication with students about the rhetorical situations in their lives.

This perspective of open communication and collaboration between educators, students, and professionals in other fields shares the sentiment of the wine communicators interviewed for this research. Instead of creating binaries of humanistic and artificial, humanities and sciences, and communicators and audiences, we instead need to “make the table bigger,” as Amanda Kimbrough encourages, and embrace the concept of a wider, diversely represented, educated community of perpetual learners. It is true that some might hesitate toward this idea, as it allows opportunities for unprecedented shifts in power and authority. To reiterate Kimbrough’s statement: some communicators are “afraid to build community out of fear of losing their audience.” But Arbuckle, et al. argue that knowledge, regardless of accessibility, has

²⁰⁴ Arbuckle et al., “An Open Social Scholarship Path.”

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

“implications politically, socially, and economically,”²⁰⁶ meaning that any researcher committed rhetorical listening will always find a supportive audience in their community, as I was able to find when I met these scholars in person earlier this year at the INKE conference. As we drank together in the evenings, we shared ideas about engaging more holistically with our students, audiences, and communities. Our conversations echo these scholars’ goals of being able to “contribute to an academic world that responds more directly to - and sees itself in - the public it serves.”²⁰⁷ This approach brings together individuals from all aspects of the rhetorical situation and allows our groundbreaking work to be shared across a community “broader than academic researchers alone.”²⁰⁸

Despite the conflicts that attempt to keep us divided, the natural evolution of our global fields will continuously birth opportunities for us to bring ourselves together. As Marche puts it: “[We] are going to need each other despite everything.”²⁰⁹ The connections between wine rhetoric and academic research, humanism and technology, and teachers and learners must be strengthened by individuals and organizations with a commitment to progress and community enhancement. For my audience, I present these questions for further research:

- How can rhetorical study and/or humanities research positively influence stronger and more authentic interpersonal relationships within industries related to food, drink, and sensory experiences?
- What communication and rhetorical practices have dissipated, evolved, or developed during the early 2020s in other human-centered fields such as healthcare, psychology, or international relations?

²⁰⁶ Arbuckle et al., “An Open Social Scholarship Path.”

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Marche, “The College Essay is Dead.”

- Which authoritative organizations currently hold the most potential power for influential, sustainable change in our fields, and what are the potential pathways towards development and/or effective management of their relationships with each other?
- How will globalization continue to impact our communication methods, cultural practices, and identity development during the 2020s?
- What are best practices for media development that authentically consider alternative communication strategies for people of different mental, emotional, and physical abilities?

In my endeavor to listen to and analyze the stories of the leading voices in wine communication, my research findings revealed that wine communicators continuously support open accessibility to knowledge and narratives around wine, have multifaceted expertise that informs their unique abilities to manage relationships with wine drinkers, and, despite the geographical and digital divides between us, continue to rely holistically on interpersonal relationships with community members of all knowledge levels. As I take these conclusions into my own future academic and professional roles, my goal is for other researchers to further explore the connections between these concepts in their own communities.

During my past few years of working on this research, I had never expected to be so eagerly welcomed into the community I was studying. I began my research journey as a new student of rhetoric intrigued by the way wine ignited friendship, camaraderie, and relationships and fascinated by the rhetorical power of sommeliers and wine communicators. Now, years later, I have a voice in the industry that has been supported and uplifted by the very people I sought to gain insight from. From my experience, it is clear that developing a community is the most vital aspect of any field - especially from a rhetorical perspective. Rhetorically listening to individuals and learning what communication support they need to make their voices heard is the purpose of community-engaged research in rhetoric, and I am grateful to have had a spectrum of opportunities to intertwine my work with timely conversations happening in the wine

industry and the academy. I hope that my research inspires other learners to pursue unconventional subjects and motivates educators to listen to their community of students to help everyone build strong, argumentative voices in the evolving world of communication.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Wine Study Information

Looking for Research Participants, Narratives, Stories, Conversations

I am researching effective communication and rhetorical practices in the wine industry. My academic work deals with the *study of rhetoric*, which is persuasive communication related to a specific industry.

Your *professional rhetoric* is essentially your persuasive communication style - the skills, strategies, experiences, and knowledge you use to communicate with people about wine. *Rhetorical situations* include simple interactions like a floor somm persuading diners to try a particular wine, but they also include more big-picture experiences like a regional expert convincing a community to value specific wine characteristics.

Wine rhetoric is especially unique because we work with a substance that carries its own rhetorical power - taste, smell, look, history, popularity, pairing qualities, etc. So our persuasive communication strategies deal with influencing audiences' subjective opinions about wine. Common rhetorical strategies include:

- Sharing accurate, relevant facts
- Displaying strong credibility (as an individual or through an organization)
- Connecting to people on a personal level
- Utilizing current trends and perspectives

Wine rhetoric is important because this is our key to asserting power over *cultural taste*. *Taste* is the element of rhetoric that encompasses a community's shared understood values and standards - for example, a community deciding that the best Malbecs are from Argentina.

Taste is always naturally evolving and often dependent on outside factors - like when a decade of Prohibition resulted in Americans having a preference towards sweeter wines. But shifts in taste can also happen because of individual effort - like how supporters of natural wine are helping it gain popularity these days.

When widespread, transformative experiences occur in a community, an opportunity to negotiate new rhetorical power is presented. In 2020, the combination of the pandemic, natural phenomena, and social movements caused a huge shift in cultural taste across food and drink industries. We can already see how wine culture has changed in many ways, but I am interested in learning more about which changes are permanent (and why) and what changes are yet to come.

Most importantly, I want to hear from individual voices in the industry to understand your stories and how they fit into the general narrative. Specifically I am looking at the professional and personal roles you held within the industry and how these roles have shifted since 2020 - or even how you've taken the opportunity to carve out a new role for yourself and why/how you did it. The rhetorical strategies you use to be a successful communicator are important for discovering how power has shifted in the general conversation about wine. Questions for consideration:

- What changes in communication and rhetorical practice have you noticed or experienced since 2020?
- What new industry roles have developed since 2020 and why/how did they develop?
- What is your role in the industry and how has this role shifted? For better or worse?
- What new wine trends do you think will remain prominent throughout the early 2020s?
- What are your values and why? How are you communicating these values to the community?
- What terms and phrases do you use to describe your identity in wine?

Rhetorical research is meant to be reciprocal. So not only do I want to collect individuals' stories for my own work, but I also want to translate my research findings into practical, deliverable results for the community. Any feedback on how my work can benefit the wine community is welcome.

Participation in my research is completely voluntary and based on your time and availability. I am particularly interested in having one- to two-hour conversations about your story - preferably with opportunities for follow-up questions and/or communication. Group sessions and/or shorter meetings are also welcome.

Ideally, these conversations will take place at a time and in a space that's most comfortable for you (like over a glass of wine!), and in-person or virtual meetings can be accommodated. If you are unable to meet but would still like to participate, feel free to send me a comment or statement regarding any topics I've mentioned here. Your story is important, and your voice matters.

If you're interested in participating, please review the **Informed Consent** document.

Appendix B

Informed Consent

Narratives of Cultural Taste and Community in the Post-2020 Wine Industry IRB #H22517

Thank you for considering a role in my research study, "Narratives of Cultural Taste and Community Engagement in the Post-2020 Wine Industry." This document describes the study, and I encourage you to follow up with me if you have any questions. This study is being led by me, Bailey McAlister, and my faculty advisor is Dr. Mary Hocks. We are a part of the English Department at Georgia State University in Atlanta, Georgia.

What is this study about?

The purpose of this research is to study 2020's effects on wine communication. I am looking at three overarching concepts:

- Wine rhetoric: the skills and strategies that define our ability to effectively communicate about wine
- Taste: the wine standards and trends established by authoritative members of the community
- Community engagement: the strategies wine figures use to participate in communications and manage relationships within their communities

I am researching these elements in wine community voices' stories. I believe that analyses of participants' stories about their experiences in wine will highlight the best strategies for navigating the world of wine post-2020.

What am I asking of you?

I will ask you to engage in a personal conversation with me where we discuss your fundamental experiences in wine, your experiences during 2020, what your role is now, and how you engage with the wine community. You will be encouraged to elaborate on your thoughts and feelings about how people learn about wine, how wine communication changes, and what you think the implications of 2020 will be for wine going forward. Your individual interests in this work and your ideas about wine will be the focus on this personal interview.

Risks and discomforts

I do not anticipate any risks from participating in this research.

Benefits

There are no direct benefits of participation. Information from this study may benefit other people now or in the future, and we hope to learn more about the post-2020 wine community.

Compensation for participation

Participants will not receive any compensation.

Privacy, confidentiality, and security

Participants' contact information and location information will not be collected. Participants' names, titles, and affiliations will only be used with each participant's consent.

Please note that email communication is neither private nor secure. Though I am taking precautions to protect your privacy, you should be aware that information sent through email could be read by a third party.

Your contact information will be kept to the degree permitted by the technology being used. We cannot guarantee against interception of data sent via the internet by third parties.

Will de-identified information be shared with anyone?

De-identified data from this study may be shared with the research community at large to advance science, health, and communications. At your request, we will remove or code any personal information that could identify you before files are shared with other researchers to ensure that, by current scientific standards and known methods, no one will be able to identify you from the information we share. Despite these measures, we cannot guarantee anonymity of your personal data.

Will this information be used in the future?

Identifiable information might be used for future research with obtaining your consent.

Taking part is voluntary!

Your involvement in this research is completely voluntary. You may refuse to participate before the study begins, discontinue at any time, or skip any questions that come up.

Will there be any follow-up studies?

With your permission, we may contact you again to request your participation in a follow-up study.

Questions?

Please let me know what questions you have about my research project. You may contact me at bmcalister5@gsu.edu, or you may contact my faculty advisor, Dr. Mary Hocks, at mhocks@gsu.edu. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a subject in this study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Human Participants at irb@gsu.edu or access their information at gsu.edu.

If you would like to participate, please indicate that now.

Appendix C

Data Reduction Round 1

<p><i>Alex Schrecengost</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications • Confidence • Diversity • Equity • Inclusion • Conversations • “Group think” • Taste • Balance • Straightforwardness • Representation • Narratives • Sustainability • Caring • “Investing in narratives” • Mental health • Community • Reciprocity • Education 	<p><i>Amanda Kimbrough</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introspection • Sociopolitics • Authenticity • Natural wine • Realistic rhetoric • Conversations • Community • “Make the table bigger” • Storytelling • Truth • Audience • Integrity • Stories • Individualism (as a negative) • Diversity • Reciprocity • Native American influence
<p><i>Chris McLloyd</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching • Camaraderie • Sharing stories • Games • African American camaraderie • Eye-opening experiences • Representation 	<p><i>Jett Kolarik</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “AHA” moments • Helping people • Wine identity • Education • Plateauing professionally • Availability • Accessibility • “Bring more people to the table”

<p><i>Kelly Cornett</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Platform• Conversations• Wine as an access tool• Wine as a welcome• Lack of diversity• Rhetorical delivery• Social reach• Connecting professionals• Telling people's stories• Narratives• Wine for good	<p><i>Luke Wylde</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Relevance• Taste evolution• Opportunity to be creative• Moral compass• Cultural revolution• Marginalized community• Inability to "go backwards"• Morals and ethics• Conversations
<p><i>Vanessa Raymond</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Technology• Conversations• Accessibility• Amplification• Caring for people's needs• Validation• Taste• Social sustainability• Diversity• Process• Stories• Wine as essential• Platform	

Data Reduction Round 2

<p><i>Stories</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "AHA" moments - Amplification - Eye-opening experiences - Inclusion - "Investing in narratives" - Narratives - Native American influence - Opportunity to be creative - Platform - Process - Rhetorical delivery - Sharing stories - Storytelling - Taste evolution - Telling people's stories - Wine identity 	<p><i>Ethics</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Availability - Accessibility - Balance - Caring - Caring for people's needs - Equity - Helping people - Integrity - Inability to "go backwards" - Moral compass - Natural wine - Reciprocity - Straightforwardness - Sustainability - Social sustainability - Wine as an access tool - Wine for good
<p><i>Camraderie</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - African American camaraderie - "Bringing more people to the table" - Connecting professionals - Community - Education - Diversity - Confidence - "Group think" - Games - "Make the table bigger" - Representation - Social reach - Taste - Teaching - Validation - Wine as a welcome 	<p><i>Conversations</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Authenticity - Audience - Cultural revolution - Communications - Individualism (as a negative) - Introspection - Lack of diversity - Mental health - Marginalized community - Plateauing professionally - Realistic rhetoric - Relevance - Sociopolitics - Truth - Technology - Wine as essential

Appendix D

Follow-up message to participants, sent April 3, 2023.

Hello [participant]!

First, let me sincerely thank you for your role in my dissertation research on rhetorical practices and effective communication in the post-2020 wine industry. Originally, I'd wanted to keep up more consistent conversation with research participants throughout the writing process. But as you can imagine, the entire climate surrounding late-stage PhD research takes a mental/emotional toll that results in my brain resembling a late-harvest Riesling grape - full of residual sugars, prone to acidity, and dehydrated like a raisin.

However, as y'all know, with the right balance of self-reflective perseverance and humbling support from a resilient community of wine geniuses, these lil grapes can produce some of the sweetest wine. It's hard to believe anything sweet could come from my weary mind at this point, but I am committed to the venture.

On Friday, April 7 at 10 AM, I will meet with my research committee (Drs. Mary Hocks, Ashley Holmes, and Baotong Gu) to discuss and defend my dissertation project. The committee has given me some incredibly insightful feedback on the early versions of my paper that I will incorporate into the project this week. To summarize their advice: in this final stretch, I need to revisit my sources - primary and secondary - to extract vital additional insight on the practical deliverables of my research, its role in the academic community, and its potential to serve wine industry professionals like yourselves.

With this goal in mind, I wanted to reach out to see if you have any additional thoughts, ideas, or insight you'd like to contribute to the research project. Part of the rough draft is linked here for your perusal. A few preliminary notes:

- Academic writing undergoes MANY stages before anything "final" is produced, so this draft will likely be a completely different paper by the time of submission. A lot of eyes will be on it and a lot of feedback will be incorporated, including any comments you'd like to provide.
- That being said, as a communicator for the past decade who's done A LOT of unpaid work involving the writing process, you are certainly not required to give any comments, feedback, or suggestions here. A simple "looks great, good luck on Friday!" will not disappoint me in any way. My goal is to give y'all an opportunity for further input, but only if you have the time and desire to do so.
- THAT being said, any response here is fair game. Do you have seriously innovative ideas about the potentials of this research? Are there any counter arguments you'd like to point out to anything I've said? Do you want to suggest anything towards how I revise and/or deliver this paper by Friday? Is there anything along the lines of final remarks you'd like to make about your role in the project?

- Personal interviews were not voice recorded - therefore, any direct quotes are taken from my written and typed notes. If there is anything you notice that is straight up inaccurate (such as “hey Bailey you said I worked for ___ on page # and I literally never said that”), please feel free to let me know; I won’t be offended.

Any response you’d like to provide will be carefully reviewed and humbly incorporated into my defense on Friday. Again, I can’t thank you enough for your role in this project, and I am so proud of this community for your dedication to ethical and inclusive progress in our fields. The industry has undergone revolutionary changes over the past few years, and I am truly excited to discuss these historical shifts with my committee on the 7th.

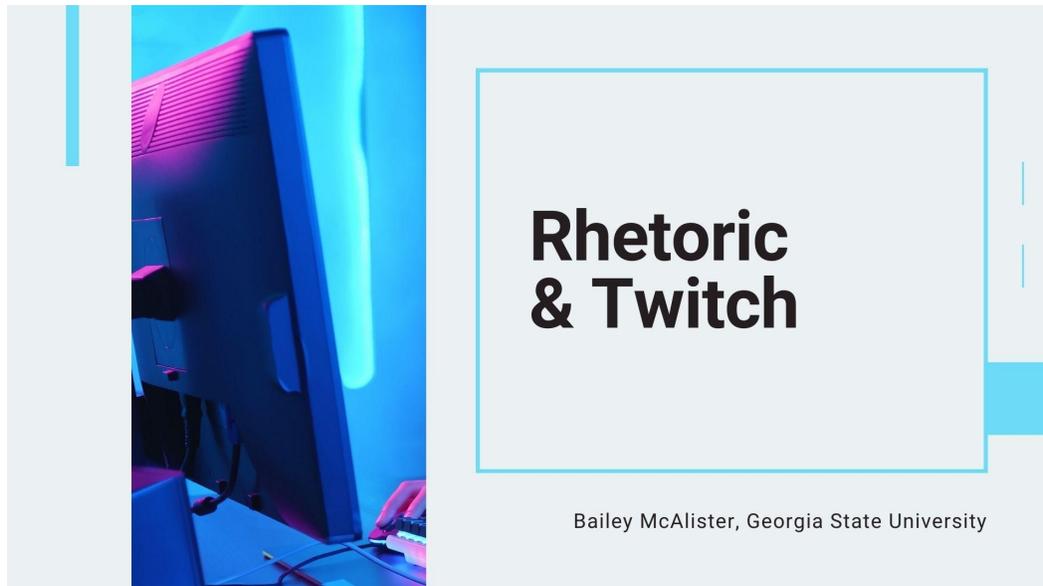
Wishing y’all a good week and myself a lot of luck. Cheers!

Bailey

PS - A note on potential conflicts of interest: if you are wondering if there might be any kind of conflict of interest here because you and I have ended up working together professionally over the past year, let me ease your worries. I have done my best to be completely transparent with my dissertation fellowship cohort over the past few months about how my academic research endeavors have led to my professional development, and I have kept a record of everything. Interdisciplinary connections are encouraged in the academic Humanities, and intersectional research is beneficial for the progress of reciprocal community-engaged scholarship so long as ethical research methods have been applied. As far as I know, our professional relationship would only be questioned if I somehow gained egregious amounts of money, fame, or glory from exploiting your mind. If that ends up happening, rest assured I will quickly resign from my life as a perpetually overworked and underpaid academic and move to a mansion in Madeira where you’ll have a permanent invitation as a thanks for your part in my infamous rise to power.

Appendix E

Rhetoric and Twitch teaching presentation



"Rhetoric & Twitch," by Bailey McAlister of Georgia State University.



"Aiming for Rhetorical Effectiveness with Live Audiences." In this presentation, three things will be covered: the rhetorics of live streaming, social and technical affordances, and community engagement.

RHETORICS OF LIVE STREAMING



WHAT IS IT?

Any communications involved in a real-time broadcast of content for a live digital audience

McAlister 2023

“Rhetorics of Live Streaming.” What is live streaming? Any communication involved in real-time broadcast of content for a live digital audience.

RHETORICAL ELEMENTS

OF LIVE STREAMING COMMUNICATIONS

VISUALS

Human features, digital graphics, and text are all able to be displayed

AUDIO

The host is able to speak to an audience who is inaudible

LIVE CHAT

Audience members may participate via typing text into a live chat conversation

“Rhetorical Elements of Live Streaming Communications.” Visuals - Human features, digital graphics, and text are all able to be displayed. Audio - The host is able to speak to an audience who is inaudible. Live Chat - audience members may participate via typing text into a live chat conversation.

PAIRING

COMBINING ELEMENTS FOR
ENHANCED COMPLIMENTARY
RHETORICAL EFFECTIVENESS

Putting two things with each other
that, together, create a whole new
experience



McAlister 2023

“Pairing.” Combining elements for enhanced complimentary rhetorical effectiveness. Putting two things with each other that, together, create a whole new experience.

PAIRING

IT REALLY IS THAT SIMPLE

Sometimes people in wine try to
over complicate pairing, but it's a
really simple concept that can be
applied to many things.



McAlister 2023

“Pairing.” It really is that simple. Sometimes people in wine try to over complicate pairing, but it's a really simple concept that can be applied to many things.

What's Twitch Got To Do With Wine?

Twitch has helped my company reach out to our digital wine community.

There have been some challenges and setbacks.

How do we reach more audiences?



McAlister 2023

“What’s Twitch Got To Do With Wine?” Twitch has helped my company reach out to our digital wine community. There have been some challenges and setbacks. How do we reach more audiences?

What are some other ways to combine communication elements for enhanced rhetorical effectiveness?

Social media, performances, etc.

What are some other ways to combine communication elements for enhanced rhetorical effectiveness?

HOW DO YOUR INTERESTS INTERSECT WITH EACH OTHER?

WHY ARE THESE THINGS IMPORTANT?



Academic progress



Community engagement



Self expression

How do your interests intersect with each other? Why are these things important?

**SOMETIMES IT'S
HARD TO REACH
PEOPLE**

BUT PEOPLE ARE ALWAYS WORTH
CONNECTING WITH

Sometimes it's hard to reach people. But people are always worth connecting with.

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