I CARED: EVERYDAY FEMININE LABORS THROUGH THE SCRAPBOOK

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

I Cared: Everyday Feminine Labors through the Scrapbook

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The dissertation uses the highly feminized hobby of scrapbooks, or scrapbooking, as an entry point to study gendered media production, labor, and subjectivity. The use of contemporary traditional, or paper scrapbooks, as the starting point of inquiry foregrounds relations of gender and power in a digital era. Traditional scrapbooks draw attention to the historical continuity with earlier forms of feminine media and labor and how these forms align with particular identity constructions as shaped by political, economic, and social forces with deep historical roots. The focus on traditional scrapbooks draws attention to gendered boundaries that continue to demarcate socio-technical systems, definitions of work/life, and the production/consumption of specific types of media. In order to best understand the perspectives of those who scrapbook, my project utilizes a set of qualitative methods including participant observation both online and off (e.g., event attendance, social media, message boards, podcasts), over thirty in-depth interviews, and textual analysis of scrapbook magazines from the 1990s to the present.

My research interjects that a concern with greater intimacy and care of the self expressed by those who scrapbook reveals a critique of current social and economic relations as lacking care, as disconnected, too impersonal and, potentially, dehumanizing.
Feminist interventions have contributed to recognition of social reproductive labor within Marxist theory and of emotional labor within scholarship on immaterial labor (Weeks, 2007, p. 233; Hochschild, 1983). These feminist interventions provide an expansive notion of reproductive labor as the work of creating and sustaining social forms and relations of cooperation and sociality (Weeks, 2007; di Leonardo, 1987). This project situates scrapbooks as a form of this expansive notion of feminine social reproductive labor.

The project maps intimacy and care labor within different domains of contemporary scrapbooking: the intimate-distance of the scrapbook industry, social intimacy/support of craft circles, the tactile pleasures of making craft, and self-documentation as self-work/management. These domains correspond into four chapters (excluding the introduction, literature review, and conclusion), inspired by the “keepsake buttons” distributed at a national scrapbook convention. The buttons to be earned included “I industrialized” (on the move from amateur to celebrity in the scrapbook industry), “I cropped” (scrapbook events/craft circles), “I created” (tactile pleasures of craft), and “I learned” (scrapbook courses on documenting one’s life).
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DEDICATION

To my mom and dad for your support every step along the way.
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The introduction has been split into two major sections. The first provides a background to contemporary scrapbooks including a detailed definition of the scrapbook, a brief tracing of historical contexts, and commentary on the future of scrapbooks. The second section provides an overview of the research project including reasons to study scrapbooks, areas of inquiry/research questions, methodology, and an outline of the chapters to follow.

SECTION ONE: BACKGROUND ON SCRAPBOOKS

Dismissal of a Highly Feminine Form

A glimpse into U.S. popular culture’s regard for the scrapbook appears in the 2003 film, How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days. On a second date, Kate Hudson’s character tries to push her date away by presenting him with a scrapbook of their future life together. While staged for exaggerated comedic effect, the scene nevertheless paints scrapbooks as an extreme performance of heteronormative femininity. The humor of the scene emerges in the juxtaposition between the high-level of emotional and familial intimacy conjured by the gift of a scrapbook with the tenuous social ties of a second date. The scene makes clear that scrapbooks involve and imply much more than paper, photos, scissors, and glue. The ability of scrapbooks to signify and cultivate relationships of greater intimacy is a recurring and pervasive aspect of their appeal and dismissal. This dissertation situates contemporary scrapbooks as a form of care labor concerned with building intimate connections rather than impersonal relations. The following chapters use scrapbooks to study entwined relations of feminine labor and subjectivity as conducted within and through a participatory media form.
Despite an estimated twenty-three million scrapbook participants in 2012, scrapbooks remain relatively invisible and understudied (CHA, 2013; Hunt, 2006). Since the late-nineteenth century, scrapbooks have become strongly feminized and industry estimates claim that nearly ninety-percent of those who scrapbook are women (Christensen, 2011, p. 186). While the widespread disparagement of the scrapbook seems to contradict the high popularity of the practice, these types of “dismissiveness, hostility, and a flippant kind of mockery” are common to popular feminine media (Modeleski, 2008, p. 4). Mocking everyday practices of women’s participatory media also reveals “the degree to which discussions about everyday habits of self-expression are underpinned by principles that serve to legitimize the exclusion and silencing of certain social groups” (Burns, 2014).

Yet, with so many women choosing to scrapbook, the practice/texts must offer those who participate something more than disparaging jokes. Creating an album may assert one’s perspective and, in the process of making, even alter one’s perspective. Jose Van Dijck (2005) notes that when she discusses family albums or diaries

I often encounter prejudiced assessments that characterize these genres as boring, predictable, or bourgeois. Yet on closer inspection, it is quite remarkable how many people gain creative energy out of shaping their own histories and subjectivities in response to existing cultural frameworks (p. 7-8).

The “creative energy” gained from the scrapbook offers another form of validation of one’s life. For many, the creative energy they receive from their scrapbooks is what keeps them going through difficult times.

An example from Facebook provides further insight into the widespread dismissal of scrapbooks. On February 4, 2014, Facebook celebrated its 10th anniversary through “a look back feature.” Facebook describes the feature as “an experience” that “compiles
your highlights since joining Facebook.” Referring to the feature as an experience
gestures to scrapbooks not simply as a text but, similar to other forms of feminine play
(Gordon, 2006), as a space of heightened experience. Facebook’s use of a video scrapbook
or “Facebook movie” to celebrate their anniversary also indicates the enduring role of
scrapbooks as a site of commemorative ritual.

The “look back feature” further illustrates the difference between making your
own photo album and the algorithms used to display and, in this case, produce content on
social media. After my initial reaction that “great, now Facebook wants to actually make
my scrapbook for me,” I was admittedly delighted with my own video, alternately thrilled
and laughing at many of my friends and, yes, I even teared up at a few. The ease and
speed amazed me as I could simply click a few buttons and have a completed narrative of
my life over the past six years – my own Facebook lifespan. However, the accuracy of
this narrative depended on the hours of labor I had already spent uploading my own
photos and liking others updates. Facebook made their algorithm clear through their title
slides including “your first moments,” “your most liked posts,” “photos you’ve uploaded.”

As many responded that the video results were not an accurate reflection of their
lives, the designers provided participatory tools that allowed users the ability to edit and
select their own photos from within these categories – helping to personalize and, in
many cases, make their video a better reflection of their life and values. The pushback
among Facebook users indicates the ways that Facebook, unlike scrapbooks, appears as
an “institutionalized archive” co-created by users, Facebook Inc., and third-party
applications/apps (Good, 2012, p. 4). As users upload content, they are effectively
handing over their personal artifacts by “relinquishing of control over their online self-
presentation to a third-party ‘curator,’ such as an algorithm or server, which has the
power to reconfigure their submission(s) in unexpected and unintended ways” (p. 4).

Social media, such as Facebook, create personal media assemblages that are shaped by and ultimately belong to the platform or site hosting them.

Many of the concerns expressed in reaction to these videos appeared not in regard to the control and ownership of the video content by Facebook; instead, criticism was leveraged at those sharing their videos for over-sharing. Increased visibility of effusive “private” memories curated in the videos intruded into what some understood as a more “impersonal” public space, their Facebook feed. Similarly, others were surprised that a social media company, Facebook, was able to produce content (a scrapbook) as an anniversary gift for them in a way that felt personal and intimate. For instance, one individual remarked in the comments section of a news story that you could “even play it at your wedding lol” (Giggs, 2014). What marks this sarcastic comment as funny is our conception of “proper” times, spaces, and uses of social media. The joke is also grounded in the commonality of photo slideshows and scrapbooks at weddings. Often wedding guests are even provided with instant cameras or photobooths that produce photos that may be placed within an album with an accompanying card or sentiment for the couple (what scrapbookers call journaling). For those unfamiliar with scrapbooks, Facebook and other forms of social media make visible the appeal of sharing photos and adding accompanying sentiments. Guests frequently upload photos from the wedding to the couple’s Facebook pages during the reception. As Facebook remains more informal, online, and tied to our everyday lives, the presence of a Facebook “look back” album seems starkly out of place at one of the most formal and ritualized events, a wedding.

As a tool of relationship marketing, the look back album made visible my intimate relationship with Facebook. The content of the movie was tied to my participation on the
platform and included branded and defining features of Facebook including “your most liked posts” accompanied by Facebook’s large thumbs up icon. This central position of Facebook’s branded thumbs-up or like button/icon within the slide show at a wedding would be comical and potentially vulgar compared to making one’s own slideshow. In the look back video, the frame of one’s life was filtered through a relationship with Facebook rather than centered on relationships with loved ones such as one’s future partner.

Yet, what I found most significant was the gendered backlash to the look back videos (most often expressed by young men) in comments and in my Facebook feed. For instance, one women notes that she

loved my Facebook movie. Mine had pics of me holding my daughter for the first time, her first day of school, her trying on my wedding dress. And it ended with a pic of me in the same dress on my wedding day. I cried like a baby watching it. And watching those of so many of my friends and family. I thought they were beautiful (Griggs, 2014).

In response someone remarked , “SUGAR OVERLOAD, dearie. Nobody else cares about your kids or your wedding dress or your family. Probably not even them” (Griggs, 2014). Another responded, “You don't care. I don't care. She cares. It's not like she made you watch the video. Why do you feel the need to tell someone else what is proper to enjoy?” (Griggs, 2014).

Whether one’s personal images of the self are displayed in an album, on social media, or on reality television, intimate display may provoke severe backlash by being designated as unimportant or as “nobody else cares.” In fact, this form of sharing is often not only misunderstood, but also open to attack and even public humiliation. At the same time, the intimacy evoked in these albums is often immeasurably treasured and valued. The affective intensity evoked in looking at or reviewing an album points to the heightened experience and the emotional connections these albums provide.
The Facebook look back video reveals an ongoing reaction against the display of intimacy as it enters public space. As the feminine remains aligned and associated with people, places, and objects of greater intimacy, this rejection is also a rejection of those whose lives are devoted to cultivating greater intimacy. Rather than seek to reject or turn away from intimacy, those who scrapbook have brought intimacy into the public and made the public more intimate in a way that may cultivate greater space for care. The scrapbook plays a critical role in sustaining, showing, and building closer connections of intimacy.

The scrapbook may also leverage a form of control and power that works to define what gets recognized, what gets validated, what claims importance. The everyday documentation of the scrapbook also serves as a place to arrange, rearrange, and idealize experiences according to notions of the “good life” followed by the maker. In a segment devoted to scrapbooks on the NPR program, “This American Life,” Julie Checkoway and Kim Meyer (2003) observe that as the scrapbook maker “can arrange life in these beautiful layouts, she can control it.” Part of what may be resisted in the devaluation of the scrapbook is the unspoken amount of control that many women hold to arrange the life of those they depict. A similar desire to control mediated self-presentations has become a major concern, even a public relations industry, as individuals use these mediated presentations to “amp up” their popularity to achieve micro-celebrity status (Senft, 2008) often through self-branding. These labors of self-presentation occupy a critical component of feminine labor as the “very project of making a self that is publicly visible is contained within the new discourses of femininity for young women that link success to image, style, and visible work on oneself” (cited in Banet-Weiser, 2015, p. 489; McRobbie, 2000; Harris, 2004; Projansky, 2014).
Another reason for the denigration of the scrapbook may be a reaction against the expression of a feminized subjectivity. Feminized self-representations’ increased visibility disrupts separate spheres of public/private, love/money, and feminine/masculine. The “good life” presented by those who scrapbook may conflict with traditionally public subjectivity grounded in a masculine standpoint. As they differ from these masculine norms, the forms of content selected for validation and intimate work produced through the scrapbook may be unrecognized and disregarded. This dissertation will argue that the scrapbook provides a tool for the validation for feminine self-representations and care labor or a tool of care for caregivers.

What is a Scrapbook?

Contemporary scrapbooks come in an astonishing array of formats, styles, and sizes that involve the use of digital photography, paper crafting, and multi-media art. There are “traditional” 12 x12 inch paper albums, mini albums, Project Life albums, paper planners, smash books, art journals, and digital scrapbooks that all fall into the category “scrapbook.” This section begins by describing and delineating the components of the scrapbook, and then provides a more broad-based and enduring theoretical definition of the practice.

Scrapbook magazines offer condensed descriptions of the most common components of a contemporary scrapbook album as a mix of four elements: “photos, journaling, design, and accents” (Creating Keepsakes, 2011; Memory Makers, 2001, p. 30). Photos refers most often to personal photos taken by the album maker (or the person for whom the album is being made); journaling involves typed or handwritten notes used to describe or tell the story of a memory; design involves the color composition and style of a page; and accents (referred to as embellishments in craft) include washi tape, paper flowers,
glitter, and other details. The centrality of design is demonstrated by the description of a completed scrapbook page in terms of a “layout” or a two-page layout as a “spread,” similar to the vocabulary of art directors in the magazine industry.

The book, *Scrapbooking Made Easy* (2005), a popular introduction to scrapbooks, provides a condensed description of the components of the process of making a scrapbook (rather than the scrapbook itself) as detailed in their “formula worksheet” (p. 191) or how-to guide on making scrapbooks. They detail the following components: 1) purpose (“why am I making this album”), 2) the format (size and style), 3) organization (chronological, theme, alpha-numeric), 4) framework, and 5) design (color scheme, decorative accents, how will I arrange my photos and journaling on the framework and filler pages to created a unified look and feel?). Despite the “ease” claimed by the formula worksheet and its identification of scrapbook components (reflective of only one common type of scrapbook), composing a single definition for such a diverse form remains a challenge.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines scrapbooks as “blank book[s] in which pictures, newspaper cuttings, and the like are pasted for preservation” (also cited in Christensen, 2011). In these terms, a photo album may be considered a type of scrapbook; however, scrapbooks are often distinguished from photo albums by the addition of an extra touch, either through design/decorative accents, memorabilia, or writing used to tell a story. Jessica Helfand (2008) asserts that “framed and interwoven with the physical proof of lived experience—that the scrapbook retains its enduring vitality, eliciting in the reader a kind of emotional response that the simple photo album, bereft of such riches, does not in fact possess” (p. 56). Gale (2005) further describes the difference between photo albums and scrapbooks as articulated by scrapbook makers (or
as these women are “adamant” that a photo album is “just pictures thrown in” but a scrapbook “tells a story” (p. 7).

Despite the varied array of formats, historians argue that “scrapbooks are one of the most enduring yet simultaneously changing cultural forms of the last two centuries…[even so] the task and function remain constant, while the form and structure alter under the influence of aesthetics and new materials” (Ott, Tucker & Buckler, 2006, p. 1-2). Utilizing this insight, this section turns to identify the scrapbook’s definitional core or the “task and function” that “remain constant.”

As a starting point for unpacking the task and function of scrapbooks, I turn to an inclusive definition offered by the founder of Simple Scrapbooks magazine, Stacy Julian. She defines a scrapbook as a “photo plus a memory…if you have taken the time to validate a photo with a memory, the process of doing that is called scrapbooking in my mind…you’re validating the ways that you see life” (Hyman, 2010, Episode 1). A similar definition appears by folklore/scrapbook scholar, Danille Christensen (2011) as she defines scrapbooks as “aesthetically heightened material artifacts meant for durable display, vehicles created to dramatize, exhibit, and thus claim importance for mundane intangible processes” (p. 179). Rather than limiting their definition to a specific formula or format, Julian and Christensen describe scrapbooks as a process “to claim importance” or “to validate.”

Drawing from both Julian and Christensen, I begin to define the scrapbook’s enduring task or function as the process of taking the time to recognize, to validate, to claim importance for the ways you see life. This offers a recognition of the ability of the scrapbook “to craft a highly skewed reality: the world according to me” (Helfand, 2008, p. 92). What makes a scrapbook a scrapbook is taking the time to add a component (photo, writing,
memento, decoration) that validates the memory through the eyes of the maker. Unlike Julian, I argue that photos are not a defining component of the scrapbook, but rather this process of validation may be done with a photo, a memento, writing, or a decorative element. This process of personalized tailoring remains the enduring task or function despite an array of formats and connects the legacy of the scrapbook with other media formats (home décor, blogs, journals, videos, social media), indicating the ways this personalization has only proliferated with digital formats.

While I foreground Julian’s insight into the process, or the enduring function/task, at the heart of the scrapbook, in alignment with other scholars of scrapbooks, I argue that scrapbooks are also [more narrowly] defined by their materiality, as a printed/paper form that can be “held in one’s hands.” The moniker, scrapbook, which emerged in the early nineteenth century, was defined by two enduring components: “scraps,” including personal memorabilia and photos, compiled into a “book” or another more durable and tangible form (Tucker, Ott and Buckler, 2006, p. 8; Garvey, 2012). Christensen’s definition also foregrounds materiality as she describes them as “material artifacts meant for durable display.” Scrapbook historians Katherine Ott, Susan Tucker, and Patricia Buckler (2006) lend further support as they define scrapbooks as a “material manifestation of memory” (p. 3). The emphasis on materiality of the scrapbook works to support their underlying function to validate or “claim importance;” through their materiality, scrapbooks translate the intangible affects or fleeting feelings/moments of the memory into a more tangible form or “material manifestation.” This can be seen in the explanation of an interviewee on difference between a photo slideshow and a scrapbook in the way that a scrapbook recontextualizes the object from a “generic” jpeg or photo into a cherished memento or story to be shared. As the PBS show, Scrapbook Soup, more
humorously explains, “mamas don’t let babies grow up to be jpegs.” The assertion by interviewees that scrapbooks are defined by their ability to “be held in one’s hands” was so frequent as to warrant a more in-depth discussion in Chapter 4.

A successful scrapbook combines the ability to strike an affective chord (through moving photos or journaling) with demonstration of hands-on care in making (through detailed design, materiality, and accents). In describing what she looks for in a scrapbook submission from readers, one scrapbook magazine editor, Lori Fairbanks (2005), describes that “I look for something that makes me laugh, smile, or tear up a little bit; techniques that make me say, “What a cool idea. I want to try that!” and a “polished look—a page that’s been crafted with care” (Creating Keepsakes, 2005, p. 47). She emphasizes that the scrapbook page should carry an affective charge and/or to show a special care in making. Another editor, Iana Lillie, asserts “I want to see complete and complex layouts that stir my senses, visually and emotionally, I want to see layouts that connect” (Creating Keepsakes, 2005, p. 42). Here again, what makes a scrapbook good is the ability to “stir my senses, visually and emotionally” and to connect. These editors gesture to the ways scrapbooks become a part of care labor in their ability to evoke or intensify affective feelings in relation to the memory depicted. One woman may summarize it best when she describes a good scrapbook page as “one you have put your heart into” (Gale, 2005, p. 14).

The materiality of the scrapbook, however, continues to be disrupted and reconfigured, particularly with the digitalization of photography and scrapbooks. Prior to a widespread use of digital photography, printed photos held greater value as they were more scarce (Hyman, 2010, Episode 1). The desire to create a scrapbook was driven by the desire to “do something” with printed photos encoded with memories. With the high
number of photos taken with digital cameras, photos that make it into the scrapbook are an increasingly small percentage. The higher number of images produced through digital photography make archiving and recording all of these images often easier using digital tools/software and platforms such as Photoshop, Flickr, Facebook, and Instagram. As the photograph moved from a precious object to be conserved at all costs from deterioration, the preoccupation with preservation has lessened within the practice of scrapbooking.

In the move from film to digital, Van House (2011) describes changes in the “publicness, temporality and volume of personal photographic images” that contribute to a shift in the function of the photograph more as “objects of communication than of memory” (p. 125). Yet, I assert that what defines a scrapbook remains taking the time to reflect and commemorate a memory. With an abundance of photographs/images, scrapbooks offer value and validation in taking the time to curate, to print/preserve, and/or to add a “special touch.” The digital has shifted what gets recorded and curated in a move from “special events” to capturing the everyday, the mundane. Scrapbooks allow individuals both to curate and to add ritual into their daily lives in what may be a response to the never-ending flows and rapidity of digital culture under advanced capitalism. Self-branded scrapbook celebrity Heidi Swap, whose line of products sells at the U.S. big box craft store Michaels, articulates this as the ability of scrapbooks to “stop the blur.” Regardless of the technological tools used to create them or the final materiality of the product, however, scrapbooks emphasize a slowing down – to reflect and validate.

This process, this labor of adding detail and personal touches entwines the practice with women’s care and craft work (or what Campbell (2005) calls “craft consumption”), and is used to singularize, individuate, or “stop the blur” of the flow of images, thoughts, and memories. As a personal curation of events often made into a gift
for others, scrapbooks cultivate and strengthen social bonds through gendered “kinwork” including the “conception, maintenance, and ritual celebration of kin ties” (di Leonardo, 1987, p. 442). As social creatures, humans “experience events in relation to others” and scrapbooks develop, capture, and archive these shared relations (van Dijck, 2007, p. 3). They also provide a sanctioned space for gendered “me” time (Negra, 2008). Despite the constant transformations in the format of the scrapbook, the practice and function of the scrapbook endures as a process used to reflect, to recognize, to validate, to claim importance for the ways you see life through the making of a material artifact.

A Brief History of Scrapbooks

Our life is a living Scrapbook-book. Clipped from the scroll of Time and pasted in by the hand of Fate, every day brings its contributors, and leaves accumulate until the book is filled.

E.W. Gurley in Scrapbooks and How to Make Them (1880)

Scrapbooks demand recognition of the ways media change and develop over time. While my project centers on the “traditional” or paper scrapbook over the past twenty years, a look at the history of the scrapbook provides a critical background for understanding contemporary forms. Katie Good (2012) utilizes scrapbook history to make explicit the enduring link between print and digital social media forms. A look at the history of scrapbooks, according to her, offers “a way of thinking about today’s social media practices as entrenched in a long history of habits and hobbies by which people interacted with media texts to both express themselves socially and, simultaneously, to document their lives” (p. 3). Historical scholarship on various scrapbook forms all remains unified by the enduring thread of their task/function as a material form used as a space of reflection, recognition, and validation to claim importance.
**Early Formats: Curating Fragments of Memory**

Historians trace scrapbooks back to the early Greeks use of *koinoi topoi* or “memory aids for recreating, events, information, and knowledge” (Tucker, Ott, and Buckler, 2006, p. 4). With the introduction of paper, aspiring elites utilized commonplace books to capture “fragments of memory” for speeches, writing, proverbs, quotations, and ideas in notebooks often arranged by theme or topic (Ott, Tucker, and Buckler, 2006; Gernes, 2001). Todd Gernes (2001) describes how with the growth of print that commonplace books became a widespread tool of general education and active reading (p. 111-113). These commonplace books emerged as “both a memory aid and a notebook for personal growth” (Ott, Tucker, and Buckler, 2006, p. 6).

As cheaper paper became more readily available with new printing technologies, such as the shift from rag pulp to wood pulp, the commonplace book was replaced by the practice of collecting or curating these “scraps” into an album, the scrapbook. By the mid-nineteenth century, the popularity of the commonplace book had decreased and the scrapbook grew to fill in the void of a material space for “intellectual reflection, literary selections, and aesthetic production” (Gernes, 2001, p. 115, p. 120). While commonplace books were used to collect handwritten ideas/quotations, the scrapbook revealed a shift to collect mass-produced printings (Gernes, 2001, p. 120). By 1825 the term “scrapbook” became a common way to refer to a hobby of keeping a blank book used to collect pictures, newspaper clippings, and objects for preservation (Gale, 2005, p. 1). In the eighteenth and early nineteenth-century, these scrapbooks often involved more formal and generic collecting and classification organized around a central theme or category (Tucker, Ott and Buckler, 2006, p. 10). The nineteenth century also saw a further extension of commonplace books into friendship and autograph albums, such as
providing a holder for calling cards. These albums were used to capture everything from poems, sayings, signatures, hair embroidery and other mementos (Helfand, 2008; McNeil 1968; Christensen, 2011, p. 176).

The 19th into the 20th Century: Growing Personalization of Mass Commodities

With increased access to mass printing, scrapbooks offered a way to personalize, curate, and straddle industrialized media production with personal/handicraft production. Nineteenth-century scrapbooks reconfigured mass-produced content into a more personalized collection (Garvey, 2012). Scrapbooks helped readers to adapt to the “proliferation of print by cutting it up and saving it, reorganizing it, and sometimes recirculating it” (Garvey, 2003 and 2012, p. 10). They were used by “readers in managing the confusing plentitude of texts” or the gluttony of information resulting from mass printing of newspapers, advertising tradecards and, eventually, photography (Helfand, 2008; Garvey, 2012, p. 25). One of the most popular items to collect were scraps of colored paper, or chromos, that proliferated with the growth of chromolithic color printing in the mid-nineteenth century (Ott, Tucker, and Buckler, 2006, p. 7). As compiled scraps of various texts, scrapbooks help to emphasize reading or reception as an active practice. Metaphors of this active reading process, such as “cut and paste,” “bricolage,” and intertextuality, emphasize the interactivity of reception (Garvey, 2003, p. 224).

The nineteenth-century also saw the growth of commercial albums. Perhaps, the most famous commercial album in the nineteenth century was Mark Twain’s patented scrapbook in 1873 that came with pages pre-coated with mucilage (a form of gummy adhesive) (Ott, Tucker, and Buckler, p. 8; Gernes, 2001; Helfand, 2008). Even
commercial albums, such as prefabricated scrapbooks or memory books such as baby albums or school memory books, despite the ways they provided a pre-printed template for memories, were, as Jane Greer (2011) describes in her study of school-girl albums from 1913-1920, viewed by young women “as more fluid composing spaces” (p. 221) or what Jessica Helfand (2008) describes as “the original open-source technology…that celebrated visual sampling, culture mixing, and the appropriation and redistribution of existing media” (p. xvii).

Alison Piepmeier (2009) uses scrapbooks in her tracing of a feminist history of “participatory media,” which she defines as “media made by individuals rather than by the consumer culture industries” (p. 29). She notes the interrelations of participatory media with mass media as participatory media often takes the media of mass culture and works to transform it. Piepmeier’s (2009) historical tracing also emphasizes how scrapbooks should be considered as more than a document of personal commemoration, but also as a media practice that works to construct community and solidarity. Piepmeier pulls from scholar Amy Mecklenburg-Faenger’s (2007) dissertation on scrapbooks from 1875-1930. Mecklenburg-Faenger (2007) notes the way that many scrapbook collections at this time were viewed as “‘rare gems’…meant to be shared with other people, and scrapbooking often, although not always, was constructed as a communal activity. That is, scrapbooks were not understood as private documents, but as artifacts meant to be shared with others” (p. 60-61 also cited in Piepmeier, 2009, p. 30). This may be seen in the number of scrapbooks of women’s clubs and organizations in the early twentieth-century. These scrapbooks, furthermore, according to Mecklenburg-Faenger (2007) were used by women to “critically engage the social roles prescribed for them and to construct new possibilities for women’s work, and women’s identities” (p. 72). Jane Greer (2011)
notes a similar practice in her study of three twentieth-century girls’ memory albums (1913-1920) that these albums illustrate the ways high school girls “were able to move among the many positions available to them as young women” (p. 225).

From the early nineteenth-century, girls and women became the most frequent compilers, and feminine became the default gender of scrapbook maker (Ott, Tucker, and Buckler, 2006, p. 9). Todd Gernes (2001) argues that the association of girls and women with scrapbooks emerged with the popularity of friendship albums often called lady’s albums that acted as the “stage prop in the theatrical parlor of middle-class adolescence” (p. 120). In addition to these “lady’s albums” (and later the early twentieth-century school-girl memory books), the late-nineteenth century fad of collecting late-Victorian advertising trade card scrapbooks (color-printed postcard/index cards similar to those used in viral marketing today) further contributed to the practice’s feminization. While boys primarily classified and organized in stamp albums, girls were encouraged to collect and organize advertising trade cards into artistic arrangements in scrapbooks (Garvey, 1996, 2012). As collections of advertising trade cards, these advertising-focused collections contributed to the education of women/girls as good consumers. Ellen Gruber Garvey (1996) asserts that this classifying and arranging of ads helped to teach young women ritualistic ways to control, order, and artistically personalize consumer goods. Building upon a similar desire to successfully display a middle class identity, tradecard scrapbooks’ combination of highly embellished “fancy work” and conspicuous consumption became all the rage as they allowed young women the opportunity for both creative play and increased status. The reconfiguration of trade cards into scrapbooks reveals a shift in female consumers’ relationships with commodities and the building desire for individuals to understand themselves through these possessions (Tucker, Ott and Buckler, 2006, p.
The commercialization and popularity of amateur photography also influenced the feminization of the practice. In 1888, George Eastman’s innovation of a handheld camera preloaded with film as a replacement for wet-plate processing industrialized many of the mechanical components of photography (Slater, 1995, p. 136; West, 2000). Kodak culture not only industrialized, but also commodified and domesticated personal photography (Olivier, 2007; Holland, 2004, p. 143; Slater, 1995, p. 128). Since the camera was purchased and the film sent away for development, Eastman’s pre-loaded camera familiarized the idea of “photography equipment and images” as commodities (Slater, 1995, p. 129). With Kodak seeking the largest market for photos, amateur photos became commodities for a consumer market that included both women and children. Photography’s emergence as a popular activity was partially driven through Kodak’s marketing including the 1889 launch of the brand’s slogan “you push the button, we do the rest” (West, 2000, p. 8) and the 1901 launch of the “Kodak Girl” campaign which linked photography with the image of the “New Woman” (Pedersen and Phemister, 1985, p. 41). At the end of the nineteenth century, questions of how a woman should dress, behave and express herself were undergoing tremendous shifts, the New Woman was “a free thinker, independent of mind and spirit” (Helfand, 2008, p. 8).

The rise of amateur photography and mass printing contributed to the emergence of commercially-produced albums used to collect photographs. As a domestic commodity, personal photos and scrapbooks joined “women’s writing,” as a sanctioned space where women were allowed to hold the camera/pen and tell their own stories. With the growth of photography, scrapbooks as collections of these personal photos became positioned as a
“private autobiographical practice so ubiquitous as to be off critical radar screens” (Helfand, 2008; Tucker, Ott, and Buckler, 2006; Christensen, 2011, p. 176). 

Industrialization’s separation between spaces of waged work and leisure reconfigured the scrapbook as a hobby or site of leisure within the home (Lears, 1981) where it was further feminized. 

In the twentieth-century U.S., individual and family albums became a ubiquitous practice and form of feminized kin labor. Family remains one of the main subjects of idealized personal photography. The prevalence of family albums and the significance of family albums as a personal archive within the U.S. and U.K. have been extensively studied in previous scholarship (Sontag, [1977] 2011; Chaflen, 1987; Spence & Holland, 1991; Hirsch, 1997; Tucker, Ott, and Buckler, 2006; Downs, 2006; Tinkler, 2010). 

Scholarship on family albums has paid particular attention to the identification of specific photographic conventions and rules which contribute to a similarity in content and style between albums which share historical and cultural contexts (Tinkler, 2010; Chaflen, 1987; Spence and Holland, 1991; Rose, 2004; Bourdieu, 1965/1996). Richard Chalfen (1987) refers this in terms of a “home mode” of photography which he found held an “overwhelming sense of similarity and redundancy” (p. 42). 

Feminist scholarship has drawn attention and critique to the content of these family albums, that while seeming to merely record actual moments in family history, family albums typically perpetuate myths of coherence and togetherness by favoring happy moments. As such, they are implicated in the naturalization and reproduction of patriarchal structures of the family and leisure” (van Dijck, 2007, p. 8; Sontag, 1977; Hirsch, 1997).

However, Gillian Rose (2010) asserts that such critique may be “somewhat misplaced” as “women are using photography as a technology that helps to picture and to perform the
things that they want: a family that is together, children who are developing, a home that is happy, a mother who is good enough” (p. 131). This “does not mean that family snaps are innocent of any sort of power relations;” however, mothers are using their family photography to construct a “selective and affective vision of family life, in which antagonisms are erased by the evocation of ‘happiness’” (p. 131). She asserts this works as a “politics of sentiment” in which mothers actively create a vision in which mothers “show and do their families, their children and their selves” (p. 131).

Scholarship has also pointed to the “family” classification as a misrepresentation of the album’s content and purpose (Langford, 2001; Tinkler, 2010; Slater, 1995). As Susan Langford (2006) argues, there is “no such thing as a family album, but only personal albums concerned with, or situated within, a particular configuration of family and community” (p. 242 cited in Tinkler, 2010, p. 262). However, as photography became a leisure activity at the meeting point of “consumer capitalism and the construction of family identity,” the formation of family identity through the album reveals the emphasis on family in U.S. culture throughout the twentieth century (Slater, 1995, p. 133).

By World War I, the pastime that had “for generations been housed in the family parlor became a more individual, arguably more private, pursuit” (Helfand, 2008, p. 75). This more private pursuit also appeared in the form of memory books, which often functioned as a “kind of time capsule.” There were books “aimed at college girls, at new mothers, at celebrity worshipers (a significant breed) and cigar-band collectors, and at every conceivable kind of traveler and tourist” (Helfand, 2008, p. 95). These albums worked to save and to hold onto items of value and to mark and commemorate occasions and individuals of importance.
Scrapbooks Today: Dominated by Caregivers

The contemporary album has been described as “neither your grandmother’s scrapbooks nor your mother’s photo albums” (Christensen, 2011; Helfand, 2008; Garvey, 2012, p. 19). Rather than a pastime dominated by young, unwed girls, as was the case for the majority of the twentieth century, today the practice remains feminized but has become “mostly the province of mothers and grandmothers” (Christensen, 2011, p. 186; Garvey, 1996, 2003; Tucker, 2003; Greer, 2011). In other words, scrapbooking has come to be “dominated by women, and by caregivers more specifically” (Christensen, 2011, p. 186, emphasis my own). The contemporary use of scrapbooks by caregivers as a tool and a form of care offers a rich space for examining current conditions of feminized care labor.

In the 1980s, the terms “scrapbooking” and “scrapbooker” gained popular usage (Garvey, 2012, p. 86; Christensen, 2011). Scrapbooking, the contemporary term, is often tied to Marielen Christensen’s presentation at the “World Conference on Records” at Salt Lake City in 1980. Christensen went on to develop a multimillion-dollar mail-order business, Keeping Memories Alive (Jarvik, 1997; Garvey, 2012, p. 19-20; Christensen, 2011). A handful of entrepreneurial women tied to this tradition started the industry by developing products for their own use and then selling these products to others who were also already creating family heritage albums (Christensen, 2011, p. 182-183). These goods were often sold with other paper crafts supplies such as stamps and cardstock. These paper crafts were further entrenched within a tradition of women’s kin labor and the exchange of sentimental gifts used to cement and build relationships (di Leonardo, 1987).

As the “World Conference on Records” held strong ties to Mormon genealogy, the contemporary scrapbook industry emerged from a Mormon tradition of family or
heritage albums. These albums displayed a collective presentation of a group or family—often one to which the compiler belonged or held close ties. The presentation and even the conception of self was rarely that of an individual. This form of scrapbooking emphasizes care for others and close bonds with loved ones over recognition for the self. In tension with this caregiving role, women were also able to gain individual recognition, appreciation, and acknowledgement from their efforts including the money accrued from sales as the hobby transformed into a business success.

Perhaps most of all, the contemporary practice has been marked by its commodification and growth into an industry. Entrepreneurship and profit-driven objectives (along with the emergence of special products sold by direct-sale companies and scrapbook stores) continued to transform the hobby of scrapbooking into a billion dollar industry. The contemporary practice went from retail obscurity in 1995 to its peak as a 2.4 billion dollar industry in 2004 (Christensen, 2012, p. 177). According to U.S. commercial sales in 2010, scrapbooks were the commercially most popular and largest craft category with an estimated 18.4 million participating households (Moss, 2010; CHA, 2011). Creative Memories, a direct sale company founded in 1987, and their 90,000 consultants (the company’s peak number in the early 2000s) worked to spread and commercialize the practice through home-based scrapbook parties (Lighte, 2004). The meteoric rise in the popularity and profit of scrapbooks as an industry from 1995-2004 emerged as part of the broader transition of feminized immaterial and affective labor into the waged sphere and will be discussed in the literature review. The impact of the shift in the scale of the industry will further be addressed in Chapter 3.
The Future of Scrapbooks?

Since 2010, I have observed the sharp decline of the scrapbook industry facilitated by the 2008 recession. In 2012, Kodak filed for bankruptcy and Shutterfly, a company devoted to printing photo books of digital images, announced record high earnings (Savitz, 2012). According to Google Trends, the search volume for scrapbooking and scrapbook has declined seventy-percent since its peak in 2005-2006. This has left many who scrapbook wondering, “what is the future of the scrapbook industry?”

While the industry declines, the practice of making scrapbooks continues to be reconfigured within new categorizations and spaces that further gesture to ongoing adaptations and adjustments to care labor. Since my participant observations began in 2010, scrapbooks have continued to be reconfigured drastically. Current notions of a “traditional” scrapbook album include an embellished photo display with an accompanying description (often called journaling) on 12x12 inch paper. This 12x12 paper emerged in the late 1990s; the larger paper offered higher profit margins while also allowing crafters the ability to get more on the page. As new trends and techniques are pushed every sales quarter, paper crafting and multi-media art techniques gain popularity. Use of these craft skills often expands beyond the page into other forms of paper crafts such as calendars, banners, and home décor (Bourassa, 2006; Venter, 2013).

With growing use of digital storage for memory keeping, the role of scrapbooks moved from preservation to “one more crafting tool in your crafting toolbox” (Hyman, 2011c, Episode 94). With digital back-ups available for their photos, many who scrapbook “realized that we didn’t have this stack of photos that was driving our creativity, but we still liked playing with paper and glue – so it was like, ‘What else can I do with it?’” (Hyman, 2011c). Scrapbook industry expert Nancy Nally explains how
scrapbooking used to be “on its own island” separated from other crafts through a focus on using archivally-safe products. *Creating Keepsakes* magazine had an archivally-safe seal of approval (similar to *Good Housekeeping* magazine’s seal for quality consumer products), which was used to identify acid-free products from the late-1990s to the early 2000s.

When a concern with acid-free products was foregrounded, many who scrapbooked, or at least many in the industry, did not call or think of themselves as “crafters” (Hyman, 2011a). There was a greater emphasis on preservation and memory-keeping. The growth of digital photography and scanning enabled those who scrapbook to, as Nancy Nally proclaims, “bust out of this [acid-free] box that we were in” (Hyman, 2011c). Lessening concern with acid-free products enabled the categorization of those who scrapbook to move from a subcategory of craft as “scrapbookers” to the broader category of “crafters.” While contemporary scrapbooks emerged as a subcategory of craft, the embrace of a crafter identity appears in the parting words of the popular scrapbook podcast, “ScrapGals,” which ends every episode by urging listeners to, “Go, be crafty!”

The market report for the U.S. Craft and Hobby Association (CHA) reflects this shift as the 2010 report categorized the hobby as scrapbooking/memory keeping, and the 2012 report categorized the hobby as scrapbook/card making/paper crafting. The sign used to identify the scrapbook section of the big-box craft chain Michaels (in all four stores I visited in two states), shifted from “Memory Keeping” to “Paper Crafting.” In 2014 the largest scrapbook magazine merged with a paper craft magazine changing its name from *Creating Keepsakes* to *Paper Crafts & Scrapbooking*. This expansion also allowed the craft industry to combine the sale of scrapbook tools/products with those of cardmaking/stamping. By January 2015, industry insiders had gone so far as to pronounce, “there is really not a scrapbook industry any more, it is a paper crafting
industry” (Hyman 2015, Episode 212). As users embrace digital forms of memory-keeping, the paper-based scrapbook becomes recategorized, subsumed and absorbed into craft. A growing embrace of craft emphasizes what differentiates the paper-form from the digital such as a more intimate or tactile experience of making, a subject that will be addressed at length in Chapter 5.

SECTION TWO: THE RESEARCH STUDY

Why Study Scrapbooks?

The legacy of the scrapbook indicates the endurance of previous practices and insights into directions of change. For media studies scholars, scrapbooks provoke consideration of what might be left out of the prevailing conversation within media studies. A study of paper scrapbooks foregrounds the historical continuity of ways we understand or conceive of media, media practices, and how these become enmeshed with particular identity constructions shaped by political, economic, and social forces with deep and enduring historical roots. As paper versions of the form remain strongly gendered feminine, they also foreground the ways that gender mediates and continues to demarcate our relationship with socio-technical systems, definitions of work/labor, and our production/consumption of specific media forms. Feminist science and technology scholarship, such as Suchman (2011), describe the way that technological society depends upon a discourse of progressive futurism that replicates “neocolonial geographies of center and periphery” (Suchman, 2011, p. 2). A study that foregrounds the perspective of those who continue to use paper scrapbooks enables a questioning of assumptions and associations of the digital as more advanced. This perspective moves away from popular associations of the digital with productivity, speed, and ease as a sign of progress. Instead,
there is greater consideration of a different set of criteria for evaluation such as the ability to generate greater intimacy or a closer touch through tactility and personalization. Through this alternate perspective, scrapbooks draw attention to our material/affective attachments and to our embodied, sensory experiences with media.

The strong feminization of paper scrapbooks emphasizes the persistence of gender and gendered labor as constitutive components of mediated experience and production. This dissertation appears in relation to the work of other feminist scholars on feminized media forms and, more specifically, on feminine media production. Scrapbooks provide insight into popular spaces, places and forms in which girls and women feel comfortable making media. As many spaces of media production, including computer code and television/movie writers/directors, continue to be dominated with the perspectives of white, male creators, a look at feminine media and media forms (what women are actually already doing) may help to change the conversation, to broaden our understanding of media, and to broaden an appreciation for the creativity and ability of work already being created by girls and women.

Furthermore, the positioning of the practice in-between mass consumption and craft marks it as a critical site of study for those concerned with feminine labor, commodification, and resistance. Scholars of craft need to explore how co-opted minoritarian values (such as sentimentality and care) circulate within a capitalist system. Rather than simply looking for forms of resistance outside of capital, new ideas may emerge by looking at minoritarian values operating within capitalism that resist or at least partially oppose the values of capital. The dissertation will trace a number of sites in which the scrapbook operates as a form of feminine labor used to reduce tensions and to

**Overview of Methods:**

As a qualitative researcher using participant observation, my goal was to find out what questions or areas were of greatest concern to my participants and then to analyze the implications of these concerns. Traditionally ethnography has sought an emic (or insider’s) perspective as “both questions and answers” are “discovered from informants” (Spradley, 1979). S. Elizabeth Bird (2003) points to an “interdisciplinary third generation of media reception studies” which seeks to situate “emic” questions and answers within the systems that enabled their meaning (see also Rybas and Gajjala, 2007). This “third generation” seeks to mitigate “the very real problems associated with trying to separate text/audience from the culture in which they are embedded” (Bird, 2003, p. 5). Following this “third generation of media reception studies,” this study has sought to address the concerns raised by informants by contextualizing the ways they intersect within a broader context of gender (femininity), subjectivity, labor, and participatory media.

With regards to subjectivity, the driving questions or areas of inquiry included: what types and practices of subjectivity appear within contemporary scrapbooking? What ways are scrapbooks used to negotiate this subjectivity? With regards to labor, the driving questions were similar, what forms of labor do we see in contemporary scrapbook practices? What do these forms and shifts in these forms tell us about conditions and forms of contemporary feminine labor? The inquiry into participatory media, including craft, was perhaps the most grounded area of inquiry. The project was initially approached with an interest in the relation of paper and digital forms of scrapbooks; through observations and early interviews, my informants shifted the conversation to the
experience of making. My multi-sited methods all indicated the importance of the hobby as a social outlet both online and off. In turn, my questions on digital/paper became concerned with the media experience offered through their paper scrapbooks – shifting concern to both the sensory and social experiences of making.

As my focus is on those who make scrapbooks similar to other “audience-focused” scholarship, this project must confront the ways that “people are always both interpreters of the media-as-text and users of the media-as-object, and the activities associated with these symbolic and material uses of media are mutually defining” (Livingstone, 2003 cited in Silverton, 1994, p. 346; Siles and Boczkowski, 2012, p. 12). This project contributes to other multi-sited studies of media reception/experience (Marcus, 1995; Abu-Lughod, 2004). This offers a revision to much of the previous scholarship on scrapbooks that falls into disciplinary boundaries creating a divide in the study of scrapbooks as either practice or text. One set of work in sociology, communication, and cultural geography views scrapbooks as social objects used to “do things” and overlaps with research on personal photography (Musello, 1980; Chalfen, 1987; Rose 2003, 2004, 2010). Cultural geographer, Gillian Rose (2003, 2004, 2010), articulates this approach in her study of family photography “as a practice – the rule-bound sayings and doings in which family snaps, as particular sorts of material objects, are embedded” (2010, p. 125). An alternate approach, based in more text-centric disciplines such as folklore, English literature, library science, and history, has studied scrapbooks as text, genre, archive, or performance (Katriel and Farrell, 1991; Buckler and Leeper, 1991; Hunt, 2006; Ogden, Tucker, and Buckler, 2006; Christensen, 2009, p. 179; Mecklenburg-Faenger, 2007, 2012).
In order to best understand the perspectives of those who scrapbook, my project utilizes a set of qualitative methods including participant observation both online and off (e.g., event attendance, social media, message boards, podcasts), over thirty semi-structured interviews, and textual analysis of over one hundred scrapbook magazines published over the past two decades. Participant observation allows for a more intimate knowledge of the scrapbook experience and the ability to interrogate discourses, experiences and sensations as they are lived. Additional methods allow grounded observations to be placed in tension with theory to interrogate ways that broader systems impact the particular and to use the particular to shed insight into larger trends.

When I began my study, I wanted to begin with individuals who could immediately connect me with others. As a result, I started by seeking out individuals who were an “extreme case,” or avid, active, connected scrapbookers, as recommended by Miles and Huberman (1994). While researching local scrapbook events and stores to visit, I came across scrapbook “consultants” who work for national direct-sale companies and who organize local events for their customers. Through the company websites, I was able to do a zip code search to find “consultants” in my area. After emailing several consultants, I received several generous offers of help not only to be interviewed but also invitations to upcoming local events (crops) that they were hosting. In a similar way, I also contacted local storeowners and attended classes at these stores interviewing the store owners/workers and attendees at a later date (both in-person and over the phone) whenever possible.

Following these initial observations and interviews, participant observations occurred at scrapbook events including scrapbook crops, expos and conventions. Crops served as one of the most important research sites of the study. A crop is a group of
scrapbookers who gather together to work on their scrapbook projects. The name comes from the “cropping” of photos prior to their placement in albums. The practice is frequently explained as a “scrapbook sewing-circle.” Groups of friends may get together and “crop” (typically once a month) or a group may gather for get-away crops at a scrapbooking convention, a store, or a hotel. Crops can range from a small group to hundreds of “croppers.”

I have gone to dozens of crops and have been a “regular” in three local groups held monthly. My first regular crop lasted for eighteen-months until the organizer moved. This crop connected to a paid monthly membership in the consultant’s monthly “kit club” (included the purchase of a monthly kit including instructions/materials to make a particular page or project) held in her basement. The second crop I have continued to participate in on-and-off for over three years is a large crop (over 25 attendees) held for free at a local church (although very few members attend the church). The third crop I began regularly attending after meeting the organizer at another crop. While this crop began as consultant crop for her business, it was also advertised on meetup.com and had limited fees to cover room costs. I attended this crop every month possible for nearly three years prior to its disbandment in 2015. The relationships, my experiences, and my conclusions gleaned from participating in this particular crop group (and others) are discussed at length in Chapter 4.

In addition to my “regular” attendance at these three crops, other crop events were visited whenever possible allowing me to get a sense of the diversity of crops. I have attended crops ranging from hundreds of attendees at a national scrapbook convention crop to three people (including myself) in an informant’s home. I also attended store crops
whenever possible at scrapbook stores in Houston, Texas; Los Angeles, California; and several stores in New Jersey.

In addition to regular attendance at crops, I also went to annual conventions and expos in four states making a special effort to visit the same events at the same place in consecutive years. A scrapbook convention and expo are essentially the same event; however, the selection of the name as expo or convention depends on the different ownership and operation of the events. Both expos and conventions include a large convention floor space with company booths selling products, classes (often offered by the companies and/or direct-sale consultants), and are usually accompanied by a large weekend-long crop. These expos/conventions offer critical space to observe changes in the industry, reconnect with previous informants, and to take classes. I have attended the scrapbook expo in New Jersey four times, both the convention and expo at two different sites in Pennsylvania twice, and the same convention as it traveled to Houston, Texas twice.

While stores, expos, and conventions were the center of the industry at its peak, these on-site storefronts have greatly diminished. Yet, these events continue to be an important and productive research site as they congregate together large numbers of paper crafters and scrapbookers that provides a public space to observe common/shared traits including demographics of those scrapbook as well as offering opportunity to observe trends/changes in product offerings on the expo/convention floor. As a way to repay an informant for her generous help with my project and as a way to gain a different ethnographic perspective, I assisted her at her store/booth during two convention crops in Pennsylvania. In addition to the official expo/convention crop, there are also “offsite”
crops held annually in conjunction with the convention at local hotels that I have also attended.

In addition to my attendance at events, I conducted 30 semi-structured interviews with key groups of individuals within the practice including 8 storeowners, 8 direct-sale consultants, 8 crop organizers, and 15 hobbyists. These numbers don’t add up as most individuals fit into more than one category; for example, direct-sale consultants often also organize crops. These interviews were further supplemented through informal conversations during my attendance at scrapbook events, classes, and trips to craft stores. These interviews occurred in-person throughout the U.S.; Storeowners, for instance, were interviewed in six states (New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Utah, Texas, Florida, and California). These interviews were recorded, transcribed and coded for key themes that served as the foundation of my findings. These broad codes were verified and set in relation to the codes found in my review of scrapbook media/paratexts.

Findings from participant observations and interviews were further triangulated in my review of scrapbook media and paratexts including scrapbook magazines, blogs, podcasts, and message boards. Scrapbook magazines offered a textual record of the ever-shifting landscape of scrapbooks. The texts filled in gaps outside the parameters of the interviews including a visual representation of changing aesthetics. I amassed 200 scrapbooking magazines by a variety of companies, covering almost every month from 1997 to the end of 2013 including *Creating Keepsakes*, *Memory Makers*, *Scrapbooks etc*, *Lasting Moments*, *Scrap & Stamp Arts*, and *Scrapbooking & Beyond*. The collection of these magazines began with the donations of two large boxes of magazines by an informant extending back to the mid-1990s. I gained several more boxes of magazines at two scrapbook consignment stores in Florida, another box at a fundraiser for a neighborhood library in
Texas, and filled in gaps in key dates through eBay sales. Many of these magazines have
gone out of business; in fact, *Creating Keepsakes*, the largest and most popular scrapbook
magazine (and brand), released their final print edition of the magazine in Nov/Dec of
2013. Utilizing a grounded approach, I systematically identified and tracked dominant
themes and discourses over the past fifteen years in these magazines through the creation
of broad codes. These findings have shaped the content of my discussion and are
dispersed throughout the dissertation.

Online blogs and forums were another important site of scrapbook media and
paratexts. Forums provide a digitized platform for the immaterial labor connecting those
who scrapbook as members of these websites use the forums to discuss everything from
scrapbooking etiquette to personal health problems. I also followed blogs of several
companies in the industry (as suggested by those I interviewed), blogs of individuals
interviewed (with their permission) and, as I became more immersed in the hobby,
individuals whose voice or style felt unique. Perhaps the most important of these sites for
many years was TwoPeas in a Bucket.com (2Peas). 2Peas operated as the central hub for
the scrapbook community as well as a retail outlet with 400,000 members and additional
lurkers known as “the online home and heart of online scrapbooking” from 1999 until
July 2014. Along with notoriously active forums/message boards, 2Peas also had a
gallery for sharing layouts, art work from the 2Peas “garden girls” design team, online
classes/events, videos and a blog. 2Peas online galleries offered a prolific site of sharing
and scraplifting (a scrapbook term that plays off of “shoplifting” and is used to describe
lifting or copying another’s scrapbook design) as well as extensive texts for analysis.

An anecdote regarding how I heard about the closing of 2Peas in July of 2014
offers an illustration of the ways online scrapbook resources worked to supplement and
even to guide my research. It could even be said that this project began thanks to 2Peas. In the fall of 2009, I was telling a friend about my findings on young women bloggers using their blogs to talk about their creative hobbies. This friend, who is an avid scrapbooker, began to tell me about the 2Peas message forums. As a regular reader of the forums, she pointed to 2Peas as a popular space online for women to discuss everything—she immediately informed/warned me of the controversial topics addressed on the site including abortion, religion, and extra-marital affairs—little did I know at the time that such candid conversation is common among those who scrapbook. Within five years of learning about 2Peas from my friend, it is perhaps fitting this same friend also contacted me on June 25, 2014 to make sure I knew that 2Peas had closed.

News and thoughts on the closing of 2Peas spread through the web of online scrapbook sites. One of the most popular blogs of industry news, Scrapbook Update, operated by Nancy Nally (2014), released the “breaking news” on her blog. She concluded by acknowledging the pivotal role that 2Peas played “especially the Pub Board community, for the encouragement I found there while in the early days of building what became Scrapbook Update.” April Foster CEO of Studio Calico sent an email to the company’s email list (I had signed-up to receive Studio Calico emails). She shared a link to a heartfelt blog post where she proclaimed that “2Peas and owner Kristina Nicolai-White have been instrumental to my life both personally and professionally…it was through them I formed early friendships in the industry, learned the difference between pigment and dye inks, and how to set an eyelet.” Another popular scrapbook designer, Ali Edwards posted a blog, “The End of an Era | Saying Goodbye to Two Peas.” She also described how she turned to 2Peas in 2002 as “the first place I became aware of what ‘modern’ scrapbooking looked like.” Paperclipping and The Scrap Gals podcasts both
devoted their next episode to the site’s closing. As I describe in the chapter, “I cropped,”
the 2Peas forums quickly migrated to other platforms/forum sites including the enduring
“2Peas refugees” message board.

While I regularly perused scrapbook forums, the forums were primarily used as an
archive to learn more about a specific topic such as controversies that had occurred prior
to my fieldwork. The forums, for example, proved invaluable in offering a record of the
scandal surrounding the Creating Keepsakes Hall of Fame contest that will be examined in
Chapter 3. One of my informants also enjoyed regularly sending me discussion links from
the forums that she found important or interesting and wanted to discuss with me. This is
the way that I initially learned of the Hall of Fame contest/scandal. In this case, the
forums served as a prompt for ongoing discussions and insights.

Two of the industry’s most popular podcasts, Paperclipping and The Scrap Gals,
also provided a reflexive commentary on the closing of 2Peas and a critical site of study
for the project. These podcasts were similar to open-ended interviews or focus groups as
they enabled the podcast participants to discuss topics and concerns of interest without
the interference of my own potentially biased questions. Notably, the forums also offered
access to the thoughts/perspective of those working inside the industry. For instance, the
Paperclipping Roundtable began in 2010 when Noell Hyman and her producer/husband
Izzy expanded their membership site, Paperclipping, to include a podcast, or the
Paperclipping Roundtable. The Roundtable invites four to five well-known voices in the
scrapbook industry to discuss a topic of interest and to create “a fun show, like friends
sitting around a table.” The second podcast, The Scrap Gals, was started in 2014 by two
friends, Tiffany Lowder and Tracie Claibourne. These two friends provide entertaining
banter and insights on scrapbooking as two longtime scrapbookers who met at a crop over ten years ago.

Scrapbooking encompasses a diverse and far-reaching array of members, companies, brands, styles, formats, and events both online and off. No set of methods or sites can comprehensively cover the entirety of contemporary scrapbooking. I have done my best as an inquiring participant to track overall trends and practices of the hobby. As a feminist scholar, I realize that my findings are still interpretations of my informants’ interpretations (Radway, 1991), but I still believe they have potential to provide insights into the often devalued perspectives of those who scrapbook.

Key Concepts and Concerns

Social Reproduction and the Terrain of Struggle

The dissertation introduces issues at various assemblages of feminine labor, subjectivity, and participatory media. As contemporary scrapbooks have become a form or even symbol of care, the dissertation foregrounds issues of care and care labor. Broadly, these care labors are a component of the labor of social reproduction; specifically, they may be understood as a concern of intimacy. In doing so, this dissertation analyzes scrapbook practices involving personalization, intimate performances, emotional disclosures, sustaining of relational ties, and embodied sensory experiences. It will argue that these intimate labors, as part of social reproductive labor, enact an ambivalent and contradictory politics – used to seek greater intimacy over impersonal relations. Each of the four main chapters introduces a concern with intimacy and care as they intersect with feminized subjectivity and labor as conducted through a participatory media form, the scrapbook. First, however, it is important to introduce
social reproduction to set the stage of this study, bringing in key debates among feminist scholars of care and intimate labor that situate the approach of the chapters to follow.

The dissertation presents an understanding of scrapbooks as part of a broader set of activities associated with social reproduction. Social reproduction designates an “array of activities and relationships involved in maintaining people both on a daily basis, and intergenerationally” (Glenn, 1992, p. 1). Feminist Marxists introduced the term social reproduction in the 1970s to extend notions of reproduction within Marxism in ways that acknowledged how the work that reproduces life replenishes the labor power used to produce commodities. Social reproduction offers recognition that “renewing life is a form of work, a kind of production, as fundamental to the perpetuation of society as the production of things” (Laslett and Brenner, 1989, p. 383). Social reproduction may be broadly conceived, as Romani Alqauti puts it, as what reproduces “living-human-capacity” (cited in Weeks and Curio, 2015).

An understanding of scrapbooks as an activity of social reproduction, in turn, positions the scrapbook in a contentious relationship with capitalism. As Haider and Mohandesi (2015) assert, within advanced capitalism, “social reproduction has become more than an activity, it has become an entire terrain of struggle.” This struggle often appears in the tension between the growing role of social reproduction as an important site for generating surplus value for capital today and of imaging or enacting a way out of the enclosure of capital logics. In other words, social reproduction holds a position of struggle within capitalism as both the “most advanced outpost of the processes of contemporary valorization and at the same time the space for experimentation and processes of radical transformation of what affects social relations, self-expression, and gender relations” (Weeks and Curio, 2015). More simply, an understanding of scrapbooks
as a site of social reproduction reveals the scrapbook as a site of tension and struggle for/against capitalism – as both a site of valorization and as a site of resistance to such valorization. However, as a form of social reproductive labor (by definition), these labors ultimately seek to prioritize human need over capital accumulation (Weeks and Curio, 2015). The times and spaces where social reproductive labor works to prioritize human need reveal these activities as part of an ambivalent and contradictory politics; the ambivalent and contradictory politics of the scrapbook may be recognized through an understanding them not simply as a hobby, but also as an activity of social reproductive labor.

The care and intimate labor conducted through scrapbooks, as components of social reproduction, are at the forefront of these tensions and of the political pushback of such labors to prioritize human need. A clear differentiation between care and intimate labor enables a better identification of care to “enhance welfare” and of intimacy marked only by closeness but without care. Care may be broadly understood as a “special kind of work involving relationships and emotional attachment” (Himmelweit, 1999, p. 37). A “caring relationship features a sustained and/or intense personal attention that enhances the welfare of its recipients” (Zelizer, 2010). On the other hand, intimacy may be defined as “a particularized knowledge received and provided – not widely available to third parties” that often depends on trust (Zelizer, 2010). Critical to my later findings are in the ways that a caring relation involves “intense personal attention.”

While often conflated, care and intimacy differ in a critical way; Zelizer (2010) notes this as she asserts that care excludes forms of intimacy that do not enhance well being. Care does not occur with every connection. Fintan Walsh’s (2014) definition of intimacy, the “spatial and experiential relationships of closeness, achieved by connecting”
(p. 57), indicates how care and intimacy may be conflated. Closeness, however, does not automatically work to enhance well-being. For instance, within feminist scholarship on intimate labor, sex work is not categorized as care labor but is considered a form of intimate labor (Parreñas and Boris, 2010). Yet, when intimate labor does work to enhance welfare, the result is care; at the same time, as care work involves “sustained and/or intense personal attention,” it may generate a “closer connection” that results in greater intimacy. Both care and intimacy may be understood in the terms of labor when their efforts create “transferable use value, including the use value that economists commonly call human capital” (Zelizer, 2010). In differentiating care and intimacy, this allows for a recognition of care labor as a form of social-reproductive labor used to increase “living-human capacity;” intimacy appears as a setting or situation that may facilitate care, but intimate labor in and of itself does not hold the ability to increase well-being.

The antagonism between social reproduction and capital accumulation plays out within this terrain of intimacy and care in assertions that commodification (as a process of abstraction, distance, and detached exchange) works to destroy intimacy (Serra, 2015). These detached relations, or loss of intimacy, may build a distance which works to undercut the “intense personal attention” often necessary for care to occur.

Underlying this tension between social reproduction and capital accumulation are “two powerful fallacies” identified by Vivian Zelizer (2005) as “separate spheres” and “hostile worlds.” Separate spheres divide sentiment and rationality; hostile world beliefs maintain that contact between those “separate worlds corrupts in both directions” (Zelizer, 2010). Yet, as Zelizer (2005) illustrates, intimate relations regularly coexist with economic transactions without being corrupted. Furthermore, the premises of hostile worlds or a notion of intimacy and care as outside the market has become more difficult
to sustain in the face of the blurring of separate spheres as “the logic of the workplace has been exported home and the logic of home has been exported to production” (Fortunati, 2015; Gregg, 2011).

One widespread concern among such feminist scholarship is that a focus solely on commodification of care and intimacy works to reinforce these “two powerful fallacies” of separate spheres and hostile worlds and to diminish the value and compensation provided for care labor. For scholars such as Zelizer (2005), overturning the fallacies of separate spheres and hostile worlds shifts the area of concern away from how commodification destroys intimacy to an understanding of the ways that commodification and intimacy co-exist.

One of the problems in these discussions is that too often intimate labor is discussed as a unified concept without addressing how the organization and character of this labor changes in different settings (Zelizer, 2010). These different settings of intimate labor involve different political struggles; however, the actions and understanding of care/intimacy in one setting have a crucial political impact on the other areas. Zelizer (2010) identifies four different sites of intimate labor: 1) unpaid care in intimate settings, 2) unpaid care in economic organizations, 3) paid care in intimate settings, 4) paid care in economic settings.

Scholars whose work focuses on paid care in intimate settings, such as Eileen Boris (2015) who studies waged domestic care, argue that an ongoing concern with the commodification of intimacy, often in relation to unpaid care in intimate settings, may belittle the struggles of care workers performing paid care in intimate settings for respect and dignity. Boris (2015) argues that a focus of concern on commodification may obscure the “carer as a worker” and support a rationalization of poor compensation as well as
support roadblocks against care workers rights and unionization. She argues, subsequently, that a better route may be to support notions of care as work. Zelizer (2010), Boris (2015) and others raise concern on the enduring devaluation of social reproductive labor as it becomes valorized and cast upon the most vulnerable members of society. However, others continue to condemn the commodification of this work in relation to neoliberal privatization of care (Fraser, 1987).

Scholars, such as Kathi Weeks (2011), argue that substituting an ethic of care with an ethic of work “risks contesting the gendered organization of a capitalist work society by reproducing its fundamental values” (p. 68). The views of Boris (2015) and Weeks (2015) both recognize care as work, however, Weeks (2015) cautions against the extension/collapse of care into the ethics/values of waged work. Weeks (2011) turns to inspiration in the “Wages for Housework” movement noting that the first step to refusing the culturally (as well as politically and economically) mandated domesticity for women was to insist that unwaged household labor was work. The second step was to see it as merely work. Instead of a greater embrace of work, Weeks (2011) argues for a shift away from a division of production/reproduction to life/work as matters of political determination. She urges for approaches that steer away from the “colonization of life by work.” Both Weeks (2011) and Boris (2015) also discuss the need to reconfigure the basic structure or organization for social reproductive work. They both share a call for the reorganization and redistribution of care labor “in a way that does not completely occupy our lives” (Weeks and Curio, 2015). Through these revisions in the structure, particularly in a notion of care as interdependence (not dependence), they both emphasize the potential of these more communal forms of care to disrupt the hegemonic order (such as the ideology of domesticity).
“Putting the Inalienable to Work”

While scrapbooks increasingly occupy different settings of intimate labor, the practice continues to be predominately associated with unpaid care in intimate settings. Unpaid care, however, is a space of intensified commodification in advanced capitalism. The contemporary practice of scrapbooking offers an exemplar of such intensified commodification as the practice has transitioned from retail obscurity in 1995 to peak as a 2.4 billion dollar business in 2004 (CHA, 2012). To the extent that the modern practice is associated with and even defined by the growth of the scrapbook industry, the modern practice is also defined by its commodification.

The commodification process involves abstraction, distance, and detached exchange, which work to increase alienation (Serra, 2015). Alienation that accompanies commodification may be understood as a “de-emotion and disembodiment that is dehumanizing” (Fortunati, 2015). The dehumanization component of alienation contributes to a greater need for the labors tasked with reproducing “living-human-capacity” or the work of social reproduction (Alqauti cited in Weeks and Curio, 2015). Intimate labors appear as a growing concern partially in response to growing commodification and application of market logics to social relations and subjectivity. As the process of commodification works to abstract, individualize, quantify, and build comparison, intimate care labor appears as more central, intensified, important, and visible as it works to maintain/build connection, sustain care, and overcome isolation.

A concern with abstraction, distance and detachment that accompany commodification appear in every chapter of this project (at the level of industry, the social, material, and personal) as do corresponding efforts to maintain concrete, close, connection, which I have labeled the labor of making inalienable. This labor of making
inalienable includes social reproductive labors that serve to counter alienation or to diminish “abstraction, alienation, and spectacularization” that may accompany commodification (Schaffer, 2011, p. 14).

Scrapbooks appear at this dueling site of alienation and making inalienable as the hobby operates not only as a commodified practice but also as a way to counter commodification. Colin Campbell (2005) makes a similar assertion that with an intensified commodification, there has been an accompanying intensification of efforts to resist commodification’s effects, or a “decommodifying reaction” (p. 36). He identifies as part of this “decommodifying reaction” a rise of a “craft consumer,” or consumers who “bring skill, knowledge, judgment, love and passion to their consuming” (p. 27). Chapter 5, “I Created,” identifies three forms of the labor of making inalienable that appear in relation to an understanding of scrapbooks as a form of craft.

The term inalienable draws from anthropological and sociological work on commodities and consumption (Miller, 1998; Hoskins, 1998; Campbell, 2005). In his ethnographic study of the labor of shopping on a London block, Daniel Miller (1998) identifies the importance of the re-working of purchased goods. This reworking is identified in two forms: first, as “that which translates the object from an alienable to an inalienable condition: that is from being a symbol of estrangement and price value to being an artifact invested with particular inseparable connotations” and secondly in creating objects with individual meanings (or what might also be understood as distinctiveness per Stewart, 1993).

An extension of this notion of inalienable as the investment of an object with distinctive meaning appears in Janet Hoskins’s (1998) work on biographical objects. She describes an inalienable object as a possession or “objects that bear a personal identity.”
Hoskins (1998) argues that a possession (rather than gift) may be a more useful notion to oppose to a commodity (p. 194). As she argues, within modern industrial societies, commodities are converted into possessions by being endowed with personal identity (p. 194). Drawing from Weiner (1992), she describes “inalienability is a characteristic of any object that becomes steeped in biographic significance” such as when we become so attached to an object that they appear irreplaceable.

Hoskins’s focus on possession identifies another impact of commodification, the move to individual ownership. As the labor of making inalienable frequently occurs in reaction to or after commodification, the labor of making inalienable often occurs at the level of the individual. Such individuation, however, also facilitates alienation. Making inalienable, subsequently, often occurs as an individual effort to build an emotional or identity connection, for instance, through a personal, embodied touch or performance.

An example of the ambivalence accompanying the individuation of the labors to make inalienable appears in the third chapter, “I industrialized.” This chapter indicates ways that commodification of the self may be an intimate labor used to increase the reach of mediated intimate performances and to build connection with one’s audience. The move to post-industrial or post-Fordist labor also extends commodification of service skills such as intimate labor. As Kathi Weeks (2011) summarizes, “when more jobs require workers to supply not only manual effort but also emotional skills, affective capacities, and communicative competencies—that is, when more of the self is drawn into labor processes and managed in accordance with the exigencies of profit maximization—the problem of alienation, from both self and others, arguably grows more acute” (p. 89). For instance, content uploaded users to the branded platform YouTube converts such content
into a branded commodity tied into a system of ad dollars and ranking illustrating of what Sarah Banet-Weiser (2012) calls the “ambivalent politics of a brand culture.”

Along with Banet-Weiser (2012), rather than remained concerned with losses to intimacy accompanying commodification, feminist scholars of intimate labor (such as Parreñas and Boris, 2010) assert that it may be more productive to understand the ways that intimacy and intimate labor co-exist with commodification. Co-existence also acknowledges how intimacy and commodification occur together or in relation with one another – a better understanding of this relation opens the space to more critically examine what types of this relationship may be harmful to social reproduction or where commodification and intimacy work to sustain one another. Furthermore, co-existence leaves open space in which intimacy exists outside of commodification.

In her review of Adkins and Dever’s (2016) collection, The Post-Fordist Sexual Contract, titled “Putting the inalienable to work: labor and life in contemporary capitalism,” Kylie Jarrett notes the way that the authors avoid “an unnuanced account of the movement of capital into all areas of life” (Adkins and Dever, 2016, p. 14 cited in Jarrett, 2016, p. 223); instead, they use this movement of capital into life, not as a finding, but as a “basic assumption” (p. 223). The collection includes a section focused on “the role of inalienable within capitalism” including gender performance, self-investment in an entrepreneurial subjectivity, and work regulation through a narrative of self-actualization (p. 224). Similar concerns with performed intimacy, entrepreneurial femininity, and self-work occur throughout my analysis of the labor of those who scrapbook. This identification points to the labor of making inalienable (or trying to) as a critical area of post-Fordist feminine labor. More specifically, for the purposes of this project, “putting the inalienable to work” serves as a concept for understanding the co-existence, the
interrelationship, and the enduring struggle within social reproductive labor between intimacy and commodification.

**Implications**

The dissertation introduces tensions and themes related to the socio-political context for care labor in the contemporary U.S. The dissertation holds implications for those interested in understanding how disruptions in feminized labor and space are negotiated. On the one hand, caregivers use the scrapbook as a tool for both making inalienable and for self-care; on the other, scrapbooks reveal the rapid commodification of social reproduction and craft (moving from retail obscurity to a two-billion-dollar industry) as well as a space for self-work used to increase the monetary value of one’s subjectivity, a process that Kathi Weeks (2011) has referred to as the “colonization of life.” In other words, scrapbooks remain, as Eve Sedgwick aptly described women’s craft, “ kinda hegemonic, kinda subversive” (cited in Cvetkovich, p. 188). One of the greatest challenges to studying this space has been sorting through and reconciling the often conflicting agendas of these struggles.

I have found a notion of “dislocations” and “re-locations” as a helpful way to decipher the hegemonic from subversive moments of the practice. Dislocate and re-locate appeared in the astute observations of travel writer Russell Banks (2016) as he described in a segment on PBS NewsHour that as we travel we are “dislocated, not re-located, we think new thoughts, deal with unbidden strange emotions, reflect on our past in a freshened way with a new perspective.” Travel itself serves as a dislocation as we are “far from home and habit where the rules as much as the landscape were unfamiliar.”

This description of the dislocation of travel resonates with Foucault’s notion of care of the self. Foucault remarks that “rules” are used to determine the “conduct of
conduct” and that the one who conducts is governed by the other he seeks to modulate.” Foucault describes care of the self in terms of an individual’s ability to apply counter-conducts to certain rules in ways that enable a greater recognition of “truth.” Care of the self may be facilitated through a reflection that detaches (or dislocates) from oneself and enables insights into or greater recognition of a “truth” – care of the self occurs to the extent that the “truth” of this recognition changes us (Cohen, 2014).

Dislocation offers the distance and reflection necessary to realize a new truth and to apply counter-conducts. As Banks (2016) reflects, travel may facilitate such reflection as it may provoke a shift in perspective and knowledge (counter-conducts) that broaden one’s understanding of the truth. Re-location, on the other hand, involves application of the same rules in a different location. An example of widespread relocation is colonization as one culture travels to another and relocates their society’s pre-existing rules – gesturing to the ways that re-location remains detached from the environment in often violent ways.

Michel Foucault’s discussion on care of the self offers another critical concept through which to understand the care labor conducted through scrapbooks. Michel Foucault (2003) refers to the Greek notion of epimelesthai sauto or “to take care of yourself.” In this notion, the self to be cared is the soul and you care for the soul through activity; more specifically, care occurs through the activity of getting to know the self/soul by self-examination or divine contemplation in order to “discover rules to serve as a basis for just behavior and political action” (p. 152). Foucault identifies three forms actions of care for the self including a retreat into the self as “active leisure” or as a “meditation and a preparation.” Secondly, he identifies care of the self in the activity of writing in the form of “self-exercise.” Finally, care of the self occurs through a “new experience of self…” [as]
attention was paid to nuances to life, mood, and reading, and the experience of self was intensified and widened by this act of writing. A whole field of experience opened which earlier was absent” (p. 152). Again, this care of the self may be identified by a dislocation that opens up a “whole field of experience.” In Foucault’s own practice of philosophy he describes as “se déprendre de soi,” or what Rabinow and Rose (2003) translate as “to detach oneself from oneself—such a distance enables motion, and in its turn, motion enables a recurrent activity of self-detachment” (p. xxii) that allows for new problematizations. This entwined relation of care of the self and dislocation provide theoretical tools that may help to discern when and where scrapbooks open up potential for care of the self and when they simply work to reinforce pre-existing rules.

**Overview of the Chapters**

Rather than a study of scrapbooks, the dissertation may be better understood as a study of intimacy conducted through a feminized participatory media form, the scrapbook. The dissertation broadly traces relations or connections of distance and closeness as negotiated by feminized care labor. As intimacy depends upon or is “achieved by” connecting, the dissertation examines four different sites of connection (industry, social, material, and personal) that provide a different perspective on the intimate labors of those who scrapbook. Each of the four sites corresponds to the four main chapters in the dissertation. These include 1) the intimate distance of the scrapbook industry (starting at Chapter 3), 2) social intimacy of crop events, 3) craft labors of making inalienable, and 4) self-documentation used for class-based self-improvement.

Three of these four sites were inspired by corresponding “keepsake buttons” earned for completing activities at the Scrapbook Expo starting in 2014. These include 1)
I cropped (attending the crop), 2) I created (completing a craft project at the expo or “make-and-take” project), and 3) I learned (taking a class) (Figure 1 and 2). I added an additional button, “I industrialized,” in order to address forms of subjectivity embedded into the scrapbook industry producing these events. After at least four buttons were collected at the event, they could be redeemed for an “I conquered” button and lanyard. In line with the themes of these buttons, the entire dissertation has been titled “I cared” to highlight the project’s examination of care as a central concern of contemporary feminine subjectivity and labor.

Each chapter addresses intimacy, ranging from the mass scale of the industry to the intensely personal scale of self-documentation. The chapters have been arranged starting with the farthest/largest or most distant scale (the industry) and ending with the closest/smallest or most intimate scale (self-documentation). Starting with the most distant/largest scale seeks to disrupt a notion of intimacy as relegated to the private and domestic and to seek an understanding of intimacy as an industry, social, and a personal concern that involves the work of building closer connections. A look at these different domains of intimacy foregrounds intimacy as a far-reaching concern for our society whether within an industry, a community, or within one’s self. Each chapter also offers a conceptual contribution at the different level/scale of intimacy addressed in that chapter. Chapter 3 addresses the industry as intimate distance; Chapter 4 addresses the practice as a social outlet through a notion of social intimacy; Chapter 5 addresses an embodied intimacy in creating/making through the notion of making inalienable; Chapter 6 addresses intimacy with oneself in a study of the relationship of self-documentation and self-work.
Figure 1: 2014 Scrapbook Expo Keepsake Buttons on Lanyard
Figure 2: Button Keepsake Program from the 2014 Scrapbook Expo
I Industrialized, Intimate Distance

The third chapter identifies the contradictory work of intimate distance, as individuals within the industry utilize tenuous indexical ties, mediated presentations of self, and performed intimacy to maintain a personal connection with customers from a greater distance. As scrapbook industry insider Nancy Nally summarizes, “we don’t want to feel like we are doing business with a company. We want to feel like we are doing business with a person” (Hyman, 2010, Episode 1). Intimate distance appears most vividly in the scrapbook industry in the intimate labors conducted by self-branded celebrity designers.

Intimate distance is defined by indexical connections that sustain a trace of the real. For instance, the indexical connection of a designer’s handwriting within the brand’s logo offers a lingering trace to the designer’s hand. Personal photos shared via social media may also offer an evidentiary or indexical trace as well as allow individuals through strategies of “persona intimacy” (Abidin and Thompson, 2012) through labors of “performed intimacy” (Marwick and boyd, 2012) such as behind-the-scenes access (Marwick and boyd, 2011. These indexical links are particularly necessary to prove a sense of authenticity and even “realness” in a time in which the veracity of representations is increasingly under scrutiny in an age of retouching and fabrication (Andrjevic, 2004). Intimate distance leverages the way “self-documentation promises or at the very least pretends to be able to promise…a glimpse at Real Life” (Kitzmann, 2004, p. 116).

A sense of alienation accompanying the production of one’s subjectivity as object may increase a need for a compensatory intimate and care labor such as emotional work necessary to maintain intimacy and to appear “authentic.” Intimate distance appears at
this intersection of self-objectification and self-work including practices of self-branding. These forms of subjectivity, while they enable mediated connections to be held over a greater distance with a larger audience, also function to create an abstract persona, which may be edited.

Perhaps most importantly, this notion of intimate distance works to raise concern on the ways that certain relations are made intimate, while others (including recognition and visibility of factory labor) remain distant. Subsequently, the juxtaposition of closeness/distance used in the term maintains an order of intimate distance, rather than distant intimacy, to retain the sense that the underlying connection remains one of a distance to be bridged through intimate labors and mediated visibility only allowed to a privileged few.

**I Cropped, Social Intimacy**

“I cropped” focuses on the practice of scrapbooking as a communal social experience. Group gatherings within scrapbooking are called crops, which are similar to sewing circles. Crops are a part of craft’s fabriculture or the residual, collective communal structure for freely sharing crafty ideas and knowledge – “meaning-making, communicative, community building” (Bratich and Brush, 2011, p. 234). Drawing on my participant observations of crops, this chapter points to the importance of making scrapbooks as a social outlet, as a space of social intimacy. Social intimacy describes interpersonal practices of mutual sharing used to generate a sense of camaraderie among a group within a safe space.

This notion of social intimacy grew from a sense of dissatisfaction with applying Lauren Berlant’s (2008) theory on the intimate publics of women’s culture to scrapbook groups. Berlant’s theory of intimate publics grew out of her analysis of feminized mass
media markets (e.g., books, magazines, television, and movies). While intimate publics was theorized in relation to the markets of chick lit, my notion of social intimacy is theorized in relation to participatory media circles and interpersonal contact such as third-wave women’s craft circles, zine communities, mommy blogs, fan groups, or book clubs. What sets social intimacy apart from intimate publics are the ways that members create or (re)create the content for themselves, rather than seeking recognition in already produced texts. When participatory media is made and shared by a group (rather than relying on a private corporate algorithm), these forms of personalized sharing may provide a “safe” space for emotional disclosure that results in actions of mutual support.

“I cropped” highlights two defining components of social intimacy: safe space and mutual social support. As a safe space, the chapter discusses the crop as a “safe” separatist space that enables women’s concerns to be centered. At the same time, safe spaces are also exclusionary spaces and the chapter raises concern with how the concern with safety may limit the potential of the crop for forms of self and mutual care. The chapter, however, points to the disruptive potential of the fun and support of the camaraderie built between members of the group.

**I Created, Making Inalienable**

While intimate distance studied a form of intimacy between industry/consumer and social intimacy between members of a social group, this fifth chapter, “I created” looks at the relationship of intimacy with objects and materiality – focusing on the labor used to transform commodities into intimate possessions or, what I call, making inalienable. “I created,” identifies three forms labor used to counter commodification and increase a sense of connection with the object or making inalienable: a personal touch, pleasure in making, and living in an artistic way.
These three forms of *making inalienable* are part of the labors of making a scrapbook. First, “a personal touch” introduces the scrapbooks’ emphasis on tactile materiality (such as texture and dimensionality) and personal touch (indexical traces of the maker) as a way to heighten affective and sensory engagement. Secondly, “pleasure in the making” points to the enjoyment in “playing with paper and glue” found in an embodied experience of making. The emphasis on “pleasure” identifies a shift in the craft discourse of “joy in labor” from the Arts and Crafts movement’s emphasis on “satisfaction” with working conditions towards a “pleasure” in a sensory-infused experience of making. The final section on “living in an artistic way” identifies a move from craft to art as a move from the embodied process of making to a concern with creativity, originality, and with making the self.

**I Learned: Extensions of Women’s Work**

This six chapter, “I learn,” uses Becky Higgins’s online course, Project Real Life, to identify extensions of women’s work as Higgins uses the course to offer guidance on improved self-management. Underlying the course emphasis on self-work, there are several broader factors in contemporary women’s lives that encourage forms of greater self-work for middle-class women. First of all, a set of contradictory rules or contradictory notions of self may underlie an increased demand to work on the self within a therapeutic culture. Disruption of traditional structures tied to domesticity has created a new worker-subject tasked with “managing the self in conditions of radical uncertainty” (Gill, 2010), p. 249 cited in Duffy and Hund, 2015, p. 3). Secondly, forms of feminized work involving care, service, or sales do not provide the same system for control and supervision as does factory work. Subsequently, as the post-Fordist economy shifts to these forms of work, they demand greater self-identification and self-discipline (Weeks and Curico, 2015;
Hochschild, 1983/2003). Finally, successful or “can-do” (Harris, 2004) femininity and the “very project of making a self that is publicly visible is contained within the new discourses of femininity for young women that link success to image, style, and visible work on oneself” (cited in Banet-Weiser, 2015, p. 489; McRobbie 2000; Harris 2004; Projansky, 2014). These discourses and displays of success are increasingly tied to display of a feminized middle class status.

Drawing from the content of Becky Higgins’s course, Project Real Life, the chapter identifies three areas of expanding feminized class work: new domesticity, relational labor, and self-management. Forms of domesticity depicted in the course reflect blurring notions of work/home, for a particular class of women, and an extension of women’s work (in the home, community, work place, family) to further include work on the self (Ouellette and Wilson, 2011). This draws on a legacy of feminized class labor that situates “home work” as home management, but expands notions of management (such as in efforts to seek balance and simplicity) to encompass self-work for self-improvement. Another area of expanding labor remains efforts to improve relational ties through a “focus on the good.” These efforts of gratitude appear as an individualized effort to overcome difficult circumstances without addressing underlying structural issues of gender and class.

While the course frequently emphasizes improved self-management, the most extensive concern in relation to self-management is improved time management. The focus on time in these women’s daily lives points to the way that the temporality of the everyday remains tied to habit and repetition tied to tradition and ritual that may conflict with the progressive, linear time of capitalism (Felski, 2000). The focus on time management may place blame not on a system that fails to offer sustainable support for
care and intimate labor, but rather places the blame on women’s improper management of time as it conflicts with the temporality of capitalism. As we increasingly document the everyday utilizing digital photography, the relation of everyday forms of documentation with self-work has widespread repercussions for our social and personal well-being.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Three broad areas provide direction, guidance, and context for this dissertation:
1.) feminine labor, 2.) subjectivity, and 3.) participatory media. The literature review
begins by defining feminine labor and disruptions to this labor including blurring
boundaries of home/work, labor/leisure, and waged/unwaged labor tied to both the
feminist movement and labor shifts accompanying neoliberalism. The second section
examines subjectivity as a site of feminine labor within a neoliberal context of therapeutic
culture, lifestyle media, and “entrepreneurial femininity.” The final section discusses
participatory media as they intersect with both feminized media production and craft.
The dissertation project’s focus on care appears in the intersection of these issues of
feminine labor, subjectivity, and participatory media.

SECTION ONE: DISRUPTIONS OF FEMININE LABOR

The Care Deficit in a Culture of Overwork

Scholars have identified conditions of a broader “culture of overwork” (Bunting, 2006) with increases in the amount of overall hours worked by waged workers in the U.S.
since 1979 (Mishel, 2013). The potential for overwork and burnout may also increase
demands for care, referenced in neoliberal/market terms as a “care deficit” (Blair-Loy,
2003, p. 237-239). The privatization and commercialization of care, along with declines
in social and governmental support for care labor under neoliberalism, have also been
linked to a global care deficit (Allison, 2009). This public retreat of social support has also
increased demand and desire for historically private or home-based forms of feminized
support and care such as emotional labor (McNay, 1999, p. 103). Lisa Duggan (2003)
describes this in terms of an increased burden for social welfare on affective life (and
labor). While workers may be increasingly overworked, the recourses for care appear to be declining contributing to an even higher demand for care.

Ongoing sexual division of labor continues to place women’s work (care labors, affective labors, intimate labors, and emotional labors) as women’s responsibility or even problem (Ely et al., 2014). Arlie Hochschild (1983/2003) describes the additional familial/affective labor demands placed on women in dual-income households after the end of their first-shift of waged work as a “second shift.” Too often feminist analysis continues to largely ignore,

the realities of a dual-wage labor market, constituted in part by the racial and gender divisions of labor, the poles of which have continued to move apart since 1963. Add to women’s often grim prospects for wage labor, the challenges of single-parenthood, or the stubbornly persistent gender division of labor in the heterosexual family, and the result is an increasingly strict economy of time, with women putting in longer hours and enjoying less free time than men (Weeks, 2011, p. 151-152; see also Sirianni and Negrey 2000, 62-63).

In reality, “most women in the United States worry less about being able to break through the glass ceiling than they do about falling through a structurally unstable floor” (Weeks, 2011, p. 151).

Social, governmental and other institutional support for care shifted from a public to a private concern. Neoliberal policies have drastically cut or withheld structural support for domestic labor – including cuts to welfare and lack of mandatory maternity/paternity leave. As coverage of maternity/paternity remains addressed under the “Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993,” this designation points to the ongoing consideration of parenthood, particularly of pregnancy and birth – aka motherhood, as only existing within the context of the “family” or as a medical condition – rather than as a normal part of life (Kurtzleben, 2015). Furthermore, the notion of a “male breadwinner”
continues to structure workplace policies regarding parenthood. As Radika Gajjala (2015) describes,

Support for childcare, breastfeeding, and paid leave from work for childbirth, among other things, is still considered on an ‘add and stir’ basis rather than as infrastructural necessities. Organizations behave as if women do not belong in the work place outside of the home. Middle class women have more autonomy over restructuring home architectures to allow for more egalitarian sharing of household work—yet, when the work place outside of the home continues to be structured as if only the male body belongs there, it leave the “choice” of domestic work to women (p. 26).

On top of it all, this system fails to address those whose needs are not met by the wage system or institution of the family – those individuals whose “forms of productivity and intimacy” do not fit within the family or fall into waged categories (Weeks, 2011, p. 143).

**Feminine Labor, Feminine Work, and Women’s Work**

Recognition of the ways labor remains gendered is critical to a feminist project as a “key element of gender inequality lies in the interconnections between the gendered divisions of labor in both the labor market and in domestic work” (McDowell et al., 2005, p. 220). Rather than binaries, a more productive and inclusive theoretical tool may be a broader focus on “divisions of labor,” which provides recognition of multiple divisions beyond class alone as well as potential divisions within class such as occupation and income (Weeks, 2011).

Historically, a series of dichotomies or separate spheres, tied to a gender binary, have ordered the realm of feminine labors: production/reproduction; public/private; work/family (Weeks, 2011). The feminine has traditionally been associated with reproduction, the private, and the family as women have “been consigned to the intimate sphere of the home and family, while men have been allowed more mobility between spheres of politics, economics, civil society, and the intimate sphere” (McLaughlin, 1999).
However, rather than continue to think of feminine labor in terms of a history of “separate spheres” or “hostile worlds” (Zelizer, 2005), mobility, or the ability to access, move between, and/or hold power within different spaces, may offer a more nuanced way to understand these gendered differences (McLaughlin, 1999). A move from separate spheres to mobility may also increase the ability to examine the intersections of these restrictions as they also align with race and class.

Multiple terms have been used to define feminine labor and work forms—often linked to different historical legacies. A few of these terms include feminine labor, feminized work, and women’s work. Feminine labor provides the broadest and most inclusive theoretical category as the focus on gender (femininity) rather than sex (women) gestures to the social construction femininity in relation to labor and how these labor forms may be also conducted by other genders/sexes. While feminine labor and feminine work are easily interchanged, work has been more closely utilized within a history of waged labor (tied to a historical home/work dichotomy). Vicki Mayer (2015) offers three criteria that define “feminized work:” 1.) work associated with domestic duties inherent in housework and childcare 2.) affective performances of caring, serving, and assisting for others—“emotional labor” (Hochschild, 1983/2003) and 3.) devaluing of work by wages or career advancement.

Feminine work and women’s work are also frequently interchanged, but women’s work (the more historical term) emphasizes the enduring sexual division of labor and in this way refers to women’s unwaged labor including their social, reproductive work which is differentiated from the waged labor of the industrial workplace (Jarrett, 2014, p. 15; Duffy 2005, p. 6). Industrial capitalism has been attributed with an increased social separation between waged and unwaged labor, between work and home (Ritzer and
Jurgenson, 2010). Over time an understanding of “work” was aligned with waged occupations outside the home excluding feminized domestic labor (Folbre, 1991). The institutionalization of this shift can be seen as women who primarily take care of their families go from being considered in 1800 as productive workers to being relegated to the census category of “dependent” by 1900 (Folbre, 1991, p. 464). Women’s work designates work that is both free (unpaid) labor, and also “freely given” (Terranova, 2000; Andrejevic, 2009 cited in Jarrett, 2014, p. 18).

Feminist scholarship has been at the forefront of correctives to labor theory that renders invisible or unimportant the work of women and other unwaged or undervalued workers (see Weeks, 2011 for summary). Increasing the mobility of minority groups across these divides as well as recognition and visibility for minority or marginalized standpoints has arguably been a central concern of the feminist project. Feminist scholarship has sought recognition of unwaged women’s labor by expanding notions of “work” beyond waged forms. Feminist theorists have worked to expand notions of productive labor to be inclusive of reproductive work including affective and service labors (Weeks, 2007, p. 233; Jarrett, 2014, p. 15).

One of the ways feminists expanded notions of work was by inserting a notion of “social reproduction” discussed in the introduction. Social reproduction offered an ability to trace how social reproductive work enables capitalist wage work through the “indirect but necessary relationship of domestic labor to circuits of commodified labor exchange” (Fortunati, 1981/1995). In a similar way, the wages for housework movement during second wave feminism drew attention to the potential waged value of invisible unwaged domestic work and the indirect value such labor adds to the economy (Weeks 2011).
However, these efforts continue to privilege waged labor and enfold reproductive labor into the terms of wage labor.

**Feminine Labor Shifts**

This section describes several of the disruptions to space, labor, and care accompanying a transition to post-Fordist production, which have uniquely impacted feminine labor (Gill and Pratt, 2008; Weeks, 2007). Reconfigurations of these traditional dichotomies used to define and order feminized labor has accompanied shifts in modes of production since the 1970s as well as with gains in the mobility of women’s labor accompanying the feminist movement. The inclusion and exclusion of women’s labor has historically been used to signal transitions in the economy or modes of production (Gajjala, 2013, p. 31). This section discusses labor changes that have disrupted binaries historically used to structure feminine labor.

In particular, Adkins and Jokinen (2008) identify four broad shifts over time in the relation of home, labor and affect including: 1.) constitution of a public-private division (separate spheres); 2.) growth of dual-earner family as socio-political and economic ideal; 3.) a cultural reversal of work and home where work becomes a source of self-expression and satisfaction and home a place of never-ending demands; and 4) the blurring of the border of home and work or the disassembly of the division of home/work as an organizing function within people’s lives.

Adkins and Jokinen’s first two shifts, formation of the public-private division and an ideal of woman joining the workforce/waged labor, are tied to the third shift they identify wherein work, not home, becomes a source of self-expression and satisfaction. The appearance of, Adkins and Jokinen (2008) second and third shift, referring to a shifting ideal of women joining the workforce/waged labor, could be observed in Betty
Friedan’s 1963 book, *The Feminine Mystique*, which set up the workplace as a haven from the cruelties of compulsory domesticity. Friedan’s “celebration of waged work as a means to social status and self-development and as a haven from cultural assumptions about feminine domesticity continue to inform feminist analytical frames” (Weeks, 2011, p. 152).

Friedan called attention to the ways compulsory domesticity created a “problem with no name” including a sense “of failure, of nothingness, of lack of completion” (p. 6).

Friedan’s work highlights an opposition between domesticity and feminism that centered feminism on the lives and concerns of white, middle class women who could afford to stay home in the first place (Gillis and Hollows, 2009). The book has also been criticized for devaluing care work at the very moment it becomes commoditized and handed-over to the more vulnerable members of society (Boris, 2015).

For Friedan, a woman affirms her modernity by working both inside and outside the home – and also by “making a new life plan of her own.” As she described,

> a woman is handicapped by her sex, and handicaps society, either by slavishly copying the pattern of man’s advance in the professions, or by refusing to compete with man at all. But with the vision to make a new life plan of her own, she can fulfill a commitment to profession and politics, and to marriage and motherhood with equal seriousness (p. 453).

The solution to the challenges facing a woman’s changing subjectivity as she enters the workplace was “the vision to make a new life plan of her own.” Yet, this solution (which sounds like a form of self-help) takes the focus away a patriarchal work structure and onto the shoulders of the woman herself.

The blurring of home/work that characterize Adkins and Jokinen’s fourth shift appears tied to the transition from Fordist to post-Fordist production. Fordist production was modeled on paid labor and material production but, with post-Fordism, productivity has become increasingly informational and communicative (referred to as informational
capitalism and cognitive capitalism). The move to informational or cognitive capitalism shifts the sources of surplus value for capital. In post-Fordism, the informational, communicative and cultural content of commodities has grown thus contributing to an expansion in the value generated from “affect, communication, cognition, and the immaterial actions of workers and consumers” (Jarrett 2014, p. 16).

With the shift in production, capitalism has revised its orientation to value creation – shifting from a use/exchange scheme to a recognition of value that does not reside in abstracted units of labor time, but increasingly “in sets of vital relations” (Adkins and Jokinen, 2009). This revised orientation to value disrupts the notion of a sphere of productivity supported and mediated by a sphere of reproduction (Adkins and Jokinen, 2008). Instead, these “vital relations,” the work of reproductive labor, become an increasingly important product or source of a product’s value. Feminized immaterial labor has gained prominence as a way to add value to commodities through social relations, shared meanings, or a sense of belonging. Tiziana Terranova (2000) describes the way that the “process of valorization,” or the production of monetary value, foregrounds immaterial labor that “literally animates the commodity” (p. 48). Fortunati (1981/1995) asserts that non-material production is the part of reproduction that is most in crisis because it is the “least controllable by capital” (p. 75). These social reproductive labors “may produce alternative dispositions, orientations, and social relations” that may transform the nature of capital accumulation (Jarrett, 2014).

In this context of value creation, labor forms historically aligned with reproductive labor become a critical means to increase value in post-Fordist production. Subsequently, reproductive labor forms (including affect, care, and performative labors), have expanded throughout the economy. In this way, assumptions of an essential division between realms
of affect and economics – a frame referred to as “hostile worlds” (Zelizer, 2005) are disrupted and there is an increased recognition of the role of affect and emotion in the economy, as asserted in the notion of “emotional capitalism” (Illouz, 2007). However, enduring assumptions of “hostile worlds” still contribute to “economic discrimination against these allegedly intangible care activities” (Zelizer, 2005, p. 301). The persistence of the racialized gendering of production/reproduction along lines of wage/unwaged also replicates a patriarchal system in which feminized labor continue to be excluded from the parameters of dominant institutions and living wages. An example of such devaluation from the scrapbook industry can be seen as the labor of feminized hobbyists who only receive the higher status of designer once their work is commoditized and sold for profit.

**Shifting Values of Home/Work**

The blurring of the dichotomy of home/work as well as public/private has shifted the boundaries of scrapbooks. With post-Fordist production, the spatial boundary between home and work, the foundation of our notions of domesticity, has waned (Matsuda, 2010). The dissipation in boundaries between home/work has also accompanied by an increased privatization and commercialization of the marketplace and social life (Allison, 2009, p. 99; Hochschild, 1995), including the commodification of traditional domestic labors, such as care.

Kathi Weeks (2007) points to the way that “commodities continue to replace domestically produced goods and services and many forms of caring and household labor are transformed into feminized, racialized, and globalized forms of waged labor in the service sector” (p. 238). These “feminized, racialized, and globalized forms of waged labor” work as a way to continue the privileged position of white, middle-class women in relation to a racial, globalized labor force. The invisible face of the factory workers, not
designers, during the production of most components of branded, mass-produced scrapbook products (such as ribbons, albums, paper, glue, stickers, etc.) will be addressed in the chapter on industry.

With the blurring of the binary of home/work in post-Fordism, there has been a curious embrace of “hyperdomesticity, self-care, and the well-lived life,” often labeled “new domesticity” (Campbell, 2001; Railla, 2004; Hollows, 2006; Negra, 2008, p. 117-8; Gillis and Hollows, 2009; Groeneveld, 2010; Matchar, 2013). Diane Negra (2008) asserts that this “intense domesticity…is not a historic or economic coincidence. Rather, it appears as a manifestation of anxieties about atomization and dislocation at a time when social connections are thin on the ground” (p. 134). New domesticity holds a wide appeal from third-wave “craftivism,” a combination of craft and activism, to the mediated consumer industry targeted to middle-class white women (Martha Stewart, HGTV, Food Network, and more).

New domesticity may be used as a way to negotiate blurred boundaries of home/work binary in women’s lives as well as indicative of another extension of women’s domestic labor into more time-consuming forms such as “handmade” and “from scratch.” These labors of “new domesticity,” a category to which scrapbooks belong, are also used as reproductive labor used to “make a house a home,” working to combat “atomization and dislocation” and to strengthen personal/familial relations. The reproductive labor (most often conducted by mothers) of domestic care labor may also be part of the labor of reproducing “social hierarchy and the class inequalities that underpin it” (Reay, 2005, cited in Jarrett, 2014, p. 22).

As new domesticity stakes to reclaim or return to a domestic ideal, new domesticity pushes back against an understanding of home as a site of “never-ending”
demands and seeks to return the home to a source of one’s values, self-expression, and satisfactory work. It is a turn away from Adkins and Jokinen’s third shift in which work, not home, becomes a source of self-expression and value. The growing embrace of domestic labor as entrepreneurial business indicates an expansion and increased valuation of such affective “home work” (such as craft work) in which creative women laborers aspire to make a living and way of life (Lewis, 2008; Raisborough, 2011; Luckman, 2015). New domesticity may be understood less as a retreat or return into the home and more as an expansion of home values into the public – reflective of the blurring of work/home identified in Adkins and Jokinen’s fourth shift (Luckman, 2015).

As a feminized media form associated enduring traditions of kin work, identity, and craft, scrapbooks offer a productive site to study transitions in gendered labor and subjectivity. As they offer the ability to “re-locate” experience into a miniature form that may be framed and edited (Banks, 2016), scrapbooks can work to mitigate or navigate these transitions. Penny Tinkler (2010) identifies scrapbooks as a site of stability in women’s lives in times of social and personal transition (p. 276, 279). She argues that twentieth-century scrapbook albums created by young women allowed them to “claim a history and an identity at a time of change and uncertainty” (p. 277). With the blurring of home/work and commodification of women’s work in the lives of modern women, scrapbooks may offer a respite, a place of retreat that allows them to reassert a sense of self and mutual care at a time of care deficit.

**The Feminization of Labor and Critique**

Theories of a widespread “feminization of labor” have been invoked in order to explain some of the shifts to the structure of work and the economy (Adkins, 2001; 2003; 2005; Adkins and Jokinen, 2009). The use of “feminization of labor” appears most
frequently in relation to three historical shifts (Adkins and Jokinen 2008; 2009): 1.) growth of the presence of women in the labor force 2.) growing precarity and flexibility demanded of workers 3.) growth of “feminine skills” aligned with performativity that are utilized as a resource/site of value in many areas of work outside the private or domestic sphere.

Precarity refers to contingent, tenuous, insecure and often uncontracted and/or impermanent working conditions that demand flexibility. Feminine labor and precarious labor overlap with a lack of socio-political ownership of labor and other forms of property in the person (Adkins and Jokinen, 2009, p. 142). As Mornin (2007) asserts,

> in cognitive capitalism precariousness, mobility and fragmentation become constituent elements of the work of all persons irrespective of gender. The model advanced is pliable, hyper-flexible and in this sense it draws from the baggage of female experience (p. 41, emphasis in original cited in Jarrett, 2014, p. 15).

Another way precarity appears is in the reorganization of labor and value around unpaid, voluntary, and/or communicative/affective practices previously aligned with women’s work (Jarrett, 2014). Such forms of unpaid, voluntary labor, for instance, appear in the notion of “free labor” in the digital economy identified by Tiziana Terranova (2000). As several feminists have pointed out, it seems as though “these forms of unpaid, precarious, and immaterial forms of labor were only ‘invented’ when they moved out of the kitchen and onto the internet” (Jarrett, 2014, p. 15). Laurel Ptak’s (2014) “Wages for Facebook” movement, for instance, overlaps with the Wages for Housework movement, when Ptak noticed that if you substituted Facebook for home that 80% of the original text remained valid (also cited in Jarrett, 2014).

Another strand of “feminization of labor” appears in the feminization of types of work or work skills. The move to post-industrial or post-Fordist labor involves increased
commodification of service skills including putting one’s own personality or subjectivity to work “in jobs that are less about manipulating things and more about handling people and symbols.” Adkins (2001) describes this in terms of a greater aestheticization, or “culturalization,” of economic life, which involves a stylization of work, workplace identities, production processes, and products (p. 669 citing Lash and Urry, 1994; du Gay, 1996; Bauman, 1998). Historically feminine labor skills are necessary for labor that is more aesthetic as well as more immaterial, service-oriented, emotional, and performative (Hochschild, 1983; Baym, 2015, p. 15; Adkins and Lury, 1999). Hochschild in her identification of the “emotional labor” of service work, including making proper facial expressions such as a smile regardless of one’s own mood, made clear the skill in effort involved in such work. Such feminized labor skills are in greater demand as “much contemporary work activity is about producing pleasant, comfortable or exciting feelings in others” (Baym, 2015; Adkins and Jokinen, 2009; Hardt, 1999). Furthermore, these skills, such as relational labor, are increasingly demanded of all waged workers, not only women (Baym, 2015, p. 18). These feminized labor skills appear to be “naturalized” for women – which contributes to a lack of recognition and flexibility for women workers attached to these skills (Adkins and Lury, 1999).

She uses Mills (1951) to trace the emergence of a “personality market” in which “personal or even intimate traits of the employee are drawn into the sphere of exchange” (p. 183 cited in Weeks, 2007, p. 239). Mills describes the way capitalism works to enlarge the market through the selling of new social spaces and relationships (such as commodification of the laboring subject) that seems similar to my notion of intimate distance, in ways that feel both “more impersonal and more intimate” (p. 161). Then, Weeks (2007) turns to Arlie Hochschild’s (1983) theory of “emotional labor” in order to
understand the skill and labor involved in service work necessary for providing the “right” response, mood, or feeling. The commodification of social relations and self traced by Weeks in Mills and Hochschild has only continued to grow such as the common practice of self-branding used to produce, circulate, and sell the self as a “detachable, saleable image or narrative” (Hearn, 2008, p. 198). Weeks (2007) describes this as a move from a “critique of exploitation to a problem of alienation” (Weeks, 2007, p. 238).

A sense of alienation accompanying the production of one’s subjectivity as a brand may increase a need for a compensatory intimate and care labor such as emotional work necessary to appear “authentic.” Forms of self-commodification appear to be frequently entwined with intimate labor, such as the use of “intimate personas” (Abidin and Thompson, 2012) or “performed intimacy” (Marwick and boyd, 2011) such as selective “backstage” disclosures used by micro-celebrities in their efforts to market themselves and build connections with their followers/customers. The contradiction of the distance created by the commodification of one’s self combined with increased intimate labors is addressed in the notion of intimate distance that I propose in Chapter 3.

For Hochschild, emotional work involves too much, not too little of the self, indicative of what Weeks (2007) identifies as “the colonization of life by work” (p. 242). However, for Weeks (2011) confining a critique of capitalism to exploitation and alienation of work is not enough. She argues that the “problem with work cannot be reduced to the extraction of surplus value and the degradation of skill, but extends to the ways that work dominates our lives.” Subsequently, she urges for an attenuation to the overvaluation of work within capitalism (p. 13). Along these lines, she insists that the “affirmation of unalienated labor is not an adequate strategy” to fight capitalism as it may
be “too readily co-opted in a context in which the metaphysics of labor and the moralization of work carry so much cultural authority” (p. 107).

As a frame for understanding contemporary labor practices, the label “feminized labor” incurs a number of pitfalls. “Feminine” as a term itself remains vague, essentialist, and tied to critical elisions. The feminine remains problematic with regard to race and class – as the term frequently focuses solely on the situation of white middle class women (Haraway, 1991). One of the strongest critics of feminization of labor appears in the work of Adkins and Jokinen (2008). They argue that the label of “feminization” hinders recognition of the ways that gender itself is shifting.

A focus on the notion of “feminization of labor” glosses over broader shifts in orientation to gender and potentially oversimplifies the four broader shifts of gender, class and affect, identified by Adkins and Jokinen (2008, p. 142). Adkins and Jokinen understand gender as more than a structural constraint or difference. Instead, gender may also be understood as an act or performance, and, as such, as part of what is produced. While they recognize increased work demands for feminine skills and performances, such as hostessing, such as affective and communicative relations usually associated with the sphere of intimacy, these trends should not “straightforwardly be understood as a feminization of work and of workers” (p. 142). While a notion of “feminization of labor” may appear to be an undoing (or convergence) of gender binaries in relation to the economic, this label of difference may serve to may invisible the way our notion of genders are changing. As a label, the feminization of labor, fails to recognize or register gender as a process or as a set of performative actions not limited to feminized labor.
In addition to the critique of feminization of labor, there has also been both a critique and an embrace of work on immaterial, affective labor. Criticism has focused on ways greater attention to affect may be accompanied by a lack of “attention to gender and a failure to recognize the continuing significance of highly material forms of exploitation and oppression” (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2008; Bolton (2009). In her feminist critique of precarious labor, Federici (2008) argues the label affective labor “strips feminist analysis of the function of the sexual division of labor, the function of gender hierarchies, the analysis of the way capitalism has used the wage to mobilize women’s work in the reproduction of the labor-force” that limits commonality to higher class interests. Furthermore, as I will address in later chapters, the move away from material care labor to affective care labor may also be critically raced and classed. This set of scholarship asserts there may be

tragic consequences of thinking about emotion work as affective labour and in terms of immaterial labor. This is because, fundamentally, it overlooks the ways emotion work is hard and productive work that is often unrewarded and recognized because of its association with the domestic sphere (Bolton, 2009, p. 72).

In a similar way, online/immaterial/affective labor has also been critiqued for disregarding other forms of “reproductive work” including the maintenance of social relationships (Huws, 2014). Yet, such forms of “kin work” and “reproductive work,” used to maintain social relations, remain a critical component of online and offline social media such as Facebook and scrapbooks (Portwood-Stacer, 2014).

The roots of the erasure underlying this critique can be seen in Hardt’s (1999) definition of affective labor, which he notes, “designated traditionally women’s work” with terms such as “kin work and caring labor.” He asserts that this labor is “immaterial, even if it is corporeal and affective, in the sense that its products are intangible: a feeling
of ease, well-being, satisfaction, excitement, passion – even a sense of connectedness or community.” He even emphasizes how the shift to affective labor has been “generalized through wide sectors of the economy” (Hardt, 1999, p. 97). By shifting focus from women’s work to affect, however, Hardt (1999) shifts focus away from the corporeal and somatic labor (and laborer) to the (immaterial) affects it produces (p. 96).

At the same time, affect has been a productive theoretical tool for feminists. First of all, affect has a strong association with feminist theory in the ways it “signifies potential: ‘a body’s capacity to affect and be affected’” ( Gregg and Seigworth, 2010, p. 2). Affect may be understood as a material intensity that emerges via the in-between spaces and potential to “become otherwise” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994). Feminists’ embrace the ability of affect, as a material intensity, to bring attention “to the substance and significance of matter, materiality and the body.” For instance, Patricia Clough et. al. (2007) assert that theories of affect and “the deployment of affective capacity” are valuable “to grasp the changes that constitute the social and to explore them as changes in ourselves, circulating through our bodies, our subjectivities, yet irreducible to the individual, the personal and the psychological” (p. 3).

Herein lies another advantage of affect for feminists, as affect avoids a focus on identity politics, while still enabling recognition of the impact of the personal on the social and the political. Elizabeth Grosz (2005) asserts affect introduces a “politics of imperceptibility, leaving its traces and effects everywhere but never being able to be identified with a person, group or organization (p. 194) that allows feminists to “develop a politics of acts, not identities” (p. 186).

Affect, furthermore, enables a re-privileging of ontology productive for a study of subjectivity formation and for feminist projects focused on the potential for new
subjectivities. Examples of such use of affect theory appear in Lauren Berlant’s (2011) work on “cruel optimism,” Ann Cvetkovich’s (2012) work on craft, and Sara Ahmed’s (2010) work on happiness. A focus on affect (prior to its potential qualification into an emotion) enables Ahmed to imagine that “when happiness is not automatically presumed to be a good thing” or “what we should aim for,” it becomes possible to conceive of happiness as “a possibility among others.” Ann Cvetkovich (2012) uses affect to imagine new potentials as she describes the power of affective embodiment in craftwork to provide transformative potential away from the abstraction and isolation of the depressive to offer a connection “to the body, to a meaningful sense of work, to relations with others” (p. 193). Craft offers a form of “body politics where agency takes a different form than application of the will. It fosters ways of being in the world in which the body moves the mind rather than the other way around” (p. 168). This offers a sense of being more “in the body” and less in the head (p. 169). Yet, such a focus on ontology has also been critiqued, and Hemmings (2005) argues that in the “affective dissonance,” or gap between the ontological and the epistemological, the transformative spark of affective politics might be ignited (cited in Pedwell and Whitehead, 2012, p. 120).

While this section covers feminist work on affect as a site of resistance or potential, most importantly the study of affect enables feminists to assert the ways that “the work of oppression is often carried out at an affective level” (Pedwell and Whitehead, 2012, p. 120). Significant concern, for instance, remains regarding the ability of affect theory to properly address and pay attention to structural causes of suffering (Pedwell and Whitehead, 2012; Berlant, 2000). Sara Ahmed (2010) offers a theoretical bridge between affect structural concerns by calling attention to the “structure of feelings” (Williams, 1977) and feelings of structure – and, ultimately, to the ways “feelings might be how
structures get under our skin” (p. 216). This appears to echo the work of Lauren Berlant (2011) on “cruel optimism” in which an optimistic attachment to something becomes cruel as the object that lends optimism becomes that which may impede or impair social change, or the transformation necessary to improve one’s social conditions.

This overview of feminine labor has identified a number of disruptions to feminine labor. These disruptions appear in a rethinking of the fallacy of separate spheres including boundaries of public/private, home/work and (re)/productive labor (what Adkins and Jokinen (2008) describe as the “fourth shift”). Within post-Fordist service and informational labor, what offers the commodity value shifts to more feminized forms of service and immaterial labor. As workers appear even more overburdened and in need of care, this shift in the value of care labor works furthers demands for feminized care labors even as they remain devalued through an enduring association with the domestic sphere.

This review has also pointed to losses and shifts in traditional structures and structural support for care labor. The loss of traditional structures, including religion and family (Lears, 1981; Gross, 2005), may also increase demand for development of one’s own life plan and other forms of self-work – particularly for women workers tasked with this care labor indicative of an enduring sexual division of labor. Contemporary feminist theory argues that the disruption of traditional structures tied to domesticity has created a new worker-subject tasked with “managing the self in conditions of radical uncertainty” (Gill, 2010, p. 249 cited in Duffy and Hund, 2015, p. 3). The development of this “new worker-subject” leads into the next section on subjectivity.
SECTION TWO: SUBJECTIVITY AND SELF-WORK

These shifts in feminine labor impact the labor of self-making or subjectivity. This section traces the way that conflicting notions of the self converge within neoliberalism; such ways include possessive/expressive individualism and femininity/masculine entrepreneurialism or “enterprising femininity” (Gray, 2003, p. 492-493) as well as “mumpreneurs” (Ekinsmyth, 2011; Luckman, 2015). The contradiction between these forms or notions of self may even underlie increased demands for self-work within a therapeutic culture. Before tracing the roots of this contradictory subjectivity, this section introduces theory on neoliberal governmentality and therapeutic culture, which provide a framework for understanding intensifications of feminized work on the self.

Neoliberal Governmentality

At a general level, liberalism is “commonly understood as a political doctrine or ideology concerned with the maximization of individual liberty and, in particular, with the defense of that liberty against the State” (Rose, 1999, p. 62). Liberalism builds a discourse that limits “political” authority from interfering with the liberty of “private” domains such as the market and the citizen. This discursive division creates the necessity for the government to maintain an appearance of distance in its mode of operation (Rose, 1999, p. 49). Strategies of governing autonomous individuals through their “freedom” function as a form of “advanced liberal” governance (Rose, 1999, p. 52). Within an advanced liberal democratic society, individuals are responsible for their own life management and the achievement of a “healthy self” is tied to the ability of the self to be “governable, predictable, calculable, classifiable, self-conscious, responsible, self-regulating and self-determined.” The desired self, or the self most easily
governed/managed, is one who seeks both “self-improvement and autonomy” (Rose, 1999, p. 52).

Two divergent, even contradictory notions of the self, expressivist and possessive, continue to define the self within a neoliberal, therapeutic promotional culture (Pooley, 2010, p. 78). These two understandings of the self are the microeconomic core of the free market and neoliberalism. An “expressivist” self emerged within a Romantic philosophical tradition driven to find an interior, “authentic” self. In expressivism, the self is hidden or inside, but is made manifest through articulation in self-expression (Pooley, 2010, p. 76; Taylor, 1989). On the other hand, the possessive individual emerged in philosophical tradition from Hobbes to Locke, which places the burden for success and self-mastery entirely on the individual, rather than society. Unlike the interiority of the expressive self, the possessive individual views interiority from an external standpoint, creating a “dual self” to be managed and owned (Skeggs, 2004, p. 120). In order to be managed, the possessive individual must first become known through expression.

The autonomy sought by the possessive individual may be elusive for feminine subjects, notably mothers, whose idealized subjectivity includes an enduring ideology of “good motherhood” entwined with a rise in forms of “intensive mothering” (White, 2015) that work to encourage selflessness and care for others. The idealized selfless “good mother” may conflict with demands for autonomy and individual achievement. These pressures are amplified with rising expectations for women to be both providers and caretakers in relation to the crisis of the nuclear family and demands for feminine laborers codified in welfare reform legislation (Ouellette and Wilson, 2011, p. 550). These tensions are also frequently blamed on the social changes following second-wave feminism of the 1960s and 1970s; yet, such tensions did not arise with feminism, but
gained greater expression through feminism. For instance, Joanne Meyerowitz (1993) found in women’s magazines between 1946 and 1958 “domestic ideals coexisted in ongoing tension with an ethos of individual achievement that celebrated nondomestic activity, individual striving, public service, and public success” (also cited in Lewis, 2008, p. 10-11).

The legacy of the merger of the two traditions of self as expressivist and possessive means that in the context of neoliberalism, “we are asked to find ourselves but at the same time to work on ourselves, “and this “injunction to explore and realize one’s true self is hopelessly mixed up with the demand to treat oneself as an object” (Pooley, 2010, p. 78). Thus, the self is first to be known and accessed before it can be successfully managed or “improved” (Latour, 1986, p. 6 cited in Rimke, p. 68). Self-knowledge emerges as the foundation of the ability to “maximize” the self and to “care for the self.” Furthermore, as these two selves are in tension, this may demand additional negotiations of the self that often take on the form of therapeutic self-work rather than politics. This therapeutic self-work is arguably situated as part of a postfeminist era in which the “freedom” of women to define themselves and their lives is understood as “taken-for-granted” despite the protestations of feminists on enduring sexism and gender inequalities. Within a neoliberal postfeminist era, women are called “to work on and transform the self, to regulate every aspect of their conduct, and to present all their actions as freely chosen” (p. 6). As Diane Negra (2008) points out a “postfeminist affective program must be devoted to rigid self-control. [There is the] need to care for others and to maintain a kind of personal tranquility (p. 140).

Rather than maintaining an understanding expressivist selfhood and possessive individualism as contradictory, Banet-Weiser (2012) asserts a more productive approach
and looks at the ways that both notions mutually shape one another. The “enterprise self” reveals a mix of possessive individualism, rational self-interest (from masculine culture), and an expressivist selfhood (concerned with symbolic performance of identity and management of private concerns) (Lewis, 2008). Possessive and expressivist notions of self blur in current conceptions of “creative autonomy” as well as “cultural entrepreneurship” and “cultural entrepreneur” that combine creativity and commerce by encompassing both “artistic production and self-promotion” (Aronczyk & Powers, 2010, p. 15). Even those not defined as cultural entrepreneurs are called to promote themselves through “calculated authenticity,” a notion built through the mutual shaping of an expressivist and possessive self-understanding (Pooley, 2010). These notions combine in this instance as an expressivist self’s concern with “true selfhood” or authenticity is expressed externally as an object, which may become a possessive self, to be managed or calculated to best effect.

A similar merger appears in the notion of an “enterprising femininity,” which is “a subjectivity formed through the characteristics of flexibility, valuable skills, informal knowledges, and modes of self-fashioning rooted in the consumer marketplace” (Gray, 2003, p. 492-493 cited in Duffy and Hund, 2015, p. 2). In enterprising femininity, the self is defined in the merger of “heteronormative femininity with discourses and practices of masculine entrepreneurialism” (Lewis, 2008; Duffy and Hund, 2015). With the extension of capital into social life, entrepreneurial subjectivities are increasingly a part of everyday domestic and home life (Allon, 2014 cited in Luckman, 2015). One example of this is the emergence of a notion of the “mumpreneur,” a set of entrepreneurial mothers whose self-employment remains home-based (Luckman, 2015). Mumpreneurs evoke consideration for alternate models of entrepreneurship and reveal the ways existing notions of the
entrepreneur are “premised on a particular heroic masculine norm.” Their “self-defined rationales and drivers originate predominantly or significantly from the real of “reproduction” rather than “production” (Ekinsmyth, 2011, p. 104). While mumpreneurship creatively merges the space of motherhood and business to change the ways business is done, these changes to business also enable gender to “not be done differently” (Ekinsmyth, 2012, p. 541; Luckman 2015).

**Therapeutic Culture**

Therapeutic culture serves as another set of critical theories (or cultural contexts) for feminine subjectivity. The therapeutic ethos is defined as the use of a set of political and cultural discourses adopted from psychotherapeutic language (Cloud, 1998, p. xvi). The therapeutic places health and self-realization at the center of a narrative of self. More specifically, therapeutic narratives foreground negative emotions including shame, guilt, fear and inadequacy as critical sites for therapeutic intervention tied to a promise of self-improvement (Illouz, 2007). While the self-help as a market that is “rampantly middle class, white and female, the medicalization and psychologization of human problems infuses our culture more broadly” (Becker, 2005, p. 154). As Todd Gitlin (1987) astutely notes in reference to the therapeutic, “however you defined the problem, your task was to ‘work on yourself’” (p. 424-25).

Therapeutic functions have also been defined as a key “disciplinary” practice constitutive of the modern self (Rose, 1999; Cloud, 1998). The self is defined as pathological to the extent that it differs from the “normative.” In such a way, the therapeutic serves as a disciplinary labor used to align the self with normative ideals. As Rogers theory of self-actualization gained ground, those who had “un-realized lives were now in need of care and therapy” (Illouz, 2007, p. 44-46). Therapeutic culture’s focus on
the self and self-improvement further aligns with the self-governance of the ideal neoliberal subject. In fact, even “normal” individuals are tasked with therapeutic self-work in order to “optimize” or “improve” – and there always appears to be room for improvement.

The therapeutic has gained additional momentum through the “spirit of self-fulfillment” (Rieff, 1966) promised by the advertising and promotion of consumer goods. As forces of the therapeutic and promotional converge, they further encourage a focus on the self as the site of positive change and transformation, rather than on broader social or political structures (Dubrofsky, 2007). The self-work demanded by the therapeutic also functions as a crucial part of “the commercialized and commodified project of the self” (Skeggs, 2012, p. 12).

The expansion of the educated middle class in the postwar U.S. worked to disrupt traditional hierarchies and status categories contributing to a “loosening” of fixed identities (Binkley, 2007; Ouellette, 2016, p. 59; Lears, 1981). As Neil Gross (2005) has argued, this process of “detraditionalization” should be tempered not as a “radical” change but as a shift as “certain regulative traditions decline” and other “meaning constitutive” frameworks for tradition endure. Therapeutic culture arose based on an understanding of self-improvement through psychotherapeutic language, including self-help expertise, which grew in relation to rapid changes in social traditions (Lears, 1981). As the modern self experiences the sense of a loss in community tradition and shared meaning, consumerism and the therapeutic step-in as a yearning “to buy things and for professional advice to take the place of what has been lost” (Cushman, 1990, p. 600).

Through associations with the self, personal and private, the therapeutic has become aligned with the feminine and tasks of feminine labor. Therapeutic discourses,
insofar as they are personalizing, domesticating and consumer-centered, are often coded as feminine discourses, and women are ascribed particular agency in implementing therapeutic solutions to crises (Cloud, 1998, p. 5-6). As the burden for much of this private caring often falls on women, the therapeutic has become gendered feminine (Wood, 1993 cited in Cloud, 1998, p. 5-6). The therapeutic emerged as a site for women to “balance general opportunities as a person and the disproportionate responsibilities for childrearing and emotional and domestic labor that society demands” (Becker, 2005, p. 12). One of the “major political and cultural formations” to adopt the therapeutic as a site of emancipation was feminism (Illouz, 1997, p. 58).

A therapeutic approach may appeal to middle-class intellectual elites as it “demands not activism but transformation and not collective work but individual consumerism” (Cloud, 1998, p. 132). Historically the middle and upper classes have been the “group most fluent in the vernacular of the therapeutic” (Becker, 2005, p. 5). Becker traces the way that the Victorian notion of middle-class women as the moral center of the family “transmuted overtime into a reification of middle-class white women’s preoccupation with matters psychological” (Becker, 2005, p. 77). According to Becker (2005) history has shown us how “middle-class women’s informal domestic involvement in the psychological has been constant, necessitated by her social role, consistent with the creation of her subjectivity, and fed by consumerism” (p. 186).

**The Project of Lifestyle**

Anthony Giddens argues that the loss of tradition or authority to define the self means that our “selves” are reflexively made and that our lives have themselves become a project to be planned. The reflexive project of the self (Giddens, 1991) may also be understood as a “project of lifestyle” (Ouellette, 2016, p. 4). The term “lifestyle” has also
been used to denote a fragmentation of the mass market and the growth of consumer
 niches based on demographics and psychographics (values, attitudes, interests, beliefs,
 behaviors) used to define these targeted consumer groups (Ouellette, 2016, p. 4). In such
 ways, rather than “unreflexively adopting a lifestyle, through tradition or habit, the new
 heroes of consumer culture make lifestyle a life project and display their individuality and
 sense of style in the particularity of the assemblage of goods, clothes, practices,
 experiences, appearance and bodily dispositions they design together into a lifestyle”

Rather than relying upon traditional authorities, advice and guidance could be
 found through media such as self-help literature/shows and lifestyle experts (Lewis, 2008).
 In a study of self-help advice, Rimke (2000) notes that knowing the self entails a form of
 self-fashioning “based upon expert convictions of what is ‘best’ to know” (p. 70). In this
 context, self-disclosure is a selective tailoring based on expert’s advice/guidelines for
 narrating the self. In such a way, this constructed self reveals a form of “knowing-how”
rather than “knowing-that.” In a sense, it becomes a performance of middle/upper class
 identity that an individual holds the “know-how” as modeled by so-called experts. Rimke
 (2000) asserts the self is a “mastery of discourse” reinvented by a “system of ‘popular’
 expert truth” that negates self-definition and works to present a “new and improved”
 pathologized identity (p. 70). This includes an intense occupation with the work of self-
 knowledge displayed to best effect through self-presentations in mediated contexts.

Lifestyle experts, including self-branded celebrities like Martha Stewart, arguably
 function as “guidelines for social, not psychological, rules of conduct” (Rimke, p. 70).
 The selves and lifestyles modeled by these experts further reflect class-based “aspirational”
 models of taste and lifestyle used to define the “good life” (Lewis, 2008, p. 15). As cultural
ambassadors and teachers of lifestyle, celebrities such as Martha Stewart, point to the endurance of “meaning constitutive” frames for the transmission of traditions such as enduring notions of gendered “domestic labor.” Such expertise was often circulated historically in domestic advice manuals and in women’s magazines, but mediated expertise has proliferated in an era of lifestyle experts (Lewis, 2008) and self-help (McGee, 2004). With weakened sources of traditional guidance, “commercial and professional conveyors of guidance are more important” (Hochschild, 1994, p. 2; Lasch, 1978/1991). The growth of celebrity experts may be “seen as a marker of a growing convergence between a public sphere of commodity production and spectacle and an ‘intimate’ private sphere of consumption and everyday life” (Lewis, 2008, p. 24). Hochschild further asserts that it is not that individuals “need one another less, only that they are invited to manage their needs more” (p. 3). In such as way, the advice for self-management shared by these experts aligns with neoliberal demands for women to self-manage or to self-govern under neoliberalism.

**Self-Empowerment as Power**

Within a neoliberal environment, the therapeutic may serve as useful tool for empowerment. The second phase of neoliberal governance has also been marked by a psychological internalization of individual responsibility (Scharff, p. 6). This individual responsibility is often encouraged and sustained by calls for self-empowerment often aimed at young women. Barbara Cruikshank (1999), in *The Will to Empower: Democratic Citizens and other Subjects*, traces how empowerment functions within liberal democratic governance as strategy or method for “constituting citizens out of subjects and maximizing their participation” (p. 66).
The therapeutic path to empowerment depends upon the ability of an individual to become an “experts on themselves” (Cruikshank, 1999). As Nancy Fraser (2003) puts it, “everyone is an expert on herself, responsible for managing her own human capital to maximum effect” (p. 163). Debra Grodin (1991), in a study of women self-help readers, found that self-help offered a therapeutic response to social change and provided support for “having to invent a place and an identity for myself without the traditional supports” (Hoffman, 1989, p. 197 cited in Grodin, 1991, p. 404). As the ability of traditional society to provide larger meaning declines, the therapeutic may step-in to provide “a condition where personal well-being becomes an end in itself” (Grodin, 1991, p. 404-405; Lears, 1981; Rieff, 1966). The focus on personal well-being, however, means that the therapeutic, particularly in the form of self-help, relentlessly attempts to perfect or improve women in a way that privatizes, individualizes and pathologizes their problems, rather than understands them as an outgrowth of inequality” (Grodin, 1991, p. 406).

Becker (2005) argues that the pervasiveness of the view of “women’s problems as personal rather than political demands that we work to make ourselves suspicious of empowerment” (p. 189).

The therapeutic understands power in terms of empowerment of the individual. This means the therapeutic focuses on making the individual more powerful, rather than a notion of power tied to social or structural forces. Becker (2005) describes how “the power the therapeutic culture purports to give women is not the power to control institutions, governments, or laws, but is an ‘inner’ power that is there to be tapped through the reclamation of ‘an essential inner self;’ the psychological ability to ‘get in touch’ with an ‘authentic, natural female self,’ a self that can guide its own actions and have freedom to make choices” (p. 134). Empirical studies on women’s view and use of
power reveals the alignment of power with a sense of greater autonomy or “personal authority” – seen in terms of an independence from patriarchal structures, which also conveniently align with the self-reliance of neoliberalism. In a survey of a group of mostly white, heterosexual women, Cynthia Miller and A. Gage Cummins (1992) found that women saw society as defining power by money and control (power-over); however, ninety-percent defined their own power in terms of autonomy and “personal authority.” This notion of autonomy as power was also found by Debra Grodin (1991) in her study on reasons women read self-help. Grodin found these women spoke of reading self-help in order establish personal autonomy that could extricate them from patriarchal authority.

An understanding of power as empowerment is also common to postfeminist “choice” rhetoric. Empowerment is a “current buzzword” and “the keyword” of postfeminism as well as an important term for other forms of feminism (Banet-Weiser, 2015, p. 59). Feminist accounts of women’s power often include contradictory notions of equality and difference. Empowerment functions to overcome these contradictions (Becker, 2005, p. 134-135). As women are empowered to find their more authentic self, empowerment enables women to be more autonomous (equality) as they express their essential inner self (difference). The emphasis on choice has further class implications as “rational capacity for making choices is a marker of class difference in which the middle-class utilize their choices most effectively” (Skeggs, 2004, p. 139).

The nineteenth century reform movements, such as settlement houses, offer insight into the gendered, raced, and classed history of “empowerment.” These reform movements conferred a power on a professional class of middle-class women to “empower” those “at risk” (Becker, 2005, p. 154). The aim of such empowerment was to “act upon another’s interests and desires in order to conduct their actions toward an
appropriate end” (p. 154). This “appropriate end” was to align these often immigrant groups’ values with those of the middle-class U.S. women, “reforming” them without impacting social structure. Becker (2005) identifies four aspects of relationships of empowerment: 1) established by expertise 2) one party seeks the “will to empower” another 3) knowledge of those to be empowered, typically found in social scientific models…gained through the self-description and self-disclosure of the subject to be empowered 4) relations that are simultaneously voluntary and coercive (p. 154).

An example of the way that the therapeutic shifts the focus from structural inequality to personal competencies appears in the work of Anita Harris (2008). She describes the widespread categorization of young women as either “can-do,” those who are “rarely able to fail,” or “at-risk” girls, those who “have few opportunities to succeed.” She notes how these “designations have much more to do with economic and cultural resources than personal competencies” (p. 32). Within these designations, the potential of the white, middle-class young woman to fail or succeed appears as a widespread concern as their success ensures that “failure itself can be displaced and cast out onto other young women,” or those “at risk” (p. 34). The “can-do” girl becomes situated as the “never-good-enough girl who must perpetually observe and remake herself.”

Banet-Weiser (2015) highlights how, in both of these subject positions, “girls are seen as in need of empowerment” (p. 61). She studies how empowerment plays out within a “visual economy.” As Zygmunt Bauman (2007) argues in Consuming Life, within a society of consumers, “no one can become a subject without first turning into a commodity” (p. 12). Banet-Weiser describes how empowerment defines these girls as entrepreneurial subjects situated within a “market for empowerment” (p. 61). As a form of therapeutic
well being, empowerment also becomes the end, rather than a starting point for material change and social justice (p. 62).

Banet-Weiser situates the market for empowerment within a gendered “economy of visibility,” in which individuals are urged to engage in affective labor necessary to make themselves marketable. The “very project of making a self that is publicly visible is contained within the new discourses of femininity for young women that link success to image, style, and visible work on oneself” (McRobbie, 2000 cited in Banet-Weiser, 2015, p. 489; Harris 2004). Self-work becomes necessary to market and make visible oneself as a “can-do” woman. Within this space, activities of self-work made visible through mediated platforms work to define oneself as “can-do,” rather than as “at-risk.” Within this economy of visibility, the potential for empowerment intensifies work of surveillance “tied to regulation and evaluation” (p. 55).

These displays of empowered selfhood through self-management achieved through self-work are reflected in daily practices of documentation on social media as well as in women’s paper crafts, including scrapbooks and memory planners, targeted to the middle class. More visible work on oneself circulate by mediated platforms, such as scrapbooks and social media, and enable a form of self-objectification, work, and display of one’s status as a “can-do” woman. Within the positionality of white, upper class women, the therapeutic functions as a pathway to discourses of empowerment that privatize women’s issues and dissuade any radical structural or political change. Management and display of successful femininity becomes linked to a form of conspicuous self-work used to demarcate can-do status within an “economy of visibility” (p. 489).
The process of “generating self-surveillance and then mobilizing self-management in response has become more intense” as the neoliberal job market demands evidence of flexibility. An internalized self-reflexive and editorial eye has also become a part of the women’s labor of self-work as concerns with perfected self-presentations have grown in relation to image manipulation/idealization facilitated through interactive digital technologies and advertising culture (Berger, 1972/1990). The growth of a reflexive self-objectification of one’s persona or meta-self enables an easy transfer onto branded platforms with online sales potential. Through processes of self-objectification, the line between objectified and commodified self has become tenuous within late capitalism (Hearn, 2008; Banet-Weiser, 2012). In fact, Andrejevic (2004) notes that as spaces of leisure and domesticity become economically productive, on camera “face time” becomes a commodity that can be monitored, repackaged, and sold (p. 36).

This endless project of becoming may be situated as a therapeutic, consumer project. Similar to therapeutic culture’s demands to “work on the self,” the continuation of consumer capitalism depends on a belief that the self is deficient and in need of a consumer fix (Raisborough, 2011, p. 59). Consumer goods and the market are turned to as a place to help with the project of “becoming better” – and, furthermore, often this project of “becoming” involves turning the self into a brand or a commodity (Raisborough, 2011, p. 61). Lifestyle media “sells this transformation by recasting ordinary life as a series of problems with market solutions” (Raisborough, 2011, p. 62). This falls into the rhetoric of consumer-choice and of neoliberal flexible, self-transformation.
Managing the “Authentic” Self

Desire to know one’s true self has grown with greater commodification and subsequent increases in exchange value over use value. With the shift to exchange value, there is the sense of a loss of the real what Adorno refers to as “withering of experience” and Lears calls “thinning of experience” (cited in Andrejevic, 2004, p. 147). Susan Stewart (1993) asserts that “within the development of culture under an exchange economy, the search for authentic experience and, correlative, the search for the authentic object became crucial” (p. 133). However, the increased objectification of the self may ultimately ease pathways to the commodification of the self.

Mediated surveillance becomes a way to reflexively adjust one’s representation to more authentically represent an idealized self. However, this self is often entwined with idealized models shown in consumer culture and championed by lifestyle experts. Celia Lury (2004) describes this phenomenon in terms of the shift to a prosthetic culture that moves beyond the mirror stage of reflection into self-extension, or prosthesis. This prosthesis in many ways depends on the photographs ability to frame, freeze, and fix as “the freezing of time creates a dimension in which the future perfect of the photographic image – this will have been – may be suspended and manipulated and reworked to become the past perfected (Tyler 1994 cited in Lury, 1997, p. 3). Not only does the mediated photographic images’ ability to “frame, freeze, and fix” enable the past to be perfected, but it also connects further to what Jones (2008) describes as a “makeover culture” in which “betterment and self-improvement are endless” (Raisborough, 2011, p. 51).

Scholarship has noted a shift in late capitalism away from “scientific management of the body and toward an inward emphasis upon feelings and desires” (Freeman, 2014,
This turn to the expressivist or “authentic” self reveals a desire to know the self. Once this self is known through expression, then it may be more easily managed – creating forms of calculated authenticity. Barry Shank (2004) observes that the growth of a culture of sentiment tied to the construction of an authentic interior self coincided with the growth of market forces and increased commercialization. This “authentic self” was constructed as a means to remain independent of these market forces (p. 22-23). Calls for an authentic self, then, became poised as a way to oppose commodification. Finding one’s “authentic” self in this context takes therapeutic self-work used to dig into one’s psyche in order to “discover” a hidden inner self.

Digital culture’s preoccupation with increased authenticity is linked to this desire for greater intimacy, greater self-knowledge through surveillance. Such surveillance may also provide greater affect through a feedback loop used to intensify feeling and counter the “thinning” of direct experience that accompany both commodification and increases in mediated experiences. Additional scholarship notes a similar intensification in performances of “micro-celebrity” as individuals “amp up” their popularity and status through mediated reflexivity such as the images and videos shared on social media (Senft, 2008, p. 25 cited in Marwick and boyd, 2011).

While therapeutic self-work is positioned to help in the discovery of one’s “real” or “authentic” self, this therapeutic work creates an artificial discourse or an extra-discursive construction of the self, a meta-self. The everyday reflexivity involved making scrapbooks may also be thought of in terms of an “(auto) ethnographic documentary practice” (Christensen, 2012, p. 193) and, “like all auto-ethnographers, scrapbookers adopt the position of self-observer” (p. 197). The reflexivity of producing such documentation may help to structure the previously “given” as well as “transform one’s experience of
experience” (p. 193). Stacy Julian, founding editor of Simple Scrapbooks, reflects this as she notes how “documenting everyday life has resulted in a greater appreciation of her own contributions to that life” and “enhanced her ability to recognize and enjoy ‘moments’ as they’re happening” (Christensen, 2012, p. 197). This process of “going meta” can transform “ongoing human life” into “symbolically represented views” – a practice that became prevalent with easy imaging technologies (Chaflen 1987, p. 11).

“Going meta” cultivates a way of looking at, or a view of life, not as it unfolds, but in a way that carries the “threat of slipping into a perpetually reflexive mode” (Christensen, 2012, p. 197). Mediated instruments of reflexivity are critical to this process of “going meta.” For instance, Sigmund Freud’s notebooks ‘isolated and made analyzable things which had heretofore floated along unnoticed in the broad stream of perception,’ film and other communicative technologies have brought about a similar deepening of apperception” (Benjamin, [1955] 1968, p. 237 cited in Christensen, p. 194). While reflexivity deepens apperception, it also facilitates manipulation and editing of these representations.

**SECTION THREE: PARTICIPATORY MEDIA**

Scrapbooks appear at the juncture of production/consumption and labor/leisure as a feminine media form within a creative industry. They occupy a unique position “in-between do-it-yourself and mass culture” (Medley-Rath, 2010, p. 245). As a form of mass-consumed craft, scrapbook labor patches together creators’ desires for crafty affinity and mimetic rituals of care (often via mass consumption) with postfeminist demands for individualistic creative self-expression. Within a participatory media culture, women’s media reception may serve not only as a site of relaxation or break from work (e.g. soap operas) but also as a space of self-work or online community building/affective labor used
to build/maintain relational ties (Ouellette and Wilson, 2011; White, 2015; Portwood-Stacer, 2014). This section introduces and examines intersection of participatory media, feminine media production, and crafty resistance.

**Participatory Media Culture**

As production has shifted out of the factory into more immaterial labor, these labors increasingly draw on the subjectivity and creativity of producers and consumers. The scholarly term “participatory media culture” developed in relation to practices of interactive online fandom. The term sought recognition of the ways that fans not only consume, but also create, share, and personalize their spaces of fandom (Brooker, 2002; Jenkins, 2006). Fan fiction emerged as an exemplary form of participatory media engagement as fans re-write the text to fit their own narrative desires and produce “user-generated content.” This is perhaps most visible in slash fiction, a subgenre of fan fiction, which reimagines the sexuality and romantic storyline of characters, famously including Captain Kirk and Spock of Star Trek; in such a way, these texts indicate the subversive potential of these rewritten accounts (Bacon-Smith, 1992; Jenkins et. al., 2009). Through their fan labor, these individuals were able to create their own “user-generated content” and to infuse additional value and enjoyment relative to the fan object.

As users work to customize/personalize or add their own creative touch and then share this with others, participatory media redefine value as they work to increase “social economic” value including “rewards of social status or personal satisfaction and the intrinsic rewards of creativity” (Bruns, 2008, p. 414). As production has shifted towards more immaterial production, user-generated content tied to users’ creativity and subjectivity increasingly becomes the site and source of value. Beer and Burrows (2010) note the ways increased prosumption (production/consumption) indicates that the
“everyday life of users” may be drawn upon as the recourse for “everyday acts of consumption” as well as production. Media forms, including social media, YouTube, and video games, have transformed as they configure media forms to “harness productive activities of amateurs” for profit (Bruns, 2008, p. 414).

Scholarship has notoriously framed this debate in terms of a binary of empowerment and exploitation. While scholars have noted the participatory and democratic potential of these media forms, the platforms that they exist on are often profit driven (e.g., Facebook) and, furthermore, may be tied to increased surveillance and tracking used to increase corporate profits and, therefore, do not represent a form of democratic power-sharing (Andrejevic, 2007).

There are several terms demarcating the convergences within participatory media culture including “producers” (producer/user), co-creation, and prosumption (production/consumption). These terms indicate that as the boundaries between work/leisure blur so do the boundaries between amateur/professional and consumer/producer. These “producers” produced forms of user-generated content and collaboration worked to define an era of Web 2.0 (between the dot-com and the app) including platforms such as Flickr, Wikipedia, and YouTube (Marwick, 2013). Scholarship has argued that the very concepts of production and consumption remain tied to the “industrial age” and need rethinking in a digital age in which consumers may be both producers, distributors and consumers thus blurring such boundaries (Bruns, 2008; Hesmondhalgh, 2010). Consumer scholarship has identified growth in “prosumption” in the productive activities of contemporary consumers (Campbell, 2005; Beer and Burrows, 2010). The prosumption practices used to define Web 2.0, for instance, have been argued to be “emblematic of issues that possess significance [for
consumption] that stretches beyond the web” (Beer and Burrows, 2007). In their special issue introducing the term “prosumption,” Beer and Burrows (2010) start with a reference to Colin Campbell’s (2005) work on a “significant and growing” type of consumer, the “craft consumer.” For Campbell, craft consumption involves “craft activity” in which consumers “bring skill, knowledge, judgment, love and passion to their consuming” (p. 27).

As the majority of “participatory culture” scholarship centers on practices of online fandom, this “may blind us to other forms of mediated practices [and creativity] that are equally interesting and relevant” (Bird, 2011, p. 502). An understanding and study of participatory culture as only an online practice fails to acknowledge the interaction of offline and online practices, “stifle a richer understanding of continuing audience activity,” and blind scholarship to other mediated practices, such as scrapbooks and do-it-yourself culture, that are equally relevant (Bird, 2011, p. 504-505). A closer look at these often craft-based practices reveals that a core element of participation required of these activities is “the act of making itself” (Liddle et al., 2013). Of greatest concern for this study is that an exclusive focus on online participatory culture (often unconsciously) works to exclude feminized forms of media production conducted offline/online: women’s crafts, journal writing, card making, paper planners and scrapbooks.

**Feminized Media Production**

Despite high levels of popularity, participatory practices and texts tied to feminine media remain relatively marginalized, invisible, and dismissed in comparison to implicitly masculine or “mainstream” media. At the same time, they frequently continue to advance and represent the normative or mainstream construction of femininity that aligns with upper-class white femininity (Portwood-Stacer, 2007). A survey of spaces of
“feminized” media productions such as fan fiction, zines, blogs, vlogs, and scrapbooks appear at a crossroads of personal writing, photography and documentary. Yet, the generative crossroads of personal writing/photography and documentary offers space that reflects and pushes back against sexist boundaries, values, and behaviors that continue to devalue and marginalize the voices of women.

A gendered genre or, more accurately, a feminine genre is that “enjoyed by a mass female audience; which primarily address itself to women; which inscribes female desires, female points-of-view or women-centered views in the narrative; and texts which either address or construct a feminine subject/spectator” (Kuhn 1984 also cited in Tasker, 1991/2014, p. 88). In this way, such genres “draw both on femaleness (the audience, the protagonists) and femininity (as subject position or set of cultural competencies)” (Tasker, 1991/2014, p. 90) There remains an implied equation (set of associations) between a “feminine activity,” an activity located in the domestic sphere, and an activity for women” (Tasker, 1991/2014, p. 90). Brunsdon (1981) notes that feminine media most often offers a “form of address to concerns of the family, the personal and the domestic” that speak to the traditional/dominant construction of femininity and to areas where women are most likely to hold the highest “cultural capital” (cited in Tasker, 1991/2014). The most visible forms of femininity circulated in U.S. media culture continue to foreground white, heteronormative, middle class girls/women, marginalizing women of color, LGBTQ, and working class women even further.

Lauren Berlant (2008) developed the notion of “intimate public” to describe mass media markets (e.g., books, magazines, television, movies) around a shared identity. This mass market becomes “intimate” through the expectation that its consumers “share a worldview and emotional knowledge” derived from a shared history, set of experiences,
and “subjective likeness” that set the tone of these texts’ expressions (Berlant, 2008, p. viii, p. 5). “Women’s culture” provides a prototypical example of intimate public for “the people marked by femininity” wherein the management of femininity is “expressed and worked through incessantly” (p. 5).

The literature on feminine media studies has noted three critical historical shifts/trends in the field of feminist media studies: 1.) successful assertion of the legitimacy of studying “feminine” media, 2.) move from the study of texts to the study of audience, and 3.) rising interest and concern with the study of feminine media production (Mazarella and Pecora, 2007, p. 106). Charlotte Brunsdon (1981) highlighted a particular turn to examine the audience or “ordinary women” through ethnographic methods. More recently, feminist media scholars, particularly within girls’ studies, have foregrounded not only “ordinary women” but also spaces of feminist media production (Celeste-Kearney, 2006; Harris, 2001). As this is an ethnographic-infused study of scrapbooks as a feminized media production conducted with so-called “ordinary” women, this paper’s approach aligns with a key area of interest and method of study advocated and utilized most often within the growing field of feminine media production.

The 1980s successfully made a convincing argument of the legitimacy of studying feminine media forms or what Kuhn describes as “women’s genres” as a “meaningful point of entry into societal gender discourses and their impacts on real women’s lives” (Baym, 1981; Kuhn, 1984; Modleski, 2008; Radway, 1991; Durham, 2003, p. 24). Media produced by women are frequently separated from “mainstream” media through specific feminine labels such as chick lit, chick flicks, women’s magazines, domestic crafting, and scrapbooking. The separation or, rather, marginalization of feminine spaces of media production draws rigid gendered boundaries that may cut off these participatory and
often collective spaces of potential subversion from challenging the status quo. Despite their popularity, these labels push these forms of media production to the feminine margins where they are dismissed and/or made relatively invisible.

The Wikipedia controversy over the creation of subcategories of “American Novelists” vividly illustrates this process of marginalization. The dominantly male Wikipedians began to move women novelists from the “American Novelists” page into a subcategory/page titled “American Women Novelists.” As the Amanda Filipacchi who wrote an expose of this story in the *New York Times* asked, “imagine if there was also a subcategory for ‘American Men Novelists’.” The controversy surrounding categorization of writers on Wikipedia reveals masculinity as the default/norm/mainstream category, while “women’s writing” becomes relegated to a genre or subcategory. The subcategorization of women novelists by dominantly male Wikipedians makes visible the continued exclusion of women media producers/productions from spaces designated with authority and legitimacy such as the canon of American literature.

Feminist media scholars have noted a similar issue within scholarship, even within approaches such as cultural studies concerned with issues of representation and power. Angela McRobbie and Jenny Garber (1991/1978) were the first to note the exclusion of young women within scholarship on subculture. They reasserted that while practices of young women may differ, they offer important spaces of resistance and oppositional agency such as girls’ “bedroom culture.” Anita Harris (2001) has also asserted that young women are “choosing, politicizing and re-invigorating the private” (p. 132) and that feminist researchers need to attend to “marginal or underground” spaces “as sites where young women deliberate over their place in the world” (p. 133). She noted the production of zines, gURL (such as blogs/web pages), and music as a productive space of
political engagement for young women. More recently, Jessalynn Keller (2015) has examined feminist girl bloggers as an active space of media production and critical engagement with feminist issues.

In identification of spaces of political resistance, scholarship on feminist media production has turned attention to feminist spaces and voices that “transgress the dictates of normative or ‘emphasized’ femininity” and gender boundaries (Durham, 2003). These spaces remain critical for opening up alternatives to the violence of the gender binary; yet, feminist scholarship focused solely on alternative spaces to normative femininity also may risk inadvertently compounding the dismissal and devaluation of people and spaces labeled “feminine.”

The emphasis on “feminine” media aligns with the production of gender within media culture; Angela McRobbie (2007) asserts that contemporary young women are taught to embrace “practices which are understood to be both progressive but also consummate of and reassuringly feminine” (p. 721). Personal writing, photography and documentary allow for the unique combination of the expressive and the personal, which remains an unthreatening traditional gender role, while still enabling the actor to feel more liberated through expression. As Mary Celeste Kearney (2006) notes, despite furthering girls’ education and broadening their experiences of the world, writing has not been seen as threatening to traditional gender (and generational) roles. Nevertheless, because it allows female youth to transcend, at least temporarily, their familial roles, spaces and responsibilities, writing has a liberatory effect on many girls (pp. 30-1).

In her analysis of Victorian girls’ diaries, Jane Hunter (1992) argues that many upper-class girls enjoyed the “protected status of obedient daughters at the same time that they
carved out a measure of imaginative independence” (Hunter, 1992, p. 61). Hunter argues for the “possibility that their later lives of some autonomy outside the home were in part enabled by their earlier discovery of regions of autonomy within it” (p. 54). This discovery of “autonomy” echoes the appeal of self-help for women readers found in Grodin’s (1991) interviews.

An ongoing challenge for feminist media scholarship appears in the potential pitfalls of the essentialization of terms such as “women” and “feminine.” “Safely feminine” media become unsafe or exclusionary spaces for those who differ from dominant norms. The entrance of girls and women into “mainstream” or masculine space may also result in moral panics, devaluations, and dismissals. Moral panics are often applied to the actions of such female fans including Beatlemania, Twilight fandom, and, as I will address, too much enthusiasm for scrapbooks.

Others note that the marginalization of these spaces also offers the potential for radically subversive acts outside of the disciplinary gaze. Through their marginalization, sites of feminine media production may foreground feminine values dismissed by patriarchal capitalism. In support of challenging such harmful gender norms, scholarship on feminist media production has focused attention to feminist spaces and voices that “transgress the dictates of normative or ‘emphasized’ femininity’ and gender boundaries” (Durham, 2003). These spaces remain critical to countering the violence of the gender binary; however, feminism must also remain cognizant of the risks of inadvertently compounding the dismissal and devaluation of people and spaces labeled “feminine.” Feminism may also seek to counter sexism through a serious consideration of moments and spaces of feminist possibility within the production of traditionally feminine media. A scholarly examination of the boundaries drawn around contemporary femininity is a
critical project for those concerned with expanding understanding of gender as complex, situated, and diverse.

**Women’s Craft Labor**

Scrapbooks are simultaneously a site of production and consumption reflective of broader changes in labor relative to a shift from industrial to informational production. Yet, women’s domestic crafts have long been an area of participatory media culture that defy the division forged during industrialization between production and consumption. Craft remains situated in a theoretically important position as a hybrid of “modern consumerism and traditional handiwork” (Luckman, 2013). A broader resurgence of interest in craft has appeared since the late-1990s in a diversity of spaces including Do-It-Yourself (DIY), makerspaces, third-wave feminist craftivism, and contemporary art (Grace & Gandolfo, 2014; Luckman, 2013; Groeneveld, 2010; Fowler, 2010).

The dichotomy between art and craft, as well as professional and amateur, are often marked in terms of gender and race (Luckman, 2013, p. 260). Adamson (2007) describes how “objects that are associated with craft have been unfairly undervalued since the beginnings of the modern era…a subplot within the more general history of the devaluation of women’s art” (p. 5). As Rozsika Parker (1984) describes “when women embroider, it is not seen as art, but entirely as the expression of femininity” (p. 5). During the second wave, feminist artists including Miriam Shapiro and Judy Chicago in their “Womanhouse in LA” exhibit and Chicago’s “Dinner Party” on display at the Brooklyn Museum worked to challenge distinctions between “high art” and craft” – to reclaim and revalue women’s traditional crafts (Cvetkovich 2012; Jones, 1996).

Feminism has held a complex relationship with craft, and other forms of domestic labor; as second wave feminists sought to expand options for women beyond the domestic
sphere (Grace and Gandolfo, 2014), domestic craft was seen as potentially regressive. This relationship has been revised with the growth of third-wave periodicals in the mid-1990s including BUST, Venus Zine, and She’s Crafty and the growth of a global “knitting revolution” including a number of stitch ‘n bitch groups (Groeneveld, 2010, p. 260; Minahan and Cox, 2007; Liss-Marino, 2014).

The gendered separation in craft practices manifests most visibly in the gendered boundaries of materials used for crafting. This separation of craft materials and tools was most prominent in the nineteenth century in the rigid division between “soft and light textiles in all their varieties” as feminine, and “hard, heavy wood and metal” as predominantly masculine (Gelber, 1999, p. 180). As a paper craft, the traditional or paper scrapbook may be ascribed a feminine authenticity not available to digital forms. Paper offers a gendered and nostalgic value linked to familiar narratives, materialities, and historical legacies (Fouche, 2011). Through the legacy of these meanings and traditions, the paper format may offer women a sense of identification and belonging that may be lacking from the digital form.

The ongoing sexual division of labor within craft practice, however, also impacts the politics of class within women’s crafting. While historian Stephen Gelber (1999) asserts that “hobbies have transcended class much more easily than gender” (p. 5), the intersection of both gender and class has been a blind spot in much scholarship on craft. The strong gendered boundaries of craft were forged during industrialization as “women’s crafting” became used to denote forms of domestic craft (Groeneveld, 2010) or home craft (Hackney, 2006) despite the common presence of working class women in various sites of industrialized craft such as the garment factories.
For much of the nineteenth and twentieth century, home crafts were often “characterized by their strong aesthetic component” (Gelber, p. 174). Decorative, non-functional, or ornamental crafts included a tradition of fancywork (such as embroidery and other decorative crafts). This fancy work enabled “haute bourgeois women” to demonstrate that they had the “time, taste, and skill to master nonfunctional past-times” (Gelber, p. 165). Displays of fancy work were used to “elevate the privileged position of white, middle-class women over and above those women who were, and always had been, employed both inside and outside the home” (Blunt & Dowling, 2006, p. 18). As “fancy work,” women’s craft was an approved activity that aligned with the morals of the “cult of domesticity” used to demarcate a woman’s middle class status.

The increasing availability of women’s magazines and periodicals enabled more middle-class women to be exposed to examples of “fancy work” through patterns features in Godey’s Lady’s Book and Peterson’s Magazine (Matthews, 1987, p. 17; Halbert, 2009). Circulation of women’s crafts through these magazines, a process repeated by feminist periodicals in the revival of third-wave craft, increased the popularity of these “embellished, non-utilitarian display pieces (Halbert, 2009, 2.15). Contemporary scrapbook magazines, podcasts, websites, and brands continue to drive interest and demand in the practice.

Crafts today align with middle/upper class aesthetics as they are less defined by utilitarian demands such as thrift and crafters are more likely to “focus their energies on making decorative objects or gifts rather than merely purely utilitarian goods” (Beecher, 2001). Other scholarship has further found that the craft/handmade aligns with or marks a contemporary upper-class aesthetic used to uphold and display a particular form of white, upper-class femininity (West, 2010; Holt, 1998; Groeneveld, 2010; Portwood-
Stacer, 2007). As modern women’s crafts are increasingly associated with leisure and a tradition of non-utilitarian, decorative crafts (which are simultaneously being professionalized and monetized), they may continue to demarcate and display higher social class within the context of women’s work.

**The Labor of Personalization**

Digital designer Malcolm McCullough (1997/2010) describes the growing contemporary use of craft as a verb, rather than a noun, as we craft everything from “business memos to good stout beer” (p. 311). He notes that the contemporary use of “to craft” seems to imply a skillful participation in some small-scale process and that “to craft is to care” (p. 311). He points to three critical areas that the use of craft as a verb affirms: involved vs. detached work, partnership with technology as better than autonomous technology, and working at a personal scale.

Colin Campbell (2005) also notes that the growing use of “to craft” emphasizes the exercise of personal control over the process of making. In this sense, the “contrast is not between hand production and machine production but rather between a production system in which the worker is in control of the machine [i.e. craft] and one in which the machine is in control of the worker” (p. 28). “To craft” in these terms has a strong resonance and appeal for those working to negotiate the transition of many practices including scrapbooks into digital platforms in which content may be filtered and reconfigured through algorithms (Good, 2012; van Dijck, 2013). As a more intimate space tied to small-scale production, craft labor facilitates the formation of closer personal involvement in the process and product of one’s labor. The recent embrace of craft is argued to be reflective of a desire for greater autonomy and control of one’s labor/production (Crawford, 2010).
As the feminine remains aligned with consumption, prosumption (such as “craft consumption”) serves to highlight the ways that consumption practices have long been a productive labor. The urge to see crafting as outside of commodification misses an understanding of craft in relation to the feminine labor used to personalize commodities and to mitigate a sense of alienation or greater detachment in social ties. For Campbell (2005), craft consumption involves “craft activity” in which consumers “bring skill, knowledge, judgment, love and passion to their consuming” (p. 27). Drawing from Igor Kopytoff (1986), Campbell situates the growth of craft consumption as part of a broader “decommodifying reaction.” In this reaction, the intensification of commodification is accompanied by the intensification of efforts to resist commodification’s effects such as homogenization and alienation (p. 36).

Craft consumption functions in this context as a way to transform the commodity into a personalized object or possession. When applied to scrapbooks, the personal scrapbook carries biographical ties that hold an emotional charge; as an intimate and unique possession, it resists becoming an easy exchange (Hoskins, 1998, p. 194). For instance, the exchange of my scrapbook for your scrapbook seems absurd. My scrapbook would be of little value to you and yours of little value to me – each object is too closely entwined with our personalized life narratives. The high level of personalization and arguable lack of relevance of one individual scrapbook to another is visible in the high level of personal and emotional value invested in these objects and the low level of public or monetary value that they hold. This is similar to the value assigned to family photos, which are viewed as both trivial and emotionally charged (Rose, 2004). The high level of intimacy or “spatial proximity” entwined with “togetherness” (Rose, 2004) of these objects inhibits their value within a detached exchange.
Hoskins (1998) identifies objects invested with identity, connection and intimacy as “biographical objects” or those “endowed with the personal characteristics of their owners” (p. 7). She points out the ways that the stories and connections generated with these biographical objects “provide a distanced form of introspection...a form of reflection on the meaning of one’s own life” (p. 2). Hoskins asserts that the notion of a “possession” may be a more useful category than “gift” to place in opposition to commodification. Hoskins describes how the conversion of commodities into possessions is facilitated by endowing them with identity and that individuals may also buy new identities through their consumption (p. 194). She defines “inalienability” as a characteristic of any object infused with biographical significance (p. 195). She highlights the critical importance of both imagination and fantasy to turn objects into “sometimes very significant possessions, which draw their power from biographical experiences and the stories told about these.”

Personalization of commodities into possessions has been designated a feminine labor. With the grown of “female consumer culture” since the 1890s, consumption and shopping became coded as a feminine space of leisure rather than productive work (Peiss, 1998). Daniel Miller’s (1998) work on the feminized labor of purchasing goods describes the reworking of purchased goods as what “translates the object from an alienable to an inalienable condition” (cited in Edwards, 2006, p. 16). The reworking of objects with individual meanings is part of the labors of homemaking. James Carrier argues that women in our culture carry the primary responsibility for the appropriation or conversion of commodities as they are more strongly identified with relational labors.

As Ouellette and Wilson (2011) identified, these participatory media forms may indicate an intensification of women’s second shift into their leisure time. A extension of
labor into media may be seen in feminist media scholar Michele White’s (2015) assertion of the increasing pressure on women as caretakers tied to increased demands of “intensive mothering” (Hays, 1998). White argues that these mothers are urged to “find fulfillment in the creativity and intimacy of involved motherhood” (p. 47), which is extended through their labor on Etsy and eBay. For instance, they are “told that they are having an enjoyable time when they are working and generating detailed emotional experiences and immaterial labor for other members” (p. 46). These forms of affective labor and even craft consumption have traditionally been viewed as leisure pursuits obscuring their role as extensions of women’s work. An ongoing sexual division of labor continues to place women’s work (care labors, affective labors, intimate labors, and emotional labors) as women’s responsibility or even problem (Ely, 2014). How well women meet these care demands further shapes the judgment of their work performance by colleagues and family (Blair-Loy, 2005).

**Conclusions**

This chapter has reviewed literature on disruptions in feminine labor, subjectivity, and participatory media as three intersecting areas in which a study of the scrapbook may contribute. In the move to post-Fordist labor, forms of labor frequently aligned with the feminine, notably feminized care labor, have become central to the generation of value for capital. Immaterial labor increasingly seeks to differentiate itself through subjectivity. “In fact, subjectivity—namely individual’s life – constitutes the potential and real base of the process of valorization” (Morini and Fumagalli, 2010, p. 248). Even more specifically, Rosi Braidotti points to the drive to “incorporate the maternal feminine in order to better metabolize its effects, since it has become a valuable commodity, to be spent on the market” (cited in Morini and Fumagalli, 2010, p. 245).
As social welfare falls more to the privatized family, the domestic and affective labor of women (the second shift) is a primary means used to support individual self-sufficiency and well being (Ouellette, 2016, p. 103). How well women meet these care demands further shapes the judgment of their work performance by colleagues and family (Blair-Loy, 2005). This places more pressure on feminine laborers to satisfy this increased need for care. These structural and care deficits are met through intensified demands to create a life plan and to better manage one’s life. Neoliberalism’s “perpetual quest for flexibility” supports the notion of the self as an “entrepreneurial project under renovation” (Bourdieu 1998; Rose 1992; Illouz 2007, 2008; Walkerdine 2003). Greater demands for worker flexibility within late-capitalism also encourages increased self-surveillance and self-management (Skeggs, 2012, p. 31).

In the space of overlap between feminine labor, subjectivity, and participatory media, the literature indicates the way women’s participatory media use, such as scrapbooks, may be used as a tool in the extension and intensification of women’s labor in efforts to better manage, even improve, one’s self and life. The dissertation follows this by looking at the ways scrapbook labor merges with and pushes back against these increased demands to manage the self. In their study of interactive media tied to the Dr. Phil show and other forms of lifestyle media, Ouellette and Wilson (2011) describe the expansion of self-work used to increase self-management into convergence culture/participatory media as further increasing women’s work. They identify this labor of self-work as an intensified second shift, or even third shift, of labor demanded of women during their leisure time.

Feminine labor and subjectivity merge even further as women are tasked to work on themselves within a neoliberal therapeutic culture. This labor more and more frequently occurs at the site of participatory as well as by means of mediated tools for surveillance
linked to a rhetoric of self-improvement (Andrejevic, 2004). While these mediated
technologies may objectify the self and ease its commodification. Labors of
personalization, also a part of participatory culture, including the feminine labor of *making
inalienable* tied to “craft consumption” (Campbell, 2005) serve as a pathway to transform
commodities into possessions. The following chapters leverage this literature in order to
analyze feminine labor and subjectivity as conducted within and through a participatory
media culture of the contemporary scrapbook.
CHAPTER THREE:
“I Industrialized,” Intimate Distance in an Intensely Personal Industry

Figure 3: Lydia Pinkham

In 1879 Lydia Pinkham’s name and image, adorned in demure Quaker dress, appeared on the label of her pre-packed bottle of “vegetable compound” for “female complaints” (Danna, 2013; Sivulka, 1998, p. 35-38; see Figure 3). The intimacy of her face may have served to diminish concerns over the legitimacy of her product and counter feelings of alienation tied to the more impersonal system of mass production. By lending a face and name to her remedy, Pinkham provided indexical ties to pre-industrial craft production and enabled consumers to engage with her mass-media persona.

Through her image, customers could build a one-sided or parasocial relationship (Horton & Wohl, 1956); for instance, women were urged to write to her with their most intimate medical complaints (Stage, 1979; Sivulka, 1998).

Use of “signature names” or brands, such as Lydia Pinkham, continue as a profitable way to cultivate a sense of mediated intimacy with customers. For those who sell scrapbook products being “intensely personal” has been asserted to be a “fundamental aspect” of the scrapbook industry that “people have to understand,”
according to industry expert and inside-industry blogger, Nancy Nally. She emphasizes how,

you can’t as a big corporation walk into this industry… you have to have a face in this industry. It’s why all of the signature names in this industry blog on their company blogs about their lives…the industry is personal and we don’t want to feel like we are doing business with a company. We want to feel like we are doing business with a person (Hyman, 2014, Episode 212).

The popularity of these “signature names,” or self-branded celebrities, point to an ongoing desire of those involved in the industry to hold onto more intimate and personal relationships. Scrapbook enthusiasts want to feel like they are doing business with a person; they are, however, most often doing business with a branded corporation. This chapter explores pathway of movement offered by the industry for individuals to transform from amateurs into designer celebrities that enable the ongoing “intense personalization” of the scrapbook industry.

The scrapbook industry offers an entry point to examine what happens as practices and individuals move onto the larger scale of industry as the hobby transitioned from retail obscurity in the U.S. in 1995 to peak as a 2.4 billion dollar industry in 2004 (CHA, 2012). The transition is not only one of a hobby into an industry, but also of the hobbyist into a celebrity within a promotional or brand culture (Banet-Weiser, 2012). This larger scale has been demanded by for-profit industry and aided by digital connections that continue to reconfigure the scale of personal relations. Reconfigurations of the scale of personal relations appear along diverse dimensions of contemporary cultural production impacting digital labor, intimate/affective labor, user-generated content, social media, and celebrity.

*Intimate distance* serves as a term to understand these contradictory reconfigurations facilitated by a participatory media culture and personified by the self-branded celebrity
designer. Susan Stewart (1993) also uses the term *intimate distance* to describe the way that souvenirs maintain an abstract connection through the object to a previously embodied experience (p. 33, 140; Hyman, 2014, Episode 212). *Intimate distance* leverages indexical ties that maintain connection to the indexical trace of the real person, such as the designer’s handwriting or personal or “behind-the-scenes” photos shared on social media, without disrupting or questioning the greater distance required by globalized industrial production, to provide a feeling of intimacy despite the greater distance often necessary to achieve a larger scale.

Within this period of skyrocketing growth, magazine design contests and winner’s blogs are identified as one critical pathway used by the industry to cultivate self-branded celebrity. These contests (similar to those deployed by reality television show contest such as *Project Runway*) function as a pathway through which amateurs may be reconfigured into unique designers and, for a limited few, celebrities. The chapter takes a closer look at the pathway of the design contest as amateurs labor to achieve (micro)celebrity designer stardom. In particular, the chapter details the scandal surrounding the 2007 *Creating Keepsakes* magazine’s annual Hall of Fame contest. The Hall of Fame scandal erupted as readers challenged the democratic rhetoric of the contest, the idea that anyone could win, as a cover-up for the promotion of predetermined celebrities.

*Intimate distance* has been facilitated by a participatory media culture and personified by the self-branded celebrity designer. This chapter traces the various pathways (e.g., design contests) within the industry and techniques (e.g., self-branding) through which a hobbyists or amateurs within the scrapbook industry may be reconfigured into celebrity. Next, the chapter looks at the transition of magazine columnists (frequently former design contest winners) into self-branded celebrities who
sustain their celebrity through popular blogs used to launch self-branded companies. Intimate labor appears as a critical site of labor for these celebrity designers as they work to balance the promotional and the personal. This balancing act works to sustain a negotiated scale of intimate distance within feminine industries associated with what Sarah Banet-Weiser (2012) describes as the “ambivalent politics of a brand culture.”

While intimate distance reveals the desires of feminine consumers and producers for relations of greater intimacy, it also builds distance by obscuring or making invisible the potentially exploitative working conditions of a racialized and gendered working class as well as those who do not fit the dominant ideal. Those who are made intimate are celebrity models who mirror the image of those in power, often white, wealthy, young, and/or attractive (see image 2). The brand’s face reveals dominant notions of attractiveness that reflect an idealized selfhood entwined with white upper-class supremacy. The face of these celebrities, furthermore, frequently model performances of “hyper-feminine subjects of capacity” (McRobbie, 2007, p. 733) and “can-do” (Harris, 2004) entrepreneurship used to re-make social divisions of race, class, and gender. Forms of intimate distance offered through social media, such as “behind-the-scenes” vignettes and updates by scrapbook celebrities, offer a glimpse of the erasure of working class bodies and race from branded images of the contemporary scrapbook industry. These whitewashed images contribute to a loss in the diversity of stories, styles, and identities that circulate most visibly within the practice (Banet-Weiser, 2012). Rather than expanding the range of images of the practice, celebrity often works to limit who and what forms of the practice are allowed to be visible on a larger scale.

In identifying intimate distance as a contradictory and often ambivalent relationship within feminine industries, this paper hopes to evoke concern regarding the continuation
of intimacy with only certain (white, middle class) bodies. Throughout, the paper situates designer celebrities or self-brands as part of a negotiated scale of intimate distance used to mask the depersonalized scale of industrial production. As profit motives may align with a larger scale, the move to celebrity tied to intimate distance may privilege ownership and competition (i.e. recognition for only top designers) that may compromise the intimate relations and traditional practices of the community such as the communal sharing common to women’s craft.

**Mediating Intimate Distance**

Relations of intimate distance are often entwined with mediated communications. Mediated spaces expand the scale and distance in which interpersonal or intimate ties can be maintained (Meyorwitz, 1986). These mediated connections both bridge and sustain greater distances between friends and loved ones. In the early twentieth-century in an era of mass personal photography and printing, the scrapbook became used as a means to objectify and personalize photographic images distanced in time/space. Labors of intimate distance remain tied to the indexical legacy of the photograph and the handwritten – as the indexical sustain ties to intimacy from a distance. Charles Sanders Peirce categorized signs along three dimensions: icons, indexes and symbols. An index, such as a statue, provides meaning through a causal connection that one “can figure out” through “indexical clues” (Berger, 2011). A photo, for instance, becomes an index or evidence of, the body, or the self behind the image (Barthes, 1981/2010). Within the study of symbolic signs, semiotics, indexes are those signs that maintain a tangible connection to their referent – where there is a link between referent and object, such as smoke and fire. Yet, as the veracity of indexicality is increasingly questioned in an age of
retouching, the labors used to sustain intimate distance have arguably only grown, as individuals must work harder to prove authenticity.

Feminist media scholars have also identified a discourse of “spectacular” femininity within Western popular media (McRobbie, 2007, p. 734). Spectacular femininity involves a concern with “image, style, and visible work on oneself” (Harris, 2004; Banet-Weiser, 2012). Within these discourses of spectacular femininity, the girl hero appears in “pursuit of media visibility, public recognition and notoriety” (Hopkins, 2002, p. 4). Mediated tools for self-presentation, particularly photography, have contributed to a greater circulation of representations of the self as other or image (Barthes, 1982).

With the growing use of digital photography, Ori Schwarz (2010) argues that “we are witnessing a shift from photography of others for self-consumption to documentation of the self for consumption by others” in line with a shift from the scrapbook to the blog (cited in Marwich, 2015, p. 141). The view of the self as object or image is gendered, particularly in relation to widespread internalization of the white male gaze (Mulvey, 1975), as women have been found to have higher rates of self-objectification (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Self-objectification, such as that commonly found in selfie photography or on social media profiles, may also offered a gendered tool to assert an embodied intimacy into self-representations through the collapse of representation/performance/embodiment (Lasen and Gomez-Cruz, 2009). These feminized forms of self-representation in these ways work to re-emphasize an embodied intimacy, even authenticity, to these indexical photographs. This display of embodied intimacy serves to sustain a sense of intimate distance even in an era of retouching.
Different forms and uses of media over time also offer different forms of interaction and distribution, which impact the construction and dissemination of celebrity. Celebrity is bound with the use of media to expand audience reach as celebrity is obtained once a certain threshold of reach or influence is obtained over a group (Pearl & Polan, 2015, p. 188. Photography and telegraphy, for instance, yielded an expansion of celebrity culture in the nineteenth-century (Marcus, 2015, p. 3). As images and clips circulate freely, repetitively, and non-sequentially, this contemporary media environment has contributed to an “intensification of celebrity” (Negra and Holmes, 2008). As celebrity has moved from dissemination primarily through a broadcast system to a network system, there has been a trend towards “ordinary” celebrity (Turner, 2006; Couldry, 2003). Terri Senft (2008) and Alice Marwick (2010, 2013, 2015) use the term “microcelebrity” to describe the “state of being famous to a niche group of people” as well as “the presentation of oneself as a celebrity” (Marwick, 2013, p. 114). Microcelebrity continues to grow as a prominent practice in the scrapbook industry, but it emerged in relation to the promotional-orientation of the scrapbook magazines. Micro-celebrity aspirations appear to be further driven by the desire to make money “through the application of marketable branding practices” on one’s own mediated self-presentation (Pearl & Polan, p. 189). These self-branding techniques, extending back to Lydia Pinkham, reveal an important strategy for maintaining an intimate distance.

**Contests for Recognition**

Starting in the late-1990s, magazines and advertisers began to hold frequent design contests for scrapbook enthusiasts. These contests offered small cash prizes and exposure to top winners in exchange for the rights to use the submitted ideas in their magazine. Design contests repositioned and promoted amateur hobbyists into
professional designers and eventually into celebrities. These design contests also functioned as one of the primary pathways through which shared designs become owned by corporations or brands. In such ways, these contests shifted the social relations within the community into a competition for recognition and sales. Following the popularity of these design contests, scrapbook brands began to have contests to become members of a “design team” (DT) who often receive free products and promotion in exchange for regularly posting project ideas using new products on their blogs and are featured on brand websites.

These contests developed grew as the scrapbook magazine industry increasingly depended upon the ongoing submissions and contributions of readers for the magazine’s creative content. The sharing of contributions and designs with others who scrapbook was (and is) a common practice in the hobby. Among those who scrapbook, copying someone else’s page is so common as to even have received its own term – scraplifting. The term scraplifting playfully rifts off of “shoplifting,” or the act of stealing goods from stores. While there have been significant debates regarding scraplifting, the consensus on online forums is that scraplifting remains fine for personal use, but “not for design team work or contest submissions” (TwoPeas, 2010). As long as an individual does not choose to profit or gain recognition from shared designs, these ideas may be scraplifted from online galleries or around the table at scrapbook events. This consensus on spaces where scraplifting is “off-limits” points to contest submissions and design teams as a primary pathway to industry ownership.

The growing use of digital technologies such as blogs and social media eased the integration and interactivity of these amateur participatory practices for the magazine. These digital technologies further facilitated the ability of these fans to monetize their
work (also seen monetization of self-published fan fiction). At the same time, such contests also fit with the use of “free labor” or “voluntarily given and unwaged” labor common to digital design work (Terranova, 2000). Design contest winners may receive small cash prizes, but primarily these practices remained unwaged. Instead of a sustainable wage, winners gained recognition of their work through its appearance in a magazine, advertisement, or brand website. As those who scrapbook seek individual achievement and recognition within the pages of scrapbook magazines/blogs/websites, the system of widespread collaborative support, social sharing, and recognition within the practice also began to change.

These contests emerged within broader socio-economic movements toward crowd-sourced marketing and user-generated content that gathered momentum and, eventually, came to define era of Web 2.0. Web 2.0 has been used to demarcate the emergence of participatory content on the internet often defined by the development of shared platforms for user-generated content such as Wikipedia and YouTube. These type of competition and contests are “ubiquitous in digital environments, where they influence the rankings and hierarchies connected with the value and popularity” of artistic goods (books, music, reality TV contestants) (Suhr, 2014). These contests serve as a tool of evaluation that determines reputation and ranking. Who has the ability to evaluate these works has shifted from editors of the magazine to the television audience.

The annual Hall of Fame (HOF) contest by leading scrapbook magazine, Creating Keepsakes (CK), functioned as the most visible pathway for moving from hobbyist to designer within the scrapbook industry from 1998 to 2008 (see Figure 4). Among those who scrapbook, CK’s HOF contest was a symbol of the highest level of social recognition and self-affirmation for amateur scrapbookers for a decade. The winners gained visibility
and legitimacy and their entries were reaffirmed as the “best” work of the year. As a contest, the HOF became a space of direct comparison with peers. As the magazines not only featured the winning pages, but also included biographies, anecdotes, and a high level of personalization, the annual issue invited readers to support winners who shared a similar style or even identity. As the industry grew, conflicting notions of “who I should be” and whose work was deserving of recognition began to play out in the pages of the annual HOF contest. Similar contest of recognition have a long history from annual festivals in ancient Greece to the blue ribbon awarded to the top quilt at the county fair (English, 2005, p. 32-37). English (2005) goes as far as to assert that “prizes have always been of fundamental importance to the institutional machinery of cultural legitimacy and authority” (p. 37) and extending hierarchies of value used to benefit those institutions.

Who and what type of individuals and forms of scrapbooking were selected for inclusion in the HOF reinforced and extended the understanding for the practice held by an associated group. The symbolic and social value of being a contest winner converted into monetary value through self-branding afforded through the growing popularity of online blogs/microsites. Through the combination of publicity and prestige, HOF winners became some of the “biggest names” in the industry. Although the contest ended in 2008, a perusal of the list of winners (Cathy Zielske, Heidi Swapp, Shimelle Laine, Elizabeth Kartchner, and Ali Edwards) overlaps with a list of today’s most popular scrapbook self-branded product lines.

**Hall-of-Famegate**

The Hall-Of-Fame (HOF) contest ended partially as the result of a scandal in the submission of a 2007 HOF winner, Kristina Contes, an event nicknamed Hall-of-Famegate on scrapbooking blogs and forums. Kristina Contes entered CR’s HOF contest
as a “28-year-old rising star in the world of scrapbooking, with a silver stud in her lip and a tattoo in Latin on her left forearm: ‘Art is long, life is short’” (Haysaki, 2008). Contes informed an LA Times reporter that her status in scrapbooking was “kind of like being a rock star” (Haysaki, 2008). Contes had an established blog and a co-authored book, *We Dare You: Scrapbook Challenges about Real Life.*

**Figure 4: 2006 Creating Keepsakes Hall of Fame Contest Promotion**

Kristina Contes was selected as one of the HOF winners in 2007; however, the as readers pointed out, her submission broke the official contest rules as she did not take the photo used in her submission. Contes, in fact, had spoken with CK to ensure that the photographer, her co-author and a former CK HOF winner, Nisa Fin was given credit for the photography of her submission (TwoPeas, 2009). Contes’s infringement of the rules was tied to the style and content of her submission. She had submitted a photo of
herself, which would have been impossible for her to take. The very subject matter of her entry, herself, was limited by existing contest rules.

The 2007 controversy gives a snapshot of several key groups vying for power: the industry/institutional structure (represented by CK magazine), the alternate reputational identity of ‘life art’ scrapbookers (represented by Kristina Contes), and the ‘traditional’ or established members (represented by the major of CK readership). The focus of her submission on herself was representative of the life-art style’s view of scrapbooks as a space of self-expression of the individual. This approach differs from a tradition of family memory keeping focused on preserving memories for self and others. These two approaches are illustrative of conflicting demands within feminine labor between self-recognition (fame, artistic achievement) and care for others (family, care labor). The recognition and symbolic value bestowed on Contes in winning the HOF contest represented a challenge and even an affront to the core identity, values, and morals, as well as the overall status position, of many within the existing practice. Contes was representative of a larger shift in the practice from recognition for loved ones to self-recognition for marginalized groups with the potential to revolutionize the dominant identity status of the established field (Walzer, 1983, p. 251). Contes’s rule breaking and use of profanity unleashed even greater pushback from those seeking to reassert recognition for forms of scrapbooking that foreground loved ones (not self) and photography (not multi-media art techniques).

The controversy emerged, however, in reaction to the democratic rhetoric espoused by the contest that the winners of the contest could be anyone – even you. The contest was defined as a space of achievement, not a symbol of pre-determined status. After nearly ten years of the contest, many readers were disappointed to see that the
contest was far from democratic. As one blogger put it, “Creating Keepsakes held a contest, a number of people thought they had an equal opportunity, and yet it appears the rules were only enforced for the non-predetermined winners” (TwoPeas, 2008). The outcry over Contes’s win became an outcry that her pre-established celebrity status held more sway than merit and achievements. As one post argues, “ten years ago, you or I had a pretty good chance of getting a layout in CK…before the Cult of Personality took over” (Two Peas, 2008). The overturning of Contes’s designation as winner was the result of pushback for CK to take the opinions of their readers into consideration. The absorption of Hall-of-Famegate into a scandal, however, worked to discount the event as a successful intervention by the readership to determine and distribute the symbolic capital for the group from CK.

The discovery of Contes’s rule-breaking revealed what many had already suspected: CK magazine was simply rewarding and acknowledging already existing scrapbook celebrities to suit their own needs, rather than discovering and supporting new talent. The mythology surrounding applicants’ desires to “break-in” the industry was revealed as a fiction. Many of those outraged by the contest controversy emphasized that the “ONLY reason people cared so much is because they felt it was evidence of fraud in the contest.” In turn, the majority of “disgruntled scrapbookers besieged the CK chat room threatening to cancel subscriptions, boycott, and sue” (Hayasaki, 2008). As a result of the scandal, the community lost a widespread sense of recognition, what Barbara Carnevali (2013) identifies as “respect, consideration, regard, attention, love, and other forms of symbolic appraisal from those with whom they share social interaction” (p. 1). The cynicism evoked by the contest may evoke Paulo Virno’s (2007) discussion on the impact of applying a principle of equivalence (associated with commodification) to social
relations. Virno notes the ways that social are based on abstract knowledge that defies equivalence. Virno argues when equivalence is applied to “general intellect,” this logic undercuts solidarity and creates cynicism as individuals reject the application of equivalence to abstract knowledge.

Only after sustaining heavy losses to both advertisers and readership did CK retract their decision. On Oct. 20, eight months after Contes had won, CK issued a news release in response to the protests: Contes had been disqualified from its HOF. “We are painfully aware that our error has deeply upset many of you, our cherished readers and scrapbooking partners,” wrote editor-in-chief Brian Tippetts. The controversy, along with the major economic recession of 2008-2009 and the widespread availability of free content online, ended the decade-long run of CK’s Hall Of Fame contest. A 2009 press release announcing the end of the contest addressed to the readers stated that, “We recognize the importance of our contests in finding and acknowledging fresh talent in the scrapbooking community, so we’re devoting a special section of our October 2009 issue to showcase your amazing pages” (Creating Keepsakes). This address served as a reminder for the readership of the power and “importance” of the magazine to bestow and affirm social recognition and symbolic value by “acknowledging fresh talent.” As the magazine addressed their “cherished readers,” they used religious-infused language to emphasize their devotion “to showcase your amazing pages.” This supplication felt patronizing to many readers as it failed to acknowledge the dependence of the magazine on the free content provided by these readers’ submissions as well as the fact that readers continued to have to pay the magazine for a subscription in order to see the magazine’s devotion to their “amazing” work.
As scrapbook magazines began to utilize these contests, the contests and the recognition given through the contests became tied to product promotion. Scrapbook contestants and design team members began to seek individual achievement and recognition; the system of widespread collaborative support and social sharing within the practice also began to change. Aeron Davis (2013) notes that “promotional activity helps direct individual behaviors and social systems towards the servicing of markets and to elevate individual values over communal ones” (p. 28). The 2007 HOF scandal provided a striking example of the growing distrust and pushback by those who scrapbook with the selfish intentions of the scrapbook business.

**Design Team Contests**

The end of the Hall-of-Fame contest in 2008/2009 is often pointed to as the end of the era of magazine-driven influence within the industry. As an online forum explains, “the magazines don’t really drive the industry anymore - now it’s bloggers, manufacturer blogs, videos, podcasts” (TwoPeas, 2013). As magazines were replaced by websites and blogs, the design contests held by the magazines became contests to join a brand’s design team. These design teams reconfigure the magazine contest into a pathway for amateurs to become professionals.

Since 2013, essentially every brand has a design team. Selection to be part of a design team is typically a one-year commitment, although it is certainly not unusual for an individual to be a design team member of a brand for several consecutive years. Typically, design team members create original designs shared on their blogs, which are often linked to manufacturer/brand websites. Design team members will often post at the same time as a team to showcase different approaches or ways to use the brand’s latest products. As individual posts are linked with the team, these monthly design team posts
become a reconfigured form of collaborative sharing – a reconfigured and commoditized system for scraplifting. Design teams serve to promote and share free ideas on how to use new product lines and to inspire readers to buy the same products.

Design teams operate as an industry and brand structure in which team members’ creative (designs and creativity) and intimate labor (personalities, personal lives) are inserted to increase the value of a brand’s product. Design team membership includes keeping a blog that may be linked to the brand or team page (often as part of a design team blog circle). These teams also enable the industry to create an intimate distance as they merge promotion of blog personas with promotion of products. The design team member personalizes the brand’s products as they add their own photos, stories, and style – a style and persona that the company selects to match their aesthetic or values. The use of design team members’ personas to help sell new products points to the “increasing cultural value, and potentially surplus value, that is now extracted from the production of affect, desire, attention, and image” (Hearn, 2008, p. 214). What design team members gain are free products and recognition. Through their blog posts, the design team members perform a form of “free-labor” and user-generated content; however, as these competitive positions are frequently leveraged to gain entry into an industry job, they are more closely akin to the system of unpaid/underpaid internships necessary to enter many creative fields.

These design teams have become ubiquitous. On a visit to a local store in Florida in 2015, I noticed that they had their own local “design team” to promote store products. As the use of design teams has proliferated, the prestige they offer falls short of the “one-and-only” status conferred by the Hall of Fame. Winning the Hall of Fame was leveraged not only to generate jobs in the industry (often at the magazine itself), but to generate a
microcelebrity status; while it “looks good on your resume,” design teams members are more often one of a crowd; however, being attached to the largest brands and names still works to demarcate one’s work as “good.” Design team calls are advertised by brands, such as Studio Calico, Project Life, Ali Edward, and other paper/product companies. A list of design team calls appears on a tab in the blog, Scrapbook Update, devoted to sharing news on the scrapbook industry. Following these calls, members of these companies select “winners” from the pool of applicants, which are often also announced on the company’s website and social media along with a profile of the selected members’ work.

The podcasts/blogs/forums within the community frequently discuss the benefits and downsides of participating in design teams. One of the most comprehensive critiques of design teams, appears in a blog post, “why I will never be on a design team,” by The Scrap Gals podcast host, Traci Claibourne. Claibourne addresses reasons individuals choose to join a design team (which she’s done in the past) including getting free stuff or “because it’s a great feeling to receive a lot of positive feedback about your work.” Another design team member adds her enjoyment of the “team camaraderie…and the experience of being part of something bigger.”

Claibourne, however, expresses at length how she “could just never, ever, ever cope with being on a design team.” A number of these objections concern the pace and timeline demanded of design team members. She also objects to having limits (parameters and guidelines) placed on her creativity, which she phrases as, “I want the things I create to be of my own choosing.” Perhaps, her deepest concern appears in relation to the inevitable comparison of her creative work to other high profile designers that would be an “added pressure…and it would affect the way I feel about memory keeping and my
creative time.” Claibourne objects to increased pressure to perform or be creative on demand. Finally, Claibourne asserts that “the payoff (product) wouldn’t be worth the investment (time).” Again, we can see how the terms of the hobby, such as design team participation, become seen in terms of a cost/benefit analysis. As hobbyists begin to work for the industry, the competitive spirit of capitalism begins to define and cut out the benefits of those seeking a supportive (not competitive) and creative outlet.

The DT presents a contradiction noted by scholars in relation to many forms of participatory media practices from YouTube to video game design. As a form of voluntary and “free-given” labor, these design teams do not align with traditional understandings of exploitation or precarious (poorly paid, insecure) labor. Yet, if you aren’t careful and don’t “make the product work” for you, then, instead, you start working for the product. One member from a DT responds that,

When I decided to apply to DT’s, I made a commitment to not compromise who I was. I scrap stories I want to tell and I make the product work for me. I knew I never wanted the product to drive what I make. Sometimes, that means some DT’s have passed me up. I am ok with that. It's very important to know who you are and what you want from the hobby before joining a DT. If you don't keep to that core thought process, then yes, a DT can suck the life out of you.

Another individual remarks that “when you scrapbook for a design team, you frequently forget that the reason you're scrapbooking is about photos, and even more importantly, about story. Design teams (DTs) are all about selling product and pushing the envelope.” The concern appears that the design team changes the purpose of the hobby and “who you are” as a designer.

While many who scrapbook appreciate space for connections and ideas, they are also critical of the rampant commercialization that accompanies the merger of a popular blog (or blogger) with a brand. Online message boards reveal disgust when there is “no
balance between the ‘ad’ blog updates and the project/inspiration updates. It is all one-sided right now.” As one message board participant states, “I don't follow most people for exactly this reason. It's just too much advertising all the time… just ‘join my class! buy my stuff! do my things!!!’ it's REALLY annoying.” Other readers have stopped reading blogs altogether: “I know it's how they make their living, but it's gotten out of hand, I think.” When the design team (DT) member’s blog becomes strictly promotional, scrapbook message boards express a strong backlash. A DT member who designs for multiple brands and has posts exclusively centered around PR/marketing receives the moniker of “design team whore” (DTW). Being labeled a DTW involves “pimping your family memories and posting them on internet, submitting all the time to get published, just so you can get free products” (TwoPeas, 2013). As the moniker DTW and the idea of “pimping products” make clear, commercialization of scrapbooking for profit can incur feelings of exploitation, power, and working the system. Yet, such forms of infighting and name-calling detract from the system of profit and loss of the industry that these design team members are inserted into and that increasingly sets the parameters for public participation.

**From Columnist to Blogger**

The magazines were crucial to the celebrity of both Ali Edwards and Becky Higgins as they were both columnists for *Creating Keepsakes* magazine as well as published authors through the magazine. Higgins joined the magazine after its first year and started one of the longest-running columns, “Becky’s Sketches.” Ali Edwards was the 2003 winner of the Hall of Fame contest prior to become a columnist. After winning, her monthly column enabled her to grow a large following of fans. In 2009, both left the
magazine to start their own successful self-brands at Beckyhiggins.com and aliedwards.com.

In one of her blog posts, Becky Higgins shares her top ten business tips. She makes reference to three business self-help books: *Purple Cow, Rework, and The Brand Called You* (Godwin, 2003; Fried and Hannsson, 2010; Montoya and Vandehey, 2003). These three books identify three forms of labor that Higgins asserts should be used by aspiring designers to bolster their self-recognition: uniqueness, flexible labor practices, and self-branding. The central messages from these three books summarize advice for those seeking to make it in the scrapbook industry. Put together, the books advise that, in order to be successful, you need a unique, or rather, “remarkable” essence (*Purple Cow*) which is increasingly important as “anyone can be in business” (*Rework*) and the best way to stand out is through “The Brand Called You,” in which you develop yourself into a product infused with your “unique entrepreneurial spirit” or your own self-brand.

The strategies shared by Higgins overlap in the development and display of a ‘unique’ self. Here she refers to the argument of marketing expert Seth Godin’s bestseller, *Purple Cow*, that a successful product should be unique. Within the landscape of marketing, uniqueness enables an entrepreneur’s product to stand out and gain attention within a crowded marketplace. Objects understood as “unique” or “remarkable” also intersect with the autonomous, unique, possessive individual demanded by the neoliberal market (Scharff, 2012, p. 6; Gill, 2007). Uniqueness further privileges more masculine-oriented notions of the self as autonomous, independent and entrepreneurial (McGee, 2005, p. 16).

This notion of “uniqueness” defines a critical space of overlap between craft and marketing. Moves to align women’s craft with “uniqueness” redefine craft into the terms
of neoliberalism such as individual choice and autonomy that enable women to assert themselves as ideal citizens and as “capable managers of their lives” (Scharff, 2012). Through their ongoing association with handicrafts rather than mass production, craft has become positioned as a “unique,” individual artistic or creative endeavor, rather than a collective or shared activity. Uniqueness offers these “artists” to assert a higher value for their work. This appears in the industry’s emphasis on the need for those who scrapbook to develop their own individual design aesthetic.

These discourses of uniqueness and individuality reconfigure the potential conflict between the notion of the scrapbook for care or kin labor and as a space for self-recognition into one of collaboration. In this reconfigured relationship, the cultivation of a unique self offers a form of self-recognition and, subsequently, care of that self. This foregrounding of care as care for the self is also tied to a feminized therapeutic ethos, which asserts that social problems can be solved through work on the self (Illouz, 2008; Dubrofsky, 2007; McGee, 2005; Banet-Weiser, 2012). The increased emphasis on recording the unique details of daily life has also heightened interest in self-surveillance tied to progressive self-improvement that was missing from previous versions of the practice that will be addressed in the final chapter. These discourses of self-care tied to self-help further reflect the individualization of the practice away from its communal and collective roots.

**Struggle to Find a “Middle Ground”**

The pull between intimate ties and the mass audiences necessary for profit is a conflict not only for the scrapbook industry, but also for those women who work or desire to work within the industry. These women are often reflective and highly self-aware of their self-presentations. Design team members and bloggers, in particular, openly discuss
their struggles to maintain the right balance between selling products and posting meaningful content that connects personally with readers. The struggle to maintain intimacy on a larger scale has become a form of intimate labor common to feminine industries. For these self-brands, sharing their personal lives through their blogs and on social media is part of the surplus value of their product offerings and a crucial part of their business.

One of the most beloved scrapbook bloggers, Ali Edwards, started her blog in 2004 as a personal blog on Typepad as just “another way to document what was happening in her life” (Hyman, 2012, Episode 104). Edwards gained notoriety as a 2003 HOF winner, and she appeared as a monthly columnist in Creating Keepsakes magazine. Edwards is not only one of the most well known names/brands in the industry, but she also has one of the industry’s most well known blogs (ww.aliedwards.com). In discussing her blog, Ali Edwards expresses the challenge of maintaining the right balance between selling products with posting meaningful content that connects personally with readers. As she explains,

my personal struggle has always been, can [the blog] be both? Can it be the personal and be the business piece? I think that sometimes it can and sometimes it can’t, and that’s what I’m always continually learning...Whether it’s too much promotional or too much personal. I’m always trying to find that middle-space (Hyman, 2012, Episode 104).

Other bloggers on the panel echoed their own struggle with the issue of finding a middle ground between the promotional and the personal. Nancy Nally, another blogger, chimes in, “I couldn’t [find that middle space], and I have two sites for that exact reason.” Edwards goes on to describe how her 2010 web redesign separated her personal blog (personal updates, things my kids say) from her project blog (business-related, new product releases, projects). Her rebranding of AliEdwards.com in August of 2014
continues to separate business and personal by offering two buttons/options under her
tagline “craft your story:” “tell your story” (products/subscriptions for sale) or “read my
story” (her personal blog). In this scenario, the ability to “tell your story” is tied to the
purchase of Edwards’ products. Edwards’s “solution” illustrates how participation from
the readership to “tell your story” is entwined with the purchase of products.

A solution for the challenge of finding the right balance between the personal and
promotional may emerge when the self-branded designers tailor their performances to sell
their approach or style rather than their entire persona. Edwards’s 2014 blog redesign
and her tagline, “craft your story,” mirrors the strategy of Becky Higgins to “cultivate a
good life, and record it.” Higgins’s tagline to “record life” highlights her approach to
scrapbooks as tied to memory-keeping, photography, and documentation of daily life. In
a similar fashion, Edwards’s tagline, “craft the story,” succinctly summarizes her personal
emphasis on long-form storytelling or journaling within scrapbooks. For instance, the
word of the year for Edwards’s blog in 2010 was “story.” Each brand aligns with their
customers’ desires to scrapbook like Ali Edwards or Becky Higgins. At the same time,
these brands channel the notion of what it is to “be like them” into following their
approach and process to scrapbooking.

Blogging is a critical space in which a form of intimate distance and para-social
interaction is negotiated between the blogger and their readership. Another blogger and
podcast host, Tracie Claiborne, introduces Ali Edwards on her podcast by stating, “I
could be besties with her.” She notes that

people that I love their blogs the most, it’s not because they are scrapping a
scrapbook page, it’s because I love them…today Ali posted a picture of herself
driving down the road on Instagram, and I’m like ‘Oh, there’s cute Ali, and she’s
driving down the road’ (Claiborne & Lowder, 2014).
This sentiment was shared during a local event, called a “crop,” as the group discussed the YouTube scrapbook celebrity, Jennifer McGuire. Several members of the group gushed, “I know she would be my friend.” Such “backstage” access to blogger/vloggers is a form of “performed intimacy” that allow these bloggers to cultivate and stay connected to their audience (Marwick and boyd, 2011).

The personal blogs and personas of both Higgins and Edwards remain a critical part of the value of their brands. Higgins’s social media posts include anecdotes, photos, or drawings from her kids to be placed in a Project Life album; even a fashion intervention by her friends gets posted and labeled “Project Style.” Both women showcase their home offices and their systems for work and organizing.

The ubiquity of social media promotions means that these entrepreneurial self-brands not only promote products, but also promote their lives and their identities through gender-infused presentations of successful selfhood that mitigate challenges of balancing ongoing personal labor demands (such as motherhood or care for others) with the search for self-recognition. Susan Luckman (2014) describes these forms of promotional and aesthetic labor as a requirement of design craft producers to “market themselves, their home and place of making, lifestyle and wider personal identity, as part of the value of the product they produce.” Personal blogs and the sharing of their personal lives are part of the surplus value of scrapbook designers’ product offerings. A clear example of this appears in both designers’ use of personal handwriting as the script/font for their brand logos and taglines (discussed in the next section).

An example of this negotiated performance of successful entrepreneur/motherhood, “mumpreneurship” (Luckman, 2015), appeared during #celebrity week (September 7, 2014) held by Michaels, one of the largest big-box craft
stores in the U.S. When former CK editor Becky Higgins took over Michael’s Instagram page, she posted pictures of her home office and of her and her three children looking at a Project Life album. Higgins’s post was accompanied by the caption, “I love and honor my role as wife and mother even more than running a business.” This post allows Higgins to present herself as mother and caretaker, while she garners self-recognition in the promotion of her products. These celebrity bloggers offer models on how to balance often conflicting demands between public and private labor, particularly in relation to motherhood. This conflict appears frequently as a critical area of tension and concern for those who scrapbook.

**Branded Signature**

As former columnists for *Creating Keepsakes* (CK) magazine, Becky Higgins, Ali Edwards, and Heidi Swapp had their handwriting featured within the pages of the magazine. Now, both incorporate their handwriting into their self-brands. In Western culture, handwriting functions to personalize or to mark the authenticity (one’s aura) and is used legally as a “signature” of the self. Within celebrity culture, an “auto” “graph,” which combines the root words for “self” and “write,” adds value to books, posters and other forms of memorabilia. As scrapbook celebrities gain notoriety, their handwriting becomes a product and, both literally and figuratively, a part of their branded signature (see Figure 5).

*Figure 5: Project Life tagline in handwriting of Becky Higgins*
The mass production of self-branded handwriting reveals the underlying indexicality of self-branding especially in the context of a scrapbook. Within the study of symbolic signs, semiotics, indexes are those signs that maintain a tangible connection to their referent – where there is a link between referent and object, such the use of handwriting as the brand’s font. Brand logos and taglines within the craft industry that are closely entwined with the designer’s persona offer an indexical link to the production/design of the product. Indexicality affords a degree of “intimate distance” as the sign remains attached/intimate with its referent. For instance, a former HOF winner Heidi Swapp (2005) published a book with Creating Keepsakes Media, *Love Your Handwriting*. Ali Edwards sells a line of stamps, rub-ons, and other products with sentiments written in her handwriting (Figure 6). Edwards also has a Pinterest board entitled “by my hand” that showcases handwritten notes and memos of famous quotations and journaling prompts. Becky Higgins has been autographing her products on store shelves and sharing these images with the location of the signed product on social media with the #BHhideandseek (Figure 7).

![Figure 6: Example of line of stamps for sale in Ali Edwards handwriting](image-url)
Figure 7: Becky Higgins adds her signature to products in stores and posts to social media for fans to find with #BHhideandseek

Semiotic scholars of branding have identified two main forms of brand indexes: 1.) type-mediated indexes such as logos and 2.) token-mediated indexes, which mark “a real contact, a making, a moment of imprinting by one for whom it acts as a kind of fingerprint.” Each type of index is also associated with differing forms of production and producer: “[token-mediated] the authenticity of the distinctive variability of artisanal craft production made by the craftsman versus [type-mediated] the guarantee of absolutely identical quality of industrial production” (Meneley, 2004; Manning, 2010, p. 38). The use of handwriting as a personalized font for mass-production shows the way that the contemporary scrapbook industry blurs boundaries between type and token-mediated indexes.

The sense of intimacy cultivated by the indexical branding and marketing of the designer also obscures the class inequalities replicated in the actual making of the products sold. The token-mediated style and approach of the designer provides a surplus value for consumers seeking connection in a marketplace dominated by “faceless” mass
production. While the more prestigious craft “designer” is known and offers a branded token-index, the working class laborers of mass-production, who are often overseas, remain invisible or faceless. These factory workers are the ones who, with the help of machines, actually make the stamps, paper, albums and other products sold in stores.

Becky Higgins personifies what Marwick and boyd (2011) describe as “performed intimacy” and strategies of “persona intimacy” (Abidin and Thompson, 2012). Performed intimacy has become a central labor of Becky Higgins social media and her brand. She often shares intimate details to accompany the pictures she posts such as “my daughter, Claire, took this photo.” Higgins also shares tips on how she does her hair or answers viewer questions about her life. In the summer of 2016, Higgins shared about finding cancer and undergoing surgery. Her face, personality, and glimpses into her life offer a surplus value for consumers seeking connection rather than “faceless” mass production.

Yet, her social media posts also reveal a stunning example of the erasure of working class production. Higgins curates “behind the scenes” video on her business for her followers with #BHbehindthescenes (Figure 8). These posts are used to involve her customers in the story or process behind the production of the brand, as Higgins describes, “before the product shows up at your door.” Higgins’s posts cover different aspects of her business including design sketches, team meetings, and video from the factory floor (Figure 9).
When launching the Project Life brand, Higgins had issues with production, which forced her to move production to the US, and she posted a video of her trip to the assembly on her blog and social media. In her footage from the factory floor, Higgins faces front and center, while the factory workers are in the background (video available at http://vimeo.com/42443189). These workers are never identified by name, unlike Higgins’s co-worker or her husband. Most of the factory workers are, in fact, women of color. This “behind the scenes” video makes visible the class hierarchy between the “designer” and typically invisible factory workers. Since Higgins has licensed production and distribution of her brand to the manufacturer American Crafts overseas, her behind-
the-scenes posts have focused on her “team” of white/pink collar workers during planning meetings or prepping for media events including modeling or photo shoots. Becky’s “team,” however, continues to exclude racialized working class labor that actually makes her products. The behind-the-scenes footage of the production by Becky Higgins continues to instill an intimate distance – balancing token-mediated (craft) production tied to the designer (Higgins) during the production of type-mediated products. Other scholars have linked this to Erving Goffman’s (1959) notion of “backstage” performances (Marwick and boyd, 2011; Abidin and Thompson, 2012).

Figure 9: Social media post from 2015 of Conference Table/Meeting in Becky Higgins Home Office #BHBehindTheScenes

The invisibility of the global working class behind-the-scenes of the scrapbook celebrity made another appearance in December 2014 during a crisis in the time-sensitive
“planner” trend in the scrapbook industry. There was a delay in the shipment of the planner for Heidi Swapp’s course on BigPictureClasses.com, which forced the customers to pay attention to and become aware of ongoing labor negotiations between ports and the 13,600 workers of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (Nally, 2014). The worker strikes in Los Angeles, Long Beach, and Seattle made the industry’s reliance on overseas labor production visible. The delay even prompted discussion and support for greater domestic production among consumers. At the same time, many manufacturers continued to downplay the seriousness of the situation; for instance, the manufacturer, Bo Bunny, posted an image of their product sitting on the dock accompanied by Otis Redding’s famous tune “sitting on the dock of the bay” (Figure 10).

**Figure 10:** **Bo Bunny’s Social Media Post on the Dock Workers’ Strike**

The intimacy and personalization enabled by self-branding and celebrity works well to mitigate distant ties of the “big corporation.” The indexical ties enabled through
the designer remain entwined with existing systems of power. “Having a face” is a privilege, as not every face is associated with higher sales. The face of the celebrity may be used to cover-up potentially exploitative production practices, including the erasure of the face, name, and labor of factory workers. What is made intimate often favors those in power whose face, work, and designs are allowed to be seen and made profitable. By evoking intimate distance as an ambivalent relationship used to privilege only certain forms femininity within “women’s culture,” this labor reinforces power structures tied to gender, race, and class that continue to make “market-friendly” forms of white, heterosexual, upper-class femininity visible at the expense of other identities.

Self-branded celebrity within the scrapbook industry is defined by a “can-do” girl who is “confident, resilient, and empowered” and set in opposition to those “at-risk” who lack self-esteem or engage in risky behavior (Harris, 2004; Banet-Weiser, 2012). These narratives of can-do and at-risk work together to promote constant self-surveillance, “failure is an ever-lurking possibility that must be staved off through sustained application” (Gonick, 2006). While self-branded celebrities may address their imperfections, weaknesses, and personal hardships including divorce and challenges of work/life balance, these entrepreneurs are ultimately presented as working through these challenges to regain control of their destiny.

**An Exclusive Category**

Winning contests in scrapbook magazines, or reality TV, affords high levels of recognition as well as a form of “intimacy at a distance” common to celebrity culture. Walzer (1983) points to a suspicion that most of us want, and even need, to give as well as receive recognition…but we are wary about finding such people among our friends and neighbors. Such discoveries are difficult because they challenge our own value and force
unwelcome comparisons with us. In a democratic society, recognitions are easiest at a distance (p. 254).

As a higher status, celebrity provides a safe zone from unwanted comparison with peers entwined with the competitive relations of capitalism. Directing our attention to the stage of celebrity redirects us from focusing on a potentially competitive relationship with others in the audience. Those who scrapbook note that comparison with others or feeling that their own work “doesn’t measure up” can be prohibitive and “shut down their creativity.” A common piece of scrapbook advice is to not compare your work to others (Hyman, 2012, Episode 104). Yet, “celebrity remains a systematically hierarchical and exclusive category, no matter how much it proliferates” (Turner, 2006 p. 157). The intimate bond we hold with celebrities distracts us from the fact that celebrity is a higher status category – one that is close enough for identification, but far enough out of our reach to avoid comparison.

Scholars have also pointed to the association of celebrities as what Hannah Arendt describes as pre-political authority figures (Furendi, 2010, p. 495). As authority figures, celebrities “provide people with a focus for identification,” and the imitation of celebrities “is a significant dimension of celebrity culture” (Furendi, 2010, p. 495). Imitation of celebrities is also tied to the craft tradition in which master craftsman models techniques to apprentices. Mimicking the personal style of scrapbook designers helps to teach and create a shared set of practices. Online distribution, such as memes and emulating poses on Instagram, “make manifest how much celebrity depends on processes of copying” (Tongson, 2015; Marwick, 2015; Marcus, 2015, p. 4). One way to get closer to a celebrity is through the process of imitating them (Marcus, 2015, p. 2). Tongson (2015) describes how the imitation of karaoke “blurs celebrity and fandom by allowing us to feel that in
copying someone else’s performance we are also, however derivatively, expressing our core selves, our intimate desires, and even our grandiose ambitions and fantasies” (p. 102). Through the proliferation of copying, imitation, and fan/celebrity retweets, digital tools have facilitated opportunities for proximity, or less distance, between fan and celebrity. At the same time, the distance afforded by celebrity status continues to mitigate direct comparison with peers while offering a role model.

Intimate distance maintained through celebrity, however, often works to balance power in favor of profit and self-recognition over mutual care. Celebrity also promotes models of selfhood entwined with a “self-conscious development and management of public persona based on templates of the ‘self’ supplied by corporate media culture” (Hearn, 2006; Luckman, 2013). Celebrity models mirror the image of those in power who are often white, wealthy, young, and/or attractive. These whitewashed images contribute to a loss in the diversity of stories, styles, and identities that circulate most visibly within the practice (Banet-Weiser, 2012). Rather than expanding the practice onto a larger scale, the practice of celebrity often works to limit who and what forms of the practice are allowed to be visible on this larger scale.

**Conclusion: Scaling Down**

Negotiating intimacy on this larger scale often relies upon forms of mediated intimacy. Use of “signature names” or brands, such as Lydia Pinkham, has become a profitable way to cultivate a sense of mediated intimacy or intimate distance between producer and consumers. Intimate distance has become necessary to the functioning of feminized industries, and self-branded celebrities function as the “face” of these negotiated relations. The tensions and contradictions of this intimate distance are representative of the “ambivalent politics of a brand culture.” The scandal surrounding
the HOF contest makes clear the power dynamics at play in who and what is allowed to transition from amateur to celebrity. Self-branded celebrity Ali Edwards blog shows the struggle to balance the promotional and personal. While self-branded celebrity Becky Higgins use of social media, makes intimate certain forms of can-do white femininity reflective of existing power structures of race and class, while obscuring, or making distant, the concerns of those outside of the cozy frame.

This chapter has examined the process of scaling up, or the larger scale, accompanying the growth of the scrapbook industry. Since the 2008 recession, however, the scale of the scrapbook industry has been shifting down. Furthermore, the process of scaling down has serious gendered implications. Scaling down will only have positive social impact if it is done by both men and women. If only women are choosing to make their practices more personal and intimate, this will only perpetuate the dominance of male perspectives and male voices within broader social discourse. Few masculine hobbies grapple with contradictions of public and private labor as contemporary scrapbooking does. Masculine hobbies are often automatically assumed to be of public interest, whereas activities marked as feminine leisure are often held to a personal scale where they may be dismissed. Ironically, many women are retreating into the personal realm in order to find a space of validation for their own experiences and for help in resolving the contradictory terrain of femininity. The turn to celebrity and increasing use of celebrity tactics in feminine performativity is also partially a way to “scale up” intimate ties within a more visible space that provides validation and recognition of the work of female designers. As amateurs seek individual recognition and monetary compensation, they move away from communal support towards the pursuit of individual recognition aligned with self-branding and celebrity status.
While scrapbooks remains categorized as a form of paper crafting, the majority of products (particularly branded lines) within the industry are now produced in bulk overseas. This includes the paper, stickers, adhesives, and other basic supplies. The labor of compilation and design has also become a service commodity sold by direct sale consultants, provided in pre-packed kits, or taught in classes. When hobbyists choose to become a direct-sales consultant or self-branded celebrity, they are able to legally assert ownership (including copyright) over their “designs.” Layout designs and templates, rather than being freely shared, become commodities to be sold. As the hobby grew into an industry, the communal, collective space of women’s craft culture became a space owned by “possessive individuals” or companies.

The scrapbook industry, like scrapbooks, manages to maintain indexical ties from a distance. This chapter has shown how intimate distance works in favor of existing power hierarchies to determine whose face, work, and designs are allowed to be seen and made profitable. Intimate distance also works to build distance from unfair and potentially exploitative working condition from globalized working class labor to the free labor of design teams. “Scaling up” is in many ways an abstraction away from the human scale where suffering takes place and where suffering is prevented. Experiences of trauma and shock work to increase distance from experience “to numb the organism, to deaden the sense, to repress memory” (Andrejevic, 2007, p. 248; Buck-Morass, 1992). As a popular leisure activity aligned with the feminine labor of caretaking, it makes sense for the scrapbook industry to focus on intimacy as a way to hold onto and to assert the importance of a more human scale. It is important to also reveal what the increased distance facilitated by the industry enables customers to remain detached from and what individuals this works to make invisible or faceless.
CHAPTER FOUR:  
“\(^{\text{I Cropped,}}\)” The Social Intimacy of the Scrapbook Circle

Why do you Scrapbook?

The last chapter addressed intimacy’s relationship with scale or, more specifically, with scaling up in relation to the growth of scrapbooks into an industry. The next three chapters continue to address intimacy at different scales and locations (social, material and personal). Furthermore, these next three chapters also align with three different reasons individuals articulated during interviews that they choose to scrapbook: 1.) as a social outlet, 2.) as an artistic outlet and 3.) as a form of memory keeping.

These different approaches to scrapbooks are both reflected and connected to “keepsake buttons” to be earned at the Scrapbook Expo events including “I cropped” and “I created.” As the introduction noted, these keepsake buttons served as an inspiration for the organization of the dissertation’s chapters. Similar to how the goal is to collect more than one button, women choose to scrapbook for multiple reasons. These reasons also overlap with the three settings or sites of the practice addressed in these chapters (social, material, and personal) and help to differentiate different contexts, forms, and concerns of intimate labor within the practice.

While I did not ask specifically ask “why do you scrapbook” during interviews, one storeowner responded to my final question “is there anything else you think I should know?” by offering her insights and observations on why various people choose to scrapbook. Or as she asked, “do you want to know why people scrapbook?”

Different people do it for different reasons. There’s a lot of people who do it just for the camaraderie, because they have friends and it’s fun. We get together, we laugh, we get out of the house. You spend the whole day doing something that you enjoy with people that you enjoy.
Some people do it for the artistic outlet – the creativity that you feel when you’re doing something, when you make something. When you make something by yourself, you look at that and it’s a very satisfying feeling.

Some people do it purely and solely for that memory keeping, they are very focused on documenting every moment of their lives. They are very pedantic as to how they go about it, they are very, you know, task-oriented. They are working on 2009 and they have every picture organized and then they have to scrapbook every picture that they take. That’s almost like a chore. Those people aren’t usually having that much fun with their scrapbooking. They feel like they just have to do it.

People who are doing it for the artistic outlet and the creativity, they don’t understand the other ones. They think that they are putting themselves into an artificial situation. The other ones don’t understand the creative ones, what do you mean that you just “willy nilly” scrapbook something? What do you mean? Why not? They are friends and they hang out together, but they have a different philosophy about the craft.

While this description indicates her bias in favor of scrapbooks as an “artistic outlet,” the storeowner emphasizes that all of these different approaches still “hang out together.” In addition, she identifies a division between those who approach scrapbooks as memory keeping and those who approach it as an artistic outlet (e.g., paper crafting).¹

¹ Two philosophies (memory keeping or paper crafting/artistic outlet) are also visible in the two most influential direct-sale companies, Creative Memories (CM) and Close To My Heart (CTMH). CM started in 1986 with what co-founder Cheryl Lightle describes as a focus “simply on telling the treasured stories behind our photographs…dedicated to our initial vision—helping people preserve their memories in albums safely, easily, and quickly” (Lightle, 2004, p. 3). As memory-keeping aligns with a desire to “preserve memories…easily and quickly,” this approach is more concerned with ease and speed of digital forms for memory keeping. The second company, CTMH began in 1990 as D.O.T.S (Dozens of Terrific Stamps) or as a stamping company rooted in the card making/paper craft community. The company changed its name to Close To My Heart (CTMH) in 1995 and eventually began focusing exclusively on scrapbooking in 2000. Rather than CM’s concern with ease and speed of memory preservation, CTMH positions itself with a focus on craft and “heartfelt artwork.” As the “Let Me Show You How” company, CTMH urges consultants to share new craft techniques and “use the inspiration in your life to create heartfelt artwork that will share joy and love with those around you” (p.1, 2000-2001 Catalog). One CTMH consultant describes, “I love being able to walk into a room of strangers and teach them new skills and empower them to be able to create beautiful art” (94). In 2014/2015, Creative Memories went out of business, and CTMH broadened product offerings to other crafts and home décor.
Another woman echoes this division (between memory keeping and artistic outlet) as she asserts, “I don’t think that there is a right or wrong reason to scrapbook. Whether you do it as a hobby to creatively express yourself or to preserve special family memories, in the end, both you and your family benefit from it” (CK HOF, 2003, p. 130). While this account asserts that there is no “right or wrong reason to scrapbook,” her use of “or” underscores a dividing line between “a hobby to creatively express yourself” or one concerned with the preservation of “special family memories.” Yet, it is through the unique combination of both care for the self (through crafty artistic expression) and care for others/family (through documentation of their memories) that scrapbooks offer a rewarding and worthwhile hobby. A glimpse at how these two components combine within the practice itself may also be articulated in the ways the practice serves as both a “creative outlet today and the memory tomorrow” (Hyman, 2013, Episode 144).

This chapter addresses the most ubiquitous reason stated by my interviewees stated on why they choose to scrapbook, or scrapbooks as a social outlet. This chapter works to unpack the storeowner’s observation that there’s a lot of people who do it just for the camaraderie, because they have ‘friends and it’s fun. We get together, we laugh, we get out of the house. You spend the whole day doing something that you enjoy with people that you enjoy. This chapter introduces the concept of social intimacy as a starting point of discussion for the forms of close connection facilitated through a shared sense of vulnerability, identification, belonging, affirmation, and support among those who scrapbook together. Beyond the relational ties made manifest on the page of the scrapbook are the friendships formed through the hobby at events, gatherings, and in online discussions. These are places to make new acquaintances, turn acquaintances into friendships, and deepen or sustain existing relationships. One participant asserts that within her scrapbook group,
“there’s a camaraderie and support when we’re struggling, it’s really more about that”. In answering a question on her favorite scrapbook project, one woman asserted, “see for me, scrapbooking is the favorite part of it, not so much the scrapbooks”. When I asked what she meant by scrapbooking, she replied, “it’s a complete social activity.” This chapter takes seriously the role of “scrapbooking” as a social activity including friendship and informal institutional support for many women.

“But Are We Really, Truly Connecting?”

The days and weeks go by and our schedules are so full that we might look back and feel like we’re lacking in the department of really connecting with those we love most. Sure, we see them every day but are we really, truly connecting? Becky Higgins, Project Life brand founder

“Are we really, truly connecting?” points directly to a deep-seated concern pervading the hobby of scrapbooking. It underscores a deeper fear, even moral panic, in a time in which connections are increasingly mediated from afar. In fact, notions of “truly connecting” are defined by a sense of closeness. Close connections are, in fact, a constituent aspect of intimacy, defined by Fintan Walsh (2014) as the “spatial and experiential relationships of closeness, achieved by connecting” (p. 57). Further alarm over the state of our intimate connections has gained momentum since the 1970s as the so-called sphere of intimacy has undergone radical reconfigurations in relation to factors such as individualization, detraditionalization, reverberations of the women’s movement, feminization of economic life, and challenges to traditional family structure (Walsh, 2014; Adkins, 2001; Rosencil and Budgeon, 2004).

While this chapter draws on my attendance at over fifty events and thirty interviews, it is inspired most by experiences as a regular participant in a crop group in New Jersey over the past three years. After a short introduction to the crop, the chapter
begins with an ethnographic vignette/overview of a monthly event with this group as a way to introduce my findings on two components of *social intimacy* including 1) desires for and dangers of “safe” space and 2) mutual support or care.

*Social intimacy* commonly appears in women’s craft circles or social gatherings among those who scrapbook referred to as a “crop.” The term is derived from the activity of cropping of photos prior to their placement in an album. One crop organizer provides a descriptive understanding of the crop as, “a room full of women talking and eating. It’s a lot of talking, a lot of fun, a lot of sharing. It’s really a social thing while doing your hobby” (August 2015). Crops are frequently introduced in terms of quilting bees or other forms of women’s craft circles. One interviewee describes the reason she introduces crops, “in terms of quilting bees. Most people have an idea in their head of what a quilting bee is. I kind of compare it to that, except everyone is working on their own project versus working on one big quilt.”.

These circles generate a close and intimate connection tied to the notion of making together, a (gendered) crafter identity, and mutual support/care. These craft circles align with what Bratich and Brush (2011) refer to as “fabriculture,” or a broad set of practices often accompanying the material labor of craft work as well as the immaterial labor of meaning-making, sharing, and community-building (Bratich and Brush, 2011, p. 253). Fabriculture covers a range of craft practices such as knitting, quilting, doll-making, and scrapbooking. Faythe Levine (2011, p. 5) echoes this notion as she describes craft as “a way to connect with people, a way to create a community that you are inspired by.”

Yet, the popularity of many women’s hobbies, such as women’s crafting, often remain out-of-sight, which contributes to an underestimation of their contribution to these women’s lives and to the broader culture. Crafting groups meet both online and off
to generate a space for shared intimacy. As these spaces begin to use online tools for connection, they may be generating a new “semi-public or semi-private” discourse on women’s concerns and feminine norms (Morrison, 2011, p. 51). Michelle Rosaldo (1974) argues that when there is a greater overlap of domestic and public space this translates into a higher status for women. As crops can serve to get these women out of the house, they may provide an important space to share what may have remained private grievances with those who may be strangers. Historian Estelle Freedman (1995) asserts her disagreement with the notion that “female networks and feminist politics [are] incompatible” (p. 87). She notes that female separatism may contribute to “female institution building” pointing to the nineteenth-century women’s club movement’s (as well as women’s crafting circles) influence on first-wave feminism. She argues that to avoid additional devaluation of women’s culture that womanhood be redefined by the “extension rather than the rejection of the female sphere.” This extension of space appears in the way craft may develop into “craftivism” or the combination of craft and activism (Greer, 2014). Support for causes appears frequently at crops and many are organized in relation to social/community issues or nonprofits including the Girl Scouts, the Humane Society, the local fire department and to raise money a crop member’s family struggling with medical bills.

Social gatherings tied to women’s craft circles make strangers into friends and sustain participation in the hobby. The friendships made are often the most important part. As one woman notes, “without that connection [of friendship], I doubt I would still be scrapbooking.” While there may be transformative potential in social intimacy, I do not want to paint a one-dimensional understanding of such intimacy as an ideal to be achieved; instead, I hope to recognize the way that it functions within specific social
contexts to suit certain purposes. As the labor to connect (necessary to build intimacy) has been traditionally associated with feminine labor and women’s relational work, assertions of diminished intimacy and need for greater connection may create “more work for mother” (Cowan, 1985). The shared intimacy of the scrapbook crop becomes a space to share this burden and to offer a mutual support for other caretaking women. As di Leonardo (1987) describes in her concept of “kin work,” the very existence of a sense of “community, identity, and belonging” often depends on the work of women who organize ritual celebrations and work to construct and maintain social networks. Ideally, the social intimacy of the scrapbook crop emerges as a space to share this burden and to offer a mutual support and care for other caretaking women; however, when the caretaking role remains burdened on one or two individuals, rather than mutually shared, the group is no long sustainable.

**A Regular at the Crop**

1) *Forget a supply? NO problem… scrapbookers share*
2) *If life gets rough, scrapbookers are there to love you*
3) *Sometimes a crop is more about the people than the pages you complete*
4) *If you want a little passion in your life, start scrapbooking. Scrapbookers are passionate*
5) *Don’t worry about going to a crop or class alone. Just look around and you’re surrounded by friends!*

Tracy White, *Creating Keepsakes* magazine Editor (from the 2007 Top 10 Issue, p. 16)

This section recounts a day at one crop held in the summer of 2015. This narrative serves as context for my discussion of two components of social intimacy that are closely entwined with Berlant’s (2008) identification of emotional release/intimate disclosures and shared identity as central to the intimate publics of women’s culture. The two components discussed and analyzed in greater depth include 1) the building of safe space and 2) social support derived from and tied to an emotional release that enables empathy and care.
In late June of 2013, I attended a weekend crop held by one of the most active scrapbooking groups in New Jersey held at a hotel. At the crop, I was placed next to a group of four women. While these events most typically consist of women in their forties to early sixties who are married with children, this group included two women in their early thirties (a single-woman looking for a job and a married teacher and mother), and two women in their mid-forties (a single accountant and another married woman who worked at my University). As a single-woman and teacher in my early thirties, I found that I related to, connected with, and was embraced by this small group. After meeting the group at that event, I was invited to attend their monthly crop held at local church only 15 minutes from my apartment and later at a different church 45 minutes away.

While I made an effort to attend many different groups as possible, I found myself most consistently attending this particular group. In other crop groups, my status as a single, childless researcher made me feel a form of “otherness” that was often difficult to overcome. At the same time, I find myself defending those who scrapbook against assumptions of rigid normativity or traditional values that do not align with the more complex lived realities of those individuals I have met. These judgments indicate a sense of close surveillance regarding the “freedom” of women to make their own life choices.

The monthly crop was held on Saturdays in the basement of a local church from 10am to 5pm and costs twenty dollars to cover the room rental and snacks. Attendees also typically bring snacks for the group that may tie with a seasonal or holiday theme such as Halloween or Valentine’s Day. This particular group also occasionally invites direct-sale consultants who have products for sale and who also may offer card-making classes for five dollars to the entire group.
During this particular summer crop, we were each asked to bring in a completed project to share. This crop had nine attendees consisting of four women in their thirties (including me), three women in their forties, one woman in her fifties, and a new attendee in her early sixties. Conversation is one of the most active parts of the crop and a crop room is rarely quiet. Discussions ranged from an upcoming surgery for one woman’s mother, a daughter’s second birthday party, questions on my recent visits to scrapbook stores in Salt Lake City, ongoing discussion about coping with a father’s death, torrid tales of bad dates, and a recent trip to Italy. An example of the level of intimacy and connection at these events occurred as I was leaving the crop at 4pm, the group was in a deep discussion of their experiences in giving birth – a topic that I have heard discussed at multiple crops.

Not only emotional sharing, but also knowledge and skill sharing are common at these events. At this particular crop, I expressed dissatisfaction with the ways my corners looked on an altered box that I was making and experienced members of the group offered advice on how to sand the corners – one regular attendee even gave me a sander that she no longer uses (despite my protestations). Another member also offered to cut out a robot shape out for me with her paper die-cutting tool for a robot-themed birthday card for my nephew. When one of the attendees mentioned that she had found the idea/design on YouTube, the group began to discuss Jennifer McGuire’s YouTube videos on scrapbooking. One member brought out her iPad and another her laptop to share these YouTube videos with everyone, and we all joked that we should just watch YouTube videos instead of working.

In fact, two of the attendees became so caught up reviewing their albums, sharing, and looking at others’ albums that they did not even work on any projects. One was
recovering from an exhausting week at work and the other was a young mother who hadn’t had a day to herself in several months. This is not unusual and underscores that central role of the crop for many remains socializing. At an early crop I attended, the group laughed hysterically in recounting the time that one attendee had spent almost an entire day of the crop working on a handmade hibiscus flower, while another attendee completed two albums.

In late 2015, this cropping group disbanded due to upcoming surgery of the organizer. The potential loss of the group, however, offered a unique moment for the group to express and convey their appreciation and the critical role that the group played in their lives. The members were simply not willing to let it end. One member told everyone, “I was just saying how much I want to go every month. I will do whatever… I will go into withdrawal.” One group member explained to us that this was the only time that she is able to attend something for herself, “this is the only thing that is mine.” She described how the other times that she goes out involve people with kids or related to her husband’s work. Another attendee discussed how she works hard all week and while she goes out, it isn’t really a social outlet for her, but this group was an important source of social support in her life. In particular, the group noted how many other crops seems to be about selling products and that this group was special as it was about the socialization and the fellowship and not about making money. The organizer kept repeating following her announcement that this would be the last crop at this location and that “this is not a funeral.”

Despite no longer meeting in-person, the group continues to remain connected online through a private Facebook group page. The Facebook posts offer insight into the ongoing social support, sharing and caring of the group. Members commonly share their
craft projects. Others leave messages saying, “crafting this weekend, and I miss the crew.” They also post and ask about local scrapbook events (“there’s a $5 crop at Michaels this weekend”). Other forms of social support are shown through posting updates on members and a link to a GoFund me site regarding a personal tragedy of another crop organizer. The group also shares “inside jokes” such as posting a shirt that says “my husband said it was either him or scrapbooking…I took a picture of him packing and made the cuteest pages!” Yet, the stories shared are less frequent and lack the incredible level of intimacy and corresponding acts of care that occurred as we met in person every month.

Safe Space

Women’s craft groups, including crops, are grounded in a shared social space – both online and off. Meeting rooms, churches, rented conference rooms, libraries, homes, blogs, websites, forums, message boards, meet-up.com groups, Facebook groups, and more connect crafters together. Scholars have noted how the ability of craft groups to go online to share, communicate, and gather has facilitated online and offline sociality among those who craft. Susan Luckman (2013) asserts that “networking and dissemination online have played a vital role in the renaissance of craft practice” (p. 251). Minahan and Cox (2007) attribute resurgence in the early 2000s of knitting groups, affectionately called Stitch ‘n Bitch, as part of a growing desire for more community-focused activities or “a more collective recreation that meets a need for social connection” – particularly as individuals may remain “connected 27/7/365 to the rest of the planet but often not connected at all to their community and place” (Minahan and Cox, 2007, p. 8, 10). The crop offers the women a place for face-to-face meetings where they may develop friendships with other women who were previously strangers in their community.
Women’s craft circles build a space of close and intimate connection tied to the notion of making together, a common (gendered) crafter identity, and sharing of support and skill. One crop organizer provides a crucial overview and insight into reasons that cropping events are so important. It’s like quilting bees. Women, they get together to celebrate things that they love to do in a way that there’s no walls, there’s no barriers, there’s no outside disturbances. It’s just purely their time to do things that they love, their passion and share it and show others what they are doing. Where people will actually help somebody or cry for somebody or support somebody—that person’s story that they are telling at the time.

She introduces crops as a space where women get together and offer support. She paints a portrait of the crop as a sacred space in which “there’s no walls, there’s no barriers, there’s no outside disturbances” – as a time and space separated from the outside. Within this space women “celebrate things that they love…do things that they love.” Through their shared passion for the practice, these women forge an intimacy that enables them to offer help and support to one another. While this account in many ways idealizes the crop, it also provides the importance of the crop as a safe space for connecting, “a time and space separated from the outside.”

When participatory media is made and shared by a group (rather than relying on a private corporate algorithm), they may offer a more intimate or “safe” space for emotional disclosure that builds intimacy. Alison Piepmeier asserts that blogs and zines “allow for creations of communities beyond the boundaries of the creator’s immediate physical environment” (p. 14). The paper form itself may also offer a greater depth of intimacy of closeness as well as a sense of “safety” to reveal one’s intimate disclosures. In comparing zines with online blogs, Piepmeier (2009) evokes that “zines do provide a kind of intimacy, demand a kind of effort, that seems to block some of the more opportunistic aggression that is prevalent online” (pp. 15-16).
The crop differs from other spaces as it foregrounds women-centered perspectives. As a woman-centered space, crops frequently offer celebration, support, and recognition of each of the women’s lives. This includes recognition and appreciation of the labor involved in caretaking or the labor of keeping a home that is often missing from the broader society. These crop events offer a safe space, not to smooth over conflict and discontent, but a safe space to make gendered discontents public and shared through the group’s conversation or “women’s talk” (Horton, 2000). The shared standpoint or position held by the attendees at these events foregrounds concerns of this “minor voice” that are often viewed as subordinate or unimportant.

Women’s issues and relationships (such as mothers, sisters, wives, daughters, granddaughters, grandmothers) form a critical space of overlap and sharing. Topics of discussion at crop events that I have attended, for instance, address the wide array of women’s experiences examples include concerns about parents/grandparents, grief, siblings, empty-nest, dating, trips, new motherhood, isolation, job loss, and domestic violence. While a discussion of children is common at scrapbook crops, many of these events do not necessarily focus on children or on motherhood; instead, these gatherings offer a place of bonding among and between women focused on shared experiences. The topic discussed derive from the composition of the group and often, more importantly, the demographics and interests of the organizer as the group composition often is derived from her social connections. Even in more “open” groups, such as those advertised on Meetup.com, individuals who stay or return to the group or those who often find a connection or sense of belonging with other attendees.

Crops may provide a crucial source of support and even freedom from demands of family and waged work. They offer a retreat to reflect upon and to celebrate close
(most often familial) relationships, while also providing a space away from these obligations. Part of what makes scrapbook crops and other craft circles appealing to many women is way that they are simultaneously social/communal and something that you do for yourself. Many interviewees echoed the notion of going to scrapbook events as “doing something for yourself.” One organizer highlighted that what differentiates scrapbook groups from other social circles of women, particularly church-centered circles or mom-centered groups, is that

church is more related to doing things for others. I think the scrapbooking portion or what appeals to women is that this is something that I am doing for me for a change. I’m putting myself first.

A regional crop echoed this in their promotions to, “do something for yourself for once.”

One woman in her early forties described the way her monthly crop group, “makes you get out of the house, step away from stress, and relax... I consider it time for myself.”

Taking the time to “get away” from daily life and to spend hours working on one’s creative projects can feel like a form of self-indulgence to women whose lives are driven by taking care of others or the stress of work deadlines. As one crop organizer described, when women come to a crop, they want to relax, work on their projects, and to socialize... it’s a women’s get-away... I think it’s all about the socialization for the majority of them, gets them away from their family for a day or two.

Another interviewee emphasized, “It’s a reason to get you out, you have committed to a time and event, and it gets you out.” As an activity that “gets you out,” the crop also functions as a way to expand community outside of the home. These events provide a “creative escape” not only for reflection but also to talk out problems with other women—to complain and to gain support around challenges from work problems to hyperactive toddlers.
Janice Radway (1991) describes similar assertions from her informants of their romance reading as a form of escape. She notes the “dual implications” inherent in the term “escape” in reference to 1.) conditions left behind and 2.) in an “intentional projection of a utopian future” (p. 11). She describes how an escape involves a “move away from something distasteful in the present to a somehow more satisfying universe” (p. 61-62). As a “move away” escape may be understood as a dislocation that enables greater care of oneself or as a relocation used to avoid confronting the truth (Banks, 2016). Dislocation appears as the event of reading (or going to the crop) provides a different space/pace outside of their habitual routine. Radway notes that as their reading buys the women “time and privacy” away from their caregiving labors. She notes the association of escape with time to myself and with “relaxing...[or a] reduction in the state of tension or stress produced by a prior condition” (p. 62). As a relocation, this “escape” shifts negative feelings that may enable them to challenge the assumption that women alone are responsible for the care and emotional nurturance of others.

As my local crop group shows, these gatherings are not limited to in-person but are also carried out online. Many groups also have meetup.com sites or a private facebook group as an important way for the group to stay connected between crops. One organizer asserted that the Facebook page has helped to “create a sense of belonging together in this great creative group.” Every month she posts pictures of 1) the pages she designed for the group to work on, 2) the food prepared, and 3) individuals/the group working during the event (which she tags so they show up on member’s own Facebook pages). She says that the reaction to these photos and to their work on their Facebook pages, “encourage and motivate them to keep going and to share.” Another interviewee
told me that, “we’ve become a part of each other’s lives and stay connected through Facebook.”

**Safe Space as Exclusionary Space**

One of the regular crop group’s favorite topics of discussion is how wonderful and welcoming the group is and compared to experiences at other scrapbook events/groups where individuals did not feel as welcomed. As the organizer of the crop has claimed multiple times, “many crops can be cliquish.” Several crop organizers discussed the challenges of keeping their crops open and welcoming. A few of the organizers mentioned hearing feedback that their group had a reputation for being “snobs” as well as “cliquish.” Both of these indicate the sense of superiority and even power accompanying one’s status as inside/outside the group. These attitudes may also serve as a barrier from casual “strangers” entering the group who may disrupt the intimacy garnered by those in frequent attendance. Such a sense of snobbery is also not foreign to the academic conference.

During a memorable moment at one crop, an attendee who is black brought up feeling a sense of racism at another crop. She described how, “it wasn’t really what was said, but that I didn’t feel comfortable.” While several group members nodded their heads, a first-time attendee spoke up, “oh, no, I’m sure that wasn’t true.” After standing back to gauge the response of the group to this story, I eventually felt obligated to affirm her experience by chiming in that I had heard of similar stories during one-on-one interviews with other minorities including an Asian storeowner in L.A.

The newcomer’s denial failed not only to acknowledge her feelings of what was a potentially traumatic experience, but went further to denounce, disregard, and even reject the expression of her experience of racism. This was actually the first time that race
had been brought up at the crop that I had attended, and I found the fact that she voiced her experience was a testament to her high-level of comfort in sharing with this group. Rather than an issue to be shared and offered support with by others in the group, however, racism was quickly denied and swept under the rug. The conversation ironically moved back to addressing/discussing how this crop is one of the most welcoming groups in a way that worked to appease the rest of the group. Indicative of the ways these groups can build a cliquish sense of moral superiority. After hearing the response of the group, however, one can quickly understand the hesitancy of individuals who bravely speak up on racism only to have their experience dismissed or denied.

What this experience indicates is that the crop offers a safe space for sharing within the confines of the group’s shared experiences. Later when this same attendee discussed how she would not be able to attend upcoming meetings as her mother who typically watches her daughter would be having surgery, the group discussed her mother’s accident leading up to the surgery and several members shared related experiences and offered support. The sense of empathy and mutual support accompanying this story contrasted starkly to the response to her experience with racism. As the group related to her experience, they were able to supply empathy; yet, racism demarcated a difference that disturbed the presumed unity of the group in a way that lead to a dismissal and a denial. Hardt and Negri (2009) define one of the forms of love’s corruption as an “identitiarian love” or “love of the same.” They note that a strategy to combat identitiarian love is to choose to identify not with those like you, but those unlike you, the other, the unknown, the “stranger” (p. 182-3).

While a shared identity as woman crafter might be possible, as this incident illustrates differences in race, religion, marital status, and social class are often only set
aside in limited ways. The crop offers a safe space only to an extant and only for those who fit the conventions of that particular group. In fact, I did not feel comfortable in attending a number of crops due to my status as a single, childless academic. Again, it was not so much what was said, but how my experience was disregarded that made these spaces uncomfortable. These feelings of rejection (similar to the denial of racism from the new attendee) were often the result of a single individual showing disapproval. In one case, I later became friendly with a woman who made a remark about childless women that I had found so offensive that I had to leave the crop. This points to the way internal feelings of not belonging combined with a lack of understanding or acceptance may generate powerful feelings of rejection. One can only imagine the rejection potentially felt by any man brave enough to enter a crop space unaccompanied by a close friend or wife.

During a scrapbook podcast, one man in the industry describes the strange looks he received on his first visit to a local scrapbook store. Enduring social categories may not simply be left behind at the crop, but the crop also allows for a mixing of different groups of people under the shared identity of woman crafter than is common in many other social spaces including school, church, and work.

As a separatist feminine space, women’s craft circles reveal a desire for a “safe” space that contributes to the freedom to emotionally disclose grievances without the risk of damaging personal and familial relationships. Christina Hanhardt (2013) describes how, “safety is commonly imaged as a condition of no challenge or stakes, a state of being that might be best described as protectionist.” This notion of safety works with and against the description of the crop as a space with “no walls, there’s no barriers, there’s no outside disturbances.” This sense of safety comes with a price of exclusionary behavior or simply making it difficult to “fit in” with the existing members. A shared sense of
identification among the group may help foster this sense of safety, but it may also generate a violent exclusion for “outsiders” in ways that may overlap with race, religion, and childless status. As Nicole Schroder (2006) notes, “feelings of solidarity, safety, and protection are often achieved by severe acts of exclusion and regulation, which are in turn oppressive” (p. 33).

As women-only spaces, scrapbook crops foreground gendered concerns tied to a shared status, position, and role. While it is easy to forget or fail to recognize the ongoing ways many aspects of our society are actively hostile to women’s lives, this is even more violent for those whose experiences of race, class, and sexuality are not taken into consideration. These concerns are reminiscent of exclusions that plague the feminist movement, which defaults to the normative white middle class heteronormative women’s experience (hence, the need for black feminism) at the expense of intersecting considerations race, class, and sexuality – a subordination of these identities that betrays the feminist project.

While communitarian, craft circles are also often “safe” spaces, which may be incompatible with the antagonism, debate, and disagreements that underlie a healthy democracy. From the perspective of women’s culture, “the political sphere is more often seen as a field of threat, chaos, degradation, or retraumatization, than a condition of possibility” (Berlant, 2008, p. 11). In order to avoid the conflict that may tamper with its status as a “safe” space, social intimacy limits itself to a shared identity within a separatist space. Yet, as the next section will discuss, the communitas underlying the hobby must also not be underestimated; “because we create to connect beyond ourselves,” craft circles offer the ability for women to connect more fully and more intimately outside themselves (Greer, 2014). These “safe” spaces also enable a space for women to speak up about issues
that they feel uncomfortable addressing in a world that continues to be hostile to the needs of many women from dissatisfaction with raising children to domestic violence and other topics that I have heard discussed at crops. As the crop exists within a female-dominated domain, women’s expertise in this area may also provide them with a forum to gain leverage and appreciation for their knowledge and skill, which remains devalued in the broader culture.

**Social Support**

Crops are also frequently described in terms of a support group. In describing what happens when her group is unable to meet, another woman noted, “we're in trouble. I have withdrawal symptoms, and they are the same. When one is sick, we all get together and do something. We are a support group.” Examples of social support were not only shared in interviews, but also witnessed in my observations. The importance of social support is a key difference between social intimacy of participatory media and intimate publics of mass media. This may indicate the difference between the care shared in a craft circle facilitating intimate, face-to-face exchanges and the circulation of mass media. Emotional release and disclosure to the group (the crop group includes both trusted friends and strangers) are foundational to social intimacy and the mutual support offered at the crop. As other research on the blog circles of mommy blogs has found, the emotional release, or intimate disclosure, on mommy blogs enables the women to break “social taboos constraining who can speak and what can be said about the condition, experience, and role of motherhood” (Morrison, 2011, p. 40). These disclosures offer the means for mutual recognition and identification contributing to a shared group identity.

The social support provided at crops often verges on group therapy implying the depth of emotional release met with care and concern. At one point in my research, I
realized that I knew more about the problems and concerns of those in my regular crop group than many of my closest friends and family simply by the proximity and time spent in cropping with them every month. The artist Marie Watt, summarizes the essence of participating in similar craft circles as

> there is no pressure to speak and yet the conversations and storytelling that happen go beyond what I’ve experienced in other circumstances….It is the quality of the conversation and coming to know, more deeply know, strangers and even those who you think you know well that have affected me at the events (cited in Fowler, 2010, p. 344).

By encouraging greater public sharing of concerns often relegated to the private, these circles offer an immediate sense of closeness. Ann Cvetkovich (2012) notes that zine culture (and I would add also scrapbook culture) show the ways that “going public with your feelings can make a difference both to how you feel and to the state of the world” (p. 161). Sharing these grievances may function to lighten the load and enable similar others to lend social support.

Almost all members of the group have at one time or another, including myself, opened up about serious issues including divorce, domestic violence, marital problems, grief, and a wide array of health problems. One month, I brought up a relationship issue that I was having with my family, and I was astonished at the way the group chimed in with similar stories that offered me perspective and the sense that I wasn’t alone. Simply sharing these problems and receiving closer connection with the group can offer a sense of care. After a close friend gave birth to a premature baby in the NICU for four months, I put her in touch with a “crop friend” who had also experienced the NICU. Similar to a support group, the crop is a space where your struggles are not invisible, but are made visible and shared.
The act of compiling photos into stories may help further facilitate and provide opportunity for opening-up, sharing, or making public what may be considered private or familial experiences, emotions that “you wouldn’t share with people right away.” Looking at photos (or scrapbooks) together creates a shared experience. One crop organizer noted that,

All of my friends that I have met through scrapbooking have gotten really close. Because you are sharing, you know, you wouldn’t talk about family members with someone that you’ve just met, but when you are scrapbooking together and you see a picture of someone’s family member, you can’t help but share things that you wouldn’t share with people right away. It might take years before you have those kind of conversations…You get very close to people very quickly.

One woman discussing the support she received from her scrapbook group after the death of her son describes how, “you can really get a sense of connection to someone just from the stories…as scrapbookers documenting it and passing it along to other people so they can feel connected to this person now or in the future.” She goes on to describe that we can

feel connected to other people in a lot of ways, and one of them is when we share experiences with people. That shared experience and the emotion that we feel as we’re doing that thing with that person and forming those memories make us feel connected – it’s the shared emotion and shared experience.

Gillian Rose (2010) describes a similar experience of closeness generated through shared experience of sharing photos as women shared their family photos with her during interviews. She notes that “interviewing these women in their homes allowed me to not just look at but to share their photographs with them, and to see how they, how we, were with them, to participate” (p. 16). When one of my interviewees discussed the outpouring of support that she received when her son was sick, she noted that “so many of the scrapbookers hadn’t met my son. They felt like they knew him from my pictures.” She notes that “people who barely knew me, but knew me from scrapbooking jumped
onboard and offered me all of the support in the world.” Sharing photographs not only evokes more intimate conversations, but also the feeling that you are a part of their life. These photos evoke stories that become something created together with the listener in a way that evokes a sense of greater togetherness and intimacy. Villi and Stocchetti (2011) describe that the connection and closeness cultivated in sharing the same view through a photo creates a shared space and narrative that may actively produce or preserve intimacy (p. 106). Here the crop leverages the ability of photos to construct and maintain social relationships, not merely reflect them (Van House et al., 2004, p. 7).

The shared identity as crafter contributes to a stronger bond among those at the crop. In a study of the benefits of crafting for older women, the authors noted that “having the same interests and attitudes contributed to a shared sense of artistic identity and connection with others…’you feel that you are not alone”’ (Liddle, Parkinson, and Sibbritt, 2013, p. 333). Tracie Claiborne echoes this in her Scrap Gals podcast as she describes that there is,

something so like-minded about this hobby – it makes you click with people right away. When you are a scrapbooker you see the world differently. You see through the eyes of a photographer, tell your stories. Even if we have different lifestyles or values – we have things that connect us.

Another interviewee says, “scrapbookers are all such giving people. If you needed a black piece of paper, any one in that room would give it to you. It’s that instant connection, that friendship, unspoken, just through your craft as you get to know new people.” Often women have few opportunities to meet and become friends with other women that are not tied to their work identity or family. A shared enjoyment in the hobby creates a unique space for strangers to become friends.
The term sister and sisterhood are frequently used by those who scrapbook to describe their relationship with one another. Similar to a sorority, consultant companies often refer to employees as a “sisterhood.” Cropping group names may also incorporate the term such as “scraping sisterhood,” “sisterhood of the traveling scissors crop,” and “scrap paper sisters.” Many crops have “secret sisters” where one attendee is matched with another to surprise them with small gifts that are given throughout the cropping event. In their study of quilting guilds, Schofield-Tomschin & Littrell (2001) describe a similar experience of sisterhood, as “there seemed to be an immediate sisterhood for the women.” However, Maria Lugones and Pat Alake Rosezelle (1995) argue that “sisterhood” provides a problematic feminist model as it does not allow for a bonding of women across differences. More specifically “sisterhood” as a metaphor of kin presupposes the institution of family and an egalitarian relationships that fails to account for the enduring inequalities between white women and women of color in the U.S. The notion of a “post-racial” sisterhood erases difference and may default to the dominant group, white and upper-middle class. So we might need to find another way of describing these solidarities among strangers.

A sense of “camaraderie” appeared several times during interviews as a way to describe relationships. Camaraderie offers a notion of friendship that differs from “sisterhood” providing a greater potential for inclusive support. As they hold the same passion in common, those who scrapbook are offered an instant camaraderie “that instant connection, that friendship, unspoken, just through your craft as you get to know new people.” At least two uses of the term camaraderie appeared during my interviews. The first notion appears tied to a collective or shared sense of fun. The second notion relates more to a sense of instant familiarity and loyalty.
As a collective or shared sense of fun, camaraderie was used by a storeowner to describe why people scrapbook. She noted, “there’s a lot of people who do it just for the camaraderie because they have friends and it’s fun. We get together, we laugh, we get out of the house. You spend the whole day doing something that you enjoy with people that you enjoy” (emphasis my own). This fun-loving camaraderie is incorporated into cropping events themselves, which are notorious for silly games, songs, and bonding activities. After attending regular crops and classes held by this storeowner, there was a notable feeling shared enjoyment among her regulars. As the store was located within a relatively rural area, there was a group of four-five women who had known one another for decades through their children. There were also other regular attendees who joined in through their love of craft. In this sense, the camraderie of the crop may pull from the camraderie of life-long friendships.

Groups of friends are a common sight at crops, particularly weekend crops. At my first crop, there was another group of four close friends who describe their attendance at this annual crop as their time to get together, talk, laugh, eat, cry, and catch-up on one another’s lives. Perhaps, the most enthusiastic scrapbooker of the friends was even working on a scrapbook of a vacation the group had taken together including a photograph of the four of them scrapbooking on the beach recounted with great laughs. Their attendance at this particular crop was further driven by the friendship of one of the women in the group with the organizer. As this particular organizer had been holding this annual crop for over a decade as a direct-sale consultant, the crop itself was a large group of her friends and her friend’s friends notably including her mother-in-law’s friends from Girl Scout leadership.
The second sense of camaraderie ties to a sense of familiarity with the “other” that enables an empathetic offering of support. Another interviewee (who was also a crop organizer and who had at one time in my research lost her job) used the term camaraderie to explain the shared support she received when her son got sick. She described the way that “all of the scrapbookers reached out to me…people who barely knew me, but knew me from scrapbooking jumped on board and offered me all of the support in the world. It’s a sense of camaraderie” (emphasis my own). Although many had never met her son, the shared camaraderie and widespread sense of caring for one another shared by scrapbookers facilitate their support of her. This particular woman described how she moved into the area and didn’t know many people. She noted that “I’ve met almost all of my friends through scrapbooking.” A similar experience occurred as another woman’s daughter went missing/ran away from home, and I watched the local scrapbook community reach out in remarkably empathetic ways to lend support and care.

A sense of a more intimate knowledge of crop friends and their friends/families through the sharing of pictures appeared in another interview as they described the friendships and support offered on an online forum, which was “initially all about shopping, but that over time we began sharing things like “my son just had a baby.” One of the members of this forum had gotten ear implants and was able to hear her daughter for the first time. During our interview, one woman noted, “I hadn’t even physically met her” but the group “all pulled together” to support her. As individuals are scrapbooking personal photos, frequently of their families and important events in their lives, “you come to know them through the photos”. Both the shared identity as scrapbookers and
the higher levels of sharing common within the practice may function together to
generate a strong and supportive camaraderie.

**Outside the Circle**

The use of the unusual term “camaraderie” of these events/relationships evoked a
connection for me to Victor Turner’s (1992) theory of *communitas*. The sense of
camaraderie offered a sense of shared community, status and support. In Turner’s theory
on ritual, he defines *communitas* as “a relational quality of full unmediated communication,
even communion” (p. 138). Turner (1992) draws attention the space of liminality, the
threshold or marginal space in the midst of ritual where the individual has not quite
reached their new status, and the marginal secular space of complex industrial leisure,
which he labels “liminoid” (p. 55-57). As a liminoid space or genre, “in the retreats these
groups make for themselves,” these groups develop a sense of *communitas*.

Turner’s notion of *communitas* differs from the notion of solidarity derived from
Durkheim that depends on an in-group/out-group. Crops vary between spaces of
*communitas* (an unhierarchical space of fellowship) and solidarity (in-group/out-group)
depending on the level of establishment of the group, the composition of the group
members, and the group’s policy/openness to adding new members. While it is common
to share certain supplies (such as paper cutting cartridges), an unprepared new attendee
may be told, “you’ll need to buy that.” Some groups continue to remain open to new
members or newbies forging a sense of *communitas*. Others consist of firmly established
group members that offer more of a closed sense of sisterhood and solidarity. A sense of
in-group and out-group can bar many new members from solidarity within the group.
This can be seen quite literally as some crops pre-assign seats, while others allow for open
seating. Entering a new crop alone can be intimidating. Similar to the in-group/out-
group actions of high school lunch, there are crop tables for firmly established members, while new members may be forced to ask, “do you mind if I sit here?” I have been told more than once, “that seat is taken.” At the same time, these moments also opened opportunities to find a new seat and even meet strangers who have become friends.

This space away, whether to a crop retreat or even a craft room in one’s home may offer a liminal space for creative play. Feminine play itself may be defined by a combination of liminality and intimacy. For instance, Beverly Gordon (2006) identifies a “saturated world” of feminine play (during the late-nineteenth/early-twentieth century including paper doll houses) used to create a “heightened experience (state, reality) that was aesthetically and sensually charged and full.” Through the “heightened experience” of their play, these young women were able to create a world that was “socially and emotionally satisfying,” a realm where anything was possible. This space offered these young women the opportunity to understand themselves and their world according to a different set of rules. Sennett (1977) further points to the critical role of playacting as a way to test boundaries of social roles.

The crop may be a space where women can claim an identity of “scrapbooker” or “crafter” for themselves – not tied to their social status as mother, employee or wife. The identity of crafter may be a transitional identity that enables women to bond across other differences. Other scholarship on women’s craft circles has noted the way the “women bind themselves symbolically to other women by their membership in small social groups, whether based on age, occupation, religion, ethnic origins, and/or leisure interests” (Lenz & Myerhoff, 1985). Scholars of guild participation assert that “sustained interactions between these individuals result in solidarity, or a common conception of identity supported by a shared ideology” (Schofield-Tomschin and Littrell, 2011, p. 41). Forms of
possession of craft supplies, insider knowledge, and even language (including the term crop) and gender are used to mark those who are inside or outside the scrapbook circle. One interviewee (whose scrapbook hobby became her business) described those friends who scrapbook as a circle of people who “get it;” most of my old friends are “very much on the outskirts of circle, it’s too remote for them to even ask questions…You no longer have the same interests. They don’t really get it. There’s no more commonality…they don’t really quite understand the value of what it brings.” Those who scrapbook share an affinity and an understanding in their love for the hobby, which form many becomes a way of life or a way of looking at life as they snap photos and plan pages throughout their daily life.

However, these women’s umbrella identification as “scrapbooker” works to differentiate them from outsiders who fail to understand or appreciate the hobby building a sense of solidarity among those who scrapbook. The devaluation of scrapbooking by those outside or unfamiliar with the hobby works to increase the level of bonding of those inside the group who “just get it.” I was particularly startled during my first, second, and even third interview, when the interviewees joked with me that as scrapbookers, “we’re kind of a cult.” The use of “cult” paints those who scrapbook as a tight knit group, similar to other social circles which share a religious fervor for an activity that may appear extreme and whose tendency to be cliquish may appear unfriendly, especially for outsiders. Similar cult status or cult following has frequently been applied to the fervor of avid fans. References to a cult film or cult classic reveals an audience appreciation that even creates its own subculture including insider references, language, and collectors objects. For those who scrapbook, their use of the term “cult” functioned as a way for them to let me know their awareness that those outside the hobby “simply don’t get it.”
These early interviews helped me from being shocked when a woman started our conversation at a crop by telling me, “my husband calls us a cult.” Again, she references the way that a person that she should be very close to, her husband, fails to understand and support her hobby. It may come as no surprise that at the end of my final interview when I asked a crop organizer if there was anything that she wanted me to know that she responded, “we’re not a cult.” The “cult” label points to the idea female enthusiasts as well as “their interests, their spaces, and their primary forms of engagement” are more suspect (Busse, 2013, p. 75). In her study of geek hierarchies, Kristina Busse (2013) goes so far as to assert that it is a “ready truism that enthusiasm for typically male fan objects, such as sports and even music, are generally accepted whereas female fan interests are much more readily mocked” (p. 75).

In the early stages of my research, I would shake my head and laugh that “scrapbookers are crazy.” It wasn’t yet clear why those who scrapbook (and unreflective researchers) would devalue the practice as “crazy” when describing or discussing it with those “outside.” In some ways, I understood that this was a way of letting me know, and for me to let those I was talking to know, that we were aware of the negative stereotypes associated with the practice. By bringing up these derogatory terms themselves, however, it enables these women to pre-emptively explain away or redefine these stereotypes or forms of “othering” on their own terms. A number of them, for instance, were able to laugh them away as hilarious or ridiculous.

Over time, I found that all of this “crazy talk” appeared in spaces and relationships—both emotionally and physically—where scrapbooks exceed the norms allotted to women. “Crazy” appears to demarcate the potential excesses of scrapbooks—excess emotion, excess spending, excess socialization, excess enjoyment, excess hoarding
of craft supplies. This sort of “mania” is commonly applied when women assert their desire, their pleasure, and their right to take up space in ways deemed inappropriate or, perhaps, crazy. By proudly asserting their own “mania” or by wielding terms such as “crazy” or “cult,” these women were able to draw attention to the potential disruptive and potentially transformative power of this activity in their lives.

Another reference to “cult,” however, appears in Hardt and Negri’s (2009) conception of the corrupt for of identitarian love. When identification “hinders and distorts love’s productivity by forcing it to constantly repeat the same” (p. 183), this may create a “cult.” While repetition of the same can be a critical component of the of everyday habit and ritual – this may be corrupted when identitarian love does not allow for alternate ways of being. As a domestic hobby aligned with the feminine, the identification of scrapbooks (and those who scrapbook) often aligns with traditional femininity. These sorts of moves presume a universal feminine subject – a “girlie culture” that is the normative construction yet still marginalized and often representative of the most privileged kind of woman (Portwood-Stacer, 2007). The reference to the scrapbook “cult” serves as a reminder of another all-female separatist space in nineteenth-century, the cult of domesticity or true womanhood (Ferguson, 1983). This cult defined femininity for a generation based on religious piety and devotion to the domestic home as women sought to become an “Angel in the Household” (Hogan and Bradstock, 1998). Yet, this cult of true womanhood almost by definition worked to exclude poor white women and women of color.

**Diminished Intimacy**

While friendship and social support work to sustain shared intimacy, this intimacy disappeared or was diminished in multiple ways in sites of my research. The care labor of
sustaining the group involves emotional and physical labor that may contribute to the burnout of organizers over time. Rather than sharing responsibility for communications, prep-work, and clean-up among all members, when this work is carried out by one person, it cannot be sustained. My regular crop-group organizer, for instance, could no longer support the group as she prepared for surgery.

Diminished intimacy may also occur when the group marginalizes or devalues potential new members. This chapter noted the challenges that a need for “similarity” and “likeness” used to forge connection within women-centered networks may also work marginalize and devalue alternate identities and ways of living. When individuals are made to feel unwelcomed due to race, religion, or marital status, this can work to limit the success of the group. Frequently, these individuals do not return to that group and may even share their negative experience with other groups. Along these lines, when the crop space is commodified, it may limit the ability of many to participate as few can afford to regularly spend $300-$400 on cropping weekends. One scrapbook group I attended overcame this challenge through an anonymous donor who ensures that no one is kicked out for not paying their fee. This crop also prohibits consultants or other forms of selling at their crop.

A more ambiguous deterrent to shared intimacy occurs with the commodification of crop events. As Ann Cvetkovich (2012) describes commercial space has an ambiguous relationship in crafting as “what is often being bought are materials for DIY projects, and people are sharing work and using commercial space as public space for organizing, learning, and community building.” In some instances, the commercialization of the crop may create a sense of obligation that motivates attendance. As a direct-sale consultant/crop organizer explained to me about her customers,
[they] won’t scrapbook in their own home. They mostly go away to an event. If they mark it on their calendar that they are going out to do something, they usually do it. If they mark it on their calendar that they are supposed to do something at home that night, then yeah I don’t think so... [They] come to my house on a monthly basis. If they don’t come, they don’t do it at home...If you expect them to do it on their own, it’s not going to happen.

A felt sense of mutual obligation such as “I paid for this” or “she is expecting me to be there” worked to sustain participation in the group. Without this obligation, participation in the group diminished.

Others noted that when the event becomes centered on profit, it loses a focus on the social relationships. In the move to work-centered identities and cultures, Melissa Gregg (2011) cautions that “if our capacities for intimacy are most regularly exercised in the pursuit of competitive professional profit, we face the prospect of being unable to appreciate the benefits of intimacy for unprofitable purposes” (p. 18). In this vein, crop organizers, associated with stores or direct-sale companies, are criticized for only caring about making money. One consultant emphasized that “I’m not all about the business. This is just a hobby for me, and I have a full time job. Some people, they are all about the business.” This consultant noted that making it all about the business changes the relationship and makes the experience of scrapbooking less desirable for those who are doing it for non-business related reasons. As she puts it, she doesn’t want people to have to feel obligated to have to buy things. As she says, “I feel bad taking advantage of my friends forcing them to have to purchase something.”

Others noted the way that the commercialization of the hobby makes it competitive. A former consultant felt that “the team members and leaders could be pushy. It’s not like we’re in some big sales organization where you earn big commissions. Some of these people were so cut-throat.” A shift to a concern with profit over a
gathering with like-minded others diminishes the shared intimacy of crop groups who become aligned with profit-making purposes. At the same time, one store owner remarked to me that the main reason that she hasn’t gone out of business is that she didn’t want to lose the close friendships that she had formed with many of her customers.

Perhaps the greatest deterrent to shared intimacy is the loss of shared space that occurs when a store, brand, or website goes out of business. This occurred for the largest online community of scrapbookers, Two Peas in a Bucket.com (2Peas) (see Figure 11 for closing announcement). The loss of TwoPeas was mostly attributed to bad customer service; however, it reveals an underlying dilemma or ongoing challenge to the scrapbook industry – the difficulty of translating shared intimacy into sales. TwoPeas was also the largest shared space online for those who scrapbook and since its decline the online forums have fragmented. For regular readers of scrapbook blogs and 2Peas forums, the news of 2Peas closure was no surprise. What was so shocking to the community was the alarm and dismay that “the message boards are frozen.” The outcry over the frozen forums felt like a call of impending doom along the lines of “the British are coming.” As one commentator noted, “what really surprised me was not that 2Peas was closing, but that they closed the forums. There are so many relationships and subcommunities that live in the 2Peas forums, and it will be very hard, if not impossible for some of them, to make new plans to meet elsewhere.”
IT IS WITH A HEAVY HEART THAT WE ANNOUNCE THE CLOSING OF TWO PEAS IN A BUCKET.

IT HAS BEEN A GREAT PLEASURE TO SERVE THE SCRAPBOOKING AND PAPER CRAFTING COMMUNITY FOR THE LAST 15 YEARS. WE HAVE LOVED BEING A PART OF THE DEEP AND DIVERSE GROUP THAT HAS FORMED DURING OUR TENURE.

WE HAVE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO MEET SO MANY PEOPLE THROUGH THIS COMMUNITY AND IT HAS BEEN WONDERFUL HAVING THEM ALL IN OUR LIVES BEING A PART OF SO MANY PEOPLE’S DAILY LIVES HAS BEEN BOTH REWARDING AND HUMBLING.

Thank You!

Figure 11: Two Peas in a Bucket Closing Announcement Posted to Website

The ever-active Peas or Pea-nuts (as they call themselves) quickly mobilized to find new homes. A hashtag, #Imisstwopeas, was generated on Instagram to find one another. By nightfall, a new forum called, 2peasrefugees.boards.net was created. The “refugees site” included two of the most popular 2Peas forums with subtitles of humor including “NSBR Resurrected: Anything goes” and “General scrapping: for those who still do!” Two days after the site was frozen to comments, 2peasrefugees already had 8,410 posts, 432 threads, and 1,863 members. Six days later 2peasrefugees had 24,032 posts, 990 threads, and 2,445 members. Noell Hyman, the co-founder of the popular news/educational site, Paperclipping.com (with paying membership of over 11,000 and the Paperclipping Roundtable podcast), had amassed 426 comments on a website thread
announcing 2Peas closure. On Friday, two days after 2Peas closure, Paperclipping started its own forum. By Tuesday the site had an additional 1,565 posts and 450 members.

Other groups/communities from TwoPeas started their own Facebook groups including “TwoPeas Swap Chat.” The Facebook Swap Chat group asserted, “we are hoping to keep our Swaps going! Swaps will be conducted as the same manner as on Twopeas.” Members also worked to fill-in other gaps left by 2Peas as the Facebook group noted, “one thing that will be missed from 2Peas are the galleries of awesome creativity. We want to keep it alive here.”

This call to “keep it alive” spoke to a fear (the forums are frozen!) that a loss IN the scrapbook community would be the loss OF the scrapbook community. Noell from Paperclipping noted that “what’s interesting about 2Peas is that while our community has broken up into lots of small splinters online, 2Peas, thought it had shrunken smaller, still seemed like the middle ground – the central hub.” Noell also noted that “since CHA [the industry convention] I’ve felt that we scrapbookers have a particular need right now to be able to come together and talk about the loss of so many companies. The changes have been fast and dramatic.”

Others made connections between the loss of 2Peas with the loss of Local Scrapbook Stores (LSS) and scrapbook magazines. Similar fears and discussion have accompanying devastating losses to both LSS and scrapbook magazines. One member wrote that “this reminds me of when the scrapbook mags went away… change is hard.” Others, more optimistically noted that it “opens the space for the next stage in scrapbooking and social media.” While many businesses and product lines have also gone out of business, the community raised a crisis level of alarm in relation to the loss of
shared participatory spaces of discussion and interaction both online and off (2Peas, magazines, LSS, and crops).

**Defining Social Intimacy in Relation to Intimate Publics**

While intimate public occurs in relation to a mass media market and social intimacy on the level of participatory media/an interpersonal level, the ways that both concepts overlap and differ offers critical insight into understanding how the relation of intimacy with membership/identity and politics may shift in a move from mass to participatory media.

Social intimacy overlaps with four critical themes of intimate publics: 1) a minority or disenfranchised identity, 2) a promise of social belonging, 3) a powerful affective reach tied to emotional disclosure, and 4) a “juxtapositional” (p. x) relationship to politics. The intimate public emerges as a “scene of affective identification among strangers” (p. viii) who through their shared history may be “emotionally literate in the other’s experience of power, intimacy, desire, and discontent” (p. 5). As the intimate public represents a “fantasy that my life is not just mine, but an experience understood by other women” (p. x), it advocates a powerful promise of social belonging. These fantasies “of vague belonging” offer an important affective force in individual’s lives as they “magnetize optimism about living and being connected to strangers in a kind of nebulous *communitas*” (p. xii). Yet, the intimate public displaces and privatizes politics into the realm of feeling (p. xii). In this way, intimate publics reveal the “difficulty of inducing structural transformations out of shifts in collective feeling” (xii).

*Social intimacy* differs from an intimate public in at least three critical ways: 1) by not being limited to public or mass media contexts 2) a focus on reciprocal, interpersonal sharing, rather than shared texts 2) affective feelings of belonging and actions of mutual
support tied to a sense of “togetherness” (sustained interpersonal connection either online or off). Social intimacy flourishes through and within spaces of group participation and identification (sports, hobbies, fandoms) and encompasses more participatory media practices such as social media, blogs, zines, or scrapbooks. What sets social intimacy apart from “intimate publics” is the way that members share and even create recognition with one another, rather than seeking recognition in already produced texts. Forms of interpersonal sharing are often a critical component of many forms of participatory media – as implied by the term “social” media. Rather than a shared text, social intimacy grows out of a mutual exchange of ideas and emotions. Social intimacy forms through the connection and closeness among these members who share an identity or a passion. As an affective force, social intimacy gains intensity in mediated spaces of interpersonal sharing tied to shared identity, emotion, or experience even with strangers.

**Conclusion**

Drawing on my experience at crops, this chapter introduced the concept of *social intimacy* as a way to understand the shared sense of vulnerability, identification, belonging, and support among those who scrapbook together. The chapter worked to highlight two defining components of this *social intimacy*: safe space and mutual support. As an interpersonal, social space or participatory media, the space of social intimacy enables members to maintain intimacy and also offers a space to expand care beyond the self. Members refer to one another as sisters and this space may function in a way similar to an extended family, as an extension of kin labor that may also reach beyond the family. In this way, it may help meet the call of both Boris (2015) and Weeks (2011) for an understanding of care as interdependence, not dependence. My participation in these groups has lead me to take very seriously the potential of this social intimacy to offer
forms of mutual care, friendship, and even of having fun together within a culture of overwork.

However, the limitation of social intimacy to a shared identity or what Hardt and Negri’s (2009) refer to as an “identitarian love” within a “safe space” may limit its potential to intervene in politics. The avoidance of conflict necessary to maintain the space as “safe” facilitates conditions of “protectionism” or of no challenge that limit the potential of the space for productive debate or for the counter-conducts that build care for the self. The concern with safety may further lower levels of trust of those who lie outside of the group contributing to a potential for conditions of xenophobic exclusion.

At the same time, the safe space offered by the crop may offer the space to safely image differently. The intimate circle of the crop facilitates emotional disclosures that open up shared vulnerabilities in a way that I haven’t seen in other spaces. While the reach of the social intimacy of the crop remains small, it may remind, or even demonstrate, for members the ways that opening up and sharing their vulnerabilities outside of the home with one another may facilitate a mutual social support. This is a space of not simply being there, but of being with often limited by the extent of that group’s identitarian love. In the space of the crop, there remains potential for your issue to become my issue in a way that offers a form of care as interdependence, not dependence.
CHAPTER FIVE: “I Created:” Women’s Craft Work of Making Inalienable

This chapter examines how the sensory-rich media experiences of paper craft intersect with feminized labor used to cultivate a greater sense of intimacy. The categorical shift of the scrapbook industry from “scrapbooks” to “paper craft” offers insight into the placement of feminine craft and care labor within the post-Fordist economy. Feminine craft and care labor personalize commodities and generate more intimate connections that transform commodities into possessions. The personal touch of craft, “handmade with love and attention,” cultivates closer connections between maker and object. Those who craft emphasize how the process of creating provides them with a sense of enjoyment or pleasure. They assert the way that scrapbooks, as an artistic outlet, offer a therapeutic reprieve from the demands of their jobs and their family.

While labor used to personalize commodities has historic roots in the feminized labor of shopping/consumption (Miller, 1998), there has arguably been an increased level of commodification in advanced capitalism and, subsequently, an intensification in the labor necessary to mitigate or personalize commodities (Kopytoff, 1986). I am coining the term making inalienable to describe the intimate labor used to diminish “abstraction, alienation, and spectacularization” that may accompany commodification (Schaffer, 2011, p. 14). This chapter introduces three approaches of making inalienable associated with the embrace of a craft orientation and as an extension of women’s unwaged reproductive labor as consumers. These three approaches include (1) handmade materiality, (2) “joy in labor,” and (3) an artistic/creative “way of being.” This chapter hopes to call attention to the ways these forms of labor are used by these women as a way to reduce commodification or to make more inalienable within advanced capitalism.
The craft and care work involved in making inalienable may also be used to reassert the traditional values and roles of women’s culture, embodied personal ties, self-expression, and emotional connections that go beyond (and often after) the commodity exchange. These are labors of social reproduction used to personalize commodities that collectively work to make a house, a home. These are the labors used to build intimacy. This labor of making inalienable appears as part of women’s invisible labors of consumption (invisible in the sense of a lack of recognition for such work like much reproductive labor). However, an idealization of time-intensive craft forms proclaims that they provide “healthier and more caring options” (White, 2015). As these options are also much more time-intensive later, they may be indicative of the extension of women’s labor into their participatory media consumption (Ouellette and Wilson, 2011).

The chapter is organized around the three approaches for “making inalienable.” The first section foregrounds the use of handmade materiality as a way to counter commodification by emphasizing a sensory-infused embodiment tied to the physicality of making and viewing attentive to a more intimate media experience. The second section discusses a move in craft discourse of “joy in labor” from satisfaction to pleasure as a site for both potential empowerment and exploitation of feminine labor. The final section examines a move to “arts and crafts” in the industry, which point to a heightened concern with crafting an authentic self through artistic expression. Yet, crafting oneself as an artist can contribute to objectification of the self and to its commodification as a self-brand. Perhaps ironically, within post-Fordism, the labors of “making inalienable,” including enjoyment of a sensory-focused experience of making and an assertion of uniqueness or authentic expression, may serve less to counter commodification and more to add value to the commodity through extensions of feminine labor.
SECTION ONE: HANDICRAFT

A Sensory Experience

My first “scrapbook” experience was a Valentine’s Day themed card class at a Houston-area scrapbook store (now closed) in January of 2011. Despite searching for and hoping to attend a class focused on scrapbooks, representative of broader changes in the industry, the only classes available were more paper-craft oriented including making cards or shadowbox (used for home décor). I signed up with my mother to attend the card class. The card class introduced a diversity of techniques and skills including paper cutting, stamping, and heat embossing used to raise the surface of the paper. As a “newbie” to paper crafting, I spent most of the class feeling unprepared, behind, and a bit overwhelmed by all of the new craft techniques. Yet, making cards with my mother, who joyfully accompanied me to the class, resulted in a fun and memorable experience for us both.

Among those who scrapbook, craft-oriented approaches are associated with a focus on the aesthetic frame, rather than the content of the frame (Christensen, 2011). “Crafty” albums are viewed as more elaborate, creative, difficult, and time-intensive. Craft-oriented practices involve greater embellishment or decorative extras such as stamp techniques, buttons, lace, stickers, or glitter. Craft approaches involve a more time and skill-intensive process concerned with materiality (not content) and with the hands-on experience of making. The turn to craft centers on enjoyment in the experience of making, or the creative process (addressed in the next section). It also involves rich sensory experiences tied to a tangible materiality and embodiment (addressed in this section).
Craft’s focus on the media experience differs from the more common notion of media use or consumption and helps to foreground a notion of media as physical and aesthetic objects (Gentikow, 2005; Ytre-Arne, 2011). Experience is a term that “articulates our physical presence in the world” (Gentikow, 2005). A focus of craft on experience moves away from detached consumption to an embodied experience of making. A study of craft offers a reminder of the ways that we “experience media through our senses, and perceptions of form and aesthetics could be an integral and important part of the general media experience” (Ytre-Arne, 2011).

Craft is also often used as shorthand for “handicraft,” which implies an embodied, local production. By foregrounding their hands, handicrafts also foreground a physical presence within a more holistic media experience. The return to a mediated experience made with one’s hands places the labor within one’s grasp, quite literally, enabling this production to return to a more human-scale. The foregrounding of the tactile experience is further reinforced as the “hands” of the maker remain foregrounded. Susan Luckman (2015) notes that “at a time of profound change in the materiality of production, and in a society swamped with mass-manufactured goods, the handmade offers a reprise, an alternative” (p. 23).

The experience of handicraft is often contrasted with globalized mass production. Janet Hoskins (1998) notes in her book, Biographical Objects, how consumers in the U.S. do not typically know where their objects are made, what materials were used, or what processes or techniques go into their making. In this way, they are “alienated from even the voyeuristic pleasure of participating in production” (p. 192). By foregrounding an embodied making through an emphasis on their hands, the individuals I spoke to and the discourses circulated within scrapbook literature (magazines, podcasts, blogs) work to
reassert a more intimate and emotional sense of participation and closeness or at least an embodied sense of “voyeuristic pleasure” in having contributed to the process of production – even if their participation is limited to design, printing or the addition of tactile embellishments.

The experience of handicraft may also offer the sense of a more authentic experience and object. David Boyle (2003) asserts one of the nine elements that define authenticity is realness and that “real means human” or rooted in humanity and a “human-scale,” not a factory version (p. 21 cited in Luckman, 2015; p. 43). As Susan Stewart (1993) describes, our experience is increasingly mediated, distanced, abstracted so that “authentic experience” becomes “elusive and allusive as it is placed beyond the horizon of present lived experience” (p. 133). She argues that, within an exchange economy, the search for “authentic experience, correlative, the search for the authentic object become critical” (p. 133). A return to making with one’s hands brings the experience of making back within our grasp.

Hands are also a crucial part of our relationship with digital interfaces; for instance, the digital is even defined with reference to the “digits” or fingers (Bratich, 2010; White, 2015). Yet, an argument may be made that a greater sense of intimate connection, or affect, seems more likely to stick to paper forms (Piepmeier, 2009). Alison Piepmeier argues that “the repeated linking— even conflation— of [paper-based] zines and electronic media, particularly blogs, both in mainstream discourses and academic studies, reveals a lack of awareness of the significance of zines’ visual and material embodiment” (220). She asserts that paper bears the marks of the body and functions as a “nexus, a technology that mediates the connections not just of ‘people’ but of bodies. Paper facilitates affection” (220). As digital devices and algorithms increasingly work to manage
(and track) women’s day-to-day lives, the ability to “play with paper and glue” can provide a respite and a sensory-rich form of media engagement.

**Dimensionality and Personalization**

In alignment with the association with “handicraft,” materiality has also historically been a hallmark of craft (Adamson, 2007, p. 20). In fact, craft practices are often categorized, organized, and even gendered into different practices based on their materiality such as paper crafting, woodworking, metalwork, or sewing. Feminized craft forms are often of “softer” materials such as fabric or paper with masculine projects orientated to wood and metal – and often the digital. It should be no surprise that materiality is also used to categorize forms of scrapbooks (and types of people who scrapbook). Craft-based paper scrapbooks are associated more with women and with a highly value textured, tactile materiality.

During one of my first scrapbook events, I stumbled upon a group of six women discussing ways that the digital is “not the same” as the paper form. Their discussion demarcated critical differences between digital and paper in relation to personalization and texture/dimensionality. Through their assertions of the “superiority” of the paper form in relation to these two elements (personalization and texture/dimensionality), they also indicated the ways that the process of crafting offers a fuller sensory engagement including details such as texture that not only add tactuality, but also infuse the labor and the object with the care of the maker. These textures, sensations and engagement in this process enable these crafts to evoke greater emotional connection. The elements (personalization and dimensionality) that these women identified as important or more valuable offer insight into productive areas and practices for the feminized labor of “making inalienable.”
Prior to hearing this conversation at the event, “personalization” and “dimensionality” had already emerged as dominant themes of the practice; and, this conversation helped me to realize their role as a labor of “making inalienable,” a way to show care, and to build intimacy. Personalization involves, “the action of making something personal, or focused on or concerned with a certain individual or individuals; emphasis on or attention to individual persons or personal details” (OED). Journaling or (often handwritten) notes accompanying photos serve as a central part of the discourse regarding the importance of “personalizing” pages. The magazine *Creating Keepsakes* urges readers to “always journal [about] your photos. Without journaling, you have a book of strange-looking people dressed in funny clothes. If you disagree, look at our grandparent’s albums” (Ruesen). The addition of such “personal touches” works to add a greater value to the albums – in a sense, these touches are what work to connect with the maker and to distance these “handmade” objects from more mass (and alienated) forms of production.

“Dimensionality” is a term tied to materiality used to demarcate a “spatial extent of any kind, as length, breadth, thickness, area, volume” (OED). Dimensionality is the difference between viewing a textile online and being able to touch, feel, and view the layers and accents which become absent or diminished when transferred into a representation. As scrapbooks work to capture and share a lived experience, the ability to add greater dimension offers a way to increase sensory connection with the memory. In an online lesson on “design principles,” scrapbook instructor Debbie Hodge (debbiehodge.com) defines texture and dimensionality. Texture is the surface of a material: is it rough or smooth, matte or shiny? Dimension refers to the extent to which something “lifts off the page” or what may be understood as the page’s 3-D elements. These characteristics are not limited to paper scrapbooks, among those who scrapbook,
even digital versions are carefully constructed to emulate the look and “feel” of paper textures, fabrics, and layers. Tips and tricks for digital scrapbooks typically offer advice to add “dimensional effects.” Such a suggestion appears in the “Digi Fusion” column of *Scrapbooks, etc.* that instructs on “popping up layers to create a dimensional effect” (June, 2011, p. 106-9). Regardless of the claims of traditional scrapbookers, those who have “gone digital” incorporate elements used to add dimension and personalize their pages through the colors, patterns, photos and textures they create digitally. This raises the question of what do these dimensional elements add or bring?

![Figure 12: Haptic Interface of Esther Howland’s Victorian Valentines](image)

At the heart of dimensionality is a deeper sensory engagement that may trigger a closer emotional connection between object and maker. The haptic interaction with tactile dimensional elements is argued to provide the “material foundation of emotional representations and responses” (Shank, 2004, p. 61). Barry Shank, for instance, notes the way that Victorian card maker Esther Howland’s valentines used high levels of dimensionality to become “beloved tokens of intricate feeling” (Shank, 2004, p. 61, Figure
Hodge praises texture and dimensionality as a way to increase haptic or sensory engagement that “draw in the viewer” on another level that may “trigger memories of previous texture experiences.”

The techniques used to add texture and dimensionality also work to demarcate a craft-oriented approach. Decorative details used on scrapbooks or cards are referred to as embellishments including buttons, lace, and glitter that frequently that add dimensionality and are common to other forms of women’s crafts such as sewing/quilting. Embellishments are the decorative side of crafting practice used to add a personal touch and an artistic flourish. They are the elements that typically add or involve the additional use of craft techniques to the process of making such as stamping, stenciling, sewing, applying glitter, and embossing. The addition of texture and dimension through these embellishments transforms these scrapbook pages into a “craft project” that may provide not only greater dimension but also greater craft skill and, subsequently, infuse a greater sense of care into the object. Embellished objects embody the care and time spent on their making in a way most other objects do not. Embellishments may be used to intensify or heighten emotions and can create and carry a strong emotional charge. For instance, one scrapbook article even asserts that “when we combine [photography] with the art of scrapbooking, additional doors open up for our creations. With a few cuts or embellishments, we can bring even more emotion to the photos” (Beattie, 2007, p. 25, emphasis in original).

The focus on texture and dimension in contemporary scrapbook practices can be seen on Raquel Bowman’s page (Figure 13) through her use of layered paper, lace doilies, and embossing (a technique that raises the surface of paper). Nicole Harper’s page (Figure 14) also showcases how the addition of dimensional and tactile embellishments advances
the skill-level and opportunity to add more personalized style. Harper utilizes hand-stitching to add an airplane cut-out. As a Creating Keepsakes magazine article praises the addition of stitching or sewing to a scrapbook page as adding “something special. It contributes subtle texture and helps define elements so they don’t bleed together. Mostly, stitches give a page a loved look, like a worn quilt” (Lightfoot, 2005, p. 63). Through this detail-work, these pages are given a “special touch” that works to add uniqueness, artistic interest, love and care. During an interview, one woman told me “I’ve tried digital, and it was okay. It didn’t have the fluffiness. There was nothing there that made me want to touch it; there was no handwriting there. It didn’t seem personal to me.”

Figure 13: Dimensional elements on Raquel Bowman’s page include layered paper, lace doilies, and embossing used to raise the surface of the paper.
Figure 14: Nicole Harper’s layered page using hand-stitching

Handcrafting and embellishing a scrapbook not only add dimensionality, but do so in a way that enhances the personal connection with the person who made the scrapbook. It is in the amount of care and attention applied adding dimension and personal details that infuses these goods with the touch of the maker. As objects that are infused with the personal touches of the maker, these crafts are valued by those who make them as a symbol of themselves and of their love (Johnson & Wilson, 2005, p. 117). These handmade objects may also be seen as a “reflection” of the maker. As Creating Keepsakes magazine asserted, “The thoughtfulness and care taken to make it special is a wonderful reflection of the giver.” One scrapbook maker describes a connection between her pages and her mother’s quilts as her “quilts reflect her life as well as her love for us. I try to put the same kind of care into the scrapbooks I make for my family” (1999 HOF, p.
21). These objects are understood as expressions of love as one a scrapbook magazine notes, “remember when your son or daughter made you our first card for the holiday or Mother’s Day? You probably displayed it proudly and later made sure to keep it tucked away safe forever. That is the power of a hand-made card. It just means more” (CK, 2005). Crafts, particularly as handicrafts, gain value as they continue to offer rich sensory experiences tied to a tangible materiality and embodiment.

The sensory engagement of touch with one’s hands is also a critical part of the enjoyment of making paper crafts. In Creating Keepsake’s 2005 Hall of Fame magazine, there is an abundance of declarations of love for the tactile in the winner’s profiles. For instance, one winner notes, “I love the tactile joy that comes from touching the product.” Another asserts that she “loves the smell of paper, the feel of dimensional embellishments and tacky residue left after using too much dimensional adhesive, ‘I just love getting my hands dirty’” (p. 116). A third winner describes herself as “a very tactile person. I need to touch my supplies, and I love texture. I’ll even re-create a pre-made embellishment.” In this case, her need to touch drives her to recreate something that already exists.

**Touch and Feel**

The repeated emphasis of those I interviewed on touch and their hands directed me to reflect and analyze the importance of such personal touch within the practice. When I asked interviewees to “tell me how you would describe a scrapbook,” I was repeatedly told that a scrapbook was something that you could “hold in your hands” (Ries, 2005). The ability to “hold” was further emphasized as a point of distinction within the ongoing redefinition of scrapbooks with increased use of digital tools for photo sharing. One interviewee, who happens to create most of her pages on her computer,
insisted a scrapbook was “personal” and “something tangible in your hand.” She insisted on making a printed, paper version of her albums, as she states,

I know people that make slide shows on their computer and they can email them. And that’s a great way to share your photos, but to me, having three kids, who will go and pick their album off the shelf and never look at their brothers’ albums. To me, that’s what it is about: having something tangible in your hand that you can look at and share.

Through her emphasis on “something tangible in your hand,” she asserts that her printed scrapbooks provide a greater sense of identification, even a closer or more intimate form of sharing. Her emphasis on touching also hints at the ways her own personalized touch is infused into the making of her sons’ albums. The residual trace of touch of the maker on the paper (or craft object) appears as a valuable as a link to the maker, particularly if the maker is someone with whom you hold close ties but have been separated from by time or distance.

The notion of touch conveying a more intimate contact appears in the trace of the handwritten. One magazine article, “Handwriting with Confidence,” encourages the use of handwriting, as “scrapbooking is a personal expression, not perfection. Nothing says you like your handwriting” (Owens. 2005, p. 76). The co-founder of the influential direct-sale scrapbook company, Creative Memories, Rhonda Anderson, asserts, “you need to see your handwriting as an important part of family history. Think back to the joy of seeing a recipe in your grandmother’s writing…your handwriting identifies you and brings comfort to those who see it” (Person, August, 2005, emphasis my own). A handwritten note or signature (even if scanned or copied) was seen as a more authentic reflection of the maker that offered a stronger connection (the personal touch) than a photograph alone,
particularly in an age of “retouching.” With scrapbook discourse, the handwriting of one’s grandmother in particular appears to convey a sense of comfort, care, and love that may also be distanced in time. Jenni Bowlin also asserts that the signature of her grandmother written on a desk makes her feel a closer connection to the desk and her grandmother, which adds a greater personal value that is “hard to describe, but which is easily felt.”

Paper forms, in particular, may offer a greater sense of embodied intimacy with those who have “touched” them before us. In holding these objects, the paper form offers a sense of closer connection with those who have also held them in their hands. The trace of the letter enables a more tactile connection with the now absent past. Historian Aaron Sachs echoes this sentiment as he notes that

one of the ironies…is that everyone talks about electronic media bringing people closer together, and I think this is a way we wind up more separate. We don’t have the intimacy that we have when we go to the attic and read grandma’s letters. Part of the reason I like being a historian is the sensory experience we have when dealing with old documents.

Sachs points to the personal connection that accompanies the “intimacy” of holding “grandma’s letters.” Holding the documents seems to offer a greater sense of engagement with the past through a more intense sensory experience. This touch works as an embodied trace, which affords the sense of a more intimate connection. As Rebecca Sower (2005) echoes this in Creating Keepsakes magazine as she notes that, “some inanimate objects work their way deep into our hearts. Because of the person we associate them with. Because they remind us of a special time. Because touching them brings back the memory of someone no longer with us” (p. 153). This is particularly true for craft objects which are viewed as special as they become “symbols of self” for the maker and their
loved ones, these craft objects offer an intimate connection to personal histories (Johnson and Wilson, 2005, p. 117).

The emphasis on hands appears to be most valued for the ability to offer a more engaged, even intimate, experience used to evoke greater emotion or to intensify the affect of the experience or memory. Susan Stewart (1999) argues that touch is a “threshold activity” between the boundaries of self and other “a place where subject and object are quite close to each other” (p. 35). In this way, touch provokes a potentially disturbing sense of contact or intimacy that is lacking in the engagement of other senses. Eve Sedgwick, for instance, was even inspired to present her theory on feeling as a combination of the “tactile plus emotional” and to assert that “a particular intimacy seems to subsist between textures and emotions” as she held a printed photograph (p. 17; Brown and Phu, 2014). Stewart (1999) notes further that “of all the senses, touch is the most linked to emotion and feeling. To be ‘touched’ or ‘moved’ by words or things implies the process of identification and separation by which we apprehend the world aesthetically” (p. 31). Through an ability to “hold” the scrapbook, individuals further reveal the evocative emotional and relational ties associated with the form.

By foregrounding a sensory-based materiality, the focus on touch recognizes the ways that materiality functions as a phenomenological experience tied to the senses. Within a visual culture (Mirzoeff 1999), the emphasis on other senses, such as touch, may resist the dominance or hierarchy of the visual within contemporary “knowledge economies” facilitated through “modernization, globalization and electronic media flows” (Edwards, Gosden, and Phillips, 2006, p. 4; Appadurai, 1996). Furthermore, craft may also offer a therapeutic and sensorial recovery for those whose everyday work requires them to be in their head. Ann Cvetkovich (2012) describes this as a form of “body politics
where agency takes a different form than application of the will. It fosters ways of being in the world in which the body moves the mind rather than the other way around” (p. 168). The emphasis on the hands foregrounds an embodied media experience in ways that may work to partially counter a sense of “abstraction, alienation, and specularization” often identified with commodification. The next section will focus more closely on a focus on the experience of making “joy in labor” common among those who craft may be leveraged within the context of women’s work to further counter feelings of alienation.

SECTION TWO: ENJOYMENT IN MAKING

Enjoying the Process from Satisfaction to Pleasure

“Enjoy the creative process. It’s easy to get caught up in getting things just right, but in the end, it’s all about how much you enjoy the process.” (Creating Keepsakes magazine, 2012).

During my analysis of the move of the scrapbook industry towards craft, I found a corresponding shift in emphasis from preservation to an enjoyment and pleasure in the process of making. I will argue that this emphasis on pleasure serves as a reconfiguration of the historic craft discourse “joy in labor” from the nineteenth-century Arts and Crafts movement. “Joy in labor” grew as a response to the shift in craft labor from workshop to the factory and a subsequent concern with conditions of labor such as deriving “satisfaction” from one’s labor rather than the often mind-numbing and alienating repetition of rote factory labor. Other scholars have found a turn to pleasure and even a “pleasure mandate” (Liss-Marino, 2014) for neoliberal creative work – such as finding “passion” in one’s work (Hong, 2014). This section examines the turn from satisfaction to pleasure in contemporary craft discourse on “joy in labor.” As a feminized craft labor, scrapbooks also indicate a concern with pleasure in one’s work as a critical struggle or area of concern for “women’s work” within the contemporary U.S. In turn, this section
connects this concern with pleasure in making among crafty scrapbookers with feminist debates on pleasure as a critical site for resisting/sustaining subordination within women’s work.

Declarations and calls for ‘pleasure’ analyzed in this section appear within a range of scrapbook literature including magazines from 1995 to the present as well as podcasts, blogs, and twenty-five in-depth interviews with hobbyists, as well as drawing from the quotations in the literature drawn from other qualitative work on women’s crafting. However, calls to enjoy the process, or “joy in labor,” were a central discourse during the nineteenth-century Arts and Crafts movement (Stalp 2007; Groenveld 2010). This movement peaked in the U.S. from 1890 to 1910 following the Industrial Revolution and was a response to changes in working conditions such as mechanization, automation, deskillig, and the growing fragmentation/divisions within labor practices (Krugh 2014: 283). The Arts and Crafts movement forged the ongoing association of craft, as a source of small-scale production and unalienated labor, as a space of resistance to industrial capitalism (Krugh 2014: 282; Luckman 2013: 250). The movement included three major strands: unity of art (artists and craftsman working together), joy in labor (the creative satisfaction of ordinary work), and design reform (making manufactured objects better) (Crawford cited in Krugh: 283). Joy in labor, referring to creative satisfaction with one’s work, placed value on one’s ability to find satisfaction with the process and product of work as a holistic process often denied within factory work involving repetition and fragmentation of labor. Joy in labor was a rhetoric used by the collective movement to draw attention to shifting conditions of labor. The modern focus on individual pleasure (rather than collective satisfaction) misses both collective concerns with satisfactory
working conditions and a vision for reform that accompanied “joy in labor” as originally used by the Arts and Crafts movement.

Tara Liss-Marino (2014) asserts that the “rhetoric of pleasure” has grown within the conditions of post-Fordism. She notes the shifts in labor to open markets, privatization and deregulation and expanding service and knowledge industries. She also points to the demands for “flexible accumulation” that demand constant innovation, mobility, and flexible/decentralized production. Individuals are responsible for juggling lifelong learning with multiple careers becoming adept at self-reliance and self-invention as they become an “entrepreneur of oneself” (du Gay 1996). Calls to find passion in one’s work and to “love what you do” serve to define the “link between vocation and identity that underpins the vast majority of neoliberal employment” (Liss-Marino, 2014, p. 12). These calls to find passion reflect the “pleasure mandate” for contemporary creative workers. Pleasure works to reveal the tension of such creative work that is supposed to feel gratifying but also the “considerable self-discipline and emotional labor it takes to project and maintain that image” (p. 13) through a “throughgoing, wholesale management of the self” (Gill, 2010), which is the topic of the next chapter.

The focus on pleasure also signifies a shift in the class dynamics of craft from a space of economic necessity in the nineteenth century into a leisure activity or a ‘matter of personal choice and expression’ since the mid-twentieth century (Cochrane 1992: 61 cited in Luckman 2015: 20-21). As craft historian Stephen Helber (1999) has argued, craft labor became a way to promote the work ethic during leisure time serving to reaffirm capitalist values of productivity (p. 155). However, the more recent call by feminine craft laborers for enjoyment in their craft work may reflect a desire to maintain their crafting as a site of leisure.
The Ambivalence of Pleasure

The use of pleasure also indicates a critical ambivalence in craft labor as it works to build a greater embodied intimacy entwined with women’s care work and as pleasure may be used as a source of potential exploitation used to sustain or increase productivity and profit through an intensified affect. Crucial to this ambivalence is the growing rhetoric of “joy in labor” as “pleasure” with the downturn of the industry after 2004 following the growth of digital photography and social media platforms for photo sharing.

As online tools for photo sharing were viewed as faster and easier, paper scrapbooking began to be perceived as too much work causing large numbers of women to quit the hobby and posing a significant threat to the profitability of the industry. An understanding of the hobby as too much work was echoed in interviews, and one woman noted her own initial reaction thoughts on the hobby as, “who has time for that?” The emphasis on enjoyment may have been a way for the industry professionals to counter associations of the hobby with too much work (culminating in the quitting of the hobby) and to reposition it as a pleasurable leisure experience.

One strand of this discourse urged magazine readers to embrace enjoyment of the hobby as a way to get beyond thinking of it as another ‘to-do’ on a long list of never-ending work. This theme appears during the editor’s introduction to the Jan/Feb 2012 issue of Creating Keepsakes magazine as she urges readers “instead of making scrapbooking another ‘get it done’ item on your list this year, consider making a resolution to make scrapbooking an adventure in 2012.” Here readers are urged to put aside the obligation to document their lives and to embrace adventure. Along these lines, another article proposes a scrapbook mantra to “get it done, but enjoy the doing. Art of any kind is such a great release and a way to express yourself. The process is such a wonderful experience as
is enjoying the finished product” (Martain 2009). In these terms, rather than another “have-to” task or demand to “get it done,” the process of paper crafting provides an outlet for expression and a “wonderful experience.” At the same time, the emphasis on enjoyment is used as a way to encourage women to keep working in order to “get it done.”

Although pleasure works to emphasize a sense of embodied experience, the focus only on part of the experience – just on the pleasurable aspects, rather than a more holistic experience – may be a trend of concern for feminist scholars. A focus only on pleasure, for instance, may also be used to justify and sustain commodification of women’s craft and care labor. It may also evoke conditions of “cruel optimism” as theorized by Lauren Berlant (2011). This “cruel optimism” occurs when such these sources of pleasure distract or sustain individuals from confronting or changing the structural conditions of their oppression.

When work becomes reframed as pleasure, it may also facilitate the ability to offer inadequate compensation, which has significant implications for women’s labor – historically defined by its unwaged status. One interviewee noted that it was through her ability to enjoy what she is doing and her lack of attachment to the product that enabled her to sell her craft labor for no profit. As she explains, “I’m happy creating and selling. I have no attachment to that page, I can sell that page…some of them take two hours to create. I’m not making money. I just enjoy what I am doing.” In this way, her enjoyment functions as compensation for the minimal monetary compensation that she receives for the feminized labor of crafting a scrapbook page.

The emphasis on pleasure and leisure in relation to women’s crafting may also obscure the ongoing devaluation of women’s under/unpaid domestic labor. Elizabeth
Groeneveld (2010: 270) describes how that the presentation of crafts on the pages of third-wave feminist periodicals are “potentially pleasurable because they are configured as leisure activities—nary an article celebrating the joys of quotidian vacuuming, dishwashing, or toilet-cleaning appears.” By focusing exclusively on the enjoyable aspects of domesticity, the emphasis on pleasure centers the experiences of middle-and upper-class women and erases the experiences of other women (Phelan, 1993; Groenveld, 2010). It reveals a failure to acknowledge that the ability to devote oneself to pleasurable domestic pursuits is a choice not available to many women who must earn wages to survive (Somerson, 2007).

In fact, the merits of pleasurable experiences tied to women’s domestic culture have been an ongoing arena of debate for feminist scholars. One productive strand of debate grew from Janice Radway’s (1984/1991) assertion that the event of romance reading, versus the book’s ideological content, provided a pleasurable “compensatory activity” in relation to the readers’ domestic duties. Ien Ang (1988) cautioned that an understanding of pleasure as only compensatory risked dismissing and reducing the potential of pleasure and fantasy. Ang argued for an acknowledgement of pleasure as a real space, ‘as the place of excess, where the unimaginable can be imagined’ (187, emphasis my own). Ang’s identification of pleasure as ‘the place of excess,’ foregrounds pleasure as holding the potential for a powerful affect (as affect may be defined as a surplus, excess, or intensity).

**Pleasure as an Affectively Intense Satisfaction**

The move of “joy in labor” from satisfaction to pleasure, involves a shift in intensity. Pleasure may also serve to provide an excess or surplus of satisfaction and so pleasure generates a stronger affect. This surplus affect may work to increase the overall
(affective) value of this labor as part of post-Fordist production. The move from “satisfaction” to “pleasure,” then may offer additional value within post-Fordist production. Susan Luckman (2015) asserts that affective labors are central to the market value of the feminized contemporary craft economy, quite visible in the marketing of products, selves, and even lifestyles.

One of the crucial differences between satisfaction and pleasure appear in pleasure’s stronger affective intensity than mere satisfaction. Affect can be understood as the level of intensity, the charge, or power to be moved (Massumi 2002). As a form of satisfaction that generates greater affective excess, pleasure holds potential for greater surplus and, subsequently, for greater surplus value or the qualification of excess onto production-consumption circuits (Ahmed, 2004). Within a modern experience economy (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982), the experience has become the commodity for sale. The pleasurable process, rather than the product alone, becomes a potential space to increase and extract surplus value, or profit, for capital.

The notion of pleasure as an excess (as affect) connects with Jane Bennett’s (2001) theory of enchantment. Enchantment offers ‘an affectively powerful sense of extrarational possibility.’ This sense of possibility may redress the disenchantment in a culture of post-Enlightenment rational dismissal (Luckman, 2015, p. 78). The ‘deeper more powerful sense of enchantment…lies in the making process itself’ as it ‘reminds us of our agency in the physical world’ (Luckman, 2015, p. 81-82). A sense of renewal and the therapeutic benefits of “enjoying the process” are affirmed by those who assert a sense of play in the process of making.

Other feminist craft scholars describe how the process of craft may work to combat a sense of disenchantment and provide a connection “out of the loss of
connection—to the body, to a meaningful sense of work, to relations with others—that characterizes depression” (Cvetkovich, 2012, 192-3). The process of craft provides a sense of “texture, color, and sensory pleasure” that are often missing or lacking from contemporary feminized labor that is often aligned with an immaterial affect. The personal touch of craft labor provides a crucial and pleasurable sense of connection with the physical world for the maker. These statements of “joy in labor” appear as a common way that crafters may reassert the importance of an embodied process of making, which may help to diminish the sense of separation between maker and product within a commodity culture.

Within other craft scholarship, “pleasure” is perhaps most frequently linked to this sense of “pleasurable experience” and, more specifically, with an experience of embodied engagement with the material world. Materiality is noted as both a hallmark of craft and as a source of pleasure (Adamson 2007; Luckman 2015). Qualitative interviews within women’s domestic craft note the way “pleasure was derived from the sensory and aesthetic aspects of making an item” (Liddle et al, 2013, p. 333). Artist Nadia Myre emphasizes, “I’m in love with its materiality. The act of sewing for me is not something I view, but rather a pleasure I experience” (cited in Fowler, 2010, p. 355).

Multiple interviewees also emphasized scrapbooking as therapeutic or used therapeutic terms to describe their experience. One mother of three referred to the area she uses to scrapbook in her home as ‘my happy place’ and her ‘outlet.’ Her assertion of ‘my happy place’ countered the dismissal of the practice by members of her family, such as her father-in-law, by reasserting the importance of the hobby to her own life (and sanity). Her scrapbook space was presented as a place where she could retreat from her domestic and caretaking duties and take time for herself. In fact, actual “scrapbook
retreats” or weekends away are a common practice within the hobby. The embrace of these retreats and the focus of the practice on domestic happiness may connect to a broader movement of feminine “retreatism” or the voluntary removal of women from public life and politics into the home, a form of “new domesticity” addressed in the next chapter (Negra, 2009).

The focus on scrapbooking as therapeutic also privileges a neoliberal notion of caretaking that individualizes care into care for the self (McGee, 2005). Feminists have critiqued such forms of self-care, particularly in the form of self-help, as working to center the individual as solution in a way that undermines collective support and political action (Rimke, 2000; Hong, 2015). At the same time, the assertion of pleasure evokes an embodied materiality, which counters the interior turn of the therapeutic. This allows women to reassert their own embodied pleasure as important and, perhaps, even more important than the album being made in a way that echoes the original resistance of “joy in labor” as a way to improve collective working conditions, in this case, for feminine laborers.

**Against Burnout**

Women are frequently addressed by contemporary therapeutic culture’s emphasis on self-improvement. Therapeutic culture encourages forms of self-management, which are necessary for neoliberal marketization of the self (Rose 1998). Viewed within the context of a culture of perfectionism, self-management/control, and/or depression, the assertion to “enjoy the process” gains vital importance.
Figure 15: Typology of Scrapbookers by Lisa Moorefield

In a cartoon guide or typology of those who scrapbook, Lisa Moorefield includes as her last example, “the burnout” (Figure 15). This “burnout” is frequently discussed in relation to the hobby and occupies a topic of great concern on scrapbook podcasts, message board discussions, blog posts, and in-person discussion at events. Scrapbook burnout may be tied to a number of factors including increased work hours, the practice as a site of intensive mothering, and the extension of women’s work into sites of
participatory media (Ouellette and Wilson 2011). An emphasis on the process of work as one of enjoyment aligns with broader affective configurations of work as a passion that may constitute “a new technology of extraction, a strategized attempt at squeezing more labor power out from workers” (Hong, 2014, p. 193).

Enjoyment and pleasure in making may also function as a critical counter-conduct in relation to a culture ruled by work/productivity and burnout. During the Paperclipping Roundtable (Hyman, 2011b, Episode 74), one woman describes the way her enjoyment functions as a counter-conduct,

> It’s a wonderful way to remember, find perspective, celebrate my life, let’s face it – play with pretty paper and be creative. I wonder why we as women so often feel that we cannot do things that are just about us and just because we like fun. My friends all say they are scrapbooking for their children. They would never spend all this time and money on themselves. I can’t even tell you the number of times that I have been told to “do something with my scrapbook” like as in if I am going to spend this much time on it then I should at least make some money off it. As in if it was an income source, then it would be okay for me to enjoy. When did we stop doing things just because we like them? When did it stop being okay for us to just feed our souls?

Impossible crafting standards align with the commodification of the industry and are visible in promotional or aspirational lifestyle-oriented areas of the industry including mediated displays of craft such as *Martha Stewart Living*, online galleries of the ‘best work,’ and Pinterest perfection. As one storeowner described to me, “I see all the time the pressure that these women put on themselves to make sure that their projects are perfect” (Edwards, 2007). Within these conditions, the rhetoric of “enjoying the process” may push back on demands to self-manage, to constantly improve oneself, or even to follow the rules; however, it does not push back against the pressure to produce. The rhetoric to enjoy the process is an attempt to counter burnout that causes many to cease work and to “quit” the hobby as it is no longer enjoyable.
Scrapbook blogger, instructor, self-brand, and former magazine editor, Cathy Zielske (2012) in a blog post, “Taking the “Crap” Out of Scrapbooking—A New Motto for an Old Approach,” provides a compelling illustration of the spirit of resistance within the rhetoric of “joy in labor.” Zielske’s post defines ‘crap’ according to five criteria including expectations, comparison, things in the way of ‘creative living,’ not living in the moment, and as ‘any other obstacle that removes your personal enjoyment from this hobby’. Zielske urges those who scrapbook to fight back against this ‘crap’ and to enjoy themselves. Her blog hits back against overwork and heightened expectations placed on women’s work through this emphasis on ‘fun’ and ‘your personal enjoyment’. She begins by noting that heightened expectations ‘make stuff not much fun at all’. She also points to the pressure to ‘constantly keep up with trends’ and to stay a step ahead of other mothers. Yet, this pressure to be perfect extends not only to mothers, but also many other women. In the pressure to ‘keep up’ with one’s memory keeping, she describes the way that many who scrapbook may no longer have the time or ability to actually live or enjoy themselves. The drive to present the ‘rosiest picture of life’ may also be damaging to ‘the authentic experience of being you’.

The responses to Zielske’s post indicate the damage and toll of these impossible standards. As the commenter notes, “I am definitely sharing as I hear all the time I cannot scrapbook, I am not good enough.” A similar sense of concern with the debilitative standards of perfection among women crafters appears in the work of craft activist, or craftivist, Kim Werker (2014). Werker pushes back against these standards by encouraging others “to make ugly crafts on purpose in a continuing effort to challenge our definitions, perceptions, and expectations of failure” (Werker, 2014, p. 49). A similar humoristic response to these unrealistic standards of perfection has become a popular
meme on Pinterest as Pinterest-perfect images are juxtaposed with failed attempts accompanied by the ironic title, “nailed it” (Figure 16). A focus on the process as one of fun and enjoyment, rather than on outcomes or “making things perfect,” may offer a return to the pleasure that accompanies simply making something – regardless of whether or not you “nailed it.” This focus on fun and pleasure has significant implications in the context of contemporary feminine labor demands for the constant display of a perfected self-image as a form of gendered craftwork made visible on the pages of the scrapbook.

Figure 16: “Nailed It” Meme on Pinterest

These women, particularly mothers, are situated within a neoliberal labor terrain that places blame and success often on the shoulders of women to self-manage, not only themselves, but also their families. Their lives and level of success as women become defined through their ability to “do it all” (further addressed in the next section) contributing to a sense of widespread “burnout.” As pressures to conduct these forms of
household management intensify, these women arguably face more intensive pressures to meet conventional gendered pressures of “good motherhood” in addition to conflicting demands and ideals of “self-care.” A focus on pleasure alone, however, does not seem foreground a sense of these collective working conditions of feminized labor as a space of resistance as did the original rhetoric of ‘joy in labor’. The focus on pleasure, for instance, may continue to privilege upper-class labor/leisure and erase the experiences of working class women. The call for pleasure also works to encourage forms of productivity focused on self-work that aligns with gendered demands for neoliberal self-management. However, the emphasis on pleasurable experience may also offer a form of push back against these neoliberal demands as it enables these women to reassert their right to simply ‘enjoy’ the doing in a manner that increases their connection with embodied experience.

SECTION THREE: The Art of Craft

This section examines implications for the labor of intimacy and of “making inalienable” as scrapbooks are positioned as an “artistic outlet.” These artistic practices appear less concerned with scrapbooks as objects and, instead, center on the individual self (esp. an individual’s emotional state) or their creative process in the present. The creative process of making addressed in the last section, however, shifts from a focus on “doing” to an artistic “way of being.” As care for the self occurs through a recognition of the truth that works to change the self, an emphasis on crafting oneself or living in an artistic way appears reminiscent of Foucault’s discussion of care of the self in The Government of the Self and Others, where he reflects on Hellenic practices of epimeleia heauton, the “care of the self,” a form of the tekhnē tou bious, the art of living, “the technique of existence” (Cohen, 2014, p. 5). This artistic turn aligns in curious ways with descriptions
of third way craft as not “just about the activity itself, it’s about crafting our life and living in an artistic way” (Railla, 2004; Groeneveld, 2010). Arguably, a focus on “creative” or artistic labor may function as a means of not only making commodities inalienable, but also one’s sense of self more “authentic” or “inalienable” as it is “created” through artistic expression. However, these calls to live in an artistic way may also be implicated with the class dictates of lifestyle media to live in a certain way.

A shift from craft to art involves a move to creativity, emotion, and individuality. One way art is evoked within the practice appears in exclamations of the exploration or expression of a “creative side.” For instance, although many who scrapbook may have started as a way to document their children’s lives, or their own lives, may state that why they remain in the hobby is because they enjoy it as a creative outlet. A 2005 profile of a scrapbook Hall of Fame winner in Creating Keepsakes notes, “although Sara started scrapbooks to preserve family photos, she’s gravitated to exploring her creative side” (p. 122). In such accounts enjoyment of the hobby comes through exploration of personal creativity, rather than a focus on the labor of preserving family photos. These accounts echo the focus on “enjoying the process” evoked in the last section, but in relation to art an emphasis on “creativity” is inserted. Here the concern shifts from creative making to creative originality evoking a sense of artistic superiority in relation to replication/copying common to craft designs.

Whereas craft is often entwined with a form of rule-oriented instruction acquired through learned action (Dormer, 1997), art is often associated with redefining, disregarding or exploitation of design rules. More art-oriented approaches emphasis the creative process and a disregard for the results. Accounts of scrapbooks as art evoke “rule breaking,” self-expression and personal feelings – how “I feel,” rather than how I am
supposed to feel. This alignment of art with breaking the rules further aligns with Foucault’s notion of self-care as counter-conducts in relation to existing rules. April Peterson, in her 2005 Hall of Fame profile, calls herself an artist, because “there are no rules in art! Instead of being paralyzed by the fear of doing it ‘wrong,’ I feel free to experiment” (p. 96). A 2004 Hall of Fame winner states, “I’ve thrown out all the rules and create for the love of creating. It’s more about feeling right than looking right” (p. 72). By aligning self-expression and “breaking the rules” with art, these notions of craft may actually contribute to the simultaneous higher cultural capital of the practice as “art” as well as the ongoing devaluation of craft in relation to art.

The evocation of scrapbooks as a form of unique, creative self-expression closely tied to emotions operates as a means to leverage the hobby as a form of art. For instance, the subtitle for the “Creativity Heals” column in CK magazine (2012) is the “use scrapbooking and crafting as a healing, emotionally restoring art” (p. 39). These emotions are described as a critical part of a creative process. As one woman states, “I really try to evoke an emotion on each layout. I usually laugh, cry or reminisce as I’m going through the process…when I feel such strong emotions, I end up with a layout I cherish” (p. 39).

Situating this labor as art, a creative, artistic process functions (as was evoked in the last section) as a way to obscure it as a form of work. Yet, the close association of art and emotion may function to elevate the value given to this emotion as well as to the management and evocation of emotion often utilized in relation to women’s work such as emotional, intimate, affective and care labors.

A focus on self-expression and self-creation, or more “artistic” forms of the practice, are more often embraced by young women, single women, women whose children have “left the nest,” and a few of the men in the practice. The temporality of the
practice shifts from a future-focus with family heritage, memory keeping or documentation to concern with the present. As one woman states,

I don't have children and I don't create scrapbooks for the future. My scrapbooks are to enjoy here and now and in 60 years when I'm dead and gone, I don't care where they go. I learned I couldn't make my scrapbooks with the idea of the future and where they would go in my head. It's about the present for me. It's about what I want, not what future generations will do with them. It's a creative outlet for me. (Paperclipping Roundtable)

She displays a disregard for the future and for a consideration of others as she reasserts,

“It’s about the present for me. It’s about what I want, not what future generations will do with them.” Her emphasis on the present contrasts with forms of the practice that emphasize “memory keeping” often for the family, particularly one’s children. Her focus is on the present moment – the experience itself – rather than on capturing this moment for future reflection. This works to counter the association of scrapbooks with photography and to emphasize the artistic components of the practice as a “creative outlet.” As the focus is on the present, and even a lack of consideration of the future of the scrapbooks, artistic-focused scrapbooks often resist the desire for a “past perfected” that overshadow memory-keeping forms.

Perhaps, unsurprisingly, as this form of the practice has higher cultural capital, the space of scrapbooks as an individual artistic-expression is a space (besides digital platforms) in which men are more commonly found within the hobby. The scrapbook celebrity Tim Holtz’s, whose name is “almost synonymous with that of altered art” (altered-art.net), promotes his products as “cutting edge paper craft” (timholtz.com).

“Cutting edge” may also be translated into a form of multi-media art. Yet, this approach demands the purchase of a array of expensive art supplies and products, which make it more profitable for the industry. While many scrapbook manufacturers have floundered
or gone out of business, the vintage or “distressed style” promoted by Holtz has flourished. His products appear in each of the three major big-box craft stores in the U.S., Michael’s, Jo-Ann’s Fabric, and Hobby Lobby. The owners of one of the local scrapbook stores I frequent have a picture of themselves with Holtz as the background/cover photo for the store’s Facebook page. This approach may also reintroduce a pressure to have “the right objects, accents and tools.” Rather than breaking the rules, much of the enjoyment comes in learning new artistic techniques, skills and rules. As someone unfamiliar with the difference between alcohol and distress inks, this artistic space may be intimidating (and expensive!) to enter. Several of the local stores that I visited offered classes geared to introducing and teaching the use of these products (often useful to increasing the sales of the product being demonstrated). As someone new to these techniques, there is a great deal of effort and concern in learning the proper way to use these accents and tools.

As Holtz represents this style, his promotional materials offer further insight artistic or multi-media art approaches to scrapbooks. Holtz’s webpage introduces the *raison d’etre* of his work,

> in a world where the moments of our lives can be captured and created in art of the everyday, it’s important it reflects our own unique personality. Finding just the right objects, accents, and tools to use are most important. Whatever your artistic vision is, exploring the imaginative is a chance for our creativity to escape understanding. Remember life isn’t about finding yourself – life is about creating yourself…(TimHoltz.com)

Holtz’s message feels both empowering and inspirational – it’s as if anything is possible. Through “artistic vision,” you can have the chance for your “creativity to escape understanding.” In these terms, creating appears as an affective force or, perhaps, an affective experience that pushes or escapes beyond our comprehension. Against the
backdrop of this imaginative “escape” is Holtz’s clandestine acknowledgment of the influence of contemporary digital media tools, such as digital photography and social media, to offer “a world where the moments of our lives can be captured.” The “art of the everyday” offers the chance for our lives to not only be captured, but to also be created. However, “most important” to this process of creation, as a manufacturer, Holtz emphasizes are “the right objects, accents and tools.” With the proper tools purchased, the goal of the practice shifts from “finding yourself” through captured moments to “creating yourself” in the present moment.

As a magazine columnist, blogger, and self-brand, Ali Edwards describes a similar notion of not only finding, but also “creating yourself through art in her book Life Artist: Scrapbooking Life’s Journey. These micro-celebrities advocate artistic forms that encourage the “creation” of self or a presentation of one’s life or “way of being” as “life artist.” This notion also aligns with Foucault’s (1988) description of life as a work of art as a “technology of the self.” Edwards asserts that the term “life artist” works better than “scrapbooker” to capture “this awesome thing I get to do, to be. A life artist, most simply, is someone who captures life and creates art” (p. 12). Both definitions of art by Holtz and Edwards describe it as a two-step process: 1.) capture life and then 2.) create. The fact that both begin by “capturing life” seems significant at a time when many of our lives are being increasingly mediated or captured through digital technology and storage. Furthermore, this notion of “capture” may serve as a mechanism for objectification (of self or one’s life) and in such a way may offer a pathway to the “abstraction, alienation, and spectacularization” of commodification (Schaffer, 2011, p. 14).

The second part of the process, to create art/self, appears not only as something you “get to do” but also “to be.” This creation and expression of the self is demarcated as
“what life is about.” Here is a shift from process, or what you “get to do,” to subjectivity or the self, what you get “to be.” Under post-Fordism, labor has transformed from material to more immaterial production tied to subjectivity (performativity, emotional labor, and even communicative labors). Yet, the emphasis on this is “what life is about” reveals the ambivalence in these forms of labor as they work both to animate the spirit, but also to animate the commodity.

The two-step process (to capture and to create) also appears in Colin Campbell’s (2005) model of craft consumption more broadly as the consumer “captures” the right objects and tools through consumption and then uses their skill or craft labor to design/display/create a self. Within the context of a feminine hobby, this two-stage process illustrates an expansion of feminine labor. In order to achieve the higher status of “artist,” individuals are not only to “capture” (or consume), but also to “create.” If “capture” is a form “consumption,” then two-step mirrors the process of “craft consumption” in which individuals infuse skill and care into their consuming. Yet, a move from “consume” to “capture” may indicate a critical difference. Capture emphasizes a potentially exploitative/imperialist power over the captured. As individuals capture their lives/images/memories and then transform themselves to fit the ideal of creative artist, capture could imply an intensification of commodification through an objectification of one’s experiences, of one’s life, of one’s self. This process should be situated in relation to intensifications in the commodification of experiences and even of one’s self (e.g., self-branding) that have proliferated in a digital age.

**Conclusions**

This chapter has traced three craft approaches for the labor of “making inalienable” used to build a more intimate relationship with commodities: an intimate
personal touch, pleasure in the process, and artistic creativity/originality. The first section noted an emphasis on the tactile media experience of making a craft as a labor used to infuse a greater sense of connection and care into the object used to transform object into a possession. Experiences of human touch tied to paper forms appear to function as a way to facilitate greater affection. The emphasis on the hands foregrounds an embodied media experience in ways that may work to partially counter a sense of “abstraction, alienation, and specularization” often identified with commodification.

Secondly, the paper discussed the changes in the craft-based discourse of ‘joy in labor’ from satisfaction with collective working conditions to one’s own individual experience of pleasure. “Joy in labor” emerged within the nineteenth-century Arts and Crafts movement in the shift in craft labor from workshop to the factory and a subsequent concern with conditions of labor such as deriving “satisfaction” from one’s labor rather than the often mind-numbing and alienating repetition of rote factory labor. More recently, scholars have noted a turn to pleasure and even a “pleasure mandate” (Liss-Marino, 2014) for neoliberal creative work – such as finding “passion” in one’s work (Hong, 2014). This also emphasizes how this turn from satisfaction to pleasure in contemporary craft discourse on “joy in labor” may also be a way to reassert women’s right to enjoy their leisure time. While an emphasis on pleasure in one’s material labors may function as a way to counter distance or alienation, through their assertions that their enjoyment matters, “joy in labor” may also reinforce a neoliberal notion of caretaking that individualizes care as care for the self.

The final section explored the two-step process of “capturing” life and then creating art as another form of the labor of making inalienable. This chapter reveals an increased concern away from practice and towards subjectivity – a turn away from doing
craft towards being artistic. As the turn to art may involve a flagrant disregard for the rules, this turn to art may facilitate the development of counter-conducts used to care for the self. Yet, crafting oneself as an artist can contribute to a move from the collective shared pleasure of craft to a focus on the individual artist. Furthermore, as the process involves a two-step process to “capture” and to “create,” it may actually contribute to a process of self-objectification that ease commodification/self-branding.

Some of the greatest potential for the labor of making inalienable appears in the experience of the craft – in its role craft and artistic outlet as a source of enjoyment. The process or the experience of making craft can also provide a “dislocation” from other forms of work; for instance, many of those I talked to pointed to the way that the craft allowed them a break from their computer. They turned away from the digital as it “felt too much like work” (also found in Ytre-Arne, 2011). Making craft brings more embodied awareness to our actions; craftwork involves focus and purposeful action including “thought, the bodily sense of vision and touch, and the physical manipulation of tools and materials” (Liddle et al, 2013, p. 332).

The labors of making inalienable also indicate the critical role of touch to both personalize and generate affect. Touch functions as a critical interface a “threshold activity – a place where subject and object are quite close to each other” (Stewart, 1999, p. 35). To be “touched” by something is to be “moved” and “implies the process of identification and separation by which we apprehend the world aesthetically” (Stewart, 1999, p. 31). As we are “touched,” this is the way we change, the way we to “care for oneself.” As Susan Stewart describes for “to be in contact with an object means to be moved by it – to have the pressure of its existence brought into a relation with the pressure of our own bodily existence. And this pressure perceived by touch involves and
actual change; we are changed and so is the object” (Stewart, 1999, p. 32). In its ability to move us, touch also gestures towards a consideration of the critical role of touch in the care of the self.

The experience of making craft also opens up alternates by providing time and space away from the flow of everyday life. The time involved in craftwork cultivates a slower tempo that provides a pause within the often rapid pace of advanced capitalism. Janice Radway (2012) notes that in making time for themselves romance readers were able to diversify the pace and character of their habitual routine. Similar to those who scrapbook, these hobbies are spoken of in terms of “relaxation,” which as Radway notes works to reduce “the state of tension produced by prior conditions” (p. 61-62). Through craft she is able to let go of “negative thoughts and stress” of one’s head and to be lost in the process of creating. She also notes how reflecting on her memories/family offers a reconnection necessary for greater intimacy. The embodied “doing of craft” works in these ways to counter abstraction of one’s head that may serve to disconnect, as Cvetkovich (2012) notes, it is “the loss of connection—to the body, to a meaningful sense of work, to relations with others—that characterizes depression” (p. 193-193). Creating, crafting, making art all function not only as a crucial form of the labor used to counter alienation, but the depression that may accompany such alienation, in the ways that such alienation fosters detachment and disenchantment.
CHAPTER SIX: “I Learned,” Self Work of Everyday Documentation as a Feminized Class Labor

SECTION ONE: Background

“Paper Planners Making a Comeback”

Below is the introduction to the “Good Day Rochester” segment aired 5/17/2016: “Blogger Norah Pritchard, who is a married mom of three, an English teacher and a small business owner, joins us on Good Day Rochester to talk about how paper planners are making a comeback. For more ideas, visit her website, WillowcrestLane.com.” (http://foxrochester.com/news/good-day-rochester/paper-planners-making-a-comeback)

Host 1: You write stories about motherhood, about family, about finding balance – or trying to…
Norah: trying to

Host 1: One of the ways you do that is you’re a big proponent of paper planners.

Norah: I love planners. The paper planner is having a moment right now. If you go to Michael’s, Jo-Ann’s, even Target, the paper planners are all over the place, and they have stickers for them. People are really enjoying having everything all in one place. [There is] something to be said for digital planning, and I certainly use my phone (and notes section of my phone) to keep my husband in the loop. But everything is in one spot, my meal plans, my book lists…

Host 1: That’s the thing about your planner, I would just jot down my appointments but you plan a week’s worth of meals, you plan outings with the kids, you plan everything
Host 2: Your planner even has your name on it.

Norah: It’s an Erin Condron Life Planner. I have a couple of planners, I’m kind of planner crazy.

Host 2: Where are the coffee stains?
Norah: Actually, this has a cover, a case. It does. I know that sounds crazy. I ordered one for it.

Host 1: It has stickers for each day. That’s part of the planner system. What does this do for you, Norah? What does it do for your brain when you see each day planned out like this? Colors and everything. It’s got to do something for you.

Norah: It totally does. Huge motivator for having a paper planner, I feel peaceful. I’m not searching all over the place. I use this as a memory keeper when I take the kids on a well-visit to track height and weight, things that are really important. Gives me a sense of peace to have everything in one spot…book lists or seasonal chores or things I get, meals, ideas for home décor, my etsy site.

Host 2: It’s more documenting, more than just when you’re going to be at something next week…
Host 1: I’m inspired. I’m going to make a list, then I’m going to follow it, and feel better.
My ECLP (Erin Condron Life Planner) has the family schedule, sports, events, school news, plus a ton more. I love the roomy boxes on the weekly view to put all of our events in.” (Norah Prichard, http://www.willowcrestlane.com/planner-overview-part-1/)

Figure 17: Norah Pritchard’s Erin Condron Life Planner

Introduction

As Norah Pritchard describes above, “the paper planner is having a moment right now.” Planners, also called memory planners, are used not only to record appointments – as one of the hosts of Good Day Rochester observes, “it’s more documenting, more than just when you’re going to be at something next week.” Pritchard describes the way her planner offers her a sense of peace by keeping all of the fragments of her life in one place. Her planner allows her to better manage not only her workload, but also that of her family. It is a tool for “trying to” find balance. The host of the morning show underscores the emotional appeal underlying the “planner moment” at the end of the segment as she proclaims, “I’m going to make a list, I’m going to follow it, and feel better.” Through the
hope of “feeling better” expressed by the host, we see the way planners serve as an instrument of self-help or as a tool used to offer a sense of “peace” within a feminized therapeutic culture.

This chapter examines how forms of everyday documentation (including planners, scrapbooks, selfies, and social media) have become used for self-management with a promise of therapeutic self-improvement through greater self-knowledge and personalized control for those struggling to balance. In particular, the chapter focuses on a twelve-week course on how to “cultivate a good life and record it,” the tagline of the scrapbook brand, Project Life. This course offers a comprehensive overview of the labor forms involved in documentation of everyday life. With a close read of the twelve-week course, these forms of self-documentation are examined as “instructional devices that encourage self-responsibility, self-entrepreneurialism, and self-improvement as a neoliberal form of governance” (Bratich, 2006, p. 67); furthermore, these forms of self-management will be argued to be a part of lifestyle media used to teach, cultivate, and display a “can-do” femininity aligned with a higher-class status. For some this training in self-management translates into business opportunities or economic capital through self-branding as amateurs translate into professionals.

As feminine audiences are more likely to embrace the paper format of everyday documentation, these forms function as a site for feminine labor and point to challenging areas and potential disruptions of daily life that this labor works to improve or negotiate. One of the main areas of work is time management; yet, paper planners are described as “intentionally inefficient” (Hyman, 2015, Ep. 241). As part of the Paperclipping roundtable on planners (Episode 241), one woman describes them as “her morning meditation,” she stops at a coffee shop to work on her planner on her way to work and it
offers “fifteen minutes with “no kids, no life – let’s zone out.” The paper form can also
serve as a potential disruption or simply a break from the digital as these planners take
time to breathe and reflect on their day, their lives, and their dreams outside of digital
streams.

The digital holds a close relationship with paper planning. The ease of digital
tailoring and personalization, for instance, increases the desire to personalize other
aspects of our lives to reflect and document ourselves. As one podcast contributor notes,

with all this technology that we have access to we expect our environment to be
tailored to us. We’re not happy with just a generic black and white [planner]
because we are so used to having our photo on the front of our iPhone screen and
having it all tailored to what we like and the planners are an extension of that. We
don’t want generic black and white, we want it to look how we want it to look – a
reflection of who we are.

These forms of tailoring and personalization are also the labors of lifestyle. Rather than
labor, these tasks are often presented as “an extension of identity formation” (Ouellette,
2016, p. 7). However, these forms of personalization demarcate difference, uniqueness,
and expression of self that often work to define an upper class aesthetic labor. They are
also part of the work of “making inalienable” (addressed in the chapter on craft) used to
decrease a sense of alienation with mass produced goods.

As daily documentation has become so prolific, the chapter draws insights from an
in-depth analysis of a scrapbook brand specifically developed in relation to the notion of
everyday documentation, Project Life. The founder, Becky Higgins, frequently uses her
own life to model not only a simpler approach to memory keeping and to provide tips
and tricks on how ways “cultivate a good life and record it,” the brand’s tagline. This
tagline and the brand’s association with the lifestyle of its founder, Becky Higgins,
indicate the ways everyday documentation intersects with other lifestyle media and, as I will argue, a feminized form of middle class labor.

The online course, Project Real Life, offered by Higgins instructs/provides ideas not only for making scrapbook pages for “recording life” but also for “cultivating a good life.” Similar to other forms of lifestyle-oriented media, Project Life instructs or gives a guideline for living the “good life” (Ouellette, 2016). In the Oct-Dec of 2012 and Jan-March of 2014, the “Project Real Life” course was offered online through Big Picture Classes. Higgins describes the course in an October 2013 blog post,

if you’re familiar with my tagline *Cultivate a good life and record it* – the class is really based a whole lot on that part about cultivating a good life. I’ve broken the content into 12 segments that cover everything from organizing and decorating to fostering relationships and getting a grip on managing our time. I’m also sharing plenty of ideas to get your creative wheels turning about how to document life with the “real life” pictures you take (Becky Higgins.com).

The course itself already works to curate and highlight the feminine labors involved in everyday documentation. As Higgins provides lessons, on her approach, efforts, and process to “cultivate a good life and record it,” she models and outlines her definition of what is meant by “living a fulfilled life” through the course content. The course indicates the diminishing lack of distinction between labor and leisure as well as production and consumption in many form of both creative and feminine labor. As individuals pay for the course, the course provides these women assignments (aka work) used to improve and “enrich” their life. This lends further support to the argument of Ouellette and Wilson (2011) on the intensification of the second-shift of women’s labor, through forms of self-work, facilitated by convergence culture. The work of this chapter is to further unpack and clarify the relationship between documentation, self-management, and feminized class labor embedded and surrounding the proliferation of everyday documentation. The
lessons that Becky Higgins teaches in her course, Project Real Life, illustrate how practices and procedures of self-documentation become a form of self-work used for better management of self and (in many cases) family (Ouellette and Wilson, 2011).

In the following pages, I will examine three entwined components drawn from Higgins’s description of her twelve-week course, Project Real Life, “I’ve broken the content into 12 segments that cover everything from organizing and decorating to fostering relationships and getting a grip on managing our time” (blog, October 22, 2013). These three areas summarize content of the twelve-week course: (1) new domesticity, “organizing and decorating” (2) relational labor, “fostering relationships” (3) self-management, “getting a grip on managing our time.” These three areas of the chapter appear in feedback from a former student’s October 2013 blog post,

This class is not about Scrapbooking…it is about living a fulfilled life and capturing the true beauty in the ordinary daily occurrences. I found this class to slow me down [self management] and I started enjoying the small things [new domesticity]. It made me a better mom, daughter, wife and person [relational labor]…I have it all documented! Becky not only sells a product but a way to enrich your life!

As “Becky not only sells a product but a way to enrich your life!” these three areas gesture to the intersection of self-documentation with lifestyle and the concerns of white, upper/middle class femininity and feminine labor. These three areas (new domesticity, relational labor, and self-management) offer a provocative starting part for understanding how hierarchies of class and gender are performed and negotiated through these media practices. They also serve to demarcate some of the key feminine labors involved in producing white, upper/middle class subjectivity.
Class Work through Intimate Labor

Everyday documentation appears as a form of intimate labor as it captures “the intimacy of the quotidian details of daily life, the intimacy of shared confession and self-revelation, the intimacy of a unique voice or persona” (Smith and Watson, 2014, p. 75). The intimacy of everyday documentation easily transitions to a form of self-monitoring entwined with self-improvement within a therapeutic culture. Self-monitoring thrives on mediated platforms, which promise increased self-knowledge through the objectification of the self and manipulation of self for best effect (Andrejevic, 2004; Lury, 2004). While similar forms of self-surveillance are often studied in digital contexts, a look at the ways these practices continue in paper forms highlights the gendered legacies and broader cultural forces, such as therapeutic culture and class, that align and even shape such activities of feminized self-work.

These mediated representations of the self are argued to hold a two-fold appeal: first, as part “of the process of ‘getting’ one’s life by making it understandable by reproducing it” and secondly, as a way to increase social validation through mediated public sharing (McNeill, 2014). The first appeal “getting one’s life by making it understandable by reproducing it” is common to paper forms of everyday documentation. The second “social validation through sharing” appears even more widely through social media. As Project Life and other forms of scrapbooking are “made to be shared,” they straddle these two appeals. The personal planner (or an art journal) can serve as a more private (and potentially “safe”) place to jot down the details of one’s life. These planners capture one’s life more intimately with less concern for impression management in a way that may offer greater self-knowledge for improvement and management of one’s life.
Everyday documentation displayed through social media, on the other hand, requires one to “strategically manage self-disclosure” as part of a “performed intimacy” (Marwick and boyd, 2011). Calculated authenticity and selective intimate disclosures of self-documentation intensify the need for self-monitoring and make more visible forms of self-work used for self-(and impression) management. Social media makes visible how the work of self-documentation entwines with performativity and impression management (Goffman, 1959). While documentation practices may reinforce social norms as one self-corrects to better fit a constructed ideal, they also facilitate recognition of the “constructedness” and work behind maintaining these norms (Smith and Watson, 2014, p. 76; Banet-Weiser and Portwood-Stacer, 2006, p. 496). The appeal of self-documentation may also reside in the subtle ways they may be used to subvert, control, and redefine demands for self-management on one’s own terms. In such a way, these practices of self-documentation are a crucial “technology of the self” used to “care for oneself” (Cohen, 2014).

Impression management and display of self-identity conducted through self-documentation are critical to the performance of a class identity. When self-monitoring transitions to self-improvement or management, these practices become tightly entwined with class aspirations. The perceived need to be “continually learning and enriching oneself” and the role this plays in upward mobility may be most acutely felt by the new middle classes (Ouellette, 2016, p. 56). An aspirational culture of self-expression and continual self-improvement has been associated with the expanding middle classes (Lewis, 2008, p. 9). Helen Wood and Beverly Skeggs (2004) argue that the idea that we can choose to “better” ourselves and our daily environments is ultimately another way of perpetuating class hierarchies as “choice mediates taste, displaying the success and failure
of the self to make itself” (cited in Ouellette, 2016, p. 56). While class may often be rendered invisible, these practices offer a way to display success, or at least one’s “can-do” attitude to improving the self, used to demarcate class.

Despite the invisibility of class, it may be important to note that during presentations and discussions of my work on scrapbooks, individuals frequently raised concerns and implications on the practice’s class status. These inquiries revealed an underlying sense of the hobby as one for upper/middle class, suburban, stay-at-home mothers or grandmothers. As I also held similar associations when I started my research, I was surprised to see a strong representation of working class women in attendance at various scrapbook events (see crop chapter). In spaces where my research centered on women’s lives, rather than industry discourse, I found the hobby was well represented and beloved by working class women identified during interviews by indicators including their occupation, education, and other social cues; however, as the industry selects what discourses of scrapbooking are circulated in the mass market, white, upper class women and their style of scrapbooking are often rendered most visible. A 2003 survey by the scrapbook industry, for instance, found that thirty-nine percent had annual incomes of less than 35,000 and sixty-five percent worked full or part time (Christensen, 2011, p. 187).

As I began talking to individuals at scrapbook events (crops and conventions), many who I talked to were unaware, or informed me that they were uninterested in, industry trends or the most popular self-brands such as Becky Higgins, Heidi Swapp, and Ali Edwards. Yet, it was through initial interviews with upper-middle class participants that who first told me about these self-branded celebrities. In fact, following trends and new products serves as significant part of the practice for some. Among those I talked to,
upper/middle class women were those most likely to identify with and follow “can-do” self-branded scrapbook celebrities, in the vein of Martha Stewart, who serve as “experts” who modeled “correct” forms of the practice (Harris, 2008; Lewis, 2008), while somehow also simultaneously proclaiming that “there’s no wrong way to scrapbook.”

**A “Can-Do” Model**

Becky Higgins offers an exemplar of this “can-do” self-branded celebrity. In September of 2014, she was featured as one of fifteen celebrities during the large big-box craft store, Michael’s “celebrity week” (michaels.com) also including Martha Stewart, Isaac Mizrahi, Vanna White, and Betsy Johnson (See Appendix A). These self-branded celebrities are also often cultural intermediaries. Bourdieu (1984) introduces the notion of a cultural intermediary to describe the role of professionals that translate cultural forms for aspiring middle classes in a location between the elite art market and those of the mass market (p. 324-328). Cultural intermediaries are tied to a particular class and professional position. Lifestyle experts, such as Becky Higgins, have become a contemporary form of the cultural intermediary in the ways she seeks to educate and inspire her students to “cultivate a good life.”

Higgins grew as a celebrity within the scrapbook industry through her monthly “Becky’s Sketches” column in the leading scrapbook magazine, *Creating Keepsakes* over a decade from 1998-2008. The column illustrated simple sketches or scrapbook page designs to be copied – a blueprint or plan to follow in order to design a scrapbook page. In fall 2008, Higgins created a supplemental kit collection for Creating Keepsakes called Project 365. Project 365 got its name from the popular practice of taking a photo-a-day (365 images). The kit offered a system to help archive these everyday images into an album using divided plastic page protectors that allowed for faster archiving as photos
could slide easily into the plastic pages without cutting or pasting. As Higgins notes in the instruction sheet accompanying the kit, “you are literally slipping things into page protectors. That’s it. Could it be any easier?” (Higgins, 2009). The kit sold out almost immediately and was notoriously difficult to get (Two Peas Forums, 2009).

Following the success of Project 365 and in the face of the collapse of the scrapbook magazine industry, Higgins left the magazine in 2009 to develop Project 365 into her own brand utilizing her name recognition and popular blog. Higgins converted Project 365 into Project Life. Project Life carried forth the idea of slipping photos into plastic “photo pocket pages.” Project Life added pre-printed cards or “journaling cards” to add your own handwritten notes (or decorative elements) along with photos into the “pocket pages.” The brand sold pocket pages in various configurations/sizes, albums, and journaling cards, all in various styles and colors. The brand sells on Amazon, Home Shopping Network (HSN), Michaels, Hobby Lobby, AC Moore, and other popular craft stores.

On an ongoing basis, Higgins posts quotes of advice on #BHCultivateAGoodLife to social media, which are also sold as a package of journal cards (see Appendix B). Combined into a comprehensive list, these phrases/cards reveal a seemingly never-ending list of advice on how to live and behave, such as, “allowing yourself to evolve and not get so stuck in a certain way of doing certain things,” “not being so hard on others. Plus—when we are critical of others, it comes across as our own insecurity,” “being the first to say hello.” These quotes could easily be framed or translated into an etiquette book used to discipline behavior in ways that align with class distinction.

As a so-called “new” form of scrapbooking, Project Life offers a touch point for broader changes. As the brand began as a way to capture a photo-a-day, Project Life and,
in particular, the Project Life App for the iPhone, integrate with digital photography, smart phones, and online documentation in ways that previous forms of scrapbooking do not. Industry expert, Nancy Nally, asserts the brand’s “massive and rapid popularity the past few years has changed the consumer side of scrapbooking” (Nally, July 9, 2013). Another blogger points to the success of the brand in the way it makes “memory-keeping accessible to non-crafters” (Priest, March 30, 2015). Despite its appeal to “non-crafters,” the brand (and Becky Higgins) hold deep roots with the scrapbook industry and maintain close ties to the culture and the labor of those who scrapbook. As a brand that straddles the traditional and new, Project Life helps facilitate discernment of ways current practices continue or carry forth the legacy of previous traditions.

SECTION TWO: THREE AREAS OF FEMINIZED CLASS LABOR

New Domesticity as “Organizing and Decorating”

“New domesticity” describes the oft-idealized resurgence of an interest in domestic pursuits aligned with a do-it-yourself ethos including activities of “home making” such as cooking from scratch, raising animals, and crafting/sewing. New domesticity paints a rosy picture of domestic pursuits involving pleasure and skill and may overlook or neglect the potential drudgery and negativity of involved in many domestic duties (Gajjala, 2015, p. 26, p. 31). Scholars have argued that “new domesticity” appears as a discourse of privilege often associated with the so-called “choice” to stay home. Emily Matchar (2013) argues that new domesticity offers a rejection of a previous rhetoric that told privileged women they could have it all, but which contrasted with their reality of a career that did not allow them adequate ability to care for themselves much less face the additional burden of familial care. The unrealized promise to “have it all” including a
work-life balance along with “growing disenchantment with the mainstream workplace, which has failed young people, mothers, and families” is cited as a contributing factor to women who opt-out from work and retreat into the home (Matchar, 2013, p. 8).

The course defines “home making” in terms of feminine labor; and, in particular, as a form of affective and intimate labor used to create a “pleasant environment.” The home and home making function as a central site, space, and labor not only for Higgins’s course, but also for feminine labors more broadly. Domesticity remains a site with powerful connotations and ongoing tensions tied to femininity, labor and power. “New domesticity” appears most visibly during the course in the weeks on “nurturing your inner homemaker,” “cutting the clutter,” and “organizing to simplify.” These categories of home making indicate the course’s orientation to upper class feminine labor in its focus on the affective labor of decorating and other ways to create a pleasant environment.

The embrace of “nurturing your inner homemaker” perpetuates home making, or domestic labor, as an expression of women’s inner or “natural” selfhood. “Nurturing your inner homemaker” focuses on the pleasurable aspects of homemaking effectively reducing protestations that such labor is not a personal choice, but rather remains an unequal burden for women. Higgins begins the week on “nurturing your inner homemaker” by acknowledging the contentious minefield of the domestic terrain,

To be a ‘homemaker’ can mean different things to different people, but I can tell you this: It’s about so much more than standing at your kitchen sink. This week I’m going to discuss the value of homemaking—whether you’re in a dorm room, a high rise apartment in the city, or a three-bedroom house with a white picket fence.

Even as she acknowledges the polysemy of meanings implied in “homemaker,” Higgins ends with “white picket fence” associated with the post-WWII U.S. nuclear family ideal. The heteronormative family, in particular, continues to be centered and normalized
throughout the course – often as a default as Higgins uses her own family as an example. This can be seen as Higgins notes that, “I hope when you think of ‘homemaking’ that you don’t have any negative connotations with that word. What an honor and a privilege to create an environment for your family, or even just yourself if you live alone.” Family appears assumed with “or even just yourself” tagged on as a caveat that falls short as a reassurance. The entire instance reveals a sense of a single-household as outside the norm, as less than, or “just” despite the growing number of single-households.

The implication also remains that the labor necessary to “create an environment” what Higgins refers to as “privilege” is really an extension of women’s domestic responsibility, rather than a shared responsibility among all those whom occupy a household. The emphasis on homemaking as an “honor and a privilege” emphasizes the role of “love and fulfillment” elides over the “lingering inequalities responsible for the second shift” of women’s labor (Ouellette 2016). What is most telling, however, are the working class women left out of Higgins’s script entirely, those who often perform their labor for undervalued wages, not as an “honor and a privilege.”

Higgins offers her own definition of what it means to be a homemaker with a focus on home management. Discourses of women as “managers” and home making as a “profession” grew out of the home economics movement at the turn of the twentieth century started by Ellen Richards. At a conference in 1904 Richards asserted, “home economics stands for the ideal home life for today unhampered by the traditions of the past; the utilization of all the resources of modern science to improve the home life” (Stage, 1997, p. 55). Higgins essentially redefines homemaking in terms of a middle/upper class labor of “management.” She states,
You are *managing matters of home*, preparing meals, cleaning, paying bills, putting clean clothes away, maintaining order, doing repairs, decorating, keeping things organized as you can, and if you have children, caring for them (emphasis in original).

This list of “matters of home” foregrounds material domestic labors such as preparing meals, cleaning, paying bills... Yet, the focus of the course for the week on “nurturing your homemaker” is on the immaterial, affective labor of “creating an environment” for one’s family. When more material domestic labors (such as cleaning) are addressed, the focus remains on having an organized home. Higgins spends a week on “cut the clutter” and another on “organize to simplify,” in which she takes the class on another tour of her home, “we’re going to go bit-by-bit, room-by-room, and just show you little snippets of things that are working for our family.” The focus on organizing appears to direct hope that with proper management the challenges of managing the burdens of the double shift will be solved.

Higgins centers the concerns of upper class white domesticity pushing aside the often menial labors of homemaking such as “preparing meals and cleaning.” This shift is also aligned with an “aestheticization of work” tied to the performance of identity including “stylization of body, emphasis on appearance, display, and the management of impressions” that are key for membership and even “constitutive of new middle classes” (Adkins and Lury, 1999, p. 600). As a form of performative labor, these domestic tasks involve forms of “iterative monitoring” of presentation, communication, and appearance (p. 600). As these labors of identity work have arguably been naturalized as part of women’s selves, these forms of domestic labor frequently remain unrecognized as work (Adkins and Lury, 1999, p. 600).
An additional week on “cut the clutter” reveals a concern with proper management of appearance and aesthetics – these are critical areas used to demarcate a “can-do” persona and class status. Higgins may be best known as expert and model on “organizing to simplify” and creating systems to rid one’s life of clutter that often accumulates. Clutter appears to serve as an affectively-charged manifestation of all the things that these women don’t have time to get to or manage. Laurie Ouellette (2016) asserts that “perhaps no problem on lifestyle television has come to exemplify the time crunch that women in postfeminist societies experience more than clutter” (p. 104-105). She notes that “clutter manifests as problems like household disorganization, ‘unattractive’ interior aesthetics and dysfunctional layouts—problems that can be solved thorough new consumer products and experts who teach the merits of simplicity and streamlining” (p. 105). The continual build-up of clutter serves as a metaphor for the never-ending burden and constant work necessary to keep things well managed.

The week on “nurturing your inner homemaker” centers on “ideas on little DIY (do-it-yourself) projects.” The weekly instructional video on “nurturing your inner homemaker” takes the class on a tour of Higgins home to “show you little corners or walls or areas of my home where I have personalized the décor in some way.” These DIY projects are more specifically those tied to home décor. Interest in DIY home décor associates new domesticity with the privilege to foreground the pleasurable (and also time-consuming) aspects of housework including cooking from scratch or crafty/handmade do-it-yourself decor. Increased emphasis on these “nice to haves” works to disadvantage the underprivileged who don’t have the time or money to “do-it-themselves” (Matchar, 2013, p. 8; Gajjala, 2013, p. 31). Through the focus on DIY home décor, Higgins shifts the focus of home making away from often thankless domestic tasks to center upon the often
pleasurable pursuit of “personalizing” one’s home and creating “an environment in alignment with your life principles.” In this case, the focus of “new domestic labor” appears as a form of conspicuous lifestyle display.

Scrapbooks, or documentation of one’s life, work as a way to track and showcase the labor involved in creating a pleasurable home environment and function as an additional source of the class labor of lifestyle. While Project Life may frame itself as a “simple” approach, Higgins foregrounds the “cultivation of a good life” as requiring the affective labor of creating a pleasant “environment.” Her focus on simplifying, organizing, and decluttering offer a promise of greater balance for overburdened homemakers through better management. The focus on home management reveals a middle/upper class concern with making one’s home look right – despite the additional burden and pressure that “looking right” may place upon these women and the ways it works to exclude and demarcate their class status.

**A Simpler Approach to New Domesticity?**

Increased labor demands for primarily middle class women seeking to balance “life and work” continue as a significant discourse in a time and space when previously separated social constructions of life/work as well as home/work are blurring and merging for a feminine and creative labor. These calls for “balance” reveal a subset of women who are still seeking “to have it all.”

Balance and even the desire for balance, in fact, represent a privilege as achievement of balance often relies upon redistributing certain forms of labor (e.g. housekeeping) to others. The notion of work-life balance remains presupposed on a system based on male breadwinners in which women care for the home. Work-life balance also presupposes a Marxist understanding that only alienating work (often tied to
wage labor and, subsequently, to male labor) needs balancing (Adkins and Jokinen, 2008). This section will argue that Becky Higgins offers a different notion of balance that does not rest on a separation of home from work or the marketplace, but instead reveals an extension of women’s work into the therapeutic/affective labor necessary to balance one’s obligations to family/self with ever encroaching and blurring boundaries work/home.

Higgins positions Project Life as “a simpler approach to scrapbooking.” The emphasis on simplicity seeks to address a broader concern for women’s work – namely how to balance all of the demands. The brand rests upon the idea that by buying into this system of scrapbooking you will be able to reduce the labor and time involved on creating an album. As Higgins phrases it, “by spending less time on your own albums, you’ll have more time to rearrange your sock drawer, give Fido a bath, or clean your house.” Here, one form of domestic labor, creating an album, is substituted for another, rearranging your sock drawer. In other instances, Higgins asserts that the brand will give you more time to “live your life” rather than simply recording it. In an article, “Let Go of the Pressure, the founding editor of Simple Scrapbooks Magazine, Stacy Julian (2005) echoes this concern with the amount of labor necessary to make a scrapbook. She gives readers permission,

With the authority vested in me as founding editor of this magazine [Simple Scrapbooks], and all the experience I have as a working mother of four, domestic goddess, life enthusiast and all-around busy person, and in accordance with the good and grand desires of my heart that make me want to celebrate every little aspect, quiet moment and unforgettable adventure of my life and the lives of those important to me, and lastly, because the most precious time is spent making memories, I hereby grand you, my fellow scrapbookers, permission to: leave most of your photos in the box, work non-chronologically, let go of the creative pressure and spend less time overall (p. 8-14)

Julian urges readers to “let go” of expectations to creatively scrapbook every photo in chronological order. She urges them to manage themselves, their expectations, and exerts
her authority through her experience in being an “all-around busy person.” Similar to Higgins assertion that you will have more time to “live your life,” Julian argues that less time should be spent working on scrapbooks “because the most precious time is spent in making memories.” Several of my informants have discussed with me their abhorrence of such sentiments as they feel that their “most precious time” is spent enjoying their hobby and that these declarations are dismissive of their enjoyment and devalue the time and labor they spend creating.

Julian’s call to “let go” is situated within the context of her busy life and desire to gain greater balance. Julian describes herself as a “working mother of four, domestic goddess, life enthusiast and all-around busy person.” Through her self-deferential joke/self-identification as “domestic goddess,” Julian calls to mind Joanne Hollows (2003) work on British author/self-brand Nigella Lawson’s book, *How to Be a Domestic Goddess: Baking and the Art of Comfort Cooking*. Hollows (2003) emphasizes the way Lawson reframes domestic labor as fantasy and focuses “on the pleasures of cooking and eating rather than pleasing others.” Lawson’s focus on the enjoyable aspects of domesticity (see also the chapter on craft) may help explain the resurgence in popularity of do-it-yourself domesticity or new domesticity.

Domestic advice aimed at the middle-class has long been grounded in domestic fantasy. Sarah A. Leavitt (2002) notes in her history of domestic advice, “the true domestic fantasy was that women held the power to reform their society through first reforming their homes” (p. 5). However, Leavitt also indicates that these pejorative accounts of domestic interest that seek to deny the pleasure of domestic activity owe “much to the power of a male-led language to decline women’s interest” (LeClere cited in Leavitt, 2002, p. 60). This balance between recognition of these sites as a space for fantasy
and pleasure as well as the ways that how these small pleasures may prohibit larger reforms has been an area of ongoing debate in feminist scholarship. Furthermore, Julian’s call to “let go” of her “the good and grand desires of her heart” to “celebrate every little aspect, quiet moment and unforgettable adventure of my life and the lives of those important to me” reveals the challenges facing these women who are often forced to let go of the tasks and labor that brings them the greatest pleasure as they juggle more pressing demands.

Higgins’s (and Julian’s) focus on simplifying the time and labor necessary to make a scrapbook critiques the move of the industry to more time-intensive craft-based approaches highlighted within “new domesticity” that may take hours (and even days!) to create. The focus on faster, quicker, easier approaches may be targeted to young mothers who may be overwhelmed and have little time to shower, much less scrapbook (ScrapGals Podcast). In an article, “Fitting it in: 10 busy women share how and why they find the time to scrapbook,” these women also acknowledge that “it can be overwhelming just keeping up with life’s daily tasks, let alone finding any extra time to recognize and record the special moments as they pass” (Lucas, 2005, p. 269).

A focus on time saving is contemporaneous with the growing interest in “new domesticity,” which encourages more “time-intensive forms of home production and often purchase expensive items for crafting rather than buying cheaper and massified consumer products” (White, 2015). Higgins calls to “keep it simple” are a call to avoid the extremes of craft production that may require extensive effort, skill and, above all, time. Rather than seek a balance by retreating from work into the domestic, such “simplified” approaches advocated by Julian, Higgins, and others in industry work further to privilege
a modern aesthetic (read simple and balanced) contrasted to a more feminized and ornate Victorian aesthetic (Leavitt, 2002) that are associated with craft-based approaches.

Through calls to simplify, Higgins and Julian evoke a class-based taste critique. Calls for simplification of housework also appeared during the 1920s in efforts to modernize and rationalize (professionalize) housekeeping (Leavitt, 2002; Matchar 2013). Simplification served as a way to assert these labors were more “modern” or “rational.” Similar calls to simplify scrapbook labor are often evoked in comparison to the ease and speed of digital memory keeping. These calls to “simplify” scrapbook making also appear to seek to “modernize” and even normalize the hobby away from the “extremes” of the labor effort and time (as well as the pleasures) of craft. Simplicity becomes an appeal to “common sense,” to rationality and often exerts a pressure to turn away from an idealization of more time-consuming domestic labors involving the homespun, handmade and “from scratch.” Whereas (as I argue in the craft-based chapter), the craft-oriented approach shifts focus away from a concern with productivity to emphasize taking the time to “enjoy the process.”

Higgins and Julian have devoted their careers to documentation of self and family, the solution that they argue for and even sell are ways to simplify and to let go of the pressure to document it all in an effort to help themselves and other women lead more balanced lives. Higgins begins the course by asserting that “it is all woven together, living life and documenting life, that is, and my hope is that we will really be able to strike a rewarding balance between the two.” These women through a refusal to “record every moment” or by challenging these issues at a systematic level involving enduring political or social concerns that increase the burden of labor on mothers. Instead, these women
seek to better manage their labor in order to meet all of the demands in their efforts to perform as superheroes or, in their own terms, as a “domestic goddess.”

Higgins’s course, blog, and social media further address the challenge of completing their scrapbooks by applying therapeutic solutions that often result in further demands of self-work on herself and others. The goal is to balance the pressure and demands placed on them, while maintaining a “can do” status. In these terms, “letting go” is reframed as managing expectations. Yet, such forms of therapeutic self-work (including everyday documentation) flourish at a time with increasing demand for care labor and decreasing social, structural, and communal support for such labor.

These women are the first to admit shortfalls of their therapeutic efforts. As Norah Pritchard noted in the opening segment, she is still “trying to” find balance. Higgins provides an intimate and heartfelt response on her own struggles to keep balance in response to negative comments expressed on her blog regarding the first-run of the course. She describes how,

those few months while I was teaching the class [Sept-Dec. 2012] turned out to be one of the most difficult times of my life. My brother died. I did get quite sick. And yet I had the weight of the world sitting on my shoulders as I pressed forward in doing my best to balance my role as wife & mother, a business owner, heavily serving in my community, and being a teacher in a virtual classroom… I was indeed grateful to all who understood that I was limited in my capacity (and sleep-deprived through it all) – but I did the very best that I could under the circumstances (Blog post, October 2013)

While the death of her brother to cancer colors the last few weeks of the first course offering, the difficult circumstances Higgins describes are representative of a broader struggle among feminine laborers, particularly working mothers, to “balance” multiple forms of labor. She even names the types of labor she struggles to balance including relational labor, motherhood, business, serving the community, and teaching.
The aim is not to further criticize Higgins for doing her “very best…under the circumstances.” Instead, the critique centers on the ways therapeutic solutions (such as efforts to find greater “balance”) require more self-work for the already overburdened – in this case, Becky Higgins herself. This is akin to what McGee (2005, p. 12) describes in her work on self-help as the “belabored self” as the “self is not improved but endlessly belabored.” As few have the time, effort, and disposable income to constantly work on themselves, self-improvement and the display of this “belabored self” may be used to demarcate class status – marking some women as more “can-do” than others even as display of this status can serve as a crushing burden of labor.

Higgins and Julian seem to offer a different notion of balance that defies the division or duality of work/home. They do not represent home as sheltered or separated from the marketplace. Higgins balances relational labor, motherhood, business, serving the community, and teaching, and then extends this to work on herself necessary to balance these conflicting demands. Rather than a site of sentimental documentation, they assert themselves as rational, calculating individuals who simplify to maximize potential and opportunities to “have it all” through better self-management. Failure is a personal failure, and these women reveal the additional burden of constant self-work used to avoid, or at least manage, their inevitable failures. This appears indicative of the fact that is not professional space or the binary of home/work, but the “women have entered professional spaces that have had to transform themselves” (Gajjala, 2015, p. 28).

**Nurturing Relationships**

Relational labor is the foundation of the tradition of scrapbooking associated with memory keeping (such as Project Life). Relationships are emphasized in every week of the course but most visibly in the week on “nurturing relationships.” The focus on “nurture”
positions the act of scrapbooking as part of social reproductive or care labor. As the economy itself has shifted from production to more service-oriented labor involving more relational, emotional and immaterial labors, labors involved in nurturing such as connecting and caring are increasingly demanded of workers (see Baym, 2015 for summary).

Such social reproductive work remains central to scrapbooks created for the purpose of memory keeping (such as Project Life). Higgins devotes a week of the course to “Memorialize the Past.” She states that

to memorialize means to preserve the memories of or commemorate. What is commemorate? Well that is to recall and show respect for someone or something in a ceremony…we are going to understand scrapbooks as ceremonies.”

Scrapbooks throughout the twentieth-century into the present were used to help commemorate ritual events (birthdays, weddings, holidays); Micela di Leonardo (1987) identified such labor as kin work or the “responsibility for keeping the households running, maintaining the lines of communication to family and friends, and keeping holidays and traditions alive” (di Leonardo, 1987; West, 2009, p. 286). This kin work may also be categorized as part of the labor of social reproduction. As this type of scrapbook focuses on creating and maintaining relations across time or distance, they exemplify what James Carey (2008) describes as a ritual mode of communication. These ritual modes are integral to the kin work of keeping holidays and traditions alive.

Albums dedicated to memory keeping, regardless of changes to format, continue to emphasize relationships. Higgins proclaims that

we all know that relationships are more important than things or work or hobbies. The truth is, sometimes we don’t exactly treat those we love most like they’re #1 because naturally, we have a billion other commitments and stresses and distractions. So this week, let’s remember that the people we love the most need to know that they’re most important to us.
Higgins goes so far as to assert that all work in the home or the intention of all work in the home should be viewed as a way to strengthen the relationship. She describes one of her most unforgettable takeaways from a college class (my BS degree is in Family Science) was something a professor said over and over: The purpose of the task is to strengthen the relationship. When we have this mindset, every task we share with a family member (or friend) takes on a whole new meaning. It’s no longer about “getting it done” but rather – how can we go about doing this task in a way that will bring us closer together?

For those focused on memory keeping, this relational work offers value and validity to the hobby of scrapbooking as more than a pleasurable activity. With this approach, even mundane tasks (and documenting those mundane tasks) become an act of relational labor.

Higgins quotes the magazine, Seeing the Everyday, “when we see work in the home as a tool, a time to nurture relationships, we approach our life with much more care and respect.” Accordingly the view of home work as a way to “nurture relationships” functions to increase the care infused into these tasks works to make these mundane tasks appear to serve a larger purpose.

The idealization or sentimentality involved in commemorating relationships within an album may also add further value to these relations; yet, these idealizations often work to support existing norms and serve as a reminder of the “masquerade” of femininity (Riviere, 1997 [1923]; Doane, 2010). Slater (1995) argues that, family photography is not documentary in aim or attitude: it is sentimental because it attempts to fix transcendent and tender emotions and identifications on people and mementoes hauled out of ordinary time and mundanity, the better to foreground an idealized sense of their value and the value of our relationship to them, in the present and in memory (p. 134).

Feminist photographer Jo Spence’s work (2005) challenges the sentimentality of personal photography indicating the ways this sentimentality may be used to cover up pain and present a false intimacy (or a calculated authenticity). Spence’s autobiographical work,
Putting Myself in the Picture, serves to point to the erasures from her family album. Perhaps her most famous work is her self-photography of her nude body in documentation of her cancer treatment. The intense intimacy of these images makes visible the erasure of pain, imperfection, and the body curated out of the typical family album.

The lecture on “nurturing relationships” diverges from Higgins’s typical presentation style, a PowerPoint with voiceover; instead, she provides a video of simply pictures and music. She points out that “the photos in this video aren’t your typical “say cheese!” type of photos. Most of them are moments captured between two or more people just being together.” In her use of a slideshow, rather than a lecture, Higgins gestures the ability of these albums to capture and share the affective connection of our relationships with loved ones. Her stated goal for the video is to inspire the student to want to capture their relationships in the same way.

The labor poured into albums seeks not only to strengthen affective ties within the family, but, perhaps more fundamentally, serves to strengthen the affective ties of the album maker (the caregiver) to those for whom they care. Gillian Rose (2010) describes this in terms of “ambivalent mothering” noting the ways that family photography may be used by mothers to overcome feelings of ambivalence about their “extremely demanding children” as a photo carries a miniaturized versions of these feelings that may be put away. These photos provide a “safe way of articulating ambivalent feelings” about those children and are subsequently a pleasurable pursuit (p. 57).

One common way to strengthen positive affect or to counter feelings of ambivalence appears in calls for gratitude and to “focus on the good.” One of the weekly themes of the course is “live in gratitude.” Higgins notes that “living a grateful life means living a happy life---even when your real life situation isn’t super ideal at times. We’re
going to think about and document the GOOD.” This use of gratitude appears in the account of one young mother,

with three kids under the age of five and a husband with a demanding career, I struggled just to get through the day—let alone do something for me! One desperate day, I started a “Journal of Joy.” Before going to bed each night, I recorded three things that happened that day that I was grateful for. That journal made a huge difference in my life—my perspective changed, and I learned how wonderful each day could be if I simply took the time to look for the good (Robin Johnson, 2005, p. 202).

The focus on gratitude is all about shifts in perspective that turn away from the negative and focus on the positive. Turning away from the negative, however, may mean that negative situations or even systems are not confronted and improved. However, for a short-term solution, Higgins notes that “we proactively focus on how blessed we are, the big stuff and the itty bitty details of life, it’s proven that we will actually feel happier.” This form of optimism is labeled “cruel optimism” by Lauren Berlant (2011), or the “affective condition of an everyday life in which the ways people seek to flourish turn out to be bad for them” (Cvetkovich, 2012, p. 166). A focus solely on the good, on gratitude can work to cultivate a delusional optimism that fails to confront the underlying difficulties and challenges that may evoke negative feelings. By relocating these negative feelings into positive feelings, this turn to the happy functions as a turn away from Foucault’s notion of self-care in which recognition of a truth works to change the self. Rather, a focus on gratitude works to simply cultivate a satisfaction with the status quo – making oneself feel happy with the state of things as they already are.

Another relational labor advocated in the course involves paying attention to and appreciating the little things. Higgins articulates this as, “the common or mundane moments and interactions that daily might seem inconsequential – are perhaps among the most critical and influential in character development and nurturing family
relationships.” She urges students to “pay close attention to some of the ‘common
moments’ that you share with family members and make a list of some of these itty-bitty
things that you recognize could have an impact on character development or nurturing a
relationship.”

**Self-Management of the Everyday**

The course spends a great deal concern on self-management, especially the
management of one’s time. Documenting the everyday functions as a way to capture time
and, ultimately, the self in efforts to better manage them. Higgins describes in week one of
the course,

> I’m really wanting you to capture everyday life and not so much every big
> moment that comes along. So the small details, the everyday happenings, the
> mundane activities, these are the things that really make us up, make us who we
> are. So that’s what I want you to focus on.

Everyday documentation may also work to make the repetitive labors of the everyday
(domestic labors) more visible, which potentially offers them greater value. Kim Morgan,
a mother of five children, describes that “when I’ve completed a layout that I’m pleased
with, I like to leave it out where I can glance at it as I go about my day. It makes me
smile to know that I’ve created something worthwhile and lasting, something that will stay
done, unlike the dishes and the laundry!” (p. 272). Christensen (2011, p. 181) asserts how
in “regimes of value that favor the enduring, the bounded, and the public, things like
cleaning and caregiving—which involve short-lived, nonpostponable, intimate services—
are rarely validated with the label *work*, let alone *art*” (p. 181). However, scrapbooking the
everyday enables these women to “combat the ephemerality of carework” (Christensen,
2011, p. 181-182). Their scrapbooks allow enable them to make their immaterial
carework visible as these fleeting moments becomes captured, either through
photography or written sentiments, and made special and materially manifested through display in an album.

The focus on time during the course seems to focus on increasing productivity and achieving balance in ways that may add a sense of pressure and blame on women who are unable to manage their time. If a woman feels overwhelmed juggling multiple children, a full time job, and the demands of feminine/domestic labor, then everyday documentation may help offer a feeling they are in control of their destiny or, at least, their narrative.

The cyclical structure of the everyday appears in the repetitive tasks of social reproduction “cleaning, preparing meals, caring for children” that may be “fundamentally at odds with the modern drive toward progress and accumulation” (p. 81-82). Felski argues that cyclical repetition may be a “threat to the modern project of self-determination” as the individual will is subordinated to the “demands of an imposed pattern” (p. 84). Kathi Weeks (2011) also notes a similar temporal clash in the “reversible measure-time of industrial capitalism (clock time) and the irreversible time of domestic caring activities” revealed by the wages for housework movement.

Yet, the repetition of “ritual, provides a connection to ancestry and tradition” (Felski, 2000, p. 83). As the pace of change accelerates in contemporary life, these everyday rituals may “help to safeguard a sense of personal autonomy and dignity, or to preserve the distinctive qualities of a threatened way of life” (p. 84). One space of such everyday ritual is the home. The familiarity of home “is actively produced over time, above all through the effort and labor of women” (p. 87).

Everyday documentation and planning become a way to insert a practice of everyday ritual in one’s daily life. As more everyday and mundane images are captured
through digital photography and camera phones, these images elevate the everyday as a “site of potential news and visual archiving” (Okabe and Ito, 2003). The ability to capture more of the everyday images entwines the practice with the repetitive, cyclical temporality of domestic labor. Rita Felski (2000) suggests that the everyday (the day after day) is grounded in the temporality of repetition, the spatiality of a sense of home, and the experience of habit (p. 80).

![Figure 18: Weekly planner/art journal](image)

Higgins devotes one of the weeks of the course to “Honor Tradition.” She asserts that, “the most powerful traditions are those we can’t even describe, aren’t even aware of.” She urges students to reflect upon and identify and record some of these traditions in their own lives. She offers nine pages of examples of traditions that she has gathered including “sharing good and bad things at the dinner table, oreo cookies and milk after the first day of school, singing a song to wake up.” The clash of the repetitive temporality
of the everyday with the “modern drive toward progress and accumulation” may be negotiated through the daily ritual of keeping a planner or doing Project Life (Figure 18 and 19). These formats for everyday documentation offer a ritual entwined with calendar time – allowing and showing sense of chronological movement. The week on tradition emphasizes the invisibility of everyday traditions, which may alternatively be understood as routine or ritual.

Figure 19: Monthly Project Life page for July
Another week of the course focuses on “routine,” what Higgins labels “finding balance in routine” (Figure 20). Balance continues to serve as a central narrative of the Project Real Life course. Higgins defines balance as “an even distribution in weight enabling someone or something to remain upright and steady” and “routine is defined as a sequence of actions regularly followed by a fixed program.” She defines the combination of “finding balance in routine” as “let’s try to not have too much or too little of something in the regimented program of our daily life so that we can remain upright and steady. I really like how that sounds—upright and steady.” Rather than viewing routine terms in terms of the temporality of the everyday, or as a habitual sequence performed repetitively. She shifts understanding of routine as a sequence and a “fixed program.” In turn, the week discusses her system of lists – a popular topic within the pages of the scrapbook and a central component of many memory planners. The week’s
focus on lists work shifts the temporality from a repetitive task to one focused on progress and accomplishment.

Keeping track of one’s time throughout the day may also work to transform irreversible time of domestic caring into the measure-time of capital. Higgins asserts that if we “want to make changes” and “see what is going on” with our habits “tracking our habits seems the best way to do that.” One of the assignments of the class is to “account for every minute of your day…we’re doing a lot of things that we really should probably stop doing. They are time wasters.” She urges the class, “to write a ‘To Stop’ list instead of a ‘To Do’ list which is what a lot of us are so used to. To stop. Think about that.” She goes on to assert that rather than think of this assignment as a form of “time management,” we think of it as “time consecration.” This moves time into the realm of the sacred similar to Carey’s ritual model. She goes on to assert that “time is a precious commodity. How we choose to consecrate our time…is part of what makes up our character.” In this way, Higgins makes an explicit link between one’s ability to properly manage time and one’s character – such arguments tied to a class-based criticism of character may be leveraged to justify systematic class inequalities.

The first two weeks of Project Real Life introduce two of the habits in Steven R. Covey’s book, 7 Habits of Highly Effective People. Higgins jokes in her introduction to the second week, “I promise you, this is not a Covey workshop…[these principles are] essential and what we need to cultivate a good life, so I wanted to dig into those first.” The two habits of Covey’s she discusses are “beginning with the end in mind” and “first things first.” “Beginning with the end in mind” serves as a way to set goals; Higgins argues this is essential as “when we take the time to think about the end result, this can truly change the whole experience.” While approached as a habit, “begin with the end in
mind” clearly reflects a future-oriented, linear temporality aligned with forward progress. The second principle, “first things first,” serves as a way “not to prioritize what is on your schedule, but to schedule your priorities.” The class assignment for the week is to reflect and “truly focus on what needs to happen first in each of the little life categories for each day, family, work, spiritual, money, and so forth.” After this self-reflection, one is to enact changes in one’s schedule to better reflect identified priorities. For Higgins (and for Covey as we’ll see), first things first entwines with “nurturing relationships” above all else.

Higgins points out that Covey also describes the habit or principle “first things first” as a couple of other things, “personal management” and “self-government.” These terms, of course, set off alarms for critical scholars as they evoke Foucault’s notion of governmentality and Nikolas Rose’s (1999) extension of this work on the neoliberal ideal of governing from a distance or getting individuals to govern themselves. However, for Higgins, management and “self-government” are embraced and held up as an uncontroversial good.

Cultural studies scholar Micki McGee (2005) also begins her book, Self Help, Inc., with self-help guru, Stephen Covey. She begins by recounting the opening narrative of Covey’s book, First Things First. The narrative describes the frustration his daughter, Maria, after the birth of her third child. As Covey recounts, “Maria realized that, in the short run, her life was going to be imbalanced…and that it should be…Finally, I said, ‘Don’t even keep a schedule. Forget your calendar. Stop using your planning tools if they only induce guilt’ (emphasis my own). At first glance, Covey’s advice appears to contradict the goals of Higgins’s course – to motivate and inspire caregivers to start using, not forgetting about, planning tools.
McGee’s analysis of “first things first” draws attention to a tension (what Covey calls an “imbalance”) illustrated by Maria’s story between the demands of self-reliance and those of caregiving. McGee identifies the apparent gap between care labor and Covey’s empire’s ideal “figure of a reasoning, self-inventing, and self-mastering individual.” Covey’s solution for Maria is to “put first things first,” and to put her own goals aside, “to stop using your planning tools.” One can’t help but note the clash between Covey’s advice and the advice of Sheryl Sandberg for women to “lean in” to their careers, rather than their familial obligations.

While Higgins and Covey appear to overlap in a desire to “put first things first” and in their agreement that children come first. Higgins does not uphold McGee’s view of Covey’s principles as in tension with her own labor as a caregiver as she is also a business owner. Furthermore, as Covey’s advice on how to be effective (or more productive) remains grounded in a notion of habit, his advice remains tied to the repetitive temporality of the everyday of concern to Higgins. Instead, reflective of her own identity as both a can-do self-branded entrepreneur and a mom, she asserts these principles are “essential to what we need to cultivate a good life.” For Higgins, the contradictions of femininity and entrepreneurship are resolved through self-work.

Higgins reveals an emerging subjectivity of “enterprising femininity” also identified in work on self-branded fashion bloggers and mumpreneurs (Gray, 2003, p. 492-493; Duffy and Hund, 2015; Luckman, 2015; Ekinsmyth, 2011). These women balance “codes of heteronormative femininity with discourses and practices of masculine entrepreneurialism” (Duffy and Hund, 2015, p. 2). Discourses of masculine entrepreneurialism may be exemplified in Steven Covey’s self-help books and yet his focus on “habits” also works to situate self-improvement within the realm of the everyday,
the domain of the domestic. While notion of what “having it all” or “cultivating a good life” means may differ between fashion bloggers and Becky Higgins, they do align in their desire to combine codes of normative femininity (in this case, their differences reflect different types of heteronormative femininity) with the codes of entrepreneurialism entwined with never-ending self-work.

“**The Everyday and the Extraordinary**”

Of course, not all who carry out everyday documentation follow the advice of Becky Higgins or use the practice exclusively for self-improvement; through the focus on Higgins’s course, this chapter has revealed an important and dominant discourse, there are others. For instance, there are those who utilize everyday documentation as a tool of reflection to notice and make connections beyond the self. The reflections and insights into the “truth” of one’s life (especially the hard truths) open up space for care of the self.

These feminized class labors of self-documentation for self-improvement may both support and impede care of the self. When such reflections generate perspective into the “truth” of one’s life (especially the hard truths), they offer a dislocation that opens space for care of the self (Cohen, 2015). However, when everyday documentation delves into a form of ritual used to replicate tradition, but does not inspire introspective change, they may serve to counter the potential to care for the self in the sense that they replicate, rather than question previous modes of conduct (such as those used to replicate class hierarchies). Yet, the repetition of these rituals may also mark time in ways that brings a greater awareness or reflection on the position of one’s current life that may stimulate a greater self-knowledge, or care of the self. Those who have the time for these forms of self-reflection, however, are often those from the privileged classes. In turn, these forms of
self-care are often options only for a privileged few and, furthermore, become a way to display one’s status and know-how as part of the privileged class.

A summary of the entwinement of ritual and tradition in everyday documentation is neatly summarized by a March/April 2010 article in *Creating Keepsakes* magazine called, “Scrapbook your life: Share the everyday and the extraordinary” (p. 59-66). The author, Jana Lillie urges readers to record their everyday life: 1) what you do each day or “our little rituals – the repeated acts that bring order and familiarity,” 2) traditions “life is full of change, and it’s easy to feel disconnected. Enter family traditions!,” 3) the relationships you treasure, “express your appreciation for those who share your life by including them in your scrapbooks,” 4) the milestones you’ve celebrated, “these events are your passage through life, in a sense, they signify your personal growth.” These four sites of documentation indicate the ways that scrapbooks offer space to negotiate dislocations and relocations through everyday documentation tied to ritual and tradition that may work to “bring order and familiarity,” maintain a sense of connection with tradition, express appreciation for life/relationships, and “signify your personal growth.” This record of everyday life serves both as a form of traditional kin labor used to sustain kin connections over time/distance that may also work to maintain a legacy. But, these repeated, ritualized acts also work to express appreciation and celebrate new life stages.

The habit and repetition of “everyday” documentation are tied to a temporality of the everyday aligned with domestic and care labor. Becky Higgins, for instance, grounds the advice for her course in habit, Steve Covey’s “Habits of Highly Effective People.” While my analysis pointed to Micki McGee’s (2005) critique of Covey’s habits, Ann Cvetokovich’s (2012) conception of “a utopia of ordinary habit” (p. 191) provides a more hopeful perspective of these practices. By uniting habit with utopia, Cvetokovich suggests
that habit may be a “mechanism for building new ways of being in the world.” As habit resides in the “domain of the ordinary,” the growth of habit into practice remains rooted in the everyday. She asserts that a focus on habit can ground one in paying attention to what is immediately present and hence about valuing the ordinary and the detail. If the spiritual is about a connection with something beyond or outside the self, the route to that form of utopian feeling is the simple act of observing or noticing what lies in one’s immediate vicinity (p. 192).

This “utopia of ordinary habit” aligns with many practices of everyday documentation, which may facilitate a greater awareness of everyday details, awareness, and even gratefulness. What differentiates Cvetkovich’s utopia from the “good life” proposed by Higgins is the shift in concern away from the self or in improving the self with a concern for a “connection with something beyond or outside the self.” While both practices are rooted in the habit of the everyday, one focuses on achievement or “the good life” and the other on “connection with something beyond.”

**Conclusion**

Rather than view everyday, domestic labor in tension with entrepreneurial capitalism, Higgins course indicates the merger of the domestic/everyday with entrepreneurial temporality and subjectivity into what has been labeled “enterprising femininity” (Gray, 2003, p. 492-493; Duffy and Hund, 2015, p. 2). This “enterprising femininity” involves increased labors of self-work and self-management that are made most visible (within the scrapbook industry) through the advice and teachings of celebrities and micro-celebrities (including design team members and other bloggers) as they, like Norah Pritchard, Becky Higgins, and Stacy Julian, seek to find balance within an environment of blurred work/life boundaries for creative and feminine workers. These celebrities (in this case, Becky Higgins) operate as cultural intermediaries who leverage a
class power through their expertise. The luxury of time and energy (the labor) used to produce documentation used for self-improvement may reinforce and display gendered class hierarchies.

This chapter addressed three entwined components of feminized class labor drawn from Higgins’s course, Project Real Life: new domesticity, relational labor, and time/self management. Through her focus on home making, Higgins indicates the blurring of work/home and the extension of women’s work (in the home, community, work place, family) to work on the self. Home work is reframed as home management tied to self-management through efforts to seek balance and simplify – forms of self-work that also serve to reinforce a can-do attitude used to leverage a class-based character critique. Higgins further reframes this labor in terms of “nurturing relationships” used to “strengthen the relationship.” These affective ties, perhaps most fundamentally, may help to strengthen the relationship of the caregiver to those they care for as they work to negotiate ambivalent feelings towards the demands of children/home work (Rose, 2010). Project Real Life encourages the class of documenters to “focus on the good” and on gratitude as a way to improve their life and overcome difficulties. Perhaps, the most extensive focus of the course, indicative of the concerns of feminine labor, is time management.

Everyday documentation remains grounded in the temporality of the found in habit and repetition tied to tradition and ritual that may conflict with the progressive, linear time of capitalism (Felski, 2000). This focus on management of time may function to place blame not on a system that fails to offer sustainable support for care and intimate labor, but rather places the blame on women’s improper management of time, including Higgins’s admonishment to track and eliminate how you are “wasting your time.” The
repetitive temporality in relation to demands for a time of sequential progress may leave women with a sense of imbalance (as noted by Covey cited in McGee, 2005).

Self-documentation in this chapter has straddled the “utopia of ordinary habit” with the “habits of highly effective people,” demonstrating the ongoing struggles in the labors of social reproduction between greater extensions of work that urge one to “be more effective” with habits of everyday practice that enables one to find balance, to care for the self, to recognize one’s position in an often quickly shifting landscape of feminized labor and space.
CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION

The contemporary scrapbook may be identified by both its feminization and its commodification. Feminization situates it within a domain of caregivers, and commodification sets the conditions of the contemporary form. By categorizing the contemporary scrapbook as a feminized participatory media form, this enables the scrapbook to be analyzed in relation to scholarship on gendered labor, subjectivity, as well as recognize its connection with other participatory media forms such as craft and social media. Once situated within this context, the project recognizes the ways that scrapbooks function as a participatory media at the center of major disruptions to gendered space and labor.

As a feminine media form and practice, a study of scrapbooks reminds media scholars of the enduring role of gender in defining the legitimacy of certain media forms. As those who scrapbook would say, at its heart, making a scrapbook is the process of taking the time to recognize, to validate, to claim importance for the ways you see life (Hyman, 2010, Episode 1; Christensen, 2011). As the province of caregivers, making a scrapbook offers them a way to (re)assert the importance of their work, their lives, their relationships as it also allows them time to themselves as both a social outlet and a creative expression. As those who scrapbook enact and seek greater personalization, connection, and embodiment, they conduct social reproductive labors used to increase “living human capacity” and provide a critical vantage to view the political terrain of social reproductive labor in digital era. The scrapbook reflects the intense value and devaluation of care labor asserted as priceless by those receiving the care and simultaneously treated as ridiculous nonsense by those outside the intimate circle. If we as
individuals and as a society are concerned about the care of ourselves, others, and our world, then there’s a lot at stake in a study of the contemporary scrapbook.

**Lessons Learned**

As a feminized and marginalized media form/practice, the scrapbook makes visible the ongoing exclusion, silencing, and invisibility of certain groups and labors. The introduction began by addressing the dismissal of scrapbooks in popular culture, and I want to end by addressing my (often inadvertent) dismissals of the scrapbook when I started my research. This reflection allows me to acknowledge how my practices as a feminist media studies scholar have been dislocated through a study of the scrapbook.

Perhaps my greatest learning occurred through a shift in perspective on centering digitalization and notions of digital progress. My preliminary interviews conducted for coursework were concerned with differences between paper and digital forms and/or the ongoing digitalization of a paper form. Those who I interviewed tolerated these questions and yet somehow still managed to redirect me to recognize they held a different set of values used to evaluate the practice.

Their values examined the ability of scrapbooks to cultivate and display greater care that was more easily facilitated through the personal touch of the paper form. I realize now that my concern with the digital was unknowingly dismissive of their values, of the labor that they poured into their scrapbook pages, and of the pleasures they received through an embodied experience of making. As one of my first interviewees taught me, “that’s what it’s all about, having something tangible in your hand that you can look at and share.” They dislocated my concern from the digital to recognition of a sensory-rich media experience that better served and reinforced their needs and goals as caregivers seeking healing and closer connections.
From their vantage as social reproductive laborers, my participants shifted research questions away from digitalization to address and revoke narratives of a “progressive digital futurism.” Their different set of criteria shifted priority from productivity and speed as progress to a concern with care involving their material/affective attachments and embodied sensory experiences. As caregivers they seek many things: to care and to heal themselves through a relaxing and hands-on (vs. abstracted) experience; more intimate connections and generation of closer social ties; greater personalization vs. impersonal, distanced and detached relations; and to generate more powerful affect that intensifies and heightens emotions. With these goals, the paper form was viewed as “better” as superior in a way that contrasted strongly with discourses of progressive digital futurism.

Although industry discourse foregrounds dominant, heteronormative, traditional, white, middle-class, domestic-centered femininity, I believe these highly visible discourses work to stereotype and contribute to the dismissal of scrapbooks among many feminist scholars. However, I found in interviews, events, blogs, and podcasts that scrapbooks were used as a site of incessant struggles to accept, reject, and embrace various aspects of their prescribed traditional roles as women and as caregivers. By listening and observing, I recognized the ways scrapbooks served to validate, as one blogger described, that “what we do every day is important and meaningful and fun and interesting, and, well, special.” In the act of making a scrapbook, these women, furthermore, work to make material their immaterial (or fleeting) care labors. In this way, they enable themselves to pause, to “stop the blur,” and reflect to validate and “make important” their care labor. In this way, the scrapbook worked not only to recognize and validate, but also to make material the care labors of these women.
My initial observations were also dismissive of the rampant commodification of the practice including the work of scrapbook consultants and a large number of self-branded celebrities/brand lines. I observed how many of those I talked to were self-critical of their own accumulation of products and, yet, excited by the potential of new products and trends. There is almost a utopic impulse in the purchase of these products, a sense of all the possibilities of what may be made with them. I was also astonished by the amount of time that was devoted to the hobby and in particular by the amount of time spent at crop events. Frankly, I initially had to drag myself to these events (often on Saturday and, frequently, taking away my day off). Yet, over time my regular crop group grew into an incredibly close community of support in my own life, a source of enduring friendships, and of encouragement. Although I often used my time at the crop to make thank you cards for interviewees, my nephews, mother, and best friends also seem to greatly appreciate the projects that I made for them at these crops and these “tokens of friendship” worked to sustain and build my own relationships.

As the process of commodification works to abstract, individualize, quantify, and build comparison, the role of social reproductive labor to counter these trends appears to be more important. What is striking about scrapbooks as a site of study is the way that they work to make visible both increased commodification (of the scrapbook into an industry) and the way that they also involve the labor used to counter such commodification or what Campbell (2005) describes as a “decommodifying reaction.” This, in turn, reveals the ambivalent relation of social reproductive labors to commodification as it works to increase surplus value for commodities, while simultaneously working “counter” the distance and abstraction of the commodification process. As consumers and commodification are a feminized activity, the labors used to
counter commodification have often also been a site of feminized labor. The strong feminization of the scrapbook also makes visible the historical continuity of the ways gender mediates and continues to demarcate our relationship with work and with the production/consumption of specific media forms.

Although it may seem obvious in hindsight, it took me several years to really discern the importance of the preoccupation (and ambivalent politics) of scrapbookers’ concerns for more intimate care. This recognition enabled me to move away from the dismissive “nobody cares” about your scrapbook to situate scrapbook practices/labors within a broader contentious terrain and tensions between social reproduction and capital accumulation (Haider and Mohandesi, 2015).

Despite the high commodification of the practice, dislocations to such commodification occur in the practice in the ways it works to prioritize human need over capital accumulation. One instance of dislocation appeared in my research in the dislocation among those in the practice from a focus on the “new” or the digital to a focus on enjoyment in an embodied experience. Another site of dislocation appears in the pervasive labors of those who scrapbook to counter alienation in ways that add a human, heartfelt touch. Perhaps ironically, within post-Fordism, the labors of “making inalienable,” including enjoyment of a sensory-focused experience of making and an assertion of uniqueness or authentic expression, may serve less to counter commodification and more to add value to the commodity through the extension of feminine labor. This reveals the limitations of the dislocations of the scrapbook that demarcate it as a space of contradictory politics. As Kathi Weeks (2011) cautions “affirmation of unalienated labor is not an adequate strategy” to fight capitalism as it may
be “too readily co-opted in a context in which the metaphysics of labor and the moralization of work carry so much cultural authority” (p. 107).

However, as a site of care labor, the scrapbook continues to offer a place for these women to reconnect and re-center as they negotiate transitions in feminine labor, space, and subjectivity. Despite these disruptions and blurring binaries, the feminization of the scrapbook also demands recognition of the ways our lives remain hierarchically ordered by gender, race, and class. Rather than dismissing scrapbooks due to their strong feminization, this feminization places them at the center of a critical field of struggle for contemporary labor and subjectivity, social reproductive labor.

**Scrapbook Dislocations**

This ambivalent politics of the scrapbook makes it difficult to discern where the practice verges into a form of feminine politics used to reassert, validate, and increase the power allotted to feminine subjects. I utilize a notion of re-location and dislocation as a theoretical tool that allow for the ability to better discern where/when scrapbooks work to reinforce existing power (re-locations) and where they may work to disrupt existing power (dislocations). A way to ascertain if the scrapbook serves as a site for care of the self (dislocation) or works to foil this care (re-location) is what gets validated – is it a validation of existing norms used for recognition and belonging (again seen in the repetitive themes of the family album, Chalfen, 1987; Hirsch, 2012; Spence, 1988) or is the scrapbook used for validation of a different way of being, such as embodied crafter? Scrapbooks, as a practice of reflection, serve to continually facilitate observation, recognitions, re-locations, and dislocations. Underlying all of these moments are the ways scrapbooks facilitate greater intimacy and closer connection. As we are “touched” or “moved” by these closer connections, they offer the potential for dislocations and change.
Re-location appears in practices of scrapbooking when scrapbooks are used to reinforce existing rules such as an alignment of one’s self-presentation with ideal motherhood or a white, hegemonic femininity. Through the scrapbook, individuals even may edit their lives to fit into pre-existing frames such as those of an ideal nuclear family (Barthes, 1981/2010; Sontag, 1977/2011). Re-location, for instance, has been viewed in photography in the ways that the photo may function to “reduce and domesticate” experience (Banks, 2016; Sontag, 1977/2011; Barthes, 1981/2010). Gillian Rose (2010) in her study of mother’s practices of family photography observes the way that photos of children allow their mothers a miniature version that they can control and edit to negotiate feelings of “ambivalent motherhood” in relation to care demands. In this sense, the dislocations of the scrapbook, the powerful feelings that may be evoked, may ultimately be reduced and domesticated – relocated, not dislocated. This is the critique of the family album common to feminist scholarship (Hirsch, 1997; Spence and Holland, 1991). These feelings are dislocated only to be re-located back in alignment with the rules.

In alignment with the utopic perspective of those who scrapbook, I want to focus on three related moments of dislocation that emerged in my study of scrapbook practices. First and, perhaps, most obviously, scrapbooks provide a time away from the daily routine, a space for creative play. Secondly, they offer a dislocation through an embodied experience of making. Finally, scrapbooks dislocate as they “stop the blur” of life/streaming media to offer the distance, time, and space necessary for reflections that lead to dislocations.

An example of dislocation through time away appeared in an early interview as a young mother of three young boys repeatedly described her scrapbook space as her “happy place.” She disappears into her scrapbook room in the family’s basement to work
on her creative projects. A similar time and space away occurs through crop events. These spaces offer a dislocation to the extent that they serve not as a safe space for retreat/escape used to cope, but rather as a liminal space of everyday ritual. This liminal space of ritual demarcates a place of transition and new beginnings. Turner (1992) also identifies a related “liminoid” space in the “marginal secular space of complex industrial leisure” (p. 55-57) such as the rituals of participatory fan culture or craft. As a liminoid space, the ritual of craft (in the ways it may align with the “utopia of everyday habit”) provides a ritual space away for play and creativity that encourages movement and change. Through the dislocations of the movement to a liminoid space, an individual often undergoes a shift or movement that may produce a counter-conduct that may offer a greater vitality.

Another dislocation appears through the creativity given expression through making a scrapbook. Cvetkovich (2012) argues, “in relation to a blockage or impasses, creativity can be thought of as a form of movement, movement that maneuvers the mind inside or outside an impasse, even if that movement sometimes seems backward or like a form of retreat” (p. 21). The movement provided by time away for creativity activity in a liminoid space may have a life-changing impact even to the extent that it emphasizes care of the self for those whose lives are devoted to care for others. One young mother articulates this as “all of my energy was divided between my roles as wife, mom, friend, and daughter. My own personality began to be buried in the survival mode of each busy day. However, when I picked up my scissors to work on my albums, I began to discover myself again.” In this space of ritual, through the creative work of her albums, she is able to leave behind the burden of her social roles and to return to herself. This may be a form of care of the self as her reflections enable recognitions, dislocations, and even potential
rejections of potentially damaging aspects of her social role such as selflessness embraced by an idealized norm of motherhood.

Arguably, intimacy itself may function as a liminal space. As the space of our closest connections, intimacy serves as a critical space of stability and instability – a threshold space between self and other. Intimacies gesture towards a shared vulnerability and unpredictability that demand extensive relational work (such as that of scrapbooking) to manage their affective intensity; this affective force may also be the reason that intimate relations “do not always respect predictable forms” giving intimacy the potential to “usurp places meant for other kinds of relation” (Berlant, 2000, p. 2, p. 4).

As scrapbooks provide an embodied space of making, they may offer a dislocation from being “stuck in one’s head” that often characterize labor under informational capitalism. This gestures to an understanding of the verb “to craft” as a form of care (McCullough, 1997/2010). My informants have taught me that playing with paper and glue or having fun matters in a culture of overwork. The ability to create something, to do something that they enjoy, is not a trivial hobby but often the heart of their social support networks and self-care. The crop, for instance, is often a sacred space for being creative and having fun together. One of my challenges as a researcher came in being respectful and careful to not interfere or get in the way of the “fun” of the crop.

This focus on the enjoyment of making also offers a dislocation from “being in one’s head” through a return to an embodied making. Leopolda Fortunati (2015), drawing from Levi-Strauss, refers to a “science of the concrete” utilized by a “movement of the concrete” involving craft skills such as, “agriculture, knowledge of herbs and minerals, medicines, and the domestication of animals.” These are referred to as “life-exalting technologies” used by those within the movement to recuperate “the role of
emotions and self-expression and creativity in their work, in what they produce.” This notion is also echoed in Ann Cvetkovich’s (2012) discussion of the healing possibilities of a utopia of ordinary habit. As an everyday practice, this habit provides a “spiritual practice…a way to connect to that which is beyond or larger than the self” (p. 200).

Finally, scrapbooks serve as a dislocation in the ways that they serve to “stop the blur” in a culture of streaming data. As they curate (noted by Galloway and Thacker, 2007 to stem from curare or to curate, to care, and to cure), scrapbooks provide a space to stop and to reconnect. Scrapbook celebrity Ali Edwards explains this as she notes how the reflection facilitated by her everyday documentation has allowed her to care for herself, “I’ve gotten great personal benefit – and hope for other people that same thing…by looking at their everyday life, by making changes when there are things that they don’t like and part of how they can do that is by being able to notice what they don’t like as they are writing about it or scrapbooking about it, it comes from that reflection” (Hyman, 2011a, Episode 72).

The simple act of making a scrapbook, regardless of what is being validated, offers the potential for new recognitions. Jessica Helfand (2008) notes in her book, Scrapbooks: An American History, “the recasting of her story in scrapbook form both obliges and enables her to perceive things different, because at its core, scrapbook time, unmoored to the demands of the everyday is characterized not so much by decorum as by a kind of tacit dislocation” (p. 2). Those who scrapbook remark that the practice changes the way that they look at themselves and at the world as they pay greater attention to detail and the deeper meaning underlying everyday moments. It helps provide knowledge of their position and then to see if they want to dislocate or re-locate.
Making a scrapbook album is a process that works to assert one’s perspective and, in the process of making, may also alter this perspective. Scrapbooks utilize existing cultural frameworks and social rules and then engage with them in ways that may construct new possibilities. As a participatory media form, scrapbooks enable women to creatively “move among the positions available to them” (Greer, 2011, p. 225). Similar to the way that participatory media may alter a mass media cultural form and then “make it their own,” the scrapbook allows women to play around with the meanings they apply to their lives. Through this play, those who scrapbook “keep the channel open” to enable connections that drive the counter-conduct through which an individual may gain a greater understanding of the truth in relation to existing rules.

**Interdependence, not Dependence**

Feminist theory on social reproduction urges for a greater understanding of care as interdependence, not dependence (Boris, 2015; Weeks, 2011). Interdependence works against privatization of support for care under neoliberalism. Interdependence may decrease the burden on individual caregivers that allows them to do more than care and also offers care. Underlying interdependence, intimacy may be used to diminish separation and seek closer connections. Beverly (2006) even asserts the experience of play in feminized “saturated worlds,” play with a heightened sensory/emotional engagement, cultivates values of “interconnectedness and community – connectedness with other people, certainly, but also connectedness and even intimacy with things” (p. 3). In the ways those who scrapbook seek greater connection, they also provide insight into ways that we may be able to craft greater interdependence.

They indicate the importance of connections generated through emotional disclosure and forms of sharing that accompany making together. Scrapbooks and other
forms of photo-sharing enable a form of not only being there but also being with as they provide a space for sharing together. Scrapbooks also reassert a link between object and maker and foreground an embodied experience of making in ways that emphasize an entwined touching-feeling multi-sensory media experience.

Interdependence depends upon a sense of solidarity or *communitas* often generated through shared interests. Solidarity among those who scrapbook appears, as I discussed in Chapter 4, as developing through a sense of being “likeminded” or with holding similar concerns and values. Among those who scrapbook, their shared identity as scrapbookers and as caregivers contributes to a shared concern with intimacy including efforts to combat disconnections tied to a sense of atomization, dislocation, and alienation. Their concern with care also appears in their desire for more meaningful interactions, argued to be a contributing factor to the growth of craft circles or “Stitch ’n Bitch” groups (Minahan and Cox, 2007).

The “like-mindedness” or shared sense of belonging is also critical to enabling individuals to feel safe enough to make emotional disclosures that open-up vulnerabilities. These emotional disclosures serve as a critical space of connection or intimacy that facilitate a form of interdependence in which your problem becomes my problem. Cvetkovich (2012) describes how “going public with your feelings can make a difference both to how you feel and to the state of the world” (p. 161). Sharing these grievances may function to lighten the load and enable similar others to lend social support. Another example of this appeared in the regular “Changes” column in the magazine, *Scrapbooking and Beyond: Learn, Create and Share*. As the magazine describes,

“Changes” is a column that devotes itself to all kinds of women’s issues ranging from daily trials, tribulations, and triumphs to illness, divorce, and loss. It is a place where you can be free to express who you are, what you think, and how you
feel...a place where your voice will be heard and your images shared...knowing that you are not alone can make all the difference.

In the recognition that one is “not alone,” a form of care for oneself may emerge as the truth of one’s condition is revealed as a larger concern or even social problem.

The public sphere increasingly appears as an unsafe, even hostile, space for care. This has contributed to women, or those women privileged to have a choice, to retreat to the private home, referred to as “new domesticity.” This retreat reveals the endurance of an idealized home and intensive motherhood. However, the retreat or withdrawal of caregivers into the home works to increase their isolation, not interdependence. Estelle Freedman (1995) asserts in her historical study of feminist separatism as a strategy for female institution building that we should seek an extension, rather than a rejection of female space (p. 87).

Expansions of new domesticity outside of the home, such as programs teaching elementary school children how to grow and cook their own food hold a potential for interdependence and radical structural change. Crops work to get women out of the home and work to build a semi-public, semi-private forum in which women’s concerns are no longer marginalized, but are made central. The questions both raised and answered by this project are what are the ways we may work to build a social home (Bratich, 2010)? What are ways to work together to build social intimacy? And, furthermore, one wonders how do we make concerns of caregivers, or of social reproduction, central in non-feminized space – such as in the space of public politics?

I defined scrapbooks in terms of taking the time to validate a memory. In this process of taking time and validating, the act of scrapbooking provides the foundation of care for the self. This care extends into other areas of the practice used to “take time” for oneself including an emphasis on the enjoyment of a sensory-rich embodied media
experience. In an era with increasing pressures to become more productive, scrapbooks open space away from work or the colonization of our lives by work (Weeks, 2011). They provide a space to arrange one’s life in one’s own terms. As one interviewee noted, “everybody has their stories to tell, everybody’s are unique and they are all important, It’s very captivating. It’s feel good.” The sociality of the scrapbook circle operates as another way that they may facilitate a utopic space for care labor that gets you out of the house to share, commiserate, and to make something.

Rather than a sense of “nobody else cares,” scrapbooks provide a potentially utopic, safe space for care labor. My interviews and observations found that scrapbooks were evaluated according to a set of criteria that measure their ability to evoke and display a connection of care. As a Creating Keepsakes editor describes what she looks for in a scrapbook, “visually and emotionally, I want to see layers that connect.” Ideally, scrapbooks serve both to intensify and evoke affect as well as to demonstrate that they have been crafted with care. They offer a utopic media experience of care in the way that they produce a heightened affective charge that may intensify a connection and as, similar to feminine play, they provide a media experience that is “aesthetically and sensually charged and full” (Gordon, 2006). Through the cultivation of this heightened experience, they work to signify and cultivate relations of greater intimacy.
Appendix A: Big-box store Michael’s Celebrity Week
Appendix B: “Cultivating a Good Life” card quotations/sentiments

Letting it go. Today is a great day to forgive someone.

Recognizing what needs to change in your life, and then changing it.

Giving compliments to others, not just thanking them.

Using your talents to serve others for no personal gain.

Being the first to say hello.

Allowing yourself to evolve and not get so stuck in a certain way of doing certain things.

Not being so hard on others. Plus – when we are critical of others, it comes across as our own insecurity.

Being happy for others when they have successes, especially those close to you.

Taking time to step back and really assess what needs to change in a situation or even in your life.

Focusing on what you do have, instead of what you don’t.

To look at procrastination in the face and say, “enough is enough.” You know what’s good for you. Do it!

Having a good sense of humor.

Determining at least one thing you can do today that will make it better than yesterday.

Cranking up the music once in a while and singing along.

Celebrating the little things!

Understanding that things don’t change just because you wish they would. Do something.

Taking breaks.

Remembering that you’re not always right.

Not comparing your weakness with someone else’s strength.
Having *moderation* in all things

Putting favorite *photographs* within your everyday surroundings as a constant reminder of your blessings

Being *quick* to apologize

Being willing to let others help you when they *genuinely* offer

Knowing that No matter what happens today, you have *control* of your outlook and attitude

Not *expecting* that others will feel/think/act the way that you would

*Singing* you don’t have to have a great voice or do it in public even humming counts

Writing a *letter* to someone once in a while. Like – actual real handwriting

Approaching that big/daunting task in much *smaller steps*. One thing at a time. One foot in front of the other.

Being *conscientiously* and proactively aware of how blessed we are

*Appreciating* where you live. Sure there are other placed you could be happy, but be happy where you are.

Forgetting yourself sometimes and *serving* others

Surrounding yourself with people who *lift* and *inspire* you and make you want to be a better version of you

*Adjusting* our relationship with technology to enjoy more well-roundedness

To stop *harboring* hard feelings. Let it go. Forgive, forgive, forgive

Encouraging a healthy dose of recreation and hobbies.

*Recognizing* when it may be time to let something drop off our to-do list – especially during naturally busy seasons
Loving people for who they are. Let’s refrain from nit-picking about other people’s imperfections

Cultivating patience. Be patient with your family, and certainly be patient with yourself

Having integrity. Every choice you make – whether you think someone will actually notice or not – makes up the person that you are

Getting out of your comfort zone once in a while. How else are you going to grow + learn + evolve if you’re comfortable all the time?!

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