

Article

Critical Feminism in the Archives

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ABSTRACT

Through the use of feminist historiography this article examines some of the myriad ways in which feminist praxis has pushed against, challenged, enriched, dismantled, assimilated or otherwise affected archival theory and practice. We contend that archival theory and practice have yet to fully engage with a feminist praxis that is aimed at more than attaining better representation of women in archives. We begin this piece by tracing the ways in which archives became embedded in feminist social movements and can be understood as critical tools and modes of self-representation and self-historicization. In the second section, we consider the explicit presence of feminist theory in archival studies literature and contemporary practice and the key focal points and arguments that have challenged traditional understandings of archival work around gender. We then address, in the third section, the expansive figure of the archives in humanities and social science literature. This piece contributes significantly to thinking on the ways in which these conversations in the archival turn can, at their best, expose blind spots within the archival literature and provide us with theoretical tools to tackle what we take for granted. Finally, we offer ways in which we see critical and intersectional feminist theory can contribute to existing archival discourse and practice, critiquing concepts that have remained unquestioned such as community and organization. This piece exposes the transformational potential of feminism for archives and of archives for dismantling the heteronormative, capitalist and racist patriarchy.

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INTRODUCTION

This article offers a reflexive analysis of critical feminism in the archival field. We argue that specific contemporary challenges in archival scholarship, practice, and professionalism can benefit from serious consideration of feminist praxis. Many interventions of feminist theory into archives have focused in on representation and collection development. However, we contend that a critical feminism is necessary for the radical transformation of archival institutions and moving beyond representational politics. The authors conceive of critical feminism as an intersectional political philosophy¹ committed to the dismantling of heteronormative, capitalist, racist patriarchy.² Rather than orienting feminism around particular essential identity formations, we see it as a tool for coalitional work around overlapping and interconnected political realities. Therefore, what we consider as an extant feminist presence throughout archival theory and history is necessarily broad. The purpose of this piece is not to anachronistically define the myriad feminisms and feminists that have engaged in archival work to align with our political project, it is meant to begin to understand the ways in which feminist praxis has pushed against, challenged, enriched, dismantled, assimilated, or otherwise affected archival theory and practice as well as to advocate for the crucial feminist work that still needs doing in a United States context. We contend that archival theory and practice have yet to fully engage with a feminist praxis that is aimed at more than attaining better representation of women in archives. Archives have the potential to work towards dismantling the heteronormative, capitalist, racist patriarchy on many fronts and through many avenues. Critical feminist concepts and methodologies also can contribute in vital ways to addressing the contemporary problems that so challenge archivists and archival institutions.

¹ For a few helpful and concise contextual pieces on the history of the concept of intersectionality within feminist studies and the social sciences more broadly, see: Avtar Brah and Ann Phoenix, "Ain't I a Woman? Revisiting Intersectionality," *Journal of International Women's Studies* 5, no. 3 (2004): 75-86; Nina Lykke, *Feminist studies: A Guide to Intersectional Theory, Methodology and Writing* (New York: Routledge, 2010); Leslie McCall, and "The Complexity of Intersectionality," *Signs* 40, no. 1 (2005): 1771-1800.

² The feminist scholarship that informs our own definition and that engages in such a practice is broad and diverse. For a few examples see: M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpede Mohanty, eds., *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures* (New York: Routledge, 1997); Angela Y. Davis, *Women, Race, and Class* (New York: Random House, 1981); Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought* (Boston: Unwin Hyam, 1990); Sara Ahmed, *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011); Sara Ahmed, *Differences that Matter: Feminist Theory and Postmodernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); and Ann McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Context* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

By employing the methodology of feminist historiography, we simultaneously provide rich context for narratives and counter-narratives while necessarily always turning analysis back on our own process. We are self-consciously engaged in a kind of history making about history makers who conceived of their interventions as vital correctives to standard historical practices. We extend this intervention into archival theory and practice, a reflexivity, a positionality, and an acknowledgement of the “evidence, power, and politics”³ of historical storytelling. We begin this piece by tracing the ways in which archives became embedded in feminist social movements and can be understood as critical tools and modes of self-representation and self-historicization. This beginning acts as a means of understanding not just some of the ways in which feminist politics have been enacted within and around archives, but also as a means of understanding how representation has often become synonymous with archival politics. Attention is given to the intersectional roots of feminist archives movements. In the second section, we consider the explicit presence of feminist theory in archival studies literature and contemporary practice. We examine the key focal points and arguments that have challenged traditional understandings of archival work around gender. In the third section, we then address the expansive ways in which humanities scholars have utilized *the archive* as metaphor and theoretical tool. *The archive* in this instance does not necessarily correspond to the institutional arrangements, specificities, or labor of archives. This piece contributes significantly to thinking about the ways in which these conversations in the archival turn can, at their best, expose blind spots within the archival literature and provide us with theoretical tools to tackle what we take for granted. Finally, we offer ways in which we see how critical feminist theory can contribute to existing archival discourse and practice, critiquing concepts that have remained unquestioned, such as community and organization. Together these sections expose the transformational potential of feminism for archives and of archives for dismantling the heteronormative, capitalist, racist patriarchy.

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND THE ARCHIVAL IMPULSE

Many of the contemporary archives that self-consciously label themselves as feminist or have an affiliation with feminist politics and praxis sprung from the emergent feminist and queer social movements of the latter half of the twentieth century. It is in this era that we can recognize a rise in the relationship between a politics of representation and the proliferation of collection development focused on identity

³ Cheryl Glenn, “Truth, Lies, and Method: Revisiting Feminist Historiography,” *College English* 62, no. 3 (2000): 387-389. <http://doi.org/10.2307/378937>.

politics.⁴ Their precursors are the women's collections developed in the 1930s and 1940s.⁵ Archival scholar Sarah Lubelski attributes later trends towards collecting on women to the development of World Center for Women's Archives proposed in 1935. She asserts that it acted as a "counter-archive," serving as an under-recognized foundation of the feminist historiographical paradigm and the women's archive movement. Already existing women's collections became a part of the conversation within archival literature alongside the wider recognition of the feminist movements of the 1970s. These movements recognized the critical significance of writing women into the historical record and the closely related need to place women's records and manuscripts into archives.⁶ This interest in the histories of women was an important component of the larger emergence of new social history in the 1960s and 1970s. Feminist historians had a significant impact on the archival field in the 1970s and 1980s. The first series of articles on "Women in Archives" from a second wave feminist movement perspective appeared in *The American Archivist* in 1973.⁷ As new social history became the fastest growing field of historical research into the 1980s,⁸ archivists

⁴ Identity politics identifies political, social and cultural oppression as rooted in one's identification as having or being considered to have a particular identity. Much of the twentieth century's political activism has been grounded in organizing around particular identities for various results. For further reading on identity politics, see: Combahee River Collective, "A Black Feminist Statement", in Gloria T. Hull, Patricia Bell Scott, and Barbara Smith, eds., *All the Women are White, All the Blacks are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave: Black Women's Studies* (New York: Feminist Press, 1982); Sally Haslanger, "Ontology and Social Construction," *Philosophical Topics* 23, no. 2 (1995): 96-125; bell hooks, *Ain't I a Woman? Black Women and Feminism* (Boston: South End Press, 1981); Toril Moi, *What is a Woman? And Other Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Shane Phelan, *Identity Politics: Lesbian Feminism and the Limits of Community* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989); and Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990.)

⁵ Suzanne Hildenbrand, "Introduction," in Suzanne Hildenbrand, ed. *Women's Collections: Libraries, Archives and Consciousness* (New York: The Haworth Press, 1986).

⁶ Margaret Henderson, "Archiving the Feminist Self: Reflections on the Personal Papers of Merle Thornton," *Archives and Manuscripts* 41, no. 2 (2013): 91.

⁷ Mabel Deutrich, "Women in Archives: Ms. Versus Mr. Archivist," *The American Archivist* 36, no. 2 (1973): 171-181; Elsie Freivogel, "Women in Archives: The Status of Women in the Academic Professions," *The American Archivist* 36, no. 2 (1973): 183-201; Miriam Crawford, "Women in Archives: A Program for Action," *The American Archivist* 36, no. 2 (1973): 223-232; Joanna Zangrando, "Women in Archives: An Historian's View on the Liberation of Clio," *The American Archivist* 36, no. 2 (1973): 203-212; and Eva Moseley, "Women in Archives: Documenting the History of Women in America," *The American Archivist* 36, no. 2 (1973): 215-222.

⁸ Dale Mayer, "The New Social History: Implications for Archivists," *The American Archivist* 48, no. 4 (1985): 388.

attempted to respond to the challenges it posed for archival practice and management.⁹ Writing the histories of women and other marginalized groups required new reading practices as well as new sets of sources for historians. It is the latter task that much archival literature and efforts are focused on.¹⁰

These archival impulses represent a larger pattern of techniques of self-representation which themselves formed a broader project of resisting the marked absence of minoritized populations from the historical record. In a larger sense, the communication, information sharing, and knowledge communities of minoritized populations were not only ignored but were often criminalized. These impulses demarcate these projects from traditional expectations of the archive as a neutral or passive repository and instead identify the archive explicitly as an institution that shapes the historical record through exclusion and silence. These archival impulses link activist movements with archives as a means of community continuity as well as visibility. The archival histories of such groups are too often conceived as fully separable but are inseparable from their actions as well as the parallel and overlapping histories of disparate movements. The history of feminist archives is, for example, closely tied to that of LGBTQ social movements and archives. Homophile organizations throughout the 1950s, predominantly operating at the level of local politics, sought to advocate for equal rights regardless of sexuality or gender identity. Censorship and obscenity laws forced these movements to become information generators and providers, and organizations routinely developed regular publication schedules disseminating literature on housing discrimination, workplace harassment, medical and legal information as well as general support for people who felt isolated. The circulation of publications such as *The Ladder* (a publication of The Daughters of Bilitis), the *Mattachine Review* (a publication of The Mattachine Society) and *One Magazine* (a publication of ONE, Inc.) were sent out to members in defiance of United States postal codes that considered these materials pornographic.¹¹ In 1958, the Supreme Court addressed the specific intersection of freedom of speech issues within the context the homophile movement. In *ONE Inc., v. Olesen* the Supreme Court considered assertions by the U.S. Post Office Department and the Federal Bureau of Investigation that the contents of a 1954 issue of *One Magazine* was unmailable under Comstock laws which had in the late nineteenth century criminalized the attempted or actual use of the U.S. Postal Service to mail erotica,

⁹ Mayer, "The New Social History"; Fredric Miller, "Use, Appraisal and Research: A Case Study of Social History," *The American Archivist* 49, no. 3 (1986): 371-392.

¹⁰ Miller, "Use, Appraisal and Research"; Eva Moseley, "Sources for the 'New Women's History,'" *The American Archivist* 43, no. 2 (1980): 180-190; Crawford, "Women in Archives"; and Zangrando, "Women in Archives."

¹¹ Rodger Streitmatter, "Creating a Venue for the 'Love that Dare Not Speak its Name': Origins of the Gay and Lesbian Press," *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 72, no. 2 (1995): 436-447.

contraceptives, sex toys, abortifacients or any information related to these items. The Supreme Court reversed the lower court's ruling that *One Magazine* was on its face obscene and therefore unmailable, marking both the first time in which the U.S. Supreme Court dealt explicitly with homosexuality.¹² The roots of feminist archives and archiving are found within such information and documentation efforts as well as the genealogies of explicitly feminist movements to which they are more frequently attributed.

The social movements of the 1960s also recognized the explicit link between the creation and management of information and the growth of their movements. The Brown Berets began publishing *La Causa* in 1969,¹³ *Ms. Magazine* began publishing in 1971 and *Our Bodies, Ourselves* was published for the first time the same year.¹⁴ In 1969 the United Indians of All Tribes' takeover of Alcatraz began.¹⁵ Broadcasting as Radio Free Alcatraz, the group aimed to reach a large community of Indian listeners as well as spreading cultural awareness on their own terms. The publications that emerged from The Black Arts movement, including Amiri Baraka's *Floating Bear Magazine*, were cornerstones of the larger Black Power movement.¹⁶ While mainstream media covered these movements in reactionary or sensationalistic ways, self- and independent publishing was widely understood as active response to a persistent lack of attention to the concerns of minoritized communities and systematic misrepresentation of their cultures, needs and desires. Each of these movements arose out of particular circumstances and at times their agendas were convergent or divergent with feminisms, but each recognized the vitality of self-representation as well as the importance of capitalizing on the knowledge of their communities, expanding networks of information and resource sharing. Examining their intertwined histories provides a strong foundation for undertaking critical feminist work in our contemporary moment.

Although the sites of social movements were multiple, a key site of resistance occurred within academic structures. The teaching of United States history had marginalized, misrepresented, or altogether ignored the experiences and vantage points of minoritized peoples. Changes in curriculum or self-sustained educational initiatives were consistently on the agenda for social movements throughout the 1960s and 1970s.

¹² Douglas M. Charles, "From Subversion to Obscenity: The FBI's Investigations of the Early Homophile Movement in the United States, 1953-1958," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 19, no. 2 (2010): 262-287.

¹³ Guadalupe T. Luna, "La Causa Chicana and Communicative Praxis," *Denver University Law Review* 553 (2001).

¹⁴ Kathy Davis, *The Making of Our Bodies, Ourselves: How Feminism Travels Across Borders* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).

¹⁵ Troy R. Johnson, *The Occupation of Alcatraz Island: Indian Self-Determination and the Rise of Indian Activism* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1996).

¹⁶ Lisa Gail Collins and Margo Natalie Crawford, eds. *New Thoughts on the Black Arts Movement* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2006).

The nationwide growth of Chicano Studies, Black Studies, Labor Studies, Women's Studies, Social History, American Indian Studies, and Ethnic Studies departments represented a tangible intervention into the historical record of the United States through educational initiatives.¹⁷ These efforts addressed historical materials and interpretations considered to be mainstream with different assumptions and expectations, these newly recognized fields of study and departments also required collections policies that focused on different materials and this bolstered institutional support for archival initiatives. Decidedly suspect of the long-term investment in and commitment to these initiatives, many organizations chose to keep collecting efforts autonomous and community driven, ensuring that collections policies and materials were not subject to changing priorities within universities. The Lesbian Herstory Archives (LHA) is often cited as a noteworthy and long-standing example of this phenomenon. The LHA has remained an independent and volunteer-run collective focused on serving the community in which it is based.¹⁸ The choice of independence is closely related to what queer cultural theorists Alexandra Juhasz¹⁹ and Ann Cvetkovich²⁰ have termed "Queer Archive Activism" that calls for something beyond the financial and infrastructural support of the institution, but also requires space for active engagement with materials and a space for housing materials that push against traditional archival notions of evidentiary value. Tensions between the institution and the community remain both a persistent source concern and fruitful debate.

FEMINIST THEORY IN ARCHIVAL STUDIES

There is a long history of engagement with feminist thought, methods and critiques within archival studies literature and praxis. The influence of feminist politics

¹⁷ Fabio Rojas, *From Black Power to Black Studies: How a Radical Social Movement Became an Academic Discipline* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2007); Isidro Ortiz, et al, Ed. *Chicano Studies: A Multidisciplinary Approach* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1984).

¹⁸ For more on the Lesbian Herstory Archives see: Danielle Cooper, "Welcome Home: An Exploratory Ethnography of the Information Context at the Lesbian Herstory Archives," in Patrick Keilty and Rebecca Dean, eds., *Feminist and Queer Information Studies Reader* (Sacramento: Litwin Books, 2013); Rachel F. Corban, "A Genealogy of the Lesbian Herstory Archives, 1974-2014," *Journal of Contemporary Archival Studies* 1; and Cait McKinney, "Body, Sex, Interface: Reckoning with Images at the Lesbian Herstory Archives," *Radical History Review* 122 (2015): 115-128.

¹⁹Alexandra Juhasz, "Video Remains: Nostalgia, Technology, and Queer Archive Activism," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 12, no. 2 (2006): 319-328.

²⁰Ann Cvetkovich, "The Queer Art of the Counterarchive," in ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives, *Cruising the Archive: Queer Art and Culture in Los Angeles, 1945-1980* (Los Angeles: ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives, 2011).

and research reached archives contemporaneously with the growth of second wave women's movement in the 1970s and 1980s. Feminist theory has had a significant influence in shaping understandings of the multifaceted relations between archives and power from the rise of postmodernism to the growth of social justice frameworks. Feminist scholars have also entered archival discourses addressing the unique challenges of collecting feminist materials, feminist archival practices, and potentiality of archives and archival practices for feminist thought. At the same time in archival practice there have been significant efforts to collect around certain feminist movements and marked increase in community-institutional collaborations between feminist archives and mainstream archival institutions. Within the archival field, engagements with feminist thought and practice have too often been focused narrowly on documenting more women in archives, rather than adopting the critical feminist agenda of dismantling the heteronormative, capitalist, racist patriarchy.

In a series of articles on archives and power from the early 2000s, Terry Cook and Joan Schwartz both draw heavily on feminist history and theory in its "symbiotic relationship to postmodernism"²¹ to complicate archival theory, practice, and professionalism. They frequently employ the example of the gendered nature of the archival enterprise as evidence against the notion of archival neutrality. Feminist historian Gerda Lerner is a central figure in this work, Cook draws on her scholarship to illustrate that from the beginning archives, records and memory were "remorselessly and intentionally patriarchal."²² This means that from the ancient world into the present one "women were de-legitimized" in archival processes.²³ In critiquing the classification of archival work and theory as scientific along with its related claims of truth, neutrality and objectivity, Schwartz and Cook employ feminist science and technology studies scholar Donna Haraway's conceptualization of objectivity as "situated knowledge."²⁴ Developed out of conversations in feminist science studies,²⁵ "situated knowledge" is a form of objectivity that can account for the agency of both the knowledge producer and the object being studied. Through situated knowledge, subjects are seen as the result of a complex configuration of biological vision and personal will and the scientific gaze is

²¹ Terry Cook, "Fashionable Nonsense or Professional Rebirth: Postmodernism and the Practice of Archives," *Archivaria* 51 (2001): 26.

²² *Ibid.*, 8.

²³ *Ibid.*, 8.

²⁴ Joan M. Schwartz and Terry Cook, "Archives, Records, and Power: The Making of Modern Memory," *Archival Science* 2 (2002): 10.

²⁵ The development of a feminist objectivity was a significant focus for feminist science and technology scholars in the late 1980s and early 1990s. See for example Donna Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," *Feminist Studies* 14, no. 3 (1988): 575-599; and Sandra Harding, *The Science Question in Feminism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986).

dissolved into a constellation of contested observations. Schwartz and Cook critique the archival profession's lag in theorizing power in relation to archives and records as well as the field's general detachment from political engagement. They call on archivists to take up Haraway's conception of objectivity that unlike traditional objectivity is "not about disengagement"²⁶ from an academic and activist feminist perspective.²⁷ Schwartz and Cook also incorporate the work of feminist rhetorician Judith Butler as a generative source for rethinking archival practice. Butler is particularly noted for her development of the theory of "performativity." Performativity is how Butler articulates the construction of gender through the repetition of gender performances. Gender in Butler's words is "a stylized repetition of acts . . . which are internally discontinuous . . . [so that] the appearance of substance is precisely that, a constructed identity, a performative accomplishment which the mundane social audience, including the actors themselves, come to believe and to perform in the mode of belief."²⁸ Gender is therefore "real only to the extent that it is performed."²⁹ Schwartz and Cook draw a parallel between Butler's concept of performativity in relation to gender and their own on archiving. Butler's theorization is deployed to demonstrate that archiving is constructed through the repetition of a particular set of sanctioned acts that become naturalized into "codes of behavior and belief."³⁰ Such scripts are thereby performed without even acknowledging that such a performance is being undertaken explaining why certain fundamental assumptions remain unquestioned in the contemporary archival field. In each of their respective scholarship both Schwartz on archival description³¹ and Cook on macroappraisal³² give substantial credit to the influence of feminist theory in building and developing their

²⁶ Donna Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 201.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 179.

²⁹ Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," in Sue-Ellen Case, ed., *Performing Feminisms: Feminist Critical Theory and Theatre* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990): 278.

³⁰ Joan M. Schwartz and Terry Cook, "Archives, Records, and Power: From (Postmodern) Theory to (Archival) Performance," *Archival Science* 2 (2002): 173.

³¹ Joan M. Schwartz, "Coming to Terms with Photographs: Descriptive Standards, Linguistic 'Othering,' and the Margins of Archivry," *Archivaria* 54 (2002): 142-171.

³² Terry Cook, "Macroappraisal in Theory and Practice: Origins, Characteristics, and Implementation in Canada, 1950–2000," *Archival Science* 5 (2005): 101-161; Terry Cook, "Mind Over Matter: Towards a New Theory of Archival Appraisal," in Barbara L. Craig, ed., *The Archival Imagination: Essays in Honour of Hugh Taylor* (Ottawa: Association of Canadian Archivists, 1992): 43, 63–64.

critical thinking about archives and power. Schwartz and Cook's work remains a touchstone for many doing critical work in the archival field.

Social justice, both as objective and analytical lens, has become increasingly central to "feminist, multicultural, and postmodern theorizing" on "exclusion and social power; consumerism and the production of material goods; democratic participation; redress, and universal human rights."³³ Social justice oriented scholarship in the archival field has also taken up the tools of feminist theory. In their consciousness-raising article on reframing archival description in support of human rights, Stacy Wood et al. strategically employ tools from feminist theory. The authors utilize the feminist strategy of "collective rhetoric," that places value in experiential and theoretical knowledge as well as the "the collective articulation of multiple, overlapping individual experiences."³⁴ This strategy builds on consciousness-raising, which was one of second wave feminism's most valuable tactics, allowing for the focusing of attention on and the building of knowledge on particular issues of collective significance through the sharing and application of personal and experiential testimony in a group. The "collaborative and exploratory consciousness-raising" as a discursive tactic central to collective rhetoric makes space for re-conceptualizing current modes of archival theory and practice with the consideration of the archival dimensions of human rights atrocities.³⁵ In his article interrogating the dynamics of silences in archives, Rodney G.S. Carter analyzes marginalization of certain groups by the powerful and the archival silences produced by their limited access to the archives. Within this discussion, he touches upon feminist tactics of "reading against the grain," the practice of reading for omissions, voices, and silences in archival texts.³⁶ Informed by strategies articulated in feminist theories of rhetoric and literary theory, and the work of feminist psychologists, Carter turns to silence as a method employed by marginalized groups and individuals for resistance. By reevaluating definitions of power using feminist theory, silence is conceptualized by Carter as a means for those who have been marginalized to resist, to be agents and to act against the powerful by denying archives their records. Drawing upon another feminist approach, archival scholars Michelle Caswell and Marika Cifor explore how adopting a feminist ethics of care shifts the theoretical model with which archivists and archival studies scholar address social justice concerns away from an individual rights-based framework. Utilizing a feminist

³³ Wendy M. Duff, et al, "Social Justice Impact of Archives: A Preliminary Investigation," *Archival Science* 13, no. 4 (2013): 321.

³⁴ Tasha N. Dubriwny, "Consciousness-raising as Collective Rhetoric: The Articulation of Experience in the Redstocking Abortion Speak-Out of 1969," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 91, no. 4 (2005): 396.

³⁵ Stacy Wood et al, "Mobilizing Records: Re-framing Archival Description to Support Human Rights," *Archival Science* 14, no. 3-4 (2014): 399.

³⁶ Rodney G.S. Carter, "Of Things Said and Unsaid: Power, Archival Silences, and Power in Silence," *Archivaria* 61 (2006): 224.

ethics approach, archivists are conceptualized as “caregivers,” bound to records creators, subjects, users and communities through “a web of mutual affective responsibility.”³⁷ The work of feminist theorists of affect has also been used by Cifor to examine how affect theory might be a significant way in which dimensions of social justice for the archival field can be elucidated, fleshed out, and confronted.³⁸

Recently, feminist scholars have turned again to archival literature to articulate the need to collect feminist records and to address the unique challenges presented by feminist records and collections. Feminist literary and cultural scholars Marianne Dever and Margaret Henderson have both written of the recent move in Australia towards the women’s movement becoming a subject of historical reflection, narrativization, and consciousness-raising.³⁹ As part of this movement both authors have engaged in the critical construction of a second wave feminist archives including the archiving feminist activist Merle Thornton’s papers. Dever writes of her efforts to perform this archival work on “radically non-nostalgic terms”⁴⁰ as a political position seeking to disrupt the discursive positioning of second wave feminist activism. While Henderson turns to the challenge feminist archival creators and subjects can present to archiving and to the potential for feminist approaches to address such challenges in archival practice through their critical analyses of the public, the private, and the political potential of the personal. The authors’ aims are that by enriching the feminist movement’s archival legacy they can open new feminist possibilities for remembering, the writing of history, and for archives.

Feminist thinking in the 1980s and 1990s has been sometimes periodized as “third wave feminism.” Arising as a critique of second wave feminist politics of the 1960s and 1970s, third wave feminism represents a diverse set of methodological and theoretical tools including intersectionality, poststructuralist, and postmodern critiques, global, transnational, and postcolonial feminisms. One of the more visible cultural phenomena of this period was Riot Grrrl, an artistic and musical sub-cultural movement broadly aimed at the empowerment of women through self-expression.⁴¹ The movement of Riot Grrrl materials into archives was rapid. By the late 1990s, for example, queer writer and activist Tristan Taormino had made an initial donation of zines to Smith College’s Sophia Smith Collection and artist Sarah Dyer was in discussions with Duke University’s Sallie Bingham Center for Women’s History and Culture about donating her substantial

³⁷ Michelle Caswell and Marika Cifor, “From Human Rights to Feminist Ethics: Radical Empathy in the Archives,” *Archivaria* 81 (2016): 23.

³⁸ Marika Cifor, “Affecting Archives: Introducing Affect Studies to Archival Discourse,” *Archival Science* 16, no. 1 (2016): 7-31.

³⁹ Maryanne Dever, “Archiving Feminism: Papers, Politics, Posterity,” *Archivaria* 77 (2014): 25-42; Henderson, “Archiving the Feminist Self.”

⁴⁰ Dever, “Archiving Feminism,” 25.

⁴¹ Kate Eichhorn, *The Archival Turn in Feminism: Outrage in Order* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2014), 14-15.

collection of zines to the archives.⁴² Collections such as the Zine Library at Barnard University and the Riot Grrrl Collection at New York University's Fales Library & Special Collections have received a great deal of popular and scholarly attention.⁴³ It is important to note that Riot Grrrl has been substantively and rightly critiqued as movement that was exceedingly exclusionary in its largely white and middle-class membership and in its politics. The race and socio-economic class makeup of the movement undoubtedly shape the desire and drive to donate and participate in archiving this movement, the investment in and trust of larger institutions and the speed at which these efforts have been undertaken. In marked contrast to earlier periods when feminist materials and collections were housed within community-based archives, this period is characterized by the deposit of feminist cultural products within major institutions.

The archiving of third wave feminism has resulted in a number of feminist scholars entering into archival studies discourse and its debates. In a recent article culture and media studies scholar Kate Eichhorn examines three contemporary feminist zine collections and their surprising rejection of digitization as either a short- or long-term goal. The reasons articulated by archives include the zines' materiality, the relations of the zines' context in respect to the archives' larger collections of feminist and women's history, and the importance of the archives' as authorizing and legitimating forces for activist movements.⁴⁴ This work counters much of the discourse in archival literature on digitization as a desired goal for contemporary archival practice. Employing the feminist concept of "safe space" as a lens, archivist Lisa Darms and ethnomusicologist Elizabeth Keenan examine the Riot Grrrl Collection, held at New York University. They argue that "safe space," the "protective stance"⁴⁵ that was preeminent and strategic in this movement has its origins in second wave feminism's consciousness-raising practices and emphasizes the physical and psychic safety and intimacy of movement participants to enable the sharing, critiquing, and valuing of their experiences, especially around gender and sexual violence and oppression, was vitally important in the movement and extend it into archives to explore how the concept is enacted through issues of collection building, and for donors and researchers, and in the tensions between the desire for access to activist history and the requirements of archival preservation.⁴⁶ These authors

⁴²Ibid., 65, 15.

⁴³ See for example: Alison Piepmeier, *Girl Zines: Making Media, Doing Feminism* (New York: New York University Press, 2009); Eichhorn, *The Archival Turn in Feminism*; and Lisa Darms, ed. *The Riot Grrrl Collection* (New York: The Feminist Press, 2013).

⁴⁴ Kate Eichhorn, "Beyond Digitisation: A Case Study of Three Contemporary Feminist Collections," *Archives and Manuscripts* 42, no. 3 (2014): 23.

⁴⁵ Elizabeth K. Keenan and Lisa Darms, "Safe Space: The Riot Grrrl Collection," *Archivaria* 76 (2013): 59.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 55-74.

demonstrate clearly the important perspective feminist scholars can bring to archival theory, practice and professionalism.

It is not just Riot Grrrl that has been a collecting and partnership focus for archives in the last two decades. In the same period, there has been a significant growth in collaborations and partnerships, both formal and informal, between feminist organizations and archives and more traditional archival institutions, especially academic archives. Both authors were part of one such collaborative partnership, “Making Invisible Histories Visible: Preserving the History of Lesbian Feminist Activism and Writing in Los Angeles.” It was a three-year collaboration between the June L. Mazer Lesbian Archives, the UCLA Center for the Study of Women, and the UCLA Library funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities. Over 80 collections from the Mazer, a community-based lesbian feminist archives founded in 1981 and located in West Hollywood, California, were selected to be arranged, described, digitized, and moved to UCLA, a major research university and large state institution, and made accessible to users at the UCLA Library.⁴⁷ The selected collections tell unique and important stories of lesbian and feminist political acts, writing, desiring, and lives. A lack of affordable space and funding concerns prompted the Mazer’s Board to engage in this partnership when they had rejected previous opportunities to do so. The Mazer Archives’ community includes lesbian feminists, many of whom were and are separatists. This presents a key tension between the institutional space of UCLA and intentions and political orientations of some the record creators. These concerns resulted in some donors refusing to have their collections relocated. Their wishes were respected despite the importance of their collections to the project and any processing and digitization work that may have already been completed. These challenges were heightened due to the increasingly public nature of their collections after their physical move to UCLA and greater digital presence. Partnerships and other collaborations between archives with explicitly feminist politics, missions and histories and mainstream institutions raise several concerns for donors, users, archivists, and communities. There are unresolved questions about to whom and how such materials are arranged, described, and made accessible and the long-term survival of such materials and archives.

THE ARCHIVAL TURN

Since the early 1990s, a body of literature has emerged foregrounding “the archive” as research site, theoretical concept, and object of inquiry. Dubbed “the archival turn,” this trend within the humanities and the social sciences does not necessarily

⁴⁷ For more on this project see: Kathleen A. McHugh, Brenda Johnson-Grau and Ben Raphael Sher, eds. *Making Invisible Histories Visible: A Resource Guide to the Collection* (Los Angeles: UCLA Center for the Study of Women, 2014).

represent an engagement with archival literature, theory, or practice, but instead has signified a focus on the construction of power within and around the archive. The archive that has emerged from scholarship in the archival turn commonly understands the archive as a metaphor or as a discursive system. This archive may or may not map, depending on the theorist and the text, onto definitions of archives as employed within archival and information studies. The term archive within archival studies refers most often to “the act of [transferring] records from the individual or office of creation to a repository authorized to appraise, preserve, and provide access to those records.”⁴⁸ While archives within the field refers to a range of things including “materials containing information of enduring value and/or serving an evidential function; organizations that collect and preserve these records; the professional discipline of administering these collections of records; the building or space” that houses such collections.”⁴⁹ The distinction between archive and archives calls attention to a broader conception of what archive can mean.

Historians in particular have undergone a disciplinary shift towards what anthropologist Ann Laura Stoler describes as “epistemological skepticism.” This move has led to a focus on “history as narrative, and on history-writing as a charged political act.”⁵⁰ Rather than conceiving of the archives as a neutral space within which historical materials were housed and from which the writing of history emerged, archives itself becomes an object worthy of scrutiny and theorization. At the same time, critical theory served as driving force in the adoption of “the archive” as theoretical construct and metaphor. In this literature, the work of both Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida has been widely referenced across multiple fields. Foucault’s *Archeology of Knowledge* and *Order of Things* are foundational texts. Foucault conceives of the archive as an authorizing apparatus and discursive structure, a “system,” invested with the power to “establish statements as events...and things”⁵¹ The archive then cannot be disentangled from the institutional and classificatory logics and practices that characterize modernity, not only representing the contents of history but the very possibility of conceiving of history itself. Feminist theory has drawn from Foucault’s, particularly from *Discipline and Punish* and *The History of Sexuality*. These works explicitly address the body as a site of power relations, indeed as one of the primary means of subject creation. The body then is neither natural nor self-evident, but a complex set of culturally mediated power relations. The archive, as a structural basis for historical possibility, co-constitutes and benefits from essentialized and easily ordered subjects.

⁴⁸ Richard Pearce-Moses, “Archive,” in *A Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2005).

⁴⁹ Alana Kumbier, *Ephemeral Material: Queering the Archive* (Sacramento: Litwin Books, 2014), 10.

⁵⁰ Ann Laura Stoler, “Colonial Archives and Arts of Governance,” *Archival Science* 2 (2002): 92.

⁵¹ Michel Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 128.

While the detailed explication of deconstruction and feminist theory is beyond the scope of this paper,⁵² the reception and use of Derrida's work can be understood as a boon and a challenge to feminist and archival theory. Feminist literary critic and historian Mary Poovey identifies the destabilization of identity as central to Derrida's project to critique the foundations of Western metaphysics. Identity for Derrida is as dependent as anything else on language, which is both a construct and a system of relations. This rupture that claims identity as anything but natural, has been salient in feminist critiques of essentialism.⁵³ Derrida's *Archive Fever* employs the archive as psychoanalytic metaphor, as representative of individual drives to both destroy and preserve. However, Derrida is also in some small way, concerned with interactions in archives as well. He addresses the relationship between his own body of theoretical work and the Freud archives, positing that what he called "archivization" is simultaneously a technical process of archiving something but is also a means of constructing static meaning around a set of texts.⁵⁴

The intimate connection between the archive and structural power was central to many thinkers working in postcolonial studies. Postcolonial scholars have looked with suspicion at the colonial record and have attempted to locate the voices of the colonized within, alongside and despite the records produced by colonial powers.⁵⁵ Such work has been influential in the archival turn's broader recognition and study of archives as an agent, one that is steeped in power, organized around particular logics of inclusion and exclusion, silence, and representation. There are significant critiques to be made of this turn. As Stoler describes, the archive has been deployed as a "metaphoric invocation of any corpus of selective collections and longings that acquisitive quests for the primary, originary, and untouched entail" by cultural theorists.⁵⁶ It can be expansively "understood as a universal metaphor for memory structures, information storage, and knowledge production," thereby becoming so broad as "include nearly everything."⁵⁷ However, as Cvetkovich has articulated, the archival turn has led to a productive and thorough "rethinking of what counts as knowledge and method."⁵⁸

⁵² Diane Elam, *Feminism and Deconstruction* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

⁵³ Mary Poovey, "Feminism and Deconstruction," *Feminist Studies* (1988): 51-65.

⁵⁴ Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression. Religion and Postmodernism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

⁵⁵ Marlene Manoff, "Theories of the Archive from Across the Disciplines," *portal: Libraries and the Academy* 4, no. 1 (2004): 15.

⁵⁶ Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Commonsense* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 45.

⁵⁷ Anjali Arondekar, et al., "Queering Archives: A Roundtable Discussion," *Radical History Review* 122 (May 2015): 229.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 228.

Feminist thought over the last few decades has also undergone another significant turn to the archives. This turn is part of the larger archival turn, the result of a longing for feminist history, and most significantly, a political and scholarly response by feminist activists and scholars in the present. This work builds particularly on Foucault's conception of the archive as a discursive structure. Feminist and queer scholars including Stoler, Anjali Arondekar, Elizabeth Kolsky, and Cvetkovich have done much to reimagine the nature of the archive and its role in feminist scholarship.⁵⁹ This body of work is so crucial to theoretical concepts of the archive that feminist literary scholar Anne E. Fernald has argued that the term is not "sustainable without feminist theory."⁶⁰ Fernald asserts that the attention to the "difference gender makes," activates affect theory, intersectionality, and global studies at the site of the archives.

In *The Archival Turn in Feminism* Eichhorn argues that archives offer significant sites to engage with the "legacies, epistemes, and traumas pressing down on the present."⁶¹ She identifies these present traumas as emerging from restructuring in the name of neoliberalism that has characterized institutional reform since the 1980s. Neoliberalism is a pervasive ideology of social, political, and economic practices and processes⁶² that proposes according to geographer David Harvey that "human well-being can best be advanced by the maximization of entrepreneurial freedoms within an institutional framework characterized by private property rights, individual liberty, unencumbered markets and free trade."⁶³ The extreme contraction of political agency through the neoliberal model has compelled feminist scholars to look for new ways of negotiating the present by looking to the past, a past which often legitimized different

⁵⁹ Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain*; Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Reordering of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995); Anjali Arondekar, *For the Record: On Sexuality and the Colonial Archive in India* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009); Elizabeth Kolsky, *Colonial Justice in British India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); and Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feeling* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).

⁶⁰ Anne E. Fernald, "Women's Fiction, New Modernist Studies, and Feminism," *Modern Fiction Studies* 59, no. 2 (2013): 231.

⁶¹ Eichhorn, *The Archival Turn in Feminism*, 5.

⁶² There is a great wealth of cross-disciplinary scholarship on neoliberalism. See, for example: Wendy Brown, "Neo-liberalism and the End of Democracy," *Theory and Event* 7 (2003); Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2015); Nicholas Gane, "The Emergence of Neoliberalism: Thinking Through and Beyond Michel Foucault's Lectures on Biopolitics," *Theory Culture Society* 31, no. 4 (July 2014): 3–27; David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); and Manfred B. Steger and Ravi K. Roy, *Neoliberalism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

⁶³ David Harvey, "Neoliberalism and Creative Destruction," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 610 (2007): 22.

forms of knowledge and cultural production than present political orientations do.⁶⁴ Eichhorn links not just feminist scholarship, but feminist activism to archives. She argues that archives are spaces where key feminist tensions between community and the academy and between theory and praxis can be confronted and addressed.⁶⁵ Feminist political theorist Wendy Brown has also called this kind of work, a “genealogical politics.”⁶⁶ Eichhorn paraphrases Brown’s reconceptualization of Nietzsche’s genealogy in order to try and diagnose the political potential that feminist scholars might see in the archive. Brown’s “genealogical politics” represents an investigation into the construction of normativity rather than an attempt to resurrect a linear historical narrative. This approach ensures a confrontation with the structures and historical conventions that dictate the possibilities of the present. Eichhorn then conceives of “the archival turn in contemporary feminism is as much about shoring up a younger generation’s legacy and honoring elders as it is about imagining and working to build possible worlds in the present and future.”⁶⁷

THE ARCHIVAL TURN FOR ARCHIVAL STUDIES

The archival turn has not been widely recognized in archival studies scholarship for the opportunities it provides “not only for deconstructing archives but also for constructing new archives.”⁶⁸ Drawing on feminist scholarship from within the archival turn we assert that the “plasticity”⁶⁹ of the concept of the archive as developed in this humanities-based work opens possibilities for the archival field to engage in work to dismantle patriarchy in all its damaging forms. From within archival studies we can certainly point to a distinct lack of specific engagement with the institutional, financial and material realities of archives in the work of the humanities. However, it is precisely this vantage point that allows for work that challenges the very definitions and boundaries of archives themselves. Some of the more conceptually challenging and politically oriented work from within archival studies has reached out into the humanities by necessity. As Cook has pointed out, the positivist epistemological commitments of archival studies as a profession are inadequate to the ways in which archives operate in a

⁶⁴Ibid., 5.

⁶⁵ Kate Eichhorn, “DIY Collectors, Archiving Scholars, and Activist Librarians: Legitimizing Feminist Knowledge and Cultural Production Since 1990,” *Women’s Studies* 39, no. 6 (2010): 635.

⁶⁶ Wendy Brown, *Politics of Out of History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

⁶⁷ Eichhorn, *The Archival Turn in Feminism*, x.

⁶⁸ Ela Przybylo and Danielle Cooper, “Asexual Resonances: Tracing a Queerly Asexual Archive,” *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 20, no. 3 (2014): 306.

⁶⁹ Kate Eichhorn, “Archival Genres: Gathering Texts and Reading Spaces,” *Invisible Culture* 12 (2008): 3.

contemporary sense.⁷⁰ Archival studies has undergone radical shifts in its orientation, sometimes leading to a splintering into silos of expertise that separate the technical from the conceptual. Beyond this separation lies another set of challenges, the variety in institutions that call themselves archives poses yet more political, technical, and conceptual challenges. The umbrella of archives contains radical lesbian community archives and corporate archives, government archives and Ivy League institutional records, born-digital materials, and fabric arts; professional organizations provide codes of ethics and standards of professional practice that attempt relevance for each and thus often show their irrelevance for all.

For the most part as we have demonstrated, feminist approaches in archival studies have focused on collections themselves, on ameliorating absences from the record and on creating self-regulated or institutional spaces for these collections. A critical feminist intervention into archives however, could mean a fundamental re-organization of archival institutions themselves. Sociologist Joan Acker has addressed the assumption of gender neutrality embedded in hierarchical modes of organization and in organizational thinking more generally.⁷¹ Organizational structures for Acker are one crucial site of gender differentiation through economic division and the subsuming of feminized and reproductive labor. Another vital dimension is the adherence to principles and practices of professionalism, which historian Howard Zinn has described as contributing to a sustained opposition to substantive political engagement.⁷² These general critiques take on a unique valence with respect to archival work. As Caswell has addressed,⁷³ archival work is associated with service and is routinely feminized. This feminization is key to its broad devaluation. Within the context of neoliberalism, the precarity of archival work and institutions has led to an even deeper intertwining of hierarchical economic structures with archival practice. Rather than adhering to a liberal feminist trajectory that might suggest that a diversified hierarchical structure would represent positive change in lived and working conditions, feminist theory can intervene in archival studies by challenging the investment in hierarchical organizations at a fundamental level. Feminist models of collective and co-operative decision-making and organization have been implemented within community archives, but these models have yet to be implemented across institutional boundaries.

⁷⁰ Terry Cook, "Archival Science and Postmodernism: New Formulations for Old Concepts," *Archival Science* 1, no. 1 (2001): 3-24.

⁷¹ Joan Acker, "Hierarchies, Jobs, Bodies: A Theory of Gendered Organizations," *Gender & Society* 4, no. 2 (1990): 139-158.

⁷² Howard Zinn, "Secrecy, Archives, and the Public Interest," *The Midwestern Archivist* (1977): 14-26.

⁷³ Michelle Caswell, "The 'Archive' is not an Archives: Acknowledging the Intellectual Contributions of Archival Studies," *Reconstruction* 16, no. 1 (2016).

While there is a body of literature within archival studies that addresses participatory practices within the archives, addressing hierarchical structures and bureaucratic models of organization explicitly has remained relatively under-theorized. The investment in hierarchy cannot simply be understood as an adherence to rationality, it is a means of creating an order of social relations. We conceptualize bureaucratic organizational structures, which are by definition hierarchical, as the routinization of a set of persistent behaviors. This routinization then embeds social relations structurally, routinizing not only the behaviors but also the subordination of workers within that structure. Within the archival world, efforts to engage with issues of “diversity” have resulted in the proliferation of initiatives, statements, and interest groups within professional organizations.⁷⁴ Often conceived of along the lines of identity groups, there lies a gap in addressing problems of intersectionality across the disciplines. Professionals with overlapping alliances, affinities, identities, and politics are left signing up for group after group, committing themselves to copious unpaid labor. Creating safe spaces for discussion, mutual support and productive dialogue is vital, but one cannot ignore the ways in which minoritized populations are again tasked with the labor of change.⁷⁵

Community and community-based archives have become a major focus for the archival field with growing scholarship and with many practicing archivists and archival institutions involved in formal and informal collaborations with communities and community-based collections. We assert that feminist theorizing on the nature, formation, sustainability and power of community and identity can challenge and enrich archival scholarship, practice, and professionalism. Theorist of politics and race Sara Ahmed offers a critical analysis of how emotions align each of us with “some others and again against other others” to build, sustain and break apart communities. She uses the examples of pain and hate to illustrate this process. Ahmed writes that hate “affects the way bodies take shape,” forcing the “bodies of those who become objects of hatred” to “embody a particular identity by and for” the individual doing the hating.⁷⁶ Hatred thus constructs bodies through the alignment with and in opposition to certain other bodies.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ See, for example, the Society of American Archivists, “Statement on Diversity,” (2010). <http://www2.archivists.org/statements/saa-statement-on-diversity>.

⁷⁵ For critical perspectives on the rhetoric of diversity, see: Regine Bendl et al, “Diversity Management Discourse meets Queer Theory,” *Gender in Management: An International Journal* 23, no. 6 (2008): 382-394; Karsten Jonsen, Martha L. Maznevski, and Susan C. Schneider, “Special Review Article: Diversity and Its Not So Diverse Literature: An International Perspective,” *International Journal of Cross Cultural Management* 11, no. 1 (2011): 35-62; Patrizia Zanoni and Maddy Janssens, “Deconstructing Difference: The Rhetoric of Human Resource Managers’ Diversity Discourses,” *Organization Studies* 25, no. 1 (2004): 55-74.

⁷⁶ Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), 55.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 54.

It is through these processes of alignment that community is formed.⁷⁸ Alignment through hate works in both directions. It aligns not only the individual who performs the hating with a collective emotion and a connection to certain other bodies, but also serves to align the individual who is the subject of the hate with the reviled group that they are made to represent.⁷⁹ Looking anew at formation of community can shift how archivists engage with community members, can challenge who should be seen as the communities with a stake in the records and the archives, and can build a critique of norms of archival practice to better meet diverse community needs.

Through an engagement with feminist scholarship we can promote what cultural and gender theorist Miranda Joseph terms “an ethical practice of community, as an important mode of participation.”⁸⁰ Community has been accepted in archival scholarship and practice as an unquestioned form of social “good.”⁸¹ Following Joseph’s work, *community* can indeed be understood both as something that is a definite good and as a positive marker of a quality of life. In a process, similar to that developed by Ahmed, Joseph argues that community both produces and is produced by the affective. It is affect that pushes people to come together in a way that is at least on its surface “caring.”⁸² This concept of “community” in turn therefore creates the feelings of belonging to something that is both positive and worthy. However, the concepts of positivity and of worth form community in ways that are fundamentally unequal. The concept of community serves to raise the status of certain individuals while simultaneously diminishing that of others, as well as their opportunities and life chances.⁸³ We draw here on the argument made by Cifor and Jamie A. Lee that community archivists would benefit from interrogating critically the emotions and affinities that align communities together.⁸⁴ The alignment of communities is frequently based in constructs of identity and is often linked to identity politics. Identity politics mean that both politically and socially some forms of identity are understood as “state-sanctioned” and “belonging,” while others are constructed as outside of such sanction and belonging.⁸⁵ This theoretical work can push work on and in

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ For more on Ahmed and her conceptualization of hatred and its applications for archival studies see: Marika Cifor, “Aligning Bodies: Collecting, Arranging, and Describing Hatred for a Critical Queer Archives,” *Library Trends* 64, no. 4 (2016): 756-777.

⁸⁰ Miranda Joseph, *Against the Romance of Community* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), ix.

⁸¹ Marika Cifor and Jamie A. Lee, “Towards an Archival Critique: Opening Possibilities for Addressing Neoliberalism in the Archival Field,” *Journal of Critical Library and Information Studies* 1 (2017).

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

community archives. Community archives have tremendous potential when they are developed critically for and with communities in which they are engaged. However, these same community archives can easily and do frequently serve to produce and reproduce hierarchies and exclusions through their processes and interpretations of records and collections that reify damaging and unjust social structures.⁸⁶

CONCLUSION

The archival field is currently and perpetually faced with financial precarity, technological challenges and institutional politics. Too often these challenges are met with cynical responses that assume that problems we face are simply a result of current policy or economic priorities. What we learn by thinking through the feminist intervention into archives begins with the recognition that self-representation and self-historicization is a vital element of collective identity, political organization, and structural change. We also learn that the epistemological foundations of archival theory are not adequate for our political ideals or practical challenges. This means taking seriously the critiques of power coming from outside of archival studies as well as from within and while we might want to easily dismiss concepts of the archive that do not adequately address or understand the specifics of archival labor and expertise, we must contend with the way that the archive/s operates for people outside of our field. Finally, we can hope that a new and growing body of literature that represents serious feminist engagement with archival theory and practice can transform our institutional politics by questioning the categories by which we define ourselves, the structures that govern our organizations and the values we embed in our practices.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

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