A Moral Voyage: Selecting Your Committee

I’ve heard it said that the difference between success and failure is a great team. In that case, I have an amazing team - er, committee - working with me, ready to advise and guide my progress through the thesis, so I should definitely be successful.

When I first started the proposal process back in March, I went to Professor Miller with the vague outline of an idea. I trusted her judgment and her expertise, knowing that she had a better idea of who in the department would best fit this topic. She suggested a few names, who I then contacted and sat down with to discuss my work. I wanted to find someone who could strengthen the themes and big ideas of my thesis - race, gender, and women's movements - and who had the time to work with me on a 1:1 level regularly. I finally decided on Professor Laura Lovett to serve as my Committee Chair - after reading through some of her work and getting to know her, she seemed really excited about the prospects of my research and in helping me take the thesis in a new direction.

Professor Miller is my second committee member - partly because I’ve worked with her so long, but also because she is an expert in the specific area of my research. She’s one of several faculty members to focus in women’s history, and I know her work in New Bedford and New England in general will help me characterize this thesis as a microhistory or case study.

Finally, because I'm incorporating a project into my thesis as well to tie my research back to my BDIC major, it made sense to include my BDIC advisor, Professor Poehler, on my committee. This way, he can see the development of the written thesis and
research to guide me towards making my digital component stronger.

Picking a committee is one of the most important things to think about when you’re making a thesis proposal. You want to surround yourself with people who are going to challenge you to work harder and to make your thesis or project the best it can be. You want to find people who are excited to help you, and who know what they’re talking about. That way, they can help you achieve your goals and make you feel more confident in your research.

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