

BOOK REVIEWS



Race, Rhetoric, and Research Methods, Alexandria L. Lockett, Iris D. Ruiz, James Chase Sanchez, and Christopher Carter. The WAC Clearinghouse, 2021. 255 pages. \$31.95 print.

How can antiracism be practiced as a research methodology? Alexandria L. Lockett, Iris D. Ruiz, James Chase Sanchez, and Christopher Carter explore this pertinent question in *Race, Rhetoric, and Research Methods*. The authors offer ways antiracism as a methodology can be practiced within writing and rhetoric studies by building on critical race theory, decolonial, and feminist scholarly traditions. Writing across race and gender, the authors acknowledge the importance of antiracist work while noting a need to explicitly develop ways of ethical engagement within the field and beyond. As scholars of language, writing, and rhetoric, we must interrogate how race and racism contribute to our social and linguistic realities especially since, as the authors assert, racism is a “complex rhetorical object” (21).

Lockett, Ruiz, Sanchez, and Carter open this book by describing the setting in which we are all teaching, researching, and writing. This opening positions antiracism as methodology first and foremost within real-world settings, therefore effectively situating all of our work within a sociopolitical context in which racism is a consistent characteristic. Citing political and social events as recent as 2020 that point toward the hostile racial climate in the United States, the authors demonstrate how racism is “not a matter of time, but of place,” emphasizing a need for sustained commitment (3). The editors argue for the practice of antiracism as methodology since “studying the processes of speaking, writing, rhetoric, and computing with little to no historical awareness of empire-in-action will likely reinforce what it ignores” (11). Such an argument aligns with Audre Lorde’s notion of historical amnesia, a willful forgetfulness that keeps us replicating the past with such normalization that it becomes a thoughtless routine. Therefore, antiracism as a methodology must work to eliminate the risk of reifying empire in action through our educational practices.

Race, Rhetoric, and Research Methods demonstrates not only how to practice antiracism in research methodology but also through writing compositional practices. Positioning the idea of collaboration as antiracist action, the authors speak to one another through the chapters and interchapter dialogues about their racialization experiences and how this has informed their thinking. These reflective dialogues capture conversational exchanges between the scholars and offer readers an additional means to understand complex concepts in approachable and inviting ways. Within these dialogues, as well as the different chapters, the authors draw knowledge from areas such as (but not limited to) research, history, and the self. This multifaceted approach demonstrates a method of grounding theory within personal experience, giving the concepts what Malagon, Huber, and Velez call “real-life substance” (qtd. in Lockett, Ruiz, Sanchez, and Carter 23). This approach destabilizes the notion that research, writing, and storytelling are aracial, neutral activities, as the authors reflectively note.

This theoretical grounding in real-life substance continues in compositional approach as the authors make clear their research positionalities and their reasons and intentions for studying race and racism. This explicit discussion of one’s investment in race and racism is a primary characteristic of an antiracist methodology that the authors propose, not only for research transparency but also to deconstruct the notion of the assumed, default white researcher or contributor of knowledge. Especially in the context of those studying marginalized spaces, the risk of bias has the potential to replicate racist assumptions and practices, whether intentional or not. Failure to reveal one’s colonial gaze may

harm the communities the researchers aim to assist and can manifest in the form of selective citational practices, misconceptions, or ignorance of one's social positioning. As Carter reminds us in chapter four, "There can be no escape from the body, and no refuge from the violence it witnesses" (125). It would indeed be a rhetorical fallacy to imagine the researcher as having a disembodied mind.

Each chapter within the book begins with clear transparency that is raw, candid, and relatable. This meditation on the self and history reveals how these moments have impacted the scholars' current thinking and intellectual development. Research positionality has been a concept long advocated for by feminists, particularly feminists of color. Yet it has not become a normalized practice to perform this meditation within our scholarly work. We have long acknowledged that writing is a political act, we have deconstructed the idea of "objectivity," yet we hesitate to reveal ourselves within our work and how our social positions influence the knowledge we produce. *Race, Rhetoric, and Research Methods* gives a hopeful look into the future, demonstrating how to combine intellectual rigor with the personal, as these are inextricably linked concepts.

In chapter two, Ruiz brings attention to the intellectual colonization of marginalized epistemologies through citational practices and appropriation. There is a paradox brought forth in this chapter: for the scholar to be deemed credible, they must cite those from Greco-Roman epistemological traditions. Yet there is a simultaneous colonization and deracialization of marginalized knowledges. To destabilize this problematic traditional practice in the field, Ruiz discusses historical recovery, or historical *curanderismo*, to center those voices that have been systematically silenced. The following chapter by Sanchez shows the potential of autoethnography as an antiracist method that can self-critically assess one's racialization and reconciliation. Sanchez describes an in-between space in the rural town where he grew up, as he discovered the importance of difference in terms of class, language, race, and more. This chapter demonstrates a candid recollection of Sanchez's memories and shows the potentially transformative nature of autoethnography when approached with a willingness to learn from one's experiences.

In chapter four, Carter demonstrates how visual rhetorical analysis can provide a means of critiquing the role of race in the context of virality and police camera footage. Carter brings attention to rhetorical dimensions that are influenced by imbalances of power between officers and Black men in South Carolina and Oklahoma. Through analyzing police camera footage, Carter encourages readers to consider nine critical approaches to studying videography in the context of race.

Lockett analyzes the rhetoric of "Black Twitter" and the workings of online racial publics in chapter five. Through critical technological discourse analysis, Lockett draws attention to the significance of Black English in online spaces and beyond. Such spaces have been largely overlooked by writing and rhetoric studies despite consistent discussion of Black Twitter in the media. Even when scholars acknowledge Black Twitter, often the rhetorical components of Black English are ignored. To mitigate this disconnect, Lockett effectively connects intersections between academia, journalism, and Black Twitter.

From the larger ethical considerations discussed in the book down to its compositional structure, *Race, Rhetoric, and Research Methods* is a must-read for all of those within writing and rhetoric studies. In a broader sense, both within and outside the academy, those interested in language, race, feminism, and decolonialism would find much value in adding this book to their collection. After all, we are all speaking, writing, and creating within the same environment, an environment in which race influences our social and linguistic realities. Surely, it is long overdue that we envision how to practice antiracism as a research methodology.

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<https://doi.org/10.1080/07350198.2022.2073779>



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Allison Harper Hitt, *Rhetorics of Overcoming: Rewriting Narratives of Disability and Accessibility in Writing Studies*, National Council of Teachers of English, 2021. 159 pages. \$29.99 paperback.

In *Rhetorics of Overcoming*, Allison Harper Hitt draws from the fields of disability studies, writing studies, and multimodal rhetorics to explore the persistent trope of “overcoming” disability in academic spaces. Hitt defines rhetorics of overcoming as discourses that support “the idea that disabled students must overcome their disabilities in order to be successful, to fit in, or to meet the standard” (18). These inherently ableist discourses pervade academic spaces, positioning “disabled student writers and disabled embodiments as *less than*” while privileging seemingly nondisabled ways of composing, knowing, and embodiment (59). Building on the work of disability rhetoricians including Brenda Brueggemann, Jay Dolmage, Stephanie Kerschbaum, Margaret Price, Amy Vidali, and M. Remi Yergeau, Hitt examines the ways rhetorics of overcoming show up in writing pedagogy and reinforce compulsory disclosure as a prerequisite for receiving individual, diagnosis-dependent accommodations. Academic institutions usually respond to documented, disclosed disabilities with prescribed accommodations, incentivized in part by federal legislation and good intentions. However, as Hitt argues in chapter one, a sole emphasis on individualized accommodations “limits the potential to craft more accessible pedagogies” that support students’ needs without requiring formal documentation (19).

Instead of demanding students disclose—and then *overcome*—disability, Hitt turns to Brenda Brueggemann’s discussion of *coming over*, a collaborative “commitment to performing what are often deemed as non-normative expressions of rhetoricity” (20). This process of negotiating and valuing rhetoricities requires “pedagogical spaces that privilege—not just accommodate—non-normative literacy practices” (21). In particular, Hitt argues that multimodal approaches create space for writers to perform “different literacy practices that acknowledge, respect, and *privilege* a wide range of embodied processes of meaning-making,” enabling student rhetors to craft “more robust, rhetorically rich texts” (21). Accessible multimodal pedagogies expand the potential for all students to engage with texts and each other without erasing the specific needs of disabled students.

In the chapters that follow, Hitt traces the influence of rhetorics of overcoming in academic spaces, including writing classrooms (chapters two and four), writing centers (chapter three), and the university campus (chapter five). The prevailing institutional model of individual accommodations locates disability as a “problem” in specific student bodies, rather than within inaccessible spaces, pedagogies, and institutions. Students are required to request and renegotiate accommodations multiple times per academic year through a process that requires formal diagnosis and disclosure. In framing disability “disclosure as a form of rhetoricity,” Hitt encourages us to resist relying on diagnosis, instead moving toward an