KEY CONCEPT STATEMENT

Inclusion

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The question of inclusion has long been a concern for feminist scholars in the history of rhetoric. As these scholars have shaped and reshaped the rhetorical canon, they have uncovered, recovered, addressed, and highlighted various chasms and gaps in how rhetorical history has been studied and disseminated, and they have done so from a broad—but not yet broad enough—range of perspectives. For example, my experiences as a deaf white woman lead me to identify myself as part of a long tradition of rhetoricians, but I am still frequently reminded of the many ways that I am not represented or reflected in versions of rhetorical traditions most readily available for study. Similar motivations have driven other feminist and postcolonial scholars to revise the presentation of rhetorical practice as overwhelmingly male, white, agonistic, able-bodied, and Westernized, and they have asked questions that may now be familiar to many of us: *Where and how are women represented? Where and how are minority communities represented? Where and how are oppressed and marginalized populations represented? Where and how are disabled bodies represented?* At each turn, the development of feminist rhetorical historiography has reflected the people involved as well as the available theories and evidence. In the next 25 years, we need to continue to use these positions and resources to resituate and retheorize our work, creating new and more relational approaches to the study of rhetorical history.

Within feminist rhetorical historiography, the project of inclusion was first approached as an additive process, as scholars identified female rhetoricians, teachers, speakers, and writers and worked to highlight their contributions within an overwhelmingly male canon (Campbell; Donawerth; Glenn; Logan; Lunsford; Miller and Bridwell-Bowles; Ritchie and Ronald). As this first wave of feminist scholarship emerged, historiographers also began to witness how attending to women in the rhetorical tradition also changed conceptions of the tradition itself. Not surprisingly, what it means to "do rhetoric" changes when the people who are identified as doing rhetoric changes (Biesecker; Dolmage; Enoch; Haas; Lipson and Binkley; Walters; Wertheimer). In recent years, feminist rhetorical historiographers have called for even more radical changes in rhetorical terrain as they have challenged processes of canonization

altogether and come to develop new methodologies for theorizing rhetorical history (Ballif; Schell and Rawson). Such work sets the stage for feminist historiography to invite, even demand, heightened attention to inclusivity in rhetorical practice by making available new ways for scholars to position both themselves and their rhetorical subjects.

In calling attention to the work of inclusion in this key concept statement, my aim here is not only to encourage the addition of new names, groups, perspectives, and/or practices to those that are regularly studied in rhetorical history; it is also to call scholars and teachers to resituate and retheorize the very ways they conceptualize rhetoric and rhetorical practice and to develop related historiographical methods. Such moves are necessary in order to understand how processes of inclusion (and yes, of exclusion, too) orient feminist rhetorical scholars to figures, groups, and practices. As Cristina Ramírez pointed out at the 2014 Conference on College Composition and Communication, if only one or two Latinas are taken to stand in for an entire period within the rhetorical canon (as is often the case with Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz and Gloria Anzaldúa), then it is hardly the case that Latina rhetorics are *included* in a particular rhetorical history. Likewise, neither de la Cruz nor Anzaldúa can be effectively understood or contextualized in any such isolated study of their work (see also Mao). To conduct more inclusive research in feminist rhetorical historiography, feminist scholars must develop ways to identify, describe, and understand the rhetorical work that has been vital to the survival and success of myriad individuals and groups throughout rhetorical history. It further calls scholars to read and engage rhetorical practices from vantage points beyond the still-canonical lens of male Western agonistic rhetoric.

That gendered rhetorical practices attributed to women still get labeled “women’s rhetorical practices,” while “men’s rhetorical practices” are rarely referred to in that way only underscores my point: approaches to inclusion must continue to examine how women—defined broadly—are part of the rhetorical tradition. To begin the work of resituating and retheorizing rhetoric and its practices, then, we need to reconsider the category of “women” and indeed, gender itself. We also need to reassess how these categories are created and re-created through the methods and practices of feminist historiography. For example, K.J. Rawson in “Queering Feminist Rhetorical Canonization” brings both queer and trans bodies and practices within the purview of feminist rhetoric while at the same time pointing out the inherent exclusion involved whenever canons are invoked. Too, Jay Dolmage and Cynthia Lewiecki-Wilson challenge categorical constructions of gender by connecting disability to all forms of rhetorical embodiment, including gender, race, and sexuality.

Bodies are always rhetorical, and rhetoric takes shape from bodies, two points that Dolmage reinforces again and again in *Disability Rhetoric*. His

reminders underscore the point that scholars' personal identifications and relationships still matter to the way they do research and situate themselves within the field. Academia remains a highly gendered, racist, and sexist environment (Gutiérrez y Muhs, Niemann, González and Harris), and thus, acts of inclusion must continue to involve acts of self-identification and self-positioning. As feminist rhetorical scholars have taught us, such acts are vital to building credibility and authority within our field. Indeed, all members of the profession need to account for who they are and why they are here as they construct their scholarly personae and convey their commitments to what they study. Of course, the construction of *ethos* through self- and group representations is complex and differently conceived within different communities (Cushman; Royster). As a result, it is necessary for scholars to build relationships with audiences, communities, and texts of all kinds. Each one of us must examine not only our own positions in relation to what we are studying but also the connections we are forging with different people within the field through the circulation of our work. Put another way, it is not enough to identify women's rhetorics or women in rhetorical history. It is necessary also to understand how those of us who are performing this kind of recovery work situate ourselves within our lines of inquiry and how our positionalities inform our efforts. Whether we see ourselves as exploring our own personal history(ies) and traditions or attending to rhetorics and rhetorical cultures very different from those that may have shaped our own experiences, tracing these roots and interconnections must constitute a key element of feminist historiographical work.

To retheorize inclusion by carefully orienting to positions and relationships also requires us to attend to issues of representation, which require ongoing vigilance (Martinez). In a forum recently published in *Legacy: A Journal of American Women Writers*, editor P. Gabrielle Foreman and forum contributors name some of these issues. They write as feminist teachers and researchers protesting ongoing displacement and tokenization of black women scholars within their fields. Collectively, the contributors share experiences that go beyond individual circumstance or one-time mistakes. They recount numerous surprised reactions to their presence and again and again, having their experiences and expertise passed over (Foreman; Foreman et al.). Gender and race are only some of the social constructions that reflect structural forces that directly affect rhetoricians and rhetorical practices of all kinds, and rhetorical performances—including those of our own scholarship—always occur within gendered, raced, classed, and disabled environments. As a consequence, doing inclusion in the present scholarly moment means paying even more attention to the embodied and contextual identities of rhetors, rhetoricians, and rhetorical subjects. Asking new questions about inclusion and finding new

ways to practice it are vital for feminist historiographers of rhetoric if we are to continue to critically engage with our subjects and one another. Such inclusive moves are especially important now, as we look to the next 25 years of the Coalition of Women Scholars in the History of Rhetoric and Composition, because they speak to the kinds of things we expect to learn as well as whom we expect to participate in the field. New modes of inclusion are also important because they provide a space to continue exploring difficult, intersectional questions about how our histories are composed along with the identity categories we use to organize ourselves and the work we ultimately produce.

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