

# Introduction

## Researching Feminist Rhetorical Methods and Methodologies

*Eileen E. Schell*

In titling this volume *Rhetorica in Motion*, we acknowledge the historical image of Rhetorica, a queen bearing a sword.<sup>1</sup> We also acknowledge the work set into motion by Andrea Lunsford and the members of Annette Kolodny's graduate seminar at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI) who inspired the volume *Reclaiming Rhetorica* (1995), the first edited collection of women's rhetoric in the field of rhetoric and composition. Like *Reclaiming Rhetorica*, the inspiration for this book also began in a Feminist Rhetorics graduate seminar in upstate New York—this time in the fall of 2005 at Syracuse University, an hour away from Seneca Falls, the birthplace of the U.S. women's suffrage movement.

In that 2005 seminar, participants explored the burgeoning scholarship on feminist rhetorics, reading a wide variety of texts that exemplified feminist rhetorical research, particularly in a historical vein. Students raised many questions about the methods and methodologies that make up feminist rhetorical research—how do feminist researchers make decisions about what to study and under what conditions? How does one undertake the work of feminist rhetorical analysis? What counts as feminist rhetorics? How should feminist rhetoricians combine rhetorical methods, feminist methods, and methods from other disciplines? What difficult choices do feminist rhetoricians face as they navigate the uncertainties of working across disciplines or at the edges

of multiple disciplines? How does one engage work that is truly interdisciplinary and at the same time maintain ties to a home discipline? What might constitute a productive attitude and practice toward questioning and being self-critical about one's own methods and methodologies?

Questions like these led me to remark at the end of the course that someone ought to edit a volume addressing a wide array of feminist rhetorical methods and methodologies—a collection where scholars model and reflect on their approaches to feminist rhetorical research. One of the students in the class, K. J. Rawson, internalized that offhand remark and approached me at the end of the term to volunteer for such a project; several months later, we issued a national call for contributions to *Rhetorica in Motion: Feminist Rhetorical Methods and Methodologies*.

The image of *Rhetorica* in motion also seemed a fitting one for a volume that comes a decade and a half after *Reclaiming Rhetorica* appeared in 1995. Since then, feminist scholars in rhetoric and composition have been on the move, establishing the Biennial International Feminism(s) and Rhetoric(s) Conference, a book series in feminisms and rhetorics at Southern Illinois University Press, a series of edited collections and anthologies on feminist rhetorics and women's rhetorics (see Lunsford and Ede 2006, 13–16), and several special issues of journals devoted to feminist rhetorics and feminist rhetorical historiography. The result, as Kate Ronald attests, is that feminist scholars have “recovered an amazing amount of rhetoric by women, reimagined our rhetorical heritage, and redefined rhetorical theory, creating a wholly new tradition, complete with new theories and . . . new practices of writing, reading, teaching, and feminist activism” (2008, 140). Feminist research, as many scholars have noted, has required a substantive rethinking of how we undertake rhetorical research, where and how we examine and analyze specific spaces, figures, communities, objects, and artifacts, and how we establish ethical—and where possible—participatory research practices.

In *Rhetorica in Motion*, contributors gather detailed explorations of research methods and methodologies that feminist rhetoricians make use of, negotiate, and create to fit particular research questions and projects. Following Sandra Harding's lead in *Feminism and Methodology*, we define research method as a “technique for (or way of proceeding in) gathering evidence” (1987, 2) and methodology as a “theory and analysis of how research does or should proceed” (3). Harding also introduces

the term epistemology, meaning “a theory of knowledge,” or how we come to know what we know and who is qualified to be a “knower” (3). In *Rhetorica in Motion*, we discuss all three, but with specific attention to feminist rhetorical methods and methodologies.

As we called for contributions to *Rhetorica in Motion*, K. J. and I wanted to explore what constitutes feminist rhetorical research and how it is undertaken. We wanted the volume to pull in two directions—to continue to map the terrain of well-defined areas of feminist inquiry such as archival research, literacy research, and online research and also to bring to the fore work in interdisciplinary areas of inquiry such as disability studies, gerontology/aging studies, Latina/o studies, queer and transgender studies, and transnational feminisms. We wanted the volume to represent a variety of spaces and locations of rhetorical study in the United States and in larger geopolitical contexts, thus connecting U.S. feminist rhetorics to the important work underway in transnational feminist rhetorics.<sup>2</sup>

In short, we wanted to create a volume that would demonstrate how feminist scholars develop, question, and modify their research methods and methodologies as they sustain scholarly work through various stages in their careers—whether as graduate students just beginning dissertations, assistant professors launching post-dissertation research, or tenured scholars continuing a current research project, launching a new line of work, or striving to bring to the field a new set of research questions and problems. We were interested in the *process* of doing feminist rhetorical research: how does a scholar unfold a research project over time, deepen a research inquiry, navigate and negotiate multiple fields of inquiry, address particular ethical challenges and struggles specific to feminist research, and possibly question the received wisdom of some of the field’s ways of engaging research in feminist rhetorics? We hope this volume will provide some answers to these questions as well as potential models for undertaking a wide variety of feminist rhetorical research. At the same time, we know that a volume like this can only partially address the possible conversations, dilemmas, challenges, and sites for inquiry in feminist rhetorical research and that our project is part of an ongoing dialogue about what constitutes feminist rhetorical research.

Even as we cannot possibly do justice to the wide variety of approaches to feminist rhetorical research, *Rhetorica in Motion* reflects

our commitment and our contributors' commitment to exercising the critical self-reflexivity and questioning that is a hallmark feature of feminist research. In part, this volume takes as its inspiration the insightful, self-aware, and self-reflexive approach of afra feminist research methods and methodologies offered by Jacqueline Jones Royster in her book *Traces of a Stream*. Royster's thoughtful, searching exploration of Afra feminist methods addresses what she calls "four sites of critical regard," including "careful analysis, acknowledgement of passionate attachments, attention to ethical action and commitment to social responsibility" (2000, 279). Her sites of critical regard have inspired me and a number of the contributors to think through our ethical, social, and political choices as feminist researchers. In "Feminist Methods of Research in the History of Rhetoric: What Difference Do They Make," Patricia Bizzell observes that Royster's work—among other things—has inspired feminist rhetoricians to examine the role of caring, emotion, and attachment to one's research subjects (2003, 201; see also Kirsch and Rohan 2008). While feminist scholars are continuing work in the "rhetorical tradition," they are also adopting "radically new methods as well, methods which violate some of the most cherished conventions of academic research, most particularly in bringing the person of the research, her body, her emotions, and dare one say, her soul into the work" (Bizzell 2003, 204). In *Rhetorica in Motion*, a number of contributors are invested in exploring the roles that embodiment, emotion, and ethics play in examining and engaging one's research methods, methodologies, and relationships with research participants.

This volume also emerges, in part, from the challenges I faced—and many of us face—as feminist academics who work at the borders and edges of a number of interdisciplinary fields of inquiry; in my case, those fields are rhetoric and composition, women's studies/feminist studies, and labor studies. As a feminist graduate student in the late eighties and early nineties, I struggled to define my research methods and methodologies in feminist rhetorical studies and feminist composition studies—two relatively new areas of inquiry in the humanities. Like many graduate students working in a new area, I was continually confronted with the typical questions: What is your project? What is your method? And what is your methodology? These questions were often asked by colleagues skeptical of the validity of the fields of rhetoric, composi-

tion, and feminist studies, let alone attempts to bring all three together. Answering these questions proved to be difficult, yet worthwhile, and like many scholars in rhetoric and composition, I had to partially invent and combine methods and methodologies from across the disciplines to undertake my dissertation and my first book project. As Janice Lauer argued in “Composition Studies: Dappled Discipline,” the scholarship many of us undertake in composition studies, and this is true of rhetorical studies as well, is multimodal: “From the start, then, this field has been marked by its multimodality and use of starting points from a variety of disciplines, all marshalled to investigate a unique and pressing set of problems” (1984, 22).

In 1991, when I was researching the working conditions of part-time women teachers of writing in the U.S., there was not a wide array of work on feminist composition or rhetorical studies that I could draw upon, although there was rich history of much earlier feminist communication scholarship.<sup>3</sup> Elizabeth Flynn’s 1988 article “Composing as a Woman,” the first direct article in composition studies on feminism, had only appeared three years earlier. A book chapter in 1991 by Susan Miller and an article by Sue Ellen Holbrook—and a handful of precursor articles on gender, pedagogy, and language (see Ritchie and Boardman 2003, 10–14)—referred to the idea that composition studies was a “feminized” field and explored gender, pedagogy, and the composing process.

Using those scholarly resources as a guide and inspiration, I worked across a range of disciplines to assemble a useful approach to my project, poring over the literature on feminisms and labor studies, studies of sex discrimination in higher education by feminist scholars, studies of part-time labor from a variety of disciplines, Marxist and social feminist theories on class and labor, the rhetoric of inquiry, the sociology of the emotions, and institutional histories of writing and writing instruction.<sup>4</sup> I often felt like a *bricoleur*, cobbling together bits and pieces from a variety of fields and working hard to structure and synthesize a coherent, if not complete, perspective. While my methods were often textually and rhetorically oriented, as I examined the common arguments and tropes about women’s work as teachers in documents, labor statements, and studies of part-time labor, I also extended my methods to include qualitative research: interviews with part-time women faculty

about their responses and reactions to their working conditions and the ways that gender factored into their thinking about their work. Thus, my research required that I be conversant in the work in my home discipline, but also in the ways that other disciplines might pose the question of gender and part-time labor.

The process of doing this research was not seamless or familiar, but often radically defamiliarizing as I came to terms with other disciplines'—and my own discipline's—research methods and methodologies. Having training in rhetorical theory was a benefit as it allowed me to analyze how different disciplines frame research questions, evaluate evidence, and make knowledge claims. As a feminist scholar trained to think about the politics of location (see Rich 1986) and power relations, I also thought about how disciplines frame their inquiries by establishing specific power relations and worldviews. Undergoing this process of working across disciplines was often painful, intimidating, and overwhelming, but it gave me an appreciation for the challenges of interdisciplinary research, and it helped me to develop the habit of being accountable and self-reflexive about my choices as a researcher.

The struggle I underwent to launch my work was hardly unique; in fact, one could call it a feminist rite of passage; numerous accounts of feminist research, including ones in this volume, tell a similar story of struggle, borrowing, invention, and adaptation. What seemed clear about my work as a feminist scholar—and that of my colleagues striving to do similar kinds of work—was that it required a mobility, flexibility, adaptability, and awareness of terms, concepts, and power relations—an awareness of the rhetorical nature of knowledge—that was both taxing and invigorating. The work I did as a feminist scholar also fed into my life as a feminist community member as I agitated for reproductive rights, for workplace equity, and for peace and social justice.

The idea of feminist rhetorical methods and methodologies as movement, as motion, and as action, then, inspires the title for this volume. As feminist researchers, we are often in motion between our various standpoints and positions, between our disciplinary locations in the academy, and between the specific texts, contexts, places, spaces, communities, and institutions we engage. Feminist rhetorical studies and interdisciplinary feminist studies as fields of inquiry are in constant motion as scholars debate and revise previously held notions of feminisms and rhetorics, introduce new subjects of research, new sites of inquiry, and

engage methods, methodologies, and pedagogies in a variety of ways. Rhetorical studies is also in motion. As Ilene Crawford argues in this volume, rhetoric “can be a study and practice of our movement with/ in rhetorics and with/in the world. Crawford asks us to consider our investments in our research methods and methodologies,” and reminds us that our work as researchers involves movement not only across time and space, but also across disciplines, communities, and in, some cases, across the borders of the nation-state.

#### METHODS AND METHODOLOGIES IN FEMINIST RHETORICAL STUDIES

While *Rhetorica in Motion* offers important reflections and enactments of feminist rhetorical methods and methodologies, we must acknowledge our debt to the prior feminist work that has influenced and guided this edited collection. This volume has been enabled by over two decades of scholarship on feminist research methods and methodologies in rhetoric and composition studies and over three decades of research in feminist social sciences and in feminist communication studies. Across these fields, key questions have been raised about the work of conducting feminist research.

- What are the key principles of feminist research?
- How can feminist research come to terms with the complexity of gender and other categories of social difference and lived experience?
- What counts as evidence in feminist research and in feminist rhetoric, in particular? And why does feminist research matter—to paraphrase Patricia Bizzell: “What difference does it make?”

While feminist scholars across the social sciences and humanities have usually eschewed a unitary feminist method and methodology, they have often agreed upon a set of general principles that guide feminist research practices. Mary Fonow and Judith Cook summarize five main principles of feminist social science research:

- first, the necessity of continuously and reflexively attending to the significance of gender and gender asymmetry as a basic feature of all social life, including the conduct of research;

- second, the centrality of consciousness-raising or debunking as a specific methodological tool and as a general orientation or way of seeing;
- third, challenging the norm of objectivity that assumes that the subject and object of research can be separated from each other and that personal and/or grounded experiences are unscientific;
- fourth, concern for the ethical implications of feminist research and recognition of the exploitation of women as objects of knowledge;
- and, finally, emphasis on the empowerment of women and transformation of patriarchal social institutions through research and research results. (Fonow and Cook 2005, 2213)<sup>5</sup>

As Fonow and Cook argue, epistemology was and is a central framework in feminist studies, particularly feminist philosophical studies, through which to consider existing terminologies for discussing knowledge and research approaches, “including agency, cognitive authority, objectivity, methods of validation, fairness, standpoint, and context of discovery” (2005, 2212).

Yet even as they summarize these five areas, drawn from their earlier 1991 anthology *Beyond Methodology*, they argue that the “spectrum of epistemological and methodological positions among feminists is much broader” (Fonow and Cook 2005, 2213). They define newer trends, debates, and dilemmas in feminist research, including “the epistemic and ontological turn to the body,” (2215), the conception and practice of “reflexivity” (2218), “the crisis in representation” brought on by postmodern theory, the implications of feminist research for “social action and policy” (2223), and new ways to deploy “quantitative methods” (2226).<sup>6</sup> They call for feminist researchers to “continue to critique, expand, and invent new ways of doing feminist research and theorizing about feminist critique” (2230)—a goal that K. J. and I share with the contributors to this volume.

Efforts to synthesize, present, and critique principles of feminist research also have a pronounced history in rhetoric and composition studies over the last decade and a half. Of particular importance is Gesa Kirsch’s *Ethical Dilemmas in Feminist Research: The Politics of Location, Interpretation, and Publication*, a 1999 monograph that analyzes the “methodological and ethical implications of feminist research for composition studies” (x), especially with respect to qualitative inquiry. In her

overview of feminist principles for research drawn from a wide swath of feminist literature on method and methodology across the disciplines, Kirsch identifies seven principles for feminist research; she characterizes these principles as specific commitments feminist scholars make to:

- ask research questions which acknowledge and validate women's experiences;
  - collaborate with participants as much as possible so that growth and learning can be mutually beneficial, interactive and cooperative;
  - analyze how social, historical, and cultural factors shape the research site as well as participants' goals, values, and experiences;
  - analyze how the researchers' identity, experience, training and theoretical framework shape the research agenda, data analysis, and findings;
  - correct androcentric norms by calling into question what has been considered 'normal' and what has been regarded as 'deviant';
  - take responsibility for the representations of others in research reports by assessing probable and actual effects on different audiences; and
  - acknowledge the limitations of and contradictions inherent in research data as well as alternative interpretations of that data.
- (Kirsch 1999, 4–5)

While Kirsch's exploration of feminist principles of research and ethical dilemmas are applied specifically to composition studies, her work is significant for feminist rhetorical scholars. Indeed, she characterizes feminist research in rhetoric and composition as taking three major paths: "recovering the contributions of women rhetoricians"; "studying women's contributions to the history and development of writing studies"; and "studying how gender inequity effects women professionals in composition" (1999, 22). This overview parallels the view of feminist methodology offered by Patricia Sullivan in "Feminism and Methodology in Composition Studies," where she notes that "feminist scholarship in composition" has been "reactive" and "proactive":

it [feminist scholarship] focuses on received knowledge—as the existing studies, canons, discourses, theories, assumptions, and practices of our discipline—and reexamines them in light of feminist theory to uncover male biases and androcentrism; and it recuperates and constitutes dis-

inctively feminine modes of thinking and expression by taking gender, and in particular women's experiences, perceptions, and meanings as the starting point of inquiry or as the key datum for analysis. (2003, 126)

While many feminist researchers have problematized the universal category of "woman" and the idea of uncovering "feminine modes of thinking and expression," Sullivan's concern is with theorizing how feminist research might proceed. To do this research, scholars have approached "two general strategies or approaches, one derived from the historical, critical, and interpretive practices of humanistic inquiry, the other from experimental and field-research models of the social sciences" (Sullivan 2003, 126).

The first branch of inquiry—"historical, critical and interpretive practices of humanistic inquiry"—has produced a rich network of "recovery and reclamation" scholarship in feminist literary studies and rhetorical studies. Second-wave feminist literary scholars were particularly engaged in a significant project of recovering the texts of women authors who were lost or neglected in literary history. This involved, in the words of eighteenth-century literary scholar Jean Marsden, the twin challenge of "unearthing forgotten literature," much of it out-of-print, and "uncovering as much information as possible about the women behind the texts." The goal of this work was threefold: "to bring long-lost women writers and their work to light, to bring them into scholarly discourse, and to make their work available to students and scholars" (2002, 657). This groundbreaking work indelibly altered the literary canon.

Scholars in feminist rhetorical studies have followed a similar trajectory as their counterparts in literary studies by undertaking a massive recovery project to bring women rhetors to light. Much of this important work in feminist rhetorical studies has addressed rhetorical recovery guided by feminist historiography in rhetoric. In "Sappho's Memory," Susan Jarratt divides the work in feminist historiography into two areas: "recovery of female rhetors and gendered analysis of both traditional and newly discovered sources" (2002, 11). Jarratt notes that these two areas of rhetorical research have led us to reconsider and reconfigure "traditional rhetorical categories, and along with them the relationships between past and present" (11). The intensive recovery efforts launched by feminist rhetoricians have produced a flurry of books and collections that uncover, collect, and analyze examples of women's

rhetorical practices and theories, thus contributing to the larger historical recovery project of feminist rhetorical histories. For instance, *Available Means: An Anthology of Women's Rhetoric*, edited by Joy Ritchie and Kate Ronald (2001), provides a wonderful sourcebook of women's primary rhetorical texts and practices across the span of several centuries and continents. Likewise, a series of edited collections have provided a useful selection of essays assessing the contributions of various women rhetoricians: Andrea Lunsford's *Reclaiming Rhetorica* (1995), mentioned at the start of this introduction, Molly Meijer Wertheimer's *Listening to Their Voices: Essays on the Rhetorical Activities of Historical Women* (1997), and Christine Mason Sutherland and Rebecca Sutcliffe's *The Changing Tradition: Women in the History of Rhetoric* (1999). Shirley Wilson Logan offers groundbreaking work with the publication of the anthology *With Pen and Voice: A Critical Anthology of Nineteenth-Century African American Women* (1995), which provides a set of speeches and writings by African American women rhetors, which she analyzes in further detail in her single-authored book "*We Are Coming*": *The Persuasive Discourse of Nineteenth Century Black Women* (1999) (see also Royster 2000).<sup>7</sup> Kate Ronald and Joy Ritchie's edited collection *Teaching Rhetorica* (2006) has framed the ways that the reclamation of women's rhetorics has contributed to new understandings of the ways we teach writing and rhetoric. As they put it succinctly: "In other words, how are scholars teaching *Rhetorica*, and what is *Rhetorica* teaching them?" (Ronald and Ritchie 2006, 2).

At the same time that the reclamation and recovery work in feminist rhetorics has been incredibly generative, it continues to be fraught with particular challenges and debates over the potential normativizing effects of scholarship based on the category of woman, over the most productive approaches and bodies of evidence that can be gathered and assessed about women's contributions, over the need to account for the way gender intersects with race, class, nation, and culture, and over ethics and embodiment in feminist research.

Feminists working with poststructural theory, postcolonial theory, postmodern theory, critical race theory, cultural studies, and ethnic studies have challenged categories often taken for granted within feminist research—and feminist rhetorical research—such as the category of woman, and constructions of the self, identity, and experience. As feminist disabilities scholar Rosemary Garland-Thomson argues:

Feminism questioned the coherence, boundaries, and exclusions of the term *woman*—the very category on which it seemed to depend. Consequently, it expanded its lexicon beyond gender differences to include the many inflections of identity that produce multiple subjectivities and subject positions. Our most sophisticated feminist analyses illuminate how gender interlocks with race, ethnicity, sexuality and class systems. This focus on how identity operates prompted an interest in the relation between bodies and identity. (2005, 1559)

The questioning of the category of woman sparked a lively and often intractable dialogue and debate in the 1980s and 1990s over the idea of “essentialism” in feminist scholarship.<sup>8</sup> In *Essentially Speaking*, Diana Fuss argued that essentialism is

most commonly understood as a belief in the real, true essence of things, the invariable and fixed properties which define the ‘whatness’ of a given entity. . . . Importantly, essentialism is typically defined in opposition to difference. . . . The opposition is a helpful one in that it reminds us that a complex system of cultural, social, psychical, and historical differences, and not a set of pre-existent human essences, position and constitute the subject. However, the binary articulation of essentialism and difference can also be restrictive, even obfuscating, in that it allows us to ignore or deny the differences within essentialism. (1989, xi–xii).

In feminist rhetorical studies, a key example of the tensions that played out over essentialism and the category of “woman” in revisionary feminist rhetorical history can be found in the oft-cited debate between Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Barbara Biesecker. That debate highlights the tensions between the two types of scholarship that Jarratt names the “recovery of female rhetors and gendered analysis of both traditional and newly discovered sources” (2002, 11).

Karlyn Kohrs Campbell’s important two-volume work, *Man Cannot Speak for Her: A Critical Study of Early Feminist Rhetoric* (1989), recovered, and in some cases reprinted, the public addresses, essays, and treatises of the early feminists who advocated for women’s suffrage. As Campbell’s work demonstrates, women rhetors need to be considered on their own terms, rather than always in relation to a male-dominated rhetorical tradition. In Barbara Biesecker’s response (1992) to Campbell’s work, she debates the assumed stability of the category of an individual woman in history or “female tokenism” and asks if celebrating the

achievement of exceptional female rhetors would result in neglecting the collective efforts of women to agitate, organize, and change their collective conditions (144). She contends that if feminist scholars want to “produce something more than the story of a battle over the right of individuals between men and women, we might begin by taking seriously post-structuralist objections to the model of human subjectivity that served as the cognitive starting point of our practices and our histories” (147). Instead of examining the rhetorical practices of individual women in history, what she calls the “affirmative action” approach (143), she wonders, as per Derrida’s interrogation of human subjectivity, what it would be like to shift the question from “‘who is speaking,’ a question that confuses the subjects of history with the agents for history, to the question ‘what play of forces made it possible for a particular speaking subject to emerge?’” (148). A “gender-sensitive history of Rhetoric” (156), she argues, would not rest on an “active/passive opposition” and man/woman focus, but it would account for the “formidable differences between and amongst women, and thus, address the real fact that different women, due to their various positions in the social structure, have available to them different rhetorical possibilities, and, similarly, are constrained by different rhetorical limits” (157).

Campbell’s reply (1993) to Biesecker’s critique points to, among other things, her engagement with writing histories of collective women (156). However, she maintains her right to focus on individual excellence and argues against Biesecker’s construction of *techné* (154–58).

While the debate ended in a stalemate between the two scholars, it was generative for many of us seeking to understand how to engage poststructural and postmodern critiques of subjectivity in feminist rhetorics. Indeed, Michelle Ballif has argued that feminist rhetorical recovery efforts are problematic, as they rely on the patriarchal systems of canonization and the very traditions that excluded women in the first place (1992, 95). Drawing on poststructuralism and French feminism, Ballif urges readers to consider “alternative paradigms,” examining how “Woman” can “un/speak in the unthought, not yet-thought non-spaces produced by alternative paradigms, by new idioms, by paralogical and paratactical and, thus, illegitimate discourses” (96). Ballif’s critique asks us to consider how recovery projects can obscure just as much as they uncover and recover.

With the critique and destabilization of the category of “woman,” and, in some cases, a questioning of the value of “figural histories that celebrate, indeed monumentalize individuals” (Biesecker 1992, 157), an emphasis on the intersectionality of race, gender, class, sexuality, and other categories of social difference began to take center stage in feminist rhetoric scholarship in the 1990s. This shift was prompted, in part, by earlier feminist scholars like Audre Lorde and contemporary feminist scholars such as Linda Alcoff, bell hooks, Chela Sandoval, Gayatri Spivak, Jacqui Alexander, and Chandra Mohanty, who began asking questions about race, colonization, and the epistemologies and methodologies of the oppressed: “Did oppressed people, by virtue of their knowledge of both the oppressor’s views of reality and that of their own subjugated groups, have access to truer or better knowledge? Who is privileged in an epistemological sense—feminists, women of color, lesbians, working-class women, postcolonials? Who can speak for whom?” (Fonow and Cook 2005, 2212–13; see also Alcoff 1991–92). The epistemological and methodological perspectives offered by feminist and womanist scholars of color challenged existing feminist research methods and methodologies, pushed others in the field to work through the question of research ethics and gendered and raced power relations in the researcher/participant relationship. These perspectives also sparked further interrogation of the connections between “theory, method, and action” (Fonow and Cook 2005, 2213), and the connections and departure points between different categories of social difference.

The focus on both utilizing and interrogating intersectionality inspired many feminist scholars to begin asking how rhetors were not only gendered, but also raced and classed. Editors Jacqueline Jones Royster and Ann Marie Mann Simpkins provide a key example of intersectional analysis in rhetoric and composition in *Calling Cards: Theory and Practice in the Study of Race, Gender, and Culture* (2005). This productive series of essays accounts for the role of race, gender, and culture in rhetoric, literacy, and pedagogy work in the field. Contributors reflect on and examine their professional “calling cards,” deploying the metaphor of the nineteenth-century calling card to examine how their foci on race, gender, and culture have shaped their methods, methodologies, and pedagogies. Inspired by Anna Julia Cooper, Royster asks readers to imagine “a world for rhetorical studies that is global, flexible, and specif-

ically aware of its own complexity in the deploying of systems of domination and oppression” (2005, 13). This work of intersectional analyses of feminist rhetorics is ongoing and continues to be vigorously engaged in many articles, books, and edited collections, including this volume.

As Biesecker and Campbell have argued over how to approach feminist historical research, Xin Gale and feminist rhetorical historians Susan Jarratt and Cheryl Glenn have debated how to take up feminist rhetorical historiography and historical evidence. Gale presented her initial critique of Jarratt/Ong and Glenn’s readings of the historical figure Aspasia at the 1997 Feminisms and Rhetorics Conference at Oregon State University. Both Jarratt and Glenn were present and responded vigorously to her critiques. In a trio of *College English* articles in 2000, Gale’s critique of Jarratt/Ong (1995) and Glen’s (1994) analyses of Aspasia sparked a wider discussion regarding the proper use of postmodern historical approaches, feminist histories, and the uses of historical evidence. Many feminist rhetorical scholars have returned to the Gale-Glenn-Jarratt debate as a way of puzzling through their own methods and methodological approaches to feminist historical research (Bizzell 2003; Wu 2000). The debate also has offered scholars an opportunity to reflect on the “role of emotion in feminist historiography” (Bizzell 2003, 198): How does feminist rhetorical research invoke a sense of solidarity and feminist community that does not appeal to those, like Gale, who may feel outside the boundaries of the real and imagined community of feminist rhetorical researchers? How does feminist rhetorical research persuade or fail to persuade a given audience (Bizzell 2003, 203–4)? Will the larger research community outside this specialized subfield find feminist rhetorical research to be persuasive and credible? What community norms are we operating under as we launch research projects and pitch them toward specific audiences (202)?

Beyond debating what can qualify as evidence and what considerations for audience must be taken into account in feminist research, feminist scholars must consider larger questions: What does feminist research do? What form does it take? Whose interests does it serve? In their introduction to *Teaching Rhetorica*, Kate Ronald and Joy Ritchie interrogate the meaning and purpose of feminist rhetorical research by asking the proverbial “So what?” question. They wonder “how rhetoric and composition will use this new area of study. How will this

work make a difference in contexts beyond and alongside scholarship?” (2006, 3). One of the answers provided by Ronald, Ritchie, and the contributors to that volume is that feminist research has changed how we teach feminist rhetoric and redefined what counts as rhetoric and rhetorical theory. While their volume is concerned with the difference that feminist research has made for teaching rhetorical theory, pedagogy, and practice, their larger question and its related concerns hang in the air: “So what?” To what end does feminist rhetorical research continue? Who benefits? Who does not? And why? How can feminist rhetorical research make a difference, and not only for scholars taking up feminist rhetorics? How can feminist rhetorics be useful in addressing many of the pressing issues of our day, such as ongoing gender and racial discrimination and continued economic, social, and political injustices and inequities in a globalized world? These questions have not been fully answered in the scholarship in feminist rhetorical research, including this volume, yet they are important ones to ask and continue to address.

In this volume, we continue the discussion about feminist research by following well-laid tracks of feminist inquiry about research methods and methodologies, but we also seek to further the discussion about how feminist rhetorical research is currently being conducted on the ground by a range of scholars and a range of approaches. The contributors to this work demonstrate how feminist rhetorical methods and methodologies are themselves rhetorical, highly adaptive, moving, breathing and representative of a continuum of methodological approaches. At the same time, this volume questions the stated and unstated “norms” in feminist rhetorical research and the locations and approaches to feminist rhetorical research. Furthermore, we consider how our approaches to feminist rhetorical research can be revised to include rhetorical, political, and geographical locations that operate transnationally.

As a volume, *Rhetorica in Motion* is divided into three major areas. Part I, “Theoretical and Methodological Challenges,” frames two major recent challenges in feminist rhetorical research: the challenge to normativity and the ideology of the normative body, and the challenge to conduct feminist rhetorical research that is global and transnational. A significant component of feminist rhetorical research, especially research in an historical vein, has involved the reclaiming of women rhetors who have been undervalued, lost, or forgotten. In the process of

doing this important rhetorical reclamation work, how do we, as feminist rhetoricians, potentially reinscribe normalizing discourses about gender, race, sexuality, and the body? What are our responsibilities to conduct feminist rhetorical research that challenges normativity?

The chapters by Jay Dolmage and Cynthia Lewiecki-Wilson and K. J. Rawson answer these questions by examining how a critique of normativity shifts our approaches to feminist rhetorical research. While both chapters come at the question of normativity from different angles—disabilities studies and transgender theory respectively—they challenge “research that objectifies its subjects or is based on unacknowledged constructions of normalcy and deviancy” (Dolmage and Lewiecki-Wilson). Dolmage and Lewiecki-Wilson address how bringing feminism and disability studies together creates new possibilities for feminist methods in rhetorical scholarship, teaching, and service. Drawing on queer and transgender theories, K. J. Rawson offers strategies for engaging feminist rhetorical recovery and gendered analysis in ways that interrogate gender normativity and heteronormativity.

Contributions by Wendy S. Hesford and Ilene Crawford also question received norms, yet do so within the framework of transnational feminist theory, asking us to consider and question how the conceptions of rhetorics, in general, and feminist rhetorics, in particular, are conceived within the borders of the nation-state or within the imaginary of the West. Hesford argues that a transnational feminist rhetorical methodology—one that draws together transnational feminist studies and rhetorical studies through critiques of feminist cosmopolitanism—can help us interrogate feminist perspectives on location, situated knowledge, rhetorical identification, agency, and the public sphere. She theorizes the spatial and temporal as part of a transnational feminist rhetorical methodology and locates feminist cosmopolitanism and transnational feminisms on a methodological continuum. As Hesford offers a careful analysis of transnational representations of women across the globe, Ilene Crawford similarly asks questions about the methods and methodologies that will address literacy and rhetorical research in transnational contexts. Resisting the allure of cosmopolitanism described and critiqued by Hesford, Crawford analyzes how she arrived at feminist rhetorical methods of research and interaction that were workable for her research on women’s literacy practices in Vietnam.

In Part II, “Reflective Applications,” contributors continue to ex-

plore theoretical and methodological challenges, but they localize their inquiries in specific sites and research approaches: gender critique and textual research practices (Kathleen Ryan), feminist performance studies and theories of the flesh (Bernadette Calafell), archival research practices (Frances Ranney), experience sampling methods (Joanne Addison), and online research (Heidi McKee and James Porter). Across all of the essays, the authors in this section reflect on the particular methodological challenges and ethical dilemmas that unfolded as they conducted their research. Running across many of the essays are the concepts of invention, social context, imagination, and ethics, and the writers also offer a critical and self-reflexive stance toward their research, a hallmark feature of feminist research described by Kirsch in her synthesis of feminist research principles (1999, 4–5).

Kathleen Ryan engages feminist pragmatic rhetoric to address how feminist textual research can function as a form of scholarly invention and disciplinary invention. Challenging the focus on feminist rhetoric as textually oriented, Bernadette Calafell analyzes the connections and differences between theories of the flesh found in Chicana feminisms, African American feminisms, performance studies, and rhetorical studies. As she reflects on her struggles to find a methodological homeplace within rhetoric, performance studies, and Chicana and African American studies, she outlines an approach to rhetoric and performance studies grounded in a theory of the flesh.

Like Kathleen Ryan, Frances Ranney is interested in the question of invention—in this case, the invention process she engaged in as she researched “Fontia R,” an elderly female subject she encountered in her archival research on a foundation for seniors in need. Ranney invents the concept of “imagin-activation”—a concept drawn from Jungian psychoanalysis—to think through the ethics of imagining the life of Fontia R. and to critically account for her attachment to her. Respondents Ruth Ray and Gwen Gorzelsky further consider and reflect on the ethical research questions that Ranney raises. Shifting the conversation from considering textual research strategies and archival research practices, Joanne Addison focuses on feminist empiricism to understand literacy as a lived experience. Addison argues that feminist empiricism, when inflected by feminist standpoint theory, can help feminist researchers better understand the knowledge and insights of those outside the

mainstream of society. Finally, Heidi McKee and James E. Porter examine the methodological and ethical issues feminist researchers face when conducting research in online environments. They use published cases and interviews with Internet researchers to address the complex ethical, political, and social problems feminist researchers must address as they undertake online research.

In “A Pedagogical Postscript,” Laura Micciche models a method for engaging with feminist work that emphasizes writing as a conceptual and imaginative process of vital importance to feminist rhetorical theory. She explores a series of questions about the role that imagination—we can also think here of Ranney’s notion of imagin-activation—and play can have in the writing classroom.

As the volume moves across the three areas of inquiry, we are aware that we do not offer easy answers or a pat formula for undertaking feminist research; rather we offer, as Fonow and Cook would say, a wide “spectrum of epistemological and methodological positions” that demonstrate the “vitality of feminist studies” (2005, 2213) in the field of feminist rhetorics. At the same time, we acknowledge that the vitality of feminist rhetorics is often challenged by a society in which many avoid the term “feminist” and many scholars seem to have developed what Gill Plain and Susan Sellers call cultural amnesia, where people act as if “the need to challenge patriarchal power or to analyse the complexities of gendered subjectivities had suddenly gone away, and as if texts were no longer the products of material realities in which bodies are shaped and categorised not only by gender, but by class, race, religion and sexuality” (2007, 1). The danger of this cultural amnesia, thus, is not only forgetting one’s histories and origins, but the danger of acting in the contemporary world as if inequality and differential power relations are no longer an issue, thus allowing rollbacks of gains made for gender equity and the elimination of gender-based oppression. In an era when feminism has been declared dead by public commentators or, worse yet, by our colleagues, and in an era when students announce that they are no longer in need of feminism even while availing themselves of opportunities borne of feminism, it is difficult to maintain equanimity and, at times, a sense of optimism.

Yet as the scholars in this volume demonstrate, feminist rhetorical research is alive and well, multifaceted and in motion, reaching into con-

tinuing and new branches of inquiry, places, and spaces. And, as these scholars demonstrate, there is not one correct “feminist epistemology generating one correct feminist methodology for the interdisciplinary field of women’s studies” (Fonow and Cook 2005, 2213) or for feminist rhetorical studies, for that matter. We, feminist scholars in rhetorical studies, are constantly in motion, “working within, against, and across” methods and methodologies, “combining elements from different perspectives” and different disciplines, addressing questions about the value and purpose of the work we do, and working to reconcile our methodological differences even as we realize that some of those differences cannot be reconciled (2213). *We are Rhetorica in Motion.*