Inviting Understanding

A PORTRAIT OF INVITATIONAL RHETORIC

Edited by Sonja K. Foss and Cindy L. Griffin

PRAISE FOR *INVITING UNDERSTANDING*

"A remarkable turn in the rhetorical tradition, the theory of invitational rhetoric invites us to reimagine rhetoric as a form of genuine dialogue. *Inviting Understanding: A Portrait of Invitational Rhetoric* is a great resource for anyone wanting to explore this provocative idea."
—Robert T. Craig, University of Colorado Boulder

"Given the divisive world in which we currently live, any approach to discourse that privileges understanding and accepting the social other is to be commended. This volume adroitly combines previously published scholarship with new material that deepens the theoretical frame for the 'invitation to understand' as well as offers a broader array of work that illustrates the possibilities for engaging in discourse."
—Raymie E. McKerrow, Ohio University

"This book is both a comprehensive and expansive examination of previously and newly published works on one of the communication discipline's most important theoretical contributions. Invitational rhetoric has certainly made its mark in the field, and this volume adds extensively to our understanding of invitational and feminist theories of communication and rhetoric."
—Stacey Sowards, University of Texas at Austin

"As an advocate for and practitioner of invitational rhetoric for decades, I am deeply indebted to Foss and Griffin's work. Now comes this comprehensive new resource, *Inviting Understanding: A Portrait of Invitational Rhetoric*, and it could not appear at a more propitious time, as teachers everywhere are looking for ways to move beyond the fragmentation and division and attack culture we are living through. BRAVA!"
—Andrea Lunsford, Stanford University

"How lucky are we to research, write, and speak during the time of Sonja K. Foss and Cindy L. Griffin, whose concept of invitational rhetoric continues to transform the long-established fields of rhetoric, communication, and composition studies. Ever since their landmark 1995 publication on this topic, my students and I have benefited from their brilliant insights; their generative scholarship; and their steady hope for a more equitable, productive rhetorical future."
—Cheryl Glenn, Pennsylvannia State University

"For the past quarter century, Foss and Griffin's theory of invitational rhetoric has played an instrumental role in fostering dialogue regarding the strengths and limits of the dominant adversarial communication paradigm. As one who shares their commitment to this critical area of inquiry, I welcome publication of *Inviting Understanding*."
—Josina M. Makau, California State University, Monterey Bay

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Part III. Applications

Acknowledgments

From the early stages of our essay, "Beyond Persuasion: A Proposal for a Theory of Invitational Rhetoric," to the completion of this volume, *Inviting Understanding: A Portrait of Invitational Rhetoric*, the theory of invitational rhetoric has been a collaborative project. Many individuals have shared their insights, expertise, and support with us, and we offer them our gratitude.

Several individuals were intellectual influences at the beginning of our development of the theory of invitational rhetoric. Sally Miller Gearhart's and Sonia Johnson's insights intersected with our thinking about alternative ways of doing rhetoric at exactly the right time. The participants in the Conference on Research in Gender and Communication in Roanoke, Virginia, in 1992 listened to our very first ideas about invitational rhetoric and took us seriously. Many colleagues and students poked and prodded and encouraged us to keep thinking in new ways as they engaged with our early ideas about invitational rhetoric. James F. Klumpp suggested the label of *invitational rhetoric* for our theory—a label that captured the complexity of the ideas we were developing in ways we had not yet appreciated. Charles Bantz had the courage and the foresight to publish our original essay in *Communication Monographs*.

We also offer our thanks to the scholars who are continuing to do good work with invitational rhetoric and have chosen to help develop the theory, including those who submitted essays for consideration for inclusion in the book, the scholars who contributed original work to this volume, and those whose essays were initially published elsewhere. Suzanne Daughton and Patrice M. Buzzanell's Foreword provided exactly the kind of introduction we envisioned for the book, and their support of the theory and the book meant a great deal to us. Andrew Gilmore was both persevering and patient as he assisted us in compiling the sources in the compendium on invitational rhetoric included at the end of the book. Our editor at Rowman and Littlefield, Elizabeth Swayze, was enthusiastic about the project from the very beginning and was an unrelenting advocate on behalf of the book.

This book could not have been completed without the support of our families. Sonja is grateful for the presence in her life of Karen A. Foss, a superb sister, friend, and rhetorical theorist, and Anthony J. Radich, whose love and laughter are still going strong after almost fifty years. Cindy thanks her family for their endless and unconditional love and for the laughter and joy they bring into her life: Michael Harte, Joseph Griffin-Harte, Kari Griffin-Harte, Brynn Griffin-Harte, Wendy Stewart, John Griffin, Tracy Zerr, and Jana Webster-Wheeler.

Foreword

Suzanne Daughton and Patrice M. Buzzanell

We recall the great excitement and controversy generated by the publication of Sonja K. Foss and Cindy L. Griffin's "Beyond Persuasion: A Proposal for an Invitational Rhetoric" in 1995. Instances of articles being debated so vigorously by so many in a range of academic settings are rare, yet invitational rhetoric immediately became a focal point for rich exploration, explication, and conjecture: What is it? How does invitational rhetoric differ from persuasion, or does it? Is rhetoric really violent? Can we legitimately define rhetoric as something other than persuasion? What would invitational rhetoric do to everyday practices such as teaching, reviewing manuscripts, writing essays, participating in conversations, and engaging in leadership processes? Invitational rhetoric continues to influence conversations about communication in profound ways, and we are delighted that it is now the subject of a volume that provides a comprehensive picture of this controversial, provocative, and inspiring theory.

We believe the publication of *Inviting Understanding* is warranted for at least three reasons. Most important, the original essay shifted the paradigm within which scholars had always viewed rhetoric and persuasion. The peaceful revolution launched by invitational rhetoric both shattered and broadened rhetoric, shifting the ground beneath Western rhetorical studies. With their alternative theory of rhetoric, Foss and Griffin suggested that even the concept of argument was no longer always relevant—rhetoric was not always about convincing an opponent or outdoing another in debate in a contest of wits and manipulation. Persuasion as a zero-sum game was now merely a part of rhetoric and not the whole of it.

The notion of invitational rhetoric as a paradigm shift cannot be overstated. Foss and Griffin's description of invitational rhetoric called our collective attention to previously unforeseen possibilities for rhetoric. When defined as an invitation to understanding, rhetoric became a tool by which individuals might connect across ideological chasms, with such a connection viewed as a legitimate function for rhetoric. Rhetoric was potentially cooperative instead of merely competitive. Rhetors could engage in rhetoric to see a different perspective—to undertake the challenge of seeing from another's point of view. The theory highlighted the importance of respect for others and valorized discussions that involved power with others rather than power over them. As terms such as *honesty*, *authenticity*, and *vulnerability* became part of rhetoric's vocabulary, invitational rhetoric suggested that communication practitioners might listen without rushing to judgment, share perspectives without always seeking to persuade, and respect and value empathy and civility.

The second reason this volume is necessary is the incredible scope (in breadth, depth, and longevity) of invitational rhetoric's impact. The year 2020 marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the publication of the original article. In the years since it was published, the theory has provoked unprecedented levels of discussion and exploration, with scholars critiquing, testing, applying, and extending the theory. The fact that the essay continues to speak to readers, sparking and invigorating discussions in multiple fields of inquiry, is a second reason why we are excited about the publication of this book. Although the theory's relevance to rhetoric, feminism, ethics, and pedagogy is obvious, the work inspired by the theory has had a profound effect on disciplines such as law, English literature and composition, education, public relations, environmental studies, and business and management. As is abundantly clear in the compendium of works on invitational rhetoric that concludes this book, the theory has been used to analyze a wide range of diverse subjects, including peer theater; posters about breast-cancer awareness; the fiction of Barbara Kingsolver, Adrienne Rich, Toni Morrison, and Joy Harjo; a Chinese blog; women's political convention speeches; faculty mentoring; 9/11 web memorials; health-communication campaigns; leadership processes; the rhetoric of Jane Addams; intractable ethnopolitical conflicts; new media; and critical localism.[1]

The sheer number of works that have been produced dealing with the theory of invitational rhetoric indicates the extensive discussion the theory has provoked. The attention the theory has received can be seen in the many articles, book chapters, books, dissertations, and theses that deal with the theory in myriad ways, often using it as a methodological framework. More contemporary measures suggest the influence of the original article as well: It has garnered over seven hundred "hits" in Google Scholar and has been the subject of at least one TED talk.[2]

A third rationale for the publication of *Inviting Understanding* is to showcase the many ways in which the principles of invitational rhetoric have been applied. Such demonstrations provide sorely needed models for addressing the all-too-common rhetorical practices that are anything but invitational today. The chapters in this volume are creative in the visionary sense—proactive rather than reactive—and provide possibilities for communication that works to empower and connect people in a limitless variety of contexts. Through invitational rhetoric, new forms of leadership and relating become possible, modeling and enacting participation, resilience, humanity, and positive social change. Social networking sites, Twitter, and other communication venues seem to prompt discourse that is hateful, divisive, and disrespectful of perspectives different from one's own. A volume that demonstrates the application of invitational rhetoric in various contexts, we hope, will inspire readers to put the theory into practice in the specific contexts in which they work and live. Invitational rhetoric embodies hope for the contributions of rhetorical studies to improve the quality of everyday interactions as well as to address global issues that require deep dialogue and diverse problem-solving skills.

The chapters that follow provide various lenses through which to view invitational rhetoric, creating a comprehensive sourcebook on the theory. The book begins with a section on foundations that provides readers with the grounds and origins of the theory. Several key essays are included here, but we call your attention to three in particular. The original essay, published in 1995, is of course included, and it is required reading for anyone who seeks to understand the theory. A special treat in this section is an even earlier essay—the first essay that Foss and Griffin wrote on invitational rhetoric, "A Proposal for a Feminist Rhetoric," a position paper they presented at the Conference on Research in Gender and Communication in 1992. The opportunity the essay affords to see what they retained and what they discarded from their original thinking as they moved forward with the development of the theory provides insights not only into the origins of the theory but also into the process of theory construction. The section concludes with an expanded discussion of the theoretical foundations of invitational rhetoric by the creators of the theory. In this essay, Foss and Griffin are able to provide a more holistic view of the theory of invitational rhetoric than they did in their original article, laying out the metatheoretical foundations of the unique worldview that is invitational rhetoric.

The second section of the book focuses on extensions, where both original and previously published essays expand invitational rhetoric in new directions. In this section, various aspects of the theory are stretched and grown, including its epistemological and ontological assumptions, conception of social change, methodological applications, and capacity to survive mobile technologies. These essays represent the best of the ways in which others have expanded invitational rhetoric beyond its original framework, suggesting its capacity to continue to be a generative, innovative force in the communication discipline.

The focus in the third section of *Inviting Understanding* is on the various ways in which invitational rhetoric has been applied. The essays in this section include a mixture of previously published and original essays that span a variety of contexts, including community development, composition pedagogy, graffiti art, transformation of the culture of a university, and decision-making around protests at the playing of the national anthem. These essays point to the possibilities provided by invitational rhetoric for communicating in new ways that can make a significant difference in the lives of individuals and in the trajectory of organizations and social movements. Invitational rhetoric does good work in the world, these essays suggest; it is not simply a theory but a concrete set of practices that opens up possibilities for transformation of all kinds.

The book concludes with two important additional resources for readers seeking a comprehensive view of invitational rhetoric. The first is an essay by Foss and Griffin in which they draw out major themes and insights from the chapters in the book to suggest the kind of work that might be done on invitational rhetoric in the future. The second is a compendium of works—journal articles, book chapters, books, dissertations, and theses—in which invitational rhetoric is featured. This constitutes a rich resource for readers who want to continue to investigate invitational rhetoric and to discover additional extensions and applications of the theory.

Invitational rhetoric is a powerful concept and practice that is generative, coherent, and versatile. It was cutting edge when it was published twenty-five years ago, and it is still relevant—perhaps even more so—today. These essays, whether foundations, extensions, or applications, provide vital responses and antidotes to increasingly adversarial climates in public and private discourse. We now invite you to experience this theory from the variety of prisms offered here, appreciating the different dimensions and angles they highlight in the portrait of the life-changing and world-changing theory that is invitational rhetoric.

NOTES

1. Scott R. Stroud, "Ontological Orientation and the Practice of Rhetoric: A Perspective from the *Bhagavad Gita*," *Southern Communication Journal* 70, no. 1 (2005): 146–60; Vanessa A. Bowers and Patrice M. Buzzanell, "The Space Between: Using Peer Theater to Transcend Race, Class, and Gender," *Women and Language* 25, no. 2 (Spring 2002): 29–40; Barbara F. Sharf, "Poster Art as Women's Rhetoric: Raising

Awareness about Breast Cancer," *Literature and Medicine* 14 (1995): 72–86; Jeannette E. Riley, Kathleen M. Torrens, and Susan T. Krumholz, "Contemporary Feminist Writers: Envisioning a Just World," *Contemporary Justice Review* 8, no. 1 (2005): 91–106; Zhang Wei and Cheris Kramarae, "Feminist Invitational Collaboration in a Digital Age: Looking Over Disciplinary and National Borders," *Women and Language* 31, no. 2 (Fall 2008): 8–19; Elizabeth A. Petre, "Understanding Epideictic Purpose as Invitational Rhetoric in Women's Political Convention Speeches," *Kaleidoscope* 6 (2007): 21–37; Carlo A. Pedrioli, "A New Image in the Looking Glass: Faculty Mentoring, Invitational Rhetoric, and the Second-Class Status of Women in U.S. Academia," *Hastings Women's Law Journal* 16, no. 185 (2004): 185–215; Aaron Hess, "In Digital Remembrance: Vernacular Memory and the Rhetorical Construction of Web Memorials," *Media, Culture & Society* 29 (2007): 812–30; Karen Taylor, Rita Durant, and David Boje, "Telling the Story, Hearing the Story: Narrative Co-Construction and Crisis Research," *American Communication Journal* 9, no. 1 (2007): online; Mohan J. Dutta-Bergman, "Theory and Practice in Health Communication Campaigns: A Critical Interrogation," *Health Communication* 18, no. 2 (2005): 103–22; Patrice M. Buzzanell, Laura Ellingson, Christina Silvio, Vicki Pasch, Brenna Dale, Greg Mauro, Erin Smith, Neil Weir, and Couna Martin, "Leadership Processes in Alternative Organizations: Invitational and Dramaturgical Leadership," *Communication Studies* 48 (1997): 285–310; Gloria McMillan, "Keeping the Conversation Going: Jane Addams' Rhetorical Strategies in 'A Modern Lear,'" *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 32 (2002): 61–75; Donald G. Ellis, "Intercultural Communication in Intractable Ethnopolitical Conflicts," *International and Intercultural Communication Annual* 28 (2005): 45–69; Karen Greiner and Arvind Singhal, "Communication and Invitational Social Change," *Journal of Development Communication* 20 (2009): 31–44; Teresa M. Harrison and Brea Barthel, "Wielding New Media in Web 2.0: Exploring the History of Engagement with the Collaborative Construction of Media Products," *New Media and Society* 11 (2009): 155–78; Steven R. Goldzwig, "Multiculturalism, Rhetoric and the Twenty-First Century," *Southern Communication Journal* 63, no. 4 (1998): 273–90.

2. Sarah Steimel, "Invitational Rhetoric," TEDx Talks, Weber State University, March 28, 2014.

Part I

FOUNDATIONS

1

The Womanization of Rhetoric

Sally Miller Gearhart

I

My indictment of our discipline of rhetoric springs from my belief that any intent to persuade is an act of violence. In this first section I'd like briefly to review our culpability as teachers of persuasion, explore the distinction between change and intent-to-change, and finally describe a culture-wide phenomenon, the conquest/conversion mentality, in which I find public discourse to be but one of many participants.

The patriarchs of rhetoric have never called into question their unspoken assumption that mankind (read "mankind") is here on Earth to alter his (read "his") environment and to influence the social affairs of other men (read "men"). Without batting an eye the ancient rhetors, the men of the church, and scholars of argumentation from Bacon, Blair, and Whately to Toulmin, Perelman, and McLuhan, have taken as given that it is a proper and even necessary human function to attempt to change others. As modern critics and practitioners of public discourse we have been committed to the improvement in our students of the fine art of persuasion. In fact, our teaching, even if it were not the teaching of persuasion, is in itself an insidious form of violence. The "chicken soup" attitude or the "let me help you, let me enlighten you, let me show you the way" approach which is at the heart of most pedagogy is condescending and acutely expressive of the holier-than-thou mindset. Void of respect and openness, it makes even the informative lecture into an oppressive act.

Until the last few decades speech or rhetoric has been a discipline concerned almost exclusively with persuasion in both private and public discourse; it has spent whole eras examining and analyzing its eloquence, learning how to incite the passions, move the will. Over the centuries rhetoric has wearied itself in the ancient and honorable act of finding the available means of persuasion, the better to adapt a discourse to its end. Of all the human disciplines, it has gone about its task of educating others to violence with the most audacity. The fact that it has done so with language and metalanguage, with refined functions of the mind, instead of with whips or rifles does not excuse it from the mindset of the violent.

This essay was previously published in *Women's Studies International Quarterly* 2 (1979): 195–201. Although the essay conforms in substance to its original version, minor editing has been done for internal consistency and clarity.

The indictment of the profession is not an attack on the tools of rhetoric; nor does it suggest that we, its practitioners, serve the world best by forsaking education or committing suicide. With our expertise in persuasion, rhetoricians and rhetorical theorists are in the best position to change our own use of our tools. The indictment is of our *intent* to change people and things, of our attempt to educate others in that skill. The indictment is of our participation in the conquest/conversion mindset that sends us now as a species pell-mell down the path to annihilation.

It is important to know that we can and do change each other daily. Our physical bodies respond to energy; even without our will they react in measurable ways to objects or people generating high energy. We are constantly being changed by each other. Further, we come closer each day to a recognition in our lives of the meaning of Einstein's reduction of matter to energy. It is only in density that the energy fields surrounding each of us differ from the solid energy that is our physical bodies; it is only in density that the energy we generate in our minds or our psyches differs from our auras. As Kirlian photography tracks down revolutionaries by the energy exuded from their very bodies and as Western medicine adopts techniques of visualization and fantasy in the curing of cancer, we realize that to thrust a sword into another person does not differ significantly from wishing them ill or from fantasizing a sword thrust into their heart. Our physical being, our movement, our thoughts, our metaphors: all are forms of energy in constant and infinitely varied exchange.

It is important that we recognize the communication that takes place between entities as well as between humans and entities that we do not count as human. Just as the lunacy of "talking to yourself" has now become a highly recommended technique of intrapersonal communication, even so has the lunacy of "talking to your plants" become recognized as an exchange of energy that revitalizes both communicators. (Here in the Bay Area of California you are thought taciturn if you do not talk to your plants and plants have been known to resent such neglect.) We have been human chauvinists too long, calling consciousness our own, cornering the market upon it, setting ourselves above everything nonhuman because of our "higher awareness." Chimpanzees and porpoises more and more frequently make mockery of the Crown of Creation we have thought ourselves to be.

To change other people or other entities is not in itself a violation. It is a fact of existence that we do so. The act of violence is in the *intention* to change another. The cultural manifestation of that intention makes up the pages of our history books. It is the *conquest* model of human interaction. More significantly, it is the *conversion* model of human interaction, a model more insidious because it gives the illusion of integrity. In the conquest model we invade or violate. In the conversion model we work very hard not simply to conquer but to get every assurance that our conquest of the victim is really giving her what she wants. In fact, a lot of excitement and adventure would go out of our lives if conquest were the only model. It is conversion that gives us our real kicks; it is the stuff of all our pornography, the stuff of Hollywood, the stuff of romance.

Our history is a combination of conquest and conversion. We conquered trees and converted them into a house, taking pride in having accomplished a difficult task. We conquered rivers and streams and converted them into lakes, marvelling in ourselves at the improvement we made on nature. We tramped with our conquering spaceboots on the fine ancient dust of the Moon and we sent our well-rehearsed statements of triumph back for a waiting world to hear. We'd like to think that much as the Moon resisted us, she really, down deep, wanted us—her masters—to tame her and to own her.

We did not ask permission of trees, river, Moon. We did not in any way recognize the part of the victim in the process. They were the conquered. We were the conqueror. The more "fight" they gave us and the more difficult the task, the more exhilarating was the contest and the more arrogant we became at winning over them. Many of us have heard it too often: "I like a woman who gives me a little fight." While there is satisfaction in conquering, the real rush comes if she resists and then gives in, if you make her want you, if you convert her, if the trees are big, if you fail the first few times to harness the river, if the Moon is hard to get to.

Since the Middle Ages scholars have been fond of classifying rhetoric into three brands: that which flows from the pulpit, that which is found at the bar of justice, and that which rings out on the senate floor. All three efforts demonstrate precisely a violence not just of conquest but also of conversion, whether it be conversion of the sinner, the jury, or the worthy opposition. Preachers, lawyers, and politicians may congratulate themselves that they are men of reason who have chosen civilized discourse above fighting. Yet where the intent is to change another, the difference between a persuasive metaphor and a violent artillery attack is obscure and certainly one of degree rather than of kind. Our rational discourse, presumably such an improvement over war and barbarism, turns out to be in itself a subtle form of Might Makes Right. Speech and rhetoric teachers have been training a competent breed of weapons specialists who are skilled in emotional manoeuvers, expert in intellectual logistics and, in their attack upon attitude and belief systems, blissfully ignorant of their violation of nature or her processes.

Somewhere in a dark corner of human history we made a serious evolutionary blunder. We altered ourselves from a species in tune with the Earth, with our home, into a species that began ruthlessly to control and convert its environment. At that point, when we began to seek to change any other entity, we violated the integrity of that person or thing and our own integrity as well.

Political speculations about the origin of alienation, theological agitations about the beginning of evil, psychological ruminations about the birth of "the other," and philosophical explorations of the mind–body split—all have shown us the futility of trying to determine the cause of our violence as a species. Was it our coming to consciousness? Or some leap from our subjective ego to the recognition of another subjective ego? The drive to civilization or the drive to death through civilization? Perhaps the creative urge or the birth of language itself or the first time someone claimed private property? Did it occur when men discovered that they had some role in conception and got so carried away that they organized the patriarchy? Is the violence inherent in the nature of the human being, a product of the natural urge to compete or of the hierarchical mindset? Did it occur from something so practical as the planning ahead for survival through the storing of surplus goods? Or from something so ontological as the realization of death and the planning ahead against its occurrence?

The evidence is plain that somehow our energy has gone haywire, that we are riding roughshod over the biosphere, that we have no species consciousness, that we produce, reproduce, and consume in a constantly expanding pattern that is rapidly depleting our natural resources and driving us to the destruction of each other and of the planet which sustains us. "Rape of the Earth" is not simply a metaphor, or if it is a metaphor it is one so strong that it brings into sharp relief both the reality of the female–male relationship in Western culture and the separation of ourselves as a species from the original source of our being. The Earth seems now to be giving us clear and unmistakeable signals that she will not endure our rule over her much longer, that we are a renegade civilization, a dying civilization which may have passed up its opportunity for survival. We need to come to a halt and reawaken ourselves, to refresh and resource ourselves at the lost wells of our own origin. Already it may be too late.

II

To pose the value question, "Can it be an act of integrity to seek to change another person or another entity?" is to open the door to alternatives to persuasion. I will explore here a non-persuasive notion of communication and show how I believe our discipline has been moving toward that notion in the recent past. Finally I will draw connections between recent understandings of communication and the womanization of culture that I believe is necessary for the survival of the planet.

If we are not to attempt to change our world, then is the alternative to sit forever in a quiet and desperate passivity? Must we choose between being an invader, a violent persuader, and a patient Griselda twiddling our thumbs and curbing our energy in the hope that some miraculous process will do it all for us? Surely it is of value to seek to alter injustices, to change oppressive societal institutions. Is there a way to relate to each other, to other entities, in acts that participate in the changing of our world but which do not themselves recapitulate our heritage of violence? Is there a difference between wanting circumstances to change and wanting to change circumstances?

Mao Tse Tung, in his essay "On Contradiction," gave us the metaphor of the egg and the stone. No one can change an egg into a chicken. If, however, there is the potential in the egg to be a chicken—what Mao called the "internal basis for change"—then there is the likelihood that in the right environment (moisture, temperature, the "external conditions for change") the egg will hatch. A stone, on the other hand, has no internal basis for hatching into a chicken and an eternity of sitting in the proper conditions of moisture and temperature will not make possible its transformation into a chicken.

If we think of communicative acts not as attempts to change others or even as attempts to inform or to help them, then perhaps we can understand Mao's metaphor. Communication can be a deliberate creation or co-creation of an atmosphere in which people or things, if and only if they have the internal basis for change, may change themselves; it can be a milieu in which those who are ready to be persuaded may persuade themselves, may choose to hear or choose to learn. With this understanding we can begin to operate differently in all communicative circumstances, particularly those wherein *learning* and *conflict encounter* take place.

What might take place in the learning circumstance could be best understood as a mutual generation of energy for purposes of growth; what would take place in the conflict encounter is best described for lack of a better word as dialogue. In either case, persons entering the interaction would be certain

1. that no intent to enlighten or to persuade would be made but rather that each party would seek to contribute to an atmosphere in which change for both/all parties can take place;
2. that there are differences among those who participate—in the case of learning, differences of degree and quality of knowing specific subject matter, and in the case of conflict genuine disagreements between/among people;
3. that though there are differences, the persons involved feel equal in power to each other;
4. that communication is a difficult achievement, something to be worked at, since the odds are great that moments of miscommunication will outnumber moments of communication;
5. that each participant is willing on the deepest level to yield her/his position entirely to the other(s).

If the circumstance is one of learning then instructors must genuinely prepare to learn, prepare to be changed with students in the mutually created setting. As we observe from changes already taking place in classrooms across the country, the number of words spoken by any one individual—teacher or student—in such an atmosphere is far less important than the manner and the intentionality with which they speak the words.

If the circumstance is one of conflict, then all that we are already learning about dialogue comes into play. Somehow the mind–body split experienced by rhetoric or speech communication as well as by other disciplines will have to be bridged in the process of dialogue. Some unity will have to occur there of personality differences with the principled advocacy of positions; some techniques of interpersonal clarification and openness will have to blend with the use of good reason in the controversy. We functioned from Socrates to the 1950s with reason as our standard; then, with the advent of sensitivity training and small group communication, we seemed almost to exchange the tyranny of the mind for the tyranny of the emotions. What we now know is that, in any conflict circumstance, there are positions and arguments, but there are as well the multi-levelled dynamics of human personalities at work.

It is at this point, when we address emerging notions of learning and dialogue that we appreciate the recent changes of the rhetoric and public address that have occurred within the discipline of rhetoric and public address. It is fair to say that until the 1950s speechmaking has been practiced and taught on the conquest/conversion model, on a very male chauvinist model, one that not only implied but explicitly assumed that all the power was in the speaker, just as we believed at one point in history that all power was in the sperm. He stood before the crowd, one hero, one persuader. He believed that he did it all, and unfortunately, his audience believed the same thing. His was the message, his the act of converting his hearers; his was the enlightened truth which sought a womb/audience in which to deposit itself and grow. Little attention was paid to the listener, and even less to the circumstances or the environment of the persuasive process.

In the last decades, however, the listener has come into her own. By drawing our attention away from the masses transfixed by one orator and toward the interactions that transpire in our daily lives, by sitting more often in groups or in dyads and less often in lectures, we have come to realize that in its more common and more natural setting communication does not have to be an invasion of enemy territory but can at least be a two-way street. We have begun to admit the listener's presence, perhaps even her participation in the speechmaking process. And the field of *rhetoric*—persuasion—has broadened into the field of *communication*, a change which in itself is a symptom of the change in our concerns.

In recent semantic and communication theory, we move closer to the concern for environment, for climate; particularly is this true in a general systems approach and transactional models. Though the term is only beginning to be used, it is important that the whole communication environment be understood as a *matrix*, a womb. A matrix is that within which or from which something takes form or begins. A matrix "produces" a seed (like the sperm) only we call it an egg. Yet the matrix is not simply a generating substance. It is also a nurturing substance, the atmosphere in which growth and change take place. In terms of communication it is an atmosphere in which meanings are generated and nurtured. We could even say, "The meaning is the matrix."

It is a new thing that we do in this century: to turn again toward the wholeness of the communication process instead of separating ourselves out from it, to think in terms of an organic atmosphere that is the source of meanings instead of waiting for an outsider who will, like a god, give us the meanings. We are perhaps on the brink of understanding that we do not have to be persuaders, that we no longer need to intend to change others. We are not the speaker, the-one-with-the-truth, the-one-who-with-his-power-will-change-lives. We are the matrix, we are she-who-is-the-home-of-this-particular-human-interaction, we are a co-creator and co-sustainer of the atmosphere in whose infinity of possible transformations we will all change.

Modern communication theory has not yet articulated its own process of change. With all of its extensive research into human behavior, with all its imagination and creative models, modern communication theory still is concerned almost exclusively with the *how* and the *what* of communication, how it works and what its definition is. At best it asks questions about the role of values in attitude change and fails as yet to ask essential value questions about its own intent.

The conquest/conversion rhetoricians of the first 2400 years of our discipline constantly asked questions of value: can virtue be taught? Can we allow a dangerous enemy to speak to the masses? What does a lie do to the speaker's credibility? Should teachers of rhetoric take fees for teaching? They too failed to ask the crucial value question, "Can we with integrity intend to change another?" But at least they reflected on their actions in the light of ethics. We recall, though, that rhetoric has always found its home in the humanities where value questions are the norm. Modern communication theory participates more readily in the social sciences where questions of value hide under the search for objective reality. Until such theory begins to entertain those ethical questions or until communicators in the humanities challenge modern theory on just such questions, we will be little better off than with our commitment to the old conquest/conversion assumptions.

In what is called the second wave of feminism, the rise of the woman's movement in the Sixties and Seventies of this century, there are threads that may connect a society presently violent to a nonviolent past and to a nonviolent future. One of the threads is an understanding of communication as essentially the womanlike process we have been describing.

Feminism is at the very least the rejection of the conquest/conversion model of interaction and the development of new forms of relationship which allow for wholeness in the individual and differences among people and entities. At the same time it means some sense of how that infinite variety thrives within a unity. Feminism is an ideology of change which rises out of the experiences of women, out of the experiences of our bodies, our experiences of our conditioning both in our individual lives and over the centuries.

It is important to the field of communication that biologically and historically we women have been thought of and think of ourselves as receptacles, as listeners, as hearers, as holders, nurturers, as matrices, as environments and creators of environments. It is important to the field of communication that, though we women now begin to discover what the suppression of our violence has meant to us, violence has been associated almost exclusively with men in our culture. The change in the discipline of speech from the concentration on speaker/conqueror to an interest in atmosphere, in listening, in receiving, in a collective rather than in a competitive mode—that change suggests the womanization of that discipline.

Many of us in the speech field, women and men alike, will be uncomfortable with that idea: that communication, like the rest of the culture, must be womanized, that in order to be authentic, to be nonviolent communicators, we must all become more like women. We have all learned that, though women are okay they are somehow lesser human beings. It is a blow to the ego to suggest that we may be like a woman. It will be hard for men to think of changing because never having been environments they need lots of practice in becoming so. It will be hard for women in the field to think of changing because, though we have been environments, we've spent most of our professional careers trying not to be so, trying not to be women, trying instead to scale ourselves to the conquest/conversion model of the speech-maker, the speech teacher.

We have all diligently studied our Aristotle and learned how to persuade others, how to enlighten them. We have all enjoyed the rush of power that has come with that. How can we forsake all this and think of ourselves not as bearers of great messages but as vessels out of whose variety messages will emerge? We have been practicing conquer-and-convert for centuries, struggling for survival in a self-perpetuating system of violence and power conflicts. There is reason, good reason, for us to be uncomfortable with such a "weak" and "yielding" model of communication. There is reason enough to be insecure about giving up our desire to change others since our entire identity has been bound up in our power to change others. When all we've done for centuries is to penetrate the environment with the truth we've been taught to believe is ours alone, then it is difficult to enjoy being just a listener, just a co-creator of an atmosphere. Yet that is precisely the task.

Feminism is a source, a wellspring, a matrix, an environment for the womanization of communication, for the womanization of Western civilization. It calls for an ancient and deep understanding and ultimately for a fundamental change of attitude and perspective. In its challenge to history and to the present social order feminism in this, its second wave, feminism this time around, in this century, is playing for keeps for all of us—for women, for men, for children, animals and plants and for the Earth herself. The stakes are that high.

2

Proposal for a Feminist Rhetoric

Sonja K. Foss and Cindy L. Griffin

We first outlined the theory of invitational rhetoric in the winter of 1992 in Columbus, Ohio, where Sonja was teaching at Ohio State University. Cindy was a doctoral student at Indiana University at the time, and we met in Columbus so we could coauthor a position paper for the upcoming Conference on Research in Gender and Communication. The Gender Conference, as it was known, was not affiliated with any organization or university; it moved from place to place, depending on who volunteered to organize it each year. The conference was guided by a different theme each year, selected by the conference organizers, who also proposed a series of questions on the theme. Participants wrote short position papers on one of the questions, and all of those who wrote on the same question formed a group that discussed that question for the duration of the conference. The conference that was organized by Belle A. Edson at Hollins College in Roanoke, Virginia, in March of 1992 had as its theme achieving a feminist future. The question to which we chose to respond was, "What are the most effective strategies to use to achieve a feminist future?"

We began our work on our position paper thinking we were going to write about visual rhetoric and its role in creating a feminist future, but we began talking about some rhetorical experiences in our lives that could not be explained using conventional rhetorical theory. These experiences did not seem to us to be acts or events that we could characterize as persuasion. We thought of as many of these experiences as we could, and then we systematically reviewed them to identify their key characteristics. Those characteristics formed the basis of what we then called feminist rhetoric. *Among those in our discussion group at the conference was Julia T. Wood, who provided some particularly useful feedback for us.*

We continued to develop the theory after the conference, and Sonja presented the proposal for this alternative rhetoric in presentations at several universities in the following year, including at the University of Maryland, where she talked about the theory in May of 1993. James F. Klumpp was in the audience and suggested that we change the name to something more inclusive than feminist rhetoric *and proposed instead* invitational rhetoric. *Needless to say, we adopted his suggestion and continue to appreciate the nuances and connotations of the label by which the theory is now known.*

The paper we submitted to and that was discussed at the Gender Conference in 1992 follows.

Implicit in the notion of achieving a feminist future is the notion of persuasion—that some means of persuasion is necessary to change others so that a feminist future may be achieved.

Our starting point for the new feminist rhetoric we propose in this essay was the challenging and rejecting of this notion. Perhaps, we thought, the way to create this future is not through persuasion or change but through some other means altogether.

The idea that some means of creating change other than persuasion is even possible came from Sally Miller Gearhart's essay, "The Womanization of Rhetoric," in which she argues that "any intent to persuade is an act of violence."[1] She proposes as a definition of rhetoric or communication the creation of an "atmosphere in which growth and change take place."[2] Although we always have liked and appreciated Gearhart's essay, we had not really taken it seriously. We decided to do just that and to see how a rhetoric based on something other than persuasion might look.

In a rhetoric that centers on the creation of an environment that facilitates growth and change, change is both possible and desirable. It simply is achieved through means other than intentional efforts to persuade. Gearhart suggests that change occurs in the environment created through rhetoric as the rhetor first changes herself; she finds her "individual or *intra*personal energy flow."[3] As the rhetor herself is changed, she reaches out to others with "authentic forms of *inter*personal energy,"[4] attracting and welcoming those who wish to join her world. She provides "a milieu in which those who are ready to be persuaded may persuade themselves, may choose to hear or choose to learn."[5] Gearhart summarizes this process: "We know we can't change other women, that they must convert themselves. Our job is to continue in our own growth and thus to create the atmosphere (in this case supportive and exemplary) in which their internal bases for change can break through."[6] Sonia Johnson provides a strikingly similar description of how change occurs:

> The truth is that we can only change ourselves, nothing or nobody else. This is not a bleak view, however, but quite the contrary, because the change in ourselves not only *can* but always *does* change something or somebody else, and it is the only thing that can.[7]

The primary dimension of our proposed feminist rhetoric, then, is the creation of an environment that facilitates growth so that individuals may change if they desire to do so.

A second component of our proposed feminist rhetoric concerns the nature of the environment created; we found Johnson's thinking useful in our formulation of what is involved in this environment. She argues that to create a new world, the rhetor must live in the present in the world she envisions. She must act as if the new world already exists, living in the moment as "fully myself, powerfully authentic, any way I choose to be."[8] "So if we want a non-hierarchical future," she explains, "we have to be non-hierarchical now. . . . There's no way to get there except to *be* there."[9] She elaborates:

> There is no future. The future is born every moment. We are birthing it this second. It doesn't matter where it's going to lead. All that matters is that right now I am this way. That's all I have, this second. Right now is the only time I will *ever* have. The only power is in the present and in how I *am* in the present.[10]

As we thought about a rhetoric used by the rhetor to enact a new world in the present that creates an environment in which those who wish to may choose to join, we concluded that we have had experiences where we have come close to engaging in such rhetoric. In these instances, we were involved in creating an environment with very different qualities from those of the structure in which we were situated, and we were attracting "converts" to the new vision simply by acting in a new way.

Purple Saturday, sponsored by the Women's Caucus at Speech Communication Association (SCA) conventions, illustrates the kind of rhetoric we are proposing. When women wear purple on Saturday at the convention, they are not trying to persuade others—they aren't trying to get others to become feminists, to accept feminist scholarship, or to value women. Instead, they are simply creating an environment in which those who wish to learn more about feminism may do so, serving as a reminder that there is an alternative way to be other than that provided by the mainstream perspective, and illustrating a commitment to this alternative perspective. In their wearing of purple, women at SCA conventions also enact some of the qualities of the new world they envision. They are united with and support other women, they celebrate women's accomplishments, and they accord value to the work women do. By participating in Purple Saturday, women are enacting "an Other way of thinking/speaking"[11] that is different from the mainstream at the convention in small but significant ways.

If our proposed feminist rhetoric depends on the creation of an environment conducive to growth and change, our next task was to delineate the conditions essential for such growth. We propose that a rhetor who attempts to use this model should work to create rhetoric that accomplishes six different conditions for those with whom she comes into contact: safety, immanent value, freedom of identity, choice, autonomous interdependence, and order.

The condition of *safety* involves the creation of a sense of security for others, rooted in their knowledge that the rhetor will make no attempt to hurt, degrade, or belittle them. Safety is generated by the rhetor's recognition that others have every right to feel and think as they choose and by her commitment to the beliefs that their sharing of ideas or feelings will be received with respect and care and that their ideas or feelings will not be judged or evaluated.

The component of *value* requires the rhetor's perception of others as worthy and enactment of this perception through her rhetoric. The feminist rhetor sees others as possessing internal or immanent worth, a worth derived not from any external accomplishments but from within them as unique and valuable beings.[12]

The condition of valuing the other leads to the third component of this environment, *freedom of identity*. When conditions for self-change are most possible, individuals feel that their identities are not forced on or chosen for them. In this environment, they feel that the rhetor is not attempting to cast them in any particular role; they feel free to choose who they are. The creator of an environment that facilitates freedom of identity recognizes that difference is both legitimate and an essential part of existence.

Choice, the fourth condition, involves the feminist rhetor's creation of opportunities for others to develop and choose among unlimited options. Rather than presenting a predetermined set of options from which individuals can choose, the feminist rhetor creates a framework in which individuals can make whatever choices seem appropriate to them. Choice is not the arrangement of possibilities "A," "B," or "C" by the rhetor and the "choice" of one of the three by others. It involves the rhetor's creation of conditions in which individuals create their own options and decisions.

Our fifth component, *autonomous interdependence*, involves two seemingly paradoxical conditions: autonomy and interdependence. The feminist rhetor recognizes that she and others are inevitably linked, and she seeks to maintain connections with others through care and respect. At the same time, maintenance of connection is not dependent on the rhetor's approval of the choices of others or on agreement between them about the appropriateness of their choices. "Best choices" are seen as right for individuals, at a given time, based on their own ability to make those decisions.

We see one last quality as a necessary component for the creation of an environment that facilitates growth and change—the creation of *order*. For self-change to be able to occur, rhetoric must provide a means for individuals to order the world so that it seems coherent and makes sense to them. This is not to suggest that the order imposed on the world by individuals will be the same; in fact, the patterns created may be quite different. Feminist rhetoric, however, provides a means for some kind of coherence and pattern to develop. When individuals' senses of order are threatened or challenged, they are less likely to be open to self-change and are more likely to cling to familiar ways of thought, denying themselves opportunities for change. As Dorothy I. Riddle explains, in periods of domination or upheaval, "we struggle to maintain the *status quo* and resist change at any cost."[13]

A wide variety of responses to our proposed feminist rhetoric are possible, and we have experienced many of them. Not everyone will choose to embrace the new world being enacted, and their responses may be quite hostile, ranging from yelling to scapegoating to outright aggression designed to destroy the alternative environment and those who have chosen to enact it. Our proposed rhetoric would not be complete if we did not suggest a way to respond to such hostility.

What the feminist rhetor needs to do, in our model, in response to hostility, is to review the conditions necessary for the creation of an environment in which growth and change can occur as they apply to the specific situation. If she determines that all of the conditions are being met—that she is, indeed, creating an atmosphere that allows others to change if they desire and that would make them feel welcome in the new world—she concludes that the person responsible for the hostility is not yet ready to change, and she goes on about her business of enacting her world as she did before.

But the feminist rhetor may discover that she has not created, through her rhetoric, one or more of the conditions necessary for the facilitation of growth and change. She may not have produced, for example, a coherence or order in which events and activities make sense to the hostile responder. Perhaps her rhetoric threatens rather than generates a sense of security for the responder. If she discovers a condition is not being met in her rhetoric, she must restore the growth condition by changing her rhetoric to develop the missing or inadequately developed condition.

Our experience at a large university on the West coast is illustrative of the hostility that may be generated by our proposed feminist rhetoric and how our model proposes the rhetor deal with this hostility. By the most delightful serendipity, Sonja happened to be teaching and Cindy was a graduate student there at a time when many feminist, mature women were in the program. Together—and quite unintentionally—we created an alternative space in the department, an alternative way to think, be, act, teach, and conduct research. The environment created was supportive and nurturing, rather than the competitive one of the department; it valued the empowerment of students rather than seeking to "squash" them in an effort to prove their lack of knowledge; it was energetic and productive rather than languishing and apathetic.

The environment generated spread; it began attracting other students who found it an appealing way to live in the department. Its presence and its otherness began to challenge, in visible ways, the department's long-standing commitments to other values and practices. Representatives of the department, seeking to squelch the alternative world, chose to scapegoat Sonja, the only one in a faculty position and thus the one who could be held responsible for the conditions, suggesting, among other charges, that she was the cause of divisiveness in the department, was unethical, was incompetent as a teacher, was biased, and was not a good loser.

A review of the rhetoric generated by Sonja and the feminist students suggests that it generally failed to provide those who were not part of the alternative world being created with a sense of security and order. The mainstream order in the department was being challenged—a challenge many mainstream representatives probably welcomed and saw as positive in many ways. But because that challenge disrupted their old order without providing any structure or pattern with which to replace it, representatives of the old order floundered, clinging to the disintegrating bits of their old world and resisting change.

We recognize that our proposal for a feminist rhetoric is very much a "Gorbachev proposal" in that we have written ourselves out of the discipline and tradition of rhetoric, with its focus on persuasion. Within the discipline of rhetoric, our proposal, to echo Sonia Johnson, is "the most radical, apatriarchal act possible."[14] This is the kind of radical, apatriarchal act, though, that enables feminist scholars to create true revisions in the communication discipline and not simply to tinker with minor adjustments to the patriarchal framework of knowledge. It allows for the development of a view of rhetoric that fits with and explains women's communication in ways that our current conceptions do not. Finally, it provides a model that feminists can use to accomplish not a feminist future but a feminist present.

NOTES

1. Sally Miller Gearhart, "The Womanization of Rhetoric," *Women's Studies International Quarterly* 2 (1979): 195.
2. Gearhart, "The Womanization of Rhetoric," 200.
3. Sally Gearhart, "Womanpower: Energy Re-Sourcement," in *The Politics of Women's Spirituality: Essays on the Rise of Spiritual Power Within the Feminist Movement*, ed. Charlene Spretnak (Garden City, NY: Anchor/Doubleday, 1982), 195.
4. Gearhart, "Womanpower," 195.
5. Gearhart, "The Womanization of Rhetoric," 198.
6. Gearhart, "Womanpower," 205.
7. Sonia Johnson, *Going Out of Our Minds: The Metaphysics of Liberation* (Freedom, CA: Crossing, 1987), 306.
8. Johnson, *Going Out of Our Minds*, 300.
9. Johnson, *Going Out of Our Minds*, 299.
10. Johnson, *Going Out of Our Minds*, 300.
11. Mary Daly, *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism* (Boston: Beacon, 1978), xiii.
12. Starhawk discusses the notion of immanent value in Starhawk, *Truth or Dare: Encounters with Power, Authority, and Mystery* (San Francisco: Harper & Row), 21, 115–16.
13. Dorothy I. Riddle, "Politics, Spirituality, and Models of Change," in *The Politics of Women's Spirituality: Essays on the Rise of Spiritual Power Within the Feminist Movement*, ed. Charlene Spretnak (Garden City, NY: Anchor/Doubleday, 1982), 374.
14. Johnson, *Going Out of Our Minds*, 302.

3

Beyond Persuasion

A Proposal for an Invitational Rhetoric

Sonja K. Foss and Cindy L. Griffin

Acknowledgment of the patriarchal bias that undergirds most theories of rhetoric is growing steadily in the communication discipline. As feminist scholars have begun to explicate the ways in which standard theories of rhetoric embody patriarchal perspectives, they have identified communicative modes that previously have not been recognized or theorized because they are grounded in alternative values (see, for example, Edson, 1985; Elshtain, 1982; Foss & Foss, 1991; Foss, Foss, & Trapp, 1991; Foss & Griffin, 1992; Gearhart, 1979; Griffin, 1993; Kramarae, 1989; Shepherd, 1992). Attention to non-patriarchal forms of communication, feminist scholars argue, expands the scope of rhetorical theory and enhances the discipline's ability to explain diverse communicative phenomena successfully.

One manifestation of the patriarchal bias that characterizes much of rhetorical theorizing is the definition of rhetoric as persuasion. As far back as the Western discipline of rhetoric has been explored, rhetoric has been defined as the conscious intent to change others. As Shepherd (1992) notes, in humanistic, social scientific, and critical perspectives on communication, "interaction processes have typically been characterized essentially and primarily in terms of persuasion, influence, and power" (p. 204). Every communicative encounter has been viewed "as primarily an attempt at persuasion or influence, or as a struggle over power" (p. 206). As natural as an equation of rhetoric with persuasion seems for scholars of rhetoric, this conception is only one perspective on rhetoric and one, we suggest, with a patriarchal bias.

Implicit in a conception of rhetoric as persuasion is the assumption that humans are on earth to alter the "environment and to influence the social affairs" of others. Rhetorical scholars "have taken as given that it is a proper and even necessary human function to attempt to change others" (Gearhart, 1979, p. 195). The desire to effect change is so pervasive that the many ways in which humans engage in activities designed for this purpose often go unnoticed:

> We conquered trees and converted them into a house, taking pride in having accomplished a difficult task. We conquered rivers and streams and converted them into lakes, marvelling in ourselves at the improvement we made on nature. We tramped with our conquering spaceboots on the fine ancient dust of the Moon and we sent our well-rehearsed statements of triumph back for a waiting world to hear. (Gearhart, 1979, p. 196)

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Embedded in efforts to change others is a desire for control and domination, for the act of changing another establishes the power of the change agent over that other. In some instances, the power of the rhetor over another is overt, as it is, for example, in laws that exert control over women's bodies, such as those concerned with abortion. In securing the adherence of women to these laws, lawmakers have power over women and their lives. But even in cases where the strategies used are less coercive, rhetors who convince others to adopt their viewpoints exert control over part of those others' lives. A student who tells another student that she ought to take a particular course, for example, controls or influences the nature of another's life, if only for a few minutes, if the other enrolls in the course or even considers enrolling in it. We suggest that a strikingly large part of many individuals' lives is spent in such efforts to change others, even when the desired changes have absolutely no impact on the lives of the change agents. Whether a friend enrolls in a particular course, for example, often is irrelevant to a student's own life.

The reward gained from successful efforts to make others change is a "rush of power" (Gearhart, 1979, p. 201)—a feeling of self-worth that comes from controlling people and situations. The value of the self for rhetors in this rhetorical system comes from the rhetor's ability to demonstrate superior knowledge, skills, and qualifications—in other words, authority—in order to dominate the perspectives and knowledge of those in their audiences. The value of the self derives not from a recognition of the uniqueness and inherent value of each living being but from gaining control over others.

The act of changing others not only establishes the power of the rhetor over others but also devalues the lives and perspectives of those others. The belief systems and behaviors others have created for living in the world are considered by rhetors to be inadequate or inappropriate and thus in need of change. The speaker's role very often "may be best described as paternalistic" (Scott, 1991, p. 205) in that the rhetor adopts a "'let me help you, let me enlighten you, let me show you the way' approach" (Gearhart, 1979, p. 195). Audience members are assumed to be naive and less expert than the rhetor if their views differ from the rhetor's own.

Rhetorical scholars have prided themselves on the eschewal of physical force and coercion and the use, in their place, of "language and metalanguage, with refined functions of the mind" (Gearhart, 1979, p. 195) to influence others and produce change. Although these discursive strategies allow more choice to the audience than do the supposedly more heavy-handed strategies of physical coercion, they still infringe on others' rights to believe as they choose and to act in ways they believe are best for them. Even discursive strategies can constitute a kind of trespassing on the personal integrity of others when they convey the rhetor's belief that audience members have inadequacies that in some way can be corrected if they adhere to the viewpoint of the rhetor. Such strategies disallow, in other words, the possibility that audience members are content with the belief systems they have developed, function happily with them, and do not perceive a need to change.

The traditional conception of rhetoric, in summary, is characterized by efforts to change others and thus to gain control over them, self-worth derived from and measured by the power exerted over others, and a devaluation of the life worlds of others. This is a rhetoric of patriarchy, reflecting its values of change, competition, and domination. But these are not the only values on which a rhetorical system can be constructed, and we would like to propose as one alternative a feminist rhetoric.

Although definitions of *feminism* vary, feminists generally are united by a set of basic principles. We have chosen to focus on three of these principles—equality, immanent value, and self-determination—to serve as the starting place for a new rhetoric. These principles are ones that explicitly challenge the positive value the patriarchy accords to changing and thus dominating others.

Primary among the feminist principles on which our proposed rhetoric is based is a commitment to the creation of relationships of equality and to the elimination of the dominance and elitism that characterize most human relationships. As Wood (1994) aptly summarizes this principle, "I don't accept oppression and domination as worthy human values, and I don't believe differences must be ranked on a continuum of good and bad. I believe there are better, more humane and enriching ways to live" (p. 4). Efforts to dominate and gain power over others cannot be used to develop relationships of equality, so feminists seek to replace the "alienation, competition, and dehumanization" that characterize relationships of domination with "intimacy, mutuality, and camaraderie" (hooks, 1984, p. 34).

Yet another principle that undergirds most feminisms is a recognition of the immanent value of all living beings. The essence of this principle is that every being is a unique and necessary part of the pattern of the universe and thus has value. Immanent value derives from the simple principle that "your life is worth something. . . . You need only be what you are" (Starhawk, 1987, pp. 115–116). Worth cannot be determined by positioning individuals on a hierarchy so they can be ranked and compared or by attending to emblems of external achievement, for worth cannot be "earned, acquired, or proven" (Starhawk, 1987, p. 21). Concomitant with a recognition of the immanent value of another individual is the eschewal of forms of communication that seek to change that individual's unique perspective to that held by the rhetor.

Self-determination is a third principle that typically comprises a feminist world view. Grounded in a respect for others, self-determination allows individuals to make their own decisions about how they wish to live their lives. Self-determination involves the recognition that audience members are the authorities on their own lives and accords respect to others' capacity and right to constitute their worlds as they choose. As Johnson (1991) explains, this principle involves a trust that others are doing the best they can at the moment and simply need "to be unconditionally accepted as the experts on their own lives" (p. 162). When others are seen as experts who are making competent decisions about their lives, efforts by a rhetor to change those decisions are seen as a violation of their life worlds and the expertise they have developed.

Our purpose in this essay is to propose a definition and explication of a rhetoric built on the principles of equality, immanent value, and self-determination rather than on the attempt to control others through persuasive strategies designed to effect change. Although we believe that persuasion is often necessary, we believe an alternative exists that may be used in instances when changing and controlling others is not the rhetor's goal; we call this rhetoric *invitational rhetoric*. In what follows, we offer a description of this rhetoric, beginning with a discussion of its definition and purpose and then describing the communicative options available to rhetors who wish to use it. We conclude our essay with two examples of invitational rhetoric and a discussion of some implications of invitational rhetoric for rhetorical theory.

Although invitational rhetoric is constructed largely from feminist theory, the literature in which its principles and various dimensions have been theorized most thoroughly, we are not suggesting that only feminists have dealt with and developed its various components or that only feminists adhere to the principles on which it is based. Some dimensions of this rhetoric have been explicated by traditional rhetorical theorists, and we have incorporated their ideas into our description of this rhetoric. We also do not want to suggest that the rhetoric we propose describes how all women communicate or that it is or can be used only by women.

Feminism "implies an understanding of inclusion with interests beyond women" (Wood, 1993, p. 39), and its aim is not to "privilege women over men" or "to benefit solely any specific group of women" (hooks, 1984, p. 26). The rhetoric we describe is a rhetoric used at various times by some women and some men, some feminists and some non-feminists. What makes it feminist is not its use by a particular population of rhetors but rather the grounding of its assumptions in feminist principles and theories. Our goal in offering this theory is to expand the array of communicative options available to all rhetors and to provide an impetus for more focused and systematic efforts to describe and assess rhetoric in all of its manifestations.

DEFINITION

Invitational rhetoric is an invitation to understanding as a means to create a relationship rooted in equality, immanent value, and self-determination. Invitational rhetoric constitutes an invitation to the audience to enter the rhetor's world and to see it as the rhetor does. In presenting a particular perspective, the invitational rhetor does not judge or denigrate others' perspectives but is open to and tries to appreciate and validate those perspectives, even if they differ dramatically from the rhetor's own. Ideally, audience members accept the invitation offered by the rhetor by listening to and trying to understand the rhetor's perspective and then presenting their own. When this happens, rhetor and audience alike contribute to the thinking about an issue so that everyone involved gains a greater understanding of the issue in its subtlety, richness, and complexity. Ultimately, though, the result of invitational rhetoric is not just an understanding of an issue. Because of the nonhierarchical, nonjudgmental, nonadversarial framework established for the interaction, an understanding of the participants themselves occurs, an understanding that engenders appreciation, value, and a sense of equality.

The stance taken by invitational rhetors toward their audiences obviously is different from that assumed by traditional rhetors. Invitational rhetors do not believe they have the right to claim that their experiences or perspectives are superior to those of their audience members and refuse to impose their perspectives on them. Rhetors view the choices selected by audience members as right for them at that particular time, based on their own abilities to make those decisions. Absent are efforts to dominate another because the goal is the understanding and appreciation of another's perspective rather than the denigration of it simply because it is different from the rhetor's own. The result of the invitational rhetor's stance toward the audience is a relationship of equality, respect, and appreciation.

Invitational rhetoric is characterized, then, by the openness with which rhetors are able to approach their audiences. Burke (1969) suggests that rhetors typically adjust their conduct to the external resistance they expect in the audience or situation: "We in effect modify our own assertion in reply to its assertion" (p. 237). In invitational rhetoric, in contrast, resistance is not anticipated, and rhetors do not adapt their communication to expected resistance in the audience. Instead, they identify possible impediments to the creation of understanding and seek to minimize or neutralize them so they do not remain impediments.

Change may be the result of invitational rhetoric, but change is not its purpose. When change does occur as a result of understanding, it is different from the kind of change that typifies the persuasive interactions of traditional rhetoric. In the traditional model, change is defined as a shift in the audience in the direction requested by the rhetor, who then has gained some measure of power and control over the audience. In invitational rhetoric, change occurs in the audience or rhetor or both as a result of new understanding and insights gained in the exchange of ideas. As rhetors and audience members offer their ideas on an issue, they allow diverse positions to be compared in a process of discovery and questioning that may lead to transformation for themselves and others. Participants even may choose to be transformed because they are persuaded by something someone in the interaction says, but the insight that is persuasive is offered by a rhetor not to support the superiority of a particular perspective but to contribute to the understanding by all participants of the issue and of one another.

The internal processes by which transformation occurs also are different in invitational rhetoric. In traditional rhetoric, the change process often is accompanied by feelings of inadequacy, insecurity, pain, humiliation, guilt, embarrassment, or angry submission on the part of the audience as rhetors communicate the superiority of their positions and the deficiencies of those of the audience. In invitational rhetoric, on the other hand, rhetors recognize the valuable contributions audience members can make to the rhetors' own thinking and understanding, and they do not engage in strategies that may damage or sever the connection between them and their audiences. This does not mean that invitational rhetoric always is free of pain. In invitational rhetoric, there may be a wrenching loose of ideas as assumptions and positions are questioned as a result of an interaction, a process that may be uncomfortable. But because rhetors affirm the beliefs of and communicate respect for others, the changes that are made are likely to be accompanied by an appreciation for new perspectives gained and gratitude for the assistance provided by others in thinking about an issue.

COMMUNICATIVE OPTIONS

The process of engaging in invitational rhetoric assumes two primary rhetorical forms. One is offering perspectives, a mode by which rhetors put forward for consideration their perspectives; the second is the creation of external conditions that allow others to present their perspectives in an atmosphere of respect and equality.

Offering Perspectives

When rhetors do not seek to impose their positions on audience members in invitational rhetoric, the presentation and function of individual perspectives differ significantly from their nature and function in traditional rhetorics. Individual perspectives are articulated in invitational rhetoric as carefully, completely, and passionately as possible to give them full expression and to invite their careful consideration by the participants in the interaction. This articulation occurs not through persuasive argument but through offering—the giving of expression to a perspective without advocating its support or seeking its acceptance. Offering involves not probing or invading but giving, a process "of wrapping around the givee, of being available to her/him without insisting; our giving is a *presence,* an *offering,* an *opening*" (Gearhart, 1982, p. 198). In offering, rhetors tell what they currently know or understand; they present their vision of the world and show how it looks and works for them.

As a rhetorical form, offering may appear to be similar to some traditional rhetorical strategies, such as the use of personal narrative as a form of support for a rhetor's position. But narrative as offering functions differently from narrative as a means of support. It is presented in offering for the purpose of articulating a viewpoint but not as a means to increase the likelihood of the audience's adherence to that viewpoint. The offering of a personal narrative is, itself, the goal; the means and the ends are the same in offering. Offering is not based on a dichotomy of cause and effect, an action done in the present to affect the future. Instead, as Johnson (1989) explains, the "'means are the ends; . . . *how* we do something is *what* we get'" (p. 35). In this mode, then, a story is not told as a means of supporting or achieving some other end but as an end in itself—simply offering the perspective the story represents.

A critical dimension of the offering of a perspective, in whatever form it takes, is a willingness to yield. Not unlike Buber's (1965) notion of the "I-Thou" relationship, the basic movement of a willingness to yield is a turning toward the other. It involves meeting another's position "in its uniqueness, letting it have its impact" (p. xiv). Tracy (1987) explains the connection between the meeting of another's uniqueness and a willingness to yield: "To attend to the other as other, the different as different, is also to understand the different *as* possible" (p. 20). When they assume such a stance, rhetors communicate a willingness to call into question the beliefs they consider most inviolate and to relax their grip on those beliefs. The process is not unlike the self-risk that Natanson (1965) describes as the risking

> of the self's world of feeling, attitude, and the total subtle range of its affective and conative sensibility. . . . [W]hen I truly risk myself in arguing I open myself to the viable possibility that the consequence of an argument may be to make me *see* something of the structure of my immediate world. (p. 15)

Scott (1976) calls this self-risk "a grave risk: the risk of the self that resides in a value structure" (p. 105). Thus, the perspective presented through offering represents an initial, tentative commitment to that perspective—one subject to revision as a result of the interaction.

A few specific examples of offering may clarify the nature of this rhetorical form. Although much rarer than we would like, offering sometimes occurs in academic settings when faculty members and/or students gather to discuss a topic of mutual interest. When they enter the interaction with a goal not of converting others to their positions but of sharing what they know, extending one another's ideas, thinking critically about all the ideas offered, and coming to an understanding of the subject and of one another, they are engaged in offering. Offering also is marked by discursive forms such as "I tried this solution when that happened to me; I thought it worked well" or "What would happen if we introduced the idea of _____ into this problem?" rather than statements with forms such as "You really ought to do _____" or "Your idea is flawed because you failed to take into account _____."

Offering may occur not only in small-group settings but also in formal presentational contexts. A rhetor who presents her ideas at an academic colloquium, for example, engages in offering when she presents her ideas as valuable yet also as tentative. She acknowledges the fact that her work is in progress; thus, she is open to the ideas of others so she can continue to revise and improve it. She builds on and extends the work of others rather than tearing their ideas apart in an effort to establish the superiority of her own. In an offering mode, she provides explanations for the sources of her ideas rather than marshalling evidence to establish their superiority. Audience members, too, may engage in offering behavior. They do so when they ask questions and make comments designed not to show the stupidity or error of the perspective presented or to establish themselves as more powerful or expert than the presenter. Instead, their questions and suggestions are aimed at learning more about the presenter's ideas, understanding them more thoroughly, nurturing them, and offering additional ways of thinking about the subject for everyone involved in the interaction.

We have tried to write this essay using such features of the offering form. We present a *proposal* for an invitational rhetoric, for example, a word we chose deliberately to suggest that what we present here is only one of many equally legitimate perspectives possible. We suggest that invitational rhetoric is a viable form of interaction in many instances but do not assert that it is the only appropriate form of rhetoric and should be used in all situations or contexts. We acknowledge the importance and usefulness of traditional theories of rhetoric even as we propose an alternative to them, and we try to build on and extend the work of other theorists—both traditional and feminist—rather than characterizing their work as inaccurate or misguided. Although we are constrained somewhat by the format of a journal article, we see this essay as in progress and plan to continue to work on our ideas; the responses of some of our colleagues and the reviewers and editor of *Communication Monographs* already have helped us clarify and improve our description of this rhetoric. We have attempted, then, to model the offering of a perspective within the perimeters allowed by a framework of scholarly discourse.

Offering also may be seen in the nonverbal realm; a perspective may be offered in the clothing individuals wear, the places in which and how they live, and in all of the symbolic choices rhetors make that reveal their perspectives. This kind of offering is illustrated by Purple Saturday, sponsored by the Women's Caucus at Speech Communication Association (SCA) conventions. On Purple Saturday, the women attending the convention (and those men who wish to show their support for women) are asked to wear purple, a color of the early women's suffrage movement, to proclaim women's solidarity and presence in SCA. When women wear purple on Saturday at the convention, they are not trying to persuade others to become feminists, to accept feminist scholarship, or to value women. Instead, they are simply offering a perspective so that those who wish to learn more about feminist scholarship or to join in the celebration of feminism may do so. Although not designed to influence others to change in particular directions, such nonverbal offerings may have that effect; some who view the wearing of purple by others at a convention may choose, for example, to explore or engage in feminist research themselves.

Another form offering may take, particularly in a hostile situation or when a dominant perspective is very different from the one held by the rhetor, is re-sourcement (Gearhart, 1982). Re-sourcement is a response made by a rhetor according to a framework, assumptions, or principles other than those suggested in the precipitating message. In using re-sourcement, the rhetor deliberately draws energy from a new source—a source other than the individual or system that provided the initial frame for the issue. It is a means, then, of communicating a perspective that is different from that of the individual who produced the message to which the rhetor is responding. Re-sourcement is not unlike Burke's (1984) notion of perspective by incongruity, but in re-sourcement, the juxtaposition of two systems or frameworks is split between rhetor and audience, with one reflected in the original message, the other in the response.

Re-sourcement involves the two processes of disengagement from the framework, system, or principles embedded in the precipitating message and the creative development of a response so that the issue is framed differently. Rorty's (1986) description of the process of generating new vocabularies points to this two-part process: "The idea is to get a vocabulary which is (at the moment) incommensurable with the old in order to draw attention away from the issues stated in the old, and thereby help people to forget them" (p. 114). In Forget's (1989) words, this kind of communication is "a swerve, a leap to the other side, which lets us . . . deploy another logic or system" (p. 136).

Although a refusal to engage in conflict or interaction under the terms proposed by a rhetor sometimes is seen as a negative, ineffective form of communication because it is interpreted as disconfirmation (e.g., Veenendall & Feinstein, 1990) or as a kind of manipulation associated with passive-aggressive behavior, it can be a positive response to a situation. It allows rhetors to continue to value themselves as well as the audience because it communicates that they are not willing to allow the audience to violate their integrity. Re-sourcement also opens up possibilities for future rhetorical choices, providing more options for rhetors than were previously available. As later options, rhetors who use re-sourcement may articulate their positions through more traditional forms of offering or standard forms of persuasion.

An example of re-sourcement is provided by Starhawk (1987) in her description of an incident that followed the blockade of the Livermore Weapons Lab in California to protest its development of nuclear weapons. She and other women were arrested and held in a school gym, and during their confinement, a woman was chased into the gym by six guards. She dove into a cluster of women, and they held on to her as the guards pulled at her legs, trying to extract her from the group. The guards were on the verge of beating the women when one woman sat down and began to chant. As the other women followed suit, the guards' actions changed in response:

> They look bewildered. Something they are unprepared for, unprepared even to name, has arisen in our moment of common action. They do not know what to do. And so, after a moment, they withdraw. . . . In that moment in the jail, the power of domination and control met something outside its comprehension, a power rooted in another source. (p. 5)

The guards' message was framed in a context of opposition, violence, hostility, and fear; the women, in contrast, chose to respond with a message framed in terms of nonviolence and connection.

Re-sourcement in a discursive form is exemplified in a story told by Watzlawick, Weakland, and Fisch (1974) about a police officer who was

> issuing a citation for a minor traffic violation when a hostile crowd began to gather around him. By the time he had given the offender his ticket, the mood of the crowd was ugly and the sergeant was not certain he would be able to get back to the relative safety of his patrol car. It then occurred to him to announce in a loud voice: "You have just witnessed the issuance of a traffic ticket by a member of your Oakland Police Department." And while the bystanders were busy trying to fathom the deeper meaning of this all too obvious communique, he got into his cruiser and drove off. (pp. 108–109)

The initial message presented to the police officer was framed in the context of opposition and hostility; he chose, however, to respond with a message grounded in a framework of simple explanation, cooperation, and respect. Re-sourcement, as a means of offering, allowed him to diffuse the situation and to communicate his own perspective—that he was doing the job he was hired by the crowd members, as taxpayers, to do.

External Conditions

Offering can occur whether or not an audience chooses to join with a rhetor in a process of discovery and understanding. But if invitational rhetoric is to result in *mutual* understanding of perspectives, it involves not only the offering of the rhetor's perspective but the creation of an atmosphere in which audience members' perspectives also can be offered. We propose that to create such an environment, an invitational rhetoric must create three external conditions in the interaction between rhetors and audience members—safety, value, and freedom. These are states or prerequisites required if the possibility of mutual understanding is to exist.

The condition of *safety* involves the creation of a feeling of security and freedom from danger for the audience. Rhetoric contributes to a feeling of safety when it conveys to audience members that the ideas and feelings they share with the rhetor will be received with respect and care. When rhetoric establishes a safe context, the rhetor makes no attempt to hurt, degrade, or belittle audience members or their beliefs, and audience members do not fear rebuttal of or retribution for their most fundamental beliefs. Even in a volatile situation such as that described by Starhawk, when the guards were about to beat a woman seeking safe haven in a group of protesters, rhetoric that promotes a feeling of safety can be created. In this case, the women did nothing to endanger the guards or make them feel as though they would be hurt. They did not fight them physically or argue against the guards' use of force; neither did they engage in verbal abuse or ridicule the guards' training and beliefs about how to deal with prisoners.

Rhetoric that contributes to a feeling of safety also provides some means for audience members to order the world so it seems coherent and makes sense to them. When audience members feel their sense of order is threatened or challenged, they are more likely to cling to familiar ways of thinking and to be less open to understanding the perspectives of others. When a safe environment is created, then, audience members trust the rhetor and feel the rhetor is working with and not against them.

The condition of *value* is the acknowledgment that audience members have intrinsic or immanent worth. This value is what Benhabib (1992) calls "*the principle of universal moral respect*"—"the right of all beings capable of speech and action to be participants" in the conversation (p. 29). Barrett (1991) describes this condition as "respectfully, affirming others" while at the same time "one affirms oneself" (p. 148).

Value is created when rhetors approach audience members as "unrepeatable individuals" and eschew "distancing, depersonalizing, or paternalistic attitudes" (Walker, 1989, pp. 22, 23). As a result, audience members feel their identities are not forced upon or chosen for them by rhetors. Rhetors do not attempt to fit audience members into any particular roles but face "the 'otherness of the other,' one might say to face their 'alterity,' their irreducible distinctness and difference from the self" (Benhabib, 1992, p. 167). Rhetors celebrate the unique and individual identities of audience members—what Benhabib (1992) describes as

> the actuality of my choices, namely to how I, as a finite, concrete, embodied individual, shape and fashion the circumstances of my birth and family, linguistic, cultural and gender identity into a coherent narrative that stands as my life's story. (pp. 161–162)

One way in which rhetoric may contribute to the acknowledgment and celebration of freely chosen, unique identities by audience members is through a process Gendlin (1978) calls "*absolute listening*" (p. 116), Morton (1985) describes as "hearing to speech" (p. 202), and Johnson (1987) terms "hearing into being" (p. 130). In such rhetoric, listeners do not interrupt, comfort, or insert anything of their own as others tell of their experiences. Such a stance contrasts with typical ways of listening, in which "we nearly always stop each other from getting very far inside. Our advice, reactions, encouragements, reassurances, and well-intentioned comments actually prevent people from feeling understood" (Gendlin, 1978, p. 116) and encourage them to direct their comments toward listeners' positions or orientations (Johnson, 1987). While speaking to listeners who do not insert themselves into the talk, individuals come to discover their own perspectives. Morton (1985) quotes a woman's description of her experience in the process of being heard to speech: "'You didn't smother me. You gave it [my voice] space to shape itself. You gave it time to come full circle'" (p. 205).

Value is conveyed to audience members when rhetors not only listen carefully to the perspectives of others but try to think from those perspectives. Benhabib's (1992) notion of the "'reversibility of perspectives'" (p. 145) is relevant here; it is the capacity to reverse perspectives and to reason from the standpoint of others, "making present to oneself what the perspectives of others involved are or could be" (p. 137). When value is created in a communicative situation, audience members feel rhetors see them as significant individuals and appreciate and attend to their uniqueness. They feel rhetors care about them, understand their ideas, and allow them to contribute in significant ways to the interaction.

Freedom, the power to choose or decide, is a third condition whose presence in an environment is a prerequisite for the possibility of mutual understanding. In invitational rhetoric, rhetors do not place restrictions on an interaction. Participants can bring any and all matters to the interaction for consideration; no subject matter is off limits, and all presuppositions can be challenged. The rhetor's ideas also are not privileged over those of the audience in invitational rhetoric. All the participants in the interaction are able, in Barrett's (1991) words, to "speak up, to speak out" (p. 148). Benhabib (1992) calls this "*the principle of egalitarian reciprocity*" (p. 29); within conversations, it suggests, "each has the same symmetrical rights to various speech acts, to initiate new topics, to ask for reflection about the presuppositions of the conversation, etc." (p. 29).

Freedom also is developed when a rhetor provides opportunities for others to develop and choose options from alternatives they, themselves, have created. Rather than presenting a predetermined set of options from which individuals may choose, a rhetor who wishes to facilitate freedom allows audience members to develop the options that seem appropriate to them, allowing for the richness and complexity of their unique subjective experiences. Perspectives are articulated as a means to widen options—to generate more ideas than either rhetors or audiences had initially—in contrast to traditional rhetoric, where rhetors seek to limit the options of audiences and encourage them to select the one they advocate.

Freedom of choice is made available to audiences, as well, in that, in invitational rhetoric, the audience's lack of acceptance of or adherence to the perspective articulated by the rhetor truly makes no difference to the rhetor. Some audience members will choose to try to understand the perspective of the rhetor, but others will not. Of those who do, some will choose to accept the perspective offered by the rhetor, but others will not. Either outcome—acceptance or rejection—is seen as perfectly acceptable by the invitational rhetor, who is not offended, disappointed, or angry if audience members choose not to adopt a particular perspective. Should the audience choose not to accept the vision articulated by the rhetor, the connection between the rhetor and the audience remains intact, and the audience still is valued and appreciated by the rhetor. The maintenance of the connection between rhetors and audiences is not dependent on rhetors' approval of the choices made by audience members. Rogers' (1962) notion of unconditional positive regard suggests the nature of the autonomy the rhetor accords the audience; the audience has the freedom to make choices without the possibility of losing the respect of the rhetor.

ILLUSTRATIONS

Invitational rhetoric offers an invitation to understanding—to enter another's world to better understand an issue and the individual who holds a particular perspective on it. Ultimately, its purpose is to provide the basis for the creation and maintenance of relationships of equality.

Its primary communicative options are offering perspectives and the creation of the external conditions of safety, value, and freedom that enable audience members to present their perspectives to the rhetor. In this section, we present two examples of invitational rhetoric to clarify its primary features.

The first example is the acceptance speech given by Adrienne Rich when she was awarded the National Book Awards' prize for poetry in 1974 (Rich, Lorde, & Walker, 1974/1994). When Rich accepted the award, she read a statement that she had prepared with Alice Walker and Audre Lorde—both of whom also had been nominated for the prize. In the statement, the three women announced that they were accepting the award together: "We, Audre Lorde, Adrienne Rich, and Alice Walker, together accept this award in the name of all the women whose voices have gone and still go unheard in a patriarchal world" (p. 148).

The statement clearly articulated the women's own position: "We believe that we can enrich ourselves more in supporting and giving to each other than by competing against each other; and that poetry—if it *is* poetry—exists in a realm beyond ranking and comparison" (p. 148). They presented no arguments in favor of their belief, however, nor did they argue against the position held by representatives of the National Book Awards. Thus, they did not seek the adherence of others to their perspective but simply offered their own vision.

The speech illustrates re-sourcement as a form of offering in that the women communicated their differences with the hierarchical, competitive framework established by the National Book Awards simply by not communicating within the terms of that framework: "None of us could accept this money for herself" (p. 148). They chose to respond within a different framework—one based on support and cooperation—by accepting the prize in the name of all women: "We will share this prize among us, to be used as best we can for women" (p. 148).

The three external conditions of safety, value, and freedom required for others to present their perspectives were created by the speech. The rhetors communicated safety when they suggested that they regarded the perspective of the judges as a legitimate one that they would treat with respect and care. "We appreciate the good faith of the judges for this award" (p. 148), they stated.

They accorded value in very specific ways to many individuals, both those in their immediate audience and others:

> We dedicate this occasion to the struggle for self-determination of all women, of every color, identification, or derived class: the poet, the housewife, the lesbian, the mathematician, the mother, the dishwasher, the pregnant teenager, the teacher, the grandmother, the prostitute, the philosopher, the waitress, the women who will understand what we are doing here and those who will not understand yet. (pp. 148–149)

They not only recognized these diverse and unique individuals but credited them as sources for their own work, calling them "the silent women whose voices have been denied us, the articulate women who have given us strength to do our work" (p. 149).

The brevity of the speech precluded the opportunity for the extensive development of freedom for the audience, but it is evident in that Rich, Walker, and Lorde do not specify particular options for action for women; they leave open to women whatever routes of "self-determination" (p. 148) they, themselves, choose. Nor do they suggest the kind of support women should give to each other or the particular contributions other women have made to them. Their ambiguity in these areas leaves open options for the audience and does not confine the terms of the interaction they initiated.

Feminist and animal-rights activist Sally Miller Gearhart (1993) provides a second example of invitational rhetoric in her narration of her interaction with an anti-abortion advocate. In the interaction, Gearhart used both traditional and invitational rhetoric, so her narrative provides a useful contrast between the two and the kinds of results each tends to produce. On a trip with a friend to upstate New York, Gearhart encountered a man in the Kennedy airport "railing about all these women and abortion rights." Because of her own pro-choice beliefs, Gearhart

> took him on. As a matter of fact, I took him on so loudly that we gathered a little crowd there in the Kennedy airport. I was screaming at him; I was trying to make him change. It was not successful, and it was pretty ugly, as a matter of fact. . . . They didn't have to actually physically separate us, but it was close to that.

An hour later, as she was boarding the shuttle bus to take her to Plattsburg, her destination, Gearhart encountered the man again: "There was only one seat on that bus, and guess who it was next to? . . . He looked at me and I looked at him as if to say, 'Oh, my God, what are we going to do?'" Rather than continue to engage the man as she had in the airport, Gearhart decided to try something different—to engage in what we suggest was invitational rhetoric: "I decided that what I would do was to try to approach this man with something different . . . and so I began asking him about his life and about the things that he did," seeking to understand his perspective and the reasons it made sense to him. "In fact," Gearhart explains, "it was even worse than I had originally thought. In fact, he was a chemist, and he had experimented on animals. He had grown up as a hunter and, of course, all that is absolutely counter to the things that I believe." But rather than attempting to convince him of the error of his ways, Gearhart continued to listen to the man, and he did the same as she shared her own perspectives and experiences with him.

The invitational rhetoric in which the two engaged brought Gearhart and the man together, although neither one "had changed our original position." As the two crossed paths for the third time in the parking lot, waiting for their respective rides, they started walking toward each other. Gearhart finishes the story:

> I don't know which one of us did it first, but I guess maybe I flung open my arms and he flung open his arms and we came together in this terrific hug, both of us in tears, sobbing, crying like babies. I said, "You know, I don't know what has happened here, but my life has been totally changed after today." And he said, "My life is totally changed, too, and I don't know what's happened."

We suggest that what happened was that the two individuals had offered their perspectives and listened to and acknowledged one another's perspectives in an environment of safety, value, and freedom. Their communication thus invited understanding and brought them to a new place of awareness of and appreciation for one another. Gearhart's (1993) summary of the experience is an excellent summary of invitational rhetoric: "It's a way to disagree and at the same time not to hurt each other and to respect each other and to have, actually, something very close and tender."

We see the statement of Rich, Lorde, and Walker and Gearhart's interaction as invitational, then, in that both were rooted in the principles of equality, immanent value, and respect for others and validation of their perspectives. Rich, Lorde, and Walker offered a perspective and communicated its difference with that of the judges, but they neither sought adherence for it nor denigrated the different viewpoint of the judges. Gearhart also offered a perspective very different from that of her acquaintance and listened to one very different from her own without seeking adherence or pronouncing judgment. Each rhetor created conditions of safety, value, and freedom, contributing to an environment in which audience members were able to present their different perspectives. The result was an understanding on which relationships of equality and respect could be built.

IMPLICATIONS FOR RHETORICAL THEORY

The expansion of the notion of rhetoric to include invitational rhetoric has several implications for rhetorical theory. The introduction of invitational rhetoric into the scope of rhetorical theory challenges the presumption that has been granted to persuasion as the interactional goal in the rhetorical tradition. Identification and explication of a rhetoric not grounded in the intent to produce a desired change in others undermine the position of privilege accorded to efforts to influence in rhetoric. The existence of invitational rhetoric encourages the exploration of yet other rhetorics that do not involve this singular interactional goal.

A second implication is that invitational rhetoric may contribute to the efforts of communication scholars who are working to develop models for cooperative, nonadversarial, and ethical communication. Such a goal, for example, is espoused by Herrick (1992), in his discussion of the link between rhetoric and ethics, when he suggests "that a virtue approach to rhetorical ethics may provide the kind of flexible, yet directive, ethic needed" to maintain the democratic nature of a pluralistic social order (p. 147). Van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1992) also propose such a goal in their book on argumentation; their approach is designed to create an open and free exchange and responsible participation in cooperative, dialogic communication. The framework provided by invitational rhetoric may allow such theorists to achieve their laudatory missions more easily by contributing to a reconciliation of goals and means (Makau, in press). According to Herrick's and van Eemeren and Grootendorst's definitions of rhetoric as a process in which rhetors seek to secure the acceptance of their perspectives by others, rhetors tend to see their audiences as opponents and sometimes may be tempted to engage in questionable ethical practices to win their "battles" with them. Rules thus are required to contain the interaction that results from the use of such strategies. Invitational rhetoric may serve as a way to allow these scholars to develop models for interaction not characterized by the opposition and competition that make the achievement of their goal difficult.

The introduction of invitational rhetoric to the array of rhetorical forms available also serves a greater heuristic, inventive function than rhetoric previously has allowed. Traditional theories of rhetoric occur within preimposed or preconceived frameworks that are reflexive and reinforce the vocabularies and tenets of those frameworks. In rhetoric in which the rhetor seeks to impose change on others, an idea is adapted to the audience or is presented in ways that will be most persuasive to the audience; as a result, the idea stays lodged within the confines of the rhetorical system in which it was framed. Others may challenge the idea but only within the confines of the framework of the dispute already established. The inventive potential of rhetoric is restricted as the interaction converts the idea to the experience required by the framework.

Invitational rhetoric, on the other hand, aims at converting experience "to one of the many views which are indeterminately possible" (Holmberg, 1977, p. 237). As a result, much is open in invitational rhetoric that is not in traditional rhetorics—the potential of the audience to contribute to the generation of ideas is enhanced, the means used to present ideas are not those that limit the ideas to what is most persuasive for the audience, the view of the kind of environment that can be created in the interaction is expanded, and the ideas that can be considered multiply. The privileging of invention in invitational rhetoric allows for the development of interpretations, perspectives, courses of actions, and solutions to problems different from those allowed in traditional models of rhetoric. Rather than the discovery of how to make a case, invitational rhetoric employs invention to discover more cases, a process Daly (1984) describes as one of creating "an atmosphere in which further creativity may flourish. . . . [we] become breathers/creators of free space. We are windy, stirring the stagnant spaces with life" (p. 18).

The inclusion of an invitational rhetoric in the array of rhetorics available suggests the need to revise and expand rhetorical constructs of various kinds to take into account the nature and function of this form. Invitational rhetoric suggests, for example, that the traditional view of the audience as an opponent ought to be questioned. It challenges the traditional conception of the notion of rhetorical strategies as means to particular ends in that in invitational rhetoric, the means constitute the ends. It suggests the need for a new schema of ethics to fit interactional goals other than inducement of others to adherence to the rhetor's own beliefs.

Finally, invitational rhetoric provides a mode of communication for women and other marginalized groups to use in their efforts to transform systems of domination and oppression. At first glance, invitational rhetoric may seem to be incapable of resisting and transforming oppressive systems such as patriarchy because the most it seems able to do is to create a space in which representatives of an oppressive system understand a different—in this case, a feminist—perspective but do not adopt it. Although invitational rhetoric is not designed to create a specific change, such as the transformation of systems of oppression into ones that value and nurture individuals, it may produce such an outcome. Invitational rhetoric may resist an oppressive system simply because it models an alternative to the system by being "itself an Other way of thinking/speaking" (Daly, 1978, p. xiii)—it presents an alternative feminist vision rooted in affirmation and respect and thus shows how an alternative looks and works. Invitational rhetoric thus may transform an oppressive system precisely because it does not engage that system on its own terms, using arguments developed from the system's framework or orientation. Such arguments usually are co-opted by the dominant system (Ferguson, 1984) and provide the impetus "to strengthen, refine, and embellish the original edifice," entrenching the system further (Johnson, 1989, pp. 16–17). Invitational rhetoric, in contrast, enables rhetors to disengage from the dominance and mastery so common to a system of oppression and to create a reality of equality and mutuality in its place, allowing for options and possibilities not available within the familiar, dominant framework.

Our interest in inserting invitational rhetoric into the scope of rhetorical theory is not meant to suggest that it is an ideal for which rhetors should strive or that it should or can be used in all situations. Invitational rhetoric is one of many useful and legitimate rhetorics, including persuasion, in which rhetors will want to be skilled. With the identification of the rhetorical mode of invitational rhetoric, however, rhetors will be able to recognize situations in which they seek not to persuade others but simply to create an environment that facilitates understanding, accords value and respect to others' perspectives, and contributes to the development of relationships of equality.

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4

Beyond Traditional Conceptualizations of Rhetoric

Invitational Rhetoric and a Move toward Civility

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Although Aristotle's definition of rhetoric as "the faculty of discerning the possible means of persuasion in each particular case" is a familiar one for rhetorical scholars grounded in Western and/or European traditions and perspectives, challenges to this definition of rhetoric are not new (xxxvi).[1] As early as the 1700s, Campbell pushed at the boundaries of Aristotle's definition, linking rhetoric to eloquence, suggesting that "eloquence, or the art of speaking . . . in its greatest latitude denotes 'that art or talent by which the discourse is adapted to its end'" (xxii). In the 1930s, Richards altered Aristotle's definition slightly, defining rhetoric as "a study of misunderstanding and its remedies" (3). In the 1950s, Bryant saw rhetoric as the "function of adjusting ideas to people and people to ideas" (404), while Weaver reintroduced a link between rhetoric and truth (*The Ethics*). A decade later, Scott continued to challenge the definition of rhetoric suggesting that rhetoric be viewed as epistemic ("On Viewing," "Dialogue," "Rhetoric"). And in the 1980s, Asante cautioned against the Eurocentric bias that framed the rhetorical theoretical tradition and that misunderstood and misrepresented rhetoric grounded in "African philosophy and culture" (*The Afrocentric* 19).

In the 1990s, scholars raised increasingly controversial questions regarding the definition of rhetoric. Asante continued his reframing of theories of rhetoric from an Afrocentric perspective (*Kemet*), Shepherd suggested that a gendered bias exists in the definition of communication and rhetoric (1992), Kennedy defined rhetoric as the transmission of energy and attributed rhetorical acts to both animals and humans (1992), and Foss and Griffin offered a theory of invitational rhetoric and a specific challenge to the discipline's monolithic definition of rhetoric as persuasion ("Beyond").[2] With their proposal for an invitational rhetoric, Griffin and Foss[3] called attention to a potential relationship between persuasion and violence challenging the discipline to consider the implications of that link. They also suggested that, rather than persuasion, rhetoric could be "an invitation to understanding as a means to create a relationship rooted in equality, immanent value, and self-determination," and they mapped out the underpinnings of a theory of invitational rhetoric (5). Critics of the theory of invitational rhetoric responded in several ways, arguing that the association between persuasion and

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violence is unacceptable (Pollock, Artz, Frey, Pearce, and Murphy; Dow "Feminism, Difference"; Dow "Feminism, Power") that Foss and Griffin unrealistically advocate that invitational rhetoric be used in all situations (Cloud), that the theory is gender-specific (Condit; Mathison; Bruner) or grounded in essentialist principles (Bruner et al.), that invitational rhetoric lacks any notion of agency (Fulkerson; Lozano-Reich; Mathison), and/or that it actually is persuasion in disguise (Cloud; Fulkerson).

In this essay, we seek to respond to these criticisms and to build on the theory of invitational rhetoric offered by Griffin and Foss in 1995. Our goal is to expand our knowledge of invitational rhetorical practices, as they exist in an increasingly diverse, complex, and interconnected world and to illustrate the ways that invitational rhetoric works to promote and establish civility in a variety of venues. To this end, we begin with a brief overview of invitational rhetoric, expanding and clarifying some of the earlier terms and components of the original theory. Next, we offer a discussion of the six critiques that have been directed against invitational rhetoric, responding to the critiques and extending the original theory as we address each. The criticisms of invitational rhetoric, and our responses to them, call attention to important tensions in rhetorical scholarship, tensions that can assist rhetorical scholars in illustrating the complexity of symbolic exchanges. We then examine specific examples of invitational rhetoric as a means to highlight the prevalence, value, and practice of invitational rhetoric in public deliberations. Our examples illustrate the presence of invitational rhetoric at work in the world in simple and straightforward as well as complex and elaborate ways. Finally, we turn to a brief discussion of links between invitational rhetoric and civility, suggesting that invitational rhetoric and civility are a means to create ethical exchanges in difficult situations.

INVITATIONAL RHETORIC

Originally defined as "an invitation to understanding as a means to create a relationship rooted in equality, immanent value, and self-determination," the authors of the 1995 article sought to establish invitational rhetoric as unique from traditional conceptualizations of rhetoric as persuasion and as an attempt to convince others of the rightness of one's own view (5). Foss and Griffin suggested that invitational rhetoric differs from attempts to win over an opponent or to advocate the correctness of a single position in a very complex issue. Invitational rhetoric, they suggested, can be viewed as a communication exchange in which participants create an environment where growth and change can occur but where changing others is neither the ultimate goal nor the criterion for success in the interaction. In contrast to wanting to change another person, when rhetors use invitational rhetoric their goal is to enter into a dialogue in order to share perspectives and positions, to see the complexity of an issue about which neither party agrees, and to increase understanding. The interaction, or relationship between those involved in the exchange, is rooted in reciprocity and respect. Although this relationship may be present in other forms of rhetoric, what makes it unique in the theory of invitational rhetoric is a willingness on the part of rhetors to dialogue rather than debate and to forgo efforts to change others.

In its earliest conceptualization, the offering of ideas or perspectives and the creation of conditions of safety, value, and freedom guided the theory of invitational rhetoric. In offering perspectives, rhetors "do not seek to impose their position on audience members"; rather, they articulate their perspectives as fully and as carefully as possible; offering is a process of "giving voice" to a perspective rather than imposing a position or view on another rhetor (7). When rhetors offer perspectives, they articulate a point of view not to gain adherence to that view, but, rather, to enhance the understanding of it. In offering, rhetors must be willing to "yield," which involves a "turning toward the other . . . meeting another's position 'in its uniqueness, letting it have its impact'" (7). This involves "self-risk" which means that rhetors must risk themselves in the exchange and "call into question the beliefs they consider most inviolate and relax their grip on those beliefs" (7). Griffin and Foss explained that in hostile situations, one way offering perspectives could occur is through re-sourcement. Re-sourcement is a "response made by a rhetor according to a framework, assumptions, or principles other than those suggested in the precipitating message" (9). In re-sourcement the rhetor deliberately draws energy from a new source, which involves disengaging from the framework offered by another rhetor, and makes a "swerve, a leap to the other side, which lets us . . . deploy another logic or system" (9).

Safety, value, and freedom were seen as external conditions created by a rhetor in and during a communication exchange. *Safety* involves "creating a feeling of security and freedom from danger" on the part of the audience and is manifest when the audience recognizes that their "ideas and feelings" will not be denigrated or trivialized by the rhetor (10). S*afety* can be established when rhetors see others as holding valid perspectives and positions that are worthy of exploration. When *safety* is created, rhetors create an atmosphere in which audiences recognize that their own views will be "received with respect and care" (10).[4] *Value* is "the acknowledgment that audience members have intrinsic or immanent worth" (11). When *value* is present, rhetors recognize that the views of the other person or people, although different from one's own, have inherent value; that is, rhetors communicate that they will step outside their own standpoint in order to understand another perspective. *Value* is created through "'the principle of universal moral respect'—'the right of all beings capable of speech and action to be participants' in the conversation"—and through "absolute listening," described as "hearing to speech" or "hearing into being" (11). Finally, *freedom*, which is "the power to choose or decide" on the part of an audience is a third condition in invitational rhetoric (12). When *freedom* is present, rhetors do not choose for others how to think or decide and they do not place restrictions on an interaction. When *freedom* is present, participants "can bring any and all matters to the interaction," they need not accept the rhetor's own view, and they may make choices and decisions that work for them (12). *Freedom* involves "the principle of egalitarian reciprocity" which allows rhetors the "same symmetrical rights to various speech acts, to initiate new topics, to ask for reflection about the presuppositions of the conversation"; in short, it is the ability of all participants to "speak up, to speak out" (12).

To engage in invitational rhetoric is to exchange ideas from positions of mutual respect and equality. Although this mutual respect and equality may be present in persuasive exchanges (e.g., Wood), from an invitational stance, rhetors explore and examine different views, not to advocate the adoption of another person's worldview or reality but, instead, to come away from the exchange with a richer and more comprehensive understanding of that worldview.

Since the original article, the authors have taken different paths in their pursuit of invitational rhetoric. Foss has turned her attention to the creation of external conditions in an invitational environment, particularly freedom, and toward the ways others might enact or create a particular kind of world in which they wish to live. Griffin's focus has turned to the role of invitational rhetoric in public discussions and dialogue and to the link between invitational rhetoric and civility. Not surprisingly, these different turns have created some tension around the theory of invitational rhetoric. Additionally, the challenge the authors made to the privileging of persuasion, some of the feminist literature they used to theorize invitational rhetoric, and the legitimate desire scholars have to challenge and question new theory, make this theory a provocative one that warrants further exploration. Our goal in this next section is to address six of the most common critiques of the theory of invitational rhetoric as a way to extend the theory itself, but also to call attention to some of the assumptions underlying these critiques and the tensions inherent in them.

CRITIQUES OF INVITATIONAL RHETORIC

With the challenge to the strict definition of rhetoric as persuasion came a desire to problematize that narrow definition and to ask rhetorical scholars to consider what persuasion is or can be. That challenge was grounded in Gearhart's 1979 essay, "The Womanization of Rhetoric," and, we believe, created fertile ground for two of the six critiques: invitational rhetoric suggests all persuasion is violent and invitational rhetoric should be used in every situation. Subsequent and interrelated critiques launched against invitational rhetoric, we contend, are strongly rooted in disagreements about feminist rhetorical theory in general and the theories used by Foss and Griffin in particular. Griffin and Foss have been critiqued as basing their theory of invitational rhetoric exclusively on *women's* communication, therefore creating an essentialist feminist paradigm (e.g., Dow "Feminism"). Additionally, critics discount invitational rhetoric because of an assumption that it lacks agency, a result of the authors' concerns with change. Lastly, invitational rhetoric has been accused of being manipulative, and therefore *really* persuasion in disguise (e.g., Cloud). In the following section, we address each of these critiques.

Critique #1: Invitational Rhetoric Posits All Persuasion as Violence

One of the most common critiques of invitational rhetoric is that, explicitly or implicitly, it is grounded in the idea that persuasion is violence (e.g., Pollock et al.). Indeed, Gearhart's own opening sentence states: "My indictment of our discipline of rhetoric springs from my belief that any intent to persuade is an act of violence" (195) and, although they do not cite that specific claim, Foss and Griffin do cite Gearhart extensively in order to question the valorization of persuasion and the ethical implications of discourses that are grounded in the "rightness" of changing others. To be sure, the critique of persuasion is harsh and the link between persuasion and violence is present. Such terms and phrases as "control and domination," "power of the rhetor over another [rhetor]" and "rush of power" are used in describing persuasion, and the questioning of the connection between persuasion and violence is obvious (3). However, Griffin and Foss advocate that under *certain* circumstances, to attempt to persuade is inappropriate, but they do not state that persuasion, by its very nature, is always and only violent.

However, Fulkerson; Pollock, Artz, Frey, Pearce, and Murphy; and Dow ("Feminism, Power") claim that by supporting invitational rhetoric, one implicitly supports the notion that persuasion is violent. This seems a problematic argument for two reasons. First, all scholarship is based on the tenets of previous theory. In order to build new theory, scholars draw on the most provocative aspects of certain theories while rejecting other aspects; the result is (hopefully) additional perspectives that enrich or amend the "old." To argue that scholarship must support a preexisting theory in its entirety, if it is to use any aspect of that theory, is an untenable claim. To argue so would be to say that when we turn to Aristotle to discuss anything related to rhetorical theory we also implicitly support Aristotle's denigration and exclusion of women (and possibly other minorities) as strong and viable rhetors. Clearly, very few rhetorical scholars would adhere to this view.

Second, and perhaps more interesting to scholars of persuasion, is that this critique effectively functions to shut down conversations about any links that may actually exist between persuasion and violence and the implications of those links. This is a provocative issue with complex and sometimes troubling nuances. If links between persuasion and violence exist, what would those links expose or suggest? If persuasion can, at times, be violent then when might it be so? If there is a form of rhetoric equivalent to extreme force what might that form be? In what instances might this extreme form be necessary and acceptable or, conversely, questionable, inappropriate, or forbidden? In short, what would it mean to say that persuasion, at times, can be violent, that there may be a continuum of "violence," or that rhetorical violence may, at times, be desirable? A refusal to engage in conversations about any link between violence and persuasion circumvents conversations about the definitions of persuasion and violence as well as the ethics involved in persuasion. For example, although *violence* can be defined as an unjust or improper force as well as an extreme and unnatural interruption or reproach, it also can be defined as a forceful alteration and a harsh and painful change. To *violate* is, of course, to desecrate or injure, but that term also can be defined as "to break or disregard" and "to interfere with by interruption or disturbance" ("violence").[5] The subtlety of these definitions suggests that nuances exist in the use of persuasion that are worth exploring. To offer an extreme and unnatural verbal interruption or reproach may halt a dangerous or desperate situation and open up a space for further negotiation before decisions are made and actions taken. To employ symbols to bring about a forceful alteration or a harsh and painful change may, in fact, be a necessary step to prevent harm or bring about a greater good. To interfere may not always be appropriate, but in certain contexts, verbal interference may cause individuals or groups to think differently about complex situations.

Rather than arguing that all persuasion is violent, the theory of invitational rhetoric suggests two things—*some* persuasive rhetoric is violent (and the implications of this are worthy of further exploration) and rhetoric could profitably be defined as more complex than solely persuasive communication. To argue that *all* rhetoric is *always and only* persuasive and persuasion is *always and only* defined as attempts to change others not only circumscribes our understanding of persuasion but it also functions to stifle important conversations about the complexity of this nuanced and powerful form of interaction. It also erases other viable forms of rhetoric. Rhetorical scholars should not deny that women, men, feminists, and nonfeminists alike have relied on varied rhetorical strategies that have not all been persuasive in nature. Given the multiple contexts that exist in the public sphere and within different cultures, alternative conceptualizations of rhetoric are imperative.

Critique #2: Invitational Rhetoric Is Appropriate in Every Interaction

A second common critique is that advocates of the theory of invitational rhetoric suggest that it should be used in all situations (e.g., Cloud; Fulkerson). In the original article, Foss and Griffin were clear about the place of invitational rhetoric: "We suggest that invitational rhetoric is a viable form of interaction in many instances but do not assert that it is the only appropriate form of rhetoric and should be used in all situations or contexts" (8). However, Cloud argues, "From the perspective of oppressed persons, it is clear that some people and many ideas should be challenged rather than invited to perpetuate hateful rhetorical and material practices such as racial discrimination and racist rhetoric. There are some things one really should devalue and reject; not all views are acceptable. . . . The absurdity of [invitational rhetoric] may be demonstrated with regard to fighting fascism and the Holocaust. No one would say that residents of the Warsaw Ghetto should have invited the Nazis into discussion rather than resisting by any means necessary their extermination" (3).[6] Although Griffin and Foss were clear that invitational rhetoric is an option, not "an ideal" for which rhetors should strive, nor "should or can [it] be used in all situations" (17), the term *option* seems to have been collapsed with the terms "used in all situations." What this critique overlooks is that invitational rhetoric was advanced as "one of many useful and legitimate rhetorics, including persuasion, in which rhetors will want to be skilled" (17).

Critics also suggest that invitational rhetoric is ridiculous as an option when attempting to talk a friend out of committing suicide, questioning the role of power dynamics in such a situation:

> If one tried to persuade a friend that he or she should not commit suicide, can we safely assume that it is done in order to feel "the rush of power" that comes from controlling people and situations? Is it not possible that the act is motivated by care and love for the other, by a desire to preserve that which is unique and valuable in that person? By essentializing persuasion (or, more accurately, the *intent* to persuade) we abstract it from any context of use, ruling out of bounds questions about who speaks to whom, for what reasons, and in what manner. All of this is settled in advance by the fatal intent to persuade. (Pollock et al. 149)

Absurd, too, for critics, is the use of invitational rhetoric when attempting to reinforce a friend's decision to leave an abusive relationship. According to Frey, if persuasion is defined as "an 'attempt to change or reinforce an audience's thoughts, feelings, or actions'. . . if a person intentionally reinforces another person's belief, feeling, or action (say, a woman's reinforcement of her friend's decision to leave an abusive relationship), that person has engaged in persuasion" (3). Twice in the 1995 article Foss and Griffin explained that invitational rhetoric is one of many options available to rhetors, yet the claim that they advocate it as the only option persists. The critique functions similar to Burke's "being driven into a corner," which requires the individual who would "reject a little to reject a great deal": if an individual cannot use the theory in the situations described above, then an individual cannot use the theory at all (*Attitudes* 222).

Contrary to critics, a theory of invitational rhetoric does recognize the complexity and precariousness of the communication crucial to the existence of racist and other unacceptable rhetorics, a suicide situation, and the dynamics of leaving abusive relationships. We suggest that at the persistence and heart of this critique lies an important question: "Is persuasion *always* the choice that will result in success?" and that this critique pulls scholarly attention away from an exploration of that question. If a person is committed to doing a particular thing (commit suicide or act in racist ways, for example), no matter the communication to which they are exposed, they likely will succeed. In some situations, no amount of persuading *or* inviting is going to be useful, and to assume otherwise places undue responsibility and accountability on the rhetor and the type of communication used. It also privileges persuasion as the only successful communicative option, which is patently absurd: the historical record is rich with examples of successful communication in extreme situations that do not meet the criteria for persuasive communication; witnessing is one such example, as are nonviolent acts of civil disobedience, protests and marches, and the sit-ins of the 1960s. Moreover, invitational rhetoric is a viable option, as is persuasive rhetoric in communicating with friends who are leaving dangerous and damaging relationships (and it is not clear which is being used in Frey's example). Obviously, certain circumstances do call for the enactment of power dynamics, and the theory of invitational rhetoric does not deny or disregard these situations. However, in many situations, invitational rhetoric is *one of the many* communicative options available and rhetorical scholars might benefit from understanding just how this option (not requirement) works.

Critique #3: Invitational Rhetoric Is Gender-Specific

Likely the result of its grounding in feminist principles, invitational rhetoric has been critiqued as gender specific (e.g., Condit) and thus naturalizing of a feminine style of communication (e.g., Mathison). Although Griffin and Foss stated "some dimensions of this rhetoric have been explicated by traditional rhetorical theorists," and they cited Harold Barrett, Martin Buber, Kenneth Burke, James Herrick, Carl Holmberg, Maurice Natanson, Carl Rogers, Richard Rorty, Robert Scott, and Frans H. van Eemeren and Rob Grootendorst in the development of their ideas, the perception that only women and all women are the sole purveyors of invitational rhetoric remains intact (5). Condit claims that invitational theory "portrays male and female activities and ways of being as radically separate from one another and assigns rhetoric to the realm of the male. More specifically, these theorists argue that rhetoric is patriarchal because it is a coercive practice and because it valorizes the public sphere" (92). Mathison suggests that as a "feminine rhetoric," invitational rhetoric "naturalizes women's ability to be in harmony with their environment, literally and figuratively, reinstating the belief that women are closer to nature because of biology" (156). Finally, Bruner suggests that dividing argumentation strategies into "'patriarchal' and 'feminist' categories" assumes that "patriarchal argumentation and feminist argumentation are mutually exclusive ways of arguing" (187). There are two critiques here worth addressing separately: the linkage of invitational rhetoric to the female and the narrow definition of patriarchy necessary to uphold the critiques.

The critique that only women can and do use invitational rhetoric, that it is a "feminine" rhetoric, or that feminist and patriarchal argumentation styles are mutually exclusive is, quite simply, not supported by the original article. Foss and Griffin stated, "Although invitational rhetoric is constructed largely from feminist theory, the literature in which its principles and various dimensions have been theorized most thoroughly, we are not suggesting that only feminists have dealt with and developed its various components or that only feminists adhere to the principles on which it is based" (5). Additionally, Griffin and Foss relied on the work of numerous nonfeminist male scholars to build their theory. Moreover, they explained, "What makes [invitational rhetoric] feminist is not its use by a particular population of rhetors but rather the grounding of its assumptions in feminist principles and theories. Our goal in offering this theory is to expand the array of communicative options available to all rhetors and to provide an impetus for more focused and systematic efforts to describe and assess rhetoric in all of its manifestations" (5). Many of the examples in the original article are not gender specific (although some are) and the one extended example of invitational rhetoric illustrated how it is used by both a nonfeminist man and a feminist woman. And, as we later illustrate, women, men, feminists, and nonfeminists can use, do use, and have used invitational rhetoric. Offering, moreover, is described as articulating perspectives as fully as possible and as giving voice to a point of view rather than imposing a point of view on another person—the link Mathison claims to exist between offering and biology or nature is difficult to find.

Critics are correct, however, invitational rhetoric does contest a *patriarchal* bias that has characterized rhetorical theory. In fact, Foss and Griffin stated, "One manifestation of the patriarchal bias that characterizes much of rhetorical theorizing is the definition of rhetoric as persuasion" (2). They further stated: "Embedded in efforts to change others is a desire for control and domination, for the act of changing another establishes the power of the change agent over that other" (3). As they position the theory, the authors make connections to the importance of dismantling this *patriarchal* view of rhetoric as solely persuasive to allow space for an additional notion of rhetoric.

At the heart of this issue, we believe, is a lack of clarity regarding the term "patriarchy." When the words "patriarchal" or "patriarchy" are used, a narrow definition of the term relies on the assumption that *all men* are included in that term and that *only men* are included in the term. However, a broader definition of patriarchy includes "literally 'rule of the father'; the term was originally used to describe *social systems* based on the authority of male heads of households. It has now acquired a more *general* usage, especially in some feminist theories, where it has come to mean male domination in *general*. Sociological and feminist research has documented a huge variety of instances of patriarchal domination." ("Patriarchy") [italics ours]. Patriarchy, in the context of invitational rhetoric, is the *social system* in which we tend to function, and not the radical separation of gendered activities. Men and women alike may not agree with the system, they may not live by the system's constraints, and many women and men, in fact, challenge the "rules" put forth by the system, but they still function within such a system. As Blair, Brown, and Baxter illustrate, the *system* of higher education is still quite patriarchal, and there are unique challenges many women face when working toward tenure ("disciplining"). However, Blair, Brown, and Baxter do not claim that all men are patriarchal (or even that all women are feminists). In the same vein as Blair, Brown, and Baxter, Griffin and Foss are suggesting that a patriarchal system exists within rhetorical theory and that system privileges specific forms of communication while discrediting others. Obviously, as Wood ("The Personal") and Dow ("Feminism, Difference(s)") argue, women have used traditional modes of rhetoric successfully throughout history to effect change and to challenge the rules of patriarchy. Invitational rhetoric does not deny this fact; instead, it challenges the underlying ideology of the system itself, questioning the need to valorize persuasion and circumscribe conversations about rhetoric to that form of interaction only.

To challenge a patriarchal bias is to call attention to a gendered hegemonic force at work in rhetorical theory (just as a "white" bias is present in rhetorical theory) and to place gendered assumptions at the center of the discussion. The goal is to unmask those assumptions so that they no longer remain "the norm" by virtue of their lack of exposure, conversation, and reflection (e.g., Frankenburg; Martin, Krizek, Nakayama, and Bradford; Nakayama and Krizek). Rather than consigning women and men to separate spheres and valorizing one over the other, as Condit and Bruner suggest, the theory of invitational rhetoric cracks the armor surrounding persuasion and suggests that expanding the focus of rhetoric to include efforts to understand complex situations is as important as changing them.

Critique #4: Invitational Rhetoric Is Grounded in Essentialist Principles

When a theory is labeled *essentialist*, it is, for all intents and purposes, branded with the scarlet letter, viewed as limited and useless, and critics of invitational rhetoric have labeled the theory essentialist in a variety of ways. Pollock et al. and Frey suggest that the theory starts from an essentialized definition of persuasion. Bruner suggests that patriarchy and feminism are essentialized in the theory, while Mathison takes issue with what she sees as the essentializing move from "a mentalistic view of rhetoric in which particular strategies can persuade an audience, to a view of rhetoric as coexistence in which rhetor and audience collaborate and learn from each other's experience and ideas." This move, she explains, "naturalizes women's ability to be in harmony with their environment" (156). Whether accurate or not, the underlying claim in these critiques is that the theory's essentialism (whether it be of persuasion, feminism and patriarchy, or the category "woman") makes it of little use to rhetorical scholars.

Traditionally, essentialism was connected to biological arguments, and Fuss defines essentialism as "a belief in true essence—that which is most irreducible, unchanging, and therefore constitutive of a given person or thing" (2). According to Fuss, this definition "represents the traditional Aristotelian understanding of essence, the definition with the greatest amount of currency in the history of Western metaphysics" (2). In contrast, Fuss states, social constructionism "insists that essence is itself a historical construction. Constructionists take the refusal of essence as the inaugural moment of their own projects and proceed to demonstrate the way previously assumed self-evident kinds (like 'man' or 'woman') are in fact the effects of complicated discursive practices" (2). The recent trend is to argue that works problematizing the social construction of gender, race, class, sexual orientation, and the like are advancing what might be called a socialization essence. Bruner illustrates this point, claiming, "feminist argumentation studies have frequently been limited in significant ways because of tendencies to reify gender stereotypes. There is a propensity in many rhetorical studies devoted to 'women's' argumentation to assume that men and women are essentially one way or another because of biological factors, socialization processes, or usually a combination of both" (185).

In the original article, Foss and Griffin did not make claims about the biological nature or the essence of men and women. When discussing gender, they address the outcomes of the foundation of the communication discipline: women and other minorities have had little to no access to the public sphere. Griffin's work suggests that when women have had access, their rhetorical strategies often are seen as ineffective; as a result, these groups have had to employ various and alternative rhetorical strategies in order to advance an idea ("Women," "Rhetoricizing," "A Web"). The charge of essentialism, in part, lies with the troubling categories "woman" and "women." Although poststructuralists argue that there is no stable self, thus no essential self, and, in fact, no way to talk meaningfully about the category "woman" or "women," others ask, "why protest current conditions unless the category 'women' is in some way a meaningful one?" (e.g., Klien). Similarly, "feminism" and "patriarchy," from a poststructuralist perspective, are fluid and indefinable categories or ideologies; yet, why challenge a particular ideology if it isn't in some way meaningful? Finally, while the critique of persuasion is harsh in the original article, invitational rhetoric makes available a nonessentialized view of rhetoric and destabilizes a term that has been viewed as unchangeable and protected for centuries.

At issue here is the complex nature of definitions and their relationship to some "essence." If scholars define a term they run the risk of being accused of essentializing, in Fuss's terms, and of highlighting "that which is most irreducible, unchanging, and therefore constitutive of a given person or thing" (2). This is a risk scholars must take, however, because definitions remain a necessary part of academic scholarship: they afford scholars and their audiences clarity. Scholars may choose definitions that feel essentially grounded: "woman" might be defined as "an adult human possessing specific biological attributes." Or, they might problematize these definitions, as does Butler, and define woman (as well as gender) as a performance (*Undoing Gender*). Both get at some essence and both may be correct given the situation and lens of the scholar. Without definitions, moreover, we run the unhealthy risk of, from a feminist perspective, taking a postmodern turn so that the term "woman" might be defined as a free floating signifier: occasionally a bunny, often a bitch, but never a biological attribute or a performance with considerable historical baggage attached.

To define rhetoric *as persuasion* is to suggest what some see as its most irreducible and unchanging essence. This in itself is an essentialist move. Until recently this definition has held the most currency, yet the theory of invitational rhetoric urges scholars to "demonstrate the way previously assumed self-evident [definitions] are in fact the effects of complicated discursive practices" (Fuss 2). Other traditions (Afrocentrism and Native American are two examples) are offering this same challenge, redefining "rhetoric" so that it moves beyond persuasion and acknowledges the variety and complexity of discursive practices that assist those in the world in moving forward with their social lives (e.g., Asante *Afrocentricity*; Asante *The Afrocentric*; Asante *Kemet*; Gunn Allen *The Sacred Hoop*; Lake "Between").

Critique #5: Invitational Rhetoric Lacks Agency

Definitions of agency are varied and slippery, but perhaps the most common definition comes from Kenneth Burke's *A Grammar of Motives*. Burke defines agency as the instrument or the means by which an act is accomplished and is concerned with how things get done (275–320). Historian Joan Scott suggests that agency is a "discursive effect" (851) and English professor Susan Wells sees agency as "the activity of a subject pursing an intention" ("Rhetoric"). Although many scholars link agency with change, thus making the two terms synonymous, these definitions of agency link it more closely to the *means* to act. Griffin and Foss explain, "Although we believe that persuasion is often necessary, we believe an alternative exists that may be used in instances when changing and controlling others is not the rhetor's goal" (5). The charge regarding a lack of agency and invitational rhetoric exists because, for some critics, there is no agency when no *effort* to change others exists (e.g., Fulkerson). For some, when the goal is to achieve understanding, agency is absent because no pre-determined change occurs.

In invitational rhetoric, the agency or the means to act includes establishing an invitational environment built on the principles of safety (others have a right to their own views), value (views different than one's own are worthy), and freedom (people have the right to make choices that work for them). Although this view of agency could be grounded in an environment in which an isolated subject knows only through her or his own personal experiences and rejects all external perspectives, as some have suggested (see, for example, Fulkerson, and Ryan and Natalle), the agency embedded in invitational rhetoric is an interactive one, grounded in the "effort to understand" another person (Foss and Griffin 10–12). As Ryan and Natalle explain this view of agency, "to understand is to act" and to engage with others, and this involves the suspending of one's own assumptions so that individuals can hear the views, however different, of those with whom they are communicating (79). As Ryan and Natalle explain, a matrix of oppression exists in the world and no one can escape their own prejudices or historical locations: "we cannot step outside or deny our positions"; therefore, active "discussion, reflection and reassessment based on the recognition of difference are integral components" of the agency embedded in invitational rhetoric and are a necessary part of "conversations that might lead to new understanding" (79).

Stroud suggests that to understand agency, understanding the ontological orientation of the rhetor is imperative. An ontological orientation "is the orientation toward the world and other that facilitates" a rhetor's actions (151). An ontological orientation "is the subjective disposition of an agent that includes all the ethical guidelines and the concurrent metaphysical justification involved in orienting the self toward the world to be experienced" (148). An ontological orientation consists of a rhetor's conscious or unconscious "beliefs about/attitudes toward the speaking situation, her lived place in it, and its necessary constituents (agents, goals, values of communication and the nature of the world)" (146).

In persuasive rhetoric, the ontological orientation is the desire to move another rhetor toward accepting a particular position and agency is facilitated by the use of symbols that compel another to change. In invitational rhetoric, the ontological orientation is the desire to understand the perspectives of another rhetor and agency is facilitated by a dialogue that allows for not only mutual understanding but also self-determination. Interestingly, in invitational rhetoric the result might be change; however, agency lies in the means by which safety, value, and freedom are created, not in the effort to change. Rhetors are focused on creating invitational environments (through dialogue, listening, understanding or exploring another's position or view, and/or sharing one's own position with respect and care for the positions others might hold) and they do so by creating the conditions of safety, value, and freedom. Should change be the result, it is not predetermined, and, as one of our examples below indicates, although rhetors come to an enhanced understanding of the position of other rhetors, change may not happen at all. Conversely, in invitational rhetoric rhetors may be as changed by an interaction as those with whom they communicate. In any form of rhetoric, then, agency is rooted in the ontological orientation of an individual and in invitational rhetoric, agency is the means used to create the environment that leads to relationships of reciprocity, self-determination, and increased understanding. Contrary to Lozano-Reich or Mathison, invitational rhetors do not assume that the establishment of relationships of safety, value, and freedom are *a priori*, nor are they exclusive to invitational rhetoric. Rather, agency occurs when invitational rhetors work to create an environment suitable for those relationships in situations where they may not already exist. When they do exist prior to the interaction, invitational rhetors work to ensure the environment continues so that those relationships might continue to be present throughout the interaction.

Ratcliffe's work on rhetorical listening is useful to this discussion, as well. Ratcliffe defines the difference between a persuasive agency and an invitational agency as the difference between what we *do to* another as compared to what we *do with* another: the difference between mastery and receptivity. Ratcliffe explains that when agency is centered on and in "*understanding*" it moves away from and "means more than simply listening *for* a speaker/writer's intent" or even "simply listening *for* our own self-interested . . . intent" (28). When agency is grounded in *understanding* or receptivity it means listening "*with* intent"—the intent to "hear and imagine how these discourses might affect not only ourselves but others," how they are negotiated, how they make sense to not only ourselves but others, and how these discourses might "inform our politics and ethics" (28). In rhetoric as persuasion, agency is present when a person tries *to change* another person; in rhetoric as invitation, agency is present when a rhetor tries *to understand* another rhetor, even if they do not agree with that person.

Critique #6: Invitational Rhetoric Is Persuasion in Disguise

A final critique of invitational rhetoric is that it, and the original essay, actually have persuasive goals. We believe that this critique stems from an assumption that one can only intend to change others: persuasion is inherent in every symbolic exchange (e.g., Cloud; Fulkerson). According to Cloud, even the offering of a perspective is persuasive: "Offerings are clearly persuasive acts, as, in the Old Testament parable, God demands that Abraham offer his son Isaac as a burnt sacrifice" (2). The assumption embedded in this critique is that communication cannot be anything but persuasive. However, Foss and Griffin are not the only scholars to question this assumption. According to Shepherd, the tradition of communication "has exhibited a masculine bias, resulting in a conceptualization of communication as influence. In granting definitional primacy to influence as a feature of communication, we have dehumanized alternative experiences of communication—experiences associated with women—and denied legitimacy to those who experience them" (203).[7]

Other scholars have continued this questioning of the hegemonic nature of persuasion. Ratcliffe offers "the desire to be heard" and a "desire for receptivity" as an alternative to persuasion or a "desire for mastery" (29). Ryan and Natalle link invitational rhetoric to philosophical hermeneutics, suggesting "invitational rhetors want change as much as traditional rhetors, but the mechanism for achieving change" differs greatly (73). Ryan and Natalle suggest that "the realization that 'you're not me' in communication with others" is "missing from much of the communication we have observed in our daily lives, both in public and private contexts" (83). Responding to this absence, Ryan and Natalle suggest that rather than persuade, "rhetoric in contemporary times can serve a multivocal society to seek peaceful understanding and to accommodate a range to truths" (71). Similarly, Anderson, Cissna, and Arnett also rethink the nature of the relationship between communicators and explore the role of rhetoric in confirming others, encouraging multiple and divergent voices, and creating community. Ellinor and Gerard theorize rhetoric and communication as a dialogue in which individuals' primary goal is to learn from another individual rather than to "push towards closure and choose one perspective" (21), and Makau and Marty suggest a "*process of communicating with (rather than at, to or for) others and the sharing of a mutual commitment to hear and be heard*" in which a communicator does not impose her or his view on another communicator (46; italics original). Moreover, Hauser advocates a civil society that does include persuasive efforts but also reflects the practices of invitational rhetoric (*Vernacular*). According to Hauser, at the heart of a civil society are relationships among diverse groups and interests. The "concept of *civil society* refers to a *network of associations independent of the state whose members, through social interactions that balance conflict and consensus, seek to regulate themselves in ways consistent with a valuation of difference*. . . . At its heart civil society is concerned with relationships among diverse groups and interests" (21–22; italics original). When we are civil, we are willing to listen to others and "consider the possibilities that might encompass our political, social, cultural, and linguistic differences" (67). When rhetors are concerned with relationships among diverse individuals and perspectives, they can seek to understand those differences via invitational rhetoric.

When rhetors are civil, Hauser suggests, they recognize that they "belong to several, perhaps many, overlapping discursive arenas in which [they] experience the polyphony of concurrent conversations . . . that rub against one another" (67). Civility involves a willingness to enter into a conversation with others, what Hauser calls a multilogue "from which *civil judgments* sustainable in multiple perspectives may emerge" (74). This multilogue involves the "thoughtful consideration of contingent affairs in order to achieve the common good of *eudaimonia*, or happiness" (98). We suggest that rhetors can arrive at civility, and Hauser's multilogue, when they are invitational because through invitational rhetoric "we learn about the threats that confront us, the level of concern that our fellow citizens share, their epistemological paradigms for confronting an uncertain and perilous world, and their commitment to collective survival in the face of severe and sometimes life-threatening crises. Participation in this multilogue informs us about the fit between our understanding of the world and the understandings of others with whom we inhabit that world" (106).

When rhetors speak from a place of invitation, of civility, and a respect for a Western view of democracy, they cannot pretend that they journey alone, that others are unworthy or without voice, or that their view is the only "right" view. We are faced with conundrums daily as members of a larger social order. However, civil disagreements and dialogues can occur when rhetors are invitational, because, like civility, invitational rhetoric "requires us to sacrifice the opportunity to display our own self-righteous anger, even when we have good reason to be angry" (Carter 35). It assumes that we listen to and communicate with those whom we would rather not listen to or communicate at all.

Although the healthy debate and discussion regarding the definitions of "influence," "effect," and "change" likely will continue, we suggest that the original article on invitational rhetoric, and invitational rhetoric itself, are part of a desire to understand and be heard—they are one part of the multilogue. The theory of invitational rhetoric raises questions about the language we use, our goals as communicators, the options available to us, and the way we position and view those with whom we communicate. As communication scholars, these are not new concepts; we are trained to pay careful attention to the use of symbols and to our audiences. To assert that all valuable communication is persuasive is to ignore the presence of invitational rhetoric in building and maintaining a civil and democratic society.

INVITATIONAL RHETORIC AT WORK

As proponents of invitational rhetoric, we often hear that invitational rhetoric is too difficult, unrealistic, that it takes too much time, or that it is utopic: we often hear that it does not exist in any meaningful way in the "real world." To the contrary, an invitational approach can and does occur in a variety of communicative interactions including political speeches, literature, conversations (the everyday and political), round table discussions, and even visual objects. Representations of an invitational approach may be found throughout the entirety of a text or perhaps in mere fragments. That is to say, like all forms of argument, which are neither exclusively persuasive nor exclusively informative, invitational rhetoric often is woven into a public argument that contains moments of informing, persuading, and inviting. The invitational components contribute to an outcome that consists of respecting the audience and reaching an understanding—one grounded in civility even if the understanding is in the final form of mutual disagreement. This section illustrates several examples of invitational rhetoric at work in speeches, visual texts, and private or public discussions. Our goal in this section is to illustrate not only the presence of invitational rhetoric in the public dialogue in the United States, but how invitational rhetoric is working as it furthers that dialogue or discussion. To that end, we have selected four examples for analysis: one speech, one visual text, a private forum, and a public forum. We work chronologically and illustrate the ways these four examples promote the conditions of safety, value, and freedom in controversial situations, as well as the offering of perspectives for exploration that are crucial to any invitational, and civil, exchange.

President Jimmy Carter: Creating the Condition of Value through Absolute Listening

Absolute listening, defined as "hearing to speech" and "hearing into being," requires that individuals take themselves out of the discussion for a time in order to listen fully to the perspectives of others. Absolute listening is linked closely to the condition of value, or the acknowledgment that audience members have intrinsic or immanent worth (Foss and Griffin 11). Throughout his four-year term as president, Jimmy Carter enacted this component of invitational rhetoric. After winning the presidential election, Carter eliminated the position of chief of staff, affording him more opportunity to interact with and hear the perspectives of each member of his staff. Critics reacted negatively to this, arguing that the amount of time necessary to interact with each member of the staff would be unwieldy. However, his decision communicated his respect for others and his desire to hear the perspectives of each member of his staff. It provided him and others an opportunity to explore and understand issues from a variety of angles, and he made use of this leadership style throughout his presidency, gathering information directly from a wide range of individuals before making decisions.

Absolute listening and the value of other perspectives also are illustrated in Carter's speeches, particularly his speeches on energy. Perhaps most obviously, they are present in a speech he gave on July 15, 1979, regarding the energy crisis and what he coined the "confidence crisis." Rather than tell his audience what the problem was, Carter asked the US American people for their help in explaining the problems in the United States. He displayed the condition of value by asking for input from others. He expressed his value of others by sharing that he realized "more than ever that as President I need your help. So I decided to reach out and listen to the voices of America. I invited to Camp David people from almost every segment of our society—business and labor, teachers and preachers, governors, mayors, and private citizens."[8] He spoke of the value of "the voices of America" and his desire to see what they perceived as the problems of the nation as well as the government. Carter explained, "and then I left Camp David to listen to other Americans, men and women like you." The results of his approach to listening and his belief in the value of others are evident in his speech as he described this process as "an extraordinary ten days, and I want to share with you what I've heard." He quoted many of the people with whom he met—a Southern governor, a young Chicano, a religious leader, a Black woman and mayor of a small Mississippi town, and a labor leader—and described how he respected their thoughts and opinions, how they "confirmed [his] belief in the decency and the strength and the wisdom of the American People," reinforcing the condition of value for his audience.[9]

Although Carter also offered his own perspective on a resolution regarding the energy crisis by announcing the components of his energy conservation and production policies, he remained open to listening to other perspectives on the issue. He concluded his speech by stating, "I will continue to travel this country, to hear the people of America. You can help me to develop a national agenda for the 1980s. I will listen; and I will act. We will act together." His "hearing to speech" or "hearing into being" assisted him in creating an environment of value, and perhaps even safety, as US American people felt able to express their ideas and concerns. He listened carefully to understand better what issues affected them. In doing so, he learned that people were concerned about problems "more serious than energy or inflation"; they were concerned with the morale of the nation. The open exchange of information, occurring in an invitational setting, taught Carter that people were losing confidence in America's democracy. Absolute listening, then, became a mechanism not only for understanding the energy crisis more fully, but for hearing other concerns that individuals felt needed to be expressed. Reinforcing the importance of others, Carter concluded his speech: "I will do my best, but I will not do it alone. Let your voice be heard. Whenever you have a chance."

The AIDS Quilt: Creating the Condition of Freedom through Choice

In June of 1987, a small group of strangers gathered at a San Francisco storefront with the goal of creating a memorial for those who had died of AIDS. The original idea of a quilt, which could tell the stories of those individuals, came from San Francisco gay rights activist Cleve Jones. Today, the Quilt contains more than 44,000 individual 3-by-6-foot memorial panels. Over 35 countries as well as all 50 United States, Guam, and Puerto Rico have contributed panels. Grounded in an invitational approach, the Quilt no longer is a domestic item sewn by women in the private sphere; rather, it contains a public message about AIDS, offering people from all walks of life—men and women, old and young, different ethnicities, cultures, and physical abilities— the freedom to explore their views of AIDS, loss, and death. In invitational rhetoric, freedom is "the power to chose or decide" and is created when "rhetors do not place restrictions on an interaction" so that individuals "can bring any and all matters to the interaction for consideration" (Foss and Griffin 12). The Quilt exhibits this condition of freedom as diverse stories of loved ones are told across the more than 44,000 panels. Any individual or group can submit a panel, and they are free to tell the story of the person they memorialize in any way they choose. The result is that stories of life, happiness, love, loss, illness, tragedy, and grief are told through the multiple perspectives of each panel. Regardless of status, age, identity, or life choices, those memorializing are free to "speak up, to speak out . . . to initiate new topics, to ask for reflection" and to "choose options from alternatives they, themselves, have created" (Foss and Griffin 12). The presence of this freedom is evident in designs that range from remarkably simple to elaborate and subjects that range from intensely private or individual to political or public. No jury screens the panels for acceptance or rejection; all are added to the quilt as they are submitted. Thus, the freedom to choose the content and form of the message sent are constrained only by the size of each panel and the limitations of fabric. No one who has been touched by AIDS is forced to create a panel, and those who choose to do so are free to offer their perspectives in ways that reflect Benhabib's spirit of "egalitarian reciprocity" (*Situating*): all have the "same symmetrical rights to various speech acts" (Foss and Griffin 12).

The Quilt represents an invitation to its viewers to participate and share in a dialogue about AIDS. It invites its audience to dialogue, either intrapersonally or with others, about typically shunned topics (not only AIDS, HIV contraction, or homosexuality, but also loss and tragedy) and to grapple with their own views and feelings surrounding these topics. Although individual panels may ask or encourage a viewer to reflect on a particular subject, they do not dictate what that reflection or view must be. Many of the panels are abstract enough, or hold meanings that are unique to their creators, so that the range of responses, beyond the more general responses of loss, laughter, sadness, or love, is unlimited. Other panels, specific as they may be, do not require that the viewer hold the same view as their maker. However direct some panels seem (rage over the loss of a child or a brother, or the expression of a deep and lasting love for a person, for example), the viewer likely does not know the individual memorialized or the memorializer, and so they function instead as an offering, albeit a passionate or angry one, and leave open the response from the viewer.

The sheer number of panels displayed at any one site also facilitates the condition of freedom. In each community it visits, the Quilt presents an array of positions so that viewers are free to decide how and to what they might respond. An "open panel" also has been added so that viewers can record their thoughts and reactions, further facilitating the condition of freedom. Howe writes, "the 'open panels' not only give viewers of the Quilt an opportunity to record their responses" but also affords them the opportunity to participate in the creation of the project, should they decide to do so (109–124). Thus, all viewers are "equals" in the process of the project, and of grieving; all viewers have something worthy to say and are free to do so (Foss and Griffin 12).

As an invited guest to a community, the Quilt further establishes the condition of freedom. Howe explains that it arrives at each location only by invitation: "The hundreds of annual displays in churches, civic centers, corporate lobbies, department store windows, hospitals, hotels, and schools, represent the kind of diverse settings in which the quilt attracts attention," yet each community must choose for itself whether or not to bring the Quilt (Howe 120). Individuals must then decide whether or not to visit the Quilt, as well. This freedom allows the "richness and complexity" of individuals and their experiences to be honored and, in fact, functions to "widen options—to generate more ideas than either rhetors or audiences" may have initially had with regard to the topic of AIDS (Griffin and Foss 12). Although the Quilt sometimes is displayed in very public places (a store window, for example), thus exposing some to its message without their choosing to be exposed, freedom still is present. Foss and Griffin explain that "the audience's lack of acceptance of or adherence to the perspective articulated" is a possible outcome of invitational rhetoric: some will choose to try to understand the perspective, but others will not (12). Unlike persuasion, when rhetors communicate from an invitational framework they are not "offended, disappointed, or angry if audience members choose not to adopt a particular perspective" (12). Their goal, like that of the Quilt, is to further understanding and to make a space for relationships of choice, reciprocity, and respect.

Controversial and painful, the topic of AIDS and the loss that accompanies that subject are difficult to address in any form of communication. The Quilt, with its emphasis on the condition of freedom, manifests an environment of self-determination and choice and stands as a powerful example of these invitational principles and practices. It asks for reflection rather than a particular point of view and embodies the desire and need for individuals to speak up and to speak out. Rather than persuading the audience to view AIDS in a particular way, the Quilt invites its audience to share, reflect, feel, and to come away from the exchange with their own view of the disease.

Talking with the Enemy: Creating Relationships of Mutual Respect across a "Deep Divide"

On the morning of December 30, 1994, John Salvi opened fire on two separate Planned Parenthood clinics in the Boston area, killing two receptionists and injuring five others. The "20-minute rampage shocked the nation" and led to the request by then Governor Weld and Cardinal Law, among others, for talks between leaders of both the pro-life and pro-choice movements.[10] The Public Conversations Project, a Boston-based national group that "designs and conducts dialogues about divisive public issues" provided the structure and framework for such talks and, for "six years, leaders on both sides of the abortion debate . . . met in secret in an attempt to better understand each other." Participants describe the talks as not aiming for "common ground or compromise." Rather, their goals were to "communicate openly with our opponents, away from the polarizing spotlight of media coverage; to build relationships of mutual respect and understanding; to help deescalate the rhetoric of the abortion controversy; and, of course, to reduce the risk of future shootings."

In order to establish this invitational environment, participants had to put aside fears that talking with their "enemy" was either "scandalous" or "futile," that their viewpoints "would not be respected," or that "if the wrong person found out about the dialogue" violence would again occur. To assist this process, two facilitators moderated all meetings with a goal of creating the conditions of safety for all participants. They began by working through the "grueling" process of agreeing "what to call each other," their positions, and "what grows and develops in a pregnant woman's womb." They discussed the stereotypes that offended them, and made lists of "hot buttons," described as phrases and terms that made thinking clearly, listening carefully, or responding constructively almost impossible. Participants acknowledged that the early meetings were challenging: "these opening exchanges brought us to the heart of our differences. Nerves frayed. The chasm between us seemed huge." Establishing the conditions of safety and then value, however, helped them overcome the challenges: "To help us listen and speak across this divide, ground rules were critical. We would seek to use terms acceptable (or at least tolerable) to all participants." As one participant explained, "[I use] prochoice because that is what they want to be called. I have a basic respect for the person, even though I don't agree with or respect the position." Participants also agreed that "we would not interrupt, grandstand, or make personal attacks. We would speak for ourselves, not as representatives of organizations. Most important, the meetings would be completely confidential unless all of us could agree upon a way to go public." The condition of freedom also was present, although this is described as an "agonizingly difficult" condition to which to agree. However, participants did agree "to shift away from arguing for their cause," to listen openly and speak candidly, and to allow their ideas to be "challenged, but not attacked."

As the years unfolded, participants explored "many aspects of the abortion controversy, such as when life begins, the rights of women, the rights of the unborn, why women get abortions, and the aftermath of abortion." They discussed abortion procedures, the meaning of the word "violence," the Declaration of Independence, as well as "a host of other complex and challenging subjects: feminism, sex education, euthanasia, suicide, the death penalty, the role of law in society, and individual responsibility." They shared the events of their personal lives and protected one another "when there was the possibility of imminent physical danger." In the meetings, conflicts often "caught us by surprise—flaring when one side unwittingly used certain words in a way that struck the other as presumptuous or offensive." Yet, the need to "listen to each other with care and respect" became the overriding need, "no matter how wide the differences are." Throughout the process they "strained to reach those on the other side who could not accept—or at times comprehend—[their] beliefs." They "challenged each other to dig deeply, defining exactly what we believe, why we believe it, and what we still do not understand." Reflecting on the process, participants shared that "as our mutual understanding increased, our respect and affection for one another grew." They saw that the "increased understanding affected how we spoke as leaders of our respective movements" and that the news media, without knowledge of the meetings, "began noting differences in our public statements."

In a wholly invitational framing, participants explained that since that "first fear-filled meeting," they have experienced a "paradox. While learning to treat each other with dignity and respect, we all have become firmer in our views about abortion." Even though they had been "stretched intellectually" and privileged to participate in a "rare opportunity to engage in sustained, candid conversation about serious moral disagreements," the conversations "revealed a deep divide. We saw that our differences on abortion reflect two world views that are irreconcilable." They explained their reasons for finally making the meetings public and in doing so validate the role of invitational and civil dialogues in public affairs: "We hope this account of our experience will encourage people everywhere to consider engaging in dialogues about abortion and other protracted disputes. In this world of polarizing conflicts, we have glimpsed a new possibility: a way in which people can disagree frankly and passionately, become clearer in heart and mind about their activism, and, at the same time, contribute to a more civil and compassionate society."

World Trade Center Site: Reciprocity and Respect through Dialogue

When rhetors find themselves in a hostile situation, or a situation in which the dominant perspective is quite different from their own, they can engage in an invitational practice termed "re-sourcement." Re-sourcement is defined as "a response made by a rhetor according to a framework, assumptions, or principles other than those suggested in the precipitating message" (Foss and Griffin 9). When the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon occurred on September 11, 2001, an atmosphere of chaos, conflict, and outrage reigned, and the effects and aftermath experienced in New York City as well as Washington, D.C., and Pennsylvania reflected this atmosphere, as well. Predictably, across the nation retaliatory discourse took center stage, yet, in an act of re-sourcement, talks of a memorial also surfaced. Although the ability to conceive of such an image seemed unimaginable to many, individuals affiliated with the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation (LMDC) and Port Authority saw that drawing energy "from a new source—a source other than the individual or system that provided the initial frame for the issue" was not only possible, but necessary (Foss and Griffin 9). The idea of and process for rebuilding the World Trade Center site reflects the practice of re-sourcement as well as the conditions of safety, value, and freedom. Rather than put its energy toward hostility and retaliation, the LMDC and Port Authority disengaged from that framework and embraced, instead, an energy centered on rebuilding, healing, and openness.

The LMDC and Port Authority recognized that people had their own unique ways of coping and healing as well as the vital need for the public's input in rebuilding the World Trade Center site. To create the necessary conditions of value and freedom, the LMDC and Port Authority devised a structure that allowed the mass public to join together: They held two nightly meetings in which five boroughs (Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens, Manhattan, Staten Island) and Long Island were linked simultaneously with large screens for an interactive meeting to explore the issue of rebuilding Lower Manhattan. They provided an overview of nine new plans for the rebuilding of the World Trade Center site and the production of a draft mission statement and program for the memorial. Additionally, an online website was created to allow the public the opportunity to observe and participate in the meetings. This unprecedented move not only invited thousands of citizens to participate in a dialogue but also was described as the most inclusive process in history. The LMDC website quoted Port Authority executive director Joseph J. Seymour: "The rebuilding of Lower Manhattan has been the most open and accessible process in history. Utilizing the most modern interactive technology, these hearings will continue the commitment by the Port Authority and the LMDC to maximize public input" ("Lower Manhattan"). LMDC president Lou Tomson added, "These meetings offer another forum for the public to join the dialogue and help shape the future of Lower Manhattan. The innovative format of the meetings will make it easier for even more people to lend their voice to this historic process—and once again, shape the outcome." In the spirit of safety and value, for several weeks, the public was allowed to comment on and participate in the design plans and the draft memorial mission statement and program. This structure allowed willing participants to voice their opinions in a forum of respect and understanding and, since the first round of designs for the rebuilding of the World Trade Center failed to inspire the citizens of New York, the officials, in a completely invitational move, initiated a new wide-open design competition. Once that plan was selected, the search for a permanent memorial began. The Port Authority and LMDC once again encouraged the public to participate in the creation of this important structure. As a result of the invitational approach, a record number 5201 entries were submitted from 49 states and 63 nations. A series of meetings took place to solicit public input regarding the memorial and a 13-member jury, including people "from many different walks of life . . . a victim's family member, artists and architects, public art administrators, a museum director, a resident of downtown New York, public officials, an educator and a historian" created a committee of people dedicated to respecting and understanding each submission's perspective ("Memorial").

When the jury finally reached its decision, their statement illustrated the invitational approach taken to select the finalists as well as their recognition of the value of those they were representing: "We understand the obligation we have to the victims, to their families, to society—indeed, to history—to serve the mission given to us; to remember and honor those who died, to recognize the endurance of those who survived, the courage of those who risked their lives to save the lives of others, and the compassion of all those who supported the victims' families in their darkest hours." The jury admitted the task was not an easy one: "Coming to a consensus has entailed hours of frank discussions, agreements and disagreements, always with the goal of arriving at common ground."

In selecting the finalists and meeting the needs of the community, the jury described their invitational focus:

> It has also been crucial for us to be able to hear all interested parties' and constituencies' opinions and views. We met with representatives of the victims' families, who shared their grief and the magnitude of their loss with us. We met with the downtown community to hear their concerns about the site and its place in their neighborhood. We met with the competent authorities entrusted with the task of rebuilding Ground Zero, including the architects, the board of the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation and their chairman. In addition, we met with Mayor Bloomberg, Governor Pataki, and Mayor Giuliani. Each of them assured us that while they have their own individual views, they will respect and honor the jury's decision.

Respect and understanding were paramount and, as each public figure expressed their own particular viewpoint, they, in turn, respected the viewpoint of the jury. After selecting the eight finalists, and meeting all eight teams, the jury explained they had "taken time to form our opinions and establish perspective in order not to rush to judgment."

In a final invitational move, the jury concluded, prior to the selection of the finalist, the importance in exhibiting all 5201 submissions for the public to view. They recognized the value in each creation and felt it necessary to allow the public to view and conclude for themselves the meaning behind each submission. On January 13, 2004, the jury announced the memorial they selected, Michael Arad and Peter Walker's design, "Reflecting Absence." When this design was displayed, the jury did not tell their audience how to think, feel, and react to the memorial; instead, they acknowledged "that memory belongs primarily to the individual." The jury maintained, "We do not view our selection of a winner as the end of the memorial. Rather, we see our selection as one more stage of memory. 'Reflecting Absence' has evolved through months of conversation between the jury and its creators," thus illustrating the presence and importance of invitational rhetoric in difficult public decisions.

INVITATIONAL RHETORIC: A CIVIL APPROACH

As our examples indicate, while invitational rhetoric at work in the world is both complex and simple, it is also a move toward civility. Like invitational rhetoric, the concept of civility has come under question and debate. We recognize that, as Harvard Law professor Stephen Carter suggests, "We seem to have trouble agreeing on exactly what civility *is*. Some people . . . think of manners. Others think of proper standards of moral conduct, or a set of standards for conducting public argument. Still others think of willing participation in the institutions that enable our democracy to thrive, what has come to be known as the movement for civic renewal" (13). But manners (although they do have a place in our lives) have been used far too often to silence and keep certain individuals "in their place." As Carter explains, rules are not good rules just because they are rules. "Sometimes what are described as rules of etiquette may demand exactly the opposite of seeing others as our equals" (25). Proper standards of moral conduct fall into this same critique, and our historical record also reveals that, at times, our "set of standards for conducting public argument" left us without civility. The noninvitational valuing of the "facts," "evidence," and "testimonies" that supported such legacies as witch burnings, slavery, the Holocaust, and the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki suggest that, too often, our proper standards for public argument perpetuate considerable violence and grief. Our examples suggest that when we adopt an invitational approach and are civil, the potential for grief and violence is minimized.

Although manners, morality, standards for public argument, and civic engagement do have important roles in our social lives, with Carter, Ryan and Natalle, and Stroud, we suggest that civility, and invitational rhetoric, can be understood as an approach to communication and an integral component of a democracy. Carter explains, the "word *civilite* shares with the words *civilized* and *civilization* (and the word *city*, for that matter) a common etymology, an Indo-European root meaning 'member of the household'" (15). Civility is what we do "for the sake of our common journey with others, and out of love and respect for the very idea that there *are* others. When we are civil, we are not pretending to like those we actually despise; we are not pretending to hold any attitude toward them, except that we accept and value them as every bit our equals" (Carter 35). When we are civil, we attempt to understand the profound differences that divide us and to "transcend difference in deep and humane ways" (Ryan and Natalle 83). To be sure, this position of understanding does not require that we allow others to carry on with their own self-interested and hurtful actions, nor does it advocate that we do so. Rather, invitational rhetoric suggests that, at times, a profound understanding of the reasons other people believe and behave in the ways they do is a most productive endeavor and that a profound understanding of other people might inform our own choices in important ways.

As this essay illustrates, when we speak from a place of invitation, of civility, we cannot pretend that we journey alone, that others are unworthy or without voice, or that our view is the only "right" view. The theory of invitational rhetoric speaks to the complexity of rhetoric and choices rhetors make as they use symbols to create and respond to messages. It calls attention to the nature of change and the role of humans in creating change and asks scholars to consider the ethics of change; to ask ourselves, "At what point do I know what is best for another?" At times, that answer is clear—what is best is to prevent a racist, classist, sexist, homophobic act, or even to prevent someone from hurting her or himself or another person or entity. However, the theory of invitational rhetoric suggests that at times knowing what is best for another is less than clear. At times, "giving the world a chance to explain itself" is the most productive rhetorical option (Barrett 147).

As Gearhart suggested in 1979, that we change others is a fact of our existence: it is the intention to change another that matters. In the intention, or orientation toward change, our ethics, goals, and means are shaped and defined. In an era in which violence, war, and overt hostility are frequently seen as the "best" options for communicating a disagreement, and in which a binary of "for or against" prevails, a continued exploration of the role of invitational rhetoric in negotiating complex exchanges seems imperative.

NOTES

1. In this essay, we are addressing the challenges to the definition of rhetoric that come from a Western and European tradition. We recognize that scholars trained in non-Western histories, canons, cultures, and worldviews also have offered important reconceptualizations of rhetoric. However, given the goals of this essay and page limitations, we selected not to offer a cross-cultural comparison. Examples of these additional challenges are Molefi Kete Asante's *The Afrocentric Idea* and *Kemet, Afrocentricity and Knowledge*; Mary Garrett's "*Pathos* Reconsidered from the Perspective of Classical Chinese Rhetorics" and "Wit, Power, and Oppositional Groups: A Case Study of 'Pure Talk'"; Lu Xing and David Frank's "On the Study of Ancient Chinese Rhetoric/Bain"; Lu Xing, Wenshan Jia, and D. Ray Heisey, *Chinese Communication Studies*; Lu Xing, *The Rhetoric of the Chinese Cultural Revolution*; and Randall A. Lake's "Between Myth and History: Enacting Time in Native American Protest Rhetoric."

2. Although not focused explicitly on the definition of rhetoric, the 1980s and 1990s brought other challenges to the Western rhetorical tradition with such books as Molefi Kete Asante's *The Afrocentric Idea* and *Kemet, Afrocentricity and Knowledge*, and such essays as Mary Garrett's "*Pathos* Reconsidered from the Perspective of Classical Chinese Rhetorics" and "Wit, Power, and Oppositional Groups: A Case Study of 'Pure Talk'" and Lu Xing and David Frank's "On the Study of Ancient Chinese Rhetoric/Bain."

3. Because "Beyond Persuasion" is a co-authored essay, and in the spirit of respect for both authors, we alternate the order of their last names as we cite the theory developed in the original essay.

4. In venues other than the original article, Griffin and Foss have explored additional ways that the mutual respect and equality necessary to invitational rhetoric can be enacted. Both authors see articulating a perspective as one legitimate avenue. When individuals articulate a perspective, they invite others to "see the world as [they] do and to understand issues from [their] perspective" (Griffin *Invitation* 340). When articulating a perspective, individuals share information or their "viewpoint on a subject so that all participants in the interaction have a better understanding of that subject" (Foss and Foss *Inviting* 25–26). A second way is the exploration of an issue (Griffin *Invitation*) or the discovery of knowledge and belief (Foss and Foss *Inviting*). Both are accomplished when rhetors attempt to engage an audience "in a discussion about an idea, concern, topic or plan of action" (Griffin 341) and when they attempt to discover what both the audience and the rhetor "know and believe [about a subject] and how best to respond on the basis of that information" (Foss and Foss 31). In both articulating a perspective and exploring an issue, rhetors will have positions of their own. However, their goal is to explore complex issues with their audiences in order to share their own views and to understand the views of others as fully as possible.

5. These definitions are taken from the 1934 edition of *Webster's New International Dictionary of the English Language*, edited by William A. Neilson. We selected this source rather than a contemporary dictionary because of its credibility, the detail with which each term is defined, and its historical groundings.

6. Fulkerson (7) echos Cloud's critique when he asks, "I wonder if Gearhart, Foss and Griffin really want to maintain that when Martin Luther King, Jr., wrote 'Letter from Birmingham Jail' he was engaged in a patriarchal act of violence, or that the speeches of Susan B. Anthony were themselves immoral imposition."

7. Shepherd might also be labeled an essentialist given his claims to masculine biases in communication, and his reference to the lack of acknowledging women's experiences in definitions of communication. We

hope, as suggested in critique #4, that, as Shepherd highlights biases in communication, his insights are not labeled essentialist and thus rejected.

8. All citations are taken from Jimmy Carter, "Energy and the National Goals—A Crisis of Confidence," speech delivered July 15, 1979, which can be found at www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/jimmycartercrisisofconfidence.htm

9. We follow Carter's description of the individuals he interviewed here, recognizing that "young Chicano" and the "Black woman" are marked by race while the other two individuals are left "unmarked." Given his linguistic strategy, our assumption is that the other individuals likely were "white" but since we do not have that information specifically, we decided to paraphrase his words and to not add the other, equally important, racial markers.

10. All citations are taken from Anne Fowler, Nicki Nicholos Gambel, Frances X. Hogan, Melissa Kogut, Madeline McCommish, and Barbara Thorp, "Talking with the Enemy," *The Boston Globe*, January 28, 2001, which can be found at http://www.publicconversations.org/pep/resources/resource_detail.aspf?ref_id=102 (accessed January 22, 2003). See also Susan Podziba and Associates, "Abortion Dialogue Among Pro-Life and Pro-Choice Leaders, in Conjunction with the Public Conversations Project," at http://podziba.com/abortiondialoguecase.htm; and Marianne Rea-Luthin, "Pro-Life, Pro-Choice Leaders Call for Civil Discourse: Pro-Life, Pro-Choice Leaders Issue Joint Statement," at http://www.rcab.org/pilotstories/pilot020201/DialogStory.htm.

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5

The Metatheoretical Foundations of Invitational Rhetoric

Axiological, Epistemological, and Ontological Explorations

Sonja K. Foss and Cindy L. Griffin

In 1995, we proposed and explicated an alternative rhetoric to persuasion that we labeled *invitational rhetoric*. We defined it as "an invitation to understanding as a means to create a relationship rooted in equality, immanent value, and self-determination," and we suggested that invitational rhetoric "constitutes an invitation to the audience to enter the rhetor's world and to see it as the rhetor does."[1] Rather than celebrating argumentation, opposition, and winning, which are the key components of persuasive rhetoric, invitational rhetoric encourages rhetors to listen across difference to try to understand perspectives at variance with their own. We hoped, when we theorized invitational rhetoric—and certainly might be accused of being naïve in our hope—that it might provide options for communicating in situations when rhetors encounter oppositional perspectives and want to work together with those who hold them to honor and learn from them.

In many ways, we have not been disappointed. We have been heartened to see invitational rhetoric applied in a variety of situations marked by strong disagreement or conflict. Although it is not always labeled *invitational rhetoric* by those who employ it, its principles have been engaged by the Interfaith Peacebuilding Institute in Maluku, Indonesia, to integrate refugees into their home communities following civil war;[2] the Public Conversations Project as it facilitated a dialogue between prochoice and prolife activists in Boston;[3] and members of the No Labels group in Congress who want to combat partisan dysfunction in American politics and have agreed simply to start talking to one another.[4] We also see invitational rhetoric in action in the Interactivity Foundation's dedication to providing safe forums for citizens to discuss and develop ideas for public policy in a civil manner[5] and in individual experiments between people of radically different positions such as Phil Neisser and Jacob Hess's attempt to talk civilly across political differences to try to understand one another.[6] The essays in this volume, including the compendium of published works on invitational rhetoric, speak to many other contexts in which the theory has been applied and to its relevance to numerous scholarly disciplines.

We continue to believe that invitational rhetoric has the potential to provide sorely needed skills for today's agonistic and contentious rhetorical environment. We agree with the numerous scholars and community activists who suggest, as Neisser and Hess articulate so clearly, that we need "a different way of talking across deep social and political differences."[7] For this reason, we revisit invitational rhetoric in this essay. Our objective is to provide a more holistic and complex picture of invitational rhetoric than we originally offered and to expand the theory of invitational rhetoric as we have come to understand it over the past twenty-five years. Our goal in this essay is not to address the criticisms of invitational rhetoric (one of us addressed these criticisms in an earlier essay[8]) but to lay out its axiological, epistemological, and ontological assumptions.

As a result of our own work[9] and the efforts of others who have engaged with us around the theory, we have come to understand that invitational rhetoric is not simply an alternative communicative practice; invitational rhetoric constitutes a unique worldview. In our original essay, we identified three commitments, rooted in feminist theories and practices, that we saw as optional or occasionally present in persuasive attempts but as integral to and always present in invitational interactions. We now believe that these principles of equality, immanent value, and self-determination actually are more robust than the simple principles we offered in the original essay. We now see them as a synecdochic representation of a particular axiological, epistemological, and ontological stance, system, or orientation that is inherent to invitational rhetoric and substantially different from persuasive rhetoric. "Every theory can be said to have an underlying metatheory or at least some underlying metatheoretical assumptions," suggest Robert T. Craig and Heidi L. Muller.[10] Rhetorical scholars, then, in every theory they advocate and every perspective they offer, refer to and rely on assumptions about what is valued, what can be known, and what ways of being are possible. Invitational rhetoric is no different. To engage in invitational rhetoric is not simply to choose to employ a particular set of communicative forms; it is to enter into a worldview or to adhere to an ideological stance quite different from the one that characterizes persuasion. This worldview, we are suggesting, can be one a rhetor lives by on a daily basis—a communicative stance that informs the majority of encounters an individual has. But it also can be adopted strategically if or when an event suggests that invitational rhetoric would be a fitting response to a particular exigency.

Before we turn to a description of the key underpinnings of invitational rhetoric, we want to make clear our stance toward invitational and persuasive rhetorics. In explicating invitational axiology, epistemology, and ontology and comparing these assumptions with those of persuasion, we are not attempting to create a hierarchy, suggesting that one is superior to another. Rather, we are suggesting that the two are different, value different kinds of interactions, and engage different kinds of communicative skills and options as they are used by rhetors. Certainly, readers of this essay will soon see that we ourselves prefer invitational rhetoric as a mode of interaction over persuasion because it aligns more closely with our values as communicators. That does not mean, however, that we do not see value in persuasion; we do. We want to reiterate what we said in our original essay: There are times when persuasion is absolutely the correct rhetorical choice to make in a given situation.[11] Our objective here, then, is not to argue for the superiority of invitational rhetoric as a rhetorical orientation but to make explicit the differences in the worldviews of the rhetorics of invitation and persuasion.

We also want to be clear that, like the majority of communication scholars who theorize about human interactions, our theorizing involves rational communicators. We are focusing on individuals who, after an invitation to join in an exploration of ideas, are willing to engage in interaction. Our descriptions and explanations, in sum, are grounded in the interactions of reasonable and sensible individuals as they willingly attempt to exchange meanings.

INVITATIONAL AXIOLOGY: VALUING A DIVERSITY OF PERSPECTIVES

Axiology and the questions associated with it reflect concerns regarding the nature of value and the kinds of things that have value. Although overt concerns with axiological systems are currently uncommon in rhetorical studies,[12] we suggest, with Ralph T. Eubanks and Virgil L. Baker, that any theory of rhetoric makes claim to some kind of axiological system. "Rhetoric," they explain, "is a dynamic force in the nurture of human values; it must therefore find a central place in any plan which claims concern for [the] quest for values." Consequently, "behind the proposals and theses of public utterance are value propositions."[13] When axiological systems are unpacked and explored, rhetorical theorists and practitioners are more able to explicate the values that inform their utterances and on which they make assessments about their merit.

Invitational rhetoric is grounded in an axiological system that privileges, celebrates, and seeks a commitment to the diversity of perspectives possible in any issue or dilemma. Because invitational rhetoric is designed to open up ways of being in and understanding the world by making room for multiple viewpoints, invitational rhetors value and, in fact, seek out variety, newness, difference, surprise, and even discomfort as they make present to themselves "what the perspectives of others involved are or could be."[14]

Not only do invitational rhetors willingly expose themselves to perspectives with which they are unfamiliar or with which they may disagree, but they are grateful for the different perspectives of others because those differences provide them with new information about the world. In an invitational axiological system, rhetors acknowledge that perspectives are inherently partial. They recognize that all individuals see the world through lenses of their "own making and use these to filter and select" those things to which they will pay attention and the interpretations they will develop of them.[15] As feminist scholars have articulated so clearly, each individual's standpoint for observing is based on "limited location and situated knowledge."[16] Invitational rhetors thus realize that there are as many different interpretations of an event or a phenomenon as there are individuals observing it.

In an invitational axiology, when many individuals with diverse perspectives are included in the process of listening to and contributing unique interpretations, everyone involved in an interaction benefits. Participants in invitational rhetoric prize the increased scope and depth of knowledge that results. As Richard Rorty suggests, the "best way to find out what to believe is to listen to as many suggestions and arguments as you can."[17] Invitational rhetors seek and value "the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point"[18] but also a vision that includes as many vantage points as possible. Propositions that expand knowledge create a "mutual enlargement of horizons, which still remain different"[19] but are present nonetheless. An invitational axiology makes use of the variety of perspectives available to provide all participants with access to standpoints, logics, experiences, and ways of understanding complex issues that were not available to them before. As Margaret J. Wheatley explains: "The more participants we engage in this participative universe, the more we can access its potentials and the wiser we can become."[20] At the time invitational rhetoric is occurring, rhetors do not want issues settled or perspectives fixed; instead, they value multiple options, ideas, and beliefs so that their own understanding as well as that of others increases.

We acknowledge that the emphasis on understanding in invitational rhetoric as a key value may seem outdated or naïve. As Craig Rood explains, for "some rhetorical scholars, 'understanding' might seem a relic of modernism, inscribed with outdated conceptions of knowledge, language, and subjectivity, naïve to the ways rhetors use and are used by rhetoric to leverage power."[21] We disagree and believe, as Rood does, that "a commitment to understanding alone will not solve the most pressing problems of the twenty-first century . . . but a commitment to understanding can help us avoid distortion and demonization and encourage more careful communication."[22] When individuals privilege the exploration of what something can mean for or to someone, they set aside value judgments and the obfuscation of ideas and embrace the information presented, the logic used to organize that information, and the conclusions gathered from that organization. For these reasons, Wayne C. Booth and others identify understanding as "the deepest of all human values,"[23] conceptualizing it as the "whole range of arts not only of persuasion but also of producing or reducing misunderstanding."[24] Simply because its achievement is difficult—because understanding is affected by numerous influences—does not mean it cannot serve as a legitimate function for rhetoric and one we believe is sorely needed in contemporary culture.

In contrast to an invitational axiology, a persuasive axiology is grounded in concern for the correctness of a particular perspective and its adoption by others. What characterizes persuasive rhetors is the desire that a proposition they advocate be accepted as best, right, or true. Persuasive rhetors direct their efforts toward making their individual perspectives "embraceable by others"[25] and securing the acquiescence of those with whom they are interacting. Diverse viewpoints are winnowed and narrowed, ideally reduced to one perspective in a confluence directed and controlled by the rhetor. The creation of a common or shared world is valued—a world in which rhetors seek the replication of their particular perspectives by securing others' assent or compliance to them. A perspective thus has merit in a persuasive axiology because it helps reduce an issue's complexity and facilitates the adoption of a single truth or answer.

INVITATIONAL EPISTEMOLOGY: KNOWING AS RELATIONAL

Scholars agree that epistemic stances are always at play in the world. As Linda Martín Alcoff suggests, epistemological questions face individuals every day as they sort through what they know, see, and accept as true.[26] Concerned with what can be known, how something is known, by whom, and the utility of that knowledge, epistemologies always include some ways of knowing while excluding others, allowing for some ideas to be accepted and others rejected. They facilitate the "making sense" of something easy or difficult, and they justify beliefs using some kinds of support and not others.

Rhetorical scholars are no strangers to questions of epistemology. They have inquired in various ways into rhetoric's epistemic nature and function[27] and have engaged theorists across disciplines in an attempt to understand both the implicit and explicit epistemological assumptions embedded in particular rhetorical practices. Rhetorical scholars have adopted, for example, Kenneth Burke's frames of acceptance and rejection as useful epistemological precepts for naming and describing the lenses through which individuals see, interpret, and shape their interactions with the world.[28] They have relied on the theorizing of Michel Foucault, who urges scholars to reflect on how disciplines dictate what counts as knowledge and to focus attention on the limits and boundaries of knowing.[29] Sandra Harding's standpoint theory has helped scholars clarify the ways in which particular epistemological frames shape various subject positions and influence how individuals perceive and understand events.[30] Kimberlé Crenshaw's theory of intersectional subjectivities prompts scholars to attend to the material impacts of epistemologies rooted in the different ways in which the range of identities individuals occupy—characterized by almost infinite variations in race, gender, sexuality, ability, religion and spirituality, economic resources, and more—affect how individuals are known and are asked to know themselves.[31]

We suggest that María Lugones's articulation of different epistemic logics is especially valuable for rhetorical scholars as they explore invitational rhetoric and its particular epistemological frame.[32] Epistemic logics name and place perimeters around knowing, defining individuals and ideas as either knowable and acceptable or as unknowable and thus unacceptable. Oppressive epistemologies such as racism privilege circumscribed ways of knowing, framing knowledge as singular and even universal. Oppressive ways of knowing not only resist but also are oblivious to difference—they do not encourage individuals to see or acknowledge difference. Difference and thus plurality usually make those who notice them uncomfortable in this kind of epistemology: They see things about themselves, their assumptions, and the ways they have organized their world that are unsettling and even potentially unflattering, so they must be ignored.

Epistemologies that are liberating rather than oppressive embrace plurality and even liminality. These epistemologies not only make possible an understanding of multiple ways of knowing but also allow a space in which individuals and what they know are "in between"—unresolved or in transition, occupying the betwixt and between of Victor Turner's theorizing.[33] Epistemologies that embrace plurality and liminality open up spaces for being many things and even no thing. In liberating epistemologies, Lugones suggests, to know plurality is to notice difference and, rather than attempting to erase or silence it, it is welcomed and embraced, even as it makes the knower uncertain. Uncertainty leads to multiplicity in this epistemic frame, and multiplicity allows rhetors to explore and investigate uncharted and unnamed spaces.

The theory of invitational rhetoric requires knowing within a very specific epistemological frame. In an invitational epistemology, "knowing requires relations *with* others"[34] because plurality demands relationships. To think in plurality requires that knowers "know" others. In this relational epistemology, "engaging with others is part of what it means to know," which "always happens within a community."[35] This epistemological system highlights not just individuals' "ability to start from or view from a certain place" but their "ability to forge relations with others."[36] Gaile Pohlhaus explains a key component of this relational epistemic stance: "To engage with another in order to know the world requires not only that I interact with another, but that I do things that facilitate and that are constitutive of our interacting."[37]

In a relational epistemology, with its explicit commitment to understanding diverse positions and views, knowing is "a dynamic, communicative process located in the relationship of the self to others where the knower wants to participate in generating knowledge with others."[38] The other participant in an interaction "is not an adversary or opponent, but a conversational partner";[39]—knowing "is based on an understanding that people are interdependent and that knowledge grows out of this engagement between the self and another."[40] In this epistemic stance, other individuals are viewed as those who have "something to say to us and to contribute to our understanding. The initial task is to grasp the other's position in the *strongest* possible light."[41]

We also believe that the epistemological orientation of invitational rhetoric advances different logics around agency. Because invitational rhetoric does not involve arguing against an idea or a position and does not have as its objective changing people or material conditions (the objective of persuasion), some critics of invitational rhetoric charge that its modes of interacting—offering a perspective and creating the external conditions of safety, value, and freedom—do not constitute agency, making invitational rhetors inherently passive.[42]

But such claims rest on an understanding of agency consistent with a persuasive rather than an invitational epistemology.

Invitational exchanges can be and are rich with agency when the term is defined within an invitational epistemology. *Agency* in an invitational orientation is a relational construct that involves understanding, listening, exploring, learning, sharing, and exchanging with others. Individuals are agentic when they choose to take the time and make the effort to explore different beliefs, trying to understand others' perspectives. Although not always possible when perspectives are so extreme, challenging, or threatening that individuals choose not to engage, agency occurs in an invitational epistemology when participants recognize that, in trying to reach understanding, they are willing to consider what both they and the other person bring to the moment. They are willing and ready to yield their own assumptions to better understand the other person's perspective.

In an invitational epistemology, agency involves the choice of the very active, dynamic, and difficult act of letting a different perspective have its impact. As individuals compare their original perspectives with new ones, they must decide whether to retain or alter their original ideas and beliefs. Whichever decision they make requires choice after choice as they consider each new perspective and constantly assume responsibility for the perspective they choose to adopt. Because their primary objective is to understand another perspective and to enrich their own, these rhetors must engage others and work with rather than against them to uncover the diverse perspectives available for consideration that others are offering. We label this *agency-with*, which contrasts with *agency-against* because rhetors engage with one another as active agents in the process of listening to and sharing perspectives with others and take responsibility for the knowledge they generate together.

When compared with an invitational epistemology, communicators grounded in persuasion are committed to a very different view of epistemology: To know is to be certain, and to be certain is to convince others of that certainty. In a persuasive epistemology, knowing requires opposition to ideas and to those who communicate them. This epistemology sanctions the binaries that are inherent in hierarchies that dictate "better" ways of communicating beliefs, understanding issues, and solving problems. In a persuasive epistemology, individuals are viewed as opponents, agonistic exchanges are common, and conquest is the objective. Listening is evaluative, and when persuasive rhetors engage with ideas, their end goal is not the fullest understanding or consideration of a rich diversity of perspectives. Rather, rhetors evaluate ideas for their strengths, compare them with other ideas, and rank them on a hierarchy of what can be accepted as true. The result is a narrowing of knowledge rather than an expansion of it. In a persuasive epistemology, knowing is oppositional, hierarchical, singular, and certain, and one rhetor can know what is best for another.

INVITATIONAL ONTOLOGY: HONORING UNIQUENESS

Questions of ontology deal with the nature of being and with "questions about what I should want, what I should try to be or become, and what I should or must take responsibility for."[43] As they do with epistemological assumptions, rhetorical scholars tend to rely on interdisciplinary explanations of ontology. As such, the foci of their ontological investigations have included concepts of materiality, embodiment, corporeality, and the performance of being,[44] with each of these explanations dependent on the approach to and understanding of ontology their authors hold.

The theory of invitational rhetoric suggests that two primary ontological characteristics of the nature of the self are key: It is self-determining, and it is unique. When individuals are seen as self-determining, they are conceptualized as "self-organizing, proactive, self-regulating, and self-reflecting,"[45] making use of symbolic resources to construct themselves and their responses to the world in ways that make sense to them. One of the key principles on which invitational rhetoric is based is the notion that individuals should be allowed to make their own decisions about how they wish to live their lives. As we wrote in our original article, self-determination "involves the recognition that audience members are the authorities on their own lives" and have the "right to constitute their worlds as they choose."[46]

Individuals are conceptualized as self-determining because they are seen as unique and "unrepeatable individuals."[47] The nature of identity in invitational rhetoric is much like Seyla Benhabib's description of the standpoint of the concrete other, which focuses on "human *individuality*" and requires that rhetors recognize and confirm others as "concrete, individual being[s] with specific needs, talents and capacities."[48] She explains this ontological stance as the act of facing "the 'otherness of the other,' one might even say to face their 'alterity,' their irreducible distinctness and difference from the self."[49] Similarly, Starhawk explains that because everyone "has something unique to bring into the world . . . a perspective exists that is yours alone. No one else can speak your truth for you or give birth to your vision."[50] An invitational ontology thus relies on avoiding what Elizabeth V. Spelman calls *boomerang perception*, in which individuals see others as "just like them" rather than as unique and worthy individuals in their own right. Spelman describes boomerang perception as "I look at you and come right back to myself," a mode of perception in which one person is not really seeing another person at all.[51] To avoid boomerang perception, individuals must see others, their uniqueness, and the importance of their contributions to a conversation or an exchange.

When rational individuals are conceptualized as autonomous and unique, the nature of the other in an interaction changes. Individuals no longer see those with whom they interact as irrational, uninformed, or wrong. As they engage others' perspectives, invitational rhetors see the humanity of those individuals and recognize their standing as persons. In an invitational ontology, "questioning someone about even the most intense disagreements need not imply that person is thereby hateful, evil, or otherwise worthy of condemnation."[52] Regardless of the differences among individuals, in an invitational ontology, they are seen as "reasonable and complex human beings,"[53] and the rhetors interacting with them are likely to be "struck by the considerable coherence and good intention reflected" in their views.[54]

When rhetors see their interactional partners as valuable, the nature of their interactions changes from labeling others as *foolish* or *crazy* to seeing them as unique and valuable. When individuals come to see other people as valuable, they must be different with one another because such an ontology "changes the 'space' between individuals by bringing increased levels of comfort with the other, more feelings of connection and friendship, more ability to see the world from another perspective, greater ease in communicating across differences, more interest in bridging differences, and new perceptions of common humanity."[55] We believe, as Neisser and Hess suggest, that "our society provides so few examples of people disagreeing and not condemning each other" that "doing so for the first time can feel strange."[56] Those engaged in the interaction try to express their ideas as fully and as carefully as possible and are committed to trying to understand the perspectives of other individuals, even if they are unfamiliar or uncomfortable. An invitational ontology thus "'exercises' an entirely new set of conversational muscles"[57] as individuals learn that they can talk about issues without attacking or demonizing others.

An invitational ontology looks and feels quite different from a persuasive ontology. In a persuasive ontology, individuals are not conceptualized as self-determining. Rather, they are seen as flawed or incorrect—they do not hold the proper perspective. In a persuasive ontology, individuals are in need of change, and one rhetor determines what that change should be. One rhetor knows what a proper position is for another person and places the knowledge or perspective of that person lower on a hierarchy of correctness. In contrast to an invitational ontology, uniqueness is not valued in a persuasive ontology because it would require the acceptance of diverse and varied ways of being, understanding issues, and solving problems. Rather than advocating uniqueness and thus multiplicity, in a persuasive ontology "the best answer" to a dilemma or problem is privileged and honored. As such, rhetors advance and ultimately accept a singular or circumscribed way of being in or understanding the world.

INVITATIONAL UNDERSTANDINGS OF POWER AND CHANGE

As we concluded our explication of the axiological, epistemological, and ontological tenets of invitational rhetoric, we found ourselves returning to two key variables that are present in any communication exchange and that we addressed in our original essay—power and change. In that essay, we considered power as it related to patriarchy and to efforts aimed at changing others, echoing Sally Miller Gearhart's claim that a "rush of power" exists in successful efforts to change others.[58] We addressed ideas of change throughout our original essay, comparing patriarchal notions of change that embody competition and domination with feminist ideas of change that feature equality, immanent value, and self-determination. We now believe that both concepts were undertheorized in our original essay and see our current metatheoretical exploration as suggesting new insights into both power and change. To that end, we now articulate more fully our perspectives on power and change in invitational rhetoric and explore the ways in which these variables are and can be managed in invitational interactions.

Power in Invitational Exchanges: Uneven Power among Ontological Equals

In invitational exchanges, the objective is to engage in interactions that develop relationships "rooted in equality,"[59] an objective that requires a particular stance toward the other individuals in the interaction and the kinds of power they might be ascribed or choose to claim. Invitational rhetors refuse to see others as superior or inferior, as more or less worthy, or as higher or lower on hierarchies of value in terms of the ideas they bring to an interaction. When rhetors choose to enter an interaction, the principle of equality, combined with the principles of immanent value and self-determination, requires that worth be neither earned nor proven; to be valued, individuals only need to be what they are[60] and to give their perspectives the fullest expression possible. From an invitational perspective, power can be productively conceptualized as an "agent-agent relation. In this respect, at least, relations of power are relations between (ontological) equals."[61]

Although the principle of equality is a central component of the theory of invitational rhetoric, individuals always have more or less power in situations: An unevenness always exists among individuals in communication exchanges. This unevenness, however, does not mean that individuals cannot manifest equality in their communication with others. They do so by acknowledging openly and explicitly any power differentials that exist and the ways they create imbalances in the interaction. They communicate about the power imbalances that are present, the ways they create inequities, and options for manifesting equality even as an imbalance or inequality is a part of the exchange.

We suggest that four types of power are likely to be the cause of real or perceived inequalities between or among rhetors who are trying to communicate invitationally—physical, material, interpersonal, and disciplinary power. We acknowledge that other types of power may be present in invitational interactions, and we also are aware that we are presenting these four types of power in broad strokes. Our goal here is simply to begin to name and articulate the presence of power in invitational communication and to suggest that scholars of both invitational and persuasive rhetoric continue to explore their impact on interactions.

Perhaps the most overt form of power present in any exchange is physical power. Physical power refers to bodies and to what bodies look like and are able to do as well as the tactics and skills used to perform power physically. Such power speaks to the performativity of the human body—to "the surface or contours of the body but also of the body in the fullness of its physicality."[62] It refers to ascribed levels of acceptability and attractiveness, whether bodies conform to particular standards, and the ways in which individuals negotiate these standards. When physical power is acknowledged, those in an invitational interaction pay attention to who makes people uncomfortable or who captivates them by their physical presence and name manifestations of physical power as they arise.

Material power derives from substantive as well as perceptible resources individuals have at their disposal and their ability to control the tangible world through those resources. Such resources include money and other concrete possessions as well as ownership of or control over organizations, events, and people. Access to material resources often provides individuals with the capacity and fluidity to move easily through various situations; a lack of such access often creates obstacles. When material power is acknowledged, invitational communicators openly name the differences in access to material power, identify the impact of that power on the condition of equality, and willingly explore the implications of those differences for the communication exchange.

A third type of power we believe is necessary to address in invitational interactions is interpersonal power. This power refers to the feelings that individuals have about themselves and others—the ways they see themselves in relationship to others and the ways they see those with whom they are communicating. This type of power is manifest through myriad communication behaviors that privilege one rhetor's perspective over another's. When individuals address interpersonal power, they identify the kinds of *ethos* communicators are claiming or are being given. They explore and name the various ways in which individuals claim more value or legitimacy for their perspectives or encourage others to see their perspectives as embodying greater expertise or knowledge.

Disciplinary power is a fourth type of power that must be acknowledged in an invitational interaction. Disciplinary power refers to what often is often called *structural*, *systemic*, or *institutional power*. Disciplinary power encapsulates those normalizing processes, practices, and structures that constrain or facilitate the actions of individuals in society at large. It is manifest through the silencing and punishing or, conversely, rewarding and supporting of individuals as they navigate the expectations, norms, and practices of educational, legal, professional, political, and spiritual institutions and structures. When invitational communicators acknowledge disciplinary power, they are willing to name and discuss the ways this type of power can create formidable but often invisible barriers for some while facilitating the movement forward and advancement of others.

Key to the negotiation of power differentials in an invitational exchange is the objective of the interaction: The participants are engaged in interaction because they *want* to understand—they want to learn about the other person's perspective. Because they do not want to change the other, they do not feel power-over or over-powered by another's perspective. The perspectives offered certainly are going to be affected by the types of power their holders claim or possess, but invitational rhetors seek to name and then separate those powers from the value accorded to the perspective itself at least for the duration of the exchange. They manage power differentials by focusing on the perspectives that participants offer in the interaction and seeing those perspectives as worthy of exploration. This is because, in invitational interactions, all participants have the power of the unique, unrepeatable perspectives they offer to others for consideration.

Relevant to the process of negotiating power differentials is Starhawk's notion of power-with, which she defines as "the willingness of others to listen to our ideas. We could call that willingness respect, not for a role, but for each unique person."[63] Invitational rhetors enter interactions able to acknowledge the various powers they and the other interactants have and the influence such powers may have on perspectives, but once those perspectives are articulated and offered, they lie on the table side by side, equal in value. With Ursula K. Le Guin, invitational rhetors ask how can one person's experience "deny, negate, disprove, another experience? . . . *Your* experience is your truth. How can one being prove another being wrong?"[64] When individuals *want* to hear different perspectives and views, they *can* set aside power differentials in order to do so.

What distinguishes invitational rhetorical exchanges from persuasive rhetorical exchanges in terms of power is not that power does not exist in invitational interactions but that invitational rhetors manage and negotiate the perceived and real unevenness in power among the participants in different ways from those in persuasive interactions. Rather than relying on the force of an argument to manage or negotiate power, invitational rhetors name and acknowledge the physical, material, interpersonal, and disciplinary powers present or absent in any interaction. They initiate discussions about how power differences may affect in various ways their goals of understanding an issue and one another. They then consciously bracket or set aside for the duration of the exchange the idea that, for example, the person with greater physical power is superior, and the one who is physically weaker is less valuable as an individual. Such explicit acknowledgment and addressing of power differentials, we believe, can do much to create environments of safety, value, and freedom—the external conditions that invitational rhetors work to construct through interaction.

Change in Invitational Exchanges: Disrupting Integrity

Our explication of an invitational axiology, epistemology, and ontology also has led us to a more complex understanding of change. In our original essay, we claimed that "change may be the result of invitational rhetoric, but change is not its purpose," and we suggested that an invitational interaction may result in no change at all.[65] We now believe that change is not something that may or may not happen in invitational rhetoric; it always happens in every exchange. With Gearhart, we now suggest that changing others "is a fact of existence" and that, at the most basic level, physics describes how, when individuals interact with others, their molecules necessarily shift and change as a result of the interaction-—individuals are changed simply by virtue of engaging with others.[66] As with ideas of power, our explication of the tenets that undergird invitational rhetoric provides a route into a more nuanced understanding of change as an important variable in all communication.

We understand the change that is common to all rhetorical exchanges as a kind of disruption of the integrity of participants. *Integrity* refers to interactants' perspectives, developed from their particular experiences and responses to those experiences; it is a vision of the self marked by a sense of continuity and coherence. Although we ourselves never used the word in our earlier explication of invitational rhetoric, some have characterized this disruption of the integrity of an individual as *violence*.[67] Any new perspective that individuals encounter disrupts or interrupts the settled integrity they have created for themselves and encourages a reconsideration of and possible change in their original perspectives. Again, we would not describe this disruption of integrity as *violent*, but we do see the exposure to new perspectives as something that unsettles, disorients, and deterritorializes individuals, making the ground on which they stand temporarily unstable.[68]

Such a disruption in integrity, which occurs in both persuasive and invitational encounters, happens in different ways in the two kinds of interactions. In persuasion, rhetors deliberately seek to disrupt the integrity of others—to challenge and change the ways of thinking, believing, and acting those others have created for themselves. In this approach, persuasion is intentionally used in an effort to break others' logic and reasoning, challenge their values, transform their behaviors, or disrupt what they know to be true.

In an invitational exchange, a disruption or change happens as well, but the process involves an interruption by individuals of their own integrity as they willingly let in something new. Because invitational rhetors value self-determination and a diversity of perspectives as their key axiological and ontological assumptions and come to know through a relational epistemological orientation, they are willing to try to assume the standpoint of the other by engaging that person's perspective. Individuals thus are changed because they have access to new ideas and understand another's views better. A metaphor that captures this kind of change is a journey to a new place, in which change feels light and welcomed; it also may be felt as an unexpected jolt if individuals' views are altered in powerful ways by the shape of another's perspective. The disruption or change that characterizes invitational rhetoric also may be represented as a footprint that makes its mark next to but does not touch the print of another. This happens when, despite their attempts to understand one another, participants are unable to understand the other's views at all; their perspectives simply do not make sense to one another. Although the individual's footprint remains in the same place, the new print next to it suggests that it must be considered when the rhetor chooses to move—the decision to maintain an original perspective still contains an implicit challenge to that perspective.

As they choose to journey to new places with their co-communicators, invitational rhetors are alert to the reality that they will be changed in some way by an interaction. They thus must decide how to manage the disruption of their integrity as they offer and accept invitations to understand diverse perspectives. The agentic choices they make vis-à-vis the change they experience affect their own and others' abilities to create the external conditions that are prerequisites for invitational exchanges and ultimately whether they are able to create relationships "rooted in equality, immanent value and self-determination."[69]

CHOOSING INVITATIONAL RHETORIC

Invitational rhetoric involves a complex system of interrelated beliefs and assumptions about values, ways of knowing, and ways of being. To choose to be an invitational rhetor is not always an easy task; however, neither is choosing to engage in persuasion. Invitational rhetoric requires commitments to ways of thinking and acting that often are not valued in the adversarial culture that characterizes the contemporary world. But there are times when working very hard to communicate with someone to accomplish understanding is worthwhile. At these times, invitational rhetors are willing to do the work required, to be uncomfortable, to listen to perspectives with which they might not agree, and to have their own beliefs and thoughts challenged in major ways.

As is the case with persuasive rhetoric, invitational rhetors will be more comfortable with some aspects of the rhetorical process than with others. They may have difficulty presenting their perspectives in the act of offering; they may have difficulty representing their perspectives accurately or eloquently and with the same degree of clarity they themselves have about them. Individuals may wrestle with the effort to listen to new or different perspectives, they may struggle to understand, they may not know how to ask for clarification, or they may be unfamiliar with the act of listening to a perspective so profoundly different from their own. Sometimes, invitational rhetors may weary of the commitment to welcome diverse perspectives, wanting to hold onto theirs unchallenged by others and in relative stability for even a little while. At other times, they may have difficulty genuinely viewing someone as a legitimate participant in an interaction, especially if that person is someone who frustrates, irritates, or angers them. In other instances, even though they recognize the probable lack of success in attempted persuasion, they may have trouble refraining from engaging in persuasive discourse with those they care deeply about, wanting to make their lives better and to prevent them from experiencing what they perceive will be negative consequences.

Our explication of the metatheory that grounds and informs invitational rhetoric provides a means by which scholars and practitioners can explore the different rhetorical practices of invitational and persuasive rhetoric. We have begun to do some of the work of comparing the two in this essay, but the axiological, epistemological, and ontological assumptions that inform persuasive rhetoric deserve the same kind of explication we have provided here for invitational rhetoric.[70] An engagement of the two systems will assist both scholars and rhetors in making decisions about the rhetorical practices they explore and in which they want to participate.

We hope that communicators will make deliberate choices about the rhetorical practices in which they engage, whether they be invitational or persuasive. Equipped with more options and an understanding of the concomitant kinds of assumptions that accompany them, rhetors should be able to make more and better use of invitational rhetoric in those contexts that call for an understanding of complex and often divisive issues. At those times, when invitational rhetors are willing to do the work required, to listen to ideas with which they might not agree, and to have their own beliefs and thoughts challenged, invitational rhetoric extends the possibility of greater understanding of issues, others, and the self.

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NOTES

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2. Carmen S. Lowry and Stephen Littlejohn, "Dialogue and the Discourse of Peacebuilding in Maluku, Indonesia," *Conflict Resolution Quarterly* 23, no. 4 (2006): 409–26.

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5. Laura W. Black and Anna Wiederhold, "Discursive Strategies of Civil Disagreement in Public Dialogue Groups," *Journal of Applied Communication Research* 43, no. 3 (2014): 285–306.

6. Phil Neisser and Jacob Hess, *You're Not as Crazy as I Thought (But You're Still Wrong): Conversations between a Die-Hard Liberal and a Devoted Conservative* (Dulles, VA: Potomac, 2012).

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12. Axiology used to be a major concern in rhetorical studies, evidenced by works such as the following: John R. Bliese, "Richard Weaver's Axiology of Argument," *Southern Speech Communication Journal* 44, no. 3 (1979): 275–88; Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, "The Rhetorical Implications of the Axiology of Jean-Paul Sartre," *Western Journal of Communication* 35, no. 3 (1971): 155–61; Donald P. Cushman and Gerard A. Hauser, "Weaver's Rhetorical Theory: Axiology and the Adjustment of Belief, Invention, and Judgment," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 59, no. 3 (1973): 319–29; James W. Chesebro, "Cultures in Conflict—A Generic and Axiological View," *Communication Quarterly* 21, no. 2 (1973): 11–20; Ralph T. Eubanks, "An Axiological Analysis of Chaim Perelman's Theory of Practical Reasoning," in *Practical Reasoning in Human Affairs: Studies in Honor of Chaim Perelman*, ed. James L. Golden and Joseph J. Pilotta (Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel,1986), 69–84; Ralph T. Eubanks, "Axiological Issues in Rhetorical Inquiry," *Southern Speech Communication Journal* 44, no. 1 (1978): 11–24; Ralph Eubanks and Virgil L. Baker, "Toward an Axiology of Rhetoric," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 48, no. 2 (1962): 157–68; and Charles Kauffman, "The Axiological Foundations of Plato's Theory of Rhetoric," *Central States Speech Journal* 33, no. 2 (1982): 353–66.

13. Eubanks and Baker, "Toward an Axiology of Rhetoric," 158.

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16. Donna Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," *Feminist Studies* 14, no. 3 (1988): 583. Also see Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, eds., *This Bridge Called My Back: Writing by Radical Women of Color*, 4th ed. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2015); Sandra Harding, "Rethinking Standpoint Epistemology: What Is 'Strong Objectivity'?" *Centennial Review* 36, no. 3 (1992): 437–70; and Nancy C. M. Hartsock, *The Feminist Standpoint Revisited and Other Essays* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1998).

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22. Rood, "'Understanding' Again," 450.

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24. Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Rhetoric: The Quest for Effective Communication* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004), 10. I. A. Richards also features the importance of understanding in his definition of rhetoric as "the study of misunderstanding and its remedies." I. A. Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), 3.

25. Richard A. Cherwitz and James W. Hikins, *Communication and Knowledge: An Investigation in Rhetorical Epistemology* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1986), 108.

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35. Pohlhaus, "Knowing Communities," 290.

36. Pohlhaus, "Knowing Communities," 290.

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38. Kathleen J. Ryan and Elizabeth J. Natalle, "Fusing Horizons: Standpoint Hermeneutics and Invitational Rhetoric," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 31, no. 2 (2001): 76.

39. Richard J. Bernstein, *The New Constellation: The Ethical-Political Horizons of Modernity/Postmodernity* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991), 337.

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42. Richard Fulkerson, for example, makes such an argument: "Viewpoints are shared, exchanged, understood, and respected, but no action is taken. . . . At the most, an individual auditor might hear something he/she liked and choose to alter his/her own behavior." Richard Fulkerson, "Transcending Our Conception of Argument in Light of Feminist Critiques," *Argumentation and Advocacy* 32, no. 4 (1996): 206.

43. Margaret Urban Walker, "Picking Up Pieces: Lives, Stories, and Integrity," in *Feminists Rethink the Self*, ed. Diana Tietjens Meyers (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1997), 62.

44. See, for example, Stacy Alaimo and Susan Hekman, eds., *Material Feminisms* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008); Diana Coole and Samantha Frost, eds., *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010); Avril Horner and Angela Keane, eds., *Body Matters: Feminism, Textuality, Corporeality* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2000); and Deborah Orr, Linda Lopez McAlister, Eileen Kahl, and Kathleen Earle, eds., *Belief, Bodies, and Being: Feminist Reflections on Embodiment* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006).

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47. Margaret Urban Walker, "Moral Understandings: Alternative 'Epistemology' for a Feminist Ethics," *Hypatia* 4, no. 2 (1989): 22.

48. Benhabib, *Situating the Self*, 159.

49. Benhabib, *Situating the Self*, 167.

50. Starhawk, *Truth or Dare*: *Encounters with Power, Authority, and Mystery* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 198.

51. Elizabeth V. Spelman, *Inessential Woman: Problems of Exclusion in Feminist Thought* (Boston: Beacon, 1988), 12.

52. Neisser and Hess, *You're Not as Crazy*, 191.

53. Neisser and Hess, *You're Not as Crazy*, 10.

54. Neisser and Hess, *You're Not as Crazy*, 191.

55. Neisser and Hess, *You're Not as Crazy*, 189.

56. Neisser and Hess, *You're Not as Crazy*, 190.

57. Neisser and Hess, *You're Not as Crazy*, 190.

58. Sally Miller Gearhart, "The Womanization of Rhetoric," *Women's Studies International Quarterly* 2, no. 2 (1972): 201.

59. Foss and Griffin, "Beyond Persuasion," 5.

60. Starhawk, *Truth or Dare*, 116

61. Terence Ball, "New Faces of Power," in *Rethinking Power*, ed. Thomas E. Wartenberg (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 21.

62. Karen Barad, "Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter," *Signs* 28, no. 3 (2003): 823.

63. Starhawk, *Truth or Dare*, 10.

64. Ursula K. Le Guin, "Bryn Mawr Commencement Address (1986)," *Dancing at the Edge of the World: Thoughts on Words, Women, Places* (New York: Grove, 1989), 150.

65. Foss and Griffin, "Beyond Persuasion," 6.

66. Gearhart, "Womanization," 196.

67. Sally Miller Gearhart does, indeed, use the term *violence* to characterize persuasion in "The Womanization of Rhetoric," *Women's Studies International Quarterly* 2, no. 2 (1972): 195–201. Although we do not use the term to describe persuasion, some scholars have suggested that we do. See, for example, Fulkerson, "Transcending Our Conception of Argument," 205; and Charlotte Jørgensen, "The Relevance of Intention in Argument Evaluation," *Argumentation* 21, no. 2 (2007): 166–67.

68. Although we do not agree with some of his characterization of the process, we believe these terms, used by Michael Bernard-Donals, accurately describe the disruption of integrity through an exposure to new perspectives. See Michael Bernard-Donals, "Divine Cruelty and Rhetorical Violence," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 47, no. 4 (2014): 400–18.

69. Foss and Griffin, "Beyond Persuasion," 5.

70. Sonja K. Foss and Karen A. Foss have identified some of the key assumptions of persuasion, or what they label the *paradigm of constricted potentiality*, in "Constricted and Constructed Potentiality: An Inquiry into Paradigms of Change," *Western Journal of Communication* 75, no. 2 (2011): 205–38.

Part II

EXTENSIONS

6

Fusing Horizons

Standpoint Hermeneutics and Invitational Rhetoric

Kathleen J. Ryan and Elizabeth J. Natalle

The transformative potential of dialogue has taken center stage among communication theorists as a rational alternative to increasingly violent rhetorical strategies for problem solving in both private and public communication contexts (e.g., Baxter and Montgomery; Downey; Tannen). Sally Miller Gearhart's germinal essay entitled "The Womanization of Rhetoric" led the way for feminist theorists, in particular, to consider new forms of public communication based in a female value system. Notably, Karen Foss, Sonja Foss, and Cindy Griffin have extended Gearhart's rhetorical theory of feminist nonviolence through their concept of invitational rhetoric, while argumentation theorists such as Catherine Palczewski have demonstrated the power of consensus through dialogue as a feminist strategy of persuasion (164–166).

Surprisingly, invitational rhetoric has not been embraced by large numbers of rhetorical scholars, and differences of opinion regarding the efficacy of invitational rhetoric as public argument (versus private conversation) have made for some tense (although respectful) reading in the pages of our academic journals (e.g., Condit; Downey; Foss, Griffin, and Foss; Makau; Pollock, Artz, Frey, Pearce, and Murphy). Why has invitational rhetoric failed to win over large numbers of communication scholars and students? Its nonviolent perspective and dialogic structure are appealing, yet it remains in the background in both our theorizing and teaching of rhetorical theory, public speaking, and composition. We believe that invitational rhetoric suffers from a misinterpretation of its epistemological grounding, and, as a result of this error, falls short as a theoretically useful model of either dialogic communication or alternative rhetoric. In this essay, we propose to emend[1] invitational rhetoric by (l) clarifying its epistemological grounding to demonstrate how it includes both internal and external sources of knowledge and (2) recasting it as standpoint hermeneutics fused with rhetoric. To those ends, this essay is structured as follows: First, a brief description of invitational rhetoric and its criticisms is offered. We then follow with an argument for clarifying the epistemological foundation of invitational rhetoric by extending its premise of "knowing as self-oriented" to "knowing other people." This argument will be grounded in the literature of feminist epistemology (e.g., Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule; Code; Hekman; Tanesini). Third, by

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synthesizing feminist standpoint theory (Jaggar; Wood; Young) with philosophical hermeneutics (Gadamer; Jost and Hyde), we argue for invitational rhetoric as a standpoint hermeneutics fused with rhetoric. Finally, we close the essay with a discussion of the theoretical and practical implications of invitational rhetoric as dialogic communication.

INVITATIONAL RHETORIC

Drawing on Sally Miller Gearhart's radical notion that persuasion is ecological violence (195), Sonja Foss and Cindy Griffin argue [*sic*] that rhetoric as persuasion is fundamentally flawed (2), and with Karen Foss (Foss, Griffin, and Foss 128–132), position themselves as feminist reconstructionists. This position, taken up in resistance to the Aristotelian, agonistic model of rhetoric, claims that persuasion is a deliberate, patriarchal attempt on the part of a rhetor to change the listener's mind, and is, therefore, a form of social and intellectual violence. The fundamental intent to change people's beliefs is interpreted by Foss and Griffin as an ethical disregard for audiences who may not want to change and may, indeed, have different, valuable perspectives on an issue. A rhetor who values the power gained by controlling and changing audience members' perspectives is recognized by Foss and Griffin as someone who underrates the audience and, by extension, contributes to a culture of conquest and conversion. Taking another cue from Gearhart's indictment of rhetorical purpose (196–197), Foss and Griffin, in their own radical, theoretical move, posit that rhetoric *may not*, in fact, always center on change as the rhetorical goal. Invitational rhetoric is offered as a nonadversarial rhetorical alternative to employ when the rhetorical situation calls for mutual understanding of issues and perspectives. Invitational rhetoric is grounded in feminist principles of equality, immanent value, and self-determination and replaces patriarchal values of domination, competition, and change.

If it is possible to have understanding rather than change as a fundamental rhetorical goal, then invitational rhetoric demonstrates that intention means engagement in an issue rather than persuasion to a belief; and meaning lies not solely with the rhetor, but in the dialogue between speaker and audience members. Like Gadamer, we define dialogue as conversational give and take where "one does not try to argue the other person down but that one really considers the weight of the other's opinion" (*Truth and Method* 367). The purpose of the rhetorical situation is for rhetor and audience members to engage in a dialogue in order to reach mutual understanding, and thus a more democratic society. The radicality of this concept is that rhetoric no longer functions in a democracy as a tool of truth-seeking; rather, rhetoric in contemporary times can serve a multivocal society to seek peaceful understanding and to accommodate a range of truths.

Foss and Griffin develop the concepts of *offering* and *willingness to yield* as the fundamental tools for rhetors and listeners to engage in invitational rhetoric. They extend Sally Miller Gearhart's notion of enfoldment/offering, originally explicated in her essays "The Womanization of Rhetoric" and "Womanpower," into invitational rhetoric's primary alternative to persuasive argument.[2] Rhetors who offer "tell what they currently know or understand; they present their vision of the world and show how it looks and works for them" (Foss and Griffin 7). Audience members who "ask questions and make comments . . . aimed at learning more about the presenter's ideas, understanding them more thoroughly, nurturing them, and offering additional ways of thinking about the subject for everyone involved in the interaction" (Foss and Griffin 8) are also engaged in offering. Speakers and listeners participate in offering "when they enter the interaction with a goal not of convening others to their positions but of sharing what they know, extending one another's ideas, thinking critically about all the ideas offered, and coming to an understanding of the subject and of one another" (Foss and Griffin 8).

The concept of *willingness to yield* describes the way rhetors and audience members should respond to offering. As a point of definition, Foss and Griffin, in "Beyond Persuasion," compare willingness to yield to Martin Buber's notion of the I-Thou relationship and David Tracy's notion of relationships between self and other. To properly react to offering, rhetors and listeners must be willing to engage each other's beliefs and be willing to let go of some of their own in the desire to move toward mutual understanding. Willingness to yield results in a unique dyadic position where, in Tracy's terms, "to attend to the other as other, the different as different, is also to understand the different *as* possible" (qtd. in Foss and Griffin 7).

The response to invitational rhetoric, for all its promise of dialogue as a way to move toward understanding and, by association, democracy, has been minimal. Neither Foss and Foss's public speaking text, *Inviting Transformation*, nor the essay by Foss, Griffin, and Foss entitled "Transforming Rhetoric through Feminist Reconstruction," both of which use invitational concepts, have had significant impact on rhetorical theory construction.[3] Rather, the few published responses to invitational rhetoric, with the exception of Downey and Makau, have been fairly negative. Fulkerson faults invitational rhetoric for its argument against persuasion, its over-identification of persuasion with violence, its position of unconditional value for all listeners, and its implied lack of action beyond just sharing perspectives (204–206).[4] Pollock et al. agree that invitational rhetoric's definition of persuasion as inherent violence is essentialized and misplaced (149–150). Condit also takes issue with Foss, Foss, and Griffin's theoretical attempt to revise traditional notions of rhetoric in her critique of "gender dichotomy" feminists, to whom she attributes essentialist beliefs, a failed recognition of the persuasive nature of discourse, and a wrongful attempt to relocate public rhetoric to private communication. Although Foss, Griffin, and Foss claim that Condit misreads invitational rhetoric and its assumptions (118–128), the problems Fulkerson, Pollock et al., and Condit raise may explain why invitational rhetoric has had little impact in the field.

EPISTEMOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF INVITATIONAL RHETORIC

We read differently the essentialism that Condit attributes to invitational rhetoric. Condit writes, "The claim that persuasion is violent, or at least coercive, is based on an essentialist understanding of the human person. That is, it is based on viewing human beings as having stable, autonomous identities that are violated by external requests for change" (92). We think Condit's criticism is misdirected at biological/cultural separatism, and would more appropriately serve the debate regarding the value of invitational rhetoric if it were recast as a criticism of epistemological contradiction. Foss and Griffin base invitational rhetoric on two feminist principles: immanent value (all humans have inherent worth) and self-determination (all humans have the autonomous capacity to direct themselves). These two principles align with notions of feminist subjective epistemology explicated in Belenky et al.'s *Women's Ways of Knowing* and actually run counter to the dialogic goals of invitational rhetoric. Herein lies a major contradiction in the theory's underpinnings that needs to be resolved.

A subjective epistemological stance rejects external authority and knowledge while looking internally to intuition and personal experience as the basis for knowing. Goldberger summarizes the subjectivist position: "Knowing is personal, private, and based on intuition and/or feeling states rather than on thought and articulated ideas that are defended with evidence" (5). Although *Women's Ways of Knowing* is seen as a watershed moment in recognizing women's capacity for looking to themselves as authorities, the notion that "truth is necessarily a private matter and . . . should not be imposed on others" (70) leads subjectivists to value their personal truths to the exclusion of outside sources of knowledge. When subjectivist knowers become too interior, they become "stubbornly committed to their view of things and unwilling to expose themselves to alternative conceptions" (84). We do not want to discount the positive aspects of subjectivist knowing that pioneers like Mary Belenky and Nancy Goldberger have documented because, indeed, what women know on the basis of subjective experience does matter. Gearhart and, subsequently, Foss and Griffin appear to develop a form of rhetoric based on subjectivist knowing. If the goal of invitational rhetoric is engagement in dialogue through offering and willingness to yield, yet the participants are communicating based on a subjective position, then a fundamental contradiction is set up and true dialogue is compromised.

More insight into this contradiction is evident in the way invitational rhetoric deals with the concept of *change.* Foss and Griffin argue that traditional definitions of rhetoric are based in the notion that a speaker's persuasive language is aimed at changing others for the purposes of gaining control over them (3). Indeed, the core of invitational rhetoric rests on the premise that there are times when a rhetor's goal is not about change, although they recognize that change *might* be a *result* of invitational rhetoric. However, Foss and Griffin qualify the nature of change as they theoretically conceive it:

> In the traditional model, change is defined as a shift in the audience in the direction requested by the rhetor, who then has gained some measure of power and control over the audience. In invitational rhetoric, change occurs in the audience or rhetor or both as a result of new understanding and insights gained in the exchange of ideas. As rhetors and audience members offer their ideas on an issue, they allow diverse positions to be compared in a process of discovery and questioning that may lead to transformation for themselves and others. (6)

In their defense against Condit's critique of their unwillingness to see change as integral to most, if not all, human discursive interaction, Foss, Griffin, and Foss write, "We agree with Condit that interaction with others constantly produces change in individuals" (125). They further qualify their own position by explaining, "Critical to invitational rhetoric is a reliance on the input and suggestions of others; the invitational rhetor's goal is to understand the position of others and not to close the self off from them" (125–126). In other words, invitational rhetors want change as much as traditional rhetors, but the mechanism for achieving change appears to differ greatly.

Yet another problem surfaces when one considers that the definitions of immanent value and self-determination suggest a reluctance towards change, which parallels the subjectivist's resistance to outside influence (Belenky et al. 76–86). Immanent value is a feminist principle undergirding invitational rhetoric, and it is based on Foss and Griffin's (1995) understanding of Starhawk's complex philosophy of the individual's position related to spiritual paganism and witchcraft (4; *see also* Foss, Foss, and Griffin 160–190; Foss and Griffin, "Feminist Perspective" 333–337). Immanent value is defined as "every being is a unique and necessary part of the pattern of the universe and thus has value . . . . Concomitant with a recognition of the immanent value of another individual is the eschewal of forms of communication that seek to change that individual's unique perspective to that held by the rhetor" (Foss and Griffin 4). Immanent value is then linked to the feminist principle of self-determination:

> Grounded in a respect for others, self-determination allows individuals to make their own decisions about how they wish to live their lives. Self-determination involves the recognition that audience members are the authorities on their own lives and accords respect to others' capacity and right to constitute their worlds as they choose. (Foss and Griffin 4)

These definitions are highly subjective; they suggest that the self is the ideal knower and support a view of the individual as isolated and separate from the negative influence of others. The emphasis on the solitary self, contained within a natural order, contrasts the notions of offering and willingness to yield, which are contingent upon the interrelationship of people and change. How can any new understanding between speaker and listener be reached if the self is the center of knowledge and external influences are seen as attacks on self-determination and human value? It can't, although invitational rhetoric suggests that the change related to offering and yielding is qualitatively or morally different from the change related to traditional persuasion. This also accounts for the choice of the term *transformation* rather than *change.* Transformation is equated with morally appropriate, dialogic change emanating from deep within the individual, whereas change is located within the rhetor's intents and motivations and may not be in the best interest of the listener.

Condit, however, points out that change is a fact of discourse, regardless of ethical motivations (104–105). This is a point well taken, and one that we wish to link further into an epistemological position. Knowledge arises out of what Lorraine Code (1991) calls the subjective-objective tension in human interaction, and notes that it is particularly manifest in gendered relationships (7–12). Regardless of one's interior, or subjective, position, we cannot help but change and be changed when we talk to others, no matter how resistant we are. In fact, a willingness to yield asks both speaker and listener to be willing to change their minds as a result of the dialogue they engage in together. New understanding implies learning and learning is change—often transformative. Because true subjectivist knowers resist looking anywhere but to themselves for knowledge, this kind of knower as a participant in invitational rhetoric logically doesn't make sense.

Given this epistemological discrepancy, we suggest a realignment towards Code's dialogic model of knowing, or subjective-objective position, that is based on the (feminist) concept of *knowing others.* Code argues (27ff.) that despite historical inattention to the knower in main(male)stream epistemology theory development, the sex of the knower does matter and has important implications for social action, including discourse. Her critique follows this line of argument: Historically, objectivity, equated with male, has been falsely privileged at the expense of subjectivity, equated with female. In deconstructing this opposition between objectivity and subjectivity with regard to knowledge and men's oppression of women, Code argues for a different model of knowing that is based in the interrelatedness of objectivity and subjectivity. Specifically, she makes a feminist argument that theorists who have a profound interest in epistemology must move away from a physics model for knowing objects based on objectivity, distance, and value-neutrality to a social science model that recognizes the role of subjectivity in its quest to understand how we know other people.

Knowing other people depends on a definition of self very different from the unified (and by implication, essential) self that can be interpreted in invitational rhetoric. Rejecting essentialist beliefs in a unitary, core self, Code redefines self using Linda Alcoff's (1988) notion of *positionality* (433–435). Alcoff's idea is similar to the theoretical concept of *standpoint* developed, among others, by Iris Young (1990). To wit: A person's identity is "relative to a constantly shifting context, to a situation that includes a network of elements involving others, the objective economic conditions, cultural and political institutions and ideologies, and so on" (qtd. in Code 180). Code then draws the implication for rhetorical theory:

> In fact, "positionality" explicitly resists taking any one position as referent, be it the position of the masculine norm; of white, middle-class feminism; of female separatism; or whatever. The point is not to advocate quiescent liberal tolerance, however. It is to analyze, assess, assume accountability for the positions one occupies, while engaging in *critical dialogue* with, or resistance against, occupants of other positions, in cognizance of their political implications. (180; emphasis added)

This position would clearly release invitational rhetoric from Condit's accusation of separatist rhetoric and squarely move it into position as a form of political rhetoric that has the potential to release people from structural forms of oppression.

Standpoint, however, does not constitute the totality of Code's analysis. She links positionality to Annette Baier's concept of *second person* to define the links between subjective-objective as contextual and relational. Second personhood emphasizes the communicative possibilities involved in the process of coming to know ourselves (Baier 90). In other words, how we understand ourselves depends on connections to other people. Baier's second personhood is a way for Code to argue for the dual importance of autonomy (subjective) and interdependence (objective). Code then concludes:

> It is possible to endorse Baier's "second person" claim without renouncing individuality, if "individuality" is not equated with "individualism": she shows that uniqueness, creativity, and moral accountability grow out of interdependence and continually turn back to it for affirmation and continuation. (82)

Thus autonomy grows out of knowing other people. The model of knowing that is "knowing other people" builds on the fluidity and contextual nature of one's subjective position, which is open to interpretation and constantly in renegotiation:

> Knowing other people, precisely because of fluctuations and contradictions of subjectivity, is an ongoing, communicative, interpretive process. It can never be fixed or complete: any fixity that one might claim for "the self' is at best a fixity in flux; but something must be fixed to "contain" this flux even enough to permit reference to and ongoing relationships with "this person." Assumptions that one knows another person have to be made within the terms of this tension. (Code 38)

Diana Fuss's deconstruction of the essentialist-constructionist binary in *Essentially Speaking* confirms the tension of "knowing other people" Code describes. Fuss's argument that there is "no essence to essentialism" and "essentialism subtends the very idea of constructionism" (4–5) reinforces this idea of establishing a "fixity in flux" to enable the dialogic exchange that is knowing other people. Instead of treating people as if they can be known as objects are (traditional epistemological view), recognizing the epistemic value of "knowing other people" brings in elements of interpretation, strategy, and community previously unrealized.

Knowing other people parallels the kind of dialogue based in offering and willingness to yield. The value of knowing other people as an epistemic foundation for invitational rhetoric is that knowing is a dynamic, communicative process located in the relationship of the self to others where the knower wants to participate in generating knowledge with others. The definition of second personhood as subjective-objective is a model for talking about the self in the larger context of the socio-political milieu and is more consistent with offering and willingness to yield than more popular feminist notions of subjectivism offered by Belenky and her colleagues. We also begin to see that it is possible to answer Condit's charge regarding rhetoric-as-public and communication-as-private (105). While subjectivism locates knowledge in a core self, which often leads to a rejection of external knowledge, knowing other people welcomes the interaction between self and other because it is based on an understanding that people are interdependent and that knowledge grows out of this engagement between the self and another. Moreover, knowing other people means caring about and wanting to learn about others. Code writes, "'Second persons' engage with one another and care about the quality of that engagement—whether in fondness or in fury" (86). Clearly, knowing other people more readily enacts the concepts of offering and willingness to yield as strategies in dialogue aimed at mutual understanding.

STANDPOINT HERMENEUTICS

Our second point is to redirect invitational rhetoric as a synthesis of rhetoric and what we are terming *standpoint hermeneutics.* If, at the fundamental level, rhetoric is defined as the art of persuasion and hermeneutics as the art of interpretation, then it is clear that offering and willingness to yield are embedded in philosophical hermeneutic practice (Gadamer, *Truth and Method*), although we wish to argue that invitational rhetoric is actually a synthesis of rhetoric and philosophical hermeneutics (*see* Jost and Hyde, 1997) bounded by feminist standpoint theory (e.g., Jagger; Tanesini; Young). This redirection shifts the focus to the strengths of invitational rhetoric and away from questions of whether invitational rhetoric is or can be rightly called a non-persuasive rhetoric. Furthermore, when invitational rhetoric is identified as a hermeneutic practice, the interpretive and dialogic possibilities of offering and willingness to yield gain greater significance and resonance for everyday use. Because we are "teasing out" the notion of standpoint from Gadamer's (1998) conception of philosophical hermeneutics, the next portion of the essay will be divided accordingly to reflect the disparate bodies of literature needed to make the argument.

Philosophical Hermeneutics

Drawing upon Gadamer's *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, "Rhetoric and Hermeneutics," "Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Ideology-Critique," and *Truth and Method* as the primary sources, philosophical hermeneutics distills down to *understanding*, a task that involves human nature's questioning of the world around us and the implicit traditions that constitute the present state of things. Hermeneutics has traditionally been described as a way to interpret biblical and legal texts. In short, an interpreter tries to make sense of a text by constantly reassessing preconceived meanings in light of new ones gained in the process of trying to read to understand. The constant reassessment of meaning brings the interpreter closer to understanding, although exact understanding of the text can never be reached because the text is always understood through the reader's historicity juxtaposed with the text's historicity. This is the familiar hermeneutic circle, conceived by Heidegger in *Being and Time* and elaborated by Gadamer as a fundamental process of inquiry in *Truth and Method* and *Philosophical Hermeneutics.* Gadamer sees philosophical hermeneutics as something quite beyond textual understanding; indeed, hermeneutics has the potential to unlock all of human understanding:

> Philosophical hermeneutics takes as its task the opening up of the hermeneutical dimension in its full scope, showing its fundamental significance for our entire understanding of the world and

> thus for all the various forms in which this understanding manifests itself: from interhuman communication to manipulation of society; from personal experience by the individual in society to the way in which he [*sic*] encounters society; and from the tradition as it is built of religion and law, art and philosophy, to the revolutionary consciousness that unhinges the tradition through emancipatory reflection. ("Ideology Critique" 313)

Drawing on the tradition of Schleiermacher, Gadamer agrees that text and speech are hermeneutical sites, and he demonstrates the link between rhetoric and hermeneutics: "But where speaking is an art, so is understanding. Thus all speech and all texts are basically related to the art of understanding, hermeneutics, and this explains the connection between rhetoric (which is part of aesthetics) and hermeneutics" (*Truth and Method* 188). Further, the process of understanding is conducted verbally, such that "it is not for nothing that the special problematic of understanding and the attempt to master it as an art—the concern of hermeneutics—belongs traditionally to the sphere of grammar and rhetoric" (*Truth and Method* 384). Gadamer's acceptance of Schleiermacher's psychological view of hermeneutics provides the fundamental rationale for invitational rhetoric: "What is to be understood is now not only the exact words and their objective meaning, but also the individuality of the speaker or author" (*Truth and Method* 186).

Conversation, according to Gadamer, is a process of coming to understanding. When dialogue is entered into as hermeneutic practice, participants are not engaged in changing each other's mind, but are interested in gaining a better understanding of the self and the other, which *might* lead to transformation. As in textual hermeneutics, each conversational partner brings his or her prejudices[5] to the conversation and tries to work through these to have a "true conversation":

> Thus it belongs to every true conversation that each person opens himself [*sic*] to the other, truly accepts his point of view as valid and transposes himself into the other to such an extent that he understands not the particular individual but what he says. What is to be grasped is the substantive rightness of his opinion, so that we can be at one with each other on the subject. Thus we do not relate the other's opinion to him but to our own opinions and views. (*Truth and Method* 385)

Just as textual interpreters must be "sensitive to the text's alterity" (Gadamer, *Truth and Method* 269), conversational partners must be open to the "other-ness" of the other and of the self. We will elaborate this point in the discussion on feminist standpoint.

The resonance between Gadamer's definition of true conversation and invitational rhetoric's concepts of offering and willingness to yield is unmistakable. When invitational rhetoric is linked to philosophical hermeneutics, Fulkerson's criticism that offering and willingness to yield do not lead to action (206) is exposed as inaccurate. Each person is engaged in trying to understand the other person's ideas and positions. Gadamer accepts that no one can escape his or her prejudices and historical location to completely know the other. Like Gadamer, we realize we cannot step outside or deny our positions, and as feminists we don't want to. Therefore, both participants must recognize that in trying to reach understanding, they have to consider what they bring to the interpretive moment and yield assumptions and misunderstandings to better understand the other person's perspective. In this hermeneutic exchange, to understand is to act. Active discussion, reflection, and reassessment based on the recognition of difference are integral components to conversations that might lead to new understanding. Foss and Griffin's description and analysis of Sally Miller Gearhart's conversation with the anti-abortion advocate (14–15) is not just an illustration of invitational rhetoric; it is the demonstration of the link between rhetoric and hermeneutics bounded by standpoint.

In Gadamer's concept of *fusion of horizons* lies the transformative actuality of dialogic communication. In defining *horizon*, note that Gadamer opens the door for a subsequent discussion of standpoint theory, which will be presented in the next subsection of this essay.

> We define the concept of "situation" by saying that it represents a standpoint that limits the possibility of vision. Hence essential to the concept of situation is the concept of "*horizon*." The horizon is the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point. . . . In a conversation, when we have discovered the other person's standpoint and horizon, his [*sic*] ideas become intelligible without our necessarily having to agree with him. (*Truth and Method* 302–303)

Understanding is the fusion of horizons of the I and Thou, to use the terminology of Buber and, according to Hekman, Gadamer when he says that "language is 'I-less'" and "language speaks us rather than we speak it" (qtd. in Hekman 66). What "I" knows expands in communicating with "Thou." In dialogue with others who participate with the qualities of openness, offering, willingness to yield, and here we will add Foss and Griffin's third feminist principle of equality (5–6), horizons grow and fuse resulting in understanding. Timothy Crusius explains the process in a positive light: "Our horizons do not fuse in the sense of complete identity; if I become the other, I lose the other's friendly opposition, which prevents me from becoming too hopelessly myself. Rather our horizons fuse in the sense of a mutual enlargement of horizons, which still remain different" (40). This is exactly what happened, in our analysis, between Sally Miller Gearhart and the anti-abortion advocate (Foss and Griffin 14). The conversational partners remained distinct, but the fusing of horizons resulted in a deep, personal (we might add rhetorical) transformation.

Feminist Standpoint Theory

Invitational rhetoric is offered as an alternative to patriarchal forms of persuasion. It is clear that this alternative is based in feminist political ideology, which we will argue is feminist standpoint theory. We have already established a fundamental line of argument that links invitational rhetoric to Code's subjective-objective model of knowing; to Alcoff's concept of the knower's position; to Baier's idea of second person; and to Gadamer's interrelated concepts of prejudice, historicity, and fusion of horizons. Although all of these concepts link to feminist standpoint theory, none explicitly makes that political claim. We do so now for two very important reasons: first, feminist standpoint theory provides a boundary line against which Gadamer's fusion of horizons finds its limitations, and second, feminist standpoint theory provides the strongest rationale for the claim that invitational rhetoric is both a hermeneutic and a rhetoric leading communicators to understanding and change through dialogic persuasion/action. Feminist standpoint theory thus releases invitational rhetoric from the charges that it is neither persuasive (Condit 95) nor inactive (Fulkerson 206).

Standpoint theory has undergone a number of serious developments since Hartsock's early work in 1983, where she extended Marxian political theory to notions of a feminist standpoint based in biological reproduction, structural differences in women's and men's work, and hierarchical dualisms.[6] Recognizing that early standpoint theorists, including Nancy Hartsock, Sandra Harding, Carol Gilligan, and Audre Lorde, established their central concern for women's oppression in essentialist terms, we emphasize here our interpretation of invitational rhetoric as a rhetorical theory that is grounded in the notions of later standpoint theory. The theoretical conceptualizations of Alison Jaggar (382–389) and Iris Young's *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (229–234) more directly reflect the position taken in this essay.

Of import to rhetorical (Davis) and communication theorists (Wood) is the way in which discourse serves a speaker's standpoint in her or his resistance to oppression. It is here that we begin to see convergence with invitational rhetoric and hermeneutics. How so? Standpoint theory explains a range of women's oppression by exploring the links between (1) the situated knowledge (Collins) that results from a communicator's gendered life experience and position(ality) in social relations (Young, *Intersecting Voices*), and (2) structural power differentials that exist between people as a result of patriarchy and positionality (Code; Collins; Davis; hooks). Communicators/rhetors from different standpoints will have no choice but to engage what Gadamer calls "a central motif of all hermeneutics, namely, the task of overcoming and assimilating the strange" ("Rhetoric and Hermeneutics" 53). Invitational rhetoric provides the means to engage "the strange," particularly when rhetors occupy unequal positions of power. But, rather than fusing horizons to become a single mindset, standpoint theory reinforces the argument that this total fusion of understanding will *never* happen, at least not from an experiential or positionality point of view. Rhetors from significantly different standpoints have only symbolic communication since their experiences are so divergent. The hermeneutic quest for understanding then becomes a rhetorical enterprise when offering and willingness to yield are the primary tools to uncover the situated knowledge of both oppressed and oppressor. Recognizing the standpoint of the communicators/rhetors allows the hermeneutical-rhetorical situation to strive for an active exploration, through discourse, of what Collins calls "the matrix of domination" (225), or an interlocked oppression that results from the totality of one's race, class, gender, age, sexual orientation, religion, ethnicity, etc.

Standpoint theory also provides a response to Code's criticism of Gadamerian hermeneutics that (1) not everyone may unequivocally desire a fusion of horizons, and (2) Gadamer does not account for power in social interaction (201–203). We argue here that invitational rhetoric, if viewed as a standpoint hermeneutical rhetoric, allows rhetors to negotiate discourse by recognizing the matrix of oppression inherent in any gendered rhetorical situation. Through offering and willingness to yield, rhetors can strive to achieve hermeneutical-objective understanding of each other's position that has the possible end result of rhetorical-active transformation of oppression through shifts in power. Only through the combined use of standpoint theory and hermeneutics do we have a tool to confront power relations. In fact, Foss and Griffin's example of Adrienne Rich's acceptance speech at the 1974 National Book Awards (13–14) is evidence that standpoint clearly influenced Rich's (and Lorde's and Walker's) choices to challenge the matrix of oppression that operates in the hierarchy of the American literati.

Without an explicit link to standpoint theory, invitational rhetoric loses some strength in its very important claim that "invitational rhetoric provides a mode of communication for women and other marginalized groups to use in their efforts to transform systems of domination and oppression" (Foss and Griffin 16). Since this claim implies rhetorical intent, it causes us to examine Foss and Griffin's external condition of *freedom*, which is set up as "a prerequisite for the possibility of mutual understanding" (12). Freedom in the rhetorical situation is viewed on several levels: as unrestricted content or topics for discussion, as the ability for all participants to speak, as unlimited options developed by both rhetor and listeners, and freedom of choice to reject the rhetor's perspective (Foss and Griffin 12). If standpoint theory truly undergirds invitational rhetoric, then this fourth level of freedom needs to be qualified; otherwise, marginalized people have no chance of ever shifting power structures to eliminate oppression. Furthermore, although we can understand that some listeners may easily choose not to accept a rhetor's position, it is difficult to see that someone may not even try to understand a rhetor's position, as Foss and Griffin claim may happen. The whole point of invitational rhetoric is to engage hermeneutically.

We wish to elaborate this point further because we think it is important. Using the Rogerian notion of unconditional positive regard as the framing device, Foss and Griffin state:

> Freedom of choice is made available to audiences, as well, in that, in invitational rhetoric, the audience's lack of acceptance of or adherence to the perspective articulated by the rhetor truly makes no difference to the rhetor. . . . Either outcome—acceptance or rejection—is seen as perfectly acceptable by the invitational rhetor, who is not offended, disappointed, or angry if audience members choose not to adopt a particular perspective. (12)

It is then a rather audacious conclusion to draw that "should the audience choose not to accept the vision articulated by the rhetor, the connection between the rhetor and the audience remains intact, and the audience still is valued and appreciated by the rhetor" (Foss and Griffin 12). Pure prejudice, in all its virulent forms, simply renders problematic such an "unconditional" relationship between rhetor and audience. Bell hooks makes this point when talking about spaces where "liberatory black subjectivity" can play out safely, and it is *not* in discursive interaction "where such moves challenge, disrupt, threaten—where repression is real" (*Yearning* 22). Hooks, in fact, would probably argue the efficacy of all three external conditions—safety, immanent value, and freedom—as simply not possible in everyday interracial communication. Yet we support invitational rhetoric's claim for these ideal conditions to the extent that rhetors must *strive* for these conditions if constructive understanding and transformation is the goal. Further, we recognize that there may be differences in the way invitational rhetoric manifests itself when used to transform social systems versus individual people. The conditions of freedom, in particular, that bound the rhetorical situation may operate quite differently across contexts and would need to be examined carefully when considering the strategic and efficacious use of invitational rhetoric.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Our goal in this essay was to emend invitational rhetoric to strengthen its philosophical undergirdings, to release it from unfounded criticism, and to move it into position as a serious rhetorical theory. To that end, we made several strategic moves. The first was to discover and revise its epistemological stance to reflect Lorraine Code's concepts of knowing others and second personhood. The second was to connect Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics to rhetoric, and the third was to take Gadamer's emphasis on position and historicity and develop the connection to feminist standpoint theory. These changes have important implications for both rhetorical theory and feminist praxis.

Three primary contributions to rhetorical theory can be added to four claims already made by Foss and Griffin and the tenets offered by Foss, Griffin, and Foss. First, our reframing of invitational rhetoric as a standpoint hermeneutical rhetoric serves as another heuristic test of Jost and Hyde's call for the intersection of hermeneutics and rhetoric, particularly as a "call of conscience understood as the *topos* of *topoi*, the place of places that opens up the human world 'as' a world of values, commitments, ideals, agendas, interests, and needs and that, in so doing, summons us to ourselves and to others" (l). Invitational rhetoric reframed highlights the dual necessity of understanding self and other and being able to articulate a point of view that has the potential to transcend difference in deep and humane ways. This fusion of standpoint hermeneutics and rhetoric leads to the realization that "you're not me" in communication with others. We cannot underscore enough how such a seemingly obvious conclusion is missing from much of the communication we have observed in our daily lives, both in public and private contexts. If Foss, Griffin, and Foss's claim that "the invitational rhetor's goal is to understand the position of others and not to close the self off from them" (126) is true, then our suggested theoretical move opens the door for invitational rhetoric to take the lead in helping us to explain how understanding can lead to action as a profoundly persuasive process.

Second, our shift to standpoint hermeneutical rhetoric suggests that persuasion-as-action is as much a result of understanding as it is argument. Understanding one's standpoint through dialogue leads to rhetoric's epistemic function of (socially) constructing knowledge. In this case, rhetoric does not lead to truth; rather argument and understanding through shared horizons lead to a series of truths that are necessary for both the subjective world of individuals and the objective world of social relationships. Our position supports Foss, Griffin, and Foss in their claim that persuasion need not be a traditional process of Aristotelian argument and that, in fact, the communicative options available to us today go beyond the naive supposition that public speaking is the only true form of persuasion. A standpoint hermeneutical rhetoric also demonstrates more clearly how invitational rhetoric is enacted when communicators disagree and the theoretical basis from which the process is derived.

Third, our epistemological realignment allows invitational rhetoric to bridge the private and public spheres of discourse. In shifting to the position of knowing others, we can agree with Code's claim that there is a range of potential for dialogue:

> The practice of "second person" discourse has the emancipatory potential to open up freer discursive spaces than those constructed and constrained by the objective, impersonal forms of address characteristic of the anonymous "public" activities of late capitalist societies. In claiming this promise for discursive strategies, I am not ignoring the intrication of discourse and forms of address within power structures that cannot be overthrown singlehandedly or all at once. Neither, though, would it be reasonable to minimize the local successes that feminists have achieved in micropractices of restructuring personal, social, and political institutions and relations. (86–87)

Clearly, second person discourse is possible in public arenas where dialogue is seen as a potential for problem solving. The notion of public argument is viewed as unacceptable and culturally damaging by theorists such as Deborah Tannen, while notions of dialogue are advocated in organizations as acceptable forms of learning to meet change (e.g., Brown; Kellett; Kristiansen and Bloch-Poulsen; Putnam; Senge et al.). If businesses and schools can effectively use dialogue as public communication to effect meaningful change, then it appears that invitational rhetoric does have the potential to expand our conceptualizations of rhetoric, transcending the public-private dichotomy and the rhetoric-communication debate. Even in politics, conceived as the most "public" of rhetorical situations, we are witness to town hall meetings where debate and dialogue converge to help people understand issues and come together as a community. These types of rhetorical situations may also serve as criteria for helping to address Pollack et al.'s concerns about how to discern when to use more "traditional" forms of persuasion versus alternatives like invitational rhetoric (150).

Invitational rhetoric, as emended here, also illuminates a commitment to feminist praxis, which bell hooks defines, using Freirean terms, as "action and reflection on the world in order to change it" (14). By engaging in dialogic communication stemming from a standpoint hermeneutical rhetoric, everyone functions as rhetors who have the capacity to see self and other in the full "matrix of oppression," reflect on the meaning of that standpoint, and act to shift the balance of power. In this sense, we believe that invitational rhetoric is now a theory that is grounded more strongly in its political ideology. Invitational rhetoric becomes a feminist tool for everyday living and opens the door for a true participatory democracy. We can see this practice at work in both the communication and composition classroom.

As coauthors of this essay, we actually began our discussion of invitational rhetoric in a dialogue about applications of feminist rhetorical theory to composition and public speaking. We have found over the course of our dialogue that standpoint hermeneutical rhetoric provides the theoretical framework for classroom praxis. Embedded in the theory are values of inquiry and exploration, the social dimensions of knowledge, the importance of difference and positionality, and the desire to eliminate oppression through trying to reach mutual understanding of difference. In public speaking and composition classrooms, invitational rhetoric articulates the way to engage in written and spoken dialogue that reflects hooks's notion of feminist praxis. Although hooks talks about the elements of dialogue and personal experience in "engaged pedagogy" (186), standpoint hermeneutical rhetoric more deeply theorizes the kind of dialogue that might lead to transformative moments for students as individuals and/or as a group. In public speaking and composition classrooms, our students often assume their peers mirror their values and beliefs; they seek connection in sameness in what they hear and read. As a result, their reading and communication reach early closure with statements like "I can relate to that," which embrace similarity and resist difference. Implicitly or explicitly, they have been taught to try to erase difference, resulting in little understanding about how to talk or write to an audience beyond themselves. Nor do students imagine communicating across difference towards mutual understanding. Practicing a pedagogy grounded in standpoint hermeneutical rhetoric means we can emphasize critical reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills that are necessary for dialogic engagement as students read texts or speak to other people.

Collaboration as praxis is also implied in our point of view. If invitational rhetoric is a model for constructing social knowledge, then we can readily demonstrate how dialogue is a tool for understanding problems of power and difference. Offering and willingness to yield become the strategies to use in collaboration with each other in the classroom. As Makau so concisely puts it, invitational rhetoric "stresses *connection* over *advocacy* and reconceptualizes the relationship of rhetor and audience" (139). Connection implies the sharing of authority as a way to equalize the way learners communicate ideas, an argument put forward in Wallace and Ewald's *Mutuality in the Rhetoric and Composition Class*. As teachers we can practice invitational rhetoric ourselves. Just as important, we help our students to practice dialogue as a tool for social participation that has transformative possibilities.

Finally, feminist praxis requires a different mode for accomplishing the business of life. Although Audre Lorde expressed it as altering "old blueprints of expectation and response" since "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house" (123), it is Iris Young who offers the new blueprint of "dialogic community." We are inspired by the notion that invitational rhetoric has the power both to dismantle the master's house and re-create a community where all people have space at the table of participatory democracy.

NOTES

1. Note our choice of terminology. Our respect for Foss, Foss, and Griffin is such that we want to improve through a critical editing rather than the more audacious *amend.* We are not interested in changing

for the better by assuming that we are the more capable theorists. Rather, invitational rhetoric is, in our minds, an overlooked and underutilized theory that has incredible power. We are grateful to Foss, Foss, and Griffin for their contribution to feminist rhetorical theory.

2. *See* pp. 274–280 in Foss, Foss, and Griffin's *Feminist Rhetorical Theories* for a complete explication of Gearhart's term *enfoldment.*

3. Foss, Foss, and Griffin's new book, *Feminist Rhetorical Theories,* has been on the market since 1999, so it is perhaps premature to predict the text's impact. Since it is designed as both textbook and reference, it has the potential to gain widespread use in the field.

4. Note that Susan Jarratt levels the same type of criticism at Sally Miller Gearhart in an essay entitled "Feminism and Composition: The Case for Conflict." Clearly, defining argument and responding to communication contexts with action carry import in both speaking and writing contexts. The fact is, a similar line of criticism has run against invitational rhetoric, and by extension, its foundation in Gearhart's work.

5. Note that Gadamer goes back to the denotative definition of prejudice: "a judgment that is rendered before all the elements that determine a situation have been examined" (*Truth and Method* 270). Prejudice here takes on either positive or negative value, but it nevertheless is a tentative judgment. Hermeneutics allows the participant to deconstruct his or her tentative judgments that are bound up in historical knowledge and tradition.

6. See Chapter 6, "The Importance of Standpoint in Feminism," in Alessandra Tanesini's *An Introduction to Feminist Epistemologies* for a concise history of feminist standpoint theory development in North America and Europe. Judith Evans also offers a concise critique of the essentialism of early theory in *Feminist Theory Today.*

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7

Telling the Story, Hearing the Story

Narrative Co-Construction and Crisis Research

Karen Taylor, Rita Durant, and David Boje

Modern social science is about finding those conventions, those predictable patterns, with which individuals can make sense of their lives. Particularly important to the social scientific method is the use of language for identifying, maintaining, and sharing propositions: "In Western and especially modern consciousness, . . . the idea of method draws its power from the fact that certain objects and processes can be experimentally isolated and thereby controlled" (Gadamer, qtd. in Grondin, 1994, p. 118).

Our experiences and our data suggest that a valuable skill set for social science research into crises includes the following:

1. Invitational rhetoric
2. Strategies for involvement in discourse
3. Recognition, acceptance, and invitation of antenarratives
4. Ways to work with linguistic resources to develop indexical antenarratives into stable, recognizable narratives

All of these skills are honed by the limitations of language and disruption of expectations imposed by crisis events—problems that exceed an individual's capacity to respond using already established routines. *Crisis* in this sense is "a temporary state of upset and disequilibrium, characterized chiefly by an individual's inability to cope with a particular situation using customary methods of problem-solving and by the potential for positive or negative outcomes" (Roberts & Dzieglielewski, 1995, pp. 9–10). Whereas *novelty* often has the connotation of triviality, we ask the reader's permission to use it to refer to the entirely new set of circumstances in crisis situations that cannot be adequately addressed and that overwhelms current systems due to its unanticipated characteristics. When traditional behaviors do not work, the individual or organization needs to go beyond the usual to reach for more creative solutions and to go from the known to the unknown.

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Crises arise when current tools—largely information and language routines—fail to isolate, name, describe, predict, or control a novel situation. Given the close link between language and understanding, crisis often is accompanied by the failure of language to adequately represent the unforeseen and overwhelming circumstances. The challenge for social science research into crisis is therefore parallel to the basic conflict of language as described by Gadamer in the opening quote. Crisis researchers have the potential not only to gather rich information but also to create an opportunity for agency and authority when they respond to interviewees' invitations to talk about the chaotic and the anomalous.

RESEARCHING CRISES

Problems are occurrences that are different from the routine, expected, or ordinary (Hopfl, 2000). Within a social science method of objectivity, standardization, prediction, and control, research seeks to avoid problems by controlling or factoring out ambiguity and difference. Because crisis situations are characterized by the failure of the tools of prediction and control, however, standard methodology may fail to adequately represent perceptions in crisis situations. Randomness and errors become the focus of the research rather than its residue.

Trust is required for someone to divulge sensitive information about difficulties in coping (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995). Trust is more readily shown to those who are considered to be "in it with us" than to outsiders. Insider and outsider status both constitutes and is constituted by discourse practices. The meaning of a class of events is always indexically bound to the specifics of a given situation and is contingent on intersubjectively constructed accounts (Barley, 1991). How can accounts of crises be intersubjectively constructed in order both to understand them today and to avoid similar calamities in the future? Our particular interest is in the language tools available for use during research into crisis.

Crisis is a state that many communities will experience. Given that "cultures regularly suffer from contingency," they inevitably "bump into things they do not expect and cannot control" (Hyde, 1998, p. 105). Therefore, the research goals of striving to predict and control crisis may not be useful or appropriate. Various language strategies can address the tension between crisis and control because language has the potential to be "betwixt and between," calling forth "new structures, new symbols, and new metaphors" (Hyde, 1998, p. 130, citing Turner, 1977)—in other words, language can generate new relationships and new understandings. In seeking ways out of the state of crisis, language strategies lead toward either a reassertion of standardization or an embrace of the new, which requires trust, a sense of humility and/or humor, and faith that an opportunity for creativity lies in the crisis.

DISCURSIVE INTERACTIONS

We propose that the solution to the uncertainties of language around crisis is the strategic employment of discourse strategies that invite others to contribute to partial understandings. Invitational rhetoric, adapted from Foss and Griffin (1995), uses language to express a desire to understand the other; admits the inadequacy of language to express such an understanding; and indicates a willingness to learn from the other in order to build new relationships, new structures, and new metaphors. As we use it here, *invitational rhetoric* is a discourse strategy of partiality, ambiguity, and careful attention on the part of the interviewer to what the respondent has to say. In the following, we identify specific rhetorical maneuvers used by some research interviewers to invite input from the respondents' points of view.

The outcome of the use of invitational rhetoric leads to vivid depictions of what the respondents are surprised by and how they feel about what happened. We propose that antenarratives are important linguistic components of crisis situations. They lack the beginning, middle, end (BME) coherence of full-blown retrospective narratives, but they indicate that some more complete narrative might be tellable in the future (Boje, 1991). Such antenarratives are pre-story utterances that "bet" that a more coherent BME narrative might emerge (Boje, 1991). An antenarrative, then, is a "prospective" utterance: a kernel, a bet, a seed of a potential story to be co-constructed through interlocution. Durant, Gardner, and Taylor (2007) build on the concept of antenarrative to suggest that indexical narrative fragments can serve as a form of antenarrative by pointing to something familiar in an unfamiliar setting or something unfamiliar in a familiar setting.

Given the recursive nature of dialogue, respondents' narrative fragments in interviews are therefore invitations to the interviewer to explore the out of place together in order to co-create or socially construct some sense out of the disordered in the past, present, or (anticipated) future. Taking up the invitation to co-construct sense out of the senseless, the interviewer also accepts an invitation to enter into a discourse community with the respondent, and a fragile, likely temporary in-group is formed. The interviewer becomes more involved (Tannen, 1987) and the respondent more descriptive. We hypothesize that invitational rhetoric leads to indexical narrative fragments and antenarratives, particularly in discourse about crises. Partial, nonstandard interviewer discourse leads to partial and nonstandard respondent discourse that better depicts crisis experiences, which by definition are beyond the capability of routines, including language routines, to adequately express the novel circumstances.

Our story in this essay, as is often the case with stories, is about a contingency in which an event from beyond the borders of the focal system intruded, causing a crisis of a greater or lesser degree (Hyde, 1998). In the Hurricane Katrina story, the crisis was of an unimaginable magnitude. Any depiction of it is necessarily partial, so we will emphasize those aspects of the crisis that highlight its novelty. After that, we describe standardization strategies of interview methodology and contrast these with potential invitational rhetoric strategies. Then we use our data to illustrate the vividness of antenarratives as depictions of crises and to suggest what happens when a respondent offers an indexical narrative fragment or antenarrative that is declined (or unnoticed) by the interviewer.

HURRICANE KATRINA

The most destructive natural disaster to date in US history, Hurricane Katrina killed more than 1,300 people, 80% of them in New Orleans. Subsequent stresses of evacuation, homelessness, separation from family, lack of insurance records, difficulty finding jobs, and other conditions of refugee life—Katrina destroyed an estimated 300,000 homes (Federal Response, 2006)—took their toll on the elderly and the poor from the city, causing countless additional fatalities.

Before the hurricane hit, plans had been made and preparations were put into place. Expecting a Florida landfall, officials had sent supplies to staging areas in Georgia, and in anticipation of the Gulf Coast landfall, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) prestaged the largest prepositioning of federal assets in history. Private sector organizations like railroads and agriculture-supply companies readied repair and alternative transports. As the hurricane approached, the Emergency Operations Centers (EOCs) of Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi expanded their staffing and operations schedules. Even so, Katrina's immensity and New Orleans's flooding overwhelmed response abilities: "Emergency plans at all levels of government, from small town plans to the 600-page National Response Plan . . . came up short" (Federal response, 2006, p. 1).

Initial hurricane winds and rain caused Lake Pontchartrain to overtop the levee system, but the city felt spared. However, the next day, 80% of New Orleans was inundated with between six and twenty feet of water from breaches in the levees. Hospitals and nearly all health-care facilities were destroyed or rendered inoperable. Firefighters, police officers, and medical personnel across all levels of government, together with citizen volunteers, braved life-threatening conditions to rescue people and animals from flooded buildings (Federal response, 2006). Flooded residents flocked to the Superdome, itself vulnerable as a result of rising water, a wind-damaged roof, lack of resources and utilities, and social tension. Others sought shelter in the convention center, which was never authorized as a shelter, and on raised surfaces such as the interstate highway. No post-storm protocols for evacuation were in place. Language routines were inadequate to account for the devastation and responses to it:

> Finally, the communications problems had a debilitating effect on response efforts in the region and the overall national effort. Officials from national leaders to emergency responders on the ground lacked the level of situational awareness necessary for a prompt and effective response to the catastrophe. This was a recipe for an inefficient and ineffective Federal response. (Federal response, 2006, p. 41)

INTERVIEW RHETORIC

Our intent in presenting some detailed rhetorical strategies is not to provide a sharper set of tools with which to pry out useful answers from interviewees. Instead, we hope to promote an overall approach, a moral orientation, to conducting research interviews about crises such as Hurricane Katrina. Traditional research interviews fall under the more general class of communicative interaction, which takes place within a more or less shared horizon of pre-understood meanings (Berkowitz & TerKeurst, 1999). Common understandings and identities are often attributed to demographic variables such as race, culture, gender, and nationality, but those are not the only possible bases for shared understanding. Mulligan (2003) also identifies shared attachments to a place as a source of identification, which undoubtedly affected the research around responses to Hurricane Katrina.

In interactive discourse, participants employ discourse strategies using available resources to achieve communicative goals (Morales-Lopez, Prego-Vazques, & Domingues-Seco, 2005). Personalizing interview strategies can be contrasted with a depersonalized, objective research style. Personalizing strategies include using colloquial vocabulary, first-person pronouns, examples or analogies to common circumstances, popular sayings or proverbs, explanations, sympathetic statements, and complimentary attributions. Objective discourse styles, on the other hand, include minimizing the interlocutor's framework; presenting oneself as a medium for institutional objectives; and employing technical vocabulary, impersonal constructions or clauses in which the subject is an institution, passive voice, the words *never* or *always*, and discussion of institutional rules and procedures.

Willingness to laugh during the interview is another personalizing strategy, including as a response to a laugh initiated by the respondent (Lavin & Maynard, 2001). For interviewers who are not themselves part of a crisis situation, that laughter can ironically be more difficult to engage, even in response to a cue from an interlocutor. Humorous observations; expressions of puzzlement; or repetition, the "replay" of respondent phrases (either verbatim or muddled) by an interviewer invite less structured responses and facilitate understanding. They also can damage rapport, especially with respondents of "divergent backgrounds" or "alternative worldviews" or when a "question may be interpreted as offensive, tactless, or meaningless" (Snow, Zurcher, & Sjoberg, 1982, p. 292). Other kinds of phrases that substitute for questions and thus serve as invitations to elaborate include descriptive comments, noting something the interviewer has observed, and evaluative comments, noting feelings or opinions that the respondent might hold (Snow et al., 1982).

We suggest that personalizing strategies, such as those noted previously, are useful because they build and support rapport between respondent and interviewer—rapport that leads to the creation of an "in-group" in whose safety respondents are willing to divulge their experience of unanticipated and challenging events and feelings. We also suggest that such strategies diverge from epistemological assumptions of modern scientific techniques. Lavin and Maynard (2001), for example, argue that following a highly standardized interview script is conventional practice in Western societies, where "increments of time, space, volume, weight, distance, and value have all become subject to uniform regulation" (p. 454).

The challenge for the qualitative researcher is how to balance the incommensurate requirements of personalization and standardization in an interview setting. Success in dealing with the paradox is particularly important during interviews about crisis situations because (1) safety is paramount for those who experienced a crisis, and (2) the data sought are about a novel situation, which will probably best be expressed through nonstandard language.

Our main concern is not with better elicitation; the story rights of those in the crisis situation must be the first priority. We suggest that Foss and Griffin's (1995) invitational rhetoric provides an appropriate moral as well as an epistemological and operational guide for the identification and selection of appropriate discourse strategies in an interview-elicitation setting. Foss and Griffin (1995) coined the term *invitational rhetoric* to suggest an alternative view of rhetoric, one in which the goal is not to bring the other into line with one's own framework but to invite communicative interaction of the participants. Narratives "represent an initial, tentative commitment to a perspective that is subject to revision as a result of the interaction" (Foss & Griffin, 1995, p. 8).

In invitational rhetoric, the goal is to be open to and appreciate and validate the other's perspectives, to learn from the other, and to build an understanding of the other's equal value (Ryan & Natalle, 2001). Invitational rhetoric's goal is the articulation of individual perspectives "as carefully, completely, and passionately as possible to give them full expression and to invite their careful consideration by participants in the interaction" (Ryan & Natalle, 2001, p. 7). As the ideas and feelings the respondents share with the interviewer are received with respect and care, respondents are provided with a feeling of safety in the belief that their perspectives are valid and informative, even when those perspectives are fragmented, uncertain, and partial—when they are antenarratives.

NARRATIVE FRAGMENTS AND ANTENARRATIVES

Retrospective narrative fragments and prospective antenarratives are developed collectively and are subject to revision (Boje, 2001). *Antenarrating* is the act of attempting to recontextualize or decontextualize, picking up content or perspective in one context and letting it loose in another. Antenarratives are travelers that depend on an expanding sociometry, a growing network of actors, to work in bits of context to send the antenarrative along its way to becoming a more coherent and stable narrative. Antenarratives are by definition "incoherent, collective, unplotted" bets on the future, born from the drive to tell a story before the storyline has been socially agreed upon, yet able to be transformative of social context (Letiche & Boje, 2001, p. 1). In discourse, antenarratives are characterized by "abbreviated and interrupted story performances that yield plurivocality" (Boje, 2001, p. 4) as well as an ambiguity that allows change through social negotiation and conciliation. Because they are incomplete, antenarratives can identify the boundary conditions of one's own perspective and reveal partiality, uncertainty, and acknowledgment of a lack of control—all characteristics of crises.

In crisis inquiry, then, the presence of narrative fragments in the discourse of interviewees may not mean that there is a tersely told, more coherent narrative a skilled interview can strategically uncover much like the process that characterizes a detective novel. Rather, the interviewee may be in trauma, and the crisis has not yet passed from reenactment (reliving events with raw emotion) into storyable experience. *To story* is, by definition, to make events storyable, to exercise more willful control of the memory of events, shaped into the wisdom of experience. To make a crisis discussible, interviewees need language and images that can be shaped into meaningful stories. The interviewer either can facilitate or impede this process.

Because they signal the existence of a break or a rupture in the expected, narrative fragments can indicate the triggering of initial sensemaking activity. Such fragments can locate the points at which the expected processes and outcomes not yet present may yet emerge. Specifically, we suggest that indexical narrative fragments provide a useful tool for inviting others to help individuals make sense out of events that have yet to become coherent experiences—a particular concern in crisis situations. If the interviewer is merely prompting an interviewee to recite some often-retold tale, then fragments have already been sorted, and the antenarrative map to the future is not ephemeral. There are times and places in which individuals neither can give reasons for events nor weave them into a coherent narrative with a BME. In such cases, they may only be able to utter indexical narrative fragments or antenarratives, pointing out something still out of place or likely to remain so. Indexical narrative fragments either point to a more fully formed narrative coherence or to the possibility that one can be co-constructed, much like the index finger gesturing toward an object says "Look at that!" Indexical antenarratives emerge from the phenomenological, wordless experience of a rupture in the expected. As respondents use indexical antenarratives to construct antenarratives, describing their observations of the strange, the out of place, and the unexpected to the interviewer, they are simultaneously inviting the interviewer to join with them in co-constructing a shared appreciation for the importance of what they are seeing or have seen.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Our examples of antenarratives in the form of indexical narrative fragments were gathered during the course of research that sought to assess the effect of public and private information sources on evacuation and relocation decisions in the context of Hurricane Katrina. Most of the interviews were conducted within two months of the disaster (the time it took to acquire institutional review board approval) in four states by communication faculty members and graduate students enrolled in a research methods course. The earliest interviews (10) were conducted by faculty in South Carolina through a shelter established for evacuees. Parallel to evacuation patterns for those fleeing Katrina, the bulk of the interviews (84) were conducted in the Baton Rouge, Louisiana, area. The Louisiana interviewees were recruited from a Salvation Army shelter, a church clothing-distribution center next to a Red Cross shelter, and a church-affiliated food-distribution facility. Each of these facilities had been set up specifically for Hurricane Katrina evacuees. Nine interviews were conducted in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, and an additional nine were conducted in Texas through the West Houston Association of Ministries, a nondenominational relief organization that assisted evacuees with housing, food, clothing, and other basic necessities. The remainder of the Texas interviews were conducted at the temporary offices set up in Houston by Tulane University to broaden the range of interviewee demographics. Snowball samples were conducted at the various sites to recruit additional interviewees.

Interviewers were supplied with consent forms, protocol forms, demographic forms, cassette recorders, microcassette tapes, and incentive discount-store gift cards to distribute to the interviewees. In the Baton Rouge area, they also were given cards with toll-free numbers for local counseling services that had been set up specifically for Katrina evacuees. The interviews ranged in length from 10 minutes (generally characterizing inexperienced interviewers' initial experiences) to over two hours. A typical interview lasted between 30 and 45 minutes.

FINDINGS

We turn now to the kinds of interview strategies that elicited, circumvented, or ignored indexical narrative fragments and antenarratives. The results reported here are derived primarily from the transcripts of the interviews but also from comments and observations supplied by the faculty supervisors of the interviewers.

In our procedures, we defined the presence of invitational rhetoric as marked by open-ended questions, participatory responses such as backchanneling, and explicit acknowledgment of listening and hearing the other's perspective. We expected that invitational rhetoric would result in more instances of antenarratives being developed into narratives characterized by the normally expected BME markers of narrative coherence. We also expected that more conversational turn-taking behaviors, more signs of involvement, and greater willingness to admit to partiality and uncertainty would yield evidence of the co-constructedness of indexicals and thus of a shared reality.

In the following, we introduce a variety of examples of formal, depersonalized interviewing techniques in which roles are clearly demarcated and the goal is standardization of accounts. Six examples of the way in which such interactions resulted in undeveloped antenarratives and reduced co-construction are provided. Subsequently, we provide nine strategies that illustrate invitational rhetoric and co-construction, showing how these interactions effectively worked to stabilize both listener and speaker in a more complex way. In these cases, we show how different rhetorical strategies supporting invitational rhetoric lead to both antenarratives and the shared development of antenarratives into narratives.

Standardized Rhetoric Strategies

Preset Codes

One way to standardize interviews is to concentrate on the facts and to record those facts into preset codes. One interview illustrates the impact of such standardization. The interviewer's asking for facts like "where?" and "when?" resulted in no narratives, and the use of questions with outlines resulted only in a short response, "another person." This answer, even though it seemed to beg for a follow-up of "what person?" was merely translated into the standard code "word of mouth."

Double-Checking Accuracy

A similar tactic for objectivity is to double check on the accuracy of the responses. Another interview illustrates how testing response accuracy shuts down co-construction. In this example, the open-ended question resulted in a relatively long narrative, which included an internal rhyme scheme "boarding . . . loading" that gave the story a sense of increasing momentum. The opening question, phrased "I would like," used a more invitational structure that construed answering as a "favor." The follow-up probe questions that challenged the point and the accuracy of the responses ("So your mom really watched") resulted in almost monosyllabic responses. The more ambiguous "situations like that" was likely an attempt by the interviewer to reinvite greater respondent participation.

Attachment to Script

Also important to standardized research is sticking to the script. An interchange in one interview involving laughter exemplifies this objective. Although shared laughter often suggests good rapport, in this case, the interviewer used relatively closed questions to respond to observations and did not invite more participation around the antenarrative "after the water level started rising."

Laughter Unreciprocated

Because laughter often points to the ironic, it can be seen as inappropriate when clarity and pointedness are important. In one interview, the respondent is the one who invited the interviewer to become more involved in the dialogue, but neither instance of laughter by the respondent was reciprocated by the interviewee. Similarly, the respondent's indexical narrative fragment, "I watched the water come up fast because I didn't believe it 'til I seen that," was completely ignored by the interviewer, who simply continued down the list of questions on the interview protocol.

Quantification

An essential tool in standardization is quantification, the ability to assign numbers for valuations and comparisons; such quantification can be seen in one of the interviews. The respondent resisted assigning a number to the experience when asked to do so by the interviewer; she was not clear on what the number would mean and did not trust that a number would be able to do justice to the "living experience."

Playing the Bystander Role

Standardized interview methods are based on power dynamics, with the "knower" standing outside of and therefore impervious to "the known." In one example, the respondent's knowledgeable and witty discourse with ironic constructions of academic terminology was ignored by the interviewer. The respondent's narrative fragment of "semi-normal" begged explanation, as did his passing reference to "contra-flow." There are two possible explanations for how this co-construction worked: Perhaps both interlocutors fully understood the meanings of both terms (although this is the less likely explanation because there was no affirmation or acknowledgment of such understanding), or perhaps the interviewer was focused on constructing the research project while the interviewee was working to construct the stability of a postcrisis "new normal."

Invitational Rhetoric Strategies

Invitational rhetoric is a discursive strategy that values the interlocutor's point of view, particularly because it is invaluable to a co-constructed interpretation of events. We identified nine invitational strategies used by interviewers in our interview data around Hurricane Katrina.

Repeating Phrases

Repeating phrases used by the respondent gives evidence of careful listening and acceptance of the respondent's point of view. Examples of invitational rhetoric resulting in greater conversational involvement and movement past the initial sense of crisis were evident in the interviews. Sometimes, narratives ended with invitations toward co-construction; a shift from first to second person indicated turn-taking and was a move toward a present instead of a past orientation. The interviewer's response moved the conversation back into past tense and used two separate question forms, the first open ended and the second suggesting alternatives. A second retrospective narrative fragment opened with specific alternatives raised in the question format but then returned to a pragmatic action orientation and prospective antenarrative focus. The second narrative fragment ended with a humor bid, which was not followed up on by the interviewer.

Repair Work

In another interview, a question was answered monosyllabically, so the interviewer did repair work by repeating the response and then clearly indicating that it was still the other speaker's turn with "okay." The next question used phrases taken directly from an earlier narrative such as "first off" and "go back." The questioner also mirrored the shift to a present and future action orientation to elicit further narrative development.

Expressing Empathy

Empathetic and encouraging comments support disclosure and participation. Comments such as "amazing" and "wow" illustrate a willingness on the part of the interviewer to appreciate and to try to share the perspective of the other. Colloquial phrases and slang signal informality and equality, as seen in several interviews. The characteristic Southern "y'all," for example, was echoed by "gone into the neighborhood somehow and knocked, known he was there and knocked." Expressions of empathy generated narratives that were more fully developed and included markers of sequentiality ("well, in the meantime"; "about a week later"); and rising action ("that was the interesting part," "everything came together").

Backchanneling

Backchanneling is feedback a listener gives to a speaker to show understanding. It highlights the listener's role in an exchange because, although the listener is saying less, he or she is actively co-constructing the interaction. The listener in one interview clearly shaped the interviewee's response using backchanneling. The initially short, factual (and somewhat negative) indexical narrative fragments were developed into longer retrospective narratives because of the interviewer's responses. By the time the next full question was asked (following up on a question about how the respondent got to Baton Rouge), the respondent included dialogue, the word "like" (indicating an informal and analogic schema), and expressions of uncertainty. Repeating "the kindness" and "I never knew" lent a moral and mythic quality to the story, transitioning into a theme of an affirmation of life and community rather than isolation. A forceful conclusion about the reality of the newly constructed understanding, ending with "actually," was also a part of the interview.

Seeking Clarification

Asking for clarification with comments and repetition (with and without rising intonation) signals interest in being clear on the details of the respondent's experience. One narrative was co-constructed through roughly equal relatively short turns, with both participants using affirming and backchanneling responses such as "right" and "mmm hmm" to seek clarification. Questions and answers repeated segments from previous talk turns for cohesion and clarity. The brevity of responses indicates a fast rate of turn taking, suggesting the high involvement of both parties.

Interpersonal Support

Invitational rhetoric is inclusive and recognizes that individuals co-create experiences and stories about them. In one case, there were two interviewees who provided interpersonal support by repeating one another's indexical antenarratives: "No people"; "Nothing man"; "All that's down"; and "All sorts of cars, cars flipped upside down." The interviewers' repetition and interpersonal support created a safe place in which the interviewee felt able to let humor represent tragedy through irony and expression of emotions: "gonna make a joke"; "you gotta make a joke"; and "you know, to keep from crying." The repetition carrying over from one turn to the next broadened to include a depiction of the community: "Like a ghost town" and "It's a mess. It's a ghost town." Because the repetition of indexical narrative fragments indicated a potentially shared perspective, there was little need to develop them into more elaborate accounts. The longest narrative, which was told about a bus, was the least shared and thus required the most description to convey.

Exploring Boundary Conditions

Invitational rhetoric takes for granted that one's own perspective is not shared. Therefore, explanations and elaboration of the interviewer's own observations establish the boundary conditions of similarity and difference with the respondent. One narrative included relatively more background information on the interviewer and invited in turn detailed narratives from the respondent. Repeated segments tied the perspectives together into a coherent interlocution.

Superlatives

Superlative semantics, including adjectives and adverbs such as “fantastic” and “wonderful” reinforce the uniqueness of the respondent’s experience rather than standardizing it. Unique perspectives developed into vivid depictions as both participants used emotional and evaluative language in one interview. The interviewer offered a situational definition that confirmed the construction offered by the respondent: “That’s okay [to talk a lot]. Especially in situations like this.” Vivid verbs and adverbs included “single handedly,” “rescued,” “tracked down,” and “literally.” The prefacing of “pointed questions” with the open-ended “anything else you’d like to add?” signaled that the perspective of the respondent was of equal or greater value than the interview protocol.

Poetic Repetitions

Invitational rhetoric values poetic forms as ways to depict an experience of crisis intensity. Given the limitations of language, repetition is therefore used not only as a rhetorical device for clarity and cohesion but also for aesthetics and emphasis. In one interview, the repetition of the number three (“three weeks,” “three days,” “three times”) lent the narrative a mesmerizing, mythic quality. Each additional narrative fragment, punctuated by backchanneling in a nearly call-and-response form, linked both forward (antenarrating) and backward (retrospecting) orientations. Devices such as anaphora (“we had no phone, we had no electric”; “left there . . . got here”; “contacted here . . . stay here . . . been here”) had variation within the repetition.

In sum, we have offered examples of interview techniques that either facilitate or shut down inquiry into the nature of the stories being elicited from interviewees. In the case of full-blown BME narratives, a fragment only indicates that a full narrative has been already told but is being kept out of the interview. In the case of fragmented narratives that do not have a previously performed narrative map, acts of co-construction on the part of interviewer and interviewee can allow events to become shaped into more coherent memories of experience. Finally, while most research has been about retrospective sensemaking of the past, there are antenarrative moves between interlocutors that are prospective sensemaking, dancing in the present to make the future seem less ephemeral.

CONCLUSION

By its very nature, crisis demands new ways to imagine meaning in the world, to engage in the intersubjective process that draws on the work of many. An awareness of invitational rhetoric techniques can help in sorting fragments of previously told, full-blown narratives from those that have yet to be shaped, a key process in crisis research. Further, invitational rhetoric can set the stage for antenarrative inquiry. Expressions of openness, invitation, and support are interviewers’ offerings for those confronting crisis, a form of offering identified in both scholarly literature and community norms. We honor the narrative fragments and antenarrative indexicals of individuals in crisis situations as fragmented pieces of stories about shattered lives and expectations, as offerings that help everyone involved recognize and respond to the early stages of sensemaking.

At the same time, we are reminded that the construction of meaning is a joint effort, and the question of who is doing the listening is as important as who is doing the narrating. Those who have lived through crisis are able to participate in the co-construction of meaning in a way that is often richer and more sensitive to the uncertainties and limitations of language when routines are disrupted. Whether one is an insider or an outsider in relation to a specific community struck by crisis, however, what matters is the skill set brought to the interviewer's role of researching, interviewing, and listening.

The sharing of meaning is dependent on and supportive of the relationship among the parties, individuals, and systems involved. Because, in research interviews, interviewers initiate the moves in this particular language game, they must model the appropriateness of nonstandard and novel language forms, expressions, and content. Accepting the respondents' invitational narrative fragments requires researchers to recognize and acknowledge the fragments that refer to anomalies. Because of the recursive and turn-taking conventions of conversation, the antenarratives of the respondent are openings for the researcher to invite the respondent to "tell me more." One way to bring meaning out of the uncertainty of crisis is for interviewers to recognize and help co-construct narratives that value what comes out of the experience of crisis. Invitational rhetoric can play a role in birthing these narratives, and we hope that seeing the difference created by that difference in research interactions, as illustrated here, can help in that regard.

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8

Planting Seeds of Change

Ella Baker's Radical Rhetoric

Marilyn Bordwell DeLaure

> "The most powerful person in the struggle of the sixties was Miss Ella Baker, not Martin Luther King."
>
> —Stokely Carmichael[1]

Ella Baker is an unsung heroine of the twentieth-century American civil rights movement. Although she dedicated her life to the struggle for human freedom and was a central force in several major civil rights organizations, few people beyond activist circles and civil rights historians know her name.[2] Baker worked for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) starting in 1940, first as a field secretary, then as national director of branches, and later as head of the New York City branch. She played a key role in the forming of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), headed by Martin Luther King, Jr., and was essentially its first executive director. During the 1960s, her most notable contribution to the movement was her behind-the-scenes work with the young lunch counter protestors, helping them launch the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). Baker was also instrumental in the organizing of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP), which sent a delegation to the Democratic National Convention in Atlantic City in 1964.

Baker's most important and enduring legacy, however, cannot be contained in these formal organizations or any specific legislative achievements—indeed, as she explained in a 1964 speech in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, "I was never working for an organization. I have always tried to work for a cause. And the cause was bigger than any organization" (qtd. in Ransby, *Ella Baker* 281). In working for that cause, Baker forged a network of communal ties and developed a style of group-centered leadership that empowered others instead of placing herself in the spotlight. Much of Ella Baker's work lives on through people such as the generations of young activists she influenced, particularly in SNCC. One of those leaders was Robert Parris Moses, who describes Baker as the "*Fundi* . . . [which is] a Swahili term for a person who

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has an expertise valued by society, and who passes on his or her art to the young by example and instruction" (Moses et al. 424, n. 1; see also Moses's speech in the documentary *Fundi*). Also among those Baker influenced was Stokely Carmichael, whose words open this essay. Carmichael's startling assessment seems illogical: surely King—celebrated orator, Nobel Prize winner, prolific writer, arguably *the* public face of the movement—must be the more powerful figure. But perhaps Carmichael's statement suggests an alternative view of power, one that privileges the less visible grassroots community organizing tradition over the more spectacular community mobilizing tradition.

Rhetorical studies of the modern American civil rights movement have focused almost exclusively on the contributions of male leaders to community mobilizing, in part because the most visible and vocal public figures in the movement were men such as Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, and Stokely Carmichael.[3] The grassroots organizing done largely by women—the "spade work," as Baker called it, that tilled the ground in preparation for campaigns such as the Montgomery bus boycott and the 1963 March on Washington—has received little attention in our field.[4] Richard Jensen and John Hammerback's work on Robert Parris Moses is an exception as they make a case for conceiving organizing as rhetorical while contesting the notion that the soft-spoken Moses was a poor speaker or even "anti-rhetorical." Jensen and Hammerback argue that Moses's rhetorical aims called not for persuasion, but "reconstitution," a "rhetorical transformation" that spurs audiences to "discover latent qualities in themselves and alter their identities" ("Your Tools" 138). Interestingly, most of the defining qualities of Moses's approach to organizing were, as Jensen and Hammerback openly acknowledge, learned from his mentor, Ella Baker ("Your Tools" 129–32; "Working" 2, 5, 15–16).

Why, then, the dearth of attention to Baker and other female organizers? Both Moses and Baker sought to avoid the limelight and were skeptical of public oratory. Perhaps Baker, as a woman, was better able to remain quietly behind the scenes than Moses; or, as I argue, her contributions remain further marginalized in public memory given her gender and radical politics.[5] Furthermore, Baker's work does not fit well into a traditional model of rhetorical criticism, because she did not give many formal public speeches before large audiences that were recorded by the media or published in manuscript form, nor did she write any extensive accounts of her own life work. The "text" of Baker's organizing, then, must be woven from various less conventionally rhetorical threads, including the many interviews she gave in her lifetime, as well as personal testimonies from those who worked closely with her.

This essay brings attention to Ella Baker as a rhetorical figure in her own right, responding in part to Jensen and Hammerback's call to expand the study of "the largely hidden story of community organizers" ("Working" 14). The essay also deepens the rhetorical analysis of community organizing by focusing not only upon *what* organizers sought to achieve, but also *how* they achieved those ends. Robert Moses learned from Ella Baker the goals of forging identification, cultivating local leadership, and reconstituting audiences, encouraging them to reformulate their own identities to see themselves as agents of change.[6] Ella Baker's methods for realizing these ends—her tools for cultivating the political terrain and planting the seeds of change—merit our attention. While Baker wisely adapted her rhetoric to the specific audience and context, sometimes employing persuasion and forceful critique, her hallmark organizing style was characterized by listening, inviting, and fostering reciprocal engagement. Finally, this essay also brings to bear the issue of gender as it relates to rhetoric and organizing. As historian Linda Gordon notes,

> The mobilizing/organizing distinction has everything to do with gender. One could say that organizing operates out of a female-style discourse and manner of relating. By female style I do not mean something that women necessarily have and men do not.
>
> . . . But in many different cultures, women develop skills at listening, connecting, nurturing, and, of course, doing without the limelight. (106–107)

Gordon's comments echo ongoing discussions in our own field about theorizing a "feminine style" and reconceptualizing rhetoric and social movements from a feminist perspective.

Granted, Baker did not call herself a feminist: in fact, she generally eschewed labels and even party affiliations (see Ransby, *Ella Baker* 370–72). Nor was her activism focused primarily on gender. The majority of her organizing targeted racism, though she was also an ardent critic of capitalism and firmly believed that economic discrimination played a central role in racial oppression.[7] Still, Ella Baker embodied several generally feminist principles. She was a strong, assertive woman unafraid of speaking her mind in any context, and she resisted stifling social norms of femininity, embracing an itinerant and financially uncertain life of activism rather than choosing the "respectable," stable job of being a teacher. When she married in 1940, Baker kept her last name and used the title of "Miss" for most of her public activities (Grant, *Ella Baker* 39–41). Baker remarked in a speech in 1969, "I have never been one to feel great needs in the direction of setting myself apart as a woman. I've always thought first and foremost of people as individuals . . . [but] wherever there has been struggle, black women have been identified with that struggle" ("The Black Woman" 227). As activist Diane Nash said, "Ella Baker was a feminist more in what she did than what she said" (qtd. in Ransby, *Ella Baker* 366).

I argue that Baker's organizing, while not explicitly or consciously feminist, nonetheless embodies many of the qualities of Sonja Foss and Cindy Griffin's "invitational rhetoric" and presciently anticipates later feminist critiques of social movement scholarship.[8] Baker's organizing reveals both the promise and limitations of the theory of invitational rhetoric and points the way to a more pragmatic and politically viable practice of invitational principles. Ella Baker's lifework exemplifies a radically democratic rhetorical praxis that empowers others to seek social change.[9]

FEMINIST CRITIQUES OF RHETORICAL AND SOCIAL MOVEMENT THEORY

Feminism has posed a number of important challenges to the discipline of rhetoric. Scholars have criticized the "great speeches" canon, arguing for the recuperation and inclusion of women rhetors and also interrogating the evaluative criteria governing that canon (see Biesecker; Campbell, *Man Cannot Speak*). Karlyn Kohrs Campbell's groundbreaking 1973 article, "The Rhetoric of Women's Liberation: An Oxymoron," highlights the paradox faced by women rhetors: that public oratory requires traits typically deemed masculine, and, conversely, that the proper performance of femininity precludes speaking publicly with confidence, independence, and self-reliance (75). The notion of a "feminine style," proposed by Campbell and later extended by others (Dow and Tonn; Hayden; Tonn), seeks to articulate the strategies used by women rhetors in the public sphere "to cope with the conflicting demands of the podium" (Campbell, *Man Cannot Speak* 12). The "feminine style" of Texas governor Ann Richards, for example, featured the use of concrete examples and anecdotes. self-disclosure and sharing of emotions, and family and nurturing principles (Dow and Tonn 298). Bonnie Dow later clarified that the feminine style is "a strategic approach for some female rhetors, not . . . an innate characteristic," and that the feminine style is as much a product of power as it is of gender (108–109).

In "The Rhetoric of Women's Liberation: An Oxymoron," Campbell also challenges the prevailing models for defining a social movement and evaluating its rhetoric. She argues that the classic model of rhetorical persuasion—one speaker seeking to mobilize audiences capable of taking action on a specific exigence—doesn't fit women's liberation discourse, and that analyzing this rhetoric requires the recognition of new rhetorical forms, such as consciousness-raising. In a similar vein, Belle Edson argues that most rhetorical approaches to social movement theory have exhibited a "male-oriented perspective" (34), in part by overemphasizing the role of leaders and assuming that group members are ordered in a hierarchical fashion.[10] Edson proposes an alternative "female perspective" on social movements, suggesting, among other things, that power might be shared equally among members rather than being concentrated in the hands of a few leaders. As we shall see, in her organizing Ella Baker already embodied alternative forms of rhetoric and perspectives on social movements insofar as she practiced listening and inviting and claimed that "strong people don't need strong leaders" (qtd. in Cantarow and O'Malley 53).

Just as Edson sought to correct a "male bias" in social movement theory by suggesting a female-systems approach, Foss and Griffin have offered "invitational rhetoric" as an alternate theory of rhetoric grounded in feminist principles. Foss and Griffin open their essay by critiquing the standard model of rhetoric as persuasion, or the "conscious intent to change others," which they claim is an authoritative, paternalistic exertion of power over others. In this "rhetoric of patriarchy," the central values are "change, competition, and domination" and the end goal is "gaining control over others" (3–4). In contrast, Foss and Griffin turn to the basic feminist principles of "equality, immanent value, and self-determination" as the foundational values for their invitational rhetoric (4). The goal is to promote these values, and ultimately to reach mutual understanding of an issue and of the participants themselves (5).

Foss and Griffin lay out two forms of invitational rhetoric: (1) offering perspectives and (2) the creation of external conditions that allow others to present their perspectives. Offering, the first form, occurs when parties "enter the interaction with a goal not of converting others to their positions but of sharing what they know, extending one another's ideas, thinking critically about all the ideas offered, and coming to an understanding of the subject and of one another" (Foss and Griffin 8). Interlocutors simply offer their perspectives, without seeking the adherence of others to these perspectives and without trying to change the minds of their listeners. The second form of invitational rhetoric involves "the creating of an atmosphere in which audience members' perspectives also can be offered," an atmosphere of "safety, value, and freedom" (Foss and Griffin 10). Invitational rhetoric is a cooperative endeavor rather than a monologue; integral to the process is the construction and maintenance of a forum for the free-flowing exchange of ideas.

The foundational principles of invitational rhetoric are quite appealing, and, as Dow notes, they would likely be shared by most feminists and by most liberal humanists as well (110). The rhetorical forms of invitational rhetoric are potentially valuable because they broaden our perspective on what kinds of communicative actions can be considered rhetorical and turn our attention to process rather than end product. Indeed, community organizing in Ella Baker's tradition embodies these invitational forms, often in lieu of persuasive oratory. Foss and Griffin's essay has served as a generative springboard for several lines of inquiry, including the rethinking of argumentation theory (Mallin and Anderson) and of communication ethics (Murray).[11]

There are, however, a number of troubling aspects to invitational rhetoric. The first problem is that, while Foss and Griffin claim to be proposing an inclusive, non-combative model of rhetoric, their essay is grounded upon a divisive, clearly gendered dualism: that (all) persuasion is patriarchal and oppressive, whereas invitational rhetoric is feminist and hence inclusive and desirable. Lynette Long notes that Foss and Griffin fail to practice what they preach, since framing traditional rhetoric as monolithically bad (patriarchal) "hardly accords much respect to their opponents" (102). Furthermore, while Foss and Griffin maintain that invitational rhetoric is not limited only to feminists or women, their gendered labels tend "to essentialize and reify gender stereotypes rather than problematize them" (Bruner 187). Dow also voices concern about Foss and Griffin's "questionable universalization of the term 'feminism,'" which elides important differences among feminists and different types of feminist theory (111).

The second problem is Foss and Griffin's provocative claim that "change may be the result of invitational rhetoric, but change is not its purpose" (6). They write that "in invitational rhetoric, the audience's lack of acceptance of or adherence to the perspective articulated by the rhetor truly makes no difference to the rhetor" (12). In other words, any kind of change that results from the rhetorical event is purely incidental. On one hand, Foss and Griffin announce that invitational rhetoric holds liberating potential as a "mode of communication for . . . marginalized groups to use in their efforts to transform systems of domination and oppression," but then weaken their claim by saying that it only "*may* produce such an outcome" (16, emphasis added). This indifference toward change, coupled with their total rejection of power as patriarchal and oppressive, raises serious concerns about the political utility of invitational rhetoric. Dow argues that the "utopianism at work" in gynocentric feminism, which advocates separatism and withdrawal from the public sphere, "tends to reject categorically the possibilities of using existing (and presumably patriarchal) activities and structures to achieve feminist goals" (112). As Lynette Long puts it, invitational rhetoric "highlights the maintenance of social harmony over the value of interactive engagement, conflict, argument, and potentially (beneficial) change—the status quo over flux" (112).

If invitational rhetoric is to be an empowering tool for transforming situations of oppression, then change cannot be a fortuitous, occasional outcome. If invitational rhetoric is indeed to be a rhetoric, it must provide for agency—it has to somehow include a vehicle for effecting change. Otherwise, the invitational forms become merely expressive communication. In their rejection of intentional change, Foss and Griffin focus too much on a one-way speaker-audience relationship and too little on context. Their negative view of transformation involves only the speaker changing the listener—what they describe as a "paternalistic" effort driven by "a desire for control and domination" (3).[12] But might not speaker and audience work together to change the world? Might not all interlocutors collectively engage in offering and creating egalitarian conditions, toward the end of identifying, defining, and ultimately changing an external exigence such as social and political injustice?

I argue that Ella Baker's organizing exemplifies the best principles of invitational rhetoric in action, but oriented toward the crucial goal of effecting change. Baker led by example, and her activism shows how promoting "equality, immanent value, and self-determination" (Foss and Griffin 4) can be a transformative rhetorical tool in the struggle for human freedom. Baker did not seek power for herself, and she often fought against restrictive forms of power even within civil rights organizations. Nevertheless, she did not view power as inherently corrupt. While Baker eschewed imposing change upon others, she did work to empower others to collectively change an unjust world.

A RADICAL ORGANIZER'S ROOTS

Ella Josephine Baker was born in Norfolk, Virginia, in 1903, and spent most of her childhood in Littleton, North Carolina, growing up in a strong rural community of her maternal relatives. Baker's grandparents had been slaves, and after being freed, her grandfather purchased 50 acres of land from his former master, upon which he built a church and the extended family farmed. More than once, Baker's grandfather borrowed against the property in order to help feed less fortunate members of the community. Baker's mother, Anna, was strong-willed, pious, and charitable, devoting her energies to raising and educating her own children and to ministering to the needy (Grant, *Ella Baker*; Ransby, *Ella Baker*). The civic, philanthropic values practiced by her extended family certainly influenced the young Ella Baker, shaping her character in important ways. She later reflected upon the lasting impact of her family roots:

> The sense of community was pervasive in the black community as a whole. . . . It was a deep sense of community. I think these are the things that helped to strengthen my concept about the need for people to have a sense of their own value, and *their* strengths, and it became accentuated when I began to travel in the forties for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. (qtd. in Cantarow and O'Malley 61)

Baker attended Shaw University in Raleigh, North Carolina, for high school and college. She was a debater, and graduated valedictorian of her class (King 42). Already as a teenager, she challenged authority, clashing with the administration when she protested the school's dress code and its rule requiring students to perform spirituals for visiting guests. Upon graduation, she wanted to attend graduate school in sociology or to become a medical missionary, but the family's financial situation did not allow it (Payne, "Ella Baker" 887). Instead, she moved to lively, bustling Harlem in 1927, where she worked odd jobs and lived with her cousin. Immersed in the vibrant, creative milieu of the Harlem Renaissance, Baker encountered thinkers and activists from all across the political spectrum. "And so wherever there was a discussion, I'd go," recalled Baker. "It didn't matter if it was all men. I've been in many groups where . . . maybe I was the only woman, or the only black, [but] it didn't matter. Because I was filling my cup, as it were. I drank of the 'nectar divine.' . . . Boy it was *good,* stimulating!" (qtd. in Cantarow and O'Malley 64).

In 1929 the stock market crashed. The ensuing Great Depression hit the black population even harder than the white one, and work was terribly scarce in New York City. Families were evicted in the middle of winter and many went hungry (Ransby, *Ella Baker* 75). In 1930, Baker worked with the socialist writer George Schuyler to form the Young Negroes' Cooperative League (YNCL), a network of local co-ops and buying clubs seeking to organize consumers within the black community to combat cutthroat competition and exert some collective control over the production and distribution of goods. The YNCL had lofty goals but was fraught with problems, including lack of funds from the outset, and thus the experiment was short-lived (Ransby, *Ella Baker* 89). In 1936–37, Baker worked for the Works Progress Administration as a consumer educator. In 1938, Baker applied, unsuccessfully, for a job with the NAACP. She remained without work during the late l930s, and became nearly destitute.

Baker did eventually join the staff of the NAACP in 1940 as a field secretary. She traveled throughout the South for four to five months at a time, speaking routinely and helping local chapters to increase membership and address the various problems of segregation. In 1943, Baker became the Director of Branches, and thus the highest-ranking female officer in the NAACP. She supervised other field secretaries and coordinated the national office's work with local groups (Ransby, *Ella Baker* 137). Baker also designed and led a series of "skill-enhancing and consciousness-raising" conferences to train local leaders, one of which was attended by Rosa Parks (Payne, *I've Got the Light* 89). During her years with the NAACP, Baker made contacts in many states, often staying in people's homes as she traveled and thus forming an extensive network of friendship and reciprocity upon which she would draw in subsequent decades. Baker also earned a reputation as a powerful public speaker, even though later in life she "would question the value of eloquent oratory as a tool for political mobilization" (Ransby, *Ella Baker* 131).

Over time, Baker became increasingly dissatisfied with the NAACP's organizational hierarchy and its primary focus on increasing membership rather than addressing local issues and solving problems. Baker saw class division plaguing some local chapters, and witnessed ineffective, elitist leadership. She felt that the NAACP governance was "overly concerned with recognition from whites, overly oriented to a middle-class agenda, unaware of the value of mass-based, confrontational politics, not nearly aggressive enough on economic issues, and too much in the hands of the New York office" (Payne, "Ella Baker" 888). Baker's primary aim was empowering people to take action to solve their own problems, and she grew frustrated when that goal was thwarted by the organization's structure. Baker also clashed with the head of the NAACP, Walter White. For these and other personal reasons, Baker resigned her post with the NAACP national office in May of 1946 (Ransby, *Ella Baker* 146).

In the late 1940s, Baker worked as a fundraiser for the National Urban League, and also headed the New York City branch of the NAACP. In the mid-1950s, together with Bayard Rustin and Stanley Levison, Baker founded In Friendship, an organization that offered financial support to blacks struggling for civil rights in the South (Payne, "Ella Baker" 889). After the Montgomery bus boycotts ended in 1956, Baker, Rustin, and Levison spent long hours discussing how they might help expand upon the gains made in the boycott and keep the momentum going. At the same time, the young Martin Luther King, Jr., who had quickly become a national figure as the leader of the Montgomery Improvement Association, was also working with his ministerial colleagues to figure out the next step (Ransby, *Ella Baker* 173). Both the northern trio—Baker, Rustin, and Levison—and King and his colleagues worked to develop a vision for a new organization, the SCLC. Baker and Rustin drafted a series of statements that framed issues and set the agenda for the SCLC's founding meeting in Atlanta in January of 1957 (Ransby, *Ella Baker* 174).

Baker traveled to Atlanta intending to remain for only a few weeks to help get the new organization off the ground, but she wound up becoming the SCLC's first full-time staff member and stayed on for two and a half years. Baker drew upon her vast network of contacts from her NAACP years to organize the SCLC's Crusade for Citizenship, a series of voter registration drives and citizen education programs. Resources were slim, and the SCLC had no office space. Baker used to joke that the SCLC's "office" was her purse and the nearest phone booth (Payne. "Ella Baker" 889). Furthermore, Baker had little contact with King and the organization's other leaders, and so she put together the Crusade for Citizenship almost single-handedly (Olson 143).

Essentially, Ella Baker was the first executive director of the SCLC, though apparently King only considered Baker an "acting" director—she was female, and not of the clergy, and so was treated as a temporary hire. "When I first went down [to Atlanta]," Baker later remarked, "I didn't insist on a title, which is nothing new or unusual for me; it didn't bother me. I was just there in person" ("Developing" 349). Over time, though, tensions escalated between the older, seasoned, collectivist Baker and the young, charismatic popular icon. King declared that leadership "never ascends from the pew to the pulpit, but . . . descends from the pulpit to the pew" (qtd. in Ransby, *Ella Baker* 170), whereas Baker's view of leadership entailed cultivating potential in others. As Baker said, "I have always thought what is needed is the development of people who are interested not in being leaders as much as in developing leadership among other people" ("Developing" 352).

Baker grew increasingly frustrated that many of the SCLC ministers were unwilling to get involved in voter registration in their hometowns and that the SCLC seemed "more interested in establishing King as a national icon, a Moses-like savior who would free his people from modern-day slavery, than in working on grassroots organizing" (Olson 144). The ministers disapproved of Baker's idea to enlist black women across the South to teach basic reading and writing to uneducated blacks so that they could pass the literacy tests still required in many states to register to vote. "The ministers did not share her enthusiasm for the enlistment of women," writes Lynne Olson, "nor were these products of the black middle class, who promoted the idea of a well-mannered, cultured 'new Negro,' all that eager to focus attention on lower-class, unlettered blacks" (146). Once again, Baker found her activism constrained by the hierarchical structure of an organization.

In 1960, a new wave of bold protest rippled through several communities: the student lunch counter sit-ins. The first, in Greensboro, North Carolina, was performed by four students, two of whom were members of the local NAACP Youth Council, which had been founded seventeen years earlier, just after NAACP field rep Ella Baker's visit to Greensboro (Olson 146). Baker saw great potential in this direct action by young people, but worried that the various sit-in groups were disconnected, uncoordinated, and that their momentum might quickly wane. So Baker arranged for a youth conference at her alma mater, Shaw University, in April of 1960: the meeting attracted more than two hundred participants. King was present, and his celebrity drew much attention, but Baker handled nearly all of the logistical details. On the second day of the conference, Baker attended a private meeting between King and the other top SCLC leaders, who were discussing ways to capture the youth movement—to mold the students into a youth wing of the SCLC. Baker was so upset that she reprimanded the ministers for their territoriality and walked out of the meeting (Ransby, *Ella Baker* 242–43).

Baker encouraged the students to remain independent and take charge of their own organizing. She wanted to preserve the radical spirit and energy of the sit-ins and feared the students getting bogged down under the bureaucratic structure of existing organizations (Ransby, *Ella Baker* 244). Over the weekend, Baker shielded the students from invasive media coverage, allowing them to hammer out their organizational principles privately. She also "encouraged the participants to see themselves—not their parents, teachers, ministers, or recognized race leaders—as the main catalysts for change" (Ransby, *Ella Baker* 246). In an article published in the *Southern Patriot* titled "Bigger Than a Hamburger," Baker described the 1960 Shaw gathering and offered a thinly veiled critique of King:

> The students showed willingness to be met on the basis of equality, but were intolerant of anything that smacked of manipulation or domination. This inclination toward *group-centered leadership*,

> rather than toward a *leader-centered group pattern of organization* was refreshing indeed to those of the older group who bear the scars of the battle, the frustrations and the disillusionment that come when the prophetic leader turns out to have heavy feet of clay. (4)

Out of the Shaw University conference, SNCC was born. Baker, King, and history professor Howard Zinn were among those invited to serve on the adult advisory board for SNCC.

For six years, Baker served as the "resident elder and intellectual mentor" of SNCC (Ransby, *Ella Baker* 271). With SNCC, she helped organize Freedom Summer and the MFDP. One of Baker's key contributions was providing the connective tissue for these campaigns by linking up the young SNCC members with local activists throughout the South.[13] Baker gave the keynote address at the MFDP convention in August of 1964, and traveled to Atlantic City with Fannie Lou Hamer and other delegates attempting to be seated to represent Mississippi at the Democratic National Convention.

Ella Baker also had a "significant influence on the early leaders of SDS [Students for a Democratic Society]" (Payne, "Ella Baker" 892), and she played an indirect part in second-wave feminism by serving as a role model for several young women working in SNCC.[14] In addition to the civil rights movement, she was involved in educational reform, struggles for freedom in South Africa and Zimbabwe, and organizing poor whites in the South and women in Third World countries. She served on the national board of the Puerto Rican Solidarity Committee and joined the Free Angela Davis campaign (Cantarow and O'Malley, 54; Payne, 892; Ransby, *Ella Baker*, 352). In 1985, she received an honorary doctorate from City College of New York. Ella Baker died in New York City in 1986, on her eighty-third birthday.

BAKER'S RADICAL RHETORICAL PRAXIS

Ella Baker's rhetorical praxis took a variety of forms, including public oratory. Of the many speeches given in her years of organizing, only a fraction have been published or captured on video. Baker's speaking schedule was particularly demanding during the months-long periods that she traveled throughout the South as an NAACP field representative in the 1940s. Friend and NAACP co-worker Odette Harper Hines described Baker as "a powerful speaker who talked without notes from her heart to the hearts of her audience. Very forceful, with a strong voice that projected even without a microphone" (qtd. in Ransby, *Ella Baker* 131). Even though she excelled at public oratory, Baker was wary of its power. She saw the limitations, and even dangers, inherent in the "great orator," leader-centered model of social movements:

> I have always felt it was a handicap for oppressed peoples to depend so largely upon a leader, because unfortunately in our culture, the charismatic leader usually becomes a leader because he has found a spot in the public limelight. It usually means he has been touted through the public media, which means that the media made him, and the media may undo him. ("Developing" 351)

Long before Edson offered her feminist critique of the hierarchical, leader-centered theoretical model of social movements, Baker advocated for "group-centered leadership" rather than "leader-centered groups."

Ella Baker also published a handful of short essays,[15] including "Bigger Than a Hamburger," which reported on the student gathering at Shaw in 1960 that led to the formation of SNCC.[16] According to friend and colleague Vincent Harding, Baker "often fantasized that one day she would write her autobiography, something she never got around to doing. But she wanted the text to be titled 'Making a Life, Not Making a Living'" (qtd. in Ransby, "Behind-the-Scenes" 54–55). Baker did leave behind an oral autobiography in the form of a number of lengthy interviews about her life work. Another key source of information about Baker is testimony by those who knew and worked with her. From these diverse texts— speeches, essays, interviews, and recollections of colleagues—we can piece together a picture of Ella Baker's organizing.

Community organizing is a rhetorical process in that it plays a crucial role in moving people to action and bringing about social change. It is a vital, if largely hidden, counterpart to community mobilizing (Jensen and Hammerback, "Your Tools" and "Working"). Historically, grassroots civil rights organizing has been a predominately female enterprise, in part because of gender constraints on female orators (Campbell, Gordon). Analyzing organizing practices as rhetorical requires recognition of "new forms" of rhetoric, beyond the traditional public oratory model (Campbell "Rhetoric"); such an approach also challenges the "great leader" conceptualization of social movements (Edson).

In her organizing, Baker sought to cultivate leadership in others, rather than perform leadership herself. As Linda Gordon explains, "[a]n organizer aims to self-destruct as a leader—that is, to make people need her less, to build leadership in others" (105).

Baker formed community ties and forged identification, not only between herself and her audiences, but among audience members as well. She focused on grassroots issues, and strongly believed that agendas for change should be locally determined through a democratic, participatory process. In part, she accomplished these ends by embodying the principles and practices of invitational rhetoric, and also merging these with a more radical, critical form of questioning and "militant mothering" (Tonn).

Principles: Equality, Immanent Value, Self-Determination

Ella Baker clearly resisted hierarchy and deplored prejudice. In her organizing, she consistently strived to promote equality, recognize the immanent value of all humans, cultivate self-worth, and encourage self-determination. As Barbara Ransby explains, "Baker had a way of appealing to ordinary people by making herself accessible, speaking in a familiar language that people could readily understand, and interacting with them in a way that made them feel they were important to her. She nurtured and cultivated this unassuming manner" (*Ella Baker* 113). Especially when organizing in poor and relatively uneducated communities, Baker took care not to dominate or use elevated language. She remarked, "if you talk differently, and somehow talk down to people, they can sense it. They can feel it. And they know whether you are talking *with* them, or talking *at* them, or talking *about* them" (qtd. in Cantarow and O'Malley 72).

Baker was sensitive to status symbols, such as fancy cars or expensive clothing, which might foster feelings of inequality, and she worked to forge identification among all members of the black community by minimizing the import of status symbols. She explained:

> And so you have to break that [division] down without alienating them at the same time. The gal who has been able to buy her minks and whose husband is a professional, they live well. You can't insult her, you never go and tell her she's a so-and-so for taking, for *not* identifying. You try to point where her interest lies in identifying with that other one across the tracks who doesn't have minks. (qtd. in Cantarow and O'Malley 70)

Baker believed in the immanent value of all citizens, including those who were socially and economically marginalized. Her radically egalitarian philosophy profoundly influenced the structure and practices of SNCC, such as the choice made by SNCC members to wear blue jeans and overalls so as to resemble the workers and farmers whom they were organizing. According to Ransby, Baker "was instrumental in SNCC's rejection of bourgeois respectability as a defensive political strategy, a rejection that opened the organization up to historically marginalized sectors of the black community" (*Ella Baker* 259).

One of the central reasons Baker parted ways with the NAACP, and later the SCLC, was her frustration with each organization's hierarchical structure and failure to thoroughly promote equality for all, regardless of class, education, gender, or political affiliation. Charles Payne notes, "Many SCLC preachers could go out and give stirring speeches about human equality and then come back and treat the office staff as if they were personal servants, never seeing the contradiction, although Miss Baker repeatedly pointed it out" (*I've Got the Light* 92). Baker's willingness to challenge authority was undoubtedly one of the factors that contributed to a strained relationship with King (Olson 144–45). Baker recalled, "I also knew from the beginning that having a woman be an executive of SCLC was not something that would go over with the male-dominated leadership. And then, of course, my personality wasn't right, in the sense I was not afraid to disagree with the higher authorities. I wasn't one to say, yes, because it came from Reverend King" (qtd. in Cantarow & O'Malley 84).

A hallmark of Baker's approach to activism was her insistence that reform should not be imposed from outside or above, because she believed that all people had the capacity and the right to participate in decisions impacting their lives. At the Shaw student conference, Baker saw to it that the students designed their own path, rather than be subsumed under King's leadership in the SCLC. According to SNCC member James Forman, Baker had "endless faith in people and their power to change their status in life" (215). Baker believed in self-determination and promoted it in her activism. Even as she organized people to seek change, she let those whom she was organizing determine the best course of action. As she stated: "I believed very firmly in the right of the people who were under the heel to be the ones to decide what action they were going to take to get from under their oppression" (qtd. in Cantarow and O'Malley 84). In her organizing, Baker used identification to promote the values of equality, immanent value, and self-determination: She sought to identify herself with the people, and the people with each other, rather than compel audiences to identify with her or with other elite movement leaders.

Practices: Offering and Creating External Conditions

Baker's organizing often performed the invitational practices of offering perspectives and creating external conditions of safety, value, and freedom. In a great deal of her spade work, Baker helped people identify and articulate their own problems, rather than pressing her ideas upon them. In doing so, she struggled to engage people about local concerns, rather than imposing dicta from the national office or centralized leadership. "On what basis do you seek to organize people?" Baker reflected. "Do you start to try to organize them on the fact of what *you* think, or what they are first interested in? You start where the *people* are" (qtd. in Cantarow and O'Malley 70). She offered perspectives but did not foist agendas or solutions on others. As Gordon asserts, "Good organizers like Ella Baker also understood . . . that people have to discover the most profound things for themselves and cannot fully take them in when they are simply pronounced by others" (105).

Baker also practiced a particular form of offering that Foss and Griffin call "re-sourcement," which is a response to a conflict that draws energy from a new source, effectively reframing the problem (9). During a SNCC meeting at the Highlander Folk School in August of 1961, tension arose between two groups, one advocating nonviolent resistance and the other pushing for voter registration efforts. The either/or discussion threatened to fracture the group, until Baker stepped in. Baker explained,

> I hope I helped point out that the people who they [the two groups] were most concerned about lived in areas where they had no political influence; they could not exercise their political right to register and vote without intimidation. . . . If [SNCC members] went into these deeply prejudiced areas and started voter registration, they would have the opportunity to exercise nonviolent resistance. It worked out that they began to see that those who went in for voter registration would be challenged so that they would have to endure violence—and resort to the nonviolent concept. (qtd. in Cantarow and O'Malley 87)

Baker's reframing of the conflict—not as *either* voter registration *or* nonviolent resistance, but as *both/and*—exemplifies the practice of re-sourcement.

The second type of invitational practice is "the creating of an atmosphere in which audience members' perspectives also can be offered," an atmosphere of "safety, value, and freedom" (Foss and Griffin 10). Again, it seems clear that most of Ella Baker's organizing efforts were spent creating an atmosphere in which local leadership could grow. As a field secretary for the NAACP, and especially during the formative meetings for SNCC, Baker listened and made rhetorical space for others to come to voice. According to Baker and others, the early SNCC organizational meetings could last from 6:00 p.m., through the night, and into the next day. Baker sat patiently on the sidelines, listening and advising, but never directing. "The first time I ever remember having a charley horse in my leg," Baker later recalled, "was after thirty hours that I had been more or less sitting in the same sort of cramped position" (qtd. in Cantarow and O'Malley 86). SNCC member Courtland Cox described these same meetings:

> The most vivid memory of Ella Baker that I have is her sitting at these SNCC meetings, which ran for days—you didn't measure them in hours, they ran days—with a smoke mask over her nose, listening patiently to words and discussions she must have heard a thousand times. Most of us can't be patient with ourselves; I mean, for someone else to be patient for us was probably the most important thing that she was able to bring to SNCC as a group. (*Fundi*)

Another young student activist, Mary King, reflected: "I watched as Miss Baker, without being instructive or judgmental, and without even offering her opinion, but using only her nondirective approach, thus gave the final push in support of the plan for the summer project" (61). Baker's organizing involved the continual process of creating these conditions of possibility for others to find their voices and develop leadership.

Implicit in the second invitational form is the practice of listening. Foss and Griffin briefly discuss the role of listening in recognizing the value of others (11). In Baker's organizing, listening was often as important, if not more so, than speaking. Listening accords respect to other speakers, and is clearly a vital part of creating external conditions of safety, value, and freedom. Listening is also an important rhetorical skill in terms of *kairos*, or appropriate timing, knowing when is the opportune moment to speak. According to Gordon, "Ella Baker would sit silently through hours of meetings listening to SNCC activists—most of them 30 years her junior—rage, dream, spin their wheels, bicker, before she spoke. She had a knack for knowing just when the discussion had reached a point where the kids—as the older generation often called the SNCC workers—could *hear* her analysis or suggestion" (107).

Militant Mothering, Radical Change

Despite the many ways that Ella Baker's organizing embodies invitational rhetoric, it also diverges from Foss and Griffin's theory in important ways. Baker's example is instructive because she illustrates how a generally invitational attitude should not foreclose the possibility of judiciously using persuasion, posing difficult questions, and even engaging in confrontation when necessary. In many respects, Foss and Griffin's model is gentle, feminine, accommodating,[17] whereas Ella Baker often defied these qualities in her personality and her work.[18] Although "she was known for her patience, tolerance, and willingness to work with individuals of diverse ideologies" (Ransby, *Ella Baker* 190), Baker also spoke her mind forcefully, even if she ruffled feathers or risked offending powerful male leaders like King. She admits, "I was difficult. I wasn't an easy pushover. I could talk back a lot . . . I not only could, but did" (*Fundi*).

Many writers have assigned to Baker a mothering role in the movement, particularly in relation to SNCC: Todd Gitlin labels Baker "the presiding spiritual and political mother of SNCC" (75); Joanne Grant calls her the "godmother of the student movement" ("Godmother" 38); John Lewis considered her the "spiritual mother" of SNCC (qtd. in Olson 150); and both Gitlin and Catherine Clinton claim that Baker "midwifed" SNCC into existence. Baker, who was fifty-seven years old when SNCC coalesced, did indeed play a nurturing role for the young activists:

> She made sure that parents were contacted when their children were arrested, that people going to jail had toothbrushes and hair combs, that those who were expelled from school for their activism found other institutions to accept them and obtained scholarships to support them. She always tried to minimize the emotional and physical hardships experienced by young people. (Ransby, *Ella Baker* 293)

In addition to this nurturing, motherly side, however, Baker was also a radical thinker and militant activist. As Casey Hayden said years later, "The SNCC of which I was a part was nurturing, warm, familial, supportive, honest and penetrating, radical and pragmatic. I see Ella in all of that" (101).

In her role as facilitator for SNCC, Baker did intervene from time to time, and could be intimidating, as she pressed the young activists in the Socratic style to examine and reexamine their motives. Her practice of *maieutic* questioning encouraged people to articulate and clarify their own ideas. *Maieutic* derives from the Greek *maieutikos* and *maieuesthai,* "to act as a midwife." Lenora Taitt-Magubane recalls:

> Miss Ella would ask questions, key questions. . . . She would sit there and she would literally almost let a meeting fall apart. People were at each other before she would intervene, because she wanted the decision to come out of the group and not be hers. She would say: "Well, what about so and so" or "Well, have you thought through this or that?" She was always pushing people to think and challenging you. (qtd. in Ransby, *Ella Baker* 360)

Other young activists also recalled that Baker's practice of active listening was punctuated by incisive, hard-hitting questions that provoked introspection and the interrogation of ideas. Mary King recalled, "With Socratic persistence, in her resonant and commanding voice, [Baker] would query, 'Now let me ask this again, what is our purpose here? What are we trying to accomplish?' Again and again, she would force us to articulate our assumptions. Sometimes I felt intimidated by her scrutiny" (60).

Baker was both nurturing and militant, a style of "mothering" identified by Mari Boor Tonn in her essay on labor activist Mary Harris "Mother" Jones. Tonn argues that Jones's militant mothering "reveals that rhetorical qualities like overt confrontation and personal provocation can actually increase identification and empower audiences to think critically and act boldly" (18), and that, *pace* Foss and Griffin, persuasion and the desire to change others are not exclusive to a "rhetoric of patriarchy." Tonn concludes that assisting others "with self-transformation can *value* the lives of others and can empower them to *resist domination*" (18). Ella Baker's goal was not to force change on others, but to enable them to seek change for themselves. Baker's rhetorical approach to organizing varied according to specific occasion, and her flexible praxis made use of a range of strategies including listening and provoking, offering and confronting, and questioning and creating conditions to empower others.

Finally, as I have suggested above, Baker's ultimate goal to effect radical change is perhaps the most important divergence from Foss and Griffin, pointing the way to a needed revision of invitational rhetoric. By forswearing the intent to seek change, because it is "patriarchal" and does violence to others, Foss and Griffin shortchange the radically democratic potential of invitational rhetoric. Particularly in deeply controversial situations that call out for change, including "situations of domination and oppression" (Foss and Griffin 16), rhetors cannot, and should not, eschew the desire for change. Foss and Griffin suggest that invitational rhetoric requires complete detachment on the part of the rhetor: She must have no investment in whether or not the audience accepts her position (12). But there is a difference between changing audience members against their will, and engaging in a reciprocal rhetorical exchange in order to achieve social change, which may or may not include the changing or reconstituting of interlocutors. By rethinking invitational rhetoric through the example of Ella Baker's organizing, we can see that broadening the scope of what constitutes "change" makes for a more politically productive invitational process. As a collective, egalitarian practice, invitational rhetoric can provide an important foundation for achieving radical change.

As we have seen, Ella Baker was deeply motivated by the desire to improve society. In a 1969 speech at the Institute for the Black World in Atlanta, Baker discussed two types of change: the struggle to gain acceptance into the existing social order, and the more radical struggle to reform society itself. She said:

> In order for us as poor and oppressed people to become a part of a society that is meaningful, the system under which we now exist has to be radically changed. This means that we are going to have to learn to think in *radical* terms. I use the term radical in its original meaning—getting down to and understanding the root cause. It means facing a system that does not lend itself to your needs and devising means by which you change that system. That is easier said than done. ("Black Woman" 230)

Change here is not an optional, incidental effect; rather, it is the central force driving Baker's organizing. Hers is a vision of change to be achieved collectively and democratically, as well as one that requires flexibility and inventiveness. Mary King recalls of Baker, "She taught me one of the most important lessons I have learned in life: There are many legitimate and effective avenues for social change and there is no single right way. She helped me see that the profound changes we were seeking in the social order could not be won without multiple strategies. She encouraged me to avoid being doctrinaire" (60). The change Baker sought was not changing others against their will, nor was it molding her audience to her own vision of social change, but change was a central goal.

Furthermore, Baker teaches us that any vision for change must itself be always under collaborative revision. As the *Fundi*, Baker passed on her organizing skills and passion for change to new generations. As she said, "So how do you keep on? I can't help it. I don't claim to have a corner on an answer, but I believe that the struggle is eternal. Somebody else carries on" (qtd. in Cantarow and O'Malley 93). The radical change Baker sought in her lifetime had no final ending point; rather, she recognized that the struggle for justice must be ongoing. Speaking at a celebration at the Institute of the Black World honoring Ella Baker, and reflecting upon the history of the movement, Vincent Harding said:

> Because this country has changed, we must change too, if we are gonna continue to carry on the struggle. See, that's one of the fascinating things . . . you move into a struggle with certain kinds of visions and ideas and hopes. You transform the situation, and then you can no longer go on with the same kinds of visions and hopes and ideas, because you have created a new situation yourselves. And if anybody here has taught us how to be flexible and change and recreate our ideas and thoughts as time has gone on, Ella Baker has done that. (*Fundi*)

Baker embodied the principles and practices of invitational rhetoric, together with militant mothering and *maieutics*, toward the end of encouraging people to collectively change themselves and their surroundings. Ultimately, all of Baker's work was dedicated to achieving change in the world, making it into a more just and humane place to live.

CONCLUSION

In her five decades of civil rights activism, Ella Baker judiciously employed a variety of rhetorical tactics in various contexts. I have focused specifically on her organizing "spade work," building upon Jensen and Hammerback's claim that organizing is a rhetorical process, integral to the formation and success of social movements ("Working" 3). While organizers like Baker were skeptical of public oratory and mass demonstrations—those parts of the civil rights movement most studied by rhetorical critics—they nonetheless engaged in rhetorical praxis as they organized communities. Baker brought people together, cultivated a sense of community through identification, made space for local leadership to emerge, and taught new generations of activists how to organize and carry on the struggle. Scholars and students of social movement rhetoric should attend to both the more visible community mobilizing tradition as well as the less visible, but equally important, community organizing tradition. The rhetorical spade work done by Ella Baker and many others—Septima Clark, Fannie Lou Hamer, Diane Nash, and Anne Braden, to name only a few—was a crucial part of the American civil rights movement in the twentieth century.

This study has also offered suggestions for the adaptation of invitational rhetoric to situations urgently calling for change. In much of her work, Ella Baker promoted the principles of equality, immanent value, and self-determination, and she practiced offering, re-sourcement, and creating situations where others could come to voice. Baker's organizing highlights the value of listening and identification as tools for practicing invitational rhetoric. However, my analysis of Baker's organizing demonstrates that one can successfully meld invitation with other more militant or confrontational forms of rhetoric, and that invitational rhetoric need not, indeed should not, proscribe the desire for change. Clearly, Baker was organizing for change, but she believed strongly that those "under the heel of oppression" should be the ones to determine the direction of and means for achieving that change.

In their original formulation of invitational rhetoric, Foss and Griffin make too hard and fast a distinction between persuasion and invitation, and frame "change" and "changing others" as a form of violence. Certainly, manipulating others to change them against their will does violence, but practicing invitational styles to collectively effect change—both in reconstituting audiences (Jensen and Hammerback, "Your Tools") and in fighting for justice—does not. Furthermore, softening the boundary between invitation and persuasion makes the theory more useful for the actual practices of democracy, including community organizing. Foss and Griffin do recognize that there are times and places for both invitation and persuasion; Baker's example suggests that rhetors may in fact need to combine both, even in a single meeting. Baker insisted on a radically democratic and egalitarian process, where everyone would be heard and respected, and no one leader directed the group. In this, she created an invitational environment. Still, conflict might arise, arguments were made, and decisions had to be reached. Baker nurtured activists, but challenged them deeply as well. Founding SNCC member Julian Bond explained:

> [Miss Baker] always searched for consensus. She never said, "Do this." She always was able to pose questions to you that made you think about alternative ways and end up with a solution that involved some kind of democratic process—involving everybody. She wouldn't tolerate someone coming in and saying, "Okay, here's what we're going to do." It had to be talked out among us all. It took us forever to make decisions. But when we made them, you had the feeling that everyone had had their say. It might not be the decision you wanted, but at least you got to argue your point of view. That was the way we thought it should best operate. You couldn't fight for democracy without being democratic. Your method and your goals had to be the same. (Gritter 84–85)

Ella Baker's work illustrates that community organizing not only forms the base from which to launch a struggle to improve democracy, but that the very process of organizing itself enacts the foundational principles of democracy by inviting people to engage in that struggle.[19] A revised theory of invitational rhetoric—one that highlights identification and listening, carefully embraces the desire for change, and works more fluidly in concert with persuasion—can be a useful tool for critics analyzing the rhetoric of grassroots community organizing. The practice of such a rhetoric creates a radically democratic space where interlocutors offer and argue, listen and debate, not with an eye toward changing others against their will, but rather to collectively fashion a new vision of society and invent the means for achieving that vision.

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NOTES

1. Statement by Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Ture) in interview with Lynne Olson. See Olson (150).
2. Baker's relative obscurity is itself revealing. Charles Payne writes, "That Ella Baker could have lived the life she did and remain so little known even among the politically knowledgeable is important in itself. It reminds us once more of how much our collective past has been distorted—and distorted in disempowering ways" ("Ella Baker" 898). In a similar vein, Joy James remarks, "It is not surprising that

the contributions of radicals, particularly black women such as Miss Baker, who spoke and organized not only against racism but also capitalism and imperialism, go unrecognized" (8).

3. There is a similar focus on "great men and elites as movement leaders" in other academic fields as well (Barnett 163). Several scholars writing on Baker and other women civil rights organizers have noted the multiple constraints—race, class, and gender—that have resulted in the near invisibility of these women. See especially Barnett, James, Olson, and Collier-Thomas and Franklin.

4. The only rhetorical study of Ella Baker to date is Catherine Orr's 1991 MA thesis. Jensen and Hammerback briefly mention Baker in their articles about Moses. Rigsby argues that only scant attention has been paid to African-American rhetoric, and most research tends to be in the "elite mode" (197), thus "neglect[ing] the vast amounts of rhetorical energies produced in local communities by local activists" (194).

5. James notes that "Ella Baker's preference to take her political directives from poor or working-class African Americans. rather than civil rights elites, led some to marginalize her" (9).

6. For more on "reconstitutive" rhetoric, see also Hammerback and Jensen, *The Rhetorical Career of Cesar Chavez*.

7. One of Baker's earliest forays into organizing was co-founding the Young Negro Cooperative League in Harlem during the Depression. James also writes about her extensive work with organized labor throughout her career.

8. Biographer Ransby writes of Baker, "Her fundamental commitment to a democratic vision and inclusive political practice was not based on a feminist perspective per se, but unconsciously, Baker had laid a foundation for subsequent black and white radical feminist work" (*Ella Baker* 298).

9. I borrow this term from Ransby, who carefully explains that Baker's "emphasis on grassroots participatory democracy" was not simply the populist formula of "one person, one vote"; rather, Baker's philosophy was "to let the disenfranchised vote, let the silenced be heard, let the oppressed be empowered, and let the marginalized move to the center" (*Ella Baker* 368).

10. Such a focus on "great leaders" and the community mobilizing tradition also influences the temporal marking of social movement phases. Did the civil rights movement begin in 1954 with *Brown v. Board of Education*, followed shortly by Rosa Parks's arrest and King's leading of the Montgomery bus boycott? Or, did it begin with the organizing done in the 1940s and earlier? See Jensen and Hammerback ("Working") for a discussion of the "pre-inception" phase of social movements; see also historian Jacquelyn Dowd Hall's "The Long Civil Rights Movement."

11. Mallin and Anderson embrace invitational rhetoric as a positive model for argumentation, defending Foss and Griffin against several critics. Murray, on the other hand, presents invitational rhetoric as but one pole in the dialectic, claiming that neither it nor direct moral suasion "can adequately fulfill the mandate of ethics" (333). Murray develops a synthesis of the two in his conceptualization of asymmetric dialogue.

12. Foss and Griffin do acknowledge the possibility for change to occur "in the audience or rhetor or both as a result of new understanding and insights gained in the exchange of ideas" in invitational rhetoric (6), but this is an accidental result.

13. For instance, in 1960 Baker sent the young Moses to learn from and work with her long time friend Amzie Moore in Mississippi (Clinton 572; Ransby, *Ella Baker* 301–306). Charles Payne asserts that much of what happened in the state of Mississippi from 1960 to 1964 "was predicated on the relationship between these two strangers [Moses and Moore] whom she brought together" ("Ella Baker" 891).

14. Joanne Grant's biography *Ella Baker* includes a photograph of Baker, Carol Bellamy, and Betty Friedan together at the International Woman's Day Celebrations in New York in 1975 (217).

15. Baker's first publication was "The Bronx Slave Market," co-authored with Marvel Cooke and published in *Crisis* in 1935. See James for a compelling discussion of Baker and Cooke's portrait of exploited black domestics during the Depression years.

16. Baker's speech at that conference, where she urged students to view their protests at the lunch counter in a broader context, had the same title, "Bigger Than a Hamburger."

17. Lynette Long argues that invitational rhetoric participates in the ideology of intimacy, which creates a "compassion trap" for women (114).

18. In fact, Baker did not subscribe absolutely to the passive, nonviolent approach to activism followed by King and the early SNCC members. "I frankly could not have sat and let someone put a burning cigarette on the back of my neck as some young people did," she said. "Whether this is right or wrong or good or bad, I have already been conditioned, and I have not seen anything in the nonviolent technique that can dissuade me from challenging somebody who wants to step on my neck. If necessary, if they hit me, I might hit them back" (qtd. in Cantarow and O'Malley 82).

19. Gordon attests, "The best moments of democracy that I have seen or read about were moments in the struggle for democracy, within the movements themselves . . . . Perhaps there is no stable political system that can continually involve all the citizens of a huge country in active political participation. In that case, we will have to depend on the inexplicable but regular outbursts of human social creativity and the political artists who help organize this energy toward social change" (116).

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9

Rhetorics of Invitation and Refusal in Terry Tempest Williams's *The Open Space of Democracy*

Jill Swiencicki

> The arduous challenge of negotiating political difference is to solicit a response from an individual who is functionally dead to one's appeal.
>
> —Jeffrey W. Murray, "The Face in Dialogue"

Is it possible to listen with openness to those whose political agenda runs entirely counter to one's own? What value lies in listening to how their beliefs came to be, or listening for the overlaps in values, or for possibilities for consensus and action? How, in our casual encounters, in our political work, and in our national discourse, do we move beyond the verbal rehearsal of ideologically entrenched views? This essay furthers the conversation on the uses and limits of attempting to communicate with those whose worldview actively undermines one's own. In it I focus on practices that fall under the category of invitational rhetoric—practices that aim less to persuade than to talk in order to allow more complex understandings of each other's differences to emerge. The term *invitational rhetoric* was coined twenty years ago in Sonja Foss and Cindy Griffin's 1995 article, "Beyond Persuasion: A Proposal for an Invitational Rhetoric," which aims to expand and name feminist rhetorical practices that do not have persuasion as an endpoint or marker of a successful encounter. The article's claims—along with research that features listening over persuasion—continue to draw impassioned responses. Yielding vigorous discussion in the fields of speech communication, women's studies, and rhetoric and composition, "the theory of invitational rhetoric raises questions about the language we use, our goals as communicators, the options available to us, and the way we position and view those with whom we communicate" (Bone, Griffin, and Scholz 448). A post–September 11, contemporary consideration of invitational rhetoric must explore the extent to which listening is an adequate political gesture in an era marked by the repeated bypassing of democratic processes. Such trends include the broad censure of political dissent, the governmental and corporate bypassing of democratic structures of deliberation, and militaristic restrictions on grassroots, citizen activism. Is the invitational mode part of a legacy of liberal, civil exchange no longer possible in an era of such keen ideological entrenchment, extreme power differentials, and real material disparities?

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In the sections that follow, I reframe debates about the relationship among listening, acting, and change within ecological theories of rhetoric and theories about rhetoric's role in democratic public culture. Such approaches advocate studying rhetorical modes in their dynamic, complex spheres of engagement; as performances of self within given discourses and communities; and as examples of invention that reveal invitation's creative, contextual force and its distributed effects. I apply this way of evaluating the invitational act to the events described in and resulting from the 2004 publication of Terry Tempest Williams's *The Open Space of Democracy*. Although Williams does not directly reference theories of invitational rhetoric in her book, I am interested in how she constructs invitations to those who openly and hostilely disagree with her critique of civic culture after September 11, 2001. I specifically focus on the rhetoric of refusal that consistently results from those invitations. I argue that telling the story of a person's motivation to listen, and the story of being refused, reveals the importance of narrative both for involving the audience in the ethics within and surrounding the exchange and for creating opportunities for those differently positioned in the situation to take up the issue when listening fails. The activist spheres of engagement that were created by students who were inspired by *The Open Space of Democracy* reveal that issues of publicity and collectivity are a crucial part of invitational encounters, one that serves the interests of the most vulnerable members of the democratic process. Rather than seek a perfect or maximal strategy in which persuasion may succeed, this essay seeks a path out of condemning practices such as invitational rhetoric, which are as limited or potent as any other options we have for making social change. Instead, the essay encourages analyses that trace how rhetors respond to and recuperate the inherent limits of scenes of persuasion.

INVITATIONAL RHETORIC: ADVOCATES AND CRITICS

Rhetorical modes based in listening feature "a stance of openness that a person may choose to assume in relation to any person, text, or culture" (Ratcliffe, *Rhetorical Listening* 1). In this tradition, invitational rhetoric, as Foss and Griffin describe it, is advanced as a broadening of rhetorical means beyond the patriarchal bias of "persuasion, influence, and power" and toward feminist principles of "equality, immanent value, and self-determination" (2, 4). "In contrast to wanting to change another person," argue Bone, Griffin, and Scholz, "when rhetors use invitational rhetoric their goal is to enter into a dialogue in order to share perspectives and positions, to see the complexity of an issue about which neither party agrees, and to increase understanding" (436). Drawing from Emmanuel Levinas's notion of "face in dialogue," Jeffrey Murray observes that invitational rhetoric aims to lift ideological veils: "whereas a rhetoric of disruption challenges the potential masking effects of ideology, a rhetoric of [invitation] goes unto the Other in order to facilitate that unmasking" (339). In sum, invitational encounters are listening-based exchanges that create an environment where transformation and growth can occur, but neither are criteria for success (Foss and Griffin 6).

After September 11, activist Terry Tempest Williams attempted such listening-based encounters with those whose political views ran counter to her own. In *The Open Space of Democracy*, she defines listening as a foundational democratic mode, one in need of being recovered and relearned as the primary way to prevent the bypass of democratic processes and representative decision making. Williams is committed to what Ratcliffe calls the exiled excess: recovering the material "that is left behind when we come to some form of common ground that has silenced the ideas most difficult, radical or confusing to hear" (*Rhetorical*

Listening 24–25). In *Rhetorical Listening*, Ratcliffe critiques a "dialectic wherein the posited thesis subsumes the acceptable aspects of the antithesis with the unacceptable excess being exiled from the dominant logic" (24). To not bypass or exile difference, but to engage it, those who study and practice the invitational mode carefully outline processes and methods for this form of communication. For example, invitational encounters are consciously built and enacted on the principles of "safety (others have a right to their own views), value (views different from one's own are worthy), and freedom (people have the right to make choices that work for them)" (Bone, Griffin, and Scholz 445). While focused on listening, Foss and Griffin describe the change process that an invitational encounter may provoke as an affective-cognitive deepening rather than an encounter involving humiliation, guilt, embarrassment, or angry submission from interlocutors: "as rhetors and audience members offer their ideas on an issue, they allow diverse positions to be compared in a process of discovery or questioning that may lead to transformation for themselves and others" (6). This deepening generally happens through the main genres of the invitational mode: narrative/storytelling and direct questioning/inquiry—approaches that reveal origins and motives for beliefs, values, and actions.

Despite these worthy aims and ideals, for some in the fields of rhetoric, communication, and women's studies, invitational rhetoric's appeal is limited. The root of the question is whether the desire to change someone can ever truly be suspended. Critics suggest that invitational rhetoric is fundamentally manipulative: what they see as the unavoidable desire to produce a conversion experience in the interlocutor(s) is embedded in the aim of understanding and listening. In "Civil Tongue," Lozano-Reich and Cloud describe invitational rhetoric's inherent irony; although it was conceived as a feminist expansion from the solely antagonist mode, the calls for civility, reciprocity, and understanding at the core of invitation are part of a sexist, racist legacy of limiting radical, passionate, change-oriented speech and emotion, along with bold material change (223). Desser sees invitational rhetoric as a reinscription of a disempowering, feminized stance, arguing that invitational practice is "too akin to the expressivists' 'ethic of care,' too close to maternal teaching, too linked to the social/cultural expectation that women attend to . . . the voices we find infuriating and destructive" (313).

Critics also find that the nonhierarchical, nonjudgmental, nonadversarial assumptions that undergird invitational rhetoric disregard how power differentials skew how listening happens and disregard how power differentials create firm disincentive to dialogue (Lozano-Reich and Cloud 221); this is what Murray calls "the fundamental ethical asymmetry of the interpersonal encounter [that] infiltrates into the core of reciprocity" (345). Arbor and other theorists have developed practices attending to the triggers and defenses that emerge before and during invitational encounters, implementing strategies to address what critics see as the mode's burden of conditionality: so many conditions for respect need to be met for interlocutors to remain motivated to risk, disclose, reveal, and explain that any sign of judgment or withholding during the encounter can make those involved retreat into practices that look like engagement but are actually formalities. Desser highlights this resistance the invitational gesture must overcome before talk among stakeholders even begins, arguing the practice might be as apt to "reaffirm a person's original dislike for a particular worldview" as it is to complicate or deepen it (324), thus risking reinforcing the very dynamic those in the minority or oppressed position struggle to change.

Critics of invitational rhetoric concede that "theorizing resistance to oppression requires attention to both invitation and confrontation, along with criteria enabling critics to evaluate both modes" (Lozano-Reich and Cloud 224). Indeed, Murray writes that "both rhetorics are ethically obligatory," and "neither rhetoric alone can adequately represent or fulfill the mandate of ethics" (335). Such critical analysis rests on the assumption that invitational rhetoric is the opposite of confrontational rhetoric and takes place largely among a dyad that can but may not have larger repercussions (Lozano-Reich and Cloud 340, 341). This dyadic assumption is at the core of analysis of invitational rhetoric. It is an assumption that I believe crops out the larger context, situation, and actors that are influencing that dyad, and crops out those who take up the work that remains or the ideas produced by the invitational encounter. Working from the assumption of their distinctness, rather than their fluidity or existence on a spectrum of dialogic options, further simplifies and polarizes how we see these modes in their dynamic fullness within a rhetorical context. Lozano-Reich and Cloud, for example, posit invitational labor as opposed to activist, grassroots tactics (224), and this opposition presupposes that the two do not work coterminously and mutually to reinforce common ends in activist work. Lozano-Reich and Cloud do concede that at base all rhetorical encounters are both invitational and persuasive (221), and that theorizing resistance requires equal parts invitation and confrontation (224), but they do not examine in depth what such an interconnection looks like or achieves. When such examinations do take place, it is assumed that a refusal to listen marks the failure of the invitational gesture or encounter.

RHETORICAL ECOLOGY

Critiques of invitational rhetoric, then, have oversimplified the invitational encounter in three main ways. First, scholars consider invitational rhetoric largely in a binary formulation, where modes of listening (which are cast as passive, accommodationist, and civil) are positioned in opposition to modes of confrontation (which are cast as active, uncompromising, and change oriented). Second, analysis of invitational rhetoric remains largely focused on the rhetorical modes of invitation and confrontation in a tight, dialogic exchange—assuming a person-to-person or group-to-group engagement that begins and ends with that dyad's encounter. Third, invitational rhetoric has been considered primarily as an abstract, isolated form, and we lack robust case studies of this mode in concert with others engaged in a rhetorical problem, raising the questions: What counts as a "deepening" of understanding resulting from an invitation to listen? For whom and at what stage in the process does the mere gesture of invitation itself, or the refusal of the gesture, potentially engender effects?

These questions are essential to pull more centrally into the conversation, because rhetorical gestures (like listening) are distributed acts rather than isolated acts of creation among individuals. How do we create models for analysis that capture the emergence, distribution, and effects of rhetorical gestures such as invitation? "Rhetorical situation models are undeniably helpful for thinking of rhetoric's contextual character," writes Jenny Edbauer, "but they fall somewhat short when accounting for the amalgamations and transformations—the spread—of a given rhetoric within its wider ecology" (20). Edbauer advocates the promotion and development of existing ecological models that capture persuasive strategies as part of "co-ordinating processes, moving across the same social field and within shared structures of feeling" (2). Such models highlight "the way rhetorics are held together trans-situationally, as well as the effects of trans-situationality on rhetorical circulation" (20). If a given rhetorical exchange does not reside in fixed spaces, but rather in spaces that merge with others, then an ecological rhetorical model helps us see rhetoric both as a "process of distributed emergence and as an ongoing circulation process" (13). To recontextualize rhetorics in their temporal, historical, and lived fluxes is to potentially shift the way we view counterrhetorics, issues of co-optation, and strategies of rhetorical production and circulation (9, 2).

And so when Lozano-Reich and Cloud ask "by what standard . . . are we to decide when and under what conditions invitational rhetoric would be productive?" (221), I argue for considering an ecological standard. When applied to evaluating invitational strategies, an ecological standard raises such questions as these: Who made the invitation? Who listened and who eavesdropped? Who took the invitation up, intended or otherwise? By what means did the invitation get taken up? To whom did the invitation or its effects transfer? To what effect? What marginalized positions emerged in the taking up? Which positions remained suppressed and why? Which material conditions changed? Which did not?

Critiques of invitational rhetoric rest on a conflation of agent and theory, maintaining that when an individual refuses an invitation to listen and engage it is the fault of invitational rhetoric rather than the individual's choice. To move away from this assumption I examine what happens when invitation is studied as one strategy in an ecology of actors and processes working on a political problem. Williams argues in *The Open Space of Democracy* (her 2004 book critiquing the public and political cultures created in part by the Bush administration's policies after September 11) that rhetorical acts of listening serve the most fundamental of collective interests. The writerly, readerly, and activist ecologies surrounding *The Open Space of Democracy* reveal that no rhetorical mode—neither invitational nor persuasive—exists in isolation or is deployed in situations fully of our own making and control. The book's representations of engagement and the readers' actions in relation to the book show that when invitations to deepen political understanding are made in view of the public on matters of civic urgency, they can set in motion other kinds of gestures from actors differently positioned and empowered to serve the interests of those most in need of solutions and change. The invitational scenes in *The Open Space of Democracy* and the journal Williams kept of her book tour (which appeared in installments online at *Grist Magazine*) highlight rhetorical features that resist pitting understanding against acting, and listening against change making. When writers like Williams take us into rhetorical ecology, describing their affective experiences and decisions to engage in invitational exchanges, it helps us identify the complex elements that make up modes of listening and observing, explore which ones overlap with and diverge from the persuasive, and see with more clarity their material and social effects.

LISTENING AND "PERSONAL DIPLOMACY"

Williams begins *The Open Space of Democracy* with a question: "How do we engage in responsive citizenship in times of terror?" (7). In other words, "How might we bypass political rhetoric and find our way toward our own humanity as we engage in meaningful dialogue and deep listening?" ("Tempest in a Tight Spot"). In the desire to "bypass" rhetoric, Williams is not naively arguing that there is a truth outside rhetoric that we can access. Instead, she is interested in strategies that will move citizens beyond the verbal rehearsal of ideologically entrenched views. In this way, *Open Space* aims to counter a post–9/11 rhetorical trend in U.S. public culture that stifled the democratic exchange of political ideas. The first chapter in the book, "Commencement," chronicles Williams's experience as the University of Utah's 2003 commencement speaker. The essay moves between long excerpts from her commencement address and descriptions of her motives, fears, and affective experiences while actually delivering the speech. Early on in the chapter, Williams quotes from her commencement speech and characterizes the problem of our time as an undemocratic consolidation of power among government, media, and corporations enacted and maintained in part through what she calls a hijacking of language:

> Since September 11th, 2001, we have witnessed an escalation of rhetoric within the United States that has led us to war twice in two years. We have heard our president, our vice-president, our secretary of defense, and our attorney general cultivate fear and command with lies, suggesting our homeland security and safety must reside in their hands, not ours. Force has trumped debate and diplomacy. Our language has been taken hostage. Words like patriotism, freedom, and democracy have been bound and gagged, forced to perform indecent acts through the abuse of slogans. (Williams 2)

Several studies of the curtailment of civil liberties and citizen dissent after 9/11, such as the American Civil Liberties Union's special report, "Dissent after 9/11," characterize the spring of 2003 as the season of presidential bravado: President George W. Bush's "Mission Accomplished" rhetoric on the aircraft carrier USS *Abraham Lincoln*; the much-publicized toppling of Saddam Hussein's statue in Firdos Square; and rhetorics of might and right that, through an enactment of Bush's "either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists" threat, aimed to limit the robust spectrum of response and action ("Freedom under Fire").

A perversion of language through ideological propaganda, as Williams describes it to the graduating students, has material implications for civic participation:

> How do we engage in conversation at a time when the definition of what it means to be a patriot is being narrowly construed? You are either with us or against us. Discussion is waged in absolutes not ambiguities. Corporations have more access to power than people. We, the people. Fear has replaced discussion. Business practices have taken precedence over public process. . . . Abraham Lincoln warns, "Accustom to trample on the rights of others and you have lost the genius of your own independence and become the fit subjects of the first cunning tyrant who rises among you." (6–7)

Restrict the deliberative power at the heart of democratic practice, Williams argues, and corporate interests will fill the space. This concern about "replacement"—about corporations and elected officials replacing citizen proposals and actions—was taken up by public intellectuals such as Williams and by such scholars of rhetorical theory as Sharon Crowley, who observed in her 2006 book *Toward a Civil Discourse*: "If Americans do not know how to invent arguments, if they do not know that they can discover alternatives to the positions defined by powerful people and institutions, democracy is indeed in trouble" (26). Williams's activist aims in this chapter focus on urgently changing the way ordinary citizens argue about, listen to, and promote diversity in public dialogue and public policy. Like Chris Hedges, Paul Loeb, Phil Donahue, Susan Sontag, and other 2003 commencement speakers, Williams received more boos than cheers for this stance (Goodman and Hedges) and faced state harassment through several mechanisms, such as Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) watch lists and "no-fly" lists (Rothschild).

Williams does not just lecture about the problem, though. Throughout *Open Space*, she describes how, starting in 2003, during the Bush administration's responses to the 9/11 terror attacks, she began to invite powerful public officials to, quite simply, engage in conversations and shared experiences with her on the issues that divide them. Eager to practice a citizenship premised on rejecting the discourse of terror (with its hallmarks of binary exclusion, domination, and preemptive judgment), Williams promotes what she calls "personal diplomacy": "a flesh-and-blood encounter with public process that is not an abstraction but grounded in real time and space with people we have to face in our own hometowns. It's not altogether pleasant and there is no guarantee as to the outcome" (23–24). Those she invited to talk were men in the highest positions of the U.S. federal government and in higher education—officials who had at different times censored her arguments against the Afghanistan and Iraq wars, against the curtailment of civil liberties after 9/11, and against the large-scale federal auctioning of public lands for corporate oil and gas production.

But in a book that champions invitational rhetoric, each of her invitations to dialogue is refused. Refusal to listen is, of course, the premier option available in hegemonic struggles, especially for those in power. In "Commencement," for example, Williams explains that after her speech to Utah grads, she exited the stage with Tom Korologos, who was there to receive an honorary degree. Korologos served as an adviser to every Republican president in recent history and was then a lobbyist in Washington for war funding for Iraq. "You don't know what the hell you're talking about," he yelled at Williams as they left the stage; "I'd like to take you to Baghdad and see what you'd say then" (Williams 15). So appears the book's first refusal—less an invitation to Williams than a threat, insult, and empty gesture. Along with Korologos, Williams quit the stage with Utah senator Bob Bennett, who said, "In the spirit of democracy, I want to register my strong dissent to your talk . . . you've inspired me to write you a letter" (15). His letter, from which Williams reprints large excerpts, focused on the central question that occupied his thoughts during her speech: "What would she be willing to die for?" (15). Bennett quickly moved on to describe what would justify *his* ultimate sacrifice: "the cause of freedom" (16). "This is what went on in Iraq," he explains to her (16). Bennett refers to Williams in the letter as a *she*, not a *you*—an interlocutor, a dialogist—further removing this letter from the realm of invitation, of a respectful exchange among engaged stakeholders. Implicit in Bennett's question is the association of dissenters with those who, unlike patriots, will not sacrifice for their country, or even with traitors ("What would she be willing to die for?").

A third refusal Williams features occurred during her book tour for *Open Space*, when she encountered Gail Norton, secretary of the interior under George W. Bush, in a Denver airport. Readers fully expect a harsh greeting, and it comes on cue when Williams extends her hand and Norton refuses to shake it ("Tempest"). Over and over we see insults hurled, invitations refused, and dialogue rejected in the wake of Williams's calls for free speech regarding our national response to terror and the erosion of democratic engagement. Those who oppose her in private use the language of hostile dismissal, adversarial challenge, and condescending didacticism, all of which aim to adjust and censure her perspective rather than hold a space for it.

Williams chronicles instance after instance of being silenced and refused in the chapter "Commencement." Her central point is to feature her own attempts to listen, to end ideological deafness. After receiving the letter from Senator Bennett, which did not request a reply, Williams begins to construct one. She describes her invention process prior to composing the letter, and it features her keen focus on Bennett's position as a Mormon elder and as a former soldier who is part of a long military tradition with roots both in the Mormon martyr tradition and in the U.S. military. As a member of a Mormon family that has lived in Utah for generations, Williams uncovers numerous points of identification between them, reflecting the principles of safety (others have a right to their own views), value (views different from one's own are worthy), and freedom (people have the right to make choices that work for them) at the core of the invitational scene (Bone, Griffin, and Scholz 445). Williams replies to Senator Bennett with the following invitation:

> We do not agree on the war on Iraq. . . . And we do not agree on America's Red Rock Wilderness Act currently before the Senate. But I do believe we can come closer to understanding why each of us is committed to our own points of view and perhaps even adjust our perspectives along the way to find creative alternatives that we cannot only both live with, but feel comfortable in proposing together. . . . [O]ur points of view might expand, even change, if we were to accompany each other to these areas of conflict . . . Baghdad and areas open for oil and gas exploration in Utah. . . . Both are regions in need of creative discourse. Both are sites of deep philosophical divisions. . . . I would like to think that we could bring our imaginations to the table and find a way through our positions to possibilities. . . . If you and I, a senator and a writer, but first, as neighbors, could find our way to common ground through shared experiences, perhaps it could provide an example of how people can come to listen to one another with real, authentic exchanges. (19–20)

In this passage, Williams focuses less on the content of Bennett's beliefs than on what formed them. The aim of listening to understand is apparent here, as Williams solicits information about that which shapes Bennett's beliefs rather than the beliefs themselves. To enhance accountability and identification across differences, Williams then points to similarities in family, beliefs, and region, and finally offers to construct a new coidentification—the shared identity of traveler, of witness—in the proposed visits to Utah and Iraq. In this invitation, she creates a context in which accountability and trust would be crucial, as both would be travelers, foreigners, and therefore potentially open to and reliant upon each other and each other's perceptions. Such an invitation exemplifies Ratcliffe's description of the four modes that make up the change process that grounds rhetorical listening: promoting understanding of self and other, proceeding within an accountability logic, locating identifications across commonalities and differences, and analyzing claims as well as the logics from which those claims function (*Rhetorical Listening* 26).

CONFRONTING THE "CIVILITY STANDARD"

Foss and Griffin argue that "the change process" that emerges in invitational encounters allows "diverse positions to be compared in a process of discovery and questioning that may lead to transformation for themselves and others" (6). But for Williams, such an encounter did not occur. Despite serving as textbook examples of invitational rhetoric, the invitations from Williams represented in "Commencement" are refused. There is no reply from Senator Bennett, for example. There is no trip taken to Iraq or elsewhere. Invitational rhetoric as represented in Williams's book and journal entries looks more like stalemate, thwarted desire, laying out of positions with real listening occurring in Williams's prose but not in lived encounters. These refusals take on added poignancy when we note that the most frequent term she deploys to describe a potentially adversarial interlocutor is *neighbor*. Williams uses this referent in her written reply to Bennett ("a senator and writer, but first, as neighbors"), and when she reflected on her brief encounter with Interior Secretary Gale Norton:

> We were both women of the west, from the west. Colorado and Utah. Neighbors. What shaped our different views of landscape? What could we agree on? And at what point in our development did we forge such contrary allegiances? This is the conversation I wish we could have had, that maybe one day we can have . . . . Instead, the awkward silences exposed both our ideologies, our beliefs, our hopes. The difference was one of power. She didn't have to talk to me. I was desperate to talk to her. ("Tempest")

One might argue that Lozano-Reich and Cloud's arguments against invitational rhetoric are realized in the previous passage. "It is precisely in situations of power differentials that we should be most cautious about invoking the invitational paradigm" (221), they argue, for "the oppressed are hard pressed to convince oppressors who benefit materially from oppression to be open to dialogue, let alone radical change" (222). Perpetuating such action advances what they call the civility standard, which aims "for understanding and dialogue rather than material (institutional and economic) social change as the desired ends of rhetorical engagement" (223). Here, civility is placed in opposition to activist, change-oriented persuasion, rendering invitation as accommodationist, as "predicated on making distinctions that support accepted practices and values, and entails enacting those distinctions to the detriment of the purportedly uncivil" (224). Isolated as a single rhetorical mode, invitational rhetoric in a private encounter, like a letter or private conversation, can appear to reinforce the inability for such a civil mode to succeed, for the counterhegemonic invitation to be dismissed.

Sharon Crowley is also a skeptic of civility's potential to deepen action-oriented, change-oriented, social justice–oriented civic engagement. In Williams's invitation to Bennett, Williams demonstrates what Crowley might see as a liberal "faith in reason and shared understandings," which undergird the logics of deliberative and, to an extent, invitational rhetorical practices:

> The implication is that peaceful resolutions of disagreements can occur if citizens become able to understand the circumstances of one another's lives, can grasp the motives and actions of others with clarity and/or achieve empathy with one another. While I do not doubt that the achievement of understanding would greatly assist the resolution of disagreements, I suffer from a failure of imagination regarding its feasibility in the really hard cases of disagreement that Americans face today. (Crowley 43)

Such a focus on shared understanding, as Williams emphasizes in her letter to Senator Bennett and in her reflection on her encounter with Interior Secretary Norton, could "forever postpone adjudication of opposing points of view" (Crowley 44).

REFUSAL AND PUBLICITY

In "Commencement," Williams does appear hampered by the civil, rational, measured response, by the apparent naïveté of suspending asymmetry for connection and neglecting how interests and power determine incentive to listen. But a bifurcated notion of agency may contribute to such a skeptical reading of Williams's invitations to listen: "In rhetoric as persuasion," Bone, Griffin, and Scholz argue, "agency is present when a person tries *to change* another person; in rhetoric as invitation, agency is present when a rhetor tries *to understand* another rhetor, even if they do not agree with that person" (446). For these authors, "agency lies in the means used to create the environment that leads to relationships of reciprocity, self-determination, and increased understanding" (446). But such a paradigm circumscribes agency within the dyad's encounter, making a refused invitation look like weakness, like a lack of power for someone like Williams. A focus on power asymmetry, and on the failure of the dyad to listen, does not yet acknowledge the strategic deployment of invitation, the power of its public story, and the ways that story can be taken up and remade.

In Williams's writing on dissent, the rhetoric of invitation is more resonant than an invitation to a single interlocutor. What is a failure among interlocutors because of the issue of power asymmetry, or because of a liberal faith in understanding over persuasion, becomes an invitational encounter among a readership to make space for corrective action. It is imperative to note that Williams's invitational rhetoric both performs the invitational gesture and then publicizes the outcome. This invitational publicity is activist, potentially provoking engagement in readers who are moved by the narrative Williams shares. Telling the story of the refusal to listen, of an invitation shot down or unanswered, is making public the bypass, a rhetorical move that invites *and* confronts. This twofold move of gesture and publicity helps reveal the complex ways that the invitational mode achieves change. In the struggle for the signifier, it is important to narrate attempts at democratic engagement, to publicize when those attempts are refused, and to allow a larger space for response than Williams alone can provide. Invitational publicity expands our ability to track how power circulates in such encounters because it opens the scene of action out into those who witness/read it, react to it, and make change because of it.

Through an invitational encounter, Williams produces herself as a new subject of an emerging discourse of listening and in doing so exposes discourses brought to bear in the invitational encounter that stall, refuse, or prohibit such gestures of engagement. Such production and exposure help place the invitational scene out of the interpersonal or private realm and into the realm of *doxa*, or "broad cultural assertions about the way things are—what exists, what human nature is, how the world operates"; though *doxa* are arbitrary, they "become naturalized and internalized as real" (Holiday 391). Invitational publicity exemplifies what Sharon Crowley sees as the heart of the rhetor's skill: invention. Crowley locates invention as the site of power in rhetoric, featuring the double move that occurs in invention: interrupting and connecting with circulating discourses. Williams's narrative of gesture and refusal denaturalizes the cultural logics in place by creating an event that hooks into circulating discourses to simultaneously connect and interrupt (Crowley 51).

Publicizing the invitational gesture may denaturalize the ideological frames of those who seek isolation in their beliefs and from the repercussions of their actions. "One contextual principle that can mitigate the possibility of change," writes Crowley, is "the single-mindedness that accrues to isolation or privilege . . . those of us who want change should challenge privilege and isolation in whatever ways we can find or invent" (194). *Open Space* makes public the refusals to talk from those in power in Homeland Security, the Senate, and the Department of the Interior, calling attention to the crisis of democratic exchange among different stakeholders in the citizenry, as well as the reader's responsibility to act or repair this breakdown. The issues Williams sheds light on happened as a result of the hegemonic privileges of purposeful isolation, which justify the bypassing of the modes of deliberation that are the hallmark of representative democracy. Williams's detailed accounting of these refusals makes her point that ideological positioning sidesteps listening and inquiry and hastens a rush to judgment; her publicity holds people accountable to their ideological rigidity, and publicly logs their stances.

If the double move at work in invention—interruption and connection—is a crucial kind of power that rhetors perform (Crowley 51), then Williams neither succumbs to the civility standard nor reveals compromised agency when refused. Instead, she plays out the limits of her role (commencement speaker, author, respondent), makes public the intention and outcome, and in doing so invites those differently positioned in the ecology to enact agential change from where they are located. Civility then is a strategy optioned by one member positioned to enact it within the ecology of the larger struggle—such as U.S. civil liberties and antiwar activism.

INVITATIONAL PUBLICITY AND THE COLLECTIVE RESPONSE

The journal Williams kept during her book tour describes her visits to college campuses, listening to students talk about political engagement, dissent, and their future during the fall 2004 election season. Published online at Grist.org, the environmental news and commentary website, Williams's journal is in part an archive, featuring documents from Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU) central to her disinvitation from its convocation, as well as news articles about the incident. It is also a diary and travel journal. Texts and commentary that are mundane, intimate, institutional, and political mingle in this online record of stakeholders' engagement with the very ideas *The Open Space of Democracy* takes up.

The central drama of the journal is Williams's canceled trip to FGCU, where faculty and students chose *Open Space* as their book in common for the 2004–2005 academic year and where Williams was to be the freshman convocation speaker and Rachel Carson Distinguished Lecturer in October, just before the 2004 presidential election. The trustees of the university voted to postpone Williams's keynote speech; in a shrugging apology, President William Merwin explained to Williams that he "didn't keep this job [serving at the pleasure of the then-governor Jeb Bush] by doing stupid things" ("Tempest"). Merwin argued that the overt political bias in *The Open Space of Democracy* was inappropriate during an election season. This was his claim, which the *U.S. News and World Report* subtly discredited when it reported that, after Williams's visit was canceled, Vice President Dick Cheney was invited to appear on campus in a reelection campaign capacity on October 12 ("Tempest"). According to the journal, in the debate that ensued among the president, faculty, and students of FGCU, Merwin conceded that Williams could speak if she expressed no political point of view and refrained from a critique of George W. Bush. Williams refused these constraints. Merwin requested a phone conversation with Williams to explain his final decision.

Williams did not summarize their phone conversation in full in the journal but instead chose to feature herself as a listener who attempted to steer Merwin's pro forma phone call into an invitational encounter. While the phone conversation lasted more than an hour, she framed her retelling of it through the two questions she asked him: What were his concerns about her visit? What specific section of her book did he find most offensive? After Merwin read and then interpreted the passage in *Open Space* that he most objected to, Williams explained her intent in that section, discussed the section's purpose for her larger argument, and stated that she felt he misinterpreted the passage; instead, the section critiqued *her* responsibility as a citizen much more than it critiqued George W. Bush. When he reasserted how trustees, state government officials, and other interested members of the institution would interpret this passage, Williams told him she felt they were each "trapped by ideology." "I appreciated our conversation," she reported saying to Merwin at the close of their phone call. "It was important to me to listen to your concerns."

This refusal by Merwin to do more than echo the party line appears to reinforce critiques of invitational rhetoric as limited by the power differentials of interlocutors. FGCU's leaders contended with powerful governmental sponsors that curtailed freedom of expression on campus. Williams's journal exposes the limits of what ideas an institution can align itself with in a given situation and the extent to which individuals can intervene. Still, too much of a close focus on Williams and Merwin highlights the problem of "sender-receiver models of public communication" that "tend to identify a kind of homeostatic relationship, which simultaneously abstracts the operation of social links and circulation" (Edbauer 6). Indeed, most news articles that covered the story of Williams at FGCU feature the disinvitation and the polarized perspectives of Williams and Merwin; this insistent focus on the dyad raises the need to attend to the "constitutive circulation of rhetoric in a broader social field" (Edbauer 7).

The online journal dispenses with the conflict between Williams and Merwin early and focuses instead on the effects of invitational publicity. This is the immense value of the journal, in which these power differentials are exposed; letters are published in full, the absence of replies is noted, newspaper articles are logged, and most importantly, an archive of the ecology of dissent unfolds. When FGCU students learned of the outcome of the conversation between Williams and Merwin, they called Williams. She told them, "You are the ones who stand to lose the most by this decision" and "this is in your hands now" ("Tempest"). According to the journal, the students informed her of their intent to create a coalition of student organizations united in protest and action to reclaim free speech on the FGCU campus, honoring Williams's aim to "bypass political rhetoric that has diminished all of us." The coalition decided to sponsor an alternative convocation on campus that October. This confrontational move, working against the administration, was explained in the students' letter of invitation to Williams, which she included in her journal. The letter was written by Brandon Hollingshead, FGCU student and representative of the student coalitions:

> The students of Florida Gulf Coast University overwhelmingly and enthusiastically invite you to address the student body on campus Oct. 24, 2004. A growing list of clubs and student organizations . . . wish to co-sponsor this speaking event. . . . The [president's] decision flies in the face of what it means to be a university, particularly a university that places its emphasis on interdisciplinary studies and active engagement on campus and in the community. The goal of our university is to teach students not how to earn a living, but how to make a life. To this end, "The University Guiding Principles" places student success at the center of all university endeavors, stating, "learner needs, rather than institutional preferences, determine priorities for academic planning, policies, and programs." We feel that the decision to postpone convocation and to cancel the Rachel Carson Distinguished Lecture events does not place our needs above institutional preferences . . . . We wish to invite you to campus . . . as a speaker committed to the values of our Learning Goals and Educational Outcomes: culturally diverse perspectives, ecological literacy, ethical responsibility, and, most importantly, civic engagement. ("Tempest")

Of the many rhetorical strategies the students could have chosen to launch their case for an alternative convocation, they chose to feature the disconnect between the administration's actions and the university's core documents. The FGCU students show how the administration had trampled on the institution's core beliefs by wrongly promoting an adherence to a specific political ideology that threatens to destabilize the more permanent, civic values of the institution. This approach exposes an administrative stance to prompt judgment among stakeholders and observers, to halt the trend away from student/civic needs, and to enact the principles called on in the institution's guiding document.

The students' goal is ultimately creative: to create the space for dialogue, exchange, and information that the annual convocation was meant to engender. The students' broader motive exemplifies what Joseph Harris calls "countering." Harris features countering as a corrective to the standard notion of critique as merely identifying weakness or flaws in claims. Like Williams, Harris writes in a post–9/11 climate, and the analytical approach he promotes is focused on disrupting ideological stagnation and using analysis for creative inquiry and problem solving. "What distinguishes the practice of countering," explains Harris, "is that it pushes beyond mere disagreement. Popular debates tend to begin with their conclusions . . . but the aim of countering is to open up new lines of inquiry" (57), focusing "less on the problems of a text than the work you are trying to do with it" (67). The central concerns of countering are eliminating logics of polarization or binarism and promoting the performance of listening and creative thinking. The FGCU students highlight the disconnect between core values and current practice, yet their end point is not critique but the production and sponsorship of a diverse gathering that produces the return to those very core values. As Harris states, the "aim is not to refute what has been said before, to bring the discussion to an end, but to respond to prior views in ways that move the conversation in new directions" (56). Harris grounds his rationale for countering through the concept of civility, which emerges as an insistence on both listening and right action: "in arguing for civility, then, I'm not pressing for a mere politeness, but for a style of countering that doesn't stop at disagreement but instead pushes on for something more—that rewrites the work of others to say something new" (71).

Harris's method of countering assumes a tight relationship between reader and text, but in the context of the students' alternative convocation the method of countering helps show how students took up the invitation of *Open Space*, remade the invitation to Williams that the university canceled, and transformed the refusal into grassroots organizing and a public event that fully achieved their aims of upholding university principles of free speech. The students ended their letter of invitation to Williams this way: "The FGCU Guiding Principles closes by stating, 'Tradition is challenged; the status quo is questioned; change is implemented.' Please join us in challenging tradition, questioning the status quo, and implementing change" ("Tempest"). In an interview with *Progressive* magazine, Williams says, "I did speak at Florida Gulf Coast University at the student-organized event, and it was an extraordinary gathering . . . . I thanked them for their true civil disobedience . . . for not only reading *The Open Space of Democracy* but for embodying it" (Kupfer). She returned her speaking fee and asked that it be used to establish an ongoing, student-led forum for engaging with experts and ideas related to the most pressing issues of our democracy and our environment. That student-run, student-centered forum is still in existence.

INVENTION, AGENCY, AND ECOLOGICAL ENGAGEMENT

Conceiving of invitational rhetoric in a persuasive ecology appears to run counter to Foss and Griffin's intent of carving out a separate mode, outside the persuasive, in which to communicate. I argue that this intent is out of our control. Different rhetorical modes get enacted at the same time and with effects we cannot determine. In the case of Williams and *Open Space*, change happens not quite through invitational rhetoric, and not quite through confrontational rhetoric, but through ecologies of engagement where actions emerge, take shape, and then close or are remade around related issues. Such a view melds the aims of Foss and Griffin with those of Crowley: to identify and support rhetorical modes of listening and understanding to make just social and political change.

One element key to both invitational and persuasive rhetorics is the feeling people such as Williams describe when they are engaged in them: nausea, light-headedness, overwhelming desire to flee, and racing heartbeat. After speaking with President Merwin, Williams states, "I hung up the phone and my whole body was shaking. This unfortunate situation is now in the hands of the students. I feel like I failed them" ("Tempest"). Such descriptions of acute distress recur in *Open Space*. It cannot be underestimated how hard it is, as Williams describes it, to "speak and stay," to engage with a person who is actively working against interests you find integral to the work of justice (3). Yet further study that polarizes the affective and strategic complexities of modes like invitation and confrontation loses these linkages, as well as their dynamic exchanges and dependencies.

Balancing a critique of invitation while promoting its opportunities for agency and change reveals less the value of one approach over another than invitation's openings when played out in the larger context, which itself is always changing. The power of the collective to seize the limits of the invitational moment and transform it into an agential sphere of engagement fully of their own making, makes Williams's online journal an important artifact, and makes the students' action so integral for communication studies. It reveals why invitation as a strategy was essential in this case, as it launched grassroots work outside spheres of power that were too entrenched to create change. Certainly motive matters, as it can be manipulative to publicize an interlocutor's refusal to listen in a headline-grabbing form of posturing that creates more hurdles to authentic, future attempts to engage. But as in the case of Williams, who so carefully set up ethical parameters for a listening encounter, it can also be a key act of invention, a genuine offer of engagement, and a call for others differently located to take up the problem from their uniquely situated spaces. Those in power, like Williams, are less change agents than invention agents. They are figures that provide exigence for movement among coalitions—like the Florida Gulf Coast University students—toward a desired change.

Gestures of refusal are stark in invitational encounters, and refusal to listen to the oppressed or counterhegemonic view is often outside the parameters of democratic engagement. Were rhetorical scholars to explore the dynamic ecologies of invitation and refusal more overtly, such analysis could contribute significantly to our understanding of political change. In a fractured political culture that suppresses dissent and shortchanges representative deliberation, considering rhetorical modes that do not have persuasion as their goal is an activist move toward (re)constructive democratic engagement. This is especially the case in a post–9/11 climate witnessing increased surveillance of those with dissenting views, the curtailment of direct action through protest, and the abdication of major media outlets in maintaining spheres for critical literacy. In this context, invitational rhetoric's attention to the change process in dialogue—how interlocutors make change through increased listening and understanding, distributing that work over time and across contexts and purposes—is important to consider at points of civic crisis and democratic impasse.

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10

Invention for the Invitational Rhetor

Allen Ginsberg's "Wichita Vortex Sutra"

Stephen M. Llano

The headlines had faded, and the was trial over: Allen Ginsberg's book *Howl and Other Poems*, published by City Lights Books in San Francisco, was not obscene, according to the United States government. But not everyone agreed. In the middle of the Cold War with Communist Russia and the hot war with the proxy-Communist North Vietnam, American citizens were on the lookout for subversive speech in their own neighborhoods.

In Wichita, Kansas, in 1964, Moodie Connell transformed his homeless soup kitchen, the Skidrow Beanery, into a beat-poetry performance space. He set up a stage and began to sell copies of *Howl and Other Poems* and other chapbooks. City officials, scared that dangerous ideas were taking root, wanted Connell gone. Finally, "the police, fire, and health departments conspired to close the business on May 5, 1964."[1] News of the effort reached Allen Ginsberg in New York, who responded to the situation by writing a letter to the editor of the *Wichita Beacon:*

> Almost a decade ago there was a similar attempt to ban a book of mine in San Francisco, and my work was found to be NOT obscene by the courts. That settled that. Subsequently my writings have been included in anthologies, translated into a dozen languages, recited on television and movies, studied in English courses in universities. I have taught or lectured in University of British Columbia, Conception University in Chile, Oxford in England, Harvard, Columbia, Berkeley, Yale, and Princeton in the U.S. This month I find myself listed in "Who's Who." Now, what the heck is going on in Wichita?[2]

Ginsberg peppers his letter with questions: "Are the citizens of Wichita so apathetic they have no control over their own bureaucracies in matters like this? Is the faculty of the local college so indifferent to the community that it cannot intervene and straighten this hassle out?" He concludes by telling the readers to "take good care of your own city" and that the task should not be up to him, "thousands of miles away to have to do that."[3]

In his editorial, Ginsberg opts for traditional argumentation—the ubiquitous "letter-to-the-editor" assignment is familiar from an argumentation course. The formula is clear: He introduces the problem, establishes *ethos*, then questions why action has not been taken. He concludes by chiding the citizens for an embarrassing lack of action. This is traditional rhetoric "characterized by efforts to change others and thus to gain control over them."[4]

In 1966, Connell, undeterred by the plotting of the city against him, opened a new art gallery in Wichita named *The Vortex*. Ginsberg traveled to Wichita that January to read for the grand opening. During the drive, Ginsberg dictated into a tape recorder as he clipped along on the interstate: "I was in the back of a bus, talking to myself, except with a tape recorder. So everytime I said something interesting to myself I put it on tape."[5] The resulting poem, "Wichita Vortex Sutra," was read at The Vortex and then at the University of Kansas. The poem's exigence is that which rhetoric typically considers. Its composition, for the ear and voice, is public address. Ginsberg, describing the poem in an interview in 1994, explained that the poem encapsulates the experience of being in and with the discourse of America at war:

> The whole thing (which is much longer) is an account of a trip in a Volkswagen bus between Wichita, Kansas and Lincoln, Nebraska, and then back down from Lincoln, through the central part of the United States, the heartland, back to Wichita. During the Vietnam War, February 1966. So this is like a time-capsule, or collage, of what could be seen of the war within America, from newspaper headlines, television, gossip, subconscious gossip, conversation, stopping on the road for lunch, coffee, passing cities, passing signs, and thoughts welling up from inside. So outside and inside, a kind of tapestry, or collage, of consciousness, or like a sort of time-capsule of consciousness at its specific moments.[6]

What Ginsberg hears, observes, thinks, and feels is rhetoric that "facilitates understanding" instead of asking for agreement from the audience.[7] Ginsberg does not offer arguments for assent. Instead, he asks what it means to have a perspective by offering a perspective. Instead of persuading through conviction, he invites consideration of rhetoric as persuasion itself. The way that Ginsberg wrote the poem and its political exigencies invoke the notion of invitational rhetoric.

In this chapter, I argue that "Wichita Vortex Sutra" is not simply an instance of invitational rhetoric but a case study of the inventional resources available to rhetors who wish to create invitational rhetoric. Invitational rhetoric is "a means to create a relationship rooted in equality, immanent value, and self-determination."[8] The result of invitational rhetoric is not changing the audience to conform with what the rhetor thinks is right, but "an understanding of the participants themselves occurs, an understanding that engenders appreciation, value, and a sense of equality."[9] But how do rhetors create these results through their speech? Specifically, the rhetoric in Ginsberg's poem presents three possibilities: to forward uncertainty instead of certainty, to juxtapose claims rather than reduce them, and to make equal utterances in discourse instead of privileging the speaker's words. Through these methods of invention, Ginsberg creates a space that invites audiences to reflect on their relationship to the world, to media, and to national identity.

AN INVITATION TO INVENT: SPEAKING POETRY AT THE VORTEX

Ginsberg had to go a bit farther than traditional discourse to address the situation happening in Wichita—and the country. Speaking there, he would be addressing the entire exigence of what caused The Vortex to open and what prompted him to speak in Kansas. Ginsberg was composing within the complexities of identity and ideology, requiring a rhetor addressing an exigence to participate in complex, nonobvious forms of public address. Joshua Ewalt identifies the form Ginsberg chose when he writes, "If one wants to see the emergence of local conditions that fully embrace the potential of our condition as argumentative beings, one can begin by using poetics to create emancipatory encounters."[10] Instead of a direct appeal with evidence and reason, a place of indetermination must be created by the rhetor. Ginsberg had to place himself and his words in a space alongside the audience members instead of scolding or praising them for doing what he thought was right. He had to show them that they, too, could express ideas as he had.

Ginsberg also broke with traditional forms of public address in his conception of the meaning of his poem. In invitational rhetoric, the audience and rhetor should feel they have coauthored the meaning of the speech. Cary Nelson asserts that Ginsberg achieved this result: "Hearing Ginsberg read 'Wichita Vortex Sutra' during the war was exhilarating. In a large audience the declaration of the war's end was collectively purgative."[11] Nelson's reflection indicates that audience members felt relief by Ginsberg's words as they participated with the poem. Instead of taking in the reasons of the rhetor, the audience became the reasons for agreement, and their participation in the text helped create its meaning.

Ginsberg's approach to poetry writ large is highly performative. His writing communicates that he believes that people's experiences with what they encounter in reality are those of people participating in a performance. His rhetoric, therefore, is focused on—to borrow a term from James Crosswhite—being *audienced* all the time.[12] Ginsberg believes this is "the only proper mode for poetry" because "'everyday reality' is a kind of continuous theatre staged by hegemonic political forces."[13] Instead of propositions for judgment, Ginsberg offers experiences. Instead of interpreting phenomena to secure assent, he re-presents them and his encounter with them. I will show how this is done specifically in the poem by decentering the speaker in several ways. Ginsberg places the focus of his rhetoric on the audience's possibilities for creation rather than describing what he knows or has come to understand.

"WICHITA VORTEX SUTRA" AS A CASE STUDY FOR INVITATIONAL *INVENTIO*

In this section, I move to examining "Wichita Vortex Sutra" in detail, looking for specific inventional resources for rhetors who wish to engage in invitational rhetoric. I suggest that, within the poem, three specific inventional strategies for crafting invitational rhetoric can be located. First is the idea of forwarding uncertainty. This means that rhetors should choose to highlight uncertainty over conviction when they can. Second is the idea of juxtaposition over interpretation. The rhetor places ideas side by side and leaves them hanging when what might be expected is for the rhetor to choose which one is to be favored. Finally, the invitational rhetor can use equality of utterances to indicate that all discourse is welcome, and the existence of a contradictory discourse does not mean it has to be silenced or resolved.

Forwarding Uncertainty

The creation of a speech or an argument begins in uncertainty. Asking questions, researching, and understanding the audience are traditional modes taught to assist with reducing uncertainty. Theories like Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's universal audience or brainstorming with the help of the commonplaces or stasis can limit the scope of reasonable interpretations.[14] Whatever interpretation rhetors select, they often see the context of their utterance as competitive and seek to offer a dominant, exclusive argument for the audience's agreement.

In poetry, concerns about losing the thread of the argument are represented by what T. S. Elliot said about poets needing to be "difficult" because of the sheer amount of competing discourses surrounding them.[15] A difficult poet works like an invitational rhetor to create spaces where audiences feel they have space to consider the poem's meaning. These poets carefully create a space for thought and reflection through rigorous care in their expression. This connection between poetry and invitational rhetoric generates the inventional resource of forwarding uncertainty.

The first example of forwarding uncertainty in Ginsberg's poem is his use of the vocative case ("O, Kansas!"), where the audience interprets his utterances as appeals for meaning. This is very different from the rhetoric of the teacher or the instructor, the person whom Douglas Ehninger calls the *corrector*, who asks, "Are you getting it?"[16] In that model, the rhetor has understanding, and the audience does not. Ginsberg, on the other hand, conveys that other poets—other writers—are needed to help him understand. If there is a question here, it is, "Can I get it?" The first example appears three stanzas in, near the start of the poem:

> Kansas! Kansas! Shuddering at last!
> PERSON appearing in Kansas!
> angry telephone calls to the University
> Police dumbfounded leaning on
> Their radiocar hoods
> While Poets chant to Allah in the roadhouse Showboat!
> Blue eyed children dance and hold thy Hand O aged Walt
> Who came from Lawrence to Topeka to envision
> Iron interlaced upon the city plain—
> Telegraph wires strung from city to city O Melville![17]

Near the opening of the poem is the arrival of the poetic rhetor into the exigence. In traditional rhetoric, rhetors would state the problem, and their delivery and style would be those of individuals who can address the problem. Instead, the poem announces the arrival of PERSON—ironically in all caps, signaling an important commonality—into a chaotic scene. There are references to controversy (angry phone calls to the University, the police presence) but also to religious celebration (chanting to Allah, dancing) and finally appeals for a clear interpretation. The speaker calls for Walt Whitman and Herman Melville to appear and make sense of the situation, as a traditional rhetor might do. The play on traditional rhetoric is fantastic: Ginsberg takes Cicero's advice from *Brutus* and summons forth "unimpeachable witnesses from history" yet has them say nothing.[18] They are present yet silent. The rhetor calls for expert testimony and only creates uncertainty—in this case, whether the PERSON can say the right words for the exigence.

Ginsberg's second use of vocative case is more direct, reporting on requests for certainty made by states and their poetic traditions:

> Thy sins are forgiven, Wichita!
> Thy lonesomeness annulled, O Kansas dear!
> as the western Twang prophesied
> Thru banjo, when lone cowboy walked the railroad track
> past an empty station toward the sun
> sinking giant-bulbed orange down the box canyon—
> Music strung over his back
> and empty handed singing on this planet earth
> I'm a lonely Dog, O Mother!
> Come, Nebraska, sing and dance with me—

Come, lovers of Lincoln and Omaha,
hear my soft voice at last
As Babes need the chemical touch of flesh in pink infancy
Lest they die Idiot returning to Inhuman—
Nothing—[19]

Ginsberg says people need words to survive, but are these the words? The irony is that the cry for certainty—for meaning—is what the cowboy/bard performs. Exactly why and how Kansas and the cowboy/bard have addressed it are uncertain, but the poet is now more comfortable, finding a place for his "soft voice" to be heard. The vocative case distances the speaker—in this case, the poet—from the certainty of what the words mean by appealing for certainty from other forms or people. Instead of communicating exactly what these expert writers—or history—would prove, the audience is left with the doubt of the speaker, who is still looking for something to pin down his reason and purpose for speech.

Aside from the vocative case, Ginsberg forwards uncertainty by using tropes that align with ancient rhetorical theory. Ginsberg's rhetoric here is reminiscent of the *epidiktikon*, the ancient Greek form of public address that Jeffrey Walker identifies as "display, showing off (*epedixis*) of things" for the purpose of "contemplation" and "insight" for a later "formation of opinions and desires on matters of philosophical, social, ethical, and cultural concern."[20] This might appear to be a use of traditional, conviction-oriented rhetorical theory. But in invitational rhetoric, it takes on the function of exploding the perceived purpose of the speech, fragmenting what might be seen as a consistent appeal from the speaker to a mere relating of experiences for audience members. Ginsberg shows here that the *epidiktikon* can be used to encourage the audience to fill in meanings rather than to judge them as they arrive.

Ginsberg prompts the audience to fill in meanings in several ways. He speaks in the rhetoric of journalists, making audiences uncertain of rhetoric's value: "Truth breaks through! / How big is the prick of the President? / How big is Cardinal Vietnam? / How little the prince of the FBI, unmarried all these years! / How big are all the Public Figures? / What kind of flesh hangs, hidden behind their Images?"[21] Obviously, these questions are ridiculous, yet they parallel legitimate journalistic questions. No judgment has passed, but audience members are invited to complete the set by adding in ridiculous questions they have encountered from the mass media. The audience is also invited to consider the depth of journalistic inquiry or lack thereof. But there is little time to think about it as Ginsberg immediately shifts to a description of the landscape around him as he listens to the press on the radio: "Prehistoric excavation, *Apache Uprising* / in the drive-in theater / Shelling Bombing Range mapped in the distance / Crime Prevention show, sponsor Wrigley's Spearmint / Dinosaur Sinclair advertisement, glowing green." Ginsberg lays out a landscape of arbitrary symbols and signifiers. The landscape of messages, like the ridiculous questions, are presented without interpretation. They exist in the landscape, as do the questions and both audience and poet. They are a part of what is out there; they are a part of humans' shared situation.

Ginsberg's inventional invoking of the tradition of *epidikdikon* lets audience members "see for themselves." But used as invention in invitational rhetoric, audience members can "mean for themselves." By forwarding an uncertain list of symbols and statements, audience members try to make meaning out of them but wind up sharing their interpretations rather than capturing some deterministic meaning from the rhetor. The meaning that comes out arrives from the experiences of those listening to the poem and the words of others who want to share their points of view.

A final way in which Ginsberg forwards uncertainty is through making his own *ethos* suspect. He first raises the question of whether he should speak at all, associating the dangers of speech with the dangers of highway travel:

Thrills of fear.
Nearer than the vein in my neck—?
What if I opened my soul to sing to my absolute self
Singing as the car crash chomped thru blood & muscle
tendon skull?
What if I sang, and loosed the chords of fear brow?
What exquisite noise wd
shiver my car companions?[22]

Uncertainty is forwarded here as the poet's speech is presented as a dangerous form of conveyance that might be fatal. As the car moves bodies down the highway, the poet's song moves bodies through life. The rhetorical invention here is metaphor, but under invitational rhetoric, it takes on speech itself. Typically, a metaphor compares a proposition to something familiar to the audience in order to make acceptance easier. But instead of two propositions in the mind of the audience, speech itself is made dangerous. The poet is concerned about the presence and power of his words just like the audience might be apprehensive about speaking. Uncertainty again lets audience members know that they are in this at the level of the rhetor, not certain if the words are going to be good, right, or appropriate. Inviting the audience to identify with the poet's fear that his words can be harmful to his friends establishes the speaker as uncertain, perhaps like many in the audience who have conflicting concerns about the issues at hand.

A powerful cry is not certain to create political change. The contrast here is visceral as the power of a poem can be rendered quickly to schoolbook curiosity. Ginsberg uses a historical example of political poetry to create more uncertainty about the act of speaking:

William Jennings Bryan sang
Thou shalt not crucify mankind upon a cross of Gold!
O Baby Doe! Gold's
Department Store hulks o'er 10th Street now
—an unregenerate old fop who didn't want to be a monkey
Now's the Highest Perfect Wisdom dust
And Lindsay's cry
Survives compassionate in the Highschool Anthology—[23]

William Jennings Bryan lost, and the political poet Vachel Lindsay's poetry in support of him only exists in the high school anthology. Again, whether poetry is an effective means of rhetorical engagement is uncertain. In traditional rhetoric, the historical example would be ineffective, yet in invitational rhetoric, the rhetorical choices of the speaker are decentered in favor of a shared, cocreated sense of what is best. For Ginsberg, these doubts humanize him as a PERSON who is trying poetry, trying rhetoric, but who shares the concerns of many that their words would either cause irreparable harm or be forgotten. This equating of speaker and audience in ability creates the possibility that the audience's perspective will be seen as equally risky as what the rhetor offers.

In this section, I have shown three ways in which Ginsberg employs the inventional method of forwarding uncertainty to equate the position of poet and rhetor with that of anyone in the audience. Suspicion runs amok throughout these examples, creating a rhetorical landscape of confused and unclear meanings. This device is somewhat similar to the next device, that of juxtaposition instead of interpretation. Although some of the examples here could be considered juxtaposition, the difference is clear between creating conditions for the audience to feel uncertain and Ginsberg's denial of interpretation of his arguments when they are set up for the audience to judge.

Juxtaposition over Interpretation

In invitational rhetoric, that the audience be considered as creators of the message or arguments offered in the discourse is vital. This means that the traditional move of interpreting chaos or making sense of evidence must be something that rhetors handle with care. Too much interpretation denies the space needed for the audience to feel invited to cocreate meaning in addressing the exigence. Ginsberg's inventional solution is that of juxtaposition of possibilities instead of interpreting what should be understood or what should come out of controversial situations.

Ginsberg begins by laying out the reports about Vietnam that he hears on the radio: "Johnson got some bad advice   Republican Aiken sang / to the Newsmen over the radio."[24] The reports on the radio seem nearly endless, and Ginsberg continues to detail them while adding context from outside his Volkswagen window:

> While the triangle-roofed Farmer's Grain Elevator
> sat quietly by the side of the road
> along the railroad track
> American Eagle beating its wings over Asia
> million dollar helicopters
> a billion dollars worth of Marines
> who loved *Aunt Betty*
> drawn from the shores and farms shaking
> From the high schools to the landing barge
> blowing the air thru their cheeks with fear[25]

Contrasted with the certainty and absolute argumentative claims by the politicians, Ginsberg's response is the landscape and the images of fearful young Marines. This juxtaposition of interpretation allows the audience access to another perspective, one that comes from scenes like the grain elevator in Kansas. The images are as clear as they are opposed: for the politicians, "bad advice"; for the heartland Marines, reality. The juxtaposition leads the poem into a rhetorical criticism of the media:

> Put it this way on the radio
> Put it this way in television language
> Use the words
> language, language:
> "A bad guess"
> Put it this way in headlines
> Omaha World Herald—*Rusk Says Toughness*
> *Essential For Peace*
> Put it this way
> Lincoln Nebraska Morning Star—
> *Vietnam War Brings Prosperity*

Put it *this* way
Declared McNamara speaking language
Asserted Maxwell Taylor
General, Consultant to White House
Viet Cong losses leveling up three five zero zero per month
Front page testimony February ’66.[26]

Juxtaposition of the various headlines and statements of fact of government officials under the heading of using “language, language” bowls over the listener with depiction. The impact can be palpable, in contrast to a statement that something is wrong. Ginsberg furthers the juxtaposition in the very next stanza:

A black horse bends its head to the stubble
beside the silver stream winding thru the woods
by an antique red barn on the outskirts of Beatrice—
Quietness, quietness
over this countryside
except for unmistakable signals on radio
followed by the honkytonk tinkle
of a city piano[27]

Juxtaposition creates opportunity for interpretation, combination, and discussion. Ginsberg provides no development along those lines. There is quiet, except for the radio. The radio is “unmistakable” yet is “followed by” the “honkytonk” of a “city” piano. The juxtaposition of the radio technology, the quietness of the countryside, and the honkytonk music on a city piano begs for interpretation of which form of engagement is preferable. But Ginsberg only presents these things alongside one another. The rhetor using this form of invention is laying out opposites to disturb the assumption that the world is well planned and complete and that utterance is not needed. The major juxtaposition—that the war could be beneficial and rages violently in the world where a horse quietly eats—almost requires audience members to chime in rather than passively listen. Their discourse is necessary to make sense of this peaceful scene, the music, and the unmistakable war raging on the other side of the world.

Ginsberg’s use of juxtaposition avoids participating in the same “how-to-put-it” rhetoric of the powers that insist on war. This choice “may transform an oppressive system precisely because it does not engage that system on its own terms, using arguments developed from that framework’s system or orientation.”[28] The media’s rhetoric of Vietnam is nothing but interpretation or “language, language.” “Wichita Vortex Sutra” invites an understanding of the war through an open presentation of multiple geographies, phrasings, and feelings. Geographical distance is as proximate as the fear of the Marines; the stillness of Kansas is as intense as the expensive helicopters with their blades beating the air. This juxtaposition begs for an interpretation as to how both things could be possible at once. But Ginsberg refuses to offer clarity. Instead, he lets the juxtaposition sit with the audience and invites it to provide accounts for the contrast. Even a generous interpretation would make the distinction between the poet/rhetor and the audience—between the one who creates meaning and the one who accepts it. But this is the very relationship that Ginsberg has been throwing into doubt throughout the entire poem. An invitational approach—a multi-voiced rhetoric—is what is missing from the discussion on the war. His poem purports to provide it.

Juxtaposition could be considered a traditional poetic device, but here Ginsberg uses it to invite an increase in speech resulting from a failure of the discourse surrounding him and his audience to correspond with a sensible reality. Ginsberg does not offer relief to his audience but an increase in tension among the scenes, inviting listeners to speak out and speak with one another, like he is, about their experiences in wartime America.

Equality of Utterance

A third inventional approach found in Ginsberg's poem is what I call the *equality of utterance*. This is where the invitational rhetor points out that expressions of meaning, even contradictory or competitive ones, do not need to be resolved. Their coexpression, existing together, does not require the elimination of one utterance for the other to be believed.

As Ginsberg rides along in the car, lonely, surrounded by radioed words, he wonders why he does not speak: "It's not the vast plains that mute our mouths" or "the empty sky that hides / the feeling from our faces" or "our skirts and trousers that conceal / the bodylove emanating in a glow of beloved skin."[29] "It's not a God" that put individuals in this position but human fear, emotion that has the speaker "almost in tears to know / how to speak the right language—," which the poem defines as "also yours," creating a moment of shared meaning. What Ginsberg suggests here is that there can be no danger from trying expression as long as the language is shared. Utterances, because they are aimed at the same exigence, are not only welcome but necessary together.

The poem moves toward a new language in a final confrontation with the man whom the speaker believes started and created the terror and loneliness through the use of atomic weapons:

> To Independence where the old man's still alive
> Who loosed the bomb that's slaved all human conscious
>   and made the body universe a place of fear—
> Now, speeding along the empty plain,
>   no giant demon machine
>   visible on the horizon
> but tiny human trees and wooden houses at the sky's edge
>   I claim my birthright!
>   Reborn forever as long as Man
>   In Kansas or other universe—Joy
>   reborn after the vast sadness of War Gods!
> A lone man talking to myself, no house in the brown vastness to hear,
>   imagining the throng of Selves
>   that make this nation one body of Prophecy
>   languaged by Declaration as Pursuit of
>   Happiness![30]

Here the discourse of President Harry Truman is placed on the level of Ginsberg's discourse through the image of the Kansas plain that contains them both. They are also both "spoken to" or "speak" by virtue of the shared utterances of the Declaration of Independence and national identity. This can be seen as what Foss and Griffin call *re-sourcement*, a process that works to create "the external conditions of safety, value, and freedom that enable audience members to present their perspectives to the rhetor" while not communicating in the terms of the original framework.[31] Instead of condemning Truman as a mass murderer, Ginsberg sees his existence as a chance to claim his own "birthright"—rhetorical invention. Their discourses are both contained—and therefore both meaningful—due to their equality, the result of their production in the same context.

Equality of utterance is an important inventional device because it provides confidence that an audience member's words have value. Used to the position of judge and listener, audience members typically feel that their expressions should have no value until after the speech is over. Ginsberg gets around this assumption by claiming an equality of utterance at the point of invention. The poet cannot speak unless he uses the audience's language, the language of Truman, the Declaration, all of it.

Equality is heightened as Ginsberg invokes religious prophets from India along with Jesus Christ to come to his "lone presence / into this Vortex named Kansas," and now he is ready to speak:

> I lift my voice aloud,
>   make Mantra of American language now,
>   I here declare the end of the War!
>   Ancient days' Illusion!—
>   and pronounce words beginning my own millennium.
> Let the States tremble,
>   let the Nation weep,
>   let Congress legislate its own delight
>   let the President execute his own desire—
> this Act done by my own voice,
>   nameless Mystery—
> published to my own senses,
>   blissfully received by my own form[32]

Ginsberg's declaration is not a choice or a call for agreement. It is conveyed as the roots of how his rhetoric is meaningful—through a shared, borrowed collage. "Making Mantra" of "American" language is to disrupt the typical political discourse, announcing a war has ended from an atypical source. Ginsberg's equality of utterance makes the situation of invitational rhetoric a more legitimate source of meaning than the official discourses. Equality of utterance shows that individuals can speak against the war and against oppression without participating in the structured "language, language" that reduces people to screens of dots and two-dimensional illusions. Far from reductionist, like mainstream political discourse, Ginsberg's rhetoric is opposed in both meaning and source to the rhetorical structures of speech associated with war.

Even though Ginsberg has found a source from which he creates an American mantra, the alternative ways of making meaning can coexist without concern: "The War is gone, / Language emerging on the motel news stand, / the right magic / Formula, the language known / in the back of the mind before, now in black print / daily consciousness."[33] Instead of consuming and critiquing such black print, the new formula encourages the creation of rhetoric from many perspectives.

As the poem concludes, Ginsberg continues his practice of laying out the landscape without judgment or interpretation, letting the scenery roll by for the audience to contemplate. Under the idea that everyone's discourse is equal—and therefore valuable—he juxtaposes Wichita's distance from the war with the heart of the war:

> So home, traveler, past the newspaper language factory
>   under Union Station railroad bridge on Douglas
>   to the center of the Vortex, calmly returned
>   to Hotel Eaton—

Carry Nation began the war on Vietnam here
with an angry smashing ax
attacking Wine—
Here fifty years ago, by her violence
began a vortex of hatred that defoliated the Mekong Delta—
Proud Wichita! vain Wichita!
Cast the first stone!—[34]

Here bits of all the inventional methods are seen together as the poem nears conclusion. The juxtaposition of the violence of temperance activist Carry Nation with the use of defoliation agents in Vietnam is striking to the listener at first, demanding interpretation. This is brought to a head in the poem as the speaker moves through the equivalency of all violence to the equivalence of all victims:

Many another has suffered death and madness
in the Vortex from Hydraulic
to the end of 17th—enough!
The war is over now—
Except for the souls
held prisoner in Niggertown
still pining for love of your tender white bodies O children of Wichita![35]

The reference here comes from Ginsberg's time in Wichita, where he learned the local name for the city's segregated nonwhite neighborhood. Ginsberg juxtaposes the feelings of the equality of utterance—the newfound invitation for the audience of Wichita to speak—with the structural and historical reality of the city. If all utterances are equal, all must be allowed to participate. He makes a direct appeal to the "children" of Wichita but does not say who those children are. If a violent temperance activist can defoliate the Mekong Delta, how innocent are any Americans who are aware of the power of this new ability to speak? Are they not all complicit if they are all capable of participating in rhetoric equally with that of the mass media and the government that wages war?

Ginsberg works carefully to discount the official language of power in order to show that all people are capable of using language to create meaning, realizing that this power comes with the freedom to encounter the discourse of power on one's own terms quite literally. But Ginsberg reminds the audience that the declaration that the war is over comes with the responsibility to enact it. Otherwise, the declaration would be a replication of "language, language" hiding behind a nice town of thoughtful people, extending false invitations. Through the equality of utterance, Ginsberg indicates both that the audience can and should be rhetors and that this power to speak comes with a responsibility to further this equality and not to end the possibilities of who can speak.

CONCLUSION

Ginsberg, facing his audience from the stage, wants change. But he does not want his audience to change. He chooses poetry, not persuasion, laying utterances beside one another, sharing perspectives of the landscapes, the music, the neon signs, the feelings, the radio, and his experiences in Wichita. Neither instructional nor critical, his reactions as poet take their place alongside beautiful images of the Kansas prairie, headlines from the newspaper, and statements from President Johnson. The inventional methods of forwarding uncertainty, juxtaposition over interpretation, and equality of utterance provide audience members with a shifting discursive context that welcomes their own position to expand and contribute to the perspective.

"Wichita Vortex Sutra" is an example of how public address under traditional constraints can be done from the perspective of invitational rhetoric. By using the methods of forwarding uncertainty, juxtaposition over interpretation, and equalizing utterance, Ginsberg creates a compelling text of the experiences and thoughts of an American in Wichita trying to make sense of a complex and divisive time. Ginsberg's exigence was to oppose the censorship and closing of the Beanery. Instead of continuing his initial editorial style of argument, he engaged in an invitational approach and, in doing so, demonstrates inventional resources for rhetors who seek to avoid the traditional conviction model of persuasion.

The theory of invitational rhetoric values a community of shared perspectives, and Ginsberg operationalizes this value in his powerful poem, using words and phrases that empower the community of Wichita—and America—to find ways to increase the possibilities for the creation of meaning rather than to rely on the all-knowing rhetor to clarify and instruct the audience what to believe. In a persuasive view of rhetoric, rhetoric feels at home taking the right thoughts to others. Rhetors sometimes forget, however, that rhetoric's home is also in establishing all the points of view from which they can start before they argue. Rhetoric is supposed to be the thing that melts away opposition, shaving away irrelevancies in discussion and debate, until only the rhetor's proposition remains. But when "irrelevancies" are discarded, rhetoric's other identity as a creator of worlds that make propositions possible is lost. And a world does not go in just one direction doing one thing—a world is always a plurality unless the sharp edge of rhetoric convinces audiences otherwise. Persuasive rhetoric is so good at worldmaking that it can make a plurality of perspectives feel like an error. In contrast, the inventional resources of invitational rhetoric suggest that when individuals come together to contemplate important issues, they often are best served by rhetorical options that open up spaces for exploration and that do "not deny the legitimacy of other views."[36] Ginsberg's inventional resources in "Wichita Vortex Sutra" model invitational rhetoric's focus on sharing and increasing points of view instead of eliminating or reducing them.

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11

Challenges to the Enactment of Invitational Rhetoric in the Age of Mobile Communication Technologies

Sonja K. Foss and Jeanine Warisse Turner

The portability of communication devices that enable voice and data services via cellular connectivity is prompting a new paradigm of communication media. Distinctive from other media in that they can be used anywhere, mobile technologies "are often worn on the body, highly individualized, and regarded as extensions of the self."[1] Devices such as smartphones, smartwatches, and iPads provide users with access to the internet, social media such as Facebook and Twitter, email, instant messaging, games, television, movies, and voice calls. Many models also can be used as music players, digital cameras, planners, phone and address books, and alarm clocks. Augmented with apps, they are further transformed into tools for myriad activities such as shopping, banking, and language learning.

The drastic changes in communication brought about by mobile technologies are occurring not only because of the many options for communicating and accessing content but because of their ubiquity. Mobile subscriptions number in the billions worldwide and continue to grow at a startling rate. While landline telephones took "about 45 years to get from 5 percent to 50 percent penetration among US households," mobile phones took only seven years to reach a similar proportion of customers.[2] Some projections suggest that by 2020, 70 percent of the world's population will use a smartphone, and 90 percent will be covered by mobile broadband networks.[3] Young adults have been found to use cell phones between eight and ten hours a day,[4] and many users feel they must carry their mobile devices with them at all times in a state of "perpetual contact."[5]

The new mobile communication technologies are affecting many aspects of communication, including civility,[6] lying behavior,[7] engagement in public settings,[8] personal and public space,[9] the quality of face-to-face conversation,[10] interpersonal relationships,[11] family communication,[12] and social presence.[13] We suggest that the new communication technologies have the potential to affect individuals' willingness and ability to engage in invitational rhetoric as well. Developed by Sonja K. Foss and Cindy L. Griffin in 1995, invitational rhetoric is an alternative to the traditional conception of rhetoric as persuasion. Defined as "an invitation to understanding as a means to create a relationship rooted in equality, immanent value, and self-determination," invitational rhetoric "constitutes an invitation to the audience to enter the rhetor's world and to see it as the rhetor does."[14] It is a form of communication designed to generate understanding among individuals with different perspectives.[15]

Our basic argument in this chapter is that mobile technologies contribute to the creation of an environment in which individuals are prompted to overlook the agency they have in their communicative actions, allowing the technologies to discourage their use of invitational rhetoric. In making this claim, we are not suggesting that invitational rhetoric and mobile technologies are mutually exclusive. Invitational rhetoric can take place not only in face-to-face interactions but also via cell phones, email, texting, and internet conference systems such as Skype and Zoom. We also do not mean to suggest that invitational rhetoric should be used at all times. As Foss and Griffin make clear in their original essay, invitational rhetoric should not "be used in all situations. Invitational rhetoric is one of many useful and legitimate rhetorics . . . in which rhetors will want to be skilled."[16] What we do want to suggest is that, to overcome the challenges presented by mobile technologies, users of mobile technologies must be more deliberate about and often more innovative in their communicative choices.

To develop our theory of the potential impact of mobile technologies on the use of invitational rhetoric, we begin by describing the key features of mobile technologies and theorize various ways in which they may influence the possibilities for engaging in invitational rhetoric, both positive and negative. Our theorizing of these impacts is guided by literature, our own experiences, and semistructured interviews about invitational rhetoric and mobile technologies that Jeanine conducted with individuals in leadership positions in organizations in Washington, DC.[17] We conclude with a proposed solution to the challenges afforded by mobile technologies to the use of invitational rhetoric—invitational social presence—and offer means for implementing it. We turn now to the primary features that characterize mobile communication technologies.

FEATURES OF MOBILE COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES

New communication technologies are characterized by two primary features that have the potential to affect invitational rhetoric—multiplicity of options and interactional control. We see these two features as affordances, "*relationships among action possibilities to which agents perceive they could apply a medium (or multiple media), within its potential features/capabilities/constraints, relative to the agent's needs or purposes, within a given context.*"[18] Just as "a stone of a certain size and shape can afford 'throwing'" and a chair affords sitting,[19] so mobile technologies "have more or less identifiable features or technological capabilities/constraints"[20] that hinder or facilitate particular outcomes in mediated communication environments. Because "affordances are perceived, not actual," they "vary in degree or extent," depending on individual users. Thus, although the characteristics of mobile technologies have the capacity to prompt or constrain various kinds of actions, these affordances are mitigated by users' agency in their adoption and application of the technologies. Instant messaging on cell phones, for example, affords "invisible whispering" during face-to-face or teleconferencing meetings, either with others in the meeting or elsewhere,[21] but the capacity for engaging in this behavior does not mean that everyone with a cell phone will become an invisible whisperer.

Multiplicity of Options

In 2002, when personal digital assistants such as BlackBerry and Palm were developed with the capacity for users to make phone calls, the opportunity to connect at any time in any place was created. More important for our purposes, these mobile devices also allowed individuals to engage in multicommunicating[22]—overlapping or interleaved speech events in the form of multiple, sequential, simultaneous, or near-simultaneous conversations. Although people have always engaged in multicommunicating (as when someone talks on the phone while simultaneously talking to someone in the room), prior to mobile digital devices, the communicative environment was defined largely by a stationary context involving one channel and one conversational context.

In contrast, in the new environment, with its multiple media and multiple contexts, individuals are more easily able to initiate or respond to one or more conversations while in the middle of another. Substantially more opportunities exist to engage in a type of multitasking that involves communication to multiple, distinct audiences.[23] Webster provides a clue to the sheer abundance of opportunities for message reception and generation with mobile technologies:

> Perhaps the most astonishing thing about digital media is their numerical abundance. . . . There are plenty of eye-popping statistics on the totals, such as the number of tweets (five hundred million a day), the new videos on YouTube (one hundred million hours uploaded every minute), or the sheer number of words we generate each day (enough to fill all the books in the US Library of Congress).[24]

The environment of radical multimodality,[25] polymedia,[26] and polychronicity[27] that allows users to engage in multiple conversations and access massive amounts of content clearly has changed the communicative landscape in significant ways.

Interactional Control

A second key characteristic of mobile communication technologies is that they provide the capacity for individuals to exercise extensive control over their interactions. Although previous communication technologies such as the telephone allowed communicators some degree of control (they could choose not to answer the phone, could install an answering machine to screen calls, and could hang up in the middle of a call, for example), mobile technologies afford individuals a much greater variety of options for increasing control over their communicative lives.

The primary means of control allowed by mobile technologies is their capacity for asynchronous or nonimmediate interaction. Because communication may occur at different times and messages do not require an immediate response, users can control incoming calls, choosing whether and when to engage in interaction. They can see if specific individuals are available to communicate, and they can talk to many individuals at the same time. They can decide how much time to let go by before responding to a message and may decide not to respond at all. Instead of having to respond on the spot to a message, as typically would be required in a face-to-face or even a telephone interaction, they have more "time to think about their responses to messages"[28] and "may plan, contemplate, and edit" their "comments more mindfully and deliberately than in the more spontaneous, simultaneous mode."[29]

Mobile technologies also afford users the option of controlling impression management, enabling them to selectively cull massive amounts of information to portray themselves in a positive light.[30] Individuals now may use personal websites, blogs, tweets, Facebook profiles, and selfies and other photographs as "warrants"—online information "that can be used to judge what a person is like."[31] In addition, they may create multiple accounts and leverage different visibilities to create multiple identity spaces, may put as little as possible online to create a concerted intentional communicative absence, or may choose not to exercise control over their online presence.[32]

The control offered by mobile technologies extends to their capacity to provide various coordination functions with others. Individuals can coordinate activities with friends via mobile technologies, directing others to their locations or following directions to their intended destinations. They also can redirect and improvise travel plans already in progress. Coordination happens as well in that mobile technology users do not have to endure social activities they do not find compelling or interesting; "if a party is boring, those who arrive first can send a message to others and alternative plans can be developed."[33]

Control over the management of calls, impression management, and coordination are only a few examples of the types of greater control mobile technologies extend to users. In addition, individuals can control the people with whom they want to communicate, the music they want to hear, and the information to which they are exposed. They are able to design communicative worlds for themselves that perfectly reflect their preferences and tastes.

POTENTIALLY POSITIVE IMPACTS OF MOBILE TECHNOLOGIES ON THE USE OF INVITATIONAL RHETORIC

Although our focus in this chapter is on the potential challenges to the use of invitational rhetoric by mobile devices, we want to begin by acknowledging some potentially positive effects of these technologies on the use of invitational rhetoric. The greater multiplicity of options and interactional control afforded by mobile technologies provide not only obstacles to invitational rhetoric but new opportunities for engaging in this form of communication.

A primary positive impact on the use of invitational rhetoric is that mobile technologies may make the difficult sharing of perspectives that sometimes characterizes invitational rhetoric easier. There is potentially more freedom for individuals to offer perspectives through mobile technologies because they provide multiple ways of communicating difficult information. To share a perspective that rhetors know will be difficult for another to hear or when they do not know how an audience member will respond can be challenging, and this is particularly the case if a perspective is shared face to face. Mobile technologies provide a barrier between interactants that may encourage individuals to offer perspectives, taking some of the pressure off of intense conversations and allowing them to be initiated and maintained. One of our interviewees noted that her husband is more willing to have a serious conversation with her if he has his mobile device with him: "He's more willing to talk if he has a secondary thing that he's doing, and he will be more forthright about how he's feeling if he's on his iPad because it's so uncomfortable for him to not be doing anything else. If I try to talk to him without his device, he will just completely shut down."

One reason individuals may be more willing to share difficult perspectives through mobile technologies is that, if they are communicating using a mobile device, they often cannot see the judgment of the other person. If someone shares something that generates disbelief, concern, or even horror on the part of the interactional partner, those emotions are likely to manifest nonverbally and, if they are seen, might shut down a conversation. If there is a negative reaction or judgment in response to a perspective offered via phone, email, or text, however, it typically is not perceived. When these nonverbal markers are hidden from the rhetor, the rhetor is more inclined to continue sharing a perspective, and the invitational interaction is more likely to continue.

Similarly, because of the expanding platform of communication modalities available, communicators can use forms that suit them for invitational exchanges. Unassertive persons, for example, may have no problem offering a perspective via email, but they would be much less comfortable and perhaps even unwilling or unable to offer the perspective in person. For those individuals who need more time to think through a conversation, asynchronous options like email or text are available. Individuals who have difficulty focusing on a message while also trying to understand body language or nonverbal cues in a face-to-face setting may be better equipped to engage in invitational rhetoric asynchronously.

Another possible positive impact of mobile technologies on invitational rhetoric can be found in the many opportunities they provide for sharing information, especially the personal, intimate information that often is expressed in invitational rhetoric. Individuals on mobile technologies frequently know a great deal about one another through Facebook and other social media, and this information provides a basis for invitational exchanges. As a result, "there is no longer the need to deal with this backlog of information. The members of a social group are frequently updated as to the issues and events taking place among their peers."[34] Individuals thus may find that sharing their perspectives with one another is easier because there are more touchstones on which to build an invitational interaction.

That mobile technologies allow access to virtually unlimited numbers of perspectives suggests another potentially positive impact on the use of invitational rhetoric. In the current multicommunicative environment, anyone with a mobile device has the capacity to explore and engage a multitude of perspectives, all easily accessible at the touch of a fingertip or the click of a mouse. In the pre–mobile communicative environment, individuals would have had to visit a library or peruse numerous newspapers and magazines to access a multiplicity of perspectives; now they can do so almost instantly. As a result, individuals have the option of living in a community that is characterized by diversity, where they can develop the skills to engage different perspectives thoughtfully and deliberately. This openness to multiple perspectives, of course, is a required skill for engaging in invitational rhetoric.

Access to diverse perspectives occurs via mobile technologies in other ways as well. Because mobile technologies and the internet allow individuals to be in contact with many—even multitudes of—people, even superficially, they often are exposed to multiple perspectives. Numerous relationships on Facebook and Twitter, for example, expose individuals to many different ideas and ways of behaving, an exposure that encourages a welcoming of or at least a tolerance for difference. Mobile technologies, then, may encourage individuals to let others have their own perspectives without feeling the need to try to change those perspectives or even engage them. This willingness to learn about a perspective without needing to change it may serve as a starting point for invitational exchanges.

Yet another positive benefit that mobile technologies bring to the use of invitational rhetoric is that they allow interactants to send quick text messages back and forth throughout the day—checking in, encouraging, or showing support and love with messages such as "Hi!" or "I love you," an emoticon, or a quick Facebook post. As a result, the individuals in such exchanges are likely to feel safe and valued, creating two of the preconditions for invitational rhetoric that encourage audience members to share their perspectives with the rhetor. With these external conditions met, a good starting point is provided for invitational exchanges at a later time and place.

Mobile technologies can help provide a feeling of safety in another way, too. Research suggests that individuals feel safer when they are carrying their cell phones, especially when they are entering risky situations. Sometimes, people can feel unsafe in conversations as well.

In both situations, if they feel uncomfortable, they can extricate themselves from a situation using their mobile devices. Mobile technologies, then, may encourage individuals to share information with and listen to perspectives very different from theirs because they provide users with a sense of safety and a degree of comfort in the interaction itself.

Mobile technologies also offer a way of engaging in the practice of re-sourcement. Re-sourcement is a form of offering "in a hostile situation or when a dominant perspective is very different from the one held by the rhetor." It "is a response made by a rhetor according to a framework, assumptions, or principles other than those suggested in the precipitating message."[35] Individuals who want to disrupt the frame of a conversational partner's precipitating message have at hand a device commonly used for this purpose, so its introduction into the interaction is not likely to be seen as unusual: They simply pull out their cell phones or tablets and show their conversational partners something on them—a picture, a video, or a game, for example. Even if they are communicating via phone or email, they have the potential to draw on digital resources as a strategy of re-sourcement to interrupt the negative trajectory of an interaction and enable the interaction to begin anew. One interviewee explained how mobile devices are used in this manner in her meetings: "People sometimes use electronics to hide when we are discussing uncomfortable topics. When the topics turn uncomfortable, people start picking up their iPads or cell phones and start focusing on them. If we're in an awkward conversation, we can turn to the technology."

We acknowledge, then, that some features of mobile technologies serve as affordances that can encourage and facilitate the use of invitational rhetoric. But these technologies also present significant challenges to the use of invitational rhetoric that we believe are serious in their potential consequences and often outweigh the benefits that mobile technologies offer. We now turn to an explication of these kinds of impacts.

POTENTIALLY NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF MOBILE TECHNOLOGIES ON THE USE OF INVITATIONAL RHETORIC

We suggest that the two primary affordances of mobile technologies—multiplicity of options and interactional control—create obstacles to individuals' ability or willingness to communicate invitationally in four ways: The presence of these technologies discourages individuals from seeing the potential for invitational interactions; offers little incentive for doing so; discourages individuals from engaging different perspectives; and has the potential to compromise the ability to create the external conditions of safety, value, and freedom.

Fewer Perceived Opportunities to Engage in Invitational Rhetoric

Mobile technologies may decrease the opportunities individuals perceive for engaging in invitational rhetoric. When communication takes place primarily through mobile technologies, individuals may not perceive the kinds of opportunities for invitational exchanges they were more likely to see available to them before. Once again, we acknowledge that invitational rhetoric may occur via mobile technologies, but we are suggesting that mobile devices themselves may discourage interaction with unfamiliar others, encourage a privileging of the management of messages over invitational rhetoric, shorten the length of messages in ways that discourage invitational rhetoric, and constitute a disruption or a barrier when opportunities are available for invitational rhetoric.

Interaction Discouraged with Unfamiliar Others

Opportunities to engage in invitational rhetoric, which once existed as people interacted with one another in the public sphere, tend not to be perceived because of the use of mobile technologies. The mobile phone is primarily used for maintaining existing relationships, with rhetors more interested in engaging with those in their digital worlds than with those they might physically encounter in the larger public world. Because most of the conversational partners in mobile phone interactions are partners, family members, good friends, and relatives, individuals' attention is focused inward.[36] In public situations, where there otherwise might be the opportunity to talk with strangers and potentially engage in invitational interactions, users are likely to engage in "chosen socialness"—interfacing with those who are familiar to them—rather than engaging in "chance socialness"—responding to an opportunity to communicate with less familiar or unknown others.[37] The cell phone thus "acts as a shield from unwanted contact"[38] or a "barrier between the user and copresent bystanders,"[39] inhibiting "opportunities for conversation to spark up among strangers."[40] Although objects such as a book or sunglasses functioned in a similar way in the past, they typically did not carry with them the nonverbal message that mobile technologies often do that the user or owner is involved in important business and should not be disturbed.

One of our interviewees reinforced the idea that cell phones discourage interaction with unfamiliar others that could turn into invitational exchanges. She observed that many young people are reluctant to order from an actual person at McDonald's because they are not used to interacting with strangers face to face. They prefer the relative comfort and familiarity of "going through a drive-through and talking to a box instead of interacting with a real person." Another interviewee contrasted the communication that occurs at the Starbucks in the government building where she works, where mobile devices are not permitted, with that at a typical Starbucks. She described the long line as "different from the one that you normally see because the employees don't have phones with them, so everybody in that line is having a conversation."

Management of Messages Privileged over Invitational Rhetoric

The need for individuals to constantly manage and juggle an overabundance of messages, often across multiple communicative devices, is a second reason fewer opportunities are available for invitational rhetoric. When a primary objective of communication becomes the efficient management of massive numbers of messages—far greater than were required to be managed before the advent of mobile technologies—the idea of engaging with a single person in an in-depth, elongated exchange is less likely to be perceived as desirable or even possible. An invitation to such a conversation is likely to be seen as an unwarranted and unwanted disruption of the management of messages that constitutes the normal flow of communication. Simply an invitation to engage in the kind of exchange that characterizes invitational interaction may even be perceived as a burden. Invitees must decide if they want to spend the time to participate and must fit responding to a message for an invitational interaction (with all the arrangements it would entail) into all of the other messages they are handling. Turkle describes the challenge of giving up control of the digital environment by opening oneself up to a conversation: "When people resist moving away from their screens toward conversation, they are often afraid of giving up this mastery."[41] The constant management of messages required by individuals because of mobile technologies means "there is neither the desire to converse deeply nor the desire to devote the time to do so."[42]

Sonja was reminded of the difficulty of inserting an invitational interaction into the environment of mobile technologies when she received an email from a doctoral advisee she had not seen for twenty-five years. Her former student was in town and wanted to see if Sonja could meet her for lunch. Although Sonja was free on the day her friend suggested they meet, Sonja's immediate reaction was to say "no"—she had not budgeted for such an exchange, and it would mean not being efficient at dispensing with all of the other messages confronting her. She no longer was encouraged, in other words, to follow up on an invitation for a longer, deeper, more intimate exchange with someone because of the way in which mobile technologies promoted a particular perception of and response to incoming and outgoing messages—short exchanges that can be dealt with quickly are privileged over ones that require more time. (Sonja rather quickly saw her initial reaction as silly and accepted her former student's invitation, and they spent a delightful three hours together in an invitational interaction.)

Time for Invitational Rhetoric Reduced by Shortened Messages

The shortened length of messages that mobile technologies encourage constitutes a third mechanism that challenges perceived opportunities for invitational interactions. Calls made on cell phones tend to be shorter than those made on landlines, averaging one and a half minutes in length compared with an average of five minutes for calls on landlines.[43] Texting typically involves shorter messages still. Certainly, invitational interactions can occur using short messages via cell phones, texts, or emails, and such messages may be used to set a time later for an invitational exchange, but invitational exchanges typically require time. Both conversational partners must have the time to develop and present their ideas in a coherent fashion. Likewise, both partners must have the time to think about the perspective being shared by the other, to process the new ideas being presented, and to inquire about them while developing their own ideas in response.

The short interactions that characterize many interactions on mobile technologies may provide another challenge to the use of invitational rhetoric. These interactions may come to be perceived by some as invitational rhetoric, thus eliminating the perceived need for a deeper conversation. As we noted earlier, many individuals exchange short text messages frequently throughout the day to attend to or check in with significant others. These abbreviated signals of investment in a relationship may come to seem like deep conversation when what has been exchanged is closer to phatic communication—formulaic communication that maintains social contact but does not convey or allow for the full exploration of significant ideas. The quick messages usually repeat the same content and do not require individuals to think of anything new to say; they thus do not lend themselves to an in-depth sharing of new perspectives.[44] Borman aptly summarizes the difficulty of engaging in good conversation in a context of mobile technologies:

> It's nearly impossible to ask for someone's time and presence. Plus, who needs a face-to-face when you've probably already covered the nuts and bolts of what you needed to say in an email, Facebook message or text. Or an emoji. Or a combination thereof.
>
> "Happy Anniversary. I (heart) you."
>
> Check and done.[45]

As Licoppe explains, "Rather than constructing a shared experience by telling each other about small and big events during the day and the week, interlocutors exchange small expressive messages signaling a perception, a feeling, or an emotion, or requiring from the other person the same type of expressive message."[46] Although an important means of relationship maintenance and support that creates an environment for interactants of safety and value, such messages may provide the appearance of an intimacy that is not fostered through deeper conversation.

The conflation of other forms of communication with invitational rhetoric also means that many users of mobile technologies have come to believe that, because they share the same communicative space—either physical or virtual—they are engaged in invitational rhetoric. They no longer see invitational rhetoric as substantially different from any of their other interactions. One of our interviewees told of an instance when she and several other coworkers sent about one hundred text messages to each other about a speaker during a workshop. She argued that their exchange enabled them to develop a special connection in an interaction she described as "invitational rhetoric." But these individuals were never having an extended conversation in which they shared their unique perspectives. In fact, we are guessing that, to be perceived as part of the group and to feel connected with one another, they probably were implicitly discouraged from texting messages that would have contradicted the general tone and substance of the other messages being circulated.

Opportunities for Invitational Rhetoric Disrupted by Presence of Mobile Technologies

Individuals may perceive decreased access to opportunities for invitational rhetoric for another reason as well. Even when a conducive environment exists for an invitational exchange, the presence of cell phones often decreases the possibility of such an exchange. One way in which a conducive environment for invitational rhetoric may be disrupted is when individuals in intimate relationships "repeatedly interrupt" their time together "to check for text or voice messages."[47] McDaniel and Coyne use the term *technoference* to describe this kind of interruption of face-to-face conversations on mobile devices.[48] Expectations to be continually available via cell phone impede "individuals' ability to be appropriately attentive and conversationally involved" with a face-to-face partner.[49] The potential to be involved in other conversations decreases the likelihood that individuals will engage in invitational rhetoric when it has the greatest possibility of occurring.

Even when individuals do not talk on their phones during face-to-face conversations, simply the presence of mobile devices may function as a barrier to invitational exchanges. The presence of a mobile communication device influences relationship quality in conversations, even if no one is using the phone.[50] A visible mobile phone inhibits "the development of interpersonal closeness and trust" and reduces the extent to which individuals feel "empathy and understanding" from their face-to-face partners.[51] One of our interviewees pointed to this kind of situation when she described a conversation with her son about the work sabbatical she would be taking. When she told him she would not be bringing her cell phone along, her son was delighted: "My son said that's the best thing he had heard—that I wasn't able to take my phone." As young as he was, he recognized that the very presence of the cell phone had the potential to affect the kind of communication he had with his mother and decreased opportunities for invitational rhetoric.

Decreased Physical Capacity to Engage in Invitational Rhetoric

The constant use of mobile technologies causes physical changes in users' "neural processing"[52] that affect individuals' ability to pay attention to and engage the key skills required for invitational exchanges. One of the primary physical impacts of mobile technologies is on attention capacities. Humans employ two types of attention—top-down attention (deep attention) and bottom-up attention (hyper attention). Top-down attention "is characterized by concentrating on a single object for long periods (say, a novel by Dickens), ignoring outside stimuli while so engaged, preferring a single information stream, and having a high tolerance for long focus times."[53] In this kind of attention, individuals have "the ability to tune out distractions and pay attention only to relevant information."[54] In contrast, bottom-up attention "wanders over the terrain, illuminating whatever seems most salient or unusual."[55] This kind of attention "is characterized by switching focus rapidly among different tasks, preferring multiple information streams, seeking a high level of stimulation, and having a low tolerance for boredom."[56] The two attentional systems are in conflict, and "significant cognitive effort" is required "for the top-down system to maintain focus without interruption or interference from the bottom-up system."[57] "To focus on just one thing feels like work," so individuals often try to "escape the effort and the tedium of paying attention" by "finding a means of distraction."[58]

Mobile technologies provide exactly the distraction required to turn away from top-down attention. As Carr notes, mobile devices seize "attention only to scatter it."[59] These technologies put individuals into a state of "'continuous partial attention,' in which they are 'continually staying busy—keeping tabs on everything while never truly focusing on anything.'"[60] Mobile devices interrupt users "and let them know when something potentially of interest is happening—to ding or ring or flash or buzz or pop up (or sometimes all of these) when a new call or message comes in, or when it is time for an appointment, or when a friend has just posted new pictures on Facebook."[61] As individuals become used to being constantly on alert, they become habituated to distractions. They become impatient with focusing for long periods on noninteractive objects, and the result is a self-induced "form of attention deficient disorder" or "mental antsyness."[62]

A second physical effect of mobile technologies concerns the nature of reading and its consequences for the capacity to engage in invitational rhetoric. As a result of mobile technologies, skimming is becoming the dominant mode of thought as individuals jump "from one link to the next. Hyperlinks interrupt linear thought processes and propel us to bounce from one page to another. Reading is further fragmented by page layouts that break content into multiple sections, incorporating features such as sidebars, scrolling text, advertisements, and a variety of multimedia content."[63] Deep reading and other activities that require sustained concentration are difficult online because of the need "to evaluate links and make related navigational choices, while also processing a multiplicity of fleeting sensory stimuli." These tasks require sustained "mental coordination and decision making, distracting the brain from the work of interpreting text or other information."[64] Thus, the ability to make the "rich mental connections" that occur with deep reading is "largely disengaged."[65] In fact, such reading practices are now influencing how website developers design websites: "To ensure that people will read the information on a website, the website developers have to dumb down the text and use clever strategies to shorten the text so that the website users can easily skim the information."[66]

The fragmented reading patterns facilitated by mobile technologies are compounded by the fact that many users of mobile technologies no longer read books. Many university students admit that "they have not read ten books on their own, or five, and many, almost as a taunt, admit that they have never read a book on their own. They don't have to, they say, and they don't have time."[67] Professors lament, "I can't get my students to read whole novels anymore, so I have taken to assigning short stories."[68] Cronon calls this condition "the *Anna Karenina* problem": "Within 20 years . . . will students manage to muster the dozens of hours of attention necessary to get through a lengthy novel like Tolstoy's 19th-century classic? If not, what does that mean for works of history that are even harder to read?"[69] Such difficulties were identified by one of our interviewees who explained that, when she produces documents, she no longer writes long paragraphs and is "keenly aware of white space, keenly aware of valuable bullets, and presenting just what they need to know. So I am truncating everything so that I can keep people's attention. You cannot expect people to read much, if anything."

The predominance of bottom-up or hyper attention, coupled with changes in the nature of reading, makes individuals less able to engage in the sustained effort and deep thinking required for invitational rhetoric. "Calm, focused, undistracted, the linear mind is being pushed aside," Carr explains, "by a new kind of mind that wants and needs to take in and dole out information in short, disjointed, often overlapping bursts—the faster, the better."[70] When individuals go online, they "enter an environment that promotes cursory reading, hurried and distracted thinking, and superficial learning."[71] Mobile technology users are less able to engage "mindful knowledge acquisition, inductive analysis, critical thinking, imagination, and reflection"[72] and thus are "more likely to rely on conventional ideas and solutions."[73] Some users, as a result, begin to demonstrate "a craving for instant gratification, impaired social skills, increased narcissism, and a reduced ability to empathize."[74] They have access to many bits of information but are unable to "extrapolate from that information" to put "information together into a comprehensive package."[75] Putting information together in a coherent package is a skill needed to engage in an invitational interaction. Individuals must focus on one conversation and one person or a small group of individuals. They must think critically about what they are hearing from another and use their imaginations to empathize, to picture different ways of being, and to try on ideas that are different from their own.

Less Motivation to Engage Different Perspectives

As we noted earlier, the sheer abundance of perspectives available through mobile devices has the potential to encourage individuals to expose themselves to diverse viewpoints. The access to virtually unlimited ideas suggests that communicators in the current multicommunicative environment might be interested in and even well practiced at exploring various perspectives and engaging them with an attitude of openness. Mobile technologies afford not only a multiplicity of options but also control over interaction, however, so they typically discourage users from exploring the diversity that is so abundantly available to them.

The control offered by mobile technologies allows individuals to isolate or insulate themselves from difference. They are allowed to construct a personalized, individualized world—"mobile privatization" or "a mobile bubble"[76]—that mimics "the straight jacket of their own mindset."[77] Although individuals were able to insulate themselves from difference prior to mobile technologies (reading only certain kinds of books and subscribing to certain magazines, for example), the insulation is now done both *to* individuals as well as *by* them. The personalization algorithms used by online services prioritize, filter, and hide information, "depending on a user's previous interaction with the system,"[78] so they are fed news and advertisements and other messages consistent with their browsing history. In effect, the abundant, diverse world to which individuals have access is transformed through these algorithms "into their own personalised narrative."[79] As one user explained, "I feel as though life is a movie that is playing especially for me."[80]

Even when algorithms are not dictating the content to which individuals are exposed, they have the option of personalizing that content, limiting their exposure to difference themselves. They are able, for example, to filter content on Twitter, only following those individuals in whom they are interested and whose perspectives align with theirs. On Facebook, they are able to be friends with those with whom they agree and to unfriend or untag those with whom they do not. An interviewee explained that people "are operating within our own individual silos, and technology helps us curate to the confirmation of existing views. We're blocking those we don't want to hear, and we're gravitating toward sources that confirm what we think."

Users of mobile technologies also can control the music they hear; as a result, they do not risk encountering different musical tastes. Whether they transfer their personal music collections to their mobile devices or employ streaming services such as Spotify to access thousands of songs from a song bank, individuals have "an unprecedented amount of choice of music to listen to." Many users "have a selection of play-lists that suit a variety of moods, times of the day or perhaps weather conditions or indeed times of the year."[81] Consequently, "the world becomes one with the experience" of the technology user,[82] and "privatised and mediated sound reproduction enables consumers to create intimate, manageable and aestheticised spaces in which they are increasingly able, and desire, to live."[83]

The result of the insulation available through mobile devices is "filter bubbles,"[84] "cyberbalkanization,"[85] "information cocoons,"[86] "echo chambers,"[87] or "communication universes" in which individuals hear only what they choose and only what "comforts and pleases" them.[88] As a result, "a unique universe of information" is created for each individual that fundamentally discourages encounters with different ideas and information.[89] "Convinced of the echo that surrounds them with their own views and preconceptions," users of mobile technologies may lose "the inclination to proactively discuss ideas with people or groups of a different opinion."[90] We acknowledge that individuals want and need times when they can enjoy the comfort of interacting with perspectives similar to theirs—times when their views are unchallenged; individuals do not want to engage difference constantly or to engage in invitational rhetoric at all times. But the use of mobile technologies has the potential to discourage the development of the habit of thoughtfully considering different perspectives, a key prerequisite for engaging in invitational rhetoric.

Compromising the Creation of External Conditions

If invitational rhetoric is to result in a mutual understanding of perspectives, it must involve not only the offering of the rhetor's perspective but the creation of an atmosphere in which audience members are willing to share their perspectives with the rhetor. We suggest that mobile communication technologies may compromise the rhetor's ability to create the requisite external conditions that encourage audience members to share their perspectives with the rhetor in a number of ways.

Safety

Safety "involves the creation of a feeling of security and freedom from danger for the audience. Rhetoric contributes to a feeling of safety when it conveys to audience members that the ideas and feelings they share with the rhetor will be received with respect and care."[91] The capacity to create safety in a communicative environment may be compromised as a result of mobile technologies because the perspectives shared with an audience may be inadvertently or deliberately shared with unseen and unknown others.

What rhetors might have shared in private in an invitational exchange prior to the advent of mobile technologies now has the potential to be disseminated in public, affecting not only privacy but a feeling of safety. One person may want an invitational exchange via cell phone and set up conditions in the environment conducive to such an exchange—talking somewhere quiet and private, for example. The environment in which the conversational partner is offering perspectives cannot be controlled by the rhetor, however, because mobile technologies allow individuals to create portable private-personal territory—the extension of their personal space into public space.[92] Callers no longer feel the need to excuse themselves from public situations to take or make phone calls on mobile devices because they believe their phones "provide them with privacy," even in public spaces.[93] As a result, a conversational partner might be in public, with the capacity to be overheard by others, and what was intended for one or a few individuals now may be shared inadvertently with unintended others. Even at home, conversations may be broadcast to others as individuals multitask while talking on the phone. One of our interviewees explained that when one of her friends calls—someone predisposed to talk for a long time—she puts "the phone on speaker" and does her laundry while she is talking. Consequently, others in the room can hear what is being said. Because of the potential for broadcasting an exchange via mobile technologies, interactants may not feel safe as a result.

The external condition of safety is compromised as well by the potential for the deliberate sharing of an individual's offered perspective with others. A message intended for the ears or eyes of one or a few individuals in an invitational exchange now has the potential to be shared intentionally with multiple others. An email, a text, or a tweet can be forwarded to multiple others (indeed, hundreds of thousands of others) with whom a rhetor did not intend to share a perspective. Lack of immediate feedback from the audience and the audience's ability to replicate the message quickly and easily make the sending of any message somewhat risky. The case of sexting is a good example; in this situation, an intimate photograph that an individual chooses to share with one person is broadcast to others for whom it clearly was not intended.[94] One of our interviewees explained that, in her organization, a group sometimes invokes the "Vegas rule—what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas"—in an attempt to counter this lack of safety. Individuals can work hard to assure one another that a perspective shared will be treated with care and respect, but the possibility that a message will be overheard by or deliberately disseminated to multiple others for whom it was not intended makes a feeling of safety more difficult to achieve.

Value

Value is fostered when a rhetor listens carefully to the perspective of another and tries to think from that person's perspective. Value is a difficult condition to cultivate when a communicative technology encourages communicators to devalue one another by turning them into availability units that are allocated to enhance personal efficiency. Audience members are treated impersonally to some degree when individuals multitask via mobile technologies, with rhetors at that moment choosing not to engage the unique human qualities of their audience members. Individuals do not want to engage in invitational rhetoric all the time, but in the moment in which messages to various audience members are managed, as users of mobile technologies tend to do, audience members are seen as demands on the finite amount of time available to the rhetor. Each potential audience member is assessed as to how much of an availability expenditure that individual deserves at that time, and the individual is managed accordingly.[95]

Some suggest that managing multiple messages via mobile technologies encourages a view of the individual as a message "'to be handled' or 'gotten rid of.'"[96] In Skågeby's terms, the nature of the relationship created is marked by pseudo-regard; there is a grant of attention, but it is not personalized, as it would be in genuine regard.[97] Even when messages are designed to convey value and investment in a relationship, when a rhetor is managing multiple conversations, those messages often create an implicit relational statement that privileges the rhetor's own availability over the uniqueness of the recipient.[98] As one of our interviewees explained, in this kind of communication, "it feels like what you're saying doesn't really matter. You obviously are not very important to that person at that moment." A primary motivation for the effort to engage in invitational rhetoric is to learn about another perspective and the individual who holds it, and mobile technologies can discourage individuals from spending the time required to fully understand and value others and their perspectives.

Freedom

The third external condition necessary for reciprocal exchange in invitational rhetoric is freedom, the power to choose or decide. A primary way in which freedom is enacted is that "the perspectives of conversational partners in an invitational exchange do not have to align," and "the audience's lack of acceptance of or adherence to the perspective articulated truly makes no difference to the rhetor."[99] But freedom is enacted in an invitational interaction in smaller ways as well. Rhetors do not place restrictions on an interaction, do not declare certain subjects off limits, do not privilege their ideas over those of their audience, and allow presuppositions to be challenged. Freedom also is developed when a rhetor provides opportunities for others to generate and choose options from alternatives that they, themselves, have created.

In an age of mobile technologies, the freedom that is a prerequisite for invitational rhetoric is significantly different from the freedom that Foss and Griffin originally conceptualized. Rhetors who are communicating in the world of mobile technologies may feel less responsible for generating the external condition of freedom to encourage audience members to share their perspectives because the act of sharing perspectives is no longer seen as unusual or uncommon. Traditionally, in invitational rhetoric, a rhetor works hard to signal to audience members that they are free to write or say whatever they want, to ask questions, and not to be restricted in any way in the exchange. As a result of mobile technologies, however, many individuals no longer feel restrained by restrictions of privacy, civility, intimacy, or impression management. To tell audience members that they can share whatever they wish seems redundant because many people are already doing that—and doing it often, loudly, and publicly: "Never before has it been easier to upload one's thoughts to the world; a situation that, although providing an important voice for people, has resulted in glutting the net to the point of absurdity."[100]

The forms of discourse commonly used for the free sharing of perspectives via mobile technologies also discourage some audience members from engaging in an interaction, even if rhetors encourage them to do so. Should individuals choose to encounter perspectives different from their own, they are often discouraged from engaging those perspectives because of the tone of many such interactions. In part because of the speed at which messages can be delivered and the relative ease of sending messages, impulsive and aggressive behaviors are tolerated and almost encouraged on mobile technologies; in Groshek and Cutino's words, "users are meaner on mobile."[101] Aggression and anger are commonly expressed through "excited and uninhibited communication such as 'flaming' (insults, swearing, and hostile, intense language)"[102]—language that is not comfortable for many and that violates the respect required in invitational rhetoric. One of our interviewees elaborated on this idea: "People are emboldened on technology. They are able to say what they would never say face to face." Such forms of communication suggest that anyone who does not share an expressed perspective is stupid, disgusting, or worse and discourage all but the most intrepid and thick-skinned individuals from participating.

Furthermore, the purpose for sharing hostile messages does not align with the purpose of invitational rhetoric—to understand another. Those who share perspectives using this style are not even trying to persuade others; they are venting perspectives simply to express them. As one of our interviewees explained, "On technology, people just rant or whine or blurt out things." Some mobile technologies encourage individuals to share perspectives without an imagined or clear audience. As a result, their act is one of self-expression and mere transmission; they have no intention of engaging with the ideas of others and do not see themselves as responsible to an audience. Roseanne Barr's tweet on May 29, 2018, about Valerie Jarrett, senior advisor to Barack Obama, is such an example.[103] She would have been unlikely to make such a statement on a talk show or to a live audience because she would have had to conceptualize an audience who would be engaging the perspective she expressed. Although they are talking about argumentation and not invitational rhetoric, Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca suggest the importance of such an audience in terms that are surprisingly aligned with invitational rhetoric: "To engage in argument, a person must attach some importance to gaining the adherence of his interlocutor, to securing his assent, his mental cooperation. . . . He acknowledges that he must use persuasion, think of arguments capable of acting on his interlocutor, show some concern for him, and be interested in his state of mind."[104] In the absence of such a visible or even imagined audience, individuals freely convey their thoughts as a mechanism of self-affirmation rather than as a prompt for the kind of dialogue that characterizes invitational rhetoric.

When Foss and Griffin theorized invitational rhetoric, many potential invitational exchanges were restricted by norms of politeness, civility, and authority, making some subjects off limits and some individuals ineligible for expressing opinions and having them accorded legitimacy. Invitational rhetors often had to work hard to overcome these restrictions so that an invitational exchange could take place. With the development of mobile technologies, the opposite problem exists: Many people feel very free to speak out and to speak up, unconstrained by previous norms of interaction and any responsibility to an audience. At the same time, many people are discouraged from speaking up, even though the opportunity is clearly there, because of the normalization of the hostile style in which many exchanges take place via mobile technologies.

INVITATIONAL SOCIAL PRESENCE AS A SOLUTION

We have been suggesting that the affordances of mobile communication technologies may facilitate invitational exchanges but that they also may discourage them. We now want to propose a solution to the opportunities and challenges that mobile technologies generate for invitational rhetoric. To construct invitational rhetoric in a multicommunicative environment in which communicators have a great deal of power to control their interactions, we suggest that potential invitational rhetors adopt a particular kind of attentional social presence. To make the affordances of mobile technologies more likely to be positive rather than negative in their effects on the use of invitational rhetoric, a particular stance in terms of social presence may be useful.

Elsewhere, we have theorized attentional social presence in a multicommunicative environment as the requirement that communicators create salience for themselves in the communicative space of another. As individuals interact with others in a space in which almost everyone is attending to multiple messages, rhetors must attempt to project themselves into the communicative worlds of others. They must create attentional social presence, which we define as "a state achieved when a communicator's actions shift attention, through increased relational control, from the audience's current objects of attention to the communicator."[105]

We posit that four primary types of attentional social presence characterize interaction in a multicommunicative environment.[106] In *budgeted social presence*, communicators control others' interactions by attending to their own availability through the efficient management of multiple messages at once. This type of presence constitutes the primary default state in which most individuals find themselves as they move from place to place with their mobile devices, attending to both physical and virtual interactions. A second type of presence is *entitled social presence*, in which communicators focus their communicative efforts on the environment and limit the number of messages in that environment so that few or no messages compete with the one offered by the communicator. In this type of presence, individuals might try to control the environment around them by asking other communicators to put their mobile devices away. In *competitive social presence*, rhetors focus on the nature of the message they are constructing, striving to make it so compelling that audience members will attend to that message; they seek to win the competition between their message and the other messages available on their devices. All of these constitute methods rhetors use to insert themselves into the digital, multicommunicative worlds of others.

A fourth type of presence is *invitational social presence*, and we propose this type of presence as a possible solution to the affordances of mobile technologies that may inhibit the use of invitational rhetoric. In this type of social presence, rhetors focus their communicative efforts on one or a few potential audience members in a single interaction or conversation. Rhetors invite potential audience members to interact with them in a focused, dedicated interaction, motivated by an interest in getting to know them and their perspectives. Individuals who enact invitational social presence are not confined to any particular type of communicative mode or to synchronous technology; they may use face-to-face interaction or interact using some form of communication technology. Typically, however, the rhetor and the audience each uses the same mode (face-to-face, cell phone, or email, for example) for their interaction, although they may choose to use different media—one might use email and the other the phone, for example.

To engage in invitational rhetoric, individuals must modify their communicative behaviors in ways unimaginable in 1995 when Foss and Griffin proposed the theory of invitational rhetoric. In addition to being committed to a goal of understanding rather than persuading—a difficult-enough task in an "argument culture"[107]—the digital environment requires that individuals attend in particular ways to their own technology use. Users of mobile technologies must consciously and deliberately decide to employ only one channel of communication and to restrict themselves to a single interaction rather than juggling multiple conversations with multiple people in unrelated conversations. They also must agree to spend a significant amount of time focused on the interaction. Each of these requirements is difficult to fulfill; when rhetors have to attend to all of them to even begin an invitational interaction, the likelihood that invitational rhetoric will occur is greatly diminished. To do so requires a dedicated intentionality on the part of all participants in the interaction.

To implement the invitational social presence that we are proposing as an entry point to invitational rhetoric, rhetors must interrupt people's typical practices concerning their mobile technologies. Our interviews generated a number of strategies being used by individuals who are trying to deal with ubiquitous mobile technology in their interactions. Their suggestions provide a starting point for identifying ways to be intentional about technology when rhetors want to optimize the possibilities for invitational exchanges.

One option suggested by the interviewees is to model the desired behavior concerning technology at their meetings or in their interpersonal conversations. They deliberately choose not to text under the table and do not leave their cell phones sitting on their desks during meetings. They recognize that such practices send the message, "I am so ready to drop you and pick up that phone."[108] One of the interviewees explained, "I put my phone inside something at the start of the meeting, so no one sees it." Another observed: "I make sure to put my device away when I'm meeting with people, and this usually prompts them to put their devices away." In other words, they signal to others that they are committed to the interaction at hand and are willing to focus on that group or that person.

A more explicit or direct option used by the interviewees to try to produce an invitational social presence involves the explicit discussion of mobile devices. One interviewee asserted, "I think there's more to be done in terms of creating self-awareness about the implications of having your head down in your phone during a conversation or a meeting." Explicit references to mobile technologies by the interviewees occur on a continuum, ranging from the more subtle, questioning approach to the confrontational. The subtle approach is exemplified in the wording used by one interviewee at the start of her meetings: "My expectation is that when we have our laptops, it's because we're taking notes. That's the whole purpose of having your laptop here." Another interviewee explained that she "signals what kind of conversation we're in and the role of technology in that conversation." This might take the form of a statement such as, "We're going to have a really sensitive conversation, and I really need everyone to put the technology down. Let's be present for each other because it's going to be really hard." Asking permission is also a more subtle form that several interviewees explained they use when a situation requires that they be able to be reached if necessary. When one interviewee wanted babysitters to be able to reach her about her son, she explained to her friends, "My parents are watching my son. Do you mind if I have my phone out just in case they call since it's so loud in here?"

Other individuals are more direct when they explicitly discuss technology with their audiences. One interviewee, for example, explained that she and her husband have created a rule for their family about mobile devices during dinner: "There are no technological devices allowed at the dinner table. Period. 'As miserably uncomfortable as it is,' we tell the kids, 'you're going to interact with your family.'" Similarly, an interviewee running a meeting explained that she begins with, "Everybody, it's time to put your technology away."

Confronting offenders is another option the interviewees reported using to respond to what is called *partner phubbing* or *Pphubbing* (a blending of the words *phone* and *snubbing)*—being "snubbed by someone using their cell phone when in your company."[109] Some interviewees challenge offenders in ways that are respectful and that try to save the face of the person on the mobile device. One explained that she might say something like, "Hey, is everything okay? Do you need to call someone?" or "You've been on your phone a lot. Everything okay? Do you need to take a minute?" She explained that she tries "to do it in a really nice way at first as opposed to jumping in and saying, 'Can you get off your fricking phone?'" Another interviewee uses similar language with an offender: "It looks like you're concentrating on something else. We can have a conversation in another time, at another place." Others are more direct and confrontational, as was the interviewee who was out to dinner with a friend who was constantly talking with another on her phone. She finally asked her friend, "Are you at dinner with them or with me?" Another asked a similar question of a friend with whom he was trying to converse: "Do you want to go home and talk on your phone?"

All of the options reported by our interviewees represent genuine attempts to develop and maintain an invitational interaction by creating the invitational social presence that assists them in inserting themselves into the communicative space of another. They are all trying to address the exigency of mobile technologies that require that they be intentional about their use of that technology as they try to initiate an invitational interaction. In doing so, however, they often violate a key tenet of invitational rhetoric—the purpose of an invitational interaction is not to persuade but to understand. Invitational rhetoric requires an invitational approach to addressing the digital devices that everyone is carrying as well as an invitational approach to the content of the message. Because many of the options suggested privilege the perspective of the rhetor over the audience and are sometimes very directive in terms of how audience members need to behave, the options themselves are not always invitational.

Because dealing with mobile devices from an invitational perspective is a relatively new problem for communicators, we do not condemn the efforts of our interviewees to construct invitational social presence. The individuals with whom we talked are improvising as they try to find a way around the challenges to invitational interaction created by mobile technologies. Rhetors are being forced to address the presence of mobile devices before they can begin an invitational exchange, and, even then, removing the technologies does not guarantee that it will happen. We see the suggestions offered by our interviewees as useful starting points and hope that others will join in the conversation about how rhetors who want to enact invitational social presence can do so in ways that are invitational as well.

The strategies offered in the interviews served as an opportunity for us to reflect on the challenge of engaging in invitational rhetoric in an age of mobile communication. Consequently, we are beginning to believe that we must modify our definition of *invitational social presence*. Earlier, we argued that invitational social presence can occur only when rhetors commit to focusing completely on a single conversation with one person or a small group. What became clear in many of the interviews, however, was the near impossibility of that task. Because communicators live in complex, networked worlds where expectations for availability are often continuous and intense, some individuals did not feel that they could turn off their phones or put them away during meetings or conversations. When the potential need to be available for a specific interaction is coupled with the anxiety some individuals experience when they do not have access to their phones, the difficulty of restricting users to one conversation becomes even more apparent. Invitational social presence must include an explicit focus on one conversation at a time, but, we are coming to believe, being available to (but not focused on) other potential incoming interactions might have to be an option for invitational participants. If a person must be available for another interaction, however, that person must be explicit about that need and the rationale for it in order to promote safety, value, and freedom in the interaction.

Invitational rhetoric is still in its infancy and is only beginning to be accepted as a standard communication practice in everyday life and in the communication discipline. Now, however, it is being threatened by affordances of mobile technologies that are massive, ubiquitous, and overpowering. The solution we propose, we admit, is a simple one: To intentionally adopt invitational social presence to address the exigency of mobile technologies. Although this solution may seem inadequate to address the enormity of the exigency, its simplicity is also its strength. For someone to focus on a single interaction for an extended period in an effort to understand, while certainly an unusual act in today's multicommunicative environment, requires no special talent, resources, or status. The question, however, is this: Do individuals have the agency or the will?

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NOTES

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Part III

APPLICATIONS

12

Love as a Strategy for Community and Social Justice Organizing

Invitational Rhetoric in Murfreesboro Loves

Roberta Chevrette and Joshua Hendricks

The United States has recently evidenced a growth of domestic extremism, racialized violence, and rhetorics of hate. According to the Southern Poverty Law Center, hate groups have increased by thirty percent over the past four years, with the 1,020 organizations active in 2018 marking the highest number in over twenty years.[1] While hate groups can be found in almost every state, they tend to be concentrated in certain regions, including the South.[2] With thirty-seven active groups, the state of Tennessee has been identified as an area of "far-right extremist activity."[3] In October of 2017, Middle Tennessee made national headlines when it was targeted by the League of the South for a White Lives Matter rally.[4] Anticipated attendees included white nationalist, alt-right, and neo-Nazi leaders from the Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, two months prior, an event at which James Fields drove a car into a crowd of counterprotesters, leading to multiple injuries and one death.

As fears of violence pervaded local communities in Middle Tennessee and the university community of Middle Tennessee State University, government officials organized an extensive police presence, and news outlets encouraged residents and students to stay away from the demonstration.[5] Many individuals, however, were unwilling to "do nothing" about the targeting of the area for expressions of racism.[6] While some activists from around the state began organizing a counterprotest to take place on the site of the White Lives Matter rally, other Middle Tennessee residents formed a collective titled *Murfreesboro Loves* with the intention of embracing the terminology of love and engaging in nonconfrontational public demonstrations on the day of the rally.

In this chapter, we examine the enactments of love, community, and justice by the Murfreesboro Loves collective. Although some scholars have critiqued concepts such as love and community for enabling racialized exclusions,[7] others express hope for a critical politics of love.[8] Rhetorical scholars also have demonstrated interest in rhetorics of love,[9] a conversation to which this chapter contributes. We examine Murfreesboro Loves' mobilization of love as an organizing strategy of social justice, specifically exploring how Murfreesboro Loves engaged an invitational rhetorical style that differed from other modalities of counterprotest.[10] By appealing to audiences from diverse racial, religious, and political backgrounds; promoting messages of inclusion and acceptance; employing a power-with rather than a power-over approach; and avoiding confrontation, Murfreesboro Loves interrupted the antagonistic model that characterizes the current political climate. Our study responds to critiques of invitational rhetoric's pragmatic and political utility and invites further consideration of how invitational rhetoric can contribute to community and social justice organizing, providing "an important foundation for achieving radical change."[11]

We begin by discussing the emphasis on ant/agonism in the rhetorical study of social movements and political persuasion and the intervention invitational rhetoric offers. The first section of our analysis draws from field notes taken in situ in different locations to contrast Murfreesboro Loves' protest modalities with those of the counterprotest. This comparison illustrates variances in rhetoric and emotions produced through different types of protest activities and paves the way for our subsequent analysis of Murfreesboro Loves' engagement of invitational rhetoric through offering perspectives and creating conditions conducive to audience members' safety, value, and freedom. As we consider how Murfreesboro Loves invited community members to reenvision themselves and their roles in racial justice, our conclusion points toward the possibilities that invitational rhetoric offers for political activism.

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS, ANT/AGONISM, AND INVITATIONAL RHETORIC

Rhetorical scholars of social movements long have viewed conflict and confrontation as central to protest and social change.[12] Herbert W. Simons, for example, argues that activists use rhetoric "as an expression, an instrument, and an act of force."[13] Kevin M. DeLuca highlights rhetorical confrontation as necessary for social justice, asserting that limits in hegemonic discourses "must be articulated as antagonisms by groups in order to subvert or disarticulate" existing power structures.[14] Similarly, Robert S. Cathcart defines movements as "a kind of ritual conflict whose most distinguishing form is confrontation."[15] Resistance is enacted through verbal arguments as well as protest actions that integrate words, bodies, images, and places, generating movement adherents by producing an "emotional habitus" and "embodied solidarities."[16] Images of violence and "bodies at risk" produced in confrontational protest also can further movement aims by attracting media coverage.[17]

Political persuasion likewise has been theorized through a confrontational model in which, by outarguing and therefore defeating an opponent, the "better" argument "wins." This mode of public debate is seen as central to democratic political processes. According to Chantal Mouffe, because "confrontation[s] between political identities" are inevitable, democracy requires the transformation of antagonisms into agonisms, conflicts between adversaries who maintain respect for the opposition.[18] Of course, the ideal democratic situation envisioned by Mouffe is not necessarily evidenced in current US and global political climates, where negative and personalized attacks contribute to "antagonistic bipolarization."[19]

Both the confrontational model of social movements and the ant/agonistic political model place conflict at the heart of democracy and social change. In such a view, rhetoric is conceptualized as "combative and adversarial."[20] In contrast, invitational rhetoric offers a different model for envisioning nonconfrontational rhetorical situations as part of the political process.[21] Whereas dominant rhetorical forms reflect a desire to exert power and control, invitational rhetoric de-escalates aggressive communication, encompassing the spirit of dialogue and exchange and creating environments for growth and change.[22] Although it also has been critiqued as utopian and irresponsive to inequalities,[23] invitational rhetoric can be used for social justice aims, as our case study of Murfreesboro Loves suggests. Our analysis allows us to explore the pragmatic and political implications invitational rhetoric may hold for "a radically democratic rhetorical praxis."[24]

A COMPARISON OF MODALITIES OF PROTEST

In recent years, a sustained conversation has developed around the use of field methods to gain access to material, embodied, vernacular, and transient aspects of rhetoric.[25] In this study, we employed the field method of participatory critical rhetoric, which enables insights into in situ rhetorics in a range of contexts, including embodied protest demonstrations.[26] As a research praxis, participatory critical rhetoric "affords critics the opportunity to stand with, for, and among the people whose rhetoric we study."[27] Because protests are public modalities that work rhetorically by confronting, challenging, and acting on those who encounter and participate in them,[28] participatory critical rhetoric focuses attention on the embodied and emotional dimensions of this process.[29] In our case, our engagement with the protest events discussed in this chapter began on the ground, a fact that shaped our subsequent inquiry. In addition to our experiences, our data set included interviews with six activists, news stories, and communication on social media.[30]

On October 28, 2017, emotions were high for many residents of Middle Tennessee and the surrounding areas. Individuals and members of activist groups such as Antifa and the Tennessee Anti-Racist Network drove in from across the state in response to the news of the white supremacist rally that would be held in Middle Tennessee. The White Lives Matter event would begin in Shelbyville, a town previously targeted by the League of the South because of its Muslim refugee resettlement community. Following the Shelbyville demonstration, the rally was scheduled to proceed to the town square of Murfreesboro, the site of a Confederate monument.[31]

At the time of these events, the second author, Joshua Hendricks, was a student in a class taught by the first author, Roberta Chevrette; we had not yet converged around our mutual interests in these events. Instead, our days started with different missions. Roberta was interested in analyzing the rhetoric of the white supremacist rally on the square, while Joshua was a community organizer of Murfreesboro Loves. The excerpts from our initial field notes recount our attitudes toward the day based on our individual perspectives, feelings, and locations:

> **Roberta:** On the morning of the White Lives Matter rally, I felt a mixture of excitement and trepidation. I didn't know what I would encounter. Although I had studied the public rhetoric of a conservative group during my dissertation research, I had never been present at a white nationalist rally. It seemed unreal they were coming to the town in which I teach just months after I arrived in the South. As I gathered my things to drive from Nashville, where I live, to Murfreesboro, where I work, I brought a pad for taking field notes. I also wore my Black Lives Matter shirt, revealing my political stakes in relation to the day's events.
>
> On the way to the counterprotest at the square, my friends and I planned to stop at the park where Murfreesboro Loves was gathering. I knew about this "alternative" protest because my student Josh was involved; he had mentioned in class that it would be in a "safe" location, unlike the square. I was skeptical not about safety but about the rhetoric of violence pervading media, community, and university responses to the events. When colleagues found out I would be attending, a number expressed concern, issuing warnings to "stay safe." These assertions seemed to suggest that protests are always verging on violence and that the best reaction is avoidance. The mainstreaming of the advice to "stay away" from a protest felt a lot like being told *not to protest*.

For me, it was hypervisible that the public discussion about safety was not really challenging racism or racist violence. Instead, by marking the desire to protest as inevitably violent, counterprotestors like Black Lives Matter activists were being viewed as no better than the protestors. That's an easy way to dismiss the fight for social justice.

Joshua: On the day of the rally, I awoke feeling afraid of what might happen but committed to fight back. Seventy years ago, Nazis killed my relatives. Now neo-Nazis want to come to the town where I go to school to continue to spread their message of hate? Advocating racist stances through the language of "white genocide"? I was determined to show them they were not welcome in Middle Tennessee.

When I became involved in organizing Murfreesboro Loves in the weeks preceding the white supremacist event, we knew we didn't want to just stay home, the way the media were suggesting. But we were aware of the risks: Barely a month ago, these same people had organized a rally and killed someone. I grew up in the South, in Appalachia, and am all too familiar with histories of racial violence and economic struggle. I didn't doubt what the people coming were capable of. And I knew that the community members we organized to participate in our demonstration were entrusting their safety to us. We had promised our off-site locations would be "safer," but I honestly didn't know if they would be. I was on the security team, and I knew that one organizer secretly had a firearm.

We offer these brief accounts to acknowledge and value the contrasting positions we held in relation to the rally and protests. While Joshua was a Murfreesboro Loves organizer who felt the risks of the situation and its historical legacies intimately, Roberta approached the scene from a less involved, critical position.

The following extended field excerpts illustrate differences in messaging strategies and emotions enacted at the two different protest locations over the course of the day:

Roberta: Arriving at Barfield Park to witness the beginning of the Murfreesboro Loves gathering, I can feel the energy of people coming together. A T-shirt proclaiming *ONE RACE: HUMAN* catches my eye. Crowd members carry cardboard signs with hand-painted messages emphasizing love. One sign features Martin Luther King Jr.'s famous quote, *ONLY LOVE CAN DRIVE OUT HATE*. Others proclaim, *LOVE IS THE ANSWER* and *MURFREESBORO LOVES: A COMMUNITY AGAINST HATE*. Some signs implicate religion with slogans such as *LOVE THY NEIGHBOR* and *YEAH, I'M JEWISH*. Other signs challenge Donald Trump's rhetoric with messages like *IMMIGRANTS MAKE AMERICA GREAT*. One sign simply reads *HUGS NOT HATE*.

Colored hearts are everywhere, replacing the *O*'s in *LOVE* and filling the borders on signs. In rainbow lettering, one sign states, *LOVE ONE ANOTHER*. Another advocates *LOVE WINS*, a slogan widely circulated in response to the Supreme Court's decision for marriage equality. While I'm not sure whether all the queer signifiers are intended as such, this seems like an LGBTQ-friendly crowd. I see people who look like professors and students as well as parents and children. Although the majority appear to be white, some members of Murfreesboro's Muslim community are here, several of whom carry signs in Arabic. People smile, laugh, and hug, asking questions about one another's lives and catching up. I see my student Josh pass by with a walkie-talkie.

The organizers begin sorting people into groups for marching, and a man climbs atop a picnic table to address the ever-growing crowd. He advises people to keep an eye out for threats and notes that heavier security will be at Old Fort, so that will be the safest group to join. Many families and older people move into that line. As the groups organize, he reminds them of the purpose for the action, requesting that if marchers encounter white supremacists, they don't "address them negatively—no middle fingers!" This is us "affirming who we are and who we want to be as a community," he explains. He recognizes the clergy members in the crowd and requests that everyone take "a moment to be silent" and just be here.

The next speaker is a local rabbi. Everyone cheers and claps as he takes the microphone. He begins by expressing admiration that "this many people would come out to spread love." As he speaks, other organizers receive updates: The white supremacists are in nearby Shelbyville now, and they are armed, despite the city ordinance against the display of weapons. The speaker reiterates the caution to "be aware of everything around you" but reminds the audience: "We're not marching *against them*; we're marching *for us*. Look around you. Look who you are with. This is your community."

Additional speakers then make remarks to the crowd, including a person of color who states, "You're not marching for me—don't feel pity for anyone who is a Muslim or African American. You're marching for you so that you can tell future generations you were here."

The groups are getting ready to depart for their locations, and the counterprotest is starting soon. My group takes our leave and heads for the square.

Arriving in downtown Murfreesboro, we park and meet up with two more university friends. We pass several military vehicles on the walk in. As we wait in line to go through metal detectors, I notice demographic differences between the people here and those at the park. While there were persons of Middle Eastern descent; a few African Americans; and representatives of diverse faith communities, including Christians, Muslims, and Jews, over at the park, there are definitely more African Americans here at the square. I receive several acknowledgments for the Black Lives Matter shirt I wear as a white woman. Antifa members, with their all-black dress, partially covered faces, and militaristic marching formation, are also visible here.

The messages on signs and their tone also diverge from those seen at the park. *IF YOU CLOWNS ARE THE MASTER RACE WE'RE IN BIG TROUBLE*, one sign reads. Another taunts *MASTER RACE/MASTERBATE*. Others mock *I LOOK AS STUPID AS THESE NAZI-BROS* and *RACISTS SUCK BUT NAZIS SWALLOW*. One features a swastika with a red circle and line over it. All around appear sentiments like *FUCK WHITE SUPREMACISTS*, *#FUCKRACISM*, and *FU.GTFO* (Fuck you. Get the fuck out).

As we continue waiting to access the locked-down area, cops on horses keep stomping through the crowd. Each time, I find myself pushed into the people near me. The synthetic leather of one of my boots tears when a hoof lands on it. One Antifa member starts to chant, "Cops and the Klan go hand in hand," and the others join in.

As we enter the square, a call and refrain begins: "Black Lives Matter!" "Black Lives Matter," I shout back.[32] The square is set up in three rings of fences. A space for the white supremacists next to the Confederate monument is surrounded by two concentric chain-link fences, between which police dressed in full riot gear face the counterprotestors allowed in the outer ring. I notice a sniper on a nearby rooftop. It's an ominous scene, what seems to me an unabashed display of state power. A National Guard helicopter flies overhead. The downtown buildings are all boarded up. Businesses were told to prepare as if it were a category-five hurricane.[33] *MURFREESBORO LOVES* signs are tacked to some of the boards.

A confrontation toward the inner circle causes a ripple of movement through the crowd. "They are in your communities!" someone shouts. I notice a few signs similar to those at the park, like *LOVE HAS NO COLOR* and *ONLY LOVE MATTERS*, but many have more violent tones. One depicts an Israeli flag draped over a gun. Another reads, *BULLETS MAKE ME HAPPY*. Other signs stand against racism with slogans like *MAKE AMERICA NOT RACIST*, while some refer directly to racialized histories in the South with claims like *LOSERS IN 1865, LOSERS IN 1945, LOSERS IN 2017*.

There are still only a few people inside the ring reserved for the white nationalists. One man has a Confederate flag draped like a cape around his shoulders. Another wears a Pepe the Frog shirt. "Get that shirt out of here," someone yells, and more yelling back and forth across the fences ensues. "I ain't afraid of no ghosts; y'all ain't shit," an African-American woman shouts from the outer ring.

News starts to make its way through the crowd that the rest of the white supremacists aren't coming. Rather than providing a sense of relief, this news seems to aggravate the crowd. People start yelling at a bearded young white man leaning casually on the chain-link fence in the inner ring. He is holding a small sign featuring Uncle Sam that says, *IT'S OKAY TO LOVE WHO YOU ARE.* "Heyyyy, Nazi," someone shouts. The young man spits on the ground in front of him. The taunts continue. Someone near me sneers, "Want some cookies for your milk?" Another yells, "It's OK to be white, but that beard's got to go! It's like saying I have just enough testosterone." He spits again, and the antagonistic remarks keep coming: "I didn't know they had slacker Nazis!," "Your mom's couch has a body silhouette in it!," and "Who's gonna be downloading porn?"

A drone hovers overhead, making a whirring sound. I am near the fence and count four magazines in the chest pocket of the cop in front of me; he has a gas mask. Someone in the crowd, trying to confirm whether the news is true, asks him if the Nazis are on their way. "Come on, where are you Nazis?" another protester yells. A few crowd members start channeling their anger toward the cops. "Is that a toy gun?" one person sneers.

The rumors are confirmed: The nationalists tweeted they weren't coming because it was a legal trap. "No-show Nazis," someone scoffs. "I done wasted enough of my day up in here," a disgruntled protestor proclaims, heading for the exit. A man wearing a flag shirt walks through the dissipating crowd, and a woman follows him, yelling, "Liar! He came in on the wrong side. He's a racist!" I think to myself that people would have been more satisfied if they got to shout down some Nazis.

My group decides to depart. We drive back to the park where Murfreesboro Loves is supposed to have an evening potluck with music and a celebration of community, but the entrances are all barricaded. We head home, feeling somewhat relieved that there weren't more white supremacists but also slightly let down that the confrontation we expected did not fully play out.

Joshua: As we gathered at the park that day, the crowd had a positive vibe to it; there was so much energy. It was a little different for we organizers; over six hundred people came, and we were concerned about their safety. Some people had written their name, blood type, and next of kin on their arms in Sharpie. The Christians prayed together, and one of the Muslim organizers prayed by himself.

It was such a cold day that one organizer had brought hand warmers to share, and we passed them out as we got people into groups to depart. Everything was running behind since people kept showing up late, but I wasn't really surprised. This is the South.

Before we left, we moved cars to block the pavilion we had rented from the parking lot to make a shield. The group going to Old Fort Parkway, a visible location for weekend shoppers headed to the mall, carpooled over to set up on the edge of the parking lot where they would hold signs, wave, and cheer at cars passing by. The group I was with would march from the park to protest alongside the road on which the Nazis would drive in.

We chanted along our way: "No hate, no fear, refugees are welcome here!"; "Show me what democracy looks like; this is what democracy looks like!"; "We are Murfreesboro; Murfreesboro Loves!"; and "We're here, it's clear, no more hate, and no more fear!"

After arriving, we continued the chants. We had three patrol cars watching over us. Some people driving by waved and honked. We only had one person react negatively, driving close to the protest line holding a Trump hat out of his car window and yelling. We already had a contingency plan for what to do if we saw a car driving on the line. We didn't want another Charlottesville. There was an embankment behind us, and if we needed to, we would jump into it and lie flat. Every revving engine was a source of anxiety.

We kept our energy up as the day wore on, and as more protesters drove to our meeting place, our line grew in numbers.

Eventually, great news came: The Nazis had called off their rally! There was an outburst of cheering. We hugged one another with tears of happiness and relief. A shadow had been lifted. As we marched back, we chanted proudly, "Whose streets? Our streets!"

> When we arrived at the pavilion, we started playing music and dancing. A few speakers spoke, and we shared food and hot coffee, celebrating. We weren't there long, though, before the police informed us the white nationalists might be coming. Shortly after this first notice, the National Guard helicopter confirmed it. We had to pack up; everyone had to go quickly. The police barricaded the park entrances. We were told to exit out the back, where we were greeted by three patrol cars and the fire truck that had been stationed there in case an EMT were needed.
>
> Although our victory party was cut short, we definitely felt like we had won. I was exhausted by the time I went to bed that night, but I slept easier than I had in a while.

Our accounts of the Murfreesboro Loves gathering at the park compared with the counterprotest on the square illustrate differences in the two protests. While the Murfreesboro Loves off-site protest focused largely on positive messaging, the on-site counterprotest was marked by more antagonistic rhetoric emphasizing conflict, provocation, and the shouting down of opposing views. In contrast to the efforts of the Murfreesboro Loves activists to distance themselves from the white supremacists and not directly engage them, counterprotesters on the square embodied the opposite response as they sought to get close to the white supremacists despite being separated by the chain-link fences and the ring of heavily armed police. The *techné* or inventional processes of rhetoric used in these different protests thus can be seen to diverge in their means of argument.[34]

The contrasting modes of protest generated different responses, including the emotions and affect they produced. Deborah B. Gould contends that "one of the most significant aspects of social movements is that they are sites for nurturing counter-hegemonic affects, emotions, and norms about emotional display."[35] In the case of Murfreesboro Loves, the nonviolent and nonconfrontational style generated positive feelings among protestors and produced a felt sense of community and togetherness across lines of difference, including race and faith. The direct confrontation on the square, on the other hand, was marked by the visible threat of violence given the police and state power on display and seemed to fuel negative and hostile interactions.

In their analysis of the alt-right's political advances, Heather Suzanne Woods and Leslie A. Hahner describe how rhetorical strategies that foster resentment "breed antagonism among the *demos* such that opposition is ridiculed and minimized."[36] The antagonistic feelings at the square were evidenced by the retorts the crowd directed at the few white supremacists inside the inner ring while they waited for a larger confrontation that never occurred. The taunts leveled at the person leaning against the fence—mocking his beard and asking him about milk and porn, for example—attempted to discredit his argument by challenging his masculinity. As Sonja K. Foss and Cindy L. Griffin have noted, in a patriarchal style of rhetorical conflict, rhetors attempt to demonstrate authority by constructing others as inferior.[37] This was further evidenced in some of the messages on signs. The equivalence made between *master race* and *masturbation* suggests that white supremacists are juvenile or incapable of attracting women, while insults such as "Racists suck but Nazis swallow" mobilized the threat of homosexuality to challenge white supremacists' masculinity and therefore discredit their arguments.[38] The "struggle over power" visible at the protest on the square reflected what Foss and Griffin identify as "the positive value" placed on dominating others within traditional forms of persuasion.[39] Because, in this type of rhetorical confrontation, "the value of the self for rhetors" is determined by exerting superiority over others,[40] the lack of opportunity to dominate offers an explanation for the sense of disappointment felt by some protestors (and, to an extent, Roberta) when the white nationalists failed to show up.

Our description of the different protest sites/sights also indicates how violence exists as "a constitutive possibility of every assembly."[41] Downtown, fear shouted loudly from guns pointed from rooftops. At Murfreesboro Loves, visible signifiers of fear were more subtle but still present, written on arms beneath bulky jackets. Judith Butler suggests that the possibility of violence pervades any public assembly, evidenced by police "waiting in the wings," the factions who threaten the peace, and the "constitutive antagonisms" within publics. She therefore identifies one important task activists face—they must find ways "to cultivate antagonism into a nonviolent practice."[42] Invitational rhetoric offers one means for conceptualizing what such nonviolent rhetorical practice might entail. In the next section, we draw from interviews with activists to unpack further how Murfreesboro Loves' rhetorical strategies aligned with invitational rhetoric and enabled possibilities for social justice and the cultivation of community across lines of difference.

MURFREESBORO LOVES AND INVITATIONAL RHETORIC

Murfreesboro Loves activists used an invitational rhetorical style to generate a community response without being bound to the argumentative terms set by the white supremacist rally. In the words of one Murfreesboro Loves organizer, their intention was to "take back the narrative." Although the group did not engage in invitational rhetoric with white nationalists—their purpose was neither to seek dialogue with them nor to uphold their positions as having inherent value—Murfreesboro Loves' protest and organizing activities invited diverse community members to come together to work for social justice. In the following, we examine the coalition's use of invitational rhetoric, including (1) the offering of perspectives through nonconfrontational rhetorical strategies and (2) the creation of the external conditions of safety, value, and freedom for audiences.

Offering Perspectives

Offering perspectives is an invitational rhetorical mode that consists of expressing points of view without insisting that they be supported or accepted.[43] Rather than seeking to change the minds of the white nationalists who were coming to demonstrate, the Murfreesboro Loves participants invited community members to join together to advocate an alternate perspective and, in doing so, emphasized the invitational form of re-sourcement. In Foss and Griffin's description, re-sourcement involves the rhetor "draw[ing] energy from a new source" and employing "framework[s], assumptions, or principles other than those suggested in the precipitating message." This style of offering perspectives can be useful "in a hostile situation or when a dominant perspective is very different from the one held by the rhetor."[44] By designing a protest that would stand for community views rather than argue against, antagonize, or even directly engage white nationalists, Murfreesboro Loves organizers modeled this mode.

The refusal to accept the terms put forth by white nationalists was modeled on protest signs. As one organizer explained, "We said there will be no negative messages on signs. We're not going to talk about Nazis on our signs. We're not going to say mean things even though we're feeling mad. Everything was going to be positive. I mean, that was the instruction to people." By drawing attention away from dominant logics or systems, offering perspectives through re-sourcement has the potential to generate new vocabularies of thought, action, and feeling.

Although love as the counterpoint of hate might be seen as residing within the same argumentative frame, Murfreesboro Loves' coordination of an alternative event in a location away from the White Lives Matter rally was a conscious attempt to shift both the figurative and literal grounds of protest. In the locations where Murfreesboro Loves demonstrated, no attention was placed on the white nationalists. "We did not want to give them validity," one organizer explained. "We wanted to draw the attention away from them and clashing like that." This refusal to engage in conflict strategically maintained the integrity of Murfreesboro Loves' position and diverted some of the media focus and crowd from the square.

Directly addressing the avoidance of conflict, one participant noted, "There's sort of two ways to give a rebuttal to something. One is to say 'no' loudly in a way that the opposition can't ignore you, and the other is to sort of ignore [them]." While she admitted that there may be drawbacks in this strategy "in that you're not actually confronting [the problem]," she explained the group's rationale: "We were trying to be very noncombative and nonviolent in our response. Nonviolence was really a core value to the whole Murfreesboro Loves movement. And nonviolence doesn't mean you don't confront—there are all kinds of theories that go behind nonviolence and nonviolent action—but I would say in terms of Murfreesboro Loves not only was it nonviolence, it was almost really nonconfrontational, not addressing the folks face to face." In contrast to the emphasis on power and violence in white nationalist rhetorics,[45] the decision of the Murfreesboro Loves activists to engage in nonviolent, nonconfrontational protest was a rhetorical action one organizer described as "lay[ing] your power down," a spirit which, she noted, "permeated the whole movement of the day and of the planning."

Murfreesboro Loves' strategy of re-sourcement served to define the community on its own terms by not simply standing against white nationalists but instead working to produce something different. As one participant described, "It's not that we as a people are digging our heads in the sand and saying, 'Well, racism doesn't really exist, or there's not anti-refugee sentiment around here.' We know there is. But we were trying to produce a narrative that's for something else . . . not just anti-hate but actually pro-something, so that was to be for love in the community." Murfreesboro Loves' rhetorical strategies operated on multiple levels to generate community feelings through social justice advocacy. On one level, the slogan "Murfreesboro Loves" enacts a community attitude; its declaration invites "a particular way of looking at the world . . . a certain way of taking a stance."[46] On another level, positive feelings were also produced by Murfreesboro Loves participants' nonverbal rhetorical performance on the day of the white supremacist rally. One organizer described the group members' intention in stationing themselves on the roads leading into town as "to show everyone who drives by *this* is who Murfreesboro is."

Public assemblies are a form of "political enactment that is distinct from speech,"[47] given that "a mass of protesting bodies can be an awe-inspiring sight, mainly because . . . they have mobilized for a cause to make a statement together."[48] In this case, many people who drove by the Murfreesboro Loves demonstrations were inspired to pull over and join the protest line. One activist recounted, "Probably three hundred people left the park going that way . . . and it ended up being way more than that [around five hundred people]. There were so many people who said, 'You know what? That's awesome. Fuck it, I'm going to join' . . . and the line just continued to grow and grow and grow.'" The Murfreesboro Loves activists thus materially enacted their invitation to the community to stand against racism.

Further illustrating Murfreesboro Loves as not only a statement but an embodied activity, one organizer declared love to be "a verb; it's not just an idea." From her perspective, organizing the demonstration "was a way to put action to the word." She explained her vision with reference to the "Love Your Neighbor" picnics that were organized by local faith leaders preceding Murfreesboro Loves; this participant viewed the picnics as an origin point for the emergence of Murfreesboro Loves: "We wanted *love* to be the action—not just stay home and pray or stay home and love. This was a way to say if you love your neighbor, you will come out and be at the picnic. . . . It wasn't like we were going to jump off a bridge or something. We were just going to go have a meal, and we were going to show how radical this was." Her description identifies love as an act of coming together—in this case, to share a meal at the park. The picnics took place under the same pavilion where Murfreesboro Loves met to organize protesters, a deliberate choice made by participants to "continue the work that had been started there." Connecting back to the aims of Murfreesboro Loves, the activist asserted, "We weren't hiding, you know?" This comment constructs standing together in public—what Judith Butler describes as the *performative* element of public assembly—as a progressive act.[49] For Murfreesboro Loves, the use of invitational rhetoric offered rhetorics of love in public appearances; love also extended to a focus on relationships as the participants invited internal and external audiences to envision being in community with one another.

Creating Invitational Conditions

Murfreesboro Loves' employment of invitational rhetoric extended beyond the organizers' actions on the day of the protest. As one participant proclaimed, "It wasn't just a day for us!" Instead, Murfreesboro Loves' mode of organizing included inviting different voices "to the table together" preceding the rally in an attempt to generate an open exchange.[50] Foss and Griffin suggest that the ability of rhetors to approach audiences with openness is characteristic of invitational rhetoric.[51] As they note, "offering can occur whether or not an audience chooses to join with a rhetor in a process of discovery and understanding."[52] For invitational rhetoric "to result in *mutual* understanding," however, a "nonhierarchical, nonjudgmental, nonadversarial framework" for interaction must be established.[53] The three external conditions Foss and Griffin identify as key to establishing an invitational interaction where mutual understanding between rhetors and audiences can occur are safety, value, and freedom. All of them were evidenced in the Murfreesboro Loves actions on the day of the protest as well as in the interactions preceding it.[54]

The first condition, safety, refers to "the creation of a feeling of security and freedom from danger for the audience."[55] The threat of violence surrounding the impending white nationalist rally generated feelings of unsafety for community members, leading people to feel limited in their ability to respond without risking bodily integrity. By creating a safe environment amid potential threats, Murfreesboro Loves generated conditions where community members felt they could take a stand for something in which they believed. This environment was extended through the variety of activities offered on the day of the event—activities that were selected through open conversation during the organizing process: Some participants stayed at Barfield Park, where children could play and people could share food and drinks; some participants went to a visible location at the mall; and others marched on the road where the white nationalists would enter town. Because no single choice was privileged, people could participate in whichever activities enabled them to experience a sense of safety.[56]

The second external condition for invitational rhetoric, value, requires an awareness of the inherent worth of all conversational participants. Value mandates an engagement with difference because it requires recognizing the "irreducible distinctness" of the Other.[57] A recognition of the inherent value of other people and their different perspectives was seen in organizers' attempts to think from the perspectives of those in the Muslim community. When asked why the Murfreesboro Loves participants had chosen not to go to the square, one organizer referenced local run-ins that had occurred with the same white nationalist group, League of the South, several years earlier when a mosque was being built and local Muslims became the target of hate crimes.[58]

Because of the history of conflict around Muslims and his personal relationships with refugee communities in the area, a prime motivation for one participant was to "reach out to the community that was being protested against and find out, 'how do you want us to respond?'" He summarized their stated opinion that a direct confrontation would lead to more violence: "When October 29th [the day after the protest] rolls around, our houses are the ones being vandalized, our doorknobs are being wrapped with bacon, our [community members] are being followed and heckled and all that stuff. . . . Because y'all are going to show up for the big party, but tomorrow I've got to be a Muslim wearing hijab in Murfreesboro, Tennessee." By engaging the Muslim community in decisions about the action, Murfreesboro Loves activists affirmed their value as "the experts on their own lives" while practicing what Foss and Griffin refer to as "absolute listening," which can lead to a deeper understanding of others' perspectives.[59]

An emphasis on affirming the value of other people further appeared in one organizer's response when asked to define the term *love*. She described it as a practice of understanding another individual's point of view:

> If you love—if you think about these statues that we have like the Confederate statues on the square—there's a lot of people that say, "I have no problem with the black community but, by gosh, these statues are great." But if you love your black neighbor, you're going to love him for his reasons behind why [the statues] affect him, and so that's where compassion comes in. You have to be able to walk a mile in your brother's shoes to be able to understand where he's coming from, and you have to say, "You know what? I love you enough to understand that, recognize that, and say, 'that's you.'" Then, OK, I want to understand and agree with and try to fight for you because I love you.

In this definition, love is seen as a practice of deep listening that creates conditions that can lead to social transformation by enabling people to think beyond the limits of their own positions.

Another example of the attempts of the Murfreesboro Loves organizers to think from the perspectives of others was evidenced by their conversations with business owners and their subsequent mobilization of community support for small businesses on the square that were affected by the protest. One person recounted how downtown business owners initially had a negative reaction to Murfreesboro Loves, thinking it was at fault for the city's decision to close off the downtown area during the rally. "So we had to go down there every day," he explained, referencing not only individual conversations but also Murfreesboro Loves' campaign to support the businesses that would be affected by the protests. He continued: "And, by the end, they said, 'You know what? Now we understand what is going on here, and we're going to stand behind you.' We wanted to give the impression—no, not just the impression—we wanted to actually say, 'We are a part of this community, and you're a part of this community, and we want to do this together.'" These types of engagement increased Murfreesboro Loves' visibility and community reach as businesses hung banners from their balconies, the local Boys and Girls Club made a huge sign in its fence out of blue and white cups, and schools put up yard signs on their fields. As a result, as one organizer noted, Murfreesboro Loves was in all of these places, "even though we weren't."

A third external condition for invitational rhetoric is freedom, which is cultivated when audience members have "the power to choose or decide" their positions on an issue.[60] One striking example of this was the decision by Murfreesboro Loves organizers to deliver food to the local police department on the morning of the rally despite the police department's lack of support for the decision to protest. Further nuancing the action of serving breakfast to the police was that this effort was led by the Muslim youth group. One participant explained that Muslims' involvement was important "because they are so often profiled and pulled over." Delivering food, then, was a further means of enacting Murfreesboro Loves' vision of community as well as offering a different perspective to police by saying, "We see how you see us, but we see you this way. . . . You pulled me over, but here's a donut. We had to leave and didn't get dinner, so here's a pizza." By embracing the police as one of the existing audiences for their action and recognizing their value in the community, the Murfreesboro Loves activists engaged an invitational style that honored different positions. As one organizer explained, "I'm a really progressive guy, but I wanted personally to be able to try to bring some other folks who didn't think like that together and not piss everybody off."

Throughout the preparation of their protest, the exchanges of the Murfreesboro Loves activists with various community members, including religious leaders, political and city government leaders, social justice organizations, small business owners, and the police, reflected a deliberate attempt to work across lines of difference. To this end, their decision to organize around a value such as love rather than a political position was in many ways strategic, offering a means for different audiences to align with the coalition and to interact in a positive manner. Murfreesboro Loves' mobilization of a rhetoric of love therefore identified "possible impediments to the creation of understanding and [sought] to minimize or neutralize them."[61] The effort to develop a rhetoric of love generated a feeling of community belonging "that was identified not . . . around faith necessarily, not around a political party, but rather around sort of an overarching concept." As one person explained, "If someone looked at me and said, 'Hey, [you] love,' I would want that, and I also believe if you look at the Muslim community here, they love. If you look at the three-percent guys [gun-rights advocates], they're going to want that said of them, too." This comment illustrates the utility of love as a rhetorical strategy that invites affiliation from various audiences; its capacity to be filled with meaning by different audiences added to its power within Murfreesboro Loves' invitational rhetoric.

INVITATIONAL SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION AND RHETORICS OF LOVE

Murfreesboro Loves offered an invitation to the community through its rhetorical performance. John Lucaites's claim that "every rhetorical performance enacts and contains a theory of its own agency—of its own possibilities—as it structures and enacts relationships between speaker and audience, self and other, action and structure"[62] points to various relationships and potentialities enabled by Murfreesboro Loves. By offering perspectives and creating conditions for open exchange among community members, the rhetorical performance of Murfreesboro Loves invited transformation for both internal and external audiences. In the preceding analysis, we have illustrated how Murfreesboro Loves' modality of nonconfrontational protest differed from prevailing models of protest that emphasize ant/agonism in the public sphere and produced positive feelings for participants. We have shown how the coalition's offering of perspectives invited community members to promote messages of inclusion and acceptance as well as to enact community through action. Finally, we have discussed Murfreesboro Loves' creation of external conditions that enabled an openness to others' perspectives.

We believe that Murfreesboro Loves' strategies positively contributed to processes of social change. The coalition created invitational conditions for community transformation through the building of genuine relationships with others. Several participants described important takeaways from the action such as the "sense of community" generated, the long-lasting relationships and "soul friendships" that were built in the process, and the feeling of knowing "we can stand together" despite differences.

Murfreesboro Loves also created invitational conditions for individual transformation. Everyone with whom we spoke described having been altered by the experience, as were we.[63] Several community members identified the importance of being able to say that, this time, they stood up for what was right—even when they might not have in the past—and that being there to fight racism with their entire families, from grandparents to children, was an influential experience. For others, the event cemented their commitment to continue to address racism, as one person observed: "It has helped me try to be more intentional about the effort to fight racism and systemic racism." Developing new awareness of racism, privilege, and oppression through a process of conversation can personalize social justice issues in important ways by enabling "an understanding of the participants themselves" and "engender[ing] appreciation, value, and a sense of equality."[64] Furthermore, "by taking action to alter or sustain power arrangements, movement participants experience a transformation of self, moving from a person who is acted upon by external forces to an agent actively shaping the scene."[65]

In sum, Murfreesboro Loves invited transformation through the enactment of what community and social justice could look and feel like. Through the performative claim of love, rendered in the participants' words and actions and through bringing community members together to create relationships of value and equality, Murfreesboro Loves represented "a way of acting in the world and, in the process, serve[d] to constitute that world."[66] Murfreesboro Loves modeled an "alternative to the system by being 'itself an Other way of thinking/speaking'"[67] and not only resisted that system but also created space for an altered public consciousness by reframing and redefining community. One organizer described Murfreesboro Loves as "almost a future concept, it's like . . . what do we want to be?" Another affirmed, "We wanted the name to show who we are, or at least who we aspire to be." These participants' articulations of the invitational potentialities of Murfreesboro Loves as a concept are illustrative of how rhetorics of love can contribute to organizing for social justice. As an emotion, love purports "to *describe* an affective state" but, in so doing, "enacts a slippage and thereby actually *alters* the affect(s) to which it refers."[68] In their invitational rhetorical performance of a community that loves, the Murfreesboro Loves participants also constructed the possibility of enacting loving attitudes and relationships among various audiences that constitute that community.

Scholarly explorations of love's limitations and promises seem to parallel the academic conversation around invitational rhetoric, with some scholars embracing its promise for feminist praxis, radical inclusion, and democracy and others critiquing its exclusionary, normative, and apolitical tendencies. What we believe Murfreesboro Loves was offering—and what we have been suggesting over the course of our analysis—was not a form of invitational rhetoric or love in which activists "all hold hands and bite [their] tongues for the sake of peace."[69] As social movement scholars, activists, and feminists, we continue to embrace the important role of antagonism in creating fissures within dominant systems. We remain staunchly opposed to normative models of civility and deliberation as a political fix-all, and we recognize the inherent problems of positing love as a solution to inequality.[70] We further recognize that certain bodies are likely to be marked as more or less loving based on intersecting identities of race, class, gender, sexuality, religion, and citizenship status. However, we believe that considering love as a means of resistance, inspiration, and inclusivity expands possibilities for activism, providing the potential to nourish individuals, relationships, and communities.

Theorizing invitational rhetoric in relation to social change requires "broadening our perspective on what kinds of communicative actions can be considered rhetorical and turns our attention to process rather than end product."[71] From this perspective, Murfreesboro Loves' organizing *process* enacted its political goal; as Darell Enck-Wanzer has described, "rhetorical and organizational *form* may be constitutive and central to a movement's political and social objectives rather than a means to an end."[72] Considering invitational rhetoric as a modality that may constitute and be deployed for social justice aims—including in the act of protest, which is not typically considered invitational—has the potential to extend an understanding of the role invitational rhetoric plays in civil society and social transformation.

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NOTES

1. Leila Fadel, "U.S. Hate Groups Rose 30 Percent in Recent Years, Watchdog Group Reports," *NPR,* February 20, 2019. https://www.npr.org/2019/02/20/696217158/u-s-hate-groups-rose-sharply-in-recent-years-watchdog-group-reports.

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3. Natalie Allison, "Southern Poverty Law Center: Neo-Nazi, KKK Chapters among New Hate Groups in Tennessee," *Tennessean*, February 21, 2018. https://www.tennessean.com/story/news/2018/02/21/southern-poverty-law-center-new-hate-groups-tennessee-neo-nazi-kkk-chapters/353363002/.

4. See, for example, *CBS News*, "One Arrest at 'White Lives Matter' Rally in Tennessee," *CBS,* October 28, 2017. https://www.cbsnews.com/news/white-lives-matter-tennessee-braces-possible-clashes/.

5. See, for example, Nancy De Gennaro and Mariah Timms, "'White Lives Matter' Rally: Murfreesboro Says No Decision Has Been Made," *Daily News Journal*, October 16, 2017. https://www.dnj.com/story/news/2017/10/16/white-lives-matter-rally-tennessee-murfreesboro-league-of-the-south/768015001/; Luke O'Brien, "Why Nazis and White Supremacists Are Putting the Fear in Middle Tennessee this Weekend," *Huffington Post*, October 28, 2017. https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/nazis-white-supremacists-fear-in-middle-tennessee_us_59f3f2f5e4b07fdc5fbe585c.

6. This study received Institutional Research Board approval.

7. Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 122–43; Miranda Joseph, *Against the Romance of Community* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002).

8. Rachel A. Griffin, "Navigating the Politics of Identity/Identities and Exploring the Promise of Critical Love," in *Identity Research and Communication: Intercultural Reflections and Future Directions*, ed. Nilanjana Bardhan and Mark P. Orbe (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2010), 207–22; bell hooks, *All About Love: New Visions* (New York: Harper Collins, 2018).

9. Maria-Sabina Draga Alexandru, "Love as Reclamation in Toni Morrison's African American Rhetoric," *European Journal of American Culture* 27, no. 3 (2008): 191–205; Joshua Gunn, "For the Love of Rhetoric, with Continual Reference to Kenny and Dolly," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 94, no. 2 (2008): 131–55; Eric S. Jenkins and Josue David Cisneros, "Rhetoric and this Crazy Little 'Thing' Called Love," *Review of Communication* 13, no. 2 (2013): 85–107.

10. Sonja K. Foss and Cindy L. Griffin, "Beyond Persuasion: A Proposal for an Invitational Rhetoric," *Communication Monographs* 62, no. 1 (1995): 2–18. Though subject to future theorizing and extension, including in this volume, in the past, invitational rhetoric has been alternately celebrated and critiqued for aligning with normative concepts of political deliberation, including civility. Given this, Roberta wishes to mark from the outset her agreement with Nina Lozano-Reich and Dana Cloud's assertion that "political confrontations up to and including violence have been perennial resources in struggles for justice" and that "the civility standard" can be detrimental to social justice struggles given media framings of protesters "as wild and riotous." See Cloud and Lozano-Reich, "The Uncivil Tongue: Invitational Rhetoric and the Problem of Inequality," *Western Journal of Communication* 73, no. 2 (2009): 224. I reference my perspective to note that I initially felt critical of Murfreesboro Loves because it seemed to fall within civility standards, including its framing of offering a safe alternative to the counterprotest. Over the course of this study, however, I realized that Murfreesboro Loves, despite my doubts, did enact a vision of community, equality, and justice worth further exploring. In conducting interviews with participants, I came to believe that the coalition's rhetorical strategies offer an effective means of organizing for social change. In this manner, I allowed myself to actually be transformed by the invitation to see from the perspective of the rhetors we interviewed.

11. Marilyn Bordwell DeLaure, "Planting Seeds of Change: Ella Baker's Radical Rhetoric," *Women's Studies in Communication* 31, no. 1 (2008): 21.

12. Several recent collections address relationships among protest, persuasion, and confrontational resistance. See Johnathan Alexander, Susan C. Jarratt, and Nancy Welch, *Unruly Rhetorics: Protest, Persuasion, and Publics* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2018); Christina R. Foust, Amy Pason, and Kate Zigglow Rogness, *What Democracy Looks Like: The Rhetoric of Social Movements and Counterpublics* (Birmingham: University of Alabama Press, 2017); Charles E. Morris III and Stephen Howard Browne, eds., *Readings on the Rhetoric of Social Protest*, 3rd ed. (State College, PA: Strata, 2013).

13. Herbert W. Simons, "Requirements, Problems, and Strategies: A Theory of Persuasion for Social Movements," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 56, no. 1 (1970): 8.

14. Kevin M. DeLuca, "Articulation Theory: A Discursive Grounding for Rhetorical Practice," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 32, no. 4 (1999): 337.

15. Robert S. Cathcart, "Confrontation as Rhetorical Form," *Southern Speech Communication Journal* 43, no. 3 (1978): 253.

16. For more on emotional habitus in social movements, see Deborah B. Gould, *Moving Politics: Emotion and Act Up's Fight Against AIDS* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009). For a discussion of embodied solidarities produced in protest, see Roberta Chevrette and Aaron Hess, "'The FEMEN Body Can Do Everything': Generating the Agentic Bodies of Social Movement through Internal and External Rhetorics," *Communication Monographs*, in press.

17. Kevin Michael DeLuca, "Unruly Arguments: The Body Rhetoric of Earth First!, ACT UP, and Queer Nation," *Argumentation and Advocacy* 36, no. 1 (1999): 14.

18. Chantal Mouffe, "By Way of a Postscript," *Parallax* 20, no. 2 (2014): 149. See also Chantal Mouffe, *Agonistics: Thinking the World Politically* (New York: Verso, 2013).

19. Victor Sampedro and Francisco Seoane Pérez, "The 2008 Spanish General Elections: 'Antagonistic Bipolarization' Geared by Presidential Debates, Partisanship, and Media Interests," *Press/Politics* 13, no. 3 (2008): 337.

20. Patricia Roberts-Miller, "Fighting Without Hatred: Hannah Arendt's Agonistic Rhetoric," *Journal of Applied Communication* 22, no. 3 (2002): 585.

21. Foss and Griffin, "Beyond Persuasion."

22. Jennifer E. Bone, Cindy L. Griffin, and T. M. Linda Scholz, "Beyond Traditional Conceptualizations of Rhetoric: Invitational Rhetoric and a Move toward Civility," *Western Journal of Communication* 72, no. 4 (2008): 436–62; Margaret Cavin, "Elise Boulding's Rhetoric: An Invitation to Peace," *Peace & Change* 31, no. 3 (2006): 390–412; Irwin Mallin and Karrin Vasby Anderson, "Inviting Constructive Argument," *Argumentation and Advocacy* 36, no. 3 (2000): 120–33; Sonja Modesti, "Invitation Accepted: Integrating Invitational Rhetoric in Educational Contexts," *Current Issues in Education* 15, no. 1 (2012): 1–12.

23. For further discussion, see Gunn, "For the Love of Rhetoric"; Lozano-Reich and Cloud, "The Uncivil Tongue."

24. DeLaure, "Planting Seeds of Change," 4.

25. See, for example, Carole Blair, "Reflections on Criticism and Bodies: Parables from Public Places," *Western Journal of Communication* 65, no. 3 (2001): 271–94; Gerard A. Hauser, *Vernacular Voices: The Rhetoric of Publics and Public Spheres* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1999); Aaron Hess, "Critical-Rhetorical Ethnography: Rethinking the Place and Process of Rhetoric," *Communication Studies* 62, no. 2 (2011): 127–52; Sara McKinnon, Robert Asen, Karma R. Chávez, and Robert Howard, eds., *Text + Field: Innovations in Rhetorical Method* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2016); Michael K. Middleton, Danielle Endres, and Samantha Senda-Cook, "Articulating Rhetorical Field Methods: Challenges and Tensions," *Western Journal of Communication* 75, no. 4 (2011): 386–406; Michael K. Middleton, Aaron Hess, Danielle Endres, and Samantha Senda-Cook, *Participatory Critical Rhetoric: Theoretical and Methodological Foundations for Studying Rhetoric* in Situ (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2015); Phaedra C. Pezzullo, "Resisting 'National Breast Cancer Awareness Month': The Rhetoric of Counterpublics and their Cultural Performances," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 89, no. 4 (2003): 345–65.

26. See, for example, Karma R. Chávez, "Counter-Public Enclaves and Understanding the Function of Rhetoric in Social Movement Coalition-Building," *Communication Quarterly* 59 (2011): 1–18; Karma R. Chávez, *Queer Migration Politics: Activist Rhetoric and Coalitional Possibilities* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2013); Danielle Endres and Samantha Senda-Cook, "Location Matters: The Rhetoric of Place in Protest," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 97, no. 3 (2011): 257–82.

27. Middleton, Hess, Endres, and Senda-Cook, *Participatory Critical Rhetoric*, xiv.

28. In thinking about forms of protest as public modalities, we engage Daniel Brouwer and Robert Asen's offering of "modality" for thinking about "ways of being and studying public." This concept highlights the role of rhetorical techniques (*technê*) in the formation of publics, emphasizing "the *productive arts of crafting publicity.*" See Daniel C. Brouwer and Robert Asen, "Introduction: Public Modalities, or the Metaphors We Theorize By," in *Public Modalities: Rhetoric, Culture, Media, and the Shape of Public Life*, ed. Daniel C. Brouwer and Robert Asen (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2010), 3.

29. For further discussion of how emotion constructs social movements and shapes organizing strategies used by activists and community members, see Gould, *Moving Politics.*

30. Interviews ranged from a seven-minute field interview to an interview in an organizer's backyard that lasted for seventy minutes. The average length of an interview was thirty-three minutes. Other data included twenty-six news articles and social media posts that provided insight into Murfreesboro Loves' messaging as well as further oriented Roberta toward the organization. She coded the interview data using procedural coding to identify rhetorical strategies that aligned with invitational rhetoric.

31. The monument depicts a Confederate soldier locally known as *Johnny Reb* and is one of several controversial statues in the Middle Tennessee area, including the Nathan Bedford Forrest statue in nearby Nashville. Preceding the rally was a failed attempt to rename Forrest Hall on Middle Tennessee State University's campus.

32. This was not specifically a Black Lives Matter protest; according to one of the Murfreesboro Loves organizers, local Black Lives Matter activists had said they would not attend since they knew they would be blamed for anything that happened.

33. Julietta Martinelli, "To Ready Themselves for White Nationalists, Two Tennessee Towns Prepare as if a Hurricane is Coming," *Nashville Public Radio*, October 27, 2017. https://www.nashville

publicradio.org/post/ready-themselves-white-nationalists-two-tennessee-towns-prepare-if-hurricane-coming#stream/0.

34. For further discussion of *techné* in relation to the concept of public modalities, see Brouwer and Asen, "Public Modalities."

35. Gould, *Moving Politics*, 41.

36. Heather Suzanne Woods and Leslie A. Hahner, *Make America Meme Again* (New York: Peter Lang, 2019), 198.

37. Foss and Griffin, "Beyond Persuasion."

38. For more on challenges to others' heterosexuality in masculine competition, see C. J. Pascoe, *Dude, You're a Fag: Masculinity and Sexuality in High School* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

39. Foss and Griffin, "Beyond Persuasion," 2.

40. Foss and Griffin, "Beyond Persuasion," 3.

41. Judith Butler, *Notes toward a Performative Theory of Assembly* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard College, 2015), 191.

42. Butler, *Notes toward a Performative Theory*, 191.

43. Foss and Griffin, "Beyond Persuasion."

44. Foss and Griffin, "Beyond Persuasion," 9. See also Sally Miller Gearhart, "Womanpower: Energy Re-Sourcement," in *The Politics of Women's Spirituality: Essays by the Founding Mothers of the Movement*, ed. Charlene Spretnak (New York: Doubleday, 1982), 194–206.

45. John M. Cotter, "Sounds of Hate: White Power Rock and Roll and the Neo-Nazi Skinhead Subculture," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 11, no. 2 (1999): 111–40; Henry A. Giroux, "White Nationalism, Armed Culture and State Violence in the Age of Donald Trump," *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 43, no. 9 (2017): 887–910.

46. Judith Butler, *Senses of the Subject* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015), 91.

47. Butler, *Notes toward a Performative Theory,* 155.

48. Brett Lunceford, *Naked Politics: Nudity, Political Action, and the Rhetoric of the Body* (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2012), 5.

49. Butler, *Notes toward a Performative Theory.*

50. Despite Murfreesboro Loves' successful engagement with a variety of voices, one participant noted that gendered dynamics seemed to factor into whose voices occupied more space during group meetings and decision-making processes. We note this so as not to present an overly flattering or idyllic account. Andrea Smith has pointed out that movements designed to challenge white supremacy and colonialism frequently repeat stuctures of heteropatriarchy. Although invitational rhetoric has been proposed as a feminist alternative to rhetorical structures that seek to dominate, we nonetheless caught a glimpse in this comment of the continued need to work "to create movements for social change that do not replicate the structures of domination that we seek to eradicate." See Andrea Smith, "American Studies without America: Native Feminisms and the Nation-State," *American Quarterly* 60, no. 2 (2008): 312.

51. Foss and Griffin, "Beyond Persuasion," 6.

52. Foss and Griffin, "Beyond Persuasion," 10.

53. Foss and Griffin, "Beyond Persuasion," 10, 5.

54. Foss and Griffin, "Beyond Persuasion."

55. Foss and Griffin, "Beyond Persuasion," 10.

56. To clarify, no choice was privileged over others with one exception: the decision made by the group not to go to the square. Some group members took this as a hard delineation, which created internal controversy when one African-American organizer decided he would go there.

57. Foss and Griffin, "Beyond Persuasion," 11.

58. Joshua noted that because conversations with the Muslim community took place early, they had the unintended consequence of potentially excluding more of the African-American community's perspectives given organizers' responsiveness to the Muslim community's wishes to stay away from the

square. That this decision did not represent the desires of all was seen when one African-American organizer broke away from the group on the day of the protest and decided to appear on the square.

59. Foss and Griffin, “Beyond Persuasion,” 4, 11.

60. Foss and Griffin, “Beyond Persuasion,” 12.

61. Cavin, “An Invitation to Peace,” 394–95.

62. John Louis Lucaites, “Understanding Agency,” position paper presented at the Alliance of Rhetoric Societies Conference, Evanston, IL, September 12, 2003.

63. One of us was altered by his role as an organizer, the other by the expansion of her own perspective while researching Murfreesboro Loves (see footnote 10).

64. Foss and Griffin, “Beyond Persuasion,” 5.

65. Robert Benford and Scott A. Hunt, “Dramaturgy and Social Movements: The Social Construction and Communication of Power,” *Sociological Inquiry* 62, no. 1 (1992): 45. See also Chevrette and Hess, “‘The FEMEN Body,’” for a discussion of how this transformation of agency is heightened by the embodied experience of empowerment that occurs during the act of protest.

66. Enck-Wanzer, “Trashing the System,” 192.

67. Foss and Griffin, “Beyond Persuasion,” 16-17.

68. Gould, *Moving Politics*, 38.

69. Griffin, “Navigating the Politics of Identity,” 216.

70. Debate has been an important part of Joshua’s life and training; he was an undergraduate at the time of this writing. His position regarding deliberation may therefore be less critical than the one expressed in this statement.

71. DeLaure, “Planting the Seeds of Change,” 6.

72. Enck-Wanzer, “Trashing the System,” 179.

13

Practicing Invitational Rhetoric

East Central Ministries' Approach to Community Development

Sarah De Los Santos Upton

Since invitational rhetoric was theorized by Sonja K. Foss and Cindy L. Griffin in 1995, the theory has been engaged and practiced in a variety of contexts. Researchers have analyzed how rhetors such as Elise Boulding[1] and Ella Baker[2] used invitational rhetoric in their activist efforts. Invitational rhetoric as a pedagogical tool has been explored in communication courses,[3] as an alternative approach to composition pedagogy,[4] as a vehicle for service learning,[5] and as a means of introducing civil dialogue into public speaking courses.[6] Scholars also have drawn on invitational rhetoric to inform campaigns targeted at health behaviors[7] and public safety.[8]

In this chapter, I expand the contexts in which invitational rhetoric has been applied to the arena of community development. Although community development appears to be an inappropriate location for the application of invitational rhetoric because community development efforts clearly are motivated by a desire to change conditions and people, I offer a case study of an organization that is able to achieve meaningful social change without privileging persuasion—East Central Ministries (ECM) in Albuquerque, New Mexico. My analysis of the practices of ECM suggests that the organization's application of invitational rhetoric expands both the practice of community development and the theory of invitational rhetoric. I begin with an overview of ECM, outlining its programs and projects. I then suggest how the organization exemplifies invitational rhetoric by offering perspectives and creating an invitational environment where concepts like equality can be fully embodied. Based on their commitment to these communicative options, I suggest some emergent practices of invitational rhetoric uncovered by community members at ECM.

EAST CENTRAL MINISTRIES: BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

ECM is a community development organization located in the La Mesa/Trumbull neighborhood of Albuquerque's international district. In the past, Kirtland Air Force Base housing and historic Route 66 both contributed to a thriving neighborhood. Once base housing was moved and Interstate 40 redirected traffic away from the area, however, La Mesa/Trumbull began to experience an economic decline that continues to this day.[9] Many residents and local media outlets in Albuquerque now refer to the international district as the *war zone*, focusing on the high rates of prostitution and violence and issues related to dealing and consuming drugs.[10] The neighborhood is, of course, much more than a war zone. It is home to a number of immigrant families from around the world and has "the highest concentration of cultural and ethnic diversity in the state."[11] It is also characterized by people who want to work together to make their community a better place.

In 1999, John,[12] ECM's founder and director, began taking surveys of local assets and needs in the international district. Rather than assuming he was coming in with all the answers, as is the case with many community development approaches,[13] John wished to work with people in respectful ways. Thus, he sought the advice of community members to determine how to approach holistic development and transformation.[14] Based on the knowledge gained from these conversations among community members, ECM has taken an asset-based approach to development in the neighborhood. It focuses on what community members describe as needs and goals and then expands on assets that already exist in the community to meet the needs and reach the goals identified. As a result of this asset-based approach to development, ECM now has several community-run projects in the international district.[15] These include a food co-op that receives donations of food from various markets, where community members come together to pick up, organize, and distribute donated food. ECM's Growing Awareness Urban Farm sells seedlings and other garden products to raise money for various community projects. Casa Shalom, the housing cooperative at ECM, brings families together—many of whom would not have access to traditional home loans—to live and share resources in community with one another. In addition, ECM's One Hope Centro de Vida Health Center offers health care in culturally meaningful ways for a low fee. ECM's programs are run by fifteen full-time employees—all community members—and countless volunteers from within and outside the community.

Soon after learning about ECM's approach to community development, I began volunteering there, planting seedlings at the urban farm, picking up donations for the food co-op, and coordinating visits from local high school students.[16] My research with ECM is based in what I call a *co-conspiring approach* to ethnographic participant observation, meaning that I worked alongside community members, focusing my efforts on relationship building and working toward social change in the district.[17] While *conspiring* traditionally has negative connotations, Morgan, the manager of ECM's Growing Awareness Urban Farm, explains how the organization uses the term: "Co-conspirators imagine creative possibilities and approaches to change that transcend limiting structures, then conspire or work together to implement these changes and plant seeds for future projects."[18] To create a holistic understanding of the strategies of invitational community development used by the co-conspirators at ECM, I used and analyzed four different types of data: (1) participant observation, (2) semistructured interviews, (3) ethnographic interviews, and (4) written materials.

The more time I spent with members of the organization, the more aware I became that people at ECM did not appear to be approaching community development with the desire to change others.[19] Instead, their approach to community development served as a demonstration of what invitational rhetoric might look like in practice. Foss and Griffin present two communicative options for practicing invitational rhetoric—offering perspectives and creating an invitational environment.[20] Offering perspectives means that individuals articulate their own thoughts about issues without advocating that others adopt them as their own. Through the practice of offering perspectives, rhetors in an invitational interaction are honoring the life worlds of others.[21] Creating an invitational environment means creating conditions of safety (freedom from danger), value (acknowledging the inherent value in the perspective of another), and freedom (allowing others the freedom to hold and express their perspectives).[22] During my time working with ECM, I found that the co-conspirators who work/volunteer/participate at ECM offer perspectives and work to construct an invitational environment. These communicative options create a space in which individuals can put into practice other concepts of invitational rhetoric such as equality.

OFFERING PERSPECTIVES: INVITING COMMUNITY

Co-conspirators at ECM often enter into conversation with one another and visitors from outside the community by offering perspectives. One of the founding stories of ECM, for example, is based on a moment of offering perspectives. The house that serves as ECM's main office was abandoned, boarded up, and used to sell drugs before ECM moved in. When John realized that two homeless men had been living on the back porch, he sat and talked with them about community development and invited them to become part of ECM's projects. One chose to move on, but the other stayed and began working on projects alongside ECM.[23] John did not demand that the men leave or change their behaviors in a particular way; instead, he invited their participation on their terms.

Co-conspirators also offer perspectives when discussing politically charged issues. After bringing a group of university students to ECM for a tour and an overview of its projects, we talked with John about how ECM's activities related to our public speaking course. I asked the students to provide examples of invitational rhetoric they witnessed at ECM, and one brought up John's use of invitational rhetoric to talk about politics. While we were outside the health clinic, John had mentioned Obamacare and said that, while he thought this would be helpful for many people in the United States, it would not solve the problem of access to health care for those without documents, a major issue in the international district. He then described the health clinic as a way to address that problem. My student noticed that while John was talking about a politically charged issue, he was doing so in a way that simply offered his perspective and did not demand that others adopt it as their own.

CREATING AN INVITATIONAL ENVIRONMENT: SAFETY, FREEDOM, AND VALUE

The creation of an invitational environment means establishing conditions of safety, freedom, and value.[24] The condition of safety is especially important for ECM's invitational environment, given the issues of crime and violence in the history of the district. Safety in an invitational environment means feeling free from danger and physically, emotionally, and intellectually secure,[25] and these elements of safety are all present at ECM. Through the creation of safe spaces in the neighborhood, co-conspirators at ECM describe a shift toward feeling free from danger. For example, Cecilia, a volunteer, described a scare she experienced one day in the warehouse: "I was inside cleaning, and my son was outside playing in the parking lot. When I went out to check on him, he was gone!" Her three-year-old son was later found walking a block away, but this experience made the need for safe green space for families clear.[26] Cecilia worked with other co-conspirators to build ECM's creation park, a playground with edible plants, an art installation designed to catch rainwater, and raised beds for neighborhood children to learn about gardening, and she now says her children are safer and happier. ECM has since worked with other community members to design parks throughout the area, creating safe physical spaces for families to walk, children to play, and neighbors to come together.

Apart from feeling free from danger, ECM creates an environment of physical, emotional, and intellectual security for co-conspirators in a number of ways. Physical security at ECM is often achieved financially as employment allows co-conspirators to address physical needs such as food and housing. Multiple co-conspirators shared that, before ECM, they "needed work badly."[27] Vicky, a staff member at the One Hope Clinic, explains:

> Cuando vino la recesión, yo me quede sin trabajo, y paso casi cuatro meses y termine con mi fondo que yo tenía para cubrir mis gastos—en este caso, luz y la renta. Yo tenía una tráiler y este ya no pude seguir entonces lo que termine antes de perder completamente todo tuve que vender la tráiler vendí mis muebles vendí todo.[28]
>
> When the recession came, I was left without work, and almost four months passed and I ran out of my fund that I had to cover my expenses—in this case, light and rent. I had a trailer that I could no longer keep, and so before I lost everything I had to sell my trailer, sell my furniture, sell everything.

When she was referred to ECM and could not pay her entrance fee into the food co-op, Vicky assumed she would need to leave and find work before coming back and becoming a member:

> Y cuando vine, este una señora me dijo, "No te preocupes. Yo te voy a pagar la canasta, y puedes recoger [comida]."
>
> And when I came, this woman told me, "Don't worry. I will pay the basket, and you can collect [food]."

Vicky has since become an integral staff member at the One Hope Clinic and, along with many other co-conspirators, now feels financially secure.

Emotional security at ECM is created by caregiving among co-conspirators—caregiving that assumes forms such as caring for children during their parents' medical appointments, volunteering at the co-op, or vows by children to care for adults in the community when they get old. For example, in a letter to her neighbor featured in the "Winter 2004 Newsletter," eleven-year-old Amanda promised to return the care that EMC co-conspirators had provided for her and her friend Chehalis: "When you and Erika get old and sick, I will be there to take care of the both of you."[29] Co-conspirators also create emotional security by being there for one another during times of loss. For example, after the passing of Cristina, a beloved co-conspirator, community members came together to plan a memorial and offer support to Francisco, her grieving husband.[30]

Care also is taken to ensure that co-conspirators feel intellectually secure in sharing their feelings and ideas. ECM's One Hope Clinic, for example, uses a practice called *salidas*, or exit interviews, to create an environment in which patients feel safe discussing health care. Immediately following appointments with the doctor, patients are able to discuss their diagnosis and treatment plan with women from the community known as *pathways navigators*.[31] These *salidas* promote intellectual security by giving pathways navigators "an opportunity to make sure that each patient understands fully what health-care providers diagnosed and the treatment offered. It is during these interviews that questions of cost, tests, or medication are discussed. It also gives patients the opportunity to open up with some of their personal issues."[32]

In addition to safety, freedom is an important condition of the invitational environment. Freedom means having the power to choose or decide, and ECM creates the condition of freedom through facilitated meetings where co-conspirators present and consider multiple options and appreciate diverse perspectives as resources. Rhonda, a former employee who now serves on the board, explains that facilitating co-op meetings using a dialogue-based approach allows for "members of the co-op to express ideas and suggestions on how the co-op should operate. Members will be allowed full creativity in idea presentation. This technique will allow the facilitator to identify the wishes of the members and will generate new and innovative ideas for the cooperative."[33]

Co-conspirators also experience freedom with respect to organizing participation at ECM around their own personal schedules. For example, during the planning of the community co-op, co-conspirators filled out daily activity schedules and available-options surveys to identify the most convenient hours of operation for the co-op, allowing "members to have a sense of responsibility and ownership of the cooperative."[34] Freedom is also expressed through the types of conversations co-conspirators feel safe having and the topics they are able to talk about. This freedom grants co-conspirators the opportunity to explore their understandings of the world, themselves, and each other and to discuss these topics openly.

The freedom of the invitational environment at ECM allows co-conspirators to practice self-determination. Self-determination "allows individuals to make their own decisions about how they wish to live their lives" and recognizes "others' capacity and right to constitute their worlds as they choose."[35] ECM's emphasis on self-determination grounds the principles of community programs. The community food co-op, for example, is guided by principles of "voluntary and open membership, democratic member control, member economic participation, equality, and caring for others."[36] People in the international district are not often thought of as having a high degree of agency because of barriers of poverty, undocumented status, language, ethnicity, and gender, among other factors. Because co-conspirators' participation in their own solutions and own future is evident in all of ECM's projects, the organization widens the space and opportunities for self-determination. For example, Blanca, ECM's administrative manager, explains that at One Hope Centro de Vida, patients are actively encouraged to participate in their own health care, and through this participation, "they become a partner in the decisions the doctor makes."[37]

Value, another external condition of the invitational environment, is an acknowledgment that co-conspirators have intrinsic worth, and each person is "a unique and necessary part of the pattern of the universe and thus has value."[38] Although many direct-service organizations have treated the international district as a problem to be fixed, ECM focuses on its value, which rests in the assets of the neighborhood and the people who live there. Profiles of co-conspirators in newsletters, for example, focus on the unique assets brought by community members, including Gabby's energy; Leticia's versatility and reliability; and Jeremy and Jennifer's friendship, advice, and security (supplied in part by their two dogs). At the clinic and elsewhere in the community, value is displayed through creating a "friendly and welcoming environment" and the importance of being "the first friendly face that someone sees" upon walking into the clinic.[39] Lidia explains that she feels frustrated in medical settings where the person behind the front desk—whom patients encounter first—is rude and unwelcoming.[40] Such an unwelcoming stance can make patients—especially those already uncomfortable due to economic, language, and other barriers—feel unwelcome in a space. The co-conspirators who work in the clinic therefore take great pride in ensuring that patients feel welcome in the space and valued as individuals by greeting them with a smile, clearly communicating they are there to meet patients' health-care needs and giving them undivided attention in *salidas*.

At ECM, community members describe both how they are made to feel valuable by others and how their self-value lies in their opportunities to help people. The idea of the dignity of work is a common theme throughout various ECM programs. Many co-conspirators explained to me that they feel respected, their work is being valued, and they feel useful. Luis, who works in *olla*[41] production and as a general maintenance worker, explains that working at ECM helped him feel useful again:

> No puede conseguir trabajo. Estoy enfermo, tengo diabetes y es muy difícil me quedan contrata porque tú sabes no tenía contrata y diabetes no tenía doctor ni nada tengo que ir cada rato a baño y tomar agua [*sic*]. Y cuando llega aquí con John, yo me sentir útil ultra vez para ayudar con buen impacto. Porque yo sabía que yo podría dar de mí también todavía no estaba ni muy enfermo ni muy cansado ni muy viejo. No más quede a un oportunidad y el me la dio.[42]
>
> I couldn't find a job. I am sick, I have diabetes, and it's hard for me to get hired. I didn't have a doctor or anything, and I have to go to the bathroom constantly and drink water constantly. And when I got here with John, I felt very useful again, like I was making a good impact. Because I still knew I had more of myself to give; I wasn't that sick or that tired or that old. All I wanted was an opportunity, and he gave it to me.

Shirley, an eighty-eight-year-old volunteer who frequently makes lunch for the staff and other volunteers, also explains how the work she does at ECM is both useful and a blessing to her: "I have a little car that everybody feels free to use, and that helps a lot. And I run errands. I run a tremendous amount of errands like depositing money and going to the main post office to buy nonprofit stamps—all sorts of errands that take time for anybody else to do, whereas I have the time. So that's really a blessing, probably to ECM but also to me to be able to do that."[43]

Co-conspirators at ECM ultimately describe feeling most valuable when they are able to help and make a difference in people's lives and feel that they are giving back. On a survey conducted by ECM to learn more about its staff and volunteers, co-conspirators were asked about their favorite part of working at ECM. One explained: "I am able to help, just a little bit, people that need to be helped"; another responded, "with the tools I have been given, I can find a way to give back."[44] When asked how their work at ECM was important to their community, family, and themselves, co-conspirators responded in a similar way: "to help makes me feel good, and if I'm good, my family is happy," and "it is a blessing for me to serve people whose lives have been changed in some way and to be a part of a growing family of community, volunteers, and staff."[45]

The invitational environment is characterized by external conditions of safety, freedom, and value. Although I have discussed safety, freedom, and value separately and have provided examples for each, important to note is that they are not unique, separate categories. Each influences the other, and, ultimately, the concepts work together to create a space where unique forms of communication and practices of invitational rhetoric are possible. As community members work to build these concepts into the practices of their daily lives and bring them into their interactions with other community members, the community space as a whole becomes enveloped in the invitational environment. This invitational environment does not just emerge on its own, however. Co-conspirators must build it into their daily experiences to create greater options for themselves and others.

EQUALITY: ELIMINATING DOMINANCE AND ELITISM

As co-conspirators at ECM work to build and maintain an invitational environment, they create opportunities to communicate in ways that privilege equality, enacting the feminist principle of equality in unique ways. Invitational rhetoric carries "a commitment to the creation of relationships of equality and to the elimination of the dominance and elitism that characterize most human relationships," replacing "alienation, competition, and dehumanization" with "intimacy, mutuality, and camaraderie."[46] At ECM, co-conspirators demonstrate their commitment to equality through the deliberate and intentional avoidance of hierarchies. Lidia, the director of ECM's One Hope Clinic, provides an excellent example of this process. Lidia uses a ladder metaphor to describe her work at the clinic, explaining that she is always a community member first, so while she can climb to the top of the ladder to talk to medical professionals, she always comes back down the ladder to her community. When doctors from outside the community ask Lidia how to be a community health-care provider, she explains to them that they need to come down the ladder—they spend too much time at the top. She also explains that everyone is at an equal level in the clinic—doctors, for example, often take out the trash. All involved should feel that no job, no matter how small, is beneath them.

Another way Lidia works to achieve equality in the clinic is by encouraging people to let go of ego, particularly through professional titles. She explains that she understands that medical school is difficult and that people are proud of their accomplishments and want to be acknowledged as doctors, but titles can place barriers between people: "But if you're going to do true community work, then you need to stop being the doctor so and so . . . because the minute that you put a title between two people, then there's a distance, and then one person goes above the other. . . . So in order for us to break the barriers and to really open that communication and see us as a partner rather than as someone who's telling me what to do, then you need to do that."[47]

Co-conspirators at ECM also employ trust as an important way to facilitate enactment of the principle of equality. For example, the programs of ECM are laid out in such a way as to invite community members' presence in all physical spaces. There are not office areas and lobbies—only a house encompassing organizational projects, which community members are welcome to enter. The door to ECM's main office is generally left unlocked as long as there is at least one person inside working, and based on its location in the international district, this implies a great amount of trust as well as a conception of all individuals as equal in their right to be there. In addition, the choice of paint colors literally invites people to come into the office. As one co-conspirator explains, "The orange windows invite people to come and be a part of the exciting things that are happening here."[48] While this may not seem immediately significant, when taking into account the deficiency and scarcity rhetoric generally used to describe the international district, ECM's invitational use of space becomes more meaningful. This community is often framed as dangerous, unsafe, and not to be trusted. So to be able to walk up to a building, open the door, walk inside, and talk to whomever happens to be there at the moment implies trust of the community and equality of its members in a way that words cannot. Through this nonverbal use of space, ECM is literally creating a physical environment of safety, freedom, and value as all people are trusted to enter and leave the space as they choose.

Co-conspirators themselves are also seen as equals in that everyone is trusted in ways that ensure programs run smoothly on a day-to-day basis. For example, at ECM, multiple cars are used for different projects such as picking up food for the co-op, donated items for the thrift store, or garden supplies for the urban farm, and these vehicles are shared by whichever individuals happen to be making a pick-up at a particular time. In addition, there are often large envelopes full of cash that need to be deposited at the bank. One day, John handed me a particularly large envelope, gave me directions to the bank, and asked me to make the deposit. Other volunteers also make regular deposits, and the fact that whoever is around and available at the moment is asked to deposit earnings from ECM's projects—rather than just co-conspirators in perceived positions of authority—implies a great deal of trust and furthers ECM's goal of disrupting hierarchies. At ECM, practices that embody equality further the possibilities of engaging in invitational rhetoric. Co-conspirators are trusted as equal partners in decision making and day-to-day operations at ECM. The physical environment at ECM is constructed in a way that invites community members in; trusts them to come and go as they please; and allows them to feel safe, free, and valued. As a result, everyone is conceptualized as equal to everyone else, providing all co-conspirators with opportunities to practice invitational communication.

EMERGENT PRACTICES OF INVITATIONAL RHETORIC

ECM serves as a case study of the use of traditional concepts of invitational rhetoric for community development. Because this approach to communication informs both day-to-day interactions and the organizational structure itself, ECM has also created opportunities to engage with invitational rhetoric in new ways. In this section, I suggest that co-conspirators at ECM offer five emergent practices that extend the theory of invitational rhetoric: setting intentions, leaving space for what emerges, empathizing, self-reflecting, and focusing on feelings. I conceptualize *practices* as ways of being, relating to others, and performing actions that are both communicated and enacted by co-conspirators over time. The term *practices* also involves practice; such practices do not emerge on their own and are not sustained without a consistent renewal of commitment. I characterize these practices as *emergent* because they appear to be actions that stretch and refine the theory of invitational rhetoric, but because they have been identified only in conjunction with one case study, I do not assume that they can be applied to every situation where invitational rhetoric is used.

Setting Intentions

I suggest that setting intentions—a conscious determination to act in a certain way—is a useful extension of the theory of invitational rhetoric. While this may sound commonsensical, this approach to communication does not come naturally because, as Foss and Griffin explain, communication is often characterized by efforts to change others.[49] To break free from the tendency to try to control others, co-conspirators have to practice letting go of control and setting intentions to communicate with one another in respectful, productive ways. For example, in conversations with my students about invitational rhetoric, John has explained that he has to actively practice letting go of control because to make all of the decisions himself in his role as executive director would be much easier than involving the community.[50] For example, co-conspirators identified health care as a need in the community and made opening a community-run health center their goal. John explains that he had reservations because he had no experience running a health center. However, he made a choice to follow the lead of his co-conspirators, and together they opened One Hope Centro de Vida. The change John exemplifies does not happen overnight, and invitational rhetoric is therefore something people have to practice with intention.

Intention setting guides all practices at ECM, whether co-conspirators are figuring out how to have meaningful productive communication or setting aside time and space to engage with one another. For example, during the initial planning of Casa Shalom, some conversations were entirely dedicated to setting intentional values for the community—including sharing resources and time together, not speaking ill of a neighbor, and building significant relationships.[51] Co-conspirators explain that "this kind of intentionality is needed for us to make steps towards transformation within our community."[52]

Using the practice of intention setting, co-conspirators commit to respecting the natural environment that houses their invitational environment. For example, ECM projects like the community food co-op and the urban farm work together for environmental sustainability. Co-op members take spoiled food from the co-op to the compost bins at the urban farm. The chickens eat what they want, and the remaining food becomes rich compost over time. This compost is used to make soil for seedlings sold at the urban farm, and the cycle begins again. Sustainability is also an intention for community projects to continue and thrive in the hands of community members.

Co-conspirators develop and implement projects in such a way that any given project is being carried out through collaboration and does not depend on one person to succeed. For example, Morgan often travels during the slower months at the end of the summer, and the urban farm is sustained though the work of other volunteers. This is a built-in aspect of ECM—the idea that if one person cannot be there for whatever reason, multiple other co-conspirators can step in and help maintain projects. Sustainability of ECM as a whole is ensured through the development of youth projects and programs to ensure that young co-conspirators can carry on the work and change that others have begun in their community.

Intention setting is an important contribution to the practice of invitational rhetoric because the work that is done to create an environment of safety, freedom, and value and that privileges equality, immanent value, and self-determination will not continue on its own. These conditions are cultivated over time and must be nourished consistently if they are to continue to flourish. Intention does not mean following a prescribed path toward goals with a particular end result in mind, but it does mean a focus on process; it is a commitment to be mindful in interactions and planning.

Leaving Space for What Emerges

Coupled with the practice of intention setting, co-conspirators at ECM extend invitational rhetoric through the practice of leaving space for what emerges. Their "intentionally unorganized" approach to community development means that it exists somewhere between the practice of "setting clear intentions for communication, shared time and space, outreach, and sustainability, but also leaving space for what emerges in messy, silly, creative ways."[53] Co-conspirators characterize this intentionally unorganized community as "an adventure," "messy," "creative," "dynamic," and "flexible." To flourish in this invitational environment requires "flexibility and a laidback personality" on the part of co-conspirators because, "in this fluid and intertwined community, often a broom or tool isn't where it was when you last saw it, and the person you are looking for has just walked out the door."[54] Morgan reflects that while "there is no formula to follow and community is often messy, it is beautiful to see such a diversity of people drawn to this shalom."[55] Although leaving space for what emerges is related to the concept of openness in the invitational environment, it focuses less on being open to new perspectives and instead emphasizes flexibility. By leaving space for what emerges, co-conspirators develop what Anzaldúa calls a "tolerance for ambiguity,"[56] becoming comfortable with the uncertainties that arise when using invitational rhetoric and trusting the process.

Empathizing

At ECM, empathy is an important practice that allows co-conspirators to relate to one another in meaningful ways by putting themselves in another's shoes. Critics of invitational rhetoric have argued that "conditions of actual equality are rare in political controversy and interpersonal relations."[57] By practicing empathy, co-conspirators at ECM are actively working to minimize power differences, and, as a result, this practice advances the invitational concept of equality in co-conspirator interactions. John explains that, growing up, he always felt more comfortable with people characterized as "outsiders" or "underdogs" positioned on "the fringe of society": "And so, my frame of mind is always a little bit geared to what are they thinking? How do they feel? What does this look like for them? Or feel like for them?"[58] He acknowledges that coming from a privileged position sets him up to be perceived in a particular way. Because of this, John actively practices empathy to better understand marginalized perspectives in a respectful way: "You have to kind of put yourself in their shoes and understand that it's hard especially for white guys who don't necessarily need to feel that. Sometimes, it's a voluntary thing to try and put ourselves in that place because I don't know what it feels like to be discriminated against due to gender or race or anything else. At least not that I know of."[59]

Blanca expands the practice of "putting yourself in someone else's shoes" to deal with interpersonal conflict at ECM. When helping two people mediate a conflict, she encourages them to see things from the perspective of the other: "'Well, let's now put you in that person's shoes, and you tell me, why did they react this way?' And I think maybe it doesn't solve the problem for them, but they start saying 'well, that's true.'"[60] Blanca adds that, over time, she sees this practice changing the way people think and hopes they begin to see themselves in others. By practicing empathy across multiple interactions, co-conspirators are able to increase their chances of engaging in invitational rhetoric by removing potential barriers as they continuously minimize power differences and work through conflicts as they emerge.

Self-Reflecting

At ECM, self-reflection allows co-conspirators to strengthen their commitment to communicating invitationally. Ryan and Natalle suggest that adding self-reflection to the practice of invitational rhetoric would offer greater possibilities of understanding self and other and ultimately transcending difference.[61] Reflecting on their thoughts and actions allows for co-conspirators to communicate with intention and to actively let go of control to make space for possibility. When John actively sets intentions to let go of control and communicate from a place of empathy, for example, the process involves a great deal of self-reflection. He must reflect on his desire for control while actively choosing to let it go. He also reflects on his privilege as a white male in order to communicate intentionally in ways that promote equality.

John also explains that practicing self-reflection helps co-conspirators learn from their mistakes, promoting the possibility of sustainable, long-term invitational interactions. He shares the story of Mike, a co-conspirator who at one time was experiencing chronic homelessness. As a temporary solution, Mike was living on one of ECM's properties and helping out on the urban farm. One day, John received a call requesting that he quickly return to the office. He explains what happened next:

> The tension and fear were [palpable] when I arrived, and Mike was in the front yard wild-eyed and yelling at everyone and no one, guarding several boxes that held all his earthly possessions. In passing, a couple days before, Mike mentioned he found somewhere to live. To expedite his

> moving process, I asked others to move his stuff to the front yard—ready to load into the truck. Based on past experiences with Mike, I should have known better, and the explosion could have been avoided. Because threats were made, I banished him from ECM, leaving everyone empty and exhausted. If I had stopped and thought about my commitment to love my neighbor and less about running a clean, efficient ministry, I know the ugly chaos and yelling could potentially have become a conversation of grace and understanding.[62]

Because John took the time to reflect on mistakes he made during this encounter, he was able to approach Mike from a place of empathy and understanding during their next interaction: "We hugged, and we both were able to deeply apologize for the hurt we had caused the other."[63] While this process of self-reflection is not always easy, John feels it deepens relationships among co-conspirators. Self-reflection strengthens possibilities for invitational rhetoric as it allows individuals in the encounter to reflect on the aspects of themselves that serve as barriers to invitational interactions.

Focusing on Feelings

Linked to the practice of self-reflection, co-conspirators engage in invitational rhetoric with a focus on feelings, using these feelings as a guide for how to imagine and create projects and also how to measure change. This focus on feelings as a built-in aspect of communication at ECM ultimately improves possibilities for invitational rhetoric as it grants co-conspirators greater freedom to make choices about their lives that feel best for them. Since its inception, ECM has focused on the concept of "felt-needs." Avoiding the common presumed-needs approach taken by direct-service organizations, co-conspirators at ECM instead listen to the "physical, emotional, mental, spiritual, and social aspects of the community as expressed by community members themselves."[64]

A focus on feelings is also used as a tool to measure how far the neighborhood has come, and co-conspirators describe their feelings of change in the community in a way that statistics and crime reports cannot capture. In the "Winter 2013 Newsletter," John wrote that after fourteen years, ECM's community, filled with people "living in the vulnerable shadows of our city," had "never looked or felt so clean and renewed."[65] People often are taught to put emotions aside in favor of thinking, acting, and being rational. Through a focus on feelings, co-conspirators are able to practice greater self-determination. As they reflect on when they feel safe and when they do not, what feels good and what does not, and what they need and do not need, they can navigate life with the freedom to go in whatever direction feels right for them.

CONCLUSION: POSSIBILITIES FOR INVITATIONAL SOCIAL CHANGE

During the years I spent working with ECM, I found that it engages with the communicative options of invitational rhetoric in several innovative ways and, in turn, expands possibilities for the practice of invitational rhetoric. Not only has ECM contributed to my own understanding of invitational rhetoric, but discussions about this approach to communication have influenced ECM as well, and together we have co-constructed what invitational rhetoric means in this unique context. After my first class visit, Morgan asked me for a short paragraph defining invitational rhetoric, and that paragraph is now featured on ECM's website as an approach to social change. Morgan explains:

This spring we had a couple UNM [University of New Mexico] classes come to tour/volunteer here at ECM. I wasn't sure exactly *which* class was coming, and when they arrived, and I was able to chat a bit more with the professor, I discovered it was a communication class. John asked the teacher quite bluntly: "What does East Central Ministries have to do with a *Communication* class?" We were both quite amazed at how much her explanation resonated with what we are trying to do. She said:

I believe there are two basic ways people approach communication. The first, and most traditional, is seeing communication as simply a means to influence or persuade others. The second, more invitational model, is to see understanding as the main purpose of communicating with others. This means offering thoughts and ideas without demanding that others adopt them as their own, or change in any way. It also means creating an environment where people feel safe expressing their thoughts and ideas. I believe that East Central Ministries is approaching social change using a model of invitational rhetoric. Rather than coming into a community and demanding that members change in specific ways, ECM invites community members to collaboratively identify their own needs and desires for change, and then invites them to take part in working towards the goals they have identified. Rather than entering the community from a position of power and "expertise," this model allows for social change that is meaningful, respectful, and honors the community where it is taking place.

Submitted by Morgan on Fri, 05/11/2012

This essay ultimately serves as a case study for the use of invitational rhetoric for community development. Although community development is focused on bringing change to communities, ECM is able to approach its programs, projects, and communication practices invitationally through offering perspectives, creating an invitational environment, building relationships based in equality, setting intentions while remaining open to what emerges, having empathy for others, engaging in self-reflection, and focusing on feelings as a guide. Sally Miller Gearhart explains that there is a difference between wanting to change things and wanting things to change.[66] Wanting to change things means protesting and fighting against people, structures, and ideas with the intention of changing them. Wanting things to change, on the other hand, means seeing problems in the world but choosing to focus change efforts on the self and working to create opportunities outside of limiting structures, which in turn potentially create a ripple effect of change. Wanting things to change, then, is not a disengaged model; it simply shifts the energy typically spent fighting against conditions and barriers into constructing new ways of being.

Co-conspirators at ECM commit to using practices of invitational rhetoric—not seeking or demanding that others change—and still hope that things in their community will change. This community serves as an example that change can happen as a result of practicing invitational rhetoric, even though change is not the focus or intention of engaging in this approach to communication. Co-conspirators reflect on their own approaches to communication and make the choice to engage invitationally with one another, offering perspectives, communicating from a place of empathy, and privileging equality in interactions. These practices lead to organization- and community-wide efforts to build an invitational environment, where co-conspirators focus on feelings as a guide for what emerges in their development efforts. Co-conspirators approach interactions with intention, whether they are one-to-one encounters or community meetings, and this intentional, sustained, holistic practice of invitational rhetoric demonstrates the potential of this theory beyond previously studied contexts. When invitational rhetoric is practiced in a community-wide context, possibilities for change emerge in places one might not expect, and rhetors are uniquely positioned to remain open to these opportunities.

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14

Discussions on Kneeling During the National Anthem

An Analysis of High School Football Players Employing Invitational Rhetoric

Kristen A. Hungerford

Beginning in August of 2016, Colin Kaepernick, then a backup quarterback for the San Francisco 49ers, began sitting and then a few weeks later kneeling as a demonstration of social protest during the playing of the national anthem at National Football League (NFL) games. Following one game, Kaepernick revealed to a media source that he was kneeling in protest "because of the oppression of people of color and ongoing issues with police brutality [in the United States]" and that he wanted to be the voice for the voiceless in these situations.[1] After sitting during the anthem for a third game in August of 2016, Kaepernick explained, "I am not going to stand up to show pride in a flag for a country that oppresses black people and people of color. . . . To me, this is bigger than football and it would be selfish on my part to look the other way. There are bodies in the street and people getting paid leave and getting away with murder."[2] He continued, "When there's significant change and I feel that flag represents what it's supposed to represent, and this country is representing people the way that it's supposed to, I'll stand."[3]

Kaepernick's protests during the national anthem sparked what has become known as the *Kaepernick effect*. Over time, teammates; other NFL players, coaches, owners, and employees; other professional sports athletes; and even high school and Little League sports players also participated in individual or organized group protests by kneeling or locking arms during the national anthem. This "effect," which resonated with many Americans, started a social movement for change, with both players and fans spreading awareness and opposing racial injustice and police brutality. It also resulted in a backlash of people opposing the protests of Kaepernick and other NFL players. NFL players, owners, and employees as well as ordinary Americans—especially some veterans, police officers, and their families—spoke out and conducted their own protests against those protesting during the anthem. Some in these groups believed that not standing for the anthem is unpatriotic and disrespectful to the US flag and the military and that politics should not be integrated into sporting events. Others disagreed with evidence of the existence of racial inequality and police brutality. As a result of continued protests for racial justice, many counterprotesters responded with boycotts of NFL teams and their franchises by not attending the games; not broadcasting games at local bars; and even burning the jerseys of Kaepernick and other players who kneeled, sat, or locked arms during the national anthem.

In the middle of this ongoing controversy, opportunities to witness invitational rhetoric have emerged among players, coaches, and ordinary Americans. Although most media outlets have not reported on the depth of this kind of collaborative communication around the topic of protests during the national anthem, a few reports have surfaced regarding dialogue among professional and high school players and coaches. In particular, one report on HBO's *Vice News Tonight* documents teammates on a high school football team having collaborative dialogue regarding their group's decision on whether or not to kneel for the national anthem.[4] This news report provides a rare opportunity to witness a group communicating in an invitational dialogue to discuss perspectives and experiences on a controversial topic.

In this essay, I analyze the *Vice News Tonight* report and suggest that it provides documentation of how some high school football players have effectively employed the fundamentals of invitational rhetoric. The players create a space for open, respectful dialogue on a controversial topic that often creates tension and division during dyadic or group conversations. My analysis will highlight how these players effectively demonstrate invitational rhetoric's specific principles of creating external conditions and offering perspectives during the meeting to discuss their positions on kneeling during the national anthem. More specifically, through the creation of a safe and inclusive physical environment and by employing the principles of openness, immanent value, and self-determination, both the players and the head coach form a dialogue that is nonaggressive and promotes respect and free choice.

I conclude this essay by arguing for the ways in which invitational rhetoric can serve as a vital form of communication prior to making a significant group decision—in this case, a decision about whether or not to enact a protest. I suggest that several examples of amateur and professional football players' prior dialogue on this topic demonstrate a thoughtful, collaborative approach needed to make a decision regarding kneeling. Thus, rather than employing traditional persuasion, a group can use invitational rhetoric, I suggest, as an essential precursor to making an important group decision. I conclude the essay by further explaining how invitational rhetoric might be employed by persons or groups debating controversial topics.

THE PRINCIPLES OF INVITATIONAL RHETORIC

Over the last few decades, multiple scholars have called for the use of invitational rhetoric in contemporary times; this type of rhetoric is grounded in listening to others and seeking to understand a diverse range of perspectives.[5] Foss and Griffin define invitational rhetoric as "an invitation to understanding as a means to create a relationship rooted in equality, immanent value, and self-determination."[6] As several scholars have noted, in invitational rhetoric, participants employ civility to participate in an open, respectful dialogue that leads to the creation of community that upholds and values diverse perspectives.[7]

Foss and Griffin highlight two primary rhetorical forms in invitational rhetoric: offering perspectives and creating external conditions.[8] By using these characteristics of invitational rhetoric, a rhetor issues an invitation to the audience to openly share perspectives and experiences on a topic in an environment that welcomes and values all persons' voices. Ideally, invitational rhetoric calls for the audience members to assume the role of the rhetor and also to provide perspectives and share experiences from their points of view. When both rhetor and audience members provide their perspectives, a better understanding of an issue—especially its subtleties, richness, and complexities—can emerge. Although a mutual understanding of a topic is a primary goal, Foss and Griffin observe that the framework for invitational rhetoric also allows all participants to better understand one another.[9] Because invitational rhetoric establishes interactions through a "nonhierarchical, nonjudgmental, nonadversarial framework," Foss and Griffin explain, this kind of dual understanding creates appreciation, value, and a sense of equality for the rhetors both intrapersonally and among audience members.[10]

Invitational rhetoric's distinct characteristics of openness, equality, and value counter the qualities that typically define traditional rhetoric. For example, traditional rhetoric is usually characterized by the rhetor asserting dominance in order to control the direction of topics and the exchange of ideas between speaker and audience members. In traditional rhetoric, dominance and control are used by the rhetor to create change in audience members' mindsets or actions so that audience members adhere to the rhetor's viewpoint. Foss and Griffin also note that "the change process often is accompanied by feelings of inadequacy, insecurity, pain, humiliation, guilt, embarrassment, or angry submission on the part of the audience"[11] because, "as rhetors communicate the superiority of their positions," they highlight "the deficiencies of those of the audience."[12]

Through the use of invitational rhetoric, change may occur for the rhetor, audience members, or both. Although change is not the purpose of this form of rhetoric. Foss and Griffin explain that if it does occur, it is the "result of new understanding and insights gained in the exchange of ideas" and not because of the dominance of one rhetor.[13] As participants engage in discussion and offer and then compare diverse ideas on an issue, they may discover new insights and question their own and other perspectives that may lead to transformation.

Agency is another fundamental concept in invitational rhetoric, with its purpose differing from its role in traditional persuasion. According to Bone, Griffin, and Scholz, "In rhetoric as persuasion, agency is present when a person tries *to change* another person; in rhetoric as invitation, agency is present when a rhetor tries *to understand* another rhetor."[14] They elaborate: "Agency occurs when invitational rhetors work to create an environment suitable for those relationships in situations where they may not already exist," or they maintain an existing environment in which relationships continue to flourish during the interaction.[15] In either scenario in invitational rhetoric, Bone, Griffin, and Scholz reiterate, "agency is the means used to create the environment that leads to relationships of reciprocity, self-determination, and increased understanding."[16]

FROM A NATIONAL CONTROVERSY INTO A LOCAL ONE

According to a year-long study conducted by ThinkProgress, from August 26, 2016, to September 26, 2017, more than 200 Kaepernick-inspired protests occurred at sporting events worldwide.[17] During this period, the breakdown of protests by the type of sport included 140 at football games, 25 at basketball games, 12 at soccer games, and 45 at other sports-related protests. More than 3,500 people professionally employed or who volunteered at sporting events participated in this kind of protest during this time period, including 1,320 at NFL games, 180 at National Basketball Association games, 39 at Women's National Basketball Association games, 1,020 at college games, and 980 at secondary and elementary games. The study also found that athletes as young as eight years old have protested at games. At many of these events, especially at the high school level, cheerleaders, band members, referees, fans, and even anthem singers have protested with players.

At the secondary level, the first known student to protest was a black athlete at Brunswick High School in Ohio on September 2, 2016.[18] His kneeling was in direct response to two white teammates using the N-word to describe players on the opposing team. Although most of the protests aligned with movements like Black Lives Matter and stood in solidarity for racial injustice for black Americans, protesters also advocated for awareness for other types of racism and sexism in society. For example, a student from a high school in Hawaii took a knee before football games to protest the injustices experienced by Native Hawaiian people in the United States.[19]

The protests of the players on the football team at Berkeley High School began a few months after the initial actions of Kaepernick. During the interview segment of the *Vice News Tonight* film, several students discuss the culture of racism and segregation that exists at Berkeley High School. In an interview prior to the team's meeting, one player describes a racist message posted on a computer at the school's library: "There was a noose that was hanging on a tree, and it was portrayed as a joke."[20] He then explains, "That's my history that you're kind of just disrespecting and you're just getting it out there and it's not funny."[21] The posting of a racist message in the library was one of several such messages that led to two initial protests, including a walkout by more than half the student body of Berkeley High School and several football players raising their fists during the national anthem at one game. The football players' initial protest, however, was interrupted once the coach noticed and told the players to put their hands down.

In an interview prior to the team's meeting broadcast in the *Vice News Tonight* report, the coach explained that the players were told to put their fists down because he wanted the team members to be sure they had well-thought-out reasons behind enacting any protests. He stated that his "only concern was making sure [his] players had an understanding of what they were protesting, what the ramifications of their actions would be, that each player had a voice and any player that didn't want to take part felt comfortable."[22] The initial protests of a few players and the coach's intervention led to calling for a team discussion in the locker room before another game to decide if and how any remaining protests should take place. As my analysis highlights, the coach created a safe, inclusive space in the team's locker room for the collaboration of all the players' perspectives to be heard without the dominant voices of a few speakers overriding the direction of the conversation. Ultimately, their dialogue resulted in the decision to unify on this topic and to protest by kneeling together as a team during the playing of the national anthem at upcoming games.

ANALYSIS OF THE ESSENTIAL PRINCIPLES OF INVITATIONAL RHETORIC IN THE TEAM'S DIALOGUE

To understand how invitational rhetoric was employed during the team meeting, I applied concepts integral to invitational rhetoric to all of the *Vice News Tonight* broadcast film footage, including prior interviews shown before the film and the dialogue of the team's meeting. To begin this process, I had a research assistant transcribe the entire broadcast film,[23] which I then reviewed for accuracy. Because the entire meeting was not broadcast or released to the general public by *Vice News Tonight*, I was unable to analyze the entire team's conversation.[24] To further account for additional content of the meeting not included in the film, I read through and used student-authored news articles, mainly from Berkeley High School publications, that summarize the meeting and provide additional dialogue and context that were not presented in the *Vice News Tonight* film itself. These articles provide additional insight into what was already evident in the initial film report and are referenced throughout my analysis as needed.

I then coded the data for themes that related to specific concepts of invitational rhetoric, including the rhetorical forms of offering perspectives and creating external conditions.

In the fall of 2016, Rolake Bamgbose, a producer of *Vice News Tonight*, was following the emergence of Kaepernick-type protests at colleges, high and middle schools, and even Little League games at the elementary level.[25] Bamgbose reached out to schools across the country in an attempt to document one team's efforts to come to a decision about whether and how to protest. The football team of Berkeley High School agreed to have its decision-making meeting filmed by the staff of *Vice News Tonight*, and Bamgbose and her staff also conducted individual interviews with players and the head coach regarding what the movement meant to them.

Throughout the documenting process, Bamgbose and her staff discovered something equally intriguing to the team's decision about protest—the inclusive, collaborative dialogue that was evident in the team's discussion on the topic. The coach explained to Bamgbose that the team would first consider and discuss whether or not to protest and, if so, how "they should make their voices heard."[26] Bamgbose later explained that the conversation seemed authentic and normal: "The players were really honest with their opinions. We did our best to be respectful, and it was like we weren't there. They were having normal conversations."[27] Bamgbose also emphasizes the importance to filmmakers of capturing young people having conversations about relevant social and political issues. In many ways, Bamgbose previews the notion of invitational rhetoric in this film by stating that her goal as a producer is "to find interesting stories with different perspectives that appeal to young people."[28] With the players creating dialogue that is shaped by offering different perspectives in an inclusive environment, an invitational rhetoric emerges that is both productive and necessary to the democratic process vital to making a group decision.

External Conditions of the Locker Room Space

The physical environment plays a significant role in creating a safe, open space for invitational rhetoric. Thus, in invitational rhetoric, physical spaces need to be inclusive, providing an environment that promotes the interlocking external conditions of safety, immanent value, and freedom. These three external conditions are essential to creating a space of inclusivity, openness, and respect in the locker room for teammates to offer perspectives freely and to make their own decisions.

The locker room typically does not function as a space where safety is a valued principle regarding communication among players and with coaches. Rather, the locker room often operates as an environment in which players experience nonconstructive criticism, intimidation, and harsh scrutiny by other teammates or coaches. This type of environment is often shaped by the hierarchal structures established in most high school football teams, determined by rankings of the coaches and team captains and the academic class standing and physical skill of the players. These rankings support dominant power structures, causing division and thus creating opportunities for the occurrence of unequal dialogues among teammates and with administrators. Generally, in sports culture, a hierarchal structure is especially valued and often results in players who are ranked lower being controlled or influenced by teammates, coaches, and executives who have the dominant voices in their organizations. For the Berkeley High School football team, this type of hierarchal structure might already be in place regarding typical communication between the coaches and teammates, especially in the locker room. For the purpose of forming collaborative dialogue on the topic of protest, however, the coach and players create a space that promotes the external conditions of safety, immanent value, and freedom.

In the meeting about protest, the locker room creates a space for open dialogue, with the physical environment promoting safety and inclusivity for the players' perspectives to be valued and heard. Most of the students sit on benches or at a table in the locker room, but because of a lack of space to accommodate enough bench seats for the entire team, a few students are either standing or sitting on top of a table. Although the benches and table are spread out across the room, they all face each other, almost in a square formation. At first glance, the few students sitting or standing might seem to create an unequal position and promote hierarchal structures. However, because all the players are sitting very close together on all of the benches, there clearly is no room for a few extra teammates to sit with them. The only person who deliberately stands throughout the entire conversation is the head coach. He is likely standing because of a lack of bench or table space and because he provides the oral introduction and conclusion to the pre-game conversation.

Throughout the dialogue, the players' specific forms of nonverbal communication further shape an inviting, safe space for discussion. For example, unlike other locker-room situations, no player or coach speaks in a loud voice or uses an aggressive tone, and when the players express their positions, they speak in calm yet expressive voices. Thus, the players' and the coach's use of expressive but not dominating vocal tones further shapes a space that encourages other teammates to participate in the discussion. The invitational approach to the meeting is further enhanced as some of the players finish eating their pre-game dinners and others slouch while sitting on the benches during the conversation. Because some of the players are eating and slouching, the physical environment provides a relaxed setting for conversation and is reminiscent of a private space, such as the living room in a home. This type of physical environment might be especially useful for effective dialogue among teenage athletes who prefer to voice their opinions, especially on a very controversial topic, in a relaxed, private setting.

Overall, the physical environment of the team's meeting does not suggest any evidence of the kind of restriction that would be typical of a formal speaking situation or an event in which the expectations of the speaker or occasion would dominate the required behaviors of and outcomes for students. Thus, the physical space enhances an invitational speaking environment in which players can exemplify the external condition of freedom to speak and make a decision as they deem appropriate. Players have the ability to use their own experiences and knowledge to make individual decisions regarding their interactions during the meeting and to do so in an inclusive space of openness and respect. As I examine how the players and the head coach offer diverse perspectives in the next section, I build on my analysis of the inclusiveness of the space, including how the external conditions of safety, immanent value, and freedom are further demonstrated by the team.

Teammates Offer Perspectives Regarding the Flag and Kneeling

Offering perspectives on an issue is a key principle of invitational rhetoric and one that is central in the dialogue of the Berkeley High School football players' team meeting. As Foss and Griffin explain, "in offering, rhetors tell what they currently know or understand; they present their vision of the world and show how it looks and works for them."[29] The Berkeley High School football players effectively offer perspectives. They all have the opportunity to freely voice their viewpoints and, in turn, engage in an invitational dialogue that demonstrates their valuing of one another.

During the meeting, three black players offer personal perspectives on or experiences with racism and racial discrimination. Their perspectives convey the despair and hopelessness they feel as a result of their experiences of racial discrimination in the United States. As one player explains, "I feel like there's nothing left. I feel like this, right here, is a chance for me, personally, to protest against, you know, the system and actually make a difference. So I feel like, if we all do it together, somebody else might notice and like, I just feel that, like, this is big for us."[30] Another player shares, "For me, personally, there are these instances where police murder people—black people—and I feel like us, as a school, when we took on these protests and walked out of class on multiple occasions to protest things just like this, this is giving us another platform to show how we feel."[31] A third player describes his direct experiences with racial discrimination in this way:

> Personal experiences that I've been through: Get pulled over by the police, and it's not just one cop car but about four or five cop cars. Pulling us over and my friend's so scared he just throw his hands up [raises both arms]. The police duty is to protect and serve, and if you feel like they not doing that then . . . you need to speak up. Right now, it may not be a bunch of people that agree with me, you know what I mean, because the flag means a lot to a lot of people, and we can seem like we mean disrespect in so many ways to someone who don't see it in our perspective.[32]

These players' offerings of perspectives on racism and racial discrimination convey the anguish the black players feel regarding this topic and highlight their direct experiences with racial discrimination by police officers. These players are careful to mention that these are their personal perspectives, and each of them also couples his narrative with calls to action to protest during the national anthem. These calls to protest are not made to impose limits on the audience's reflections and options or to coerce them into protest. Because all of these players identify their perspectives as personal and one mentions that there are multiple interpretations of the flag, these students are being mindful of multiple perspectives and options that can be discussed openly with fellow teammates during the meeting.

For the Berkeley High School players, the meeting in the locker room functions as an open, safe place to express why they want to protest and the importance of such an action. In these examples, the teammates are aware that people's experiences with racism and racial discrimination are the primary reasons for the protests during the national anthem. This meeting, however, provides the team with the opportunity to reflect on specific perspectives on and the experiences with racism their classmates have encountered beyond the general public's discussion of the topic. During the meeting, these players' specific perspectives are used "as a means to widen options" and "to generate more ideas than either rhetors or audiences had initially" thought about when reflecting on the topic.[33] On the contrary, if players attempted to express their specific perspectives in different noninvitational school or public settings, their viewpoints might be generalized, overlooked, or completely muted by rhetors who dominated the direction of the discussion.

During the *Vice News Tonight* report, players' offerings are shown related to other topics as well, including the service of veterans. In an individual interview at the beginning of the *Vice News Tonight* broadcast, one white football player expresses his position of being against kneeling because of his grandfather's veteran status: "My grandfather—he's a veteran. Kneeling for the flag is kind of disrespectful to those who've risked their lives to, you know, protect our rights."[34] In addition, during the actual dialogue among teammates, one black player also talks about his father being a veteran, but he has a different interpretation of the flag's meaning: "My dad was a veteran; he served to protect us, not the flag. The flag is cloth, you know what I mean? 'Cause what the flag represented is what us, as a group, as Americans, represents, and so when that's not respected right, I feel like we gotta say something, don't it?"[35] Here, two students offer opposing perspectives regarding the meaning of the flag derived from their experiences as members of veterans' families.

As the news report documents the meeting, evidence of the characteristic of value is demonstrated by the teammates. One example is when a white player who was initially against kneeling reverses his perspective on the topic after listening to the other teammates' viewpoints on and experiences with racism during the meeting. Foss and Griffin find the principle of value to be "conveyed to audience members when rhetors not only listen carefully to the perspectives of others but try to think from those perspectives."[36] In an interview prior to the meeting, the player expresses his position against kneeling because of the need to respect the flag from the perspective of his grandfather's experience as a veteran. Toward the end of the meeting, however, he changes his perspective and openly expresses his modified position to his teammates: "The fact that I was even like debating not kneeling for your like, you know, not kneeling for you to make your rights to like and your rights to like, have the same privileges that I got, you know, I just want to say 'I'm sorry' to y'all for thinking like that. I'm a kneel with y'all because I love y'all, and if I lost any of y'all, I would be devastated, and you I'm gonna support y'all one hundred percent."[37]

The player's comments both in the interview and during the meeting exemplify Benhabib's notion of the "reversibility of perspectives."[38] Initially, the player stated his position on the topic as being against kneeling because he identified with his grandfather's experiences as a veteran. By the end of the meeting, he has listened to different perspectives and values those perspectives. Thus, he finds justification for kneeling with his fellow students out of respect for and because he values their positions, regardless of whether he personally can identify with those perspectives.[39] This player's response conveys what Foss and Griffin describe as "an appreciation for new perspectives gained and gratitude for the assistance provided by others in thinking about an issue."[40]

Beyond valuing the audience members, the player who changes his mind demonstrates that he values his ability to discuss his perspectives openly and his freedom to choose to alter his stance. Through the interrelated principles of value, self-determination, and freedom of choice, this player not only has time to reflect on understanding his teammates' perspectives, but he is also able to better reflect on his own positions without feeling dominated by the particular perspective of one rhetor. Furthermore, this individual player's change in his position is not a required outcome of invitational rhetoric. Rather, Foss and Griffin suggest that change can occur "as a result of new understanding and insights gained in the exchange of ideas."[41] As participants engage in discussion and offer and then compare diverse ideas on an issue, they may discover new insights and question their own and other perspectives that may lead to transformation. Although these players have the option of being persuaded by another rhetor, they do not feel pressure to support or adopt any other rhetor's perspective, as would be expected in traditional persuasion.

Even though viewers see a player express his stance against kneeling outside of the actual team meeting, he and other players do acknowledge and value multiple understandings on the topic of kneeling during the meeting. One of the players cited earlier is an example of such acknowledgment. This player stated, at the end of his narrative of his experience with racial discrimination, "Because the flag means a lot to a lot of people, and we can seem like we mean disrespect in so many ways to someone who don't see it in our perspective."[42] Because this player acknowledges opposing perspectives, his comment conveys a sense of value that undergirds the different positions on the topic. Thus, this player's comment further shapes an invitational space where diverse viewpoints are acknowledged, regardless of whether or not those stances are expressed overtly to the group or the rhetors holding those views are present at the meeting. This player's comment further aids in shaping mutual understanding on the complexities of this topic.

In all of the instances of offering, players share their perspectives and experiences to create dialogue on the topic and, more specifically, on their decision about whether or not to protest during the national anthem. Thus, as Foss and Griffin observe, the rhetor does not convey a story to provide a means of support or to strategically increase the likelihood that the audience will adhere to the rhetor's viewpoint.[43] Rather, the rhetor shares a personal narrative to articulate a viewpoint in and of itself. As Foss and Griffin explain, in invitational rhetoric, an offering itself is the goal of communication, in which the means of sharing a personal narrative is also the end.[44] Although the players do not offer their perspectives for support or persuasion, the team's meeting does foster a supportive environment where students can voice their viewpoints and experiences and find grounds for identification with one another, regardless of their different perspectives.

The principles of self-determination and agency are especially evident when players state their perspectives and are valued for their decisions to support or deny support for kneeling. As each player states his position, the other teammates do not respond by trying to influence the previous speaker's perspective; the players' focus remains on their own personal narratives. As a result, the players further enact invitational rhetoric by valuing others' perspectives but not intruding upon them or elaborating on them if they agree with them. By remaining nonintrusive when other players speak, the teammates demonstrate agency as they value each player's ability to form and state his individual perspective and make decisions without any outside influence.

The concept of absolute listening is an essential component of offering perspectives and is also evident in the team's discussion. Absolute listening is especially evident as all students listen to each rhetor but do not provide any kind of verbal or nonverbal reaction during the meeting. As Foss and Griffin explain, absolute listeners "do not interrupt, comfort, or insert anything of their own as others tell of their experiences"; consequently, rhetors have the opportunity "to discover their own perspectives."[45] Conversely, in typical listening patterns, the rhetor is often verbally or nonverbally interrupted, if only by subtle communication from audience members. While audience members might not communicate their actions to oppose the speaker directly, their reactions nonetheless may disrupt the rhetor's focus. In their meeting, the only time that teammates provide a comical reaction is when one player makes a joke in the middle of his narrative, stating that he is not a Kaepernick sports fan but supports another professional athlete. Otherwise, as absolute listeners, they remain unexpressive and do not convey any verbal or nonverbal reactions to each speaker.

Self-determination, agency, and absolute listening are evident as well through the communication of the head coach. His decision to call a team meeting to discuss the topic collectively demonstrates his value of and trust in his players to act as agents to create a civil, collaborative dialogue. Other than acting as the initial agent to provide a brief introduction regarding why he called the meeting, the coach never intrudes on the players' discussion.[46] After his brief introduction, only the players discuss their perspectives regarding their collective decision to kneel. By not inserting his power or influence in the conversation, the coach both demonstrates and promotes absolute listening and provides a nonintrusive form of leadership in which he shows that he values the self-determination of every player.

As the coach clearly values the self-determination of every player to make his own decisions, he also demonstrates the importance of freedom of choice during the meeting. When the coach initiates the meeting, he states, "All right, so we're here to talk about the protest. I just wanted you to have a reason behind doing it. I want you to be able to articulate that reason behind it."[47] Here, the coach provides an invitational setting where students can provide perspectives before deciding if or how the team will be represented on the topic. At the beginning of the news segment, the coach also explains in an interview that he did not want a few of his players who previously held up their fists to protest before a game "to feel a backlash without making sure they were behind what they were doing."[48] Thus, the meeting provides players with an opportunity to voice their opinions freely and to make a decision outside of administrators' influence.[49] The players' freedom of choice is further supported by the coach in his concluding statements during their meeting: "You guys are everything that I thought you were. I mean, I really believe that. I mean, I just love you guys for the way you're speaking up, the way you're expressing yourself, the way that it's been thought out by you. As long as I feel that you're doing the right thing and it's something you want to do and I feel it's right, I support you guys."[50] In this last comment, the coach conveys that his ideas are not privileged over the players' perspectives. His comment further highlights the essential characteristic of invitational rhetoric for all participants to have a voice or, as Barrett (1991) states, to "speak up, to speak out."[51]

In summary, all of the coach's comments both in the interview and during the meeting further support the notion of the players' freedom of choice. As Foss and Griffin explain, "either outcome—acceptance or rejection—is seen as perfectly acceptable by the invitational rhetor, who is not offended, disappointed, or angry if audience members choose not to adopt a particular perspective."[52] Regardless of the nature of the individual players' perspectives or the team's decision regarding kneeling, the coach's communication indicates his respect for them. As invitational rhetoric scholars suggest, the coach's and the players' value of and connection with one another is not negatively affected by a discussion involving a diverse range of perspectives and options for making a group decision. In Foss and Griffin's summary of Rogers's notion of unconditional positive regard, they highlight the idea that the audience—in this case, the players—have "the freedom to make choices without the possibility of losing the respect of the rhetor."[53]

Through invention, the players' freedom of choice reiterates how a place for invitational rhetoric can allow for more ideas, "interpretations, perspectives, courses of actions, and solutions to problems"[54] to emerge among the teammates. Thus, the locker room provides an invitational space for the teammates and coach to discuss the topic creatively and their options regarding it. The dialogue around the topic is not limited to how or why they would protest; rather, it is a discussion on what the topic means to each player. The creativity employed by players throughout the discussion creates a space for the potential occurrence of transformation and change but does not require it. Furthermore, the change that occurs during the process is a transformation of openness, respect, and equality to listen to and reflect on a diverse range of perspectives that may not be typical of the communication among players in a locker room.

POST-MEETING TEAM REFLECTIONS AND COMMUNITY REACTIONS TO INVITATIONAL RHETORIC

Following its release, the team's and the coach's reactions to the film were both positive and further reiterated the fruitful aspects of their invitational dialogue. Prior to the release of the film, the head coach was concerned with how the players would be represented in the film. Following its release, the head coach found the film to be well executed and noted that "everyone [on the team] is pleased with how it turned out."[55] More specifically, the coach believed that the team bonded during the meeting and found new respect for each other as a result of the experience.[56] Thus, through reflection following the meeting, the coach's comments further reiterate evidence of the essential principles of value and respect in invitational rhetoric.

The principles of value and respect are further highlighted by the reflections of other members of the Berkeley High School community on the meanings of the film. For example, following the film's release, Tracey Taylor, a journalist for the local Berkeley community newspaper *Berkeleyside*, wrote an article summarizing the events surrounding the film in the high school newspaper. According to Taylor, the team's meeting and decisions demonstrated many inspirational themes of hope, passion, determination, love, and unity.[57] The superintendent of the unified Berkeley school district also mentioned the collaborative dialogue of the team in an email sent out to the community to address the national political climate the day after the 2016 US presidential election. In this email, the superintendent promoted the importance of "thoughtful reflection" and "positive lessons of respect and inclusion" and cited the HBO film as a "good example of the thoughtfulness we see in our students every day."[58] He continued, "The team's coach and athletic director asked them to consider their actions before protesting, ensured they had researched and understood the issues and had worked together to ensure everyone has a voice."[59] Finding inspiration in the team's collaborative dialogue, the superintendent concluded, "These are questions that underpin our constitutional democracy, and are essential to the way in which we will move forward, together."[60]

Although many of the general public's reactions to the film were positive, there were instances of negative criticism, including racist, hostile, and hateful comments posted on the internet by viewers seemingly outside of the community of students at Berkeley High School. According to a student reporter for the school newspaper, the *Berkeley High Jacket*, many of the comments were aimed at the black community as well as the Black Lives Matter movement.[61] The student reporter describes these viewers' comments as "attacking the hope, passion, and determination that the students in the video so clearly embody."[62]

Both the positive and negative comments clearly exhibit a division regarding people's reactions to the collaborative aspects of dialogue on the issue of protesting during the national anthem. Furthermore, the racist and hateful nature of some of the comments also highlights the controversial aspects of race-related debates and protests in the United States that are central to understanding this topic. Regardless of people's interpretations of the broadcast of the team's meeting, my analysis demonstrates how central invitational rhetoric can be in discussing controversial topics.

INVITATIONAL RHETORIC AS A PRECURSOR TO MAKING GROUP DECISIONS

Before Kaepernick enacted his first individual protest, he engaged in a type of invitational rhetoric with another teammate. In these conversations, Kaepernick and teammate Nate Boyer considered options for protesting, especially forms that might still honor and respect other people's diverse perspectives on this topic. In an interview on *Real Sports with Bryant Gumbel*, Boyer, a military veteran, explained how Kaepernick was influenced by the conversations that Boyer previously had with an active military member serving in Afghanistan.[63]

In the interview, Boyer explained that he showed Kaepernick a text message that he received from a good friend serving in the US Special Forces: "Nate, I was just standing on the tarmac as a plane came back from Afghanistan to drop off a coffin that was draped in an American flag of one of our brothers and I couldn't stop looking at Staff Sergeant Thompson's wife and just seeing the grief and the pain and I got filled with rage for anybody that disrespects what we are fighting for and what we stand for."[64] Boyer explained that, after reading the text message, Kaepernick was overwhelmed with emotion and said that he wanted to "do something different" to protest respectfully.[65] Nate suggested that Kaepernick take a knee alongside his teammates during the national anthem, explaining that "soldiers take a knee in front of a fallen brother's grave to show respect." Kaepernick responded, "I think that would be really powerful."[66] Kaepernick asked Boyer to kneel beside him during the national anthem, and Boyer responded, "Look, I'll stand next to you. I got to stand, though, I got to stand with my hand on my heart. It's what I do and where I'm from."[67]

Boyer's comments convey that his and Kaepernick's conversations assumed the form of invitational rhetoric. During their conversation, neither Kaepernick nor Boyer employed a dominant form of traditional persuasion by attempting to persuade the other of his position. Instead, both players openly offered different perspectives on the topic, remained respectful of each other's opinions, and then worked together to propose a solution for protest that incorporated those viewpoints. In the interview, Boyer explained that they both came to a type of middle ground on a solution for the protest. They agreed that Kaepernick would take a knee alongside his teammates to be respectful of the military forces, and Boyer would offer his support and indirectly take part in the protest by standing next to him during the national anthem.

This example, along with Berkeley High School football team's pre-game meeting, demonstrates the necessity and functionality of invitational rhetoric as a precursor to making a significant group decision—in these two cases regarding enacting a potential protest. Even though both Kaepernick and several members of the Berkeley High School football team had strong, predetermined convictions regarding the issue and a few student athletes had held a prior anthem protest, both parties were open to collaboration with others regarding how to proceed with understanding while reflecting on this complex societal topic. Instead of initially engaging in a direct form of protest that might offend other teammates, both parties first considered the need for collaborative dialogue before making a decision. Kaepernick, for example, first discussed protest options with a teammate who also happened to be a veteran, and the Berkeley High School football team's head coach called upon his athletes to stop their initial protest and instead hold a team meeting to discuss further actions. Overall, these two examples illustrate what Carey suggests regarding how rhetorics can be marshalled to work alongside each other.[68]

The central principles of invitational rhetoric—openness, immanent value, and self-determination—were employed by both Kaepernick and Boyer and the Berkeley High School football team. Even though some of the players held certain predetermined convictions regarding societal racism and felt an urgency to protest while others from veterans' families were against the protests, these examples show how the involved parties shaped mutual understandings of the different perspectives on this topic. These examples of invitational rhetoric support its platform as an essential form of communication in which participants actually collaborate with one another instead of speaking over and dominating one another as is typical in traditional persuasion.

There are situations, however, in which invitational rhetoric might not be the best option as a precursor to other forms of rhetoric. These might include situations in which participants feel physically or verbally threatened; when setting up a safe space—physically or virtually—to hold a discussion is not possible; or even when time is scarce, as it can be when protests happen or dates are in place for voting or other such initiatives. In these situations, direct action might need to be taken immediately without first engaging in invitational rhetoric with the others involved.

Even so, as scholars of invitational rhetoric have suggested, this form of communication can be effectively employed in a wide range of rhetorical situations.[69] Specifically, Ryan and Natalle argue that "rhetoric in contemporary times can serve a multivocal society to seek peaceful understanding and to accommodate a range of truths."[70] Invitational rhetoric can be employed to promote a better understanding of topics and issues and, in the process, accommodate a diverse range of perspectives. Today's political polarization is causing extreme divisiveness in the United States, and homogenous social networks often are functioning as breeding grounds for incivility and hate speech. Used effectively in a variety of public and private platforms, invitational rhetoric can discourage such polarization and incivility as people explore and discuss controversial topics. By creating the external conditions of invitational rhetoric, rhetors can shape a welcoming environment that enables participants to safely consider and comprehensively explore a diverse range of perspectives. Because of invitational interactions, participants can learn and grow from each other and can assist those interested in communicating through its lens to make more thoughtful decisions, individually and as a group of respectful communicators.

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NOTES

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7. Foss and Griffin, "Beyond Persuasion"; Hauser, "Vernacular Voices."
8. Foss and Griffin, "Beyond Persuasion."
9. Foss and Griffin, "Beyond Persuasion."
10. Foss and Griffin, "Beyond Persuasion," 5.
11. Foss and Griffin, "Beyond Persuasion," 6.
12. Foss and Griffin, "Beyond Persuasion," 6.
13. Foss and Griffin, "Beyond Persuasion," 6.
14. Bone, Griffin, and Scholz, "Beyond Traditional Conceptualizations," 446. See also Ratcliffe, "Rhetorical Listening," and Ryan and Natalle, "Fusing Horizons."
15. Bone, Griffin, and Scholz, "Beyond Traditional Conceptualizations," 446.
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20. Caspian Kang, "National Anthem Protests."
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22. Millicent Sampson-Eves, "BHS Football Anthem Protest Brought to the National Level by Vice," *Berkeley High Jacket*, November 29, 2016, http://www.berkeleyhighjacket.com/bhs-football-anthem-protest-brought-to-the-national-level-by-vice/.
23. My research assistant also transcribed the recorded interview of Kaepernick's former NFL teammate Nate Boyer, who played a pivotal role in the form of protest Kaepernick chose. His comments are incorporated into the conclusion.
24. I acknowledge that the original content of the meeting may contain examples of rhetoric that are not invitational. Thus, there is the possibility that the broadcast content was edited in ways that may have affected my analysis.
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26. Taylor, "In Film, Berkeley High Athletes Wrestle."
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28. Taylor, "In Film, Berkeley High Athletes Wrestle."
29. Foss and Griffin, "Beyond Persuasion," 7
30. Caspian Kang, "National Anthem Protests."
31. Caspian Kang, "National Anthem Protests."
32. Caspian Kang, "National Anthem Protests."
33. Foss and Griffin, "Beyond Persuasion," 12.
34. Caspian Kang, "National Anthem Protests." Because this player's comment was only shown during a pre-meeting interview, viewers are unsure if he restated this opinion during the meeting or if his comment was strategically used for editing purposes.

35. Caspian Kang, "National Anthem Protests."
36. Foss and Griffin, "Beyond Persuasion," 12.
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39. This player's change in his position does not necessarily negate his respect for the flag or his grandfather's or veterans' positions against kneeling.
40. Foss and Griffin, "Beyond Persuasion," 6.
41. Foss and Griffin, "Beyond Persuasion," 6.
42. Caspian Kang, "National Anthem Protests."
43. Foss and Griffin, "Beyond Persuasion."
44. Foss and Griffin, "Beyond Persuasion."
45. Foss and Griffin, "Beyond Persuasion," 11.
46. There are also other adults in the room—possibly other coaches, school administrators, or parents. They are never acknowledged nor are their positions specified.
47. Caspian Kang, "National Anthem Protests."
48. Caspian Kang, "National Anthem Protests."
49. The opportunity for student athletes to speak freely on this topic may differ from restrictions put into place at other elementary and secondary schools and colleges. This example also widely differs from professional athletes' discussions on kneeling, in which some coaches, owners, and commissioners have great influence over the players' individual or group decisions to kneel or legally obstruct their teams' or leagues' athletes from doing so.
50. Caspian Kang, "National Anthem Protests."
51. Harold Barrett, *Rhetoric and Civility: Human Development, Narcissism, and the Good Audience* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1991), 148; Foss and Griffin, "Beyond Persuasion," 12.
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53. Foss and Griffin, "Beyond Persuasion,"13; Carl R. Rogers, "The Interpersonal Relationship: The Core of Guidance," *Harvard Educational Review* 32 (1962): 416–29.
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64. Gumbel, "Nate Boyer and Colin Kaepernick."
65. Gumbel, "Nate Boyer and Colin Kaepernick."
66. Gumbel, "Nate Boyer and Colin Kaepernick."
67. Gumbel, "Nate Boyer and Colin Kaepernick."
68. Carey, "The Parallel Rhetorics."
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15

An Invitation to Rhetoric

A Generative Dialogue on Performance, Possibility, and Feminist Potentialities in Invitational Rhetoric

Bryant Keith Alexander and Michele Hammers

In his essay, “Stages: Queers, Punks, and the Utopian Performative,” José Esteban Muñoz (2006) describes *a utopian performativity*. He writes, “Performance, seen as utopian performativity, is imbued with a sense of potentiality.” In building his argument, he outlines how Agamben (1999) notes Aristotle’s distinction between potentiality and possibility. He writes,

> Possibilities exist, or more nearly, they exist within a logical real, the possible, which is within the present and is linked to presence. Potentialities are different insofar as while they are present they do not exist in present things. Thus potentialities have a temporality that is not in the present but, more nearly, in the horizon, which we can understand as futurity. Potentiality is and is not presence and its ontology cannot be reduced to presentness. (pp. 10–11)

Muñoz’s construction is a stage in building an argument about the residual traces and potency of performance and performative effect, after the fact of audience engagement. The authors of this essay are using this important construction from Muñoz to invoke several critical observations that lead to a set of possibilities and potentialities on Sonja Foss and Cindy Griffin’s (1995) notion of *invitational rhetoric*.

In 1995, Sonja Foss and Cindy Griffin published the germinal essay “Beyond Persuasion: A Proposal for an Invitational Rhetoric” in the journal *Communication Monographs*. The essay initiated a vigorous conversation within the communication discipline and beyond, regarding the definition of rhetoric linked with the intent of persuasion, and the potential of an *invitational rhetoric* through a feminist sensibility. As the 25th anniversary of the essay approaches, these observations (relative to Muñoz’s and what is to follow) play in the tropological space between outlining and critiquing, while upholding what we believe is the moral invective of the important construct of *invitational rhetoric* offered to the discipline by Sonja Foss and Cindy Griffin. First, we believe that the major contribution that Foss and Griffin initiated is the relational speculation between people, place, and purpose in rhetoric and rhetorical engagement. Second, their critical contribution invoked, in our opinion, a perception about

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potentiality and possibility in/of/as rhetoric, with a feminist critique about power as it relates to both the persuasive intentionality and effects of rhetoric as in persuasion. And third, their initiation of the conversation established not just a theoretical or philosophical perspective but also a trope of human social engagement that is both specifically *invitational rhetoric* and an *invitation to rhetoric*.

For us, the later construction, an *invitation to rhetoric*, in relation to the previous articulation of potentiality and possibility, signals our point of entry into this discussion. Their contribution affords us this opportunity to further perform and postulate on the potentialities of invitational rhetoric as a dialectic of human social engagement. In writing, we are standing at an active intellectual positionality—both in the *logical real* of this anniversary moment of their essay, and always in the trace, the emerging and unfolding potentialities of their contribution that sanctions this postulation.

In this performative essay, we use a dialogical approach between two communication studies scholars, one situated in performance, cultural, and queer studies and the other in critical feminist, gender, and rhetorical studies—engaging what Jonathan Wyatt and Ken Gale (2013) might call an *assemblage*—a form of collaborative writing in which we "exchange writing via email as we [further] explore the intersecting, overlapping, felted, themes of subjectivity and collaborative writing" (p. 302) relative to the particularity of our theme.[1] Our method is a dialogical performance that models, in an idealistic way, an aspect of invitational rhetoric "built on the principles of equality, immanent value, and self-determination" of each contributing author, "rather than on the attempt to control others through persuasive strategies" (Foss & Griffin, pp. 4–5). The method that we are engaging fosters a civility of engagement in which each author is triggered to both respond to aspects of invitational rhetoric, relative to his or her individual orientations but also in a manner that signals to the other as a prompt in conversational turn-taking that helps to facilitate a dual—not dueling—perspective on the potentialities of invitational rhetoric. The methodological approach embodies the critical and liberatory qualities that invitational rhetoric espouses—influencing and effecting the attitudinal perception of both the authors and the readers.

And as Foss and Griffin also invoke invitational rhetoric as a feminist response, we are reminded of Karlyn Kohrs Campbell's (2001) later construction of a *rhetoric of conversation*. In her important piece entitled, "Three Tall Women: Radical Challenges to Criticism, Pedagogy and Theory," delivered as the Carroll C. Arnold Distinguished Lecture for the National Communication Association, Kohrs Campbell writes:

> There is an alternative rhetorical tradition that exists in the work of groups who are oppressed, exploited, or lack the usual sources of power. These groups cannot speak in the usual venues nor can they use many of the strategies available to members of dominant groups. Accordingly, they create spaces in which or subject positions from which they can speak, and they bring into being rhetorical modes that stand in sharp contrast to what a graduate student recently referred to as "the imperialist speaking ritual." (p. 4)

She further describes a *rhetoric of conversation* as "dialogic, involving more than one person (or, in rare cases, more than one self), and is a dialectical, that is a way of winnowing or testing one's beliefs through *lexis*—through language and talk. Often via questions and answers" (p. 4). This is a complimentary and critical sentiment to Foss and Griffin's construction of *invitational rhetoric* and one that lays the foundation of our own engaged response to an invitational rhetoric, and the particular space that we create for this possibility.

Hence, we make particular note of our own embodied positionalities as a Black, gay-identified male and a White, queer-identified woman in what some might construct as a hierarchical relationship as academic dean and faculty. This is important for the reader to know—relative to a particular performed academic/administrative/intellectual/collaborative project that penetrates the political and power structures of academic relationality—modeling an aspect of invitational rhetoric in which both authors maintain *immanent value* and an *openness* to each other as collaborator and audience invoking possibility and potentiality within, across, and beyond the categorical distinctions of their persons that have historically both divided and conjoined them (pp. 5–6).

We, as the authors of this performative essay, are aware that Foss and Griffin plan their own commemoration of the 25th anniversary. Our attempt here is to neither preempt nor censure their efforts. We believe that our effort here is a compliment to and celebration of their heuristic construct—which has brought forth and continues to generate collegial and critical dialogue.

WRITING A SEASON WELCOME (PERFORMANCE AS INVITATIONAL RHETORIC)

The morning in which the impulse for this essay arrived, I was sitting in my office trying to write a welcome note for the inside cover of our season events brochure. I serve as a dean of a college of communication and fine arts. The welcome for this brochure, and more importantly, the invitation to prospective audiences to our events, always has a dual if not triple purpose for me. First is to signal the range of events in a diverse set of disciplines—inclusive of communication studies, theatre, dance, music, art and art history, marital and family (art) therapy, and interdisciplinary and applied studies. Second is to articulate the range of events that co-informed the common theme of the college as a whole—*communication as art and art as communication*. Third is to invite audiences into the critical arguments on human social experience or the meditations on the human condition that each event promotes. So as I was crafting my response, the impulse to write on "invitational rhetoric" dinged its way into my psyche and I thought, how timely. It was timely relative to my particular challenge in the moment, as well as my ongoing orientation to the complex intentionalities of the construct, invitational rhetoric.

In this case, I reference invitational rhetoric as a construct as opposed to a concept because invitational rhetoric is a performative utterance—a thing doing and a thing done (Austin, 1975). It has tangible effects, both in the process of doing and in the invocation of its possibility. And while the philosophical approach to rhetorical engagement that Foss and Griffin signal is a counterstrategy (or even a counterargument) to traditional orientations to rhetoric as persuasion, invoking that rhetorical intentions could be communicative and critically informative, and not a domination of ideas rendering or reducing the listeners' standpoint, but inviting a critical dialog of possibility—the approach is still an invitation to rhetoric. It is an invitation to the undergirding intentions of communication to engage in critical information sharing and the volition of receipt processed through a dialogical exchange. In the Jesuit traditions of our current institution, such a notion could be articulated through the construction of *information, formation, and transformation*.[2] In which case, the open and noncoercive sharing of information is an invitation to the listener/audience/student to critically receive information in the process of deepening commitments and formation of positionality. The intention of such action is not exclusively the persuasion or transformation of the listener/audience/student, but how that individual uses that newfound knowledge with commitment to transform the world in constructive ways (pp. 5–6). In outlining this perception as such, I have reframed what is constructed as the feminist motivations in invitational rhetoric to something that is informed by Jesuit principles, which are always and already humanist ideals regardless of political or religious groundings.

But back to my point: The dinging sound of that impulse (like the sound of an actual email coming into my system) offered me a particular framework for the welcome. The framework could meet my multiple intentions in ways that were invitational, but also built an argument of intent—not to persuade per se but to articulate an understanding of what we do in the college that teaches and studies critical human social engagement within a mission toward cultural transformation. The resulting season welcome was an invitation to possibility—to expressions of potentiality:

> It is a pleasure to welcome you to the 2017–2018 Events Season in the College of Communication and Fine Arts at Loyola Marymount University. The empowering mission of LMU which includes *the encouragement of learning, the education of the whole person, the service of faith and the promotion of justice* is made manifest in the curriculum, practices, performances and events of the college. We are committed to activating the power of the expressive arts beyond the sometime "diminishments of the arts as aesthetics, mimicry, catharsis or mere entertainment rather than as a generative force, and a critical dynamic within human behavior and social processes." Hence, our programming celebrates the communicative aspects of the performance and artistic expression, "as ways of comprehending how human beings fundamentally make and remake culture, affect power and invent and reinvent our ways of being in the world" as an everyday embodied practice and in aesthetic forms staged in our theatres, recital hall, art galleries, dance and art studios. (Madison & Hamera, 2006, p. xii)
>
> As a communication and performance studies scholar, I understand the importance of what we do across the diverse range of our disciplines as a form of what scholars Foss and Griffin (1995) have called *invitational rhetorics*; for us an invitation to diverse audiences in differing modes (theatre, dance, music, art and lectures) to understand a meaningful discourse on particular themes; an invitation to explore critical ideas through artistic and aesthetic constructions; an invitation to see, listen, experience and feel into public expressions always fusing their own thoughts on the matter—with opportunities to then engage in meaningful dialogue both direct and reflective to co-inform and influence each other. The work of our students and faculty seeks to inform audiences of critical social and political issues, helps them toward forming their own commitments, and sparks their abilities and actions towards transforming self and society. All of course, while always offering aesthetic and articulate pleasure.
>
> We invite you to join us through our season of diverse programming.

In such case, performance and performative engagement is invitational rhetoric. It "offers an invitation to understanding—to enter another's world to better understand an issue and the individual [as well as playwrights, directors, actors, artists, and audiences] who holds a particular perspective on it" (Foss & Griffin, 1995, p. 13).

AN INVITATION TO DIALOGUE

For me, this project should be framed by two moments 20 years apart.

Twenty years ago, I was sitting at a large, polished, conference table. This table situates me within a certain set of possibilities. Across from me are three men. They are there to deliver judgment. On me. I am, they say, unsuited for my profession—I am too cooperative, too friendly, too passive, too *feminine*. The judgment is gendered and sexist, as well as scathing. It crushes me. And changes me. In the wake of that judgment, I learn lessons about what passes for—and counts as—advocacy. These are lessons I have not unlearned.

Twenty years later, I am sitting at a different large, polished, conference table. Across from a different man. This is not an occasion for judgment, but for conversation. Different possibilities. The conversation turns to the question of invitation and its potential.

In the two decades between those moments, there are interim lessons—other conference tables—that ask me to (re)consider the relationships among gender and advocacy, rhetoric, and possibility. One of those interim moments involved my initial engagement with Foss and Griffin's (1995) *invitational rhetoric*. That first engagement proved challenging because, to be frank, the possibilities at play in an invitational framework ran counter to my earliest—and harshest—experiences.

As a feminist primarily identified with the politics of the Second Wave, I have always considered myself to be committed to structural change—political, economic, and legal differences that would ensure the sanctity of *immanent value* in the face of material inequities. Because I remain committed to systemic change, I have not given up on the legal advocacy—and other methods of advocacy based in traditional models of persuasion. However, in the interim between these two moments, 20 years apart, I have been forced to (re)evaluate the methods by which I make and evaluate arguments.

In this present moment, I am confronted not only with renewed possibilities but also with a rich potentiality—the present but not-present of an invitation *to* rhetoric. In this moment, I am drawn to Michel Foucault's (2001) discussion of *parrhesia*—the practice of radical truth-telling in the face of danger. But *parrhesia* isn't just about truth-telling; it is also about a particular orientation to one's Self and the Other. The practice of *parrhesia* circulates around the role of "truth" and the underlying relationships among self-knowledge-others that contributes to an exploration of the potentialities of an invitational understanding of rhetoric.

Foucault's (2001) *parrhesia* exists in the betweenness of *logos*, *bios*, and truth (p. 101).[3] Truth in this betweenness demands that the *parrhesiastes* (one who performs *parrhesia*) says what she *knows* to be true (pp. 13–15). In the context of the classical Greco-Roman philosophical and practical conditions of *parrhesia*, there is a correspondence between belief and truth—a correspondence that is not grounded in what we now understand as "evidence" but in the verbal act of speaking—with courage and duty in the face of unequal power relations. *Parrhesia's* truth is, ultimately, an ethical relationship between self-knowledge and the interlocutory Other.

Parrhesia's resort to "truth" and its function as criticism might appear to fly in the face of invitational rhetoric's foundational emphasis on perspective sharing—the noncoercive exchange of worldviews (pp. 17–19). However, the dialogical nature of *parrhesia* in practice, and its focus on authentic expression despite differential power relations, demands that we consider other potentialities with regard to both *parrhesia* as it might open space for invitation.

The performative potentiality of *parrhesia* is in the ongoing process of being and becoming a person capable of radical truth in a dialogical relation to Self and Others. Rather than impose one's truth on another, the *parrhesiastes* speaks *her* truth in a dialogue of risk and authenticity.

At the horizon, *parrhesia* is not a telling, but a dialogue; it is performative and that performance has the potential to be invitational.

SITTING AT THE TABLE (A DIFFERENT ILLUSTRATION)

As a Black/gay/male/academic/administrator *sitting at a large, polished, conference table*, I often find myself trapped in the false dichotomies of my social construction: The academically achieved Black-teacher-scholar who brings the promise of diversity to historically White universities while also invoking the imaginings of the angry, aggressive, hypersexually potent Black man; the legacy of a vicious and pernicious slave trade marketing strategy that commodified the Black male body while establishing a mystique of exoticism that furthers the social construction of race, and therefore determining race itself as a psychological and cognitive difference—as much as the presumptions of pigmentation (as temperament) that needs to be tamed and contained. The presence of my body is a living history.

The dichotomous nature of the misnomers is the stuff that argumentation and debate are made of, with those on either side having stakes in the persuasive outcomes of their investments. The currency of the public protest and advocacy of Black Lives Matter—as a statement and as an embodied *rhetoric of defiance*, indicative of political protest—is the evidence of a historical argument not yet resolved in the minds of many—that offer little civility in its enactment. For such a construction of the rhetor, the performative intention of the collective is in fact to assert and insist that "the belief systems and behaviors others have created for living in the world are considered by [this collective of] rhetors to be inadequate or inappropriate and thus in need of change" (Foss & Griffin, p. 3). And that comment is less a critique on such movements, as much as the necessity of performed protest for social justice against the procedural performances of injustice that play out every day. This too is a rhetorical act that insinuates the necessity for change—changing the minds, practices, and actions of others. And it should not be conflated with constructions of being un/civil; this is the democratic process at work; this is civil disobedience.

And just today (as I am writing this original utterance), our U.S. president elected to further repeal rights of decency and equality when he denied the right of transgendered persons to serve in the military—which appropriately elicited a protest rhetoric of force.[4] I am not transgendered, but the politics of my identities sit at the tender intersectionalities of historical denials of access and possibility for "nonfreely chosen, unique identities" perched on the edges of what is seen as social acceptability, which is always rooted in inequality (p. 12). But such protest is not the idealized site for an invitational rhetoric "where change is not the purpose" (p. 6); but still may be to establish or enliven a "cooperative, nonadversarial, and ethical communication" that respects human dignity (p. 15).

And just today (as I am writing this addendum on August 12, 2017), in Charlottesville, Virginia, a clash between White supremacist/neo-Nazis and protesters resulted in the death of Heather Heyer and the injury of countless other protesters. President Trump's first public statement about the rally/protest as an "egregious display of hatred, bigotry and violence *on many sides*" offered a moral equivalency between the White supremacists/neo-Nazis and those protesting for justice and equality. Then he followed with an equally repugnant statement on August 14, 2017, that overreached apologia—only after coming under major fire from both Democrats and Republicans because he did not "call out white supremacists and neo-Nazis as hate groups."[5] He reversed himself again on August 15, 2017, when he stated, "What about the 'alt-left' that came charging at, as you say, the 'alt-right'? Do they have any semblance of guilt?" Of the counterprotesters, he said, "They came charging with clubs in their hands."[6] In both the case of the White supremacists/neo-Nazis and the case of the President, rhetoric as ideological practice shouted from a bully pulpit can sanction, incite, and become violence.

But I digress (not really).

So I too am *sitting at a large, polished, conference table*—(and the table is both literal and figurative) trapped in an everyday process of regulating my behavior against the social anticipation of what is presumed to be my true self. I, unlike others, tend to perform an everyday invitational rhetoric—using provisional language and modulated tones that seek to lay an open field of knowing, creating the conditions in which others might come to see and know differently without the power construction of forced compliance or (Black) male dominance. It is a style that I have perfected over the years to offset being called "the angry or aggressive Black man" in my professional and academic life in predominately White institutions. But others do not practice the same invitational rhetoric. As a Black man, I practice an invitational rhetoric against the sometimes defiant White man whom history has sanctioned to speak as a means of not only persuasion but also domination. I practice an invitational rhetoric against the seldom described, but persistently present, angry White woman, who uses a *lethal femininity* born of the historical sanctity of White feminine privilege—coupled with an emboldened performed *feminist futurity*, to which she believes she is the role model and advocate (Varughese, 2017, p. 108).[7]

She (and she is both real and mythic) speaks her mind. What a luxury.

She (and she is both individual and composite) speaks without regard to some presumed feminine act of care and consideration, but a strident feminist authority that eviscerates all who contradict her demanding compliance (uncivilly). But when she is contradicted or denied, or particularly when I do it—as the Black man at the table—my disagreement is read as an attack on the fragility of her White femininity, a backup positionality that never fails to elicit a particular level of sympathy and immediate defense by the White men (or like-minded people) at the table who defend her intention and her honor—even when I am performing my best invitational rhetoric. The materiality and historicity of our bodies forestall an invitational rhetoric of conciliation in which we come to a collaborative congeniality knowing the other and the ideas of the other. Because short of our shared titles, these relationships are not equal, and they are never equal. I wonder if *she* realizes that? And in even asking the question, I am once again performing a form of generosity that has become both expected and is a part of my natural lean to care/consideration.

And while I have engaged in a form of *re-sourcement* as a counterstrategy of reviving possibility in the face of loss, the strategy places me in a space of always being the one to find a space of compromise—to recuperate both the interpersonal and political outcomes of an agreed ideal (Foss & Griffin, p. 9, citing Gearhart (1982)). Such a strategy of my own engagement might be a "womanization of [my] rhetoric" in reverse effect, in relation to the directionality of power and the parties at play in this scenario—to which the irony is not lost on me, and the construction of womanization is dispositive (Gearhart, 1979). In such case, my consistent performance of civility as a counterstrategy to my social construction has also been critiqued as a form of weakness which has appeared on a formal performance review, in which such colleagues offer commentary suggesting that I assume a more aggressive defense of my positions, to literally "fight harder," which I experience as an invited space of self-entrapment.

Sitting at a large, polished, conference table can be a space of entrapment. It is not always an invitation to dialogue; it is sometimes an invitation to be present at the table so that the social investments of diversity are visibly marked as a performed civility without the real potentialities of being and becoming. I let go from time to time (and that is what it feels like—a letting go), and match the intensity of a particular persuasive vigor. In such cases, while my point is made, and I may even sway the tides, and some might even gain pleasure in the happening; I feel lesser in the process, having had to engage a particular performative rhetoric of coercion, and "a rush to power" that runs against the grain of my true personhood, but engaging an efficiency model of collective social engagement (p. 201). I get the work done, *by any means necessary* (falling just short of perpetuating violence).[8]

At the horizon, the invitation can be issued. But such invitations are not always accepted as an offering of civility toward the potentiality of recuperating historically constructed social relationalities.

A TRUTH TO BE TOLD

Parrhesia is tattooed on my arm. Situated between wrist and elbow, in heavy black ink, it is not a small tattoo. It is not subtle. In many ways, this tattoo represents an act of symbolic incivility. It is my very public assertion of an identity I have actively constructed for myself as/in a liminal space among competing positionalities.

But this construction is only partial.

Because, truth be told, I have been the angry, White woman at the table. Perhaps not *this* table in this present not-present. But at some moments. At some tables. In my struggle to navigate a gendered identity that is acceptable to both others and myself, I benefit from the preexisting construction of White femininity.

I can flaunt my performance of *parrhesia* because even as I reject many of the gendered norms that would police my body, my behaviors, and my voice, I remain firmly located in the space of privilege that precedes my presence. The danger(s) I face because of my performance of critical speech in situations of differentiated power is always contained. I can wear a visible tattoo—flaunting my symbolic incivility—largely because, to be honest, my White, female, body has been rendered both culturally valuable and politically *safe*. While I may be symbolically threatening, I am rarely—if ever—an actual threat, at least to the dominant social-political-economic conditions that operate around me.

My safe*ness*, which helps ensure my *safety*, does not keep me from creating *un*safe conditions for others (see Foss & Griffin, pp. 10–11). My privileges may not necessarily be enough to ensure my full inclusion in the social-political-economic discourses that act upon me—my female body, my queer relationships, my professional embroilments, my economic (dis)advantages (see Fraser, 1997)—but they are always enough (whether I know it/accept it/own it) to put the safety of others at risk.

The permissive space to perform incivility as a threatening nonthreat is, however, not unproblematic. Being *that* woman—talking too loudly, taking up too much space, insisting on having my own turn to speak, even interrupting and contradicting others—performing nonconformity, even from a space of relative (but exceptional) privilege—carries risks of its own. I risk being defined and undermined by the negative construction of female incivility—emotional, irrational, and out of control. My failure to perform sanctioned femininity renders me dismissable. But then again, an embrace of the alternative—a commitment to civility, as it is broadly constructed—renders me invisible.

For me, the practice of *any* rhetoric poses a dual threat. The Scylla of dismissability and the Charybdis of invisibility. But the practice of invitational rhetoric highlights the precariousness of my performance of both gender and advocacy.

As a White woman—who is sometimes *that* woman—an invitational rhetoric would require that I navigate my own feelings of insecurity, exclusion, and disempowerment without creating those conditions for others. The creation of a "nonhierarchical, nonjudgmental, and nonadversial" framework (Foss & Griffin, p. 5) requires telling an eyes-open, no-holds-barred radical truth to and about myself—both as embodied and as constructed (as if these are ever anything but mutually informed entwinements).

As I sit here, navigating the threats posed by my own truths, I am thinking about tables—places of judgment and entrapment. I am thinking about stages. And I am thinking about Muñoz's (2006) articulation/invocation of stages as performative spaces—both literally and figuratively—where "kernel(s) of potentiality" can fuel a "modality of knowing and recognition among audiences and groups that facilitate modes of belonging, especially minoritarian belonging" (p. 10). Muñoz calls upon me (us) to recognize the ways in which I (we) are both enabled and constrained by the ebb and flow of safe*ness* and *safety* that we perform, together. And, as does invitational rhetoric—an invitation to rhetoric, Muñoz provides a glimpse of utopian futurity—an invitation to a "not here" and "not now" that, we hope, is substantially better than the here and now (p. 11).

ON TABLES AND STAGES

Tables and stages are both platforms for public discourse. The invitation to one or the other can represent both performances of civility or protest within a narrow strait to which one must navigate between competing monstrosities of desire or intentionality (Scylla and Charybdis), poles of engagement that are neither beyond persuasion nor neutral to affect or effect, disaster or demise. Yet, I am also duly convinced that "invitational rhetoric in conditions of antagonism is fraught with contradictions exposed in exploration of the historical uses of 'civility' to discipline women and Others"—as this is always a recognition that I am the proverbial other in this construction for whom "the uncivil tongue" is not always an option because *incivility has its own discontents* (Jamieson, 1999; Lozano-Reich & Cloud, 2009, pp. 224–225). As I write this, I have convinced myself that the intentionality of a theory for invitational rhetoric is not to discipline the female in feminist, or to demonize the presumed male in rhetoric, but to find a place of influence in our common humanity that is not fraught with linguistic practices of power, as we explore possibility and potentiality (even a feminist potentiality) of mutual benefit that does not harm. Yet we know that "this potentiality is always in the horizon and, like performance [and rhetoric] never completely disappear but, instead lingers and serves as a conduit for knowing and feeling each other" (Muñoz, 2006, p. 20).

She, the she of my current dialogical engagement, not the she of my differential reference before, has shown me how to better read the tensiveness of rhetorical engagements. I use the term *tensiveness* in that way that performance and literary scholars might use the term; not as a reference to tension—the push and pull of forces vying for dominion or a frustration of competing intentions, but those energized impulses *in any given situation*, if I can invoke Aristotle, that give any performative situation, embodied or literary text— a dynamism of felt relationality. Wallace Bacon (1966) used the term *tensive* to reference the liveness of a text. I am using it in a relational and *phenomenological sense* as a component of rhetoric, and let's say an invitational rhetoric for the moment (Kleinau & Isbell, 1977).[9] Not a struggle or a friction, but the actions of those elements and attributes of relations that either maintain social systems or seek to transform them. I often think of tensiveness like holding the opposite poles of *two* magnets to each other—and feeling the forces of push and pull as a productive place filled with a liveliness of relationality. The energy of forces at play that are not seen, but felt as a relational that is neither negative nor positive, but covalent in nature seeking to influence the other; a gravitational energy that allows each to be fully empowered and to know the other without being consumed by or as the other—maybe that is a productive way to think about the call for an invitational rhetoric.

She, the she of my current dialogical engagement, not the she of my differential reference before, beckons me against the shores of intellectual desire and disdain—to recognize the intensity of a positionality that does not dissuade the relationality of discussion—to which we could each potentially grow in insight and understanding of the subject matter or the other. And maybe that is not moving "beyond traditional conceptualizations of rhetoric" in an argumentative debate or defense that reifies the subject of its rejection, as much as it invites us back into principles of basic human social relations and the quest for communication in which,

> the theory of invitational rhetoric speaks to the complexity of rhetoric and choices rhetors make as they use symbols to create and respond to messages. It calls attention to the nature of change and the role of humans in creating change and asks scholars to consider the ethics of change. (Bone, Griffin, & Scholz, 2008, p. 457)

I believe that the basic intention in human social engagement is to share and care with an acknowledgment of how our strategies of engagement a/in/effects the other in building and maintaining relationships and effecting culture. The lesson that I am being reminded of is that while the rhetor is often constructed as the active presenter, the redeeming feature of an invitational rhetoric is a focus on the dialogic, on dual (not dueling) rhetors involved in critical information sharing and sense making, each (all) committed to the potential outcomes and negotiating beyond tone to get to content, intent, and commitments to the ideals of mutual discovery, maybe in "the rhetorical situation"—"the pragmatic" intentionality of the discourse "that invites utterance" and maintains mutual volition in the process (Bitzer, 1968, pp. 3–4).

She, the she of my current dialogical engagement, not the she of my differential reference before, writes about sitting across a table with three men waiting in judgment: "too cooperative, too friendly, too passive, too feminine." Well, those men and some women (in power) have said the same to me: "too cooperative, too friendly, too passive, too feminine." The effect of that judgment is the same, and not the same. "The judgment is gendered and sexist, as well as scathing." While embodying a reversal of fate on who gets to name and defame, with the permission to be uncivil.

She writes, "Twenty years later, I am sitting at a different large, polished, conference table. Across from a different man. This is not an occasion for judgment, but for conversation. Different possibilities. The conversation turns to the question of invitation and its potential." I think that I am that man. *Oh, how I want to be that man*. Not just the man within or/of her construction, but the man (not "The Man"), who invites into possibility the joint humanity of critical and civil discourse on issues that matter, bringing into light all the available means of knowing from diverse re/sources—knowing and inviting the passion of positionality and offering constructive insights that encourage possibility in a "rhetoric of redemption" that heals divisiveness without *Trumping* human dignity with authority or hierarchies of valuing and knowing—in manipulative acts of changing people's mind or acting against another's (good) will (Bobbitt, 2004). And of course I am using the construction of *Trumping* as a reference to our 45th president of the United States—as an adjective of engagement; a set of particular leadership/persuasive/operational strategies that get the work done *by any means necessary* (not forestalling the option of violence), an illustration that must be made in the corpus of talk on invitational rhetoric as another opposing pole (poll) of reference.

And truth be told: Heather Heyer, the protester killed on August 12, 2017, in the Charlottesville clash with White supremacist/neo-Nazis—was a White woman; a White woman fighting for peace, equality, and justice; a White woman committed to structural change; a White woman using the privilege and power of White femininity toward emancipatory possibilities for all; a White woman who is quoted by friends and family to unequivocally and repeatedly state, "If you're not outraged, you're not paying attention!"[10]

So, at times I am sitting at the table and standing on the stage (or standing on the table and sitting on the stage)—negotiating my role as presenter and audience, "not as opponents" but active participants. Always recognizing the intentionality of the occasion in relation to the invitational possibilities of getting to the horizons of joint understandings, which, I am told, "constitutes the ends" of such engagements (Foss & Griffin, p. 16).

SEASONS OF INVITATION

It was a normal night. I was sitting on my couch, laptop perched precariously. Any one of a half-dozen projects—primarily administrative—open on my desktop and my work email open in the background. As part of this pattern that has become so routine I no longer identify it as constructed, two questions tend to roll to the surface: *Why did I agree to be a department chair? (And, more amusingly, why would anyone agree to appoint me?)*

I heard the "ding" alerting me to an addition to my inbox. Out of habit, I stopped what I was doing and flipped over to see what had come in. It was an invitation to a season of performance, but it was also an invitation to me. As he wrote earlier, it's "an invitation to see, listen, experience and feel into public expressions always fusing their own thoughts on the matter—with opportunities to then engage in meaningful dialogue both direct and reflective to co-inform and influence each other."

The email, the invitation is—indeed—from *that* man (the Black/gay/male/academic administrator who serves as the dean of my college and the person who appointed me to my position as department chair). The hierarchical complexities of this invitation-to-engage are not lost on me, nor—I suspect—are they invisible to him. I can tell that from the way each exchange is framed, each invitation is offered. The process, the principles, and the reflexive-responsive tone of the *assemblage* we've co-constructed also play out in the emails that frame and facilitate our work. I am invited, supported, encouraged—I am free to perform my part in this *assemblage* authentically (as well as dialogically).

Truth be told, that *invitational* impulse has been the case since the first day I sat at that large, polished, conference table of this moment. At least on his part. Looking back, I wonder whether I flaunted my White, female privilege—even in the face of the hierarchical positionalities that do (and should) contextualize our professional relationship(s)—across that table. Did I wear my tattoo and perform my self-ascribed identity as truth-teller in ways that might have limited the potentialities of invitation in those early moments? Perhaps, one day, he'll tell me. Perhaps, one day, I'll be prepared to hear that truth.

Elsewhere, *he* (the so very particular embodiment of a mythic presence that I never knew was undiscovered) has discussed the importance of humility: "The self seeing the self seeing the self—not in a recursive process of entrapment, but humility and reflexivity as both attitude and ability/intrapersonal process and extended as a courtesy of engagement to/with others" (Alexander et al., 2014, p. 18). Perhaps, as a rhetor (and as a person), I need to be less focused on the performance of *parrhesia* (no matter how dialogic) and more on the humble (but not passionless or impoverished) contribution to an invitational exchange—an *invitation to rhetoric* that does not just allow for, but embraces, celebrates, and enthusiastically *jumps* into a yet unknown, but always in the process of becoming, horizon.

I reference jumping for two not unrelated reasons:

First, I remember a moment—early in my term as department chair, and early in my (often fraught) process of *becoming* a department chair. While I do not remember the context, I remember the moment in which I flailed my way to a conversational moment and blurted out: "You know, it's just one of those '*if you're feeling froggy, jump*' moments." I stopped short, wondering whether I had just made a fool of myself in front of that/the man (but not "The Man") who was my "boss" . . . the man who would ultimately be called upon to sit in judgment. Over me. He smiled. Then we both chuckled and we *jumped* into a conversation about shared idiom. Shared histories that cut across the raced/sexed/queered identities we live within. Together we moved toward something more than hierarchy and potential judgment (while those do and must, in specific ways, exist).

Second, in the email that framed my first substantive contribution to this *assemblage*, I spoke of "jumping" into the exchange. After struggling for days with an entry point, I realized that sometimes the best response to an invitation is to trust the invitation. To accept it for what it is, a (rhetorical) situation whose purpose is to open the possibility of something more—more than what? Just more.

So I relaxed into that moment. Thought about horizons. I forgot about the tables (and stages) of judgment and entrapment. And, like a hopeful and (hopefully) humble rhetor (person), I jumped.

DRAWING TOWARD YET FORESTALLING CONCLUSIONS

The closing line of Foss and Griffin's (1995) germinal essay on *invitational rhetoric* reads as follows:

> With the identification of the rhetorical mode of invitational rhetoric, however, rhetors will be able to recognize situations in which they seek not to persuade others but simply to create an environment that facilitates understanding, accords value and respect to others' perspectives, and contributes to the development of relationships of equality. (p. 17)

We are particularly taken with the construct of "relationships of equality." Because, while it might be read as a feminine/feminist/feminized construct—it is in true alignment with principles that establish the foundation for human social relations across differences such as race, gender, sex, sexuality, and vast dimensions of *thick intersectionalities*. It furthers efforts of social justice to bring diverse others to the tables and stages of everyday civic life, to confront and address each other's human needs and diverse lived experiences (Yep, 2010).

The performative and dialogical approach that we have engaged is premeditated—premeditated in its intentionality to embody and exemplify what we believe to be the most bracing aspects of invitational rhetoric. We have staged an instance for the sharing of differing perspectives on a common set of issues, concepts, and constructs that impact each of the participants; this in what at first appears differing ways—relative to the social and political constructions of our identities and positionalities. But upon closer examination, it is revealed that the impacts of those social concepts and constructs—both particular to the call to invitational rhetoric—as well as plural to the social ills to which it seeks to address—affect the two rhetors of this dialogic engagement in ways that actually help us to suture the breach of social division/difference/derision that might keep us apart, might keep us from empathizing with the other. It might prevent us from working collaboratively toward common goals of emancipation from the shackles that bind us—the visible and invisible shackles of our social constructions and positionalities.

In this project, we have held strong to the independent and *immanent value* and an *openness* to each other as collaborators invoked by Foss and Griffin. In each turn of our engagement, we have pivoted on the critical insights of the other to explore a "deep listening" in and with each other as a means to "a transformative dialogue" (Gergen et al., 2001; Junkin, 2017). This transformative dialogue is not meant to persuade or change each other but to focus on the resonance of experiences, differently embodied, that leads to a better understanding of each other and establishes new *templates of sociality* of knowing in/through/with the other. Judith Hamera (1999) writes that "templates of sociality expose, manage, finesse tensions that must continually be resolved by embodied subjects, successfully or otherwise" (p. xi). I believe that through a call for invitational rhetoric, Foss and Griffin, both then and now, are also signaling the same type of relational encounter on a playing field of social negotiation and sense making—a performative engagement of civility that invites participation, drawing toward yet always forestalling conclusions, like the relationship between possibilities and potentialities of being and becoming.

NOTES

1. Wyatt and Gale also direct the reader to additional resources: Alexander, Moreira, and Kumar (2015, 2012); Gale and Wyatt (2009); Kumar, Alexander, and Moreira (2013); Wyatt, Gale, Gannon, and Davies (2011).
2. See the mission statement of Loyola Marymount University and the discussion about "the education of the whole person" at http://mission.lmu.edu/missionstatement/.
3. While I focus on *parrhesia* in the context of interpersonal relationships, Foucault also discusses its performance across public contexts (see 108–133).
4. See Davis and Cooper (2017).
5. Rubin (2017).
6. "Trump blames 'both sides.'"
7. I am using the construct of "feminist futurity" primarily as a feminist performativity that seeks to model an assertiveness of feminine engagement. See also how Prudence Chamberlain (2017) invokes the notion of feminist futures and outlines the feminist fourth wave.
8. And, of course, I am invoking the popularized edict of Malcolm X in his speech delivered June 28, 1963, at the Organization of Afro-American Unity. The phrase ostensibly invites the interpretation that *all available tactics for the desired ends, including* if possible for change to occur, with the use of "necessary" as a "qualifier . . . [meaning that if] violence is not necessary, then presumably, it should not be used ("By any means," 2019).
9. See how Kleinau and Isbell (1977) critique and comment on Bacon's use of the term *tensive* relative to texts, counteracting it as a phenomenological feature that only exists between "perceiver and the object of his perception and does not properly accommodate a discussion of any object, literary or not, independent of an interpreter" (p. 142).
10. http://www.newstalkzb.co.nz/news/world/if-youre-not-outraged-youre-not-paying-attention-charlottesville-victimsmother-gives-emotional-eulogy/.

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16

Understanding Affectively

Beyond the Hills as Cinematic Invitational Rhetoric

Alina Haliliuc

In 1995, Sonja K. Foss and Cindy L. Griffin asked rhetorical scholars to think of rhetorical practices apart from the model of agonistic encounters between adversaries with persuasion as the primary goal.[1] They proposed that invitational rhetoric—discursive practices grounded in the feminist values of equality, immanent value, and self-determination—can lead audiences and rhetors to deeper self- and mutual understanding. In the current context of highly polarized political discourse and a media culture of outrage, understanding invitational rhetoric's depolarizing potential is more urgent than ever.

In this essay, I challenge critiques that suggest that invitational rhetoric is unfit for situations where ideologically entrenched positions reach a crisis point. Such critiques suggest that invitational rhetoric is more suitable under "conditions of economic, political, and social equality among interlocutors."[2] I propose that, quite the contrary, forms of invitational rhetoric can be most effective in situations of ideological entrenchment, and I offer film as an example of such an invitational form. Through the illustrative case of the 2012 Romanian film *Beyond the Hills*, I explore how a sensorially and affectively rich film that offers multiple perspectives in a contentious rhetorical situation functions as invitational rhetoric.[3] By prompting viewers to "feel with" characters who are aligned with competing ideologies, invitational filmic rhetoric fosters the perspective taking and reflection that interrupt easy judgment and automatic loyalties, opening dialogue across ideological camps.

My analysis expands the object domain for invitational rhetoric beyond the verbal and interpersonally performative communication mapped out in Foss and Griffin's original article. I encourage rhetorical critics to explore cinematic and artistic discourse that engages the body as potential invitational rhetoric that can intervene in contentious rhetorical situations. My intention, then, is that this essay function in two ways. First and primarily, I see it as an example of how a narrative feature film can be analyzed as a productive form of invitational rhetoric. Second, I hope it encourages further scholarly attention to the many types of sensorial rhetoric that function invitationally in contentious situations.[4]

Beyond the Hills responds to a social drama that occurred in 2005: Director Cristian Mungiu dramatizes the real story of a young woman's death in a Romanian Christian-Orthodox monastery located near the northern village of Tanacu. What has become known as the *Tanacu case* or the *Tanacu tragedy* concerned Maricia Irina Cornici's death at the hands of nuns and a priest who tried to "cure her of the devil" through an improvised exorcism. At the time, the press relished in sensationalist reporting and found an obvious villain in the clerics and retrograde mentality of religious faith. The media's secular indignation rehearsed ideological purity in a country where post-socialist precarity has kept many of the most vulnerable subjects attached to the church. In this dynamic, the precariat are served socially and spiritually by the church but are also kept in states of precarity by the populist conservative political parties that the church supports. By vilifying their attachment to faith and the church, the media's progressive rhetoric only increased the polarization between conservative and progressive publics.

A democracy-serving media discourse would have tried to undo the injurious attachments that precarious conservative publics have to ideologies that reinforce their marginalization. They would have searched for the best means to understand the Tanacu tragedy and to increase public dialogue. Instead, the media performed a rhetoric of outrage, the most prominent form of persuasive discourse currently eroding democracy through its amplification of polarization. According to Jeffrey M. Berry and Sarah Sobieraj, outrage has become a dominant genre in the media industries, emerging at the intersection of technological developments, increased advertiser influence, media segmentation, and a broader political culture of polarization.[5] With the explicit intention to persuade, a rhetoric of outrage voices a polarizing, dismissive, and unnuanced discourse that reinscribes audiences' attachment to their existing ideological views, sowing mistrust in views different from one's own. In covering the Tanacu case, the Romanian press missed the opportunity for reporting that increased dialogue. By indulging in a dismissive and paternalistic progressive rhetoric of outrage, it fortified the entrenched ideological alignments along religious-conservative versus secular-liberal subject positions.

I propose that *Beyond the Hills* productively inserts itself in the outrage spectacle that the tragedy became. The film exemplifies how invitational rhetoric can work to bridge progressive and religiously conservative publics precisely because it suspends argumentation and debate as the known way to think about an event such as the monastic tragedy. The film crafts an invitational rhetoric that offers the multiple perspectives of those involved in the tragedy (Cornici, her friend, and the clergy) and appeals to the senses to facilitate an affective understanding of such perspectives apart from argumentative defensiveness. As such, the film helps viewers consider the tragedy as co-constituted by the clerics' decisions as well as by dysfunctional institutions, strained relations, and a wider state of precarity for young women like Cornici.

To capture the film's invitational capacity for opening public imagination, I begin with an overview of the Romanian press's reporting of the tragedy, followed by a presentation of director Cristian Mungiu's invitational perspective through Foss and Griffin's lens. I then offer a reading of the film's invitational resources.

OUTRAGE IN THE ROMANIAN PRESS

In the aftermath of Cornici's death, the press produced sensationalist reporting about the "devil in holy clothes"[6] and "the fortress of fanatics."[7] The medieval toolbox used in Cornici's "treatment" seemed to cast a long shadow of backwardness upon the whole society, and the media's response manifested a visible desire to assign culpability to ideologically recognizable groups.[8] Fault was assigned to clerics at the Holy Trinity monastery, who were painted as the religiously backward Other. While the media identified them as the scapegoat, the Orthodox Church itself disidentified from the group by defrocking the priest and closing the monastery immediately following Cornici's death.

Reports and opinion pieces in the national written media vilified the clerics with a vehemence and an ideological selectivity characteristic of a rhetoric of outrage.[9] My review of six publications in the weeks following the events revealed that the press not only aligned with the victim but also attempted to persuade audiences of the clerics' uncontested fault.[10] Focusing on the personalities of the nuns and monks, much of the written press cast them as "dangerous, inept, or immoral."[11] The head priest, Daniel Petre Corogeanu, was singled out as the chief culprit and identified in grossly incriminating terms as "the devil in holy clothes";[12] "the exorcist from Tanacu";[13] the "assassin monk"; or "Daniel, the exorcist."[14] In photographs and headlines that highlighted his long red beard, he was turned into a character descended from local myths about cunning, red-haired antiheroes. He was quoted selectively to appear to be either dangerously inept or heartlessly experimental. For example, Corogeanu was cited as stating, with dangerous naiveté, that "the battle with the devil is very hard" and could not be handled with pills, a reference to the medical treatment of Cornici for pneumonia and schizophrenia.[15] Furthermore, he was seen as leading "a sectarian fanatical movement" within the church because the monastery's entrance carried a sign forbidding non-Orthodox Christians from attending services.[16]

Instead of calibrated analyses of his failures in discernment during the course of the events that ended with Cornici's death, journalists fed the outrage by belittling Corogeanu and the nuns. In keeping with the spirit of a discourse of outrage of "sidestep[ping] the messy nuances of complex political issues in favor of melodrama,"[17] journalists gave disproportionate space on the page to melodramatic speakers. For instance, "former priest Gheorghe Sofianu" was featured proposing that Corogeanu be "skinned alive," and he condemned in passionate terms the proliferation of monasteries "where crazy and illiterate people gather."[18] Indeed, the media extended Corogeanu's character assassination to his entourage—the loyal nuns and the local villagers in Tanacu. They were described as a community of "zealots" from the Middle Ages[19] who isolated themselves in a "fortress of fanatics"[20] and refused to give up their perceived right to religious practice despite the revocation of that right by the upper echelons of the church.[21]

Journalists also repeatedly framed the clerics and the local community of churchgoers as a conflictual one. Articles enthusiastically described turbulent meetings between angry protesters who came out to disapprove of the priest in front of the courthouse and the locals who attended his church who came out to demonstrate their support.[22] Similarly, an episode of physical altercation between the clergy and representatives of the regional bishop who came to close the monastery was described with sensationalist detail. The frame of conflict constructed the spectacle of violent religious fanatics uncontrollable by either higher church authorities or the police and impervious to public opinion.[23]

The press assembled for the laic liberal imagination of its readers a coherent caricature of the religious fanatic. This scene of outrage resembled "the captivating distortions of a funhouse mirror" rather than "the discriminating insights of a microscope."[24] Because keeping ideological purity took precedence over the facilitation of understanding, the media's rhetoric amounted to bullying less educated religious publics rather than articulating a convincing progressive stance. Consequently, the press foreclosed the Romanian public's ability to have meaningful conversations about faith and the Orthodox Church.

BEYOND THE HILLS'S INVITATIONAL INTERVENTION

In the context of media outrage, *Beyond the Hills* functions as what Foss and Griffin call an *offering*, the giving of expression to a perspective without advocating its support or seeking its acceptance. Interviewed about his choice of topic, Mungiu confessed to having directed the film under constant fear that the real events were "too mediated, complex, and sensationalized" to become good cinema.[25] Such apprehension expresses not only an artistic consciousness—Mungiu is known as a prominent film *auteur* who avoids predictably ideological stories—but also a rhetorical one in an invitational key. He read the outraged exploitative public attention to the Tanacu tragedy as itself a form of discursive intolerance reminiscent of the wooden language of Communist indictment. Mungiu states, "I feel like we're not leading the kind of lives we were hoping to twenty-three years ago. I see a lot of tension, a lot of hate, and a lot of lack of joy, compassion, and empathy toward others."[26] Prompted by the interviewer, Mungiu welcomed the possibility that *Beyond the Hills* could lead to good-faith public conversations about the role of religion in Romanian social life, even if he did not trust that such conversations actually would happen.[27]

When he identifies the characteristics of hypothetical productive public conversation, Mungiu enumerates the qualities of good faith, civility, and dialogism that define invitational rhetoric. To Foss and Griffin, the competition, suspicion, assertiveness, and will to win that are prevalent in agonistic rhetorical encounters erode the trust and openness that sustain democracy. In contrast, invitational rhetoric's commitments to equality, immanent value, and self-determination cultivate the necessary openness without which public discourse would turn into preaching to ideological choirs in an atmosphere of generalized cynicism. If public lives have alarmingly taken such an antidemocratic form, films such as *Beyond the Hills* demonstrate how invitational rhetoric can bring more trust, mutual understanding, and dialogue into contexts of divisive discourse.

According to Foss and Griffin, the key modality through which invitational rhetoric enacts "greater understanding of [an] issue in its subtlety, richness, and complexity" is by offering a perspective.[28] The offering is a careful and thorough presentation, often in narrative form, of a rhetor's perspective in the service of understanding rather than argumentation. The authors present the concept of re-sourcement as a form of offering that demonstrates a creative capacity to surpass the generic or logical expectations embedded in a discursive situation. It is a process of creating a new vocabulary by borrowing from a different genre as a way to "deploy another logic or system."[29]

Beyond the Hills is a particularly worthy candidate to study as invitational rhetoric because of its supple capacity to communicate outside logics framed verbally. Film can use re-sourcement not only in small interruptive moments, as in Foss and Griffin's original examples, to divert attention and prevent harm. Film can construct an elaborate perspective on an issue outside of the discursive verbal logics already available in public discourse by drawing on the rich resources of a medium that combines narration, sound, image, acting, and settings.

In the following analysis, I illustrate how Mungiu's offering of perspective takes the form of aligning viewers in succession with the victim, her friend, and the clerics. Such perspective taking is enhanced through the strategy of invocation of the sensorium and affective responses. The embodied attunement to another's bodily sensations prepares audiences to encounter the Other from a position of shared embodiment and humanity. Laura Marks calls this aesthetic strategy *haptic visuality*.[30] As opposed to optic visuality, haptic visuality enables "the viewer to experience cinema as multisensory" by involving the entire body.[31] Marks draws on the notion of synesthesia from neurophysiology and cognitive science to describe film's capacity to appeal to "touch, smell, taste and indeed entire environments of sense experiences."[32] The strategy privileges "the material presence of the image" over the representational power of the image as well as affect over ideological representations; it thus creates minimal separation between the looking subject and the subjects on screen, forging a more intimate understanding of Otherness.[33] Mungiu deploys a multisensory visuality to amplify "feeling with" the characters, an invitation that opens the laic public's imagination to considering perspectives that were lost in the loud chorus of media voices.

To develop the film that pierced through the outrage consensus, Mungiu turned to arguably the first invitational voice that emerged about Tanacu—journalist Tatiana Niculescu Bran's nonfictional novel about the tragedy, *Spovedanie la Tanacu* (*Deadly Confession*),[34] which Mungiu credits as inspiration for his script.[35] Former senior editor of the Bucharest Romanian Bureau of the BBC World Services, Niculescu Bran re-created the tragedy in her book with attention to the vulnerability of young people from former Communist orphanages who try to find security either in Orthodox monasteries or in labor migration.

Beyond the Hills opens with Alina (Cornici's character, played by Cristina Flutur) arriving at the train station near the monastery, where Voichiță (played by Cosmina Stratan), her former orphanage friend and now a nun, awaits her. The reason for Alina's visit gradually becomes clear: She wants Voichiță to return with her to Germany, where they would work on a cruise ship. As Voichiță reveals her commitment to monastic life and her unwillingness to leave its security for the unknown, Alina bursts into episodes of violence against the clerics. The nuns take Alina to the emergency room, where medics puzzle over her condition, and also to the home of her foster family, trying to ensure she receives the care she needs. But the hospital is crowded and the foster family self-protective, and both relinquish responsibility for Alina's care to the nuns who, in their Christian commitment to charity, take her back. After more violent outbursts against the nuns in the monastery, the priest (played by Valeriu Andriuță) wants to send her away. Aware of Alina's social isolation and influenced by other nuns' suspicion that her friend is possessed by the devil, Voichiță implores the priest to keep her friend at the monastery and perform an exorcism. He agrees and begins a ritual in which Alina is read Bible verses while immobilized in the cold spaces of the unfinished monastery. The young woman dies after three days of this ritual, and the film ends when the police arrive to investigate her death.

Feminist academic and public intellectual Mihaela Miroiu describes how watching the film invited her into a deeper emotional and embodied understanding of the circumstances under which the nuns would give up their autonomy and sacrifice the autonomy of another woman as well.[36] In an open letter addressed to the nun who inspired Voichiță's character, Miroiu explains that before she watched *Beyond the Hills* and read the journalistic novel on which Mungiu's script is based, she "had only understood about you, from the media representation of your friend's death, that you're a primitive fanatic among other primitive fanatics."[37] While Miroiu remains committed to the value of individual autonomy, condemning the clergy's deprivation of the victim's liberty, she credits the film for her newfound ability to understand how, for precarious subjects who never had the privilege of social belonging, individual autonomy can be relegated to the group and church ritual in the name of belonging. She was able to imagine the young nuns growing up in the orphanage, rejected and exploited since birth and with nobody but each other to whom to belong until they found the monastic community. Miroiu asserts that she stands corrected in her original righteous perspective: "I had not understood the despair of belonging to no one."[38]

Miroiu's enlarged perspective speaks of the power of the film's invitational rhetoric for audiences otherwise trained by the media to judge the tragedy from the ideological position of the liberal subject who is secure in belonging. In the following pages, I illustrate how the film's rhetoric invitationally opens understanding by aligning audiences successively with Alina's alienation, inadvertently intensified by the clerical community; with the nuns, especially with Voichiță's choice of monastic life as a survival strategy; and with the clerics' struggle to care for an increasingly sick visitor with limited understanding and support from laic institutions. Each of these "offerings" of perspective is accomplished cinematically through a sensorial visuality that intensifies sensation and affect, inviting viewers to place themselves in each position and consider the experience of being the ideological Other.

Affective Understanding of Alina's Alienation

From the opening shot, Alina's unmet desire to belong is constructed through the placement of her body in physically frustrating spaces that accentuate the need for tactility and generate affective scenes of angst. When she embraces Voichiță at the train station, the sharp contrast between her convulsed embrace and the nun's distancing gestures already present a scene of emotional alienation. Alina grabs Voichiță in her arms, digging into the nun's dark thick coat (Figure 16.1). Her desire is already resisted by Voichiță, who pats her on the shoulder with an embarrassed request to let go: "It's OK, it's OK," followed by a firmer, "Alina, let go, people are looking."

On the way to the monastery, Voichiță remains distant, averts her gaze and, once they arrive, busies herself with managerial tasks. The film continues to construct a scene of emotional and physical unresponsiveness at the convent through qualisigns that frustrate the skin. Qualisigns capture the affective, material, and symbolic capacity of objects and nonobjects—lines, textures, colors, angles of light, curves, or motion—to communicate how living in a particular situation feels.[39] Voichiță keeps her gloves on in her private room, indicating that the heating stove is no longer radiating heat and that the little thermal comfort provided in the room is through the thick and scratchy textures of the textiles covering the uninsulated walls. Because Alina does not want to take a nap after her trip, Voichiță offers to help her wash her face in the early spring air with a fresh bucket of water from the well.

The haptic and emotional frustration viewers increasingly experience with Alina in her emotionally and physically unreciprocated encounters with Voichiță intensifies when the two enter the clerical community. Voichiță's precise gestures in her chores and kind interaction with the nuns reveal her to Alina as a fully integrated and beloved member of the clerical group. Alina is surprised, pained, and suspicious of this belonging, which she had regarded as

Figure 16.1. Alina embracing Voichiță. *Beyond the Hills* (2012)

Figure 16.2. The monastic community at dinner. ***Beyond the Hills*** **(2012)**

only instrumental for a fellow orphan with no other place to go. When she jealously asks her friend if she has a particularly close connection with one of the nuns, Voichiţă protectively replies, "We're just helping each other, and that's that." But the film will belie that answer, showing the monastery as filling the clerics' needs for emotional, material, and spiritual support.

The dinner scene best illustrates the film's invitation to understand Alina's acute feelings of marginalization as intensified by the clerical community's cohesion and the priest's benevolent paternalism. Voichiţă's open gaze warms up the space, turning it into one of bodily ease. Flanked by nuns and food, the young nun takes visible comfort in the agglomeration of warm bodies, steaming food, and lighted candles. In this sensorial scene full of qualisigns of comfort and ease, the film constructs well-being as a cluster of bodies satisfied by each other's presence. The freshly sliced yellow polenta in the center of the shot grounds the religious community in its soft warm materiality (Figure 16.2). Candles draw the eye into the depth of the shot to white aprons and kitchen towels hanging on the wall between the priest and the head nun. The young nuns affectionately call the male priest *Daddy* and the head nun *Mommy*. These two symbolic parents discuss the business of the monastery with an informality and warmth indicative of the pleasure the clerics take in the group members' relationship.

The housekeeping talk shows the clerical group to be charitable and benevolent. The monastery has a subsistence farm from which the nuns sell and donate produce. Although they need to sell eggs to afford gas for cooking, the priest sympathetically decides to donate the eggs to the local orphanage instead. Rather than being strict with delayed payments owed them by people and businesses in the community, the clerics also accept mutual indebtedness as one of the dynamics of precarity. They plan to ask the gas provider to put a sorely needed new cylinder on their tab, navigating the precarious economy with lenience even as they count on others' lenience toward them.

If the planned transactions and donations reveal the life of the clerics as governed by humane reciprocity and charity, they also show material paucity as intensifying their desire to keep at bay any difference that may disturb their fragile balance. Thus, the guard dog is often chained, even if he does not like his captivity and frequently breaks loose. Alina, as a foreign other, receives paternalistic attention as well. Visually marginalized through her positioning outside of the candle-delineated group, wearing civilian clothing and her usual suspicious gaze, Alina is emotionally trapped at the margins of this united community whose leader, the priest, tries to make sense of her in alienating terms. After learning that Alina has been living in Germany, the priest lectures her and the nuns on the perils of migration and the virtues of the Orthodox Church over the West and Western Christianity.

The priest speaks like Communist subjects used to speak, using wooden language made up of platitudes meant to position him "with the good."[40] He confesses never wanting to travel to the West because the West has lost its way. "Men marry men, women marry women, drugs everywhere, even the church isn't what it used to be," the priest recites from a Communist-era, anti-Western catalog of sins. His language remains obliviously unkind toward Alina even as he is compassionate toward her choices. He recognizes, referring to the massive labor migration from Romanian villages, that "poor people go wherever they can to earn money for their kids. Meanwhile, children grow up without mothers or fathers." Still, Mungiu does not indulge in demonizing the priest. The film shows the priest genuinely feeling compassion and yet unable to listen to Alina or to refrain from delivering a call to confession to their guest.

Miroiu expresses the film's nuanced presentation of Alina's perspective as alienation in a community that contains her with limited discourse: "This willful and confused girl, ill fit in a world in which her only freedom is obeying, loses her mind because she cannot accept to lose her only anchor, personified by her friend."[41] Indeed, Alina's state deteriorates after she submits, reluctantly, to the priest's call to confession, a ritual whose gestures embody the *ethos* of patriarchal submission to the male authority of the priest. Unlike the Catholic ritual where confessor and confidant maintain their privacy by talking in a booth that screens them away from other believers and from each other, confessions in the Christian Orthodox Church take the form of the priest sitting while the confessant kneels before him, the latter's head covered by the priest's ornamental layer of cassock (Figure 16.3).

Alina returns from confession scared and shivering with a fever. The state of estrangement and alienation viewers have been invited so far to feel with Alina in the face of her friend's coldness and the clerics' paternalism cues audiences into understanding her predicament as a complex knot of affect—she desires to belong, feels the estrangement of her only friend, and feels increasingly entrapped in a community more eager to discipline than understand her. Although the film is subtly critical of the logics of knowledge and power that underlie the Orthodox Church's ethics of care—shown as paternalistic, reserved only for recognizable subjects, and not a Samaritan care open to the stranger—Mungiu's portrayal of the church is a far cry from the unilateral image of an intolerant fanaticism described by the Romanian popular press.

Figure 16.3. Alina at Christian Orthodox confession. *Beyond the Hills* (2012)

After the film takes the time to articulate Alina's perspective, it carefully dramatizes the perspectives of Voichiță and the majority of the clerics. It invites viewers to understand the clerics as a group that is both paternalistic and alienating to nonbelievers but also as the only support network and refuge for vulnerable women who otherwise would face homelessness and abuse. It invites viewers to appreciate the complex challenge that Alina's desire poses to Voichiță and her violent illness presents to the rural clerical community. In articulating Voichiță and the clerics' perspective, *Beyond the Hills* spends time giving audiences an embodied perspective on the monastery as a coveted refuge for poor women in an exploitative and indifferent world.

Affective Understanding of Voichiță's Attachment to the Monastery

During the progression of the film, viewers come to realize that the nun's absent-minded distance toward her friend is not uncaring but is the preoccupied state of someone who intuitively tries to negotiate an existential choice. From the film's early scenes, viewers see both Alina and the religious community as equally exclusivist in claiming Voichiță's belonging. When Voichiță asks the head priest for permission to take a leave of absence from the monastery to help her friend settle more comfortably in Germany, the priest is puzzled by the request. He reminds her that a nun's life requires constant commitment, suggesting that such a leave is out of the question if she is to continue being a nun. As the film progresses, Voichiță's leave from the monastery comes to be seen as highly imprudent because the convent is a prized and scarcely available sanctuary for women in precarious conditions. Voichiță's errands to the nearby town illuminate the multiple scenes of vulnerability for women like her and give viewers the chance to grasp not only the young nun's spiritual but material and social attachment to the monastery. At the local orphanage to which the monastery donates food, a young woman persistently asks the head nun about the availability of a spot at the monastery, having overstayed her term at the orphanage. The head nun offers hope while simultaneously providing a sense of the precarity of local women. She explains that one opening might become available if a current nun returns, as she seems inclined to do, to her abusive husband.

The dangers women face in the outside world are showcased as well at the police station, where Voichiță stops for paperwork for possible international travel with Alina. A clerk becomes suspicious upon learning that Voichiță is an orphan-turned-nun who plans to accompany her friend to work as a waitress in Germany. He pulls "that file with the photos," seemingly an unresolved case against a pedophile passing as a philanthropist who took sexually exploitative pictures of the children and adolescents at the orphanage. The clerk asks Voichiță if she knows him, and she admits to being one of those children. Caught off guard by the unexpected reference to her traumatic history, she refuses to press charges. The clerk does not insist and delivers a lackadaisical warning: "Careful whom you trust. There's all kinds of people."

A long shot of Voichiță on the bus ride back to the monastery shows her alone, gazing pensively at her passport. The scene prompts viewers to reflect on the traumatic history the two women shared and the likelihood of experiencing greater precarity if Voichiță takes the trip. Viewers understand Voichiță's stability at the monastery as precious and tenuous in light of her history and the competition for a monastic spot. Alina's plans, by comparison, appear dangerous, likely to land both women in the hands of sexual predators. After this succession of scenes that shows their chosen life paths as survival strategies—emigration for Alina and finding refuge at the monastery for Voichiță—a crucial next conversation seals the nun's commitment to remain at the monastery.

Voichiță returns from the town without a copy of the school diploma that Alina needs to work legally in Germany. Their buses and boat will take off without them, Alina realizes. Alone again with her friend, Alina finds that Voichiță no longer loves her in "the same way" and that she is not willing to give up her safe spot in the monastery to accompany her to Germany. Alina cuts off the nun when she tries to explain her commitment to God and to the monastic community as a safe space, highlighting Alina's desperation and her potentially abusive attachment to Voichiță; she "doesn't need anyone else," she abruptly declares. At the same time that viewers feel with Alina her sense of desertion and aloneness, they feel Voichiță's anxiety at the imprudent possibility of gambling her tenuous stability for dependence on a high-strung, desperate friend and the precarity of low-skilled international labor.

Mungiu accentuates the intensity of viewers' feeling with both Voichiță and Alina through the affect imprinted onto the materialities of the decisive scene in which the two women face the divide between them. A long shot frames Alina alone and desolate in the room, reeling from the emotional punch she has just received, with Voichiță's bag lying unpacked next to her (Figures 16.4 and 16.5). Although viewers are invited to understand Voichiță's choice as leading to the breakdown of Alina's symbolic world, the immediate shot prompts them to understand the nun's choice as liberating. Voichiță contemplates from the top of the hill the

Figures 16.4 and 16.5. Alina and Voichiță parting ways. *Beyond the Hills* (2012)

small town full of painful memories. Through a series of qualisigns suggestive of the nun's secure anchoring in monastic spaces—at the top of a hill, by a tree, gazing over the laic world she is again leaving behind, in the friendly company of a dog—viewers feel relief at Voichiță's renewed commitment to break with the laic world that Alina represents.

Affective Understanding of Communities of Care

An understanding of the tragedy is not complete without appreciating how the rest of the community, beyond Voichiță, participated in the events leading to Alina's death. Mungiu foregrounds the monastic community as benevolent, sometimes skilled, yet ultimately overwhelmed when Alina's symbolic system crumbles into the disarray of her body and voice, disrupting the fragile order the monastic community tries to maintain and defend. The amplification of anxiety as the defining affect and use of sensorial visuality are mobilized by Mungiu to invite audiences into understanding the clerics as overwhelmed in their ability to care for Alina. Mungiu does not end the film with the clerics' perspective, however, but stages the meeting of perspectives among the priest, Voichiță, and the local police to intensify the conundrum that her care posed.

In the early manifestations of her illness, the clerics are able to manage Alina with resourcefulness and care. She interrupts a midnight religious service with impious snickers, followed by a scene in which she is staring ominously into the well in the yard, ready to jump into the water. The nuns and priest flock to the well, trying to persuade her away from it. Alina screams and lunges violently at the nuns, who struggle to contain her. The four-minute scene, shot with minimal light at night and with long takes, allows audiences to sit with the panic and confusion saturating a moment of crisis. Alina's screams and grunts become indistinguishable from the nuns' in an aural cacophony that aligns viewers' sympathies with all of the actors caught up in this anxious struggle to keep harm at bay.

Voichiță escapes into a room to call the ambulance in a scene that further frustrates the sensorium and builds the affect of anxiety. A close-up frames Voichiță's hands groping for a light, stumbling against objects. She finds the phone and pleads for an ambulance, only to be met with a receptionist unwilling to send service. The ambulance's failure to arrive prompts the clergy to turn to a trusted neighbor to drive them to the local hospital. Both the four-minute struggle in the dark and the minute-long scene of the drive are so uncomfortable that they feel much longer. They invite viewers to ask how they themselves would have acted and allow them to identify with the clerics' initial choices to contain Alina and take her to the emergency room. Their next decisions are dramatized as gradually tragic rather than fanatically so, emerging in moments of similar high anxiety, lack of support from the laic world, and even prudent deliberation.

During Alina's hospitalization, the head nun, the priest, and Voichiță have an initial conversation regarding the visitor's fate in which the young nun insists that they keep her friend at the monastery until she gets better. At the hospital, the medic also relies on the priest's benevolence. Declaring that she is plagued with a lung infection and implying chronic mental illness, he asks if the priest would take the patient in and is relieved to release Alina back to the monastery. He explains that the treatment would be the same in either place and emphasizes that she needs to be protected from stress, something difficult to do in a hospital noisy with renovation work and crowded with sick people.

The priest repeatedly expresses doubts about Alina's capacity to adapt to monastic life after she intimidates the nun whom Voichiță favors and challenges the priest himself. The priest negotiates with compassion and clarity Alina's fate with Voichiță, the head nun, and Alina herself, expressing doubt about the arrangement and suggesting instead that Alina go to live with her previous foster family. But the young woman is fearful she will lose Voichiță, her only stable attachment in the world. Further disillusioned with the foster family's inability to return money entrusted to them, she insists on joining the clerical community, forcing the priest to take her in.

The incompatibility between the austere monastic life and a weakened, desperate and willful outsider becomes irreconcilable. Alina is torn among the desire to please her friend by following the rituals of confession and prayer, jealousy of Voichiță's relation with another nun, and anger at the rigidity of the community. As she becomes increasingly agitated and violent, the nuns become increasingly fearful of her, leaving viewers to wonder anxiously when the next outburst will strike. Alina verbally intimidates the nuns, follows Voichiță ominously to night prayer and menial jobs, breaks an icon held in pious esteem by the community, screams profanity at the priest, and interrupts the service for the local community by ringing the church bells and setting on fire the room to which she is confined for the duration of the service. The succession of these actions, set against the expansive and quiet spaces of the monastery, constructs dread as the affective state of the film. As the monastery and its inhabitants become increasingly isolated by an overpowering snowfall, viewers are positioned to anticipate what seems like an inevitable next crisis and dread its consequences for Alina. After a tumultuous outburst of violence, the clerics immobilize her again. Realizing that there is nobody else willing to care for her, the priest gives into requests from Voichiță and the head nun to keep Alina tied up and to read her the scriptures in an effort to remove the devil.

As the exorcism progresses, anxiety toward managing Alina's crises turns into dread about her entrapment at the monastery as Mungiu repositions viewers to feel with Alina's body, tied up for the ritual in a frigid, unfinished room in the courtyard. Snow continues to fall heavily, and cold passes through the thin glass walls of the uninsulated room, reinforced by the characters' ever-visible breaths. Alina's body remains trapped by the nuns as the community "beyond the hills" is transformed from a refuge into a prison. Feeling powerless to respond to her friend's desperate cries, Voichiță's own body collapses into desolation. Voichiță's face has been reflecting, in the early parts of the film, the warmth of belonging and trust in the religious community, while the shape of her body, in its verticality, visually complemented her performance of steadfast belief. As the ritual progresses with no success and no means of escape, Voichiță's body loses its verticality. The nun becomes a bent line and, finally, under the affective weight of desolation, a creased texture (Figures 16.6 and 16.7). Collapsed in prayer for the first time, Voichiță blends seamlessly into the desolate room of the monastery as a warped, textured form, indistinguishable from the other textures that cover the walls, beds, and table in the room's silent tableau. Like Alina's trapped body, Voichiță's collapsed body calls the viewer to feel the anxiety and desperation of having nobody to whom to turn.

Miroiu again voices a potential understanding of Voichiță's desperation and willingness to leave Alina stranded for the ritual. She attributes it to the smallness of the nun's social and symbolic world, a smallness that characterizes the lives of many Romanians: "Of the rest of us—people who belong to someone, those of us who have access to crying out in public . . . and who can treat our physical and psychological ailments not through the mortifications of the body and the soul—you had no way of knowing. Like many other Romanians, you had no way of learning more flexible and humanistic alternatives to the clerical ethics of total withdrawal and austerity that Orthodox monks postulate as the only sanctioned way to be."[42] With enlarged awareness of the discursive, affective, medical, and educational privileges that

Figures 16.6 and 16.7. Voichiță collapsing in prayer. *Beyond the Hills* (2012)

the middle class affords, Miroiu reconsiders from a position of value and respect Voichiță's relegation of her agency to a church ritual that is beginning to go tragically wrong.

For precarious subjects who do not belong—who live in a materially and discursively impoverished environment, burdened with care for others whose distress they cannot comprehend—autonomy clearly does not look or weigh the same as it does to liberal subjects secure in their belonging and educational privileges. To Miroiu, such understanding beyond her own ideological position, opened by the film's invitational rhetoric, also moves her to feeling shared responsibility. As a public intellectual, she begins to question the function of progressive public voices in further isolating the undereducated marginalized people like Alina and the nuns: "The rest of us, living in the laic world and aware of secular ethics seem to have failed equally towards those most don't care about, since we have not found a way to offer them a helping hand."[43]

The film's ending keeps viewers in the intensity of anxiety, compelling them to sustain the complex moral dilemma that has unfolded. The dialogue between the police and clergy does not resolve this dilemma but brings understanding of each perspective. Arriving at the monastery after Alina's death, the officers' questions accentuate the gravity of events as seen through the eyes of the authorities: "Did you tie her down, Father?" "Did you tie her to a cross with chains?" the investigators ask incredulously. The verdict that one investigator delivers—"Father, it looks bad. Forced imprisonment followed by death. You could get twenty years or more behind bars"—is short lived. The priest retorts that the hospital personnel also had tied Alina down, she had set her room on fire, and immobilization was the only way to deal with her violence. Furthermore, the priest argues, they were the only ones left to care for her when all others "got rid of her quickly."

The dialogue aligns viewers alternatively with authorities and the clergy and infuses the scene with the anxiety of no simple verdict. Voichiță's eyes follow the back and forth of this exchange between the police and the priest, dramatizing the difficulty of assigning righteous blame. The scene compels viewers to contemplate responsibility as shared among systemic failure, the misguided actions of the clergy, and Voichiță's own participation through wishful thinking and trust in a community that had the good will but not the means to heal Alina's social and bodily precarity. Voichiță's face amplifies the aporia in which viewers find themselves, allowing them to identify with the conundrum of care that the clergy have faced.

CONCLUSION

Beyond the Hills goes to great lengths to offer sensorially and affectively rich perspectives on the tragedy. Its strategy of re-sourcement, I have illustrated, allows viewers to understand affectively the precarious world that Irina Cornici/Alina had to navigate as well as her embodied, emotional, and social deprivation. The film invites viewers to understand, from an empathetic position of trust and embodied attunement, not only the victim but also the clerics whose genuine desire to help turned fatal when expressed in moments of crisis, in the impoverished terms of religious discourse, and at the abandonment of laic institutions.

To rhetorical critics, *Beyond the Hills* shows how, in rhetorical situations of ideological entrenchment and monologism, film can open space for understanding the Other with alert empathy and nonrighteous judgment. Obviously, not all filmic rhetoric is invitational, and the work of this chapter has been to illuminate a rhetorical strategy of "speaking" invitationally onscreen: that is, the construction of multiple perspectives with the help of sensorial visuality. Such an aesthetic narrative choice, I propose, bridges the empathy gap between viewers and the characters on screen.

Beyond the Hills dramatizes the idealized "I-Thou" Buberian relationship that Foss and Griffin want for invitational rhetoric by offering a rich perspective on the affective and existential states of multiple characters: Alina, Voichiță, and the clerics who try to help both.[44] *Beyond the Hills* dramatizes Alina's desire to belong and her precarity in the world, impressing on viewers her vulnerability as a poor orphaned woman who has a hard time sustaining life abroad in the absence of meaningful relationships. It also presents Voichiță's choice to stay at the monastery and deny her friend as a difficult but also a prudent one. Finally, the film carefully stages the clerics' care for Alina as genuine and sometimes skilled, yet ultimately fatal because of their inability to read her emotional and physical needs and their subordination of those needs to the fatal ritual.

Beyond the Hills has accomplished a successive alignment with multiple perspectives not by employing visually, aurally, and narratively crafted arguments analogous to verbal persuasive discourse. Nor does the film employ the more conventional strategy of Hollywood cinema in which the plot moves in a clear ideological direction through optic visuality. Film scholars and rhetoricians alike have analyzed how, more often than not, familiar Hollywood aesthetic strategies reinscribe audiences within dominant ideologies, turning films into cultural discourses of hegemonic alignment rather than productive disturbance.[45] In contrast, Mungiu's filmic rhetoric is deeply invitational because, when aligning audience members with multiple perspectives, it immerses them affectively and sensorially in the worlds of the characters. The ability to "feel with the characters," I have suggested, is primarily accomplished through a haptic visuality that privileges the material and not-always-symbolic qualities of the image, a strategy more common in independent cinema. The textures, colors, shapes, and duration of shots evoke the senses and give viewers an embodied-emotive capacity to feel with characters caught in complex conditions. The strategies foreclose easy resolution of complex problems and lead to transformation rather than alignment with one perspective. By exposing the I to the perspective of the Other and "let[ting] it have its impact,"[46] invitational cinematic rhetoric does not play into the existing ideological assumptions of viewers but challenges them to become immersed sensorially and affectively in the Other's universe.

This essay is rooted in a case study that examines how a tragic cultural event can be rerouted to open public dialogue. If democracies are maintained through public discourse that engages with public issues in established forums (e.g., town halls, public squares, and the television news), films such as *Beyond the Hills* challenge individuals to understand how democracies are also shaped by forms of discourse unavailable to traditional rhetors. The communication discipline would be well served if scholars inquire more often how artists and other public intellectuals shape public discourse in written, performed, filmed, sung, or danced invitational forms. Artistic cultural work continuously offers nuance to the democratic imagination. It renews the vocabularies individuals use to understand complex problems beyond the ideological boundaries too often policed by a dominant outrage media and by professional politicians. Films such as *Beyond the Hills* remind rhetorical critics to allow themselves to recognize the role for and legitimacy of creative and artistic public voices in democracies.

NOTES

1. Sonja K. Foss and Cindy L. Griffin, "Beyond Persuasion: A Proposal for an Invitational Rhetoric," *Communication Monographs* 62, no. 1 (1995): 2–18.

2. Nina M. Lozano-Reich and Dana L. Cloud, "The Uncivil Tongue: Invitational Rhetoric and the Problem of Inequality," *Western Journal of Communication* 73, no. 2 (2009): 221.

3. *Beyond the Hills*, directed by Cristian Mungiu (Bucharest: Mobra Films, 2012).

4. In this respect, my essay, the editors of this collection, and the work of rhetoricians who examine affective-sensorial filmic rhetoric suggest a critical literature available to scholars interested in film as invitational rhetoric. Earlier and more recent examples of film's embodied potential in rhetoric are Thomas W. Benson, "The Rhetorical Structure of Frederick Wiseman's *Primate*," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 71, no. 2 (1985): 204–17; Martin J. Medhurst, "*Hiroshima, Mon Amour*: From Iconography to Rhetoric," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 68, no. 4 (1982): 345–70; Brian L. Ott and Diane Marie Keeling, "Cinema and Choric Connection: *Lost in Translation* as Sensual Experience," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 9, no. 4 (2011): 363–86.

5. Jeffrey M. Berry and Sarah Sobieraj, *The Outrage Industry: Political Opinion Media and the New Incivility* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

6. Teo Popescu, "Devil in Holy Clothes," *Evenimentul Zilei*, June 18, 2005, 1.

7. Toma Roman, Jr. and Vladimir Ioan, "The Fortress of Fanatics," *Jurnalul National*, June 29, 2005, 6.

8. The shadow of backwardness carries the legacy of a stigmatizing national imagination that scholars have identified as a discourse of Balkanism about the region. In the derogatory Western European imagination of its Eastern counterpart, the Balkans are symbolized as "the spectacle of a timeless, incomprehensible, mythical cycle of passions," an imagination that disavows the late-capitalist and post-colonial

problems of Western nations and projects them onto its Eastern Other. See Slavoj Žižek, "Multiculturalism, or the Cultural Logic of Multinational Capitalism," *New Left Review* 225 (September/October 1997): 38. Such imagination is routinely appropriated and circulated within Eastern Europe to cast the alleged sins of Balkan backwardness and chaos upon internal and neighborly Others. Two essays that illustrate how a Balkanist rhetoric casts the Roma as Other in Romania and neighboring countries are Ioana Szeman, "'Gypsy Music' and Deejays: Orientalism, Balkanism, and Romani Musicians," *The Drama Review* 53, no. 3 (2009): 98–116; and Alina Haliliuc, "Manele Music and the Discourse of Balkanism in Romania," *Communication, Culture & Critique* 8, no. 2 (2014): 290–308. Christina Morus analyzes how non-Serbian ethnics were imagined as national Others to the Serbian people through a similar stigmatizing logic in "The SANU Memorandum: Intellectual Authority and the Constitution of an Exclusive Serbian 'People,'" *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 4, no. 2 (2007): 142–65.

9. I offer examples from the national written press with a reputation for balanced reporting to exemplify the generalized discourse of outrage in the public sphere at the time. Commercial television stations, under higher incentives to engage in sensationalist reporting, reveled even more in constructing the events as a scandal.

10. The publications reviewed for this project were the national dailies *Evenimentul Zilei*, *Jurnalul National*, *Adevarul*, and *Romania Libera* and the weeklies *Revista 22* and *Dilema Veche.*

11. Berry and Sobieraj, *The Outrage Industry*, 8.

12. Popescu, "Devil in Holy Clothes," 1.

13. Daniel Grosu, "The Exorcist from Tanacu Received with Fists and Insults," *Romania Libera*, June 25, 2005, 1.

14. Dan Bucura and Valentin Popescu, "Doctors from Vaslui Are Accused in the Death of Tanacu Nun," *Adevarul*, June 23, 2005, 14.

15. Liviu Iolu, "Executioner Accompanies His Victim on Her Last Road," *Evenimentul Zilei*, June 20, 2005, 2; Daniel Grosu, "Priest 'Red Beard' Regrets Nothing," *Romania Libera*, June 20, 2005, 1.

16. Roman and Ioan, "The Fortress of Fanatics," 6.

17. Berry and Sobieraj, *The Outrage Industry*, 7.

18. Popescu, "Devil in Holy Clothes," 3.

19. Marius Vasileanu, "Exorcising the Priest Factory," *Adevarul*, June 20, 2005, 14.

20. Roman and Ioan, "The Fortress of Fanatics," 6.

21. Popescu, "Devil in Holy Clothes," 3.

22. See, for example, Grosu, "The Exorcist from Tanacu"; Bucura and Popescu, "Doctors from Vaslui are Accused."

23. See, for example, Popescu, "Devil in Holy Clothes," 3.

24. Berry and Sobieraj, *The Outrage Industry*, 8.

25. Cristian Mungiu, interview by Razvan Braileanu, "International Recognition Does Not Help in Making Another Good Film," *Revista*, June 5, 2012, accessed January 9, 2019, https://revista22.ro/interviu/cristian-mungiu-recunoasterea-internaional-nu-te-ajut-cu-nimic-la-realizarea-altui-film-bun.

26. Cristian Mungiu, interview by Mihai Gotiu, "If We Don't Like What We See in Romanian Cinema, Let's Change the Substance, Not the Image," *CriticAtac*, accessed December 10, 2018, http://www.criticatac.ro/interviu-exclusiv-cristian-mungiu-dac-nu-ne-place-ce-vedem-filmele-romaneti-hai-schimbm-coninutul-nu-imaginea/.

27. Mungiu, interview by Razvan Braileanu.

28. Mungiu, interview by Razvan Braileanu, 5, 7.

29. Philippe Forget, "Argument(s)," in *Dialogue and Deconstruction: The Gadamer-Derrida Encounter*, ed. Diane P. Michelfelder and Richard E. Palmer (Albany: SUNY Press, 1989), 136.

30. Laura U. Marks, *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000), 22.

31. Marks, *The Skin of the Film*, 23.

32. Marks, *The Skin of the Film*, 22.

33. Marks, *The Skin of the Film*, 163. Marks's attention to haptic visuality is part of a larger recent turn across disciplines to aesthetics, affect, and material semiotics to account for agency as embedded in and shared with material environments; Marks's focus is on material environments communicated on screen. See, for example, Ann Cvetkovich, *Depression: A Public Feeling* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012); Sianne Ngai, *Our Aesthetic Categories: Zany, Cute, Interesting* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015); Kathleen Stewart, "Atmospheric Attunements," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 29, no. 3 (2011): 445–53. In the communication discipline, examples of scholarship on how individuals are materially-affectively moved include Jenny Edbauer, "Unframing Models of Public Distribution: From Rhetorical Situation to Rhetorical Ecologies," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 35, no. 4 (2005): 5–24; Debra Hawhee, *Moving Bodies: Kenneth Burke at the Edges of Language* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2009); Thomas J. Rickert, *Ambient Rhetoric: The Attunements of Rhetorical Being* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2013).

34. Tatiana Niculescu Bran, *Spovedanie la Tanacu* (Bucharest: Humanitas Publishing, 2006).

35. The film won the 2012 Cannes Film Festival award for best screenplay.

36. Mihaela Miroiu, "Nobody's People," *Revista* 22, November 6, 2012, accessed January 10, 2019, https://revista22.ro/opinii/nihaela-miroiu/oamenii-nim259nui.

37. Miroiu, "Nobody's People."

38. Miroiu, "Nobody's People."

39. Krisztina Fehérváry, *Politics in Color and Concrete: Socialist Materialities and the Middle Class in Hungary* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 9–10.

40. Francoise Thom, *Newspeak: The Language of Soviet Communism*, trans. Ken Connelly (London: Claridge, 1989), 95.

41. Miroiu, "Nobody's People."

42. Miroiu, "Nobody's People."

43. Miroiu, "Nobody's People."

44. Foss and Griffin, "Beyond Persuasion," 7.

45. See, for example, Barbara A. Biesecker, "Remembering World War II: The Rhetoric and Politics of National Commemoration at the Turn of the 21st Century," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 88, no. 4 (2002): 393–409. A rich array of examples of films aligning audiences with dominant ideologies are examined in David Blakesley, ed., *The Terministic Screen: Rhetorical Perspectives on Film* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2007).

46. Martin Buber, *Between Man and Man* (New York: Macmillan, 1965).

17

Participatory Graffiti as Invitational Rhetoric

The Case of O Machismo

Benjamin R. Bates

In March 2009, the Brazilian government passed Law 706/07, a law decriminalizing graffiti if the owner of a building consented to their property becoming decorated. In Sao Paolo and Rio de Janeiro, street artists capitalized on this opportunity to present their work without being accused of vandalism (Walters, 2012). Although street art has been present in Brazil as a way to deal with long-lasting challenges of poverty, narcotics, and misgovernment, Law 706/07 also allowed a shift from furtive tagging to a recognized and productive form of art in the country (Ganz, 2009; Lost Art, Neelon, & Manco, 2005).

In making this shift, the government of Brazil also created a clear delineation between vandalism and street art, a division commonly remarked upon in studies of graffiti. As described by Cluver (2011; see also Carrington, 2009), this division of graffiti into either vandalism or street art recognizes that, although they share materials and techniques, vandalism primarily exists to draw attention to the creator and the creator's tags, while street art primarily exists to draw attention to the immediate message of the art itself.

This article examines a particular instance of Brazilian graffiti: O Machismo. Unlike previous studies of graffiti, which assume that the artists' message is contained in the initial graffito, O Machismo creates an invitational visual rhetoric. That is, I argue that this graffiti project invites viewers to participate in completing the art project and collectively share in co-creating its message. I begin by outlining previous understandings of graffiti as visual communication. I then offer themes that emerge in O Machismo when viewers participate in the construction of this visual rhetoric. Finally, I offer some ideas about how an invitational visual rhetoric expands our previous understandings of graffiti.

GRAFFITI AS INVITATIONAL RHETORIC

Graffiti have been a communication channel deployed by those without access to traditional public communication media. For example, Miladi (2015) argued that graffiti became an

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alternative channel during the Arab Spring in Tunisia. Although the government asserted control over traditional and social media, the "graffiti writings and political slogans painted on street walls, doors, and sometimes on pavements and grounds of public spaces became significant means of effective communication" (Miladi, p. 134).

Graffiti's transformation of urban space into a medium for resistance is well documented. Graffiti artists in Greece protested against policies of austerity (Zaimakis, 2015), while those in South Africa have used graffiti to protest Apartheid and, more recently, against government inactions on corruption, poverty, and the spread of HIV/AIDS (Bodunrin, 2014). Other uses of graffiti include marking the public square in old East Berlin, Germany, during a period of gentrification (Papen, 2012); at historically Black colleges in the United States from the 1970s to the 1990s (Rodriguez & Clair, 1999); on the wall separating Jerusalem from the Occupied Territories to the west by both Israelis and Palestinians (Hanauer, 2011); in Gezi Park, Istanbul, Turkey, during the heyday of the Occupy movement (Tas & Tas, 2014); and in Egypt during the Arab Spring (Abaza, 2013; de Ruiter, 2015).

Specifically in Brazil, Iddings, McCafferty, and Da Silva's (2011) examination of graffiti in Vila Madalena, a neighborhood of Sao Paolo, argued that graffiti artists attempted to create *conscientização* in their neighborhood. That is, graffiti were a form of consciousness-raising in which the artist's message would be recognized by community members and lead them to agitate for social change. Alternatively, de Carvalho Oliveira and Salgueiro Marques (2014) claimed that the graffiti in Sao Paolo during a national celebration of the arts called on viewers to delegitimize state and institutionally controlled art museums in Brazil in favor of street art.

In these studies of graffiti, the general conclusion has been that graffiti are a resistant and an interactive form of communication. It is, however, a particular kind of interactivity. The posting of a graffito seizes the public square from authoritative control and creates a space where discussion is welcome (Miladi, 2015). Implicitly these studies posit that the artist creates a graffito and places it on a wall where the viewer then decodes the message in the graffito and responds accordingly. O Machismo art does not assume this linear transmission.

O Machismo does not ask viewers to congregate and interact with one another as they attempt to decode the artwork, the approach examined in previous studies; O Machismo asks viewers to complete an unfinished piece of artwork. Specifically, O Machismo offers the beginning of a sentence—"*O machismo não me cala porque . . .*" (Machismo doesn't silence me because . . .)—and allows the viewer to write in, literally, the reason that they are not silenced by machismo. The completions of the sentence—the interactivity of this graffiti—demonstrate responses to this invitation. As such, O Machismo may be a form of invitational rhetoric. At a practical level, invitational rhetoric is performed when a rhetor offers her perspective and then creates "external conditions that allow and encourage others to present their perspectives" (Foss, 2009, p. 570).

As described by Foss and Griffin (1995), there are three main features emphasized in an invitational rhetoric that distinguish it from a traditional rhetoric: equality, respect for the immanent value of all living beings, and appreciation for self-determination. In allowing equality, an invitational rhetor seeks not to impose a perspective on another but to invite "the audience to enter the rhetor's world and to see it as the rhetor does" (p. 5). That is, the invitational rhetor recognizes that her view is one perspective among many and that a successful rhetoric does not deny the legitimacy of other views. By embracing immanent value, the invitational rhetor also offers the opportunities for "rhetor and audience alike [to] contribute to the thinking about an issue so that everyone involved gains a greater understanding of its subtlety, richness, and complexity" (p. 5). In this move, the rhetor does not open herself to counterpersuasion; rather, she enters into conversation where she can learn from and begin to appreciate perspectives of others who engage with the issues. Finally, the invitational rhetor allows self-determination. The transformation in speaker and audience is not a violent victory of one idea resulting in feelings of "guilt, embarrassment or angry submission" that accompany traditional persuasion; instead, the transformation engenders "an appreciation for new perspectives gained and gratitude for the assistance provided by others in thinking about an issue" (p. 6).

Although invitational rhetoric offers an alternative approach to traditional rhetoric, it has been criticized at both the theoretical level and the practical level. As reviewed and responded to by Bone, Griffin, and Scholz (2008), opponents of invitational rhetoric claim a variety of inconsistencies in how invitational rhetoric has been theorized: that invitational rhetoric is a masked form of persuasion but also posits, incorrectly, that all persuasion is violent; that invitational rhetoric claims to be appropriate in all rhetorical situations but is also gender-specific and essentialized to being able to be used by women speakers only; and that it denies agency to speakers while claiming to allow agency. As noted by Bone and her colleagues, these tensions also are found in theorizations of non-invitational rhetoric that do not lead to the dismissal of these non-invitational theorizations. Moreover, the existence of these tensions reveals the utility of an invitational approach that allows the richness of complexity of these tensions to emerge and be acknowledged in theorization of rhetoric.

The second critique of invitational rhetoric is that, at a practical level, it is too cumbersome, time-consuming, and utopian to be useful in the real world (Bone et al., 2008). Although acts of invitational rhetoric may be less common than acts of traditional rhetoric, there have been several explorations of real-world written and spoken discourse using this lens. Explorations of invitational rhetoric in practice include Kirtley's (2014) examination of composition pedagogy; DeLaure's (2008) and Carey's (2014) investigation of Ella Baker's speaking style; Taylor, Durant, and Boje's (2007) and Greiner and Singhal's (2009) considerations of health and safety communication; and Bone et al.'s (2008) considerations of spoken and written dialogue in Jimmy Carter's listening tour during the energy crisis and the World Trade Center site's post 9–11 dialogue. There have also been efforts to extend invitational rhetorical principles into our classroom teaching (Mallin & Anderson, 2000; Novak & Bonine, 2009) and interactive web technologies (Harrison & Barthel, 2009). Closer to the present project, Bone et al. (2008) discussed how the AIDS quilt allowed viewers to enter into dialogue, encounter panels that had shareable worldviews, and contribute their own panels in response to these invitations. The invitational possibilities that have been explored are largely textual, and they are largely formal. O Machismo, because of its illicit but not illegal format and its visual form, may allow us to explore whether a visual invitational rhetoric is possible. Because O Machismo is painted in the form of an invitation, we might ask, then, how do Brazilians respond to this invitational graffiti?

O MACHISMO

Graffiti in Rio de Janeiro is fleeting. Although the supply of graffiti in Rio appears to be infinite, this examination focuses on the O Machismo graffiti posted along Travessa do Comércio in the old center of Rio (see Figure 17.1 for an example). This alleyway is popular among graffiti artists because of its proximity to commercial and government buildings, both of which allow many viewers to encounter it, but also because the walls of the alley are regularly

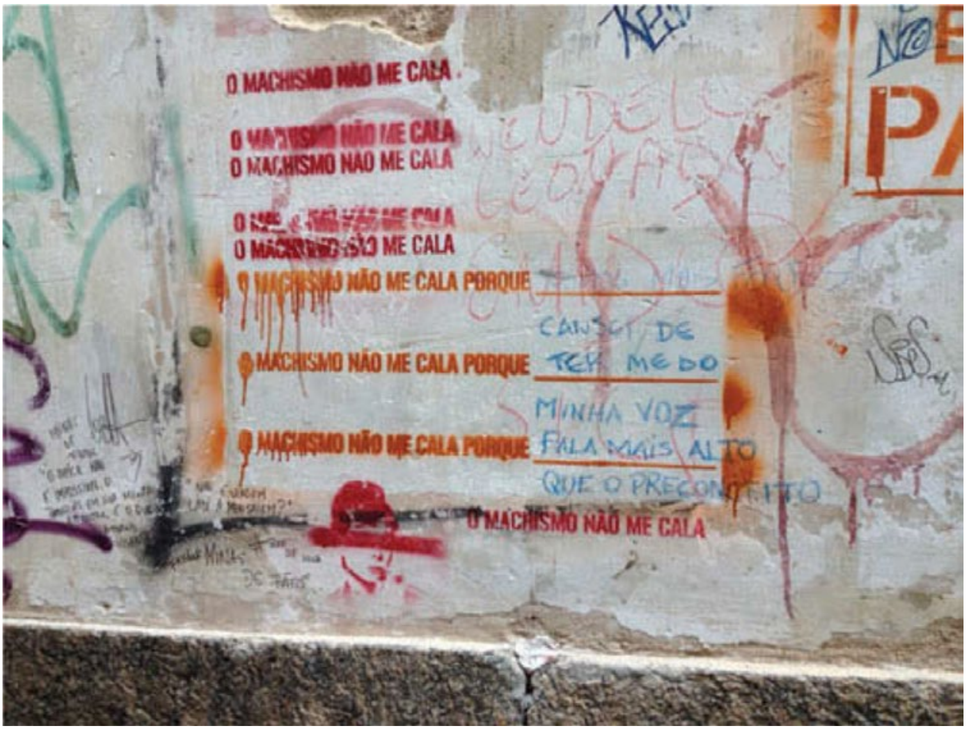

Figure 17.1. An example of O Machismo graffiti.

repainted in white or beige to cover the graffiti posted there. The walls become, in Derrida's (1980) and Barthes' (1985) terms, a form of palimpsest wherein the combination of high potential viewership and potential blank canvasses invites many temporary installations of graffiti. The graffiti I photographed represent all completions of the O Machismo invitation present along Travessa do Comércio on May 26, 2016. I did this because the photograph's "essence is to ratify what it represents" (Barthes, 1981, p. 85), to show that the thing being discussed had an existence, however fleeting it may be. None of the graffiti were present three days earlier, and the wall was repainted, destroying all of these graffiti, within one week. Indeed, some of the graffiti recorded had already been partially painted over by new artists, even as the O Machismo graffiti was, itself, painted over other pieces.

Using stencils and red paint, the artists emblazoned the wall repeatedly with "O machismo não me cala" ("Machismo doesn't silence me"). Among the red slogans, other stenciled works painted in orange offered the same phrase, followed by "porque" and a blank line. The red paint makes a statement about machismo not silencing the individual who paints, while the orange paint invites the viewer to give the reasons for not being silenced. Scattered on the ground were markers of various colors—red, blue, green—that the viewer could pick up and use to complete the statement.

Many viewers responded to this invitation. Because the work is not signed, it is not possible to follow up with the viewers to ask them what their responses intended. These additional graffiti, posted in response to and in completion of the original graffito, become part of the public statement and part of the dialogue. To examine these responses, a thematic analysis of the completions of the invitation was performed (see Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, pp. 211–228 for a review). The viewers responded to the invitation in three ways: statements of solidarity, direct expressions of the problems with machismo, and comparisons between machismo and an implied *feminisma*.

The first way that viewers responded to the invitation was to make statements of solidarity. This response emerges when viewers state that machismo does not silence them because the viewer has identified common interests with others resisting machismo. Example completions of regarding solidarity include viewers who wrote, "*O machismo não me cala porque juntas somos fortes*" ("Machismo doesn't silence me because together we are stronger"), "*juntas somos mais*" ("together we are more"), and "*somos mais fortes*" ("we are stronger"). Complementing these statements that focus on "*somos*" ("we") are viewers who focus on "*eu*" ("I"). These include statements like "*eu sou uma mulher mobilizada*" ("I am a mobilized woman"), "*sei que as mulheres são mais fortes do que ele*" ("I know women are stronger than him") and "*[eu] sou mais mulher*" ("I'm more woman"). The inclusion of the self in mobilization or in becoming "more woman" contributes to the shared strength of those who would not need machismo in Brazilian society. These statements, and their sharing in a "*somos*" ("we"), may enact forms of identification similar to those named by Cheney as the "assumed 'we'" (1983, p. 154; see also Burke, 1950) when he argues that this blending of the interests of the collective with the interests of the individuals gives priority to their shared interests. In this case, and unlike in Cheney's work, because the "we" is deployed by the respondent to the invitation rather than by the collective, her completion of the statement is what may engender identification with other opponents of machismo who have completed the statement alongside and with her. In short, the expression of solidarity may be an enactment of invitational rhetoric's focus on equality between speakers and audience.

The second way that viewers responded to the invitations was to make statements that directly express the problems with machismo. Some statements about the need to not be silenced by machismo articulate the impact that machismo can have on women in Brazilian society. For example, one woman wrote, "*O machismo não me cala porque cansei de ter medo*" ("I'm tired of being afraid"). The exact fear felt by this woman is difficult to place: It could be the threat of violence, of displacement from the home, of unequal employment and social opportunities, or more. This polyvalent statement, and its emphasis on the exhaustion that comes from being on edge in a macho society, may call on women to speak against that society and the fear it engagers. This fear underlying this contribution may become concrete when another viewer writes, "*o machismo mata*" ("machismo kills"). Other statements complement the need to not be silent by explicitly emphasizing the power of women's voice. For instance, one writer stated the machismo did not silence her because "*minha voz fala mais alto que o preconceito*" ("my voice speaks louder than prejudice"). Although this writer may also feel fear pressures from a macho society, she also indicated that objecting to macho patterns of thinking, communication, and behavior could be a path to overcome machismo. Problems with machismo were felt not only by women but also by men. Although statements of solidarity allowed a gender neutral "we" coupled with a feminine "I" to emerge, naming problems with machismo allow both men and women to contribute. For example, one man completed the statement by writing "*sou homem e me recuso a viver com o mal e sigualdade tao primititva*" ("I'm a man and I refuse to live with evil and such primitive inequality"). By expressing that he was male, yet did not need machismo, this author may allow other men to see a place for themselves in this O Machismo graffiti. Moreover, by making clear that machismo can be rejected by men as well as women, this male contributor, in conversation with female contributors, may allow perspectives on the role of machismo and gendered oppression to emerge that complement woman-centered perspectives (for a review, see Smith, 2001). Moreover, this type of response echoes invitational rhetoric's respect for the immanent value of all human beings.

The final way that viewers respond to the invitation are statements comparing machismo to an implied *feminisma*. These responses emerge when viewers articulate that machismo does not silence them because they can rely on principles stated in various feminist approaches. Unlike the previous category, the implied viewers/co-constructors of the graffiti are women. For example, viewers who wrote things like "*O machismo não me cala porque o corpo me*" ("my body") or "*my pussy e poder*" ("my pussy and power") state that machismo is not silencing because the viewer has the right to bodily integrity and autonomy. The first statement speaks to the general body, but the second goes further to state directly that women's sexuality, positioned in the body, grants power against machismo. These readings may allow further claims, such as machismo not silencing because "*sou forte que do homem*" ("I am stronger than man"). This comparative statement may, similar to the distinction that Poirot (2009) drew between domesticated feminism and radical feminism, indicate that some viewers may see a need to replace machismo with a superior, more woman-centered way of organizing society. Indeed, this call is enacted when one viewer writes that machismo does not silence her because "*vc veio do meu utero eu vim da sua costela*" ("U came from my womb and I came from his rib"). Instead of the biblical ordering of creation, where woman was made from man's rib, the macho man is remade into the product of woman. That is, while the implied author of this statement is a woman created by God from man's rib, the individual who relies on machismo is the creation of a mother through childbearing (compare to Colaner, 2009). In this case, and in extension of the distinctions made by Poirot, a non-macho ordering of society better reflects the strength and creative power of the female body. Moreover, in doing so, these responses emphasize invitational rhetoric's focus on self-determination, particularly for women.

INTERPRETATION AND IMPLICATIONS

These three responses to O Machismo's invitation—statements of solidarity, direct expressions of the problems with machismo, and comparisons between machismo and an implied feminism—come together to create a collective invitational rhetoric expressed mutually by the initial artist and the viewers. In both the form of the invitation and its content, O Machismo creates an invitational rhetoric. As described by Foss and Griffin (1995), an invitational rhetoric seeks not to persuade individuals into accepting or rejecting a point of view but to create spaces for understanding that allow both the initial speaker and her audience to contribute perspectives.

As an explicitly invitational rhetoric, O Machismo does not present its messages—a critique of machismo—as a thing to be accepted or rejected. Instead, the beginning fragment, "Machismo does not silence me because . . . ," allows viewers to decide whether they want to enter into the perspective and lifeworld of the message and supply their own conclusion. Rather than the hierarchical and patriarchal presentation of persuasion via graffiti emphasized by others, O Machismo invites viewers to become graffiti artists; it engages them as equal others of immanent value who can determine, for themselves, whether to assist in the co-construction of a world that is not silenced by machismo. Each of the three responses offers a way to complete O Machismo's statements collectively.

Simultaneously, because O Machismo offers participation in this co-construction via graffiti, it operates in a way that creates the external conditions for participating in invitational rhetoric. Participation by original artists and viewers can be anonymous; the works are unsigned and posted under cover of darkness. So too are the contributions the viewer makes. Moreover, because the viewer is left free to participate by repeating already posted messages or offering her own unique moment of participation—because she has the freedom to choose whether to be addressed, to respond, and how, if at all—the invitation offers maximum recognition of the immanent value of each potential addressee and interlocutor.

O Machismo thus encourages us to reconsider and expand the conclusions offered by Miladi (2015) and others. Graffiti is interactive and creates a public square, but projects like O Machismo also transform graffiti from one-way persuasive communication to mutual co-construction through an invitational rhetoric.

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18

Invitational Rhetoric as a Springboard to Using Dialogue across the Curriculum

Patricia Hawk and Rachel Pokora

As professors of communication studies, our goal is to prepare students to find their voices as professionals; as members of families; and as citizens of local, state, and national communities. That effort is often thwarted by classroom discussions in which a few voices dominate and the majority witnesses the argument rather than shapes the content. Many classroom discussions serve to silence rather than encourage students to enter the conversation. Invitational rhetoric offers a solution to this problem by providing a model that encourages all students to participate. In 2003, the faculty in our department began exploring the potential impact of revising our general education curriculum to include invitational rhetoric. We were determined to complement our persuasive curriculum with a more dialogic model. The result was a shift in our classroom and university cultures, allowing more and varied voices to shape campus conversations.

Our journey began with a critical look at the entry-level course in the Communication Studies Department at Nebraska Wesleyan University (NWU). Nebraska Wesleyan is a small, private, liberal arts college located in Lincoln, Nebraska. Invitational rhetoric's condition of value was a good fit for the culture of NWU and, in particular, the university's core value of community, which states that each member's dignity and worth should be respected. Inspired by invitational rhetoric as well as the theory of coordinated management of meaning (CMM), we began a process that led to a broader dialogic approach. These changes were transformational for our department and the larger university community.

In this chapter, we describe our philosophical evolution as we incorporated invitational rhetoric and dialogue in our introductory course, departmental curriculum, and eventually across the university curriculum. We also discuss how these changes have affected the Nebraska Wesleyan community.

INVITATIONAL RHETORIC IN THE BASIC COURSE

Our experience with invitational rhetoric began with our service course at NWU. NWU's general education curriculum, Preparing for Global Citizenship, was in place from 1995 through 2014 and included a three-credit required Fundamentals of Speech class as part of the first-year experience. Traditionally aged first-year students enrolled in this course during one of their initial semesters. The Preparing for Global Citizenship curriculum was informed by a Faculty Declaration of Educational Intent, adopted in 1992, which included an emphasis on speaking effectively. The courses included in the first-year experience (i.e., Liberal Arts Seminar, English Language and Writing, and Fundamentals of Speech) were intended to help students develop skills they would need to be successful college students as well as successful professionals and citizens.

The faculty members who taught Fundamentals of Speech had some flexibility in course design within a prescribed framework. Students were required to give at least one informative speech, one persuasive speech, one group speech, and one speech of any type (e.g., introductory, impromptu, special occasion). After many years of teaching Fundamentals of Speech, the Communication Studies faculty reflected on the strengths and weaknesses of the class. We saw evidence of the argument culture in our classrooms,[1] and, in its place, the faculty wanted to help students learn to welcome difference—to understand that the response to encountering difference need not be isolation, criticism, or persuasive argumentation.[2] Rather, faculty wanted students to consider others' ideas, to understand that most issues have more than two sides, to develop a nuanced perspective, and to participate in civil conversations.

Because persuasive and invitational speaking draw on the skills needed in informative speaking, we eliminated the required informative speech and added a required invitational speech. Communication faculty were given the option of having students develop and deliver an invitational speech as an individual or as a group. Most faculty chose to assign the invitational speech as the final individual speech of the semester. Students understood the importance of the speech because a significant amount of instructional time was devoted to these speeches, and the assignment accounted for a substantial portion of the students' grades.

We constructed the invitational speaking assignment to be a combination of Griffin's invitational speech and the speech designed to discover knowledge and belief as described by Foss and Foss.[3] This assignment required students to deliver an invitational speech that concluded with a dialogue intended to explore the speech topic in depth. Speeches concluded with an invitation to engage in dialogue as a way for individuals to shape a more complex understanding of the issue. While students likely held personal positions on their speech topics, they were asked to present multiple perspectives as a way to invite those who disagreed to invest in the speech.

Following the speech portion of the assignment, presenters invited class members to arrange their desks in a circle so they could facilitate the dialogue, of which the instructor was often a part. In an effort to nurture a space that encouraged invitational engagement, student facilitators invited class members to respond to prepared questions designed to value a broad range of opinions, recognize the lived experience of each participant, contest unchallenged ideologies, and open space for participants to change their minds. The dialogue period typically lasted between ten and twenty minutes to offer students time to grapple honestly with the ideas presented in the speech. When time was up, the presenter/facilitator invited final comments and then offered a short conclusion synthesizing the common themes and unique perspectives shared during the dialogue. Each student experienced the process approximately twenty times during the semester. The instructor took time at the end of the first two invitational speech days to lead students in a discussion about whether or not class members felt invited into the speeches and dialogues; thus, students were asked to acknowledge their role in nurturing an invitational space. The purpose behind the discussion was to remind students that everyone should participate in the construction of the dialogue and needed to accept responsibility for participating.

By adding the invitational speech to the required curriculum at NWU, we hoped to nurture a culture of invitation on campus. We wanted students to develop more complex and sophisticated tools for civic engagement. We also hoped to inspire our colleagues to raise their expectations for student presentations and more complex discursive engagement in their classes.

Contextualizing Invitational Rhetoric

Concurrent with the introduction of invitational speaking into our introductory course, the authors explored dialogue more deeply, both professionally and personally. Our experiences revealed connections among multiple communication concepts and theories, and we were eager to make these connections among invitational speaking, CMM, cognitive complexity, and the invitational concept of safety.

Most of the Communication Studies classes at NWU emphasize the social construction of meaning through communication in a variety of contexts, including the interpersonal. We emphasize the interpersonal theory of CMM, developed by W. Barnett Pearce and Vernon Cronen. Our colleagues embraced the question inspired by CMM, "What are we creating together?" and the advice, "Speak so that others can listen; listen so that others can speak."[4] In fact, these two quotations so inspired our department that we adopted them as mottos and stenciled them onto the walls in our common spaces. Faculty and students commonly refer to "What are we creating?" inside and outside the classroom. One Communication Studies graduate recently decorated her graduation cap with "What are we creating together?"

The questions suggested by CMM help students consider the role each member of our community plays in creating an invitational environment. The work of dialogue scholar David Bohm reflects this understanding. He states that dialogue participants do not "attempt to make common certain ideas or items of information that are already known to [them]. Rather, it may be said that the two people are making something in common."[5] Through their nonverbal and verbal behavior during the speech and during the dialogue after the speech, each person is either adding to or subtracting from a safe, open, free environment that values each person.[6]

The concept of cognitive complexity also can help students understand invitational speaking and their role in the class dialogue. We teach students that cognitively complex communicators engage in social perspective-taking and are responsive to and flexible concerning the needs of the audience.[7] We remind students that cognitively complex communicators shape their messages in a way that invites understanding while remaining open to the other.

We also want our students to understand the difference between conflict and confrontation. The invitational concept of safety helps us operationalize this distinction. Safety, in this context, does not refer to a conflict-free zone. Foss and Griffin contend that audience members will "cling to familiar ways of thinking and be less open to understanding the perspective of others when they feel threatened." However, when a safe environment is created, "audience members trust the rhetor and feel the rhetor is working with and not against them."[8] We intend to create a place where people can share their thinking and concerns with each other, make mistakes and own up to them, and change their minds as they grow in understanding. We introduce conflict as a valuable part of dialogic engagement but distinguish conflict from confrontation. Oliver Escobar suggests that "confrontational communication prevents conversations from developing, and therefore hinders mutual learning, fosters shallow exchanges, accentuates polarization, and leaves the issues underexplored."[9] Escobar goes on to explain, "Avoiding confrontational dynamics does not mean overlooking conflict. Instead, it means taking conflict not as a point of arrival, but as a point of departure. This means that in dialogue practice we try to frame conflictive issues not as stumbling blocks or no-go zones, but as areas that require further exploration through collaborate investigation. This is what differentiates meaningful dialogue from rehearsed monologues and ritualized exchanges."[10]

Teaching Invitational Rhetoric: Skills for Effective Dialogue

To help our students engage in an invitational way, we devote class time to developing the skills necessary for effective dialogue. These include invitational listening, invitational language, and mindfulness and contemplative practices. In this section, we outline the ways in which we encourage our students to learn the skills that make up effective dialogue and are required for invitational rhetoric and how we help them practice these skills in the classroom.

Invitational Listening

Our entry-level course includes instruction on effective listening. The goal of the listening instruction is to help students understand how the quality of their experiences in dialogue improves when they demonstrate genuine curiosity about the ideas other dialogue participants share. For example, we teach the five elements of listening: hearing, attending, understanding, responding, and remembering.[11] Each of these elements can be understood in the frame of dialogue. A dialogue participant must be able to hear what others are saying, and the physical space in which the dialogue takes place can help or hinder the ability to hear. Participants must choose to attend or pay attention to what others are saying. This involves avoiding the temptation to allow outside thoughts to pull attention from the dialogue. We encourage our students to physically breathe in the others' words, a technique Patricia experienced at the Institute for Communal Contemplation and Dialogue that involves being still enough inside and out to let the others' words fully resonate in one's mind. Participants are encourage to make their breathing slow, deep, and even as a way to focus on the other. Understanding can involve, in part, asking for clarification or actively checking to ensure the listener's interpretation is accurate. Response in a dialogue is sometimes verbal, but nonverbal behaviors are also important. Eye contact, posture, facial expressions, movements, and the like send important messages to the others involved. As they are listening, students are encouraged to consider what messages they are sending and how their nonverbal communication is enhancing or detracting from the dialogue. Finally, remembering encourages dialogue participants to learn from each other and open themselves to the possibility of change.

To further enhance students' listening skills, we invite them to engage in an interpersonal listening activity. Students are invited to find a classmate they do not know well and to share a brief personal story, uninterrupted. Once students have shared, they return to their seats and are asked to write a short description of the story they told and the story they heard. The description includes a reflection on the emotions described in the story. Once students have written the two reflections, they exchange the sheets describing their own stories. Students are asked to silently reflect on how the story their partner described is similar to the way they described their partner's story. The instructor does not encourage students to specifically talk about the level of coherence between interpretations; rather, students are encouraged to consider their own ability to listen effectively.

Invitational Language

Students are encouraged to use invitational language when they participate in dialogue. Invitational language nurtures an environment of equality where multiple perspectives are encouraged, and no one perspective is privileged over another.[12] It demonstrates an openness to others and encourages participation. We help students understand the power of their language and help them think about making choices that invite others into the conversation rather than making absolute statements or speaking in a way that silences others. When asking questions, we encourage students to seek clarification rather than attacking ideas. Griffin offers the following examples: "Can you elaborate on that idea?" and "What benefits do you see with that position?" When offering opinions, we encourage students to explain their reasoning using statements such as: "Because of this experience, I began to see this issue as . . . ." or "I came to this view because . . . ."[13]

Early in the semester, we also focus on nurturing trust among members of the class. This includes activities designed to encourage attentive listening and nurture more sincere engagement. Before students participate in classroom dialogue, they practice invitational language in dyads. One member of the dyad describes a remarkable moment in her or his life. The "listener" asks clarifying questions intended to help the speaker better understand the experience using phrases like, "Say more about that," "How did that make you feel?" "How did that change your life?" and "Help me understand why that is important to you." The purpose of the exercise is to help students practice attentive listening in a low-stakes exchange. The exercise also begins to nurture trust among the students, which is essential as the course moves into more challenging dialogues.

Mindfulness and Contemplation

We use mindfulness practices to help students understand that dialogue is different from regular class discussion. Marianne Mille Bojer, Heiko Roehl, Marianne Knuth, and Colleen Magner contend that successful facilitators devote themselves to a contemplative practice as a way to prepare to be "fully present" to dialogue participants.[14] We find that students move more easily into deep engagement when we take time at the beginning of class to dim the lights and play calming music. To that end, we use five to seven minutes of guided or unguided meditation at the beginning of class to help everyone, including the instructor, shift gears. When students facilitate dialogue, they plan the meditation and choose the type most comfortable for them. This offers students an opportunity to experiment with a variety of meditative practices that can help facilitate invitational dialogues.

Lana Zinger suggests that a contemplative practice can help students focus on the "here and now."[15] Zinger shares that "contemplative activity can cleanse the mind so that it can engage more fully with what one is currently experiencing."[16] We began the meditative practice with the intention of calming everyone in the room; however, we discovered that everyone does not relax in the same way. Following the dialogues, students were asked to reflect on their experiences, and although they appreciated the process, several indicated that the opening meditation was frustrating and, in some cases, physically uncomfortable. We discovered that some students found guided meditations too prescriptive; for example; they could not relax when someone simply told them to relax or was trying to guide their breathing.

In the early days of the development of the upper level dialogue course, we used meditation more instrumentally. Our research indicated that meditation was an important part of dialogic engagement, but we were not experts, so we relied too much on meditation tools with which we were familiar. Although the guided meditation was generally effective during the first semester we taught the course, our lack of attention to student needs became obvious during the second semester. We moved too quickly into a short guided meditation at the beginning of class and did not recognize student resistance. Other problems were evident as well. Class size was limited to sixteen students, and four of them had not spoken during dialogues in the first two weeks of class. In addition, students did not appear to be very invested in the process. Out of desperation (and frustration), the instructor sent the students outside and told them to find a quiet place on campus to observe nature. They left their phones in the room and wandered away. The decision to send students outside was informed by Stephen Kaplan's attention restoration theory,[17] which asserts that spending time in nature allows the mind to rest in a way that is rejuvenating. When students returned, they were asked to write about the experience. Unsurprisingly, they wrote about the calming effect of listening to birds and watching squirrels. However, the instructor was surprised that nearly every student indicated that there is no quiet in their lives. That was a turning point in the semester and has informed our curricular design. Rather than relying on tools that were successful in other classes, we now invite students in our courses to shape the contemplative practice (e.g., mindfulness, breathing techniques, yoga, nature walks). Our hope is that students will identify and nurture skills that will help them remain invitational as they navigate emotionally charged impasses later in their lives.

Practicing Dialogue

As we teach invitational listening, invitational language, and meditative and contemplative skills, we want our students to practice dialogue throughout the course and not just at the end with their invitational speeches. As such, our first dialogue attempts are low-stakes activities. For example, students might be given a course-related topic or current event to discuss in small groups while they attempt to practice the skills of effective dialogue. They are asked to do the following: speak honestly, listen carefully, ask a question, ask a follow-up question, comment on someone's point, prompt someone to say more, encourage someone to speak, and be aware of their own nonverbal behavior and what messages it might be sending. Then, because reflection is essential for learning, students are asked to consider how well they did these tasks. What was easiest? Most appealing? Most challenging? What skills need the most practice and development?

Students then are given the opportunity to facilitate and participate in higher stakes dialogues as well as small-group dialogue experiences. Three class periods are dedicated to this practice. Students are divided into groups of three, and each student is the facilitator for one of the dialogue days. Each day, the students are asked to engage a common text—two book chapters and the transcript of a podcast. Students stay in the same groups so that they become comfortable with each other and also feel a sense of responsibility to the other members of the group. (See Appendix A for a description of this assignment from the syllabus.)

Students often participate in yet another dialogue that is facilitated by the professor or a more experienced student. This dialogue is ungraded and therefore low stakes, but it involves the entire class. Finally, the last several weeks of the class are devoted to invitational speeches that include class-wide dialogue. This culminating project is considered high stakes because it offers students an opportunity to demonstrate the skills they have been developing throughout the semester, and it is worth the most points.

In preparation for the invitational dialogues, students are taught to prepare, engage, create, and reflect. (See Appendix B for a template for designing discourse-instructive activities.) Every person prepares by reading/listening to the common text. The facilitator prepares a plan for the dialogue that includes developing questions intended to "frame the dialogue without containing" it.[18] When the students are together, they engage the text and each other. Hopefully, they create new understanding, new knowledge, and/or new questions regarding these common texts. Once the dialogue has concluded, participants write post-dialogue reflections designed to be brief (250 to 300 words) and timely (submitted within forty-eight hours). In their reflections, students address the following questions: "How did you demonstrate genuine curiosity?" "What did you learn from others during this dialogue?" "How did you help the group move deeper into the dialogue?" and "Which part of the dialogue process is still challenging for you?" (See Appendix C for examples of reflection assignments.) We attempt to shape the questions in a way that encourages students to take responsibility for their role in the entire dialogue.

BEYOND THE BASIC COURSE: INVITATIONAL RHETORIC IN THE COMMUNICATION STUDIES CURRICULUM

Our successes in teaching invitational concepts and dialogue in the basic course prompted us to develop language across our curriculum that was consistent with invitational principles as well as those of meaning creation. Patricia, for example, developed a junior-level course, Communicating through Dialogue, in which students explore the theory and practice of dialogue. They engage in dialogue during class time and facilitate dialogues across campus. Though not a required course for Communication Studies majors, many students choose to take the course to build on the experience they had with invitational rhetoric in the Introduction to Communication Studies course during their first year. Faculty across the university are encouraged to invite a student team from the dialogue course to facilitate a dialogue in their classrooms. Facilitating team members coordinate with the cooperating faculty member to develop a dialogue that will encourage students to engage course content. Faculty have mentioned that their students are better prepared to invest in these dialogues since we added invitational rhetoric to the introductory course.

The dialogue course and the classroom dialogues the students facilitate embody key principles that are very much in line with those of invitational rhetoric. Chilean biologist Humberto Maturana contends, "When one human being tells another human what is 'real,' what they are actually doing is making a demand for obedience. They are asserting that they have a privileged view of reality."[19] Both dialogue and invitational rhetoric eschew this stance and require that participants both risk and remain curious. As Heather Zoller suggests, true dialogue may involve "risking one's position in order to arrive at a new understanding,"[20] while David Bohm believes dialogue can be a means for creating new meaning as long as participants demonstrate a "relaxed, non-judgmental curiosity."[21] He continues, "Dialogue may not be concerned directly with truth—it may arrive at truth, but it is concerned with meaning."[22]

INVITATIONAL COMMUNICATION ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

In 2014, NWU launched a new general education curriculum called the *Archway Curriculum*. The general education revision was the culmination of years of reflection, research, and development by faculty, staff, and administrators. Making a change to the general education requirements offered us an opportunity to complement the persuasive model of communication with invitational and dialogic models. Preliminary faculty discussions about the new general education curriculum revealed a reluctance to continue to include a required first-year speech class, despite the success of our public speaking course. Although faculty supported the goal of teaching effective speaking, they were interested in exploring alternatives to a required class. This change came in part from a desire to lessen the number of required courses in the general education curriculum; fewer required classes offered students flexibility in how they developed skills such as writing and speaking. This desire for flexibility prompted the Communication Studies faculty to develop a proposal that would best serve the needs of students and also fit the department's resources. The new curriculum included a requirement that all students take three courses designated as *speaking instructive* or *discourse instructive*. One of the three courses must be taught at the junior or senior level. Speaking-instructive classes devote significant time to public speaking instruction and student presentations (fifteen to thirty minutes). Discourse-instructive classes devote significant time to instruction in collaborative discourse and listening. Students practice at least sixty minutes of collaborative discourse, and they respond in writing to these discourse experiences.

Communication Studies faculty supported this change because years of assessment data suggested scaffolding the skill of public speaking throughout the curriculum might help reinforce the public speaking proficiency. Our assessment efforts compared first-year speeches, largely taken from Introduction to Communication classes, with senior-level speaking (from senior seminars and internship talks). This assessment revealed that students often did their best speaking at the end of their first-year speaking class. We surmised that some faculty did not consistently reinforce speaking skills, and others did not hold students to high public speaking standards. Our new curriculum would require faculty to teach students about excellent speaking in their own disciplines and demonstrate that speaking matters beyond the introductory course. Because public speaking is a skill students can expect to use throughout their lives, we saw public speaking not just as a class to check off a list but as a skill that should be continually developed and reinforced.

The Nebraska Wesleyan faculty included the possibility of a discourse class in part because they had witnessed the impacts of good discourse on our campus following the introduction of invitational speaking in the general education public speaking course. Recognizing that students would be required to engage others in helpful and healthy ways throughout their lives, faculty wanted to teach and practice these skills in the classroom. The support was so significant that some faculty even advocated for requiring one speaking-instructive course and two discourse-instructive classes.

As part of an examination of our departmental curriculum and with the removal of the required introductory public speaking course for first-year students at NWU, the Communication Studies Department revised the introductory course, which is now called *Introduction to Communication*. During the revision process, we also transitioned most of our courses from three to four credit hours. Our Introduction to Communication class became a hybrid class that includes public speaking, interpersonal communication, and dialogue. While ambitious, the class became a much better introduction to the discipline of communication. The new version of the class still includes an invitational speech followed by class-wide dialogue. In addition to this Introduction to Communication course, the Communication Studies Department offers three classes with discourse-instructive designation: Health Communication, Communication and Gender, and Communication through Dialogue. (See Appendix D for the discourse-instructive syllabus assignment for Communication and Gender.)

Preparing Faculty to Teach in the Speaking and Discourse Curriculum

To aid in the implementation of the new curriculum, the four full-time members of the Communication Studies faculty offered workshops to other NWU faculty on teaching speaking-instructive and discourse-instructive classes. Although students were required to take more speaking-instructive classes, most faculty initially were interested in the discourse-instructive workshops. We believe this is because of the time commitment required for a speaking-instructive class as well as the perception that discourse is close to class discussion and therefore a less foreign skill for faculty to learn. The authors developed and delivered two discourse-instructive workshops with the goal of helping faculty embrace a deeper model of invitational dialogues in their classrooms.

We began the first dialogue workshop by having faculty colleagues participate in three-person dialogues. Each member of the group facilitated a portion of the dialogue as the group members explored their successes and frustrations with student-led discussion in their courses. This introductory activity modeled a dialogue activity, set the tone for the topic, and focused attention on interaction in the classroom. The more we created space for deep engagement, the more comfortable participants became with modifying their own courses.

We shared with participants a process we developed for designing dialogue-instructive assignments that involves four steps: prepare, engage, create, and reflect. (See Appendix B.) We felt that every person involved in the dialogue should prepare. As such, the instructor (or students, depending on the assignment design) identifies a facilitator or, more commonly, facilitators. The facilitators engage in the first step, *prepare*, by developing a written plan for what will happen during the dialogue, although they know that flexibility is important in dialogue facilitation. This plan usually includes a specific dialogue model chosen to fit the needs of the participants and the topic, relying on the dialogue models found in *Mapping Dialogue: Essential Tools for Social Change.*[23] All participants prepare for the discussion by familiarizing themselves with a common text or experience, which might involve a reading or series of readings, watching a video, engaging in an experience (observation of or participation in an activity or an event), or another choice appropriate to the topic and setting.

The second step, *engage*, takes place during the dialogue. The dialogue facilitators invite participants to "shift gears" as they enter the dialogue. The purpose is to focus the attention of participants on what is happening in the room at that moment and to remind participants to engage the interpersonal skills appropriate to dialogue. Sometimes, this shift involves sitting in silence for a few minutes, slowing the breath, listening to relaxing music, or participating in guided meditation. As the dialogue begins, the facilitators refer to the common text or experience and invite all to participate. The manner in which this occurs is largely dependent on the model chosen for the dialogue and the needs of the participants.

The third step, *create*, also occurs during the dialogue. All participants should approach the dialogue with a hope for new understanding, new knowledge, and new questions. This step is largely dependent on the participants and their openness to understanding new ideas and their desire to understand themselves and the other. Although student facilitators will choose the dialogue model that best fits the topic and the needs of the participants, we remind students that "tool-specific expertise can quickly lead into tool-related dependence."[24] We want facilitators to recognize when participants in their dialogue are not engaging so they can modify their approaches and nurture connection. Although we encourage facilitators to be patient and embrace silence, we also want them to effectively diagnose issues that may emerge during their dialogues and empower them to make modifications with confidence. If participants are not sharing in a large group, facilitators are encouraged to move students into smaller groups. If small groups are not working, facilitators are encouraged to move students into pairs. Just as an audience will relax when a speaker presents with confidence, dialogue participants will relax when a facilitator leads with confidence.

At the conclusion of the dialogue, all participants engage in the final step, *reflect*. Facilitators may reflect more formally about a specific dialogue, but all participants should be asked to reflect on what surprised them, what they learned, what went well for them, what they would change about the design of the dialogue or their own participation, and how they changed through the process. We remind workshop participants that we are helping students develop skills for effective dialogue so they are able to more deeply engage course content and carry these skills into their professional lives. Particularly rewarding has been to be contacted by graduates who recount how they are successfully using invitational rhetoric and dialogue in their workplaces.

After discussing the curricular design process, we explained the importance of developing good listening skills as a key component of effective dialogue. We invited participants to engage in a listening exercise that allowed them to invest in the topic before we discussed the communication theories. We identified and offered examples of effective and ineffective listening behaviors as explained previously in this essay and as presented in Ronald Adler and Russell Proctor's *Looking Out, Looking In*.[25]

During the final part of the first workshop, we facilitated a dialogue using the World Café model.[26] Participants were divided into groups of four and seated at tables covered with a large sheet of paper and markers. We placed a different question in the center of each table that was designed to invite discussion about incorporating dialogue into their courses. Some of the questions were intended to encourage personal reflection, and some were intended to help participants think creatively about course design (e.g., Describe a time when you have felt silenced. What must be true for you to share honestly in a group? What are your biggest concerns about incorporating dialogue into your course?). Participants remained in their groups for ten to twelve minutes and moved to a new group when they heard a chime tone. The World Café model is designed to cross-pollinate ideas by having one group member remain at the table and share a thirty-second synopsis of the previous conversation with the new members of the group, often accompanied by a reference to words or drawings on the paper.

During these dialogues, participants revealed their concerns about modifying their courses to include more dialogue and invitational engagement. We made note of these concerns in the first workshop and were able to address them in the second workshop. Initial workshop dialogues revealed common concerns about incorporating dialogue into courses: How could they effectively assess dialogue participation? How could they break students of the habit of relying on personal belief rather than informed opinion? How could they invite students into dialogues that may be interpreted by some as politically charged and alienating?

The second workshop began with a brief review of the first workshop. The refresher welcomed participants who were unable to participate in workshop one. We began with another World Café dialogue experience that specifically invited participants to address the concerns identified in the earlier workshop. We encouraged faculty members to allow students to create something new during classroom dialogues. Because the dynamic nature of dialogue can make assessment challenging, we encouraged faculty not to struggle to develop instrumental assessment tools but to assess students primarily on preparation and reflection. (See Appendix C.)

After the World Café dialogue experience, we shared four more models of dialogue with participants and explained what circumstances might lead a faculty member to choose them. The new models, described in detail in *Mapping Dialogue: Essential Tools for Social Change*, included the circle model, change lab, deep democracy, and open space technology.[27] Many of the participating faculty purchased a copy of *Mapping Dialogue* for their own reference.

We then offered an example of how one NWU class, Communication and Gender, was modified to incorporate more dialogue and meet the requirements of a discourse-instructive class. This allowed workshop participants to ask specific questions about course redesign. We also walked participants through the process of applying to have their courses designated *discourse instructive* through the Curriculum Committee.

Reinforcing the Importance of Invitational Dialogue

The purpose of scaffolding dialogue within a single class and across a student's undergraduate experience is to cultivate a shift from superficial engagement to reflective engagement. To emphasize this shift, we facilitated a discussion with our colleagues about developing low-, mid-, and high-stakes discourse experiences in their classes, as we have described previously in this chapter. We concluded the second workshop with an explanation of how using discourse in the classroom helps develop students' core intellectual abilities as identified by the Association of American Colleges and Universities—critical inquiry, analysis and reasoning, information retrieval and evaluation, effective written communication, effective listening and speaking, understanding the limits of personal perspectives, and the ability to interact constructively with a diverse group with conflicting views.

Informal responses to the workshops were quite positive. In fact, workshop participants often contacted us a week after the workshop to tell us about a recent experiment with dialogue in their classes that was met with great success. The immediate gratification of richer student engagement in classroom dialogue has inspired faculty across the university to commit to incorporating discourse instruction in their courses. These initial successes may explain why faculty appear more eager to teach discourse-instructive than speaking-instructive courses as indicated by the number of applications to the NWU Curriculum Committee during the first two years of the new curriculum launch. In addition, this ongoing investment in dialogue across campus has helped us move beyond ideological entrenchment so common in departments and colleges to an openness to sincere engagement across disciplines and perspectives.

CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS: INVITATION AND DIALOGUE AS WAYS OF THINKING AND BEING

What began as invitational speeches in a required first-year class has turned into a way of thinking and being in NWU's Communication Studies Department and across the university. Students can choose from among forty-one discourse-instructive classes taught in departments across the university. We have seen changes in our students and in our community that are understood in light of invitational speaking and dialogue.

Student feedback from Introduction to Communication demonstrates that students are learning important invitational skills. They comment that they have learned that there are ways to interact through disagreement that do not include debate or arguing; they have learned how to listen carefully and understand and accept other people's perspectives. Every year, students in the NWU Communication Studies senior seminar, Communication in Contemporary Society, fill out an exit-interview form and discuss their answers during the final meeting over a meal. Since dialogue has been emphasized in our curriculum, students often mention how significant it has been for them. Students who took the dialogue class often mention that class as one of their most significant learning experiences. Students express how they have become more invitational in their daily lives; they listen to people with whom they disagree and try to understand different points of view while holding to their beliefs and values.

Because students in the Communicating through Dialogue class need experience facilitating dialogue, faculty in multiple departments invite these student facilitators into their own classrooms. Facilitating in teams, students connect with their assigned faculty to determine what the cooperating faculty member is trying to accomplish with the dialogue. Some faculty ask the student teams to facilitate a dialogue focused on course material. Some faculty use the dialogue to help their first-year students explore issues around college transition. Other faculty use the dialogue to help their students engage challenging social issues. The result is that facilitating teams serve as ambassadors for dialogue and assist faculty as they work to nurture deeper engagement in their courses.

World Café types of discussions now are a regular part of our university life, and Communication Studies faculty, as well as faculty university wide, try to model invitational language and a dialogic approach in campus meetings and gatherings. Recently, faculty and staff used invitational dialogue to address critical issues during meetings with the university Presidential Board of Advisors. Since the NWU faculty have embraced discourse instruction and students in every discipline have the opportunity to engage in invitational dialogues, we are noticing a shift in the way students approach conflict on campus. Students are learning to reason critically and carefully, rather than passively agreeing with one another or blatantly rejecting different views. Communication Studies majors and minors, in particular, have embraced their roles as leaders in creating spaces for dialogic engagement. Students are facilitating dialogues during the annual university lecture series, in classes across campus, in residence halls, and in the community. Each time members of our university community have a positive experience with invitational speaking and dialogue, we are able to move toward a less combative and more collaborative culture of engagement. Our hope is that our community will understand that we are creating something together and that we can choose either to nurture negativity or to create something positive and invitational.

We intend to build on our foundation of invitational communication by continuing to use dialogue in our classrooms and throughout the NWU community. We hope to create several designated spaces on our campus for these dialogues to happen. Although we now use our department lounge for dialogues, we would like to turn several more rooms into spaces with comfortable seating and lighting to encourage people to engage invitationally. These spaces could be used by anyone in the community.

When the Communication Studies faculty first incorporated invitational rhetoric into the basic public speaking course at NWU, we could not have predicted how this would change our department and the university. The identity of the Communication Studies Department is shaped by the values of invitational rhetoric: treating others as equals rather than attempting to dominate them, recognizing others' immanent value rather than seeking to change them, and granting others self-determination rather than telling them how to live.[28] We are encouraged to see our students, faculty, administrators, and colleagues embracing their role in what we are creating together as a department, as a university, and as a community. Invitational dialogues open spaces for deep engagement inside and outside our classrooms, empowering and transforming the ways we think and behave.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Patricia Hawk wishes to thank Nancy Sylvester and Kathy Krone for nurturing her interest in the theoretical and practical impact of dialogue. Patricia and Rachel Pokora both thank their departmental colleagues Rachel Droogsma, Karla Jensen, and David Whitt for partnering on their journey toward a dialogic department.

APPENDIX A

Dialogue Reading/Discussion Leading

The class will be broken into groups of three. Each of the three people will be responsible for leading discussion for a full class period with the three people in their group. The discussion will be based on the course reading for the day (Makau & Marty Chapter 1, Makau & Marty Chapter 5, and Appiah/Civil Conversations Project).

On the day you lead discussion, you should be prepared with thoughts and questions for your group. Your group members will have done the reading and reflected on that reading, and they should come prepared to have a thoughtful discussion.

Things to do to help you prepare to both participate and lead discussion:

- Look up any word you do not know.
- Look up any idea you do not know.
- Identify the main point and other key points of the reading.
- Note any questions the reading raises for you.
- Consider how you will contribute to a positive group climate.

Things to do to help you prepare to lead discussion:

- Determine the purpose of everything you do when you lead discussion.
- Consider drawing attention to certain parts of the reading.
- Prepare to clarify what you have covered, what you have discussed/learned.
- Consider determining a way to get everyone to participate early.
- Consider how you will help create a positive group climate.
- Prepare good questions.

Civil Conversations Project Reading

I strongly encourage you to listen to the program as well as read the transcript. Students who have done both have gotten more out of this assignment; the voice can add meaning you won't get just from reading. The links will be on Blackboard as well as below.

Kwame Anthony Appiah, Philosophy Professor at Princeton, Ghanaian-British-American: "Sidling Up to Difference" http://www.onbeing.org/program/sidling-difference/transcript/558#main_content

APPENDIX B

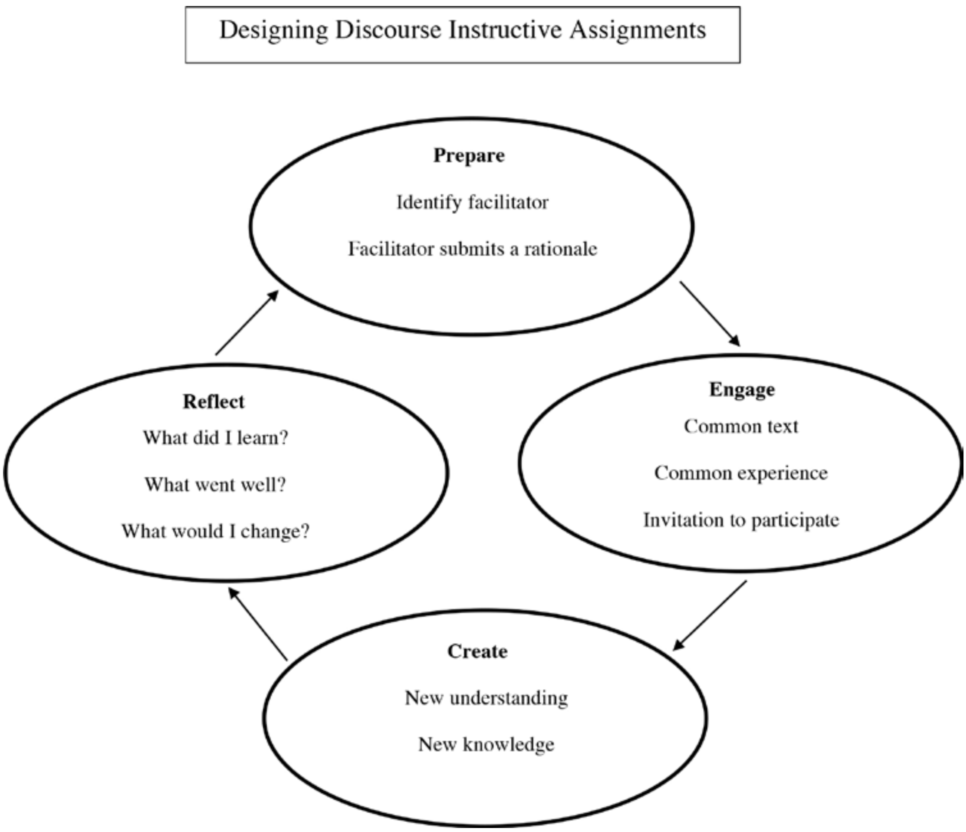

Figure 18.1. Appendix B. Designing Discourse Instructive Assignments

APPENDIX C

Examples of Pre-Dialogue Rationales and Post-Dialogue Reflection Assignments from Communicating through Dialogue

Field Dialogue Rationales (submit by email at least 48 hours before you facilitate): Students may submit a single paper from the team or individual papers from each team member. The paper(s) will describe:

1. How you and your partner prepared to facilitate the topic assigned by the instructor
2. Which dialogue model you have chosen and why
3. How you and your partner will welcome students into the dialogue
4. How you and your partner plan to focus and/or center the class
5. What dialogue questions you have developed to help students explore the topic thoughtfully
6. How you plan to conclude the dialogue

Post-Dialogue Reflection
Submit through assignment on Blackboard. The purpose of this assignment is to allow you to reflect on the triumphs and challenges of dialogue facilitating. Your critical reflection should help you better prepare for each successive dialogue. Your post-dialogue reflection is a formal three-part paper.

First: Describe how you prepared to facilitate the dialogue.

1. What kind of research did you do on the topic and participants?
2. How did you coordinate with your facilitating partner?
3. How did you select your dialogue model or format for this facilitation?

Second: Describe the actual dialogue.

1. How did you welcome participants?
2. How did you focus the participants?
3. How did you invite participation throughout the dialogue?
4. What surprised you during the dialogue?

Third: Describe what you learned from this dialogue facilitation.

1. What did you learn about yourself?
2. What part of the process was effective?
3. What would you do differently next time?

APPENDIX D

Communication and Gender: Discourse-Instructive Assignment

This class emphasizes discourse. Discourse can be defined as communication that encourages a free exchange of ideas with the goal of creating new knowledge and deeper understanding. Discourse involves:

- authentic engagement
- respectful interaction
- careful listening
- genuine curiosity
- openness to change

Our class discourse will be grounded in texts (e.g., readings, recordings, etc.). All discourse involves preparation, process, and reflection.

As a class, we will engage in ten discourse days. Each person in the class will facilitate, with a different partner/partners each time, two of these days.

Your discourse assignments involve four steps:

1. Prepare
    a. If you are the facilitators, you should prepare a detailed, full-sentence plan that includes:

        i. A description of what you plan to do
        ii. A rationale for why you plan to do it
        iii. This plan is due by 10:00 am the day before you facilitate
        iv. Your facilitation grade is based, in part, on this plan
    b. All participants should do the assigned readings and come to class prepared to engage one another.
2. Engage
    a. If you are the facilitators, consider:
        i. How you will invite participation in the discourse
        ii. How you will help participants engage the common text
        iii. How you will help the participants engage each other
    b. All participants have the responsibility to the group to:
        i. Engage and encourage others.
        ii. Practice good listening behaviors.
3. Create: Through discourse, all participants create new understanding, new knowledge, and new questions.
4. Reflection: All facilitator reflections are due by 10:00 am the next day the class meets.
    a. Reflect in writing on the following questions:
        i. What did I learn?
        ii. What went well?
        iii. What would I change about how I participated in the discourse?
        iv. How did I change because of the discourse?
    b. In addition, facilitators reflect on their plan and how effective they believe they were.
    c. Occasionally, all participants will be asked to reflect on their participation in a Learning Log entry.

NOTES

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19

Creating an Invitational Classroom Environment

Lessons Lived and Learned

Donna Marie Nudd

I have been blessed with the privilege of teaching classes at both the undergraduate and graduate levels in communication at a research university for over three decades. I love teaching, and there's ample evidence that my students appreciate my teaching.[1] If I had to attribute my teaching success to anything, I think it would be my steadfast devotion to creating a classroom environment that encourages public deliberation. In the fifth edition of her textbook, *Invitation to Public Speaking*, Cindy L. Griffin succinctly notes the five highest priorities for an invitational speaker; these parallel my priorities as a college teacher virtually every time I walk into a classroom:

- Understand the issue fully.
- Respect diverse views.
- Appreciate the range of possible positions on an issue, even if those positions are quite different from your own.
- Engage in dialogue with your audience.
- Create a space in which your audience and you can express their views.[2]

If I had to choose my favorite class to teach, it would be a graduate seminar called *Teaching Oral Communication Classes*. If pressed to choose my favorite assignments within that class, it would be the invitational speaking assignments.[3] Why? In learning how to speak invitationally, graduate students not only gain experience in clearly presenting a topic to a classroom audience but also in facilitating a discussion around that topic. Equally important, graduate students gain practice at summing up publicly their own sometimes-revised positions on the topic as well as the relevant insights from their fellow students.

In this essay, I articulate the position that the invitational speaking module in my graduate seminar on Teaching Oral Communication Classes can serve as a valuable microcosm for guiding future teachers in how to create a classroom atmosphere that encourages public deliberation. Although this essay focuses on the invitational module I have created for a specific graduate seminar, I believe my pedagogical approach can serve as an inspiration to others as to ways invitational speaking principles might be integrated not only into teaching assistant (TA) training classes but also other college-level classes and academic environments.

Philosophically—and perhaps paradoxically—the required readings in my seminar expose the graduate students to traditional approaches to public speaking (e.g., Dan O'Hair and Hannah Rubenstein's *Pocket Guide to Public Speaking*[4]) as well as invitational approaches to speaking (e.g., the opening chapter of Sonja K. Foss and Karen A. Foss's *Inviting Transformation: Presentational Speaking for a Changing World*[5]). In a similar, seemingly paradoxical, vein, some of my assignments in my invitational module might be considered by some feminist rhetoricians as outdated or inappropriate (e.g., the required full-sentence outline), while traditional rhetoricians might perceive some of my pedagogical approaches as overly new age (e.g., my conscious undermining of my own authorial position as an evaluator of students' invitational speeches). From the onset, readers should understand that, for me, traditional and invitational approaches are not mutually exclusive or antithetical but, if combined thoughtfully, can enhance each other. Also, because one of the goals of the class is for students to begin to develop their own teaching philosophies, I believe exposure to different philosophical positions on teaching speaking in my course helps them to achieve that goal.[6]

In this essay, I first provide a general description of my graduate seminar (e.g., the goals and objectives for the course and the numbers and type of students enrolled). Second, I expound on the invitational speaking module in the course by describing each of the three major assignments (formal outline, speech, and critique) and their accompanying pedagogical objectives. Third, I discuss some of the reconcilable and unreconcilable philosophical tensions that arise during this section of the course as I try to negotiate the terrain of being an "equal member" of an audience with that of being a professor who assigns grades. In this third section, I try to articulate my successes and my concerns in reconciling this oxymoronic pedagogical position. Fourth, I briefly describe two aspects of the module that I believe are the most challenging for the graduate students and tentatively offer a possible pedagogical solution. Before concluding, I summarize what I, as well as many students in my class, see as the overarching value of the invitational speaking module for their future careers.

THE GRADUATE SEMINAR

I started teaching Teaching Oral Communication Courses in 1997, the year that oral communication competency was being phased in as a university requirement for all undergraduates at Florida State University. To meet the increased demand for our two public speaking courses, the School of Communication hired additional faculty members and changed the stand-alone structure of the classes to a lecture/lab format, where faculty members delivered the lectures and graduate students, primarily at the master's level, taught the accompanying labs.

At this time, over two decades ago, I was tapped to create and teach an intensive six-week, summer preparatory class designed to train the incoming master's students to teach public speaking labs. The graduate level course, which I now have taught probably twenty-five times,[7] also attracts other graduate students—for example, doctoral students in mass communication who want to strengthen teaching skills or international graduate students in communication who want to improve their English-speaking skills. In the syllabus, the course goals are summarized in two sentences: "All students will learn how to present in an invitational environment; develop and implement active learning strategies; gain experience dealing with ethically complicated classroom dynamics; critique informative, persuasive, special occasion and invitational speeches; read research and theory related to college level instruction; explore current issues in higher education and develop a philosophy of teaching. In addition, students at the doctoral level will design a test and grade a set of tests." To achieve these goals in the seminar, there are a variety of assignments because I believe that, for students to learn how to teach, they have to have ample and varied opportunities to practice teaching with as much feedback as possible.

The invitational speaking module takes place midway through the semester. Before the invitational speaking assignments, the fifteen or so enrolled students will have read *Pocket Guide to Public Speaking*, taken a multiple-choice test on the first one-third of the book, completed a long-answer test on the second one-third of the book, and taken or designed a multiple choice/long-answer test for the last one-third of the book.[8] Students also will have read an essay underscoring principles of ethical criticism[9] and received feedback on their written critiques of three different recorded undergraduate speeches. Thus, by the time the graduate students reach the invitational speaking section of the class, they will have completed a plethora of assignments to ensure they understand the basic principles of the art and practice of public speaking and how best to approach evaluating it.

THE INVITATIONAL SPEAKING MODULE: ASSIGNMENTS AND PEDAGOGICAL OBJECTIVES

Of the hundreds of graduate students who have been enrolled in my Teaching Oral Communication Classes course through the decades, none has delivered, as an undergraduate, an invitational speech. Because this particular speech assignment is new to the students, I post online the opening chapter from *Inviting Transformation: Presentational Speaking for a Changing World*[10] and the chapter on invitational speaking from Griffin's textbook, *Invitation to Public Speaking*, to guide them.[11] Students also read an excerpt from the Griffin textbook that gives them tips on how to moderate a question-and-answer session.[12]

The invitational speech assignments collectively constitute twenty percent of the students' final grade in the class. There are three graded assignments in the invitational module: a full-sentence outline (five percent), a speech (ten percent), and an evaluation of a fellow student's speech (five percent). In terms of topic, I require only that it be in the area of higher education; other than that broad perimeter, the students select their own topics. The speaker's goal for the invitational speech must be either to explore an issue or to articulate a position.[13]

Early in the semester, students get a chance to test out the feasibility of their topics. On that class day, students post two possible thesis statements on the whiteboard, each on a different topic, and I facilitate a class discussion on their postings. My goal is for students to leave class that day with a strong sense of audience knowledge and interest in each of their topics. Ideally, most students have other takeaways—for example, being aware of the need to narrow the topic given the time limit for the speech, the need to refine the wording of the thesis statement to make it more invitational, or the benefits of a different organizational pattern than the one implicit in the thesis statement. A few days later, the students formally post their thesis statements online in a discussion board. This early feedback on students' topic choices encourages student speakers to start thinking about their speeches long before drafting their outlines, and it ensures that there is not a duplication of topics in the invitational speech round. Also, because each student in class serves as a critic for another student's invitational speech, student critics know well in advance the thesis of the speech they will be evaluating later.

The Full-Sentence Outline

I certainly am not alone in believing that future teachers of public speaking—or, for that matter, all graduate students—should have a solid understanding of how to write a thesis sentence for a speech, choose an appropriate organizational structure, understand logical progression, and cite sources appropriately. I would probably characterize myself as rather *schoolmarm-ish*, however, in my particular passion about outlining (e.g., "there must be at least two subordinate points—i.e., you cannot have an 'A' without a 'B'").

When teaching a teacher-training class, everything seems relevant to the subject matter of the course. Consequently, I use outlining as an opportunity in the class to stress that, inevitably, one instructor will care passionately about certain aspects of public speaking, while another lab instructor will stress other aspects. What is key to good teaching, I advise, is to be as transparent as possible with your students. At this juncture, I candidly forewarn the students that I am a stickler about outlines and that to be successful on this assignment, they should read a handout posted in the online learning management software on outlining; reread the chapter in *Pocket Guide* on outlining; and model their full-sentence outlines for their invitational speeches on the extended example of a full-sentence outline, "Working Outline," in *Pocket Guide*.

I underscore the value of the assignment by comparing outlining to the scaffolding of a house or the skeletal bones underneath the bodily flesh. Perhaps of greater value than my tortured metaphors, I try to gauge which graduate students are struggling with the organizational structure of speechmaking and give them some extra help. Thus, if a student is unsuccessful at unscrambling the scrambled outline on a particular question on the test on unit two, I privately offer that student a different scrambled outline to try to reassemble. If students continue to have difficulty, I offer to meet during my office hours to review with them the inherent logical progression embedded in outlining, and I offer to give early feedback on the draft of their outlines for their invitational speeches.

Many of my pedagogical objectives in assigning the full-sentence outline are rather classical in nature. Whether students choose to develop a speech to explore an issue or to clarify a position, the major objectives are the same. The students' submitted outlines should

- provide a clear thesis statement for their invitational speeches.
- put forth a viable organizational pattern.
- demonstrate an understanding of the formal rules of outlining.
- demonstrate an understanding of logical progression.
- provide helpful transitions.
- cite sources appropriately and accurately.

For me, the best invitational speakers *clearly* present their positions and the salient issues; this transparency is necessary so the audience can discuss the topic. Careful attention to outlining can push students to discover ways to make their ideas as transparent as possible to their audiences.

In assigning the full-sentence outline, I also am careful to point out the major differences between creating a full-sentence outline for an informative or persuasive speech and an outline for an invitational speech. In the latter, the students are doing a full-sentence outline and Works Cited for only the first one-third of their speech because they cannot anticipate the content and structure of either the discussion or the conclusion.

At this juncture, the students typically begin to fully realize that the working outline is going to help them only so far. Invariably, some graduate students express anxiety over not being able to prepare or outline two-thirds of a presentation on which they will be graded. At this point, we spend some class time discussing other strategies that experts have recommended for preparing for the discussion portion of their speeches, and we review Griffin's recommendations for preparing for possible audience questions during the question-and-answer session and for practicing responses.[14]

The Invitational Speech

The first speech the students deliver in my graduate seminar is on the first or second day of class. Students pair up with someone they do not know; interview each other; and then, while sitting in a circle, introduce each other. If there is an odd number of students, I pair up with a student. This ungraded speech of introduction is so informal that I believe the graduate students register it more as an icebreaker than a speech. For the most part, the students are correct because my primary intention for this low-stakes, interviewing/speaking exercise is simply for us to get to know each other.

In contrast, the students' midsemester invitational speech assignment is a high-stakes assignment. After having read and been tested on public speaking concepts and after having critiqued recorded undergraduate informative and persuasive speeches, graduate students are now expected to demonstrate that they understand the invitational approach by effectively presenting an invitational speech. The required length of the student's invitational speech and its inherent components vary semester by semester, determined primarily by course enrollment (number of speakers) and whether the course is taught in the summer (in an intensive six-week term) or in the fall semester (in sixteen weeks). In one fall semester, for example, each student's invitational speech was twenty-five to twenty-seven minutes in length. The recommended breakdown was between seven and eight minutes for the presentation, a fifteen-minute discussion, and a three-to-four-minute conclusion. The speech is challenging for the students not simply because of the sheer amount of time they are in the front of the classroom but also because it demands different delivery styles—manuscript or extemporaneous for the initial section of the speech where the student either clarifies a position or explores an issue and impromptu for the discussion and conclusion.

My pedagogical objectives are varied. Because most of the students in my class are going to be at the front of the classroom the very next semester (often for the first time), I want them to have some practice being at the front of a classroom. While up there, they are required to deliver an invitational speech instead of a lecture. Why? As noted at the onset of this essay, the invitational speech, as outlined by Griffin, is more valuable pedagogically because it is more interactive than the primarily one-directional, informative lecture. After articulating a position or exploring an issue, an invitational speaker facilitates a discussion with the audience; thus, the structure of the invitational speech builds to the audience's oral engagement with the speaker on the topic—to express agreement with the speaker's initial position, to raise concerns, to ask provocative questions, or to offer additional insights or examples. Beyond the challenge of artfully facilitating such a discussion, the invitational speaker is also expected to conclude the speech by synthesizing both the speaker's and the audience's insights.

Because the invitational speech is a challenging assignment, I base the order of the invitational speeches in part on the information the graduate students have provided on the information sheet they fill out the first day of my class. One of the questions asks what courses or experience they have had in public speaking. With my students' consent, I schedule speakers on the first day who have the most experience in public speaking, and the speakers on the last day are the ones with the least experience. Undeniably, students learn from watching other presenters, and this scheduling gives the students with the least background and experience—most often my international students who have not had any speech classes as undergraduates and for whom English is their second language—more time to absorb the principles of invitational speaking and to prepare and practice their speeches.

The invitational speech primarily serves to allow students to demonstrate their mastery of the subject matter in that the speech requires them to apply all the principles of effective public speaking they have been studying. In the process of *doing*—researching, organizing, writing, and practicing—the graduate students invariably are reminded, in both an intellectual and a visceral way, of what the undergraduates enrolled in their public speaking labs the following semester are likely to be experiencing. I believe all speakers feel some vulnerability about speaking in public, and future teachers of public speaking are served exceptionally well by being reminded of that fact.

Collectively, the variety of topics covered in the invitational speeches also introduces students to issues in higher education of which I, as a seasoned instructor, are sometimes very familiar but which they, as twenty-somethings, are not as familiar. Hence, in years past, some of my students' speeches explored questions like the following:

- Should tenure be abolished?
- What are the pros and cons of trigger warnings?
- Should Florida State University abandon the Seminole mascot?
- Does the GRE discriminate against minorities?
- Should attendance in undergraduate classes be required?
- Should public speaking TAs grade more easily on the first speech or immediately establish an evaluation standard used for all three required speeches?

To my continued delight, every semester graduate students also choose topics related to higher education that are completely new to me. Some examples:

- Should colleges and universities invest resources into improving their rankings in *U.S. News and World Report*?
- Are MOOCs (Massive Open Online Classes) working?
- Should people who have not attended law school be allowed to take the state bar exam?
- Should universities use the plus/minus letter grade system?
- How much should research universities, such as Florida State, invest in 3-D technology?
- Was Yale University justified in admitting Sayed Rahmatullah Hashemi, the Deputy Foreign Secretary of the Taliban, into a nondegree program?
- Should Florida State University make feminine hygiene products available free of charge in all women's and gender-neutral bathrooms?

Because the students know that their seven- to eight-minute speeches have to serve as a catalyst for a fifteen-minute discussion, the students consistently choose topics with the audience discussion in mind—topics that are relatively new to the field, are age-old philosophical conundrums, are particularly relevant locally, or are ones on which the student speakers simply have not yet figured out their own positions and would genuinely like some help in thinking through.

In the big picture, the invitational speech round encourages each student to become an expert on one particular issue related to higher education. Collectively, the round helps to make our classroom feel like a community of experts. At the same time, the genre of the speech—invitational—pushes all the graduate-student experts to remain open minded and willing to consider viewpoints that differ from their own.

Inherent in the invitational speech round is another pedagogical objective of the class—for students to develop their own philosophical perspectives on teaching. Inevitably, after the round of speeches, audience members, including me, think somewhat differently about the issues relevant to higher education that have just been presented for public deliberation. As a result, soon-to-be TAs begin to articulate their own pedagogical philosophies, while I, as well as doctoral students with some experience teaching, continue to revise our own.

The Critique

As noted earlier, prior to the invitational speech module, graduate students enrolled in my seminar have read articles on constructive criticism, and I have supplemented those tips with my own. By the time the students reach this module, they have critiqued at least three undergraduate speeches using standardized critique forms for informative and persuasive speeches—the type of critique forms used, with some variation, by TAs and instructors of public speaking across the nation. The students also have received oral and written feedback on their critiques.[15]

For the invitational speech round, I offer the graduate students some alternative approaches to evaluation. In this module, each student in the seminar is responsible for researching and critiquing one fellow student's invitational speech. Because these assignments are made early in the semester, the students know well in advance which student they are critiquing and that student's specific thesis. Thus, this becomes an opportunity for the graduate students in my seminar to become informed critics on another speaker's particular topic.

Another variation on evaluation is that, for this assignment, the speeches are recorded. While the student critics are duly cautioned to take good notes while watching the speeches because technology sometimes fails, most of the time, the technology does not fail, so student critics have a recording of their fellow student's speech. Thus, the critic has the opportunity to watch and listen to the speech multiple times.

Another variation on the evaluation is that the student critics are not supplied a standard critique form but are required to turn in a four- to five-page typed narrative. An excerpt from the guidelines for this assignment explains my expectations:

> I'm not going to be prescriptive as to a format for your essay, but I do expect it to be a well-written, well-argued essay with a clear introduction, body, and conclusion. The essay should be proofread with no typos or grammatical errors and it should have well-constructed paragraphs.
>
> Your critique should be balanced with insightful comments in all three areas (content, delivery, and organization). In addition, don't forget to also critique your peer's handling of the Q and A and impromptu conclusion. All your claims should be backed up with specific examples from the speech itself.
>
> In terms of critiquing the speech, you can draw on the principles articulated in *Pocket Guide* as to what constitutes effective public speaking, as well as the principles in the chapters you read about invitational speaking and the online essay on how to handle a Q and A. In addition, make

> sure you apply the various principles of effective criticism we've been discussing all semester. And, as McKeachie would recommend, incorporate comments in your criticism that are "understandable, selective and specific"; "contextualized"; and "forward-looking and transferrable."[16]

The students in the seminar are required to print out two copies of their critique—one to give to the student they critiqued and one to give to me.

The final variation in the evaluation process is an oral critique of the seminar's invitational speeches that occurs the same day the students' typed narrative critiques are due. The class sits in a circle, and we discuss invitational speeches in the order in which they were presented, guided by a few rules. First, the speaker is asked to say something positive about the speech or process and follow it up with something that, if given the chance to do it again, the speaker would change. After the speaker's reflective comments, we move to the informed critic's observations, again with the peer critic articulating positive aspects of the student's invitational speech followed by recommendations for improvement. Then the discussion is opened to feedback from all audience members.

Because the student speakers will receive written feedback from me later, I try to limit what I say during this round of oral criticism. I do take notes, however, on the students' comments, and, at the end of the round of oral criticism, I try to make some larger observations about where I think the students in general have succeeded in their invitational speeches and what areas deserve continued attention.

My pedagogical objectives for the evaluation part of the invitational module, then, are to give the students different approaches to evaluation—analyzing the speaker's speech from a more informed perspective (after having researched the speaker's topic), writing a narrative critique after watching a speech live and reviewing the recorded version, and orally summarizing key critical insights on the speech in an open forum.

PARADOXICAL POSITIONING OF EQUAL AUDIENCE MEMBERS AND INSTRUCTOR

Implicit in the two words *public speaking* is someone talking to a group of people, a public. In invitational speaking, speakers are expected to value and respect all audience members' views and their inherent right to their opinions. All audience members are assumed to be equal.

But in a classroom environment, for student speakers to view their instructor as an equal audience member is impossible. Students perceive their instructors as the experts because they are evaluating students' speaking. In my graduate seminar on Teaching Oral Communication Classes, I, as the instructor, ultimately post a grade for each graduate student's outline, speech, and critique. Undeniably, within the institutional frame of academe, my position as instructor in the invitational speaking round is more privileged—and often more valued—than that of other audience members.

Fully acknowledging that to eradicate my position of privilege in this classroom context is impossible, the question then evolves into another one: Can I, in this invitational speaking round, at least try to mitigate my privileged role? Through the decades of teaching this module, I have found myself attempting to do so by choosing to *perform* the role of equal audience member to the best of my ability. So how does this translate practically? For me, it means consciously trying to position myself as one voice among many in the students' selection and refinement of topics, one voice among many in the fifteen-minute discussion session of each student's speech, and one voice among many in the evaluation of that speech. Following are some of my pedagogical strategies for divesting myself of my privilege, flawed as they inevitably are.

Topic Selection

On the day that students post their two possible thesis statements on the whiteboard for the class to review, I am the one at the front of the classroom leading the discussion. Visually, this positioning cannot help but underscore that I, the instructor, am in charge. But that position can be mitigated somewhat by facilitating a discussion on the proposed theses by my asking questions more than commenting. Sometimes, my questions are addressed to the student who posted the theses:

- Sharon, what got you interested in this first topic?
- Jala, what organizational patterns do you have in mind for your second thesis?

Other times, my questions are addressed to the class at large:

- From our discussion, both of Darvin's topics seem viable. Since he's equally interested in both, let's take a straw poll so Darvin can gauge audience interest. If you have a strong preference for one of Darvin's topics, raise your hand when I announce that one. If you are equally interested in both of Darvin's topics, raise your hand twice.

Admittedly, sometimes my questions are rhetorical in the sense that they are designed to express a concern I have:

- Is Lexie's topic here too similar to Andy's?
- Is Chandra's invitational intention clear in both theses?
- John, you seem very passionate about guns not being allowed on campus. Are you confident you can be open minded to other views?

When the practice of an instructor alone approving students' topics is contrasted with this model of a class vetting each other's topics via public deliberation, we can see that the latter somewhat mitigates the privileged authority position of the instructor.

Discussion Section of the Speech

Another time when I consciously try to perform the role of equal audience member is during the students' invitational speeches. Specifically, during the discussion section of each of the student's speeches, I consciously try to limit the amount of time I speak. Why? Consider this common scenario: If, during the question-and-answer portion of the speech, four audience members and I raise our hands, I have found that the chance that the speaker is going to call on me over the other audience members is disproportionately high. Knowing this, I now genuinely try not to deliver more than one question or comment during the fifteen-minute question-and-answer portion of each student's invitational speech. Quite honestly, I find this very difficult to do because, when I am unfamiliar with a topic such as universities' policies on emotional support dogs in dorms, I am intellectually intrigued and want to know more. On the other hand, when I am extremely familiar with a topic, such as the tenure process, I want to comment, clarify, or complicate the discussion. Again, I try to limit my participation to no more than one question or comment, although, admittedly, I sometimes fail to achieve this goal.

Peer Evaluation

The third strategy I have for mitigating the instructor's privileged audience position in the evaluation process is my assigning each student in the seminar to be the critic for another student's speech. I strongly encourage the student critics to research their peers' topic before their peers deliver their speeches. Although not all students heed my advice, many do. This results in many student critics asking the most informed questions in the question-and-answer session because, typically, the informed student critic has read many of the same sources that the speaker has and sometimes has read sources the speaker has not.

Another strategy that empowers the peer critic over the instructor is that the peer critic later has access to the recording of the speech. The recording allows the peer critics to analyze what happened in the discussion section of the speech much more thoroughly than if they heard the speech once live. In their narrative critiques, then, peer critics have consistently proven to be keen observers. In noticing the positives, for example, peer critics might comment on the different ways a speaker

- repeated or clarified a student's question.
- honestly acknowledged being completely unfamiliar with a particular argument.
- tactfully encouraged the introverts in the class to contribute.
- adeptly defused a hostile aside from a fellow classmate.
- repeatedly thanked audience members by name for their insights.

Peer critics also point to specific areas where the speaker leading the question-and-answer session could improve. What strikes me again and again in reading their typed essays is how insightful and tactful the graduate students are in their criticisms. In part, they are incorporating the principles of constructive criticism we have been talking about all semester, but they are also highly empathetic to how hard their fellow speakers worked on their speeches and how difficult it is to get everything right. So, for example, often the tone of the peer's narrative criticism is something like this:

> Christy, you could tell there was great audience interest in your topic because there were always at least three or four sets of hands up wanting to comment or ask a question during the discussion section of your speech. Don't forget to respond, though, or at least somehow acknowledge audience members' contributions during the Q and A. While most of the time you did this, twice in the discussion period you failed to respond to the speaker's question or concern (Kimberly's and Tony's) and just jumped to the next set of hands. I know the speaker can feel overwhelmed up there at the podium; I sure did. But for the environment to be truly inclusive, audience members like Kimberly and Tony need to be assured their voices were heard.

As an instructor, when I read the students' narrative critiques, I often stop to contemplate how much my own teaching would benefit from someone recording my moderation of a class discussion and then closely analyzing it.

Oral Criticism of the Round of Speeches

Another pedagogical strategy that helps to mitigate my privileged position as an audience member is embedded in the structure and rules I impose for when the class discusses the invitational speeches. As noted earlier, here, as the instructor, I am again trying to be one voice among many responding to the speech. So, in the circle, the student speaker is the first to reflect on what the speaker is most proud of and still wants to work on; this is followed by the assigned peer critic underscoring the speaker's strengths and then recommending areas for improvement. Then discussion of the speech concludes with observations from other graduate students. Once again, I try to limit my comments as we discuss the individual speakers and speeches; instead, I focus on taking notes on the insights of the speakers, peer critics, and audience members. When I do speak in the end, it usually is to underscore how the class as a whole was particularly successful (e.g., clearly presenting their initial ideas, facilitating a sophisticated discussion on a number of topics, having visually exciting slides) as well as underscoring what the class as a whole can continue to work to improve on as future speakers and teachers. In this latter category, for example, I might use specific observations made by the speakers or critics as points of entry to encourage the graduate students in the class to think even more deeply. For example:

> Princess noted in our discussion that Jeremy's choice to come out from behind the podium and pull up a chair to sit during the Q and A was perhaps too informal and took away from his credibility. Do you agree, or could an argument be made that Jeremy's sitting in a chair among us visually established him on equal footing with us as audience members? If Jeremy had chosen to sit on the desk at the front of the room, how would that be read by audience members? Should invitational speakers even be using a podium? Why or why not?

Another example:

> Many of you in your self-critiques today noted that the most difficult part of the speech was the conclusion. Peer critics often agreed, noting that the speaker's conclusion seemed "somewhat pat," "memorized," or "preplanned." As lab instructors, you are often going to find yourself in a position of summing up a discussion or, at the end of a class period, reminding students of the important takeaways. Those of you in class who felt you did a good job with your conclusion, what tips can you offer others?

After the students offer their tips, I might bring up strategies students from previous classes have used successfully. I might tell them, for example, about Mary Ellen, who put the audience's key ideas on the chalkboard during the question-and-answer session. I underscore that Mary Ellen's strategy worked well to affirm the audience members' ideas during the discussion section of the speech and also served to help Mary Ellen remember the ideas because she later referenced them in her conclusion.

Written Feedback from the Instructor

To be candid, when I grade both the full-sentence outline and the students' narrative critiques, I am a traditional professor. I am not one voice among many; rather, I am a professor who has followed what I believe to be good teaching practice by providing students with relevant readings; giving clear instructions for the assignments; being transparent with my grading rubric; and offering constructive, detailed criticism.

When I evaluate the invitational speech itself, however, I believe I have structured the module such that I am "one voice among many." At the start, the students' topics were assessed collectively. After presenting their invitational speeches and before receiving any written feedback from me, the students in my class, during the oral round of criticism, have self-reflected on their experience and shared their own insights; listened to and responded to their peer critics' perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of their speeches; heard selective comments from other audience members; and, with their peers, thought through some of the particular challenges of this mode of speaking. In addition, the students have read a four- to five-page narrative critique from a well-informed peer.

When I do add my individual voice to the community dialogue, I do so by filling in a critique sheet that is specifically designed to synthesize audience feedback before explicitly adding my own. My critique sheet has just four prompts to which I respond:

- Dr. D agrees that the following were some of the strengths of your speech (as articulated by you, your peer critic, or other classmates).
- Dr. D agrees that the following were some of the weaknesses of your speech (as articulated by you, your peer critic, or other classmates).
- Dr. D disagrees with the following observations or claims (as articulated by you, your peer critic, or other classmates) and explains why.
- Dr. D also wants to add:[17]

The template is consciously structured to synthesize the community response to the speech, including my own. In that way, it reinforces my desire to be "one voice among many."

The handwritten grade on the bottom of the critique, however, can be read in a number of ways. Some students might see it as directly connected to the synthesis of community criticism on which I have just expounded; to them, the numerical grade is a quantitative assessment of the public deliberation of the strengths and weaknesses of their speeches that I have just outlined. Others may see the grade as an expert—a full professor in the School of Communication—assigning a numerical grade based on her opinion. As their instructor, I hope more students read it as the former than the latter. That said, I have to admit that, paradoxically, there is truth to both views.

CHALLENGING ASPECTS OF THE INVITATIONAL MODULE

Students practice a variety of skills in the invitational module. As speakers, they choose a topic, articulate a thesis, research a topic, create a full-sentence outline, present a position (or explore an issue), moderate a discussion, and conclude a speech based in part on audience feedback. As audience members, students listen carefully to speeches on a variety of issues in higher education and ask salient questions or offer insightful comments. As critics, students research a peer's topic, closely analyze a peer's speech (based on seeing it live and recorded), and provide constructive feedback on it both orally and in written narrative form.

After teaching the course for over two decades, I can point to two areas from all the ones noted previously in which I find the graduate students still struggle—concluding the invitational speech and composing a full-sentence outline. After briefly articulating these two problem areas, I will propose a possible solution I am optimistically determined to try the next time I teach the course.

The first area where I, as well as many of my students, often feel disappointment is in their inability to artfully conclude their invitational speeches. Indeed, many of the students wrap up their invitational speeches in a rather clichéd way. These students seem to have pre-written their conclusions prior to presenting the speech and, at best, add a token thank you to the audience for contributing to the discussion. Audience members understandably feel disconcerted when our fifteen-minute class discussion seems ignored or undervalued by the speaker in the conclusion.

A few possible explanations surface to explain this phenomenon. First, I think the speakers' inability to conclude is because, on the whole, graduate students have extremely limited experience thinking on their feet (i.e., orally synthesizing key ideas from others and integrating them with their own). Second, I believe, even *with* experience, this type of impromptu conclusion is extremely difficult to do well. Third, sometimes there is not a simple conclusion to an invitational speech and its complex audience discussion. Nonetheless, we can continue to work against these obstacles. One student who had some teaching experience recommended, "Since the majority of our class did not sufficiently conclude the invitational speech, more emphasis and practice concluding discussions would have been valuable ahead of the speech" (Julia Hix).[18]

The second area where the students often struggle is in composing their full-sentence outlines. Earlier in this essay, I underscored that I always forewarn students that I'm a "stickler" about outlines, so they need to read and follow the textbook guidelines closely, peruse my supplementary handout and rubric, and come chat with me if they are struggling. Even with all of these caveats, every semester, when I grade the outlines, I am disappointed.[19] I offer two possible explanations. First, I surmise that many of my students have had limited practice in their undergraduate classes in outlining, and, consequently, those students need more practice in outlining in my graduate class before they are expected to do a formal, graded, full-sentence outline in the invitational speech module. One anonymous student in my class one fall semester candidly acknowledged, "I've never written an outline quite like the one required. I never took a speech course that dove into it because how the speech is delivered was always the focus." A second explanation for their poor performance on outlines might be students' lack of effective time-management skills. Because the full-sentence outline is due on the same day as the invitational speech, perhaps some students, finding themselves in a bit of a time crunch, simply opt to use those last hours practicing their speeches rather than refining their written outlines.[20] This second explanation seems particularly probable in the summer term, when my "boot-camp" class is packed into six weeks.

In contemplating possible pedagogical solutions to these two problems, I know that there is not much room to spare in the course calendar. If I do add something, it is most likely to be some type of interactive learning exercise specifically designed to address both of these problem areas simultaneously. For example, I am considering telling the class I am going to show an invitational speech related to higher education and task one-third of the class with creating a full-sentence outline for the first section of the speech, one-third of the class with summarizing the key points made by audience members in the discussion section of the speech, and one-third of the class with critiquing the strengths and weaknesses of the speaker's conclusion. I do not naively believe that adding one learning activity that gives students more practice in the two areas with which they have been struggling—outlining and synthesizing—will magically work for all; nevertheless, I am an optimist and eager to try a different pedagogical strategy to try to help the students develop stronger skills in these two areas.

VALUE OF THE INVITATIONAL MODULE

In my Teaching Oral Communication Classes seminar, I work daily to create an invitational environment. This translates into my being prepared for each class, articulating ideas clearly in the classroom setting, and creating a space where diverse and sometimes contrary views are expressed and seriously considered. Although I strive for this invitational environment in all my classes, it differs in Teaching Oral Communication Classes in that, midway through the semester, I literally take a backseat in the classroom. For approximately eight hours of class time during the middle of the semester, I consciously adopt the role of equal audience member so that all graduate students have the opportunity to practice creating and sustaining an invitational environment.

To succeed as an invitational speaker, the graduate students, too, have to have done the hard work of researching, outlining, and writing their speeches. But now, on the scheduled speech days, their private work is put to a public test. The graduate students must demonstrate that they understand their issue fully by clearly presenting their position, and they need to demonstrate that they can sustain an invitational environment by handling the discussion section and improvising a conclusion. In general, the students agree with my contention that they need more practice in improvising conclusions; nonetheless, the students seem relatively united in their collective discovery that moderating a discussion on their topics was challenging, thrilling, and valuable:[21]

> The invitational speech was incredibly helpful overall. In writing my own speech, it was challenging to prepare for the question and answer portion. The reason is because you truly have no idea what your classmates will say, which is very realistic to the classroom. (Lauren Diego)

> I actually enjoyed the [invitational speech round] thoroughly. In undergrad, we had to give informative and persuasive speeches but not invitational. I believe the invitational is more of a balanced approach because (1) you are presenting multiple sides of a subject in order to warrant discussion, and (2) it forces the speech writer to be more objective in his or her evaluation of the material due to knowing there is a mixed audience and wanting to encourage discussion. Another element is the feedback/discussion portion. This section forces the student to be on his or her feet and actually know the material as opposed to just reading from a script. It becomes a multi-level discussion instead of just being one-sided. (Joshua Clements)

> Giving an invitational speech was one of the far more difficult things I did this semester. It forced me to truly consider opinions other than my own beyond just a surface understanding. I grew in confidence as both a graduate student and future instructor after facilitating discussion among my peers. (Abigail Lloyd)

> Overall, I think the invitational speeches were *valuable*. They force aspiring teachers to cross over into a realm they don't typically already live in. When I use the word *realm*, I am referring to the specific space where an individual creates an open conversation. I think this ability (skill) is not taught or prioritized in higher education. (Tabitha Cervantes)

> One of the biggest things I got out of the invitational speech was how it makes speakers really think about their audience for the Q and A session. I had to consider their interpretations and possible reactions to points I was proposing. In [this class], we always talk about the audience as a huge factor to consider when creating speeches, but they never have their own voice. The invitational speech gave that audience a voice and changed the dynamic from speaker to audience into speaker to speakers. (Lilu Cabreros)

Lilu's insight that the invitational speech empowers its audience members by shifting the dynamic from "speaker to audience" to "speaker to speakers" is readily apparent in the required fifteen minutes' discussion session of each student's speech, where the audience members ask questions or comment on the speaker's ideas. But there is also a macroscopic "speaker-to-speakers" feel in the classroom itself because literally everyone in that classroom is a speaker (either someone who has given a speech or someone about to give one). Because all the topics for the round are related to higher education, the classroom becomes an assemblage of experts on various issues in higher education:

> I think what I love most about [the invitational speaking round] was the topics that my classmates presented. Since our class was small and talkative, I felt like we created some incredibly interesting and thought provoking conversations. (Lauren Diego)

> For the invitational speech round, I consider the speeches to have provided important insight about major problems in higher education that I hadn't thought deeply about in the past. Other than increasing my knowledge on important issues, I also discovered how the perspectives and opinions change from person to person. This helped me become more understanding toward others' opinions and brought a sense of unity for the class. (Stephanie Zuniga)

A former doctoral student, Stephen Andon, provided another lens on the invitational speech when he described how he felt as an audience member during the question-and-answer sessions of the speeches:

> As an audience member, the invitational speeches spoke to my sense of curiosity and a drive to understand the speaker in a deeper way than I may have as an audience member for other kinds of speeches. Plus, it was just so much fun. The extemporaneous quality of the invitational speech brought a vibrant, dynamic quality. As an audience member, you knew that the speakers had prepared, had brought their expertise to bear, and so the process of asking follow-ups or clarifications or other kinds of questions allowed for those students to let their expertise flow.[22]

Collectively, the students in my graduate seminar seem to have taken great pride in having co-created and sustained an intellectually exciting, invitational environment for this section of the course. That is precisely why, in the middle of the semester after the invitational module, the balance of the class tips, and the graduate students take greater control of the class. For the remainder of the seminar, the graduate students in pairs and in groups experiment with creating invitational environments in configurations unlike the formal speaking context.[23]

Although most of the master's students in my graduate seminar go on to serve as TAs running their own labs for an introductory speech course, typically the very next semester, the doctoral students tend to be placed as TAs for other courses in communication. For both sets of students, the other required text for the class serves them well because many of the chapters in *McKeachie's Teaching Tips* underscore the same principles of invitational rhetoric; these include "Facilitating a Discussion"; "Teaching Culturally Diverse Students"; "Different Students, Different Learning"; "Active Learning: Group-Based Learning"; and "Teaching Large Classes (You Can Still Get Active Learning!)." The testimonials from my students strongly suggest that the invitational module gave them the confidence that they would be capable of creating an invitational environment in their labs and classrooms.

But what about beyond their one- or two-year stints as TAs at Florida State University? Because the majority of the graduate students enrolled in my seminar are master's students, few of whom go on to pursue doctorates, I can only hope that the master's students realize the potential for creating invitational environments in their future careers. One of my master's students clearly understood this:

> The invitational speech lessons provided an opportunity to understand how public speaking can be operationalized in the real world. In most public speaking courses, you are invited to "inform" or "persuade" the audience, neither of which reflects what *real* public speaking will look like in business, discussion, or problem solving. Implementing an invitational speech allows speakers to present before their audiences multiple options, choices, or outcomes that then can be further evaluated as a whole. Outside of academia, students will rarely be given the opportunity to simply "persuade." Instead, students will be asked to pitch ideas, intake criticism, and eventually develop new ideas. The invitational speech provides students with a more realistic assignment that promotes audience engagement as a means of drawing conclusions. (Steven Pope)

Although I do not have sufficient data to gauge how being introduced to invitational speaking affected the doctoral students' teaching careers, I can fantasize that Stephen Andon's experience, as articulated here, is not unique:

> I guess let me start by saying that my experience [in the Teaching Oral Communication Classes seminar] was transformative. I had thought about teaching in higher education, but only as an abstraction. I knew so little about what it really meant. All I had to go on was my own perceptions as an undergraduate and what I liked about my instructors at that level. I had taken a speech class as an undergraduate but, looking back now, if [this teacher-training class] had only offered the more unidirectional offerings—informative, persuasive, etc., speeches—I would have missed out on what is now a fundamental building block for my teaching.
>
> The approach to the invitational speech is pretty much my approach to lecture to this day. With some variety, dependent upon the course, naturally, I like to offer a few thoughts and then launch into a discussion or an in-class activity that spurs a discussion, concluding the class meeting with a recap of the day's ideas. That, to me, is the ideal class period. And so, the invitational speech was my first real practice with that approach. I can't imagine teaching a class any other way. It fosters discourse naturally, it's fun, and my students seem to respond positively to that approach. The great thing about our discipline is that it pairs so well with this approach—the field of communication is so fertile with contemporary examples—just today we were talking about credibility, image restoration, and the Larry Nassar case at Michigan State. It speaks to the extemporaneous quality of the invitational speech that it can be so adaptive to situations and contexts facing our students.
>
> [Invitational speaking also] challenges me to think about diverse vantage points, to respond with empathy to my students, to be earnest, to exhibit good will to questions/responses of any stripe. One thing I love about our student body at Nova Southeastern University is that we are really international—a lot of students are from the Caribbean, Central and South America—and, as a fluent Spanish speaker myself, I often find myself deferring to their expertise on how a particular theoretical concept may be applied practically in their culture. In other instances, the ability to handle questions and responses deftly is handy especially when students present viewpoints that are oppositional, even combative, in nature.
>
> So, in all, I'm a big fan of the invitational speech. It helped solidify my own approach to teaching and, as an audience member, I found it both intellectually stimulating and perspective expanding.

In this essay, I have presented the case that my invitational module is valuable for preparing graduate students to become TAs as well as preparing them for their future careers, whether those careers occur outside or inside academe. Inside academe, Stephen Andon reminds us how adopting invitational speaking practices continues to aid him in creating intellectually stimulating classroom environments. Although I wholeheartedly agree that adopting invitational speaking practices makes us better teachers, I also believe that when we adopt those same invitational principles practices in myriad other academic environments—in our offices, at faculty meetings, and at our national conferences, for example—we inevitably become better advisors, better faculty members, and better academics. As my student Tabitha Cervantes more succinctly claimed, invitational speaking makes us "better humans."

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author wishes to thank Sonja Foss and Cindy Griffin, whose feedback on this essay embodied all the principles of invitational rhetoric.

NOTES

1. I have won four teaching awards in my tenure at Florida State University: University Teaching Award (Graduate Level, 2014); University Teaching Awards (Undergraduate Level, 1991 and 2007); and Teaching Incentive Program (1994). In addition, after six years of receiving consistently high evaluations from teaching assistants across the curriculum who took my interactive teaching workshops, Florida State University's Program for Instructional Excellence honored me in 2000 with a certificate of appreciation for my university service.
2. Cindy L. Griffin, *Invitation to Public Speaking*, 5th ed. (Stamford, CT: Cengage Learning, 2014), 241.
3. I remain indebted to Cindy Griffin for introducing me to the invitational speech in 2005 when she visited Florida State University.
4. Dan O'Hair and Hanna Rubenstein, *Pocket Guide to Public Speaking*, 5th ed. (New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2015).
5. Sonja K. Foss and Karen A. Foss, *Inviting Transformation: Presentational Speaking for a Changing World*, 3rd ed. (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 2012), 1–19.
6. In the School of Communication at Florida State University, there are seven different faculty members (as well as the occasional doctoral student) who deliver the lectures for our basic public speaking courses. The required basic public speaking textbooks assigned by those instructors for their lecture/lab courses vary. Thus, I believe it would be a disservice to the graduate students in our program to train them only in an invitational approach to public speaking.
7. For the last six years, given the enrollment demand and student interest, I have taught the course, in addition to each summer, every other fall semester.
8. The expectations for the third "test," which covers three chapters in *Pocket Guide* (two on persuasion, one on special occasion), differ depending on whether the students are at the doctoral or master's level. The variation for the assignment is because, after my seminar, doctoral students will be designing tests for a range of courses in communication, while the master's students who become TAs most likely will not be. This variation in assignment is meant to benefit both groups. In a semester in which I had fourteen students, for example, two doctoral students designed a unit-three test on the assigned chapters with a heavy emphasis on creating exam questions that demand higher order critical thinking, six master's students took one doctoral student's unit-three test, and the other six students took the other doctoral student's unit-three test. I serve as metacritic—I give feedback and assess the doctoral students' test constructions, their grading of the master's level students' tests, and their reflective essays on the process. Also, to ensure the fairest grading possible for the master's students, I reserve the right to adjust (and often do) the doctoral students' grades on the unit-three tests.
9. Rudolph F. Verderber, Deanna D. Sellnow, and Kathleen S. Verderber, *The Challenge of Effective Speaking in a Digital Age*, 17th ed. (Boston: Cengage Learning, 2018), "Constructive Criticism," 3–4b.

10. Foss and Foss, *Inviting Transformation*, 1–19.

11. Griffin, *Invitation to Public Speaking*, 239–57.

12. Griffin, *Invitation to Public Speaking*, 323–25.

13. See "Types of Invitational Speeches" in Griffin, *Invitation to Public Speaking*, 290–93, and "To Articulate a Perspective" in Foss and Foss, *Inviting Transformation*, 25–27.

14. Griffin, *Invitation to Public Speaking*, 323–25.

15. Because I try my best to practice what I preach, the rubric on my metacritique mirrors the same set of principles of ethical criticism I have been encouraging them to use. For the first five principles, I am indebted to Deanna Sellnow:

1. Does the critic sufficiently cover all three areas (content, structure, and delivery)?
2. Is the criticism grounded in specific observations?
3. Are the critic's observation statements followed by an explanation of how and why the observed behavior affected the speech?
4. Does the critic underscore what the speaker did well before launching into suggestions for improvement?
5. Does the critic use "I" language?
6. Are the critic's circled scores in the various categories in sync with narrative feedback?
7. Are the circled scores and narrative comments in sync with the final numerical score or letter grade?

16. Donna Marie Nudd, *Guidelines for Critique of Your Peer's Invitational Speech* [computer printout] (Tallahassee: School of Communication, Florida State University, 2018).

17. It took me over a decade of teaching at the college level before I figured out how I wanted to be addressed. When I was a young feminist assistant professor, immensely proud of my recently minted PhD, I felt devalued when students and staff addressed all the male professors as *Dr.* and me as *Donna*. But I also am a much more informal teacher than many of my colleagues, and *Dr. Nudd* seemed too formal. Eventually, I realized that *Dr. D* hit the right note.

18. In anticipating writing this essay, I handed out blank pieces of paper near the end of the semester to the graduate students enrolled in my class in the fall of 2017. I informed my students that I was going to write a scholarly paper on using the invitational speech module in a teacher-training class, and I would appreciate their input. I asked them to write as candidly as they could about the invitational round—what they thought worked or did not and whether they found the various assignments valuable or not. I assured them I would not read any of their comments until after final grades were submitted and said that they could choose to sign their feedback forms or not. In this essay, comments from students who did not sign their feedback forms are listed as "Anonymous." If I am quoting from students who signed their feedback forms, the students' names are directly cited, and they have granted me permission to quote them. Except for the quote in the essay from a former student, Stephen Andon, and a quote (in endnote 20) from a student in my summer, 2018, class, all quotes in this paper are from graduate students enrolled in Teaching Oral Communication Classes in the fall semester of 2017 at Florida State University, Tallahassee campus.

19. To double check my impression in this matter, I did a quick quantitative analysis. In reviewing 101 graduate students' grades on their outlines over the course of the seven classes, 29 percent were A's; 53 percent, B's; 10 percent, C's; 7 percent, D's; and 2 percent, F's. With a mean score of 41.9/50 possible points, these grades, in a graduate school context, adequately reflect my disappointment and, I presume, theirs.

20. An additional problem surfaces here that, in requiring a full-sentence outline, some students may then opt to *not* create a speaking outline or speaking notes. In my summer, 2018, class, one anonymous student acknowledged that "the full-sentence outline was valuable because it made me identify clear main and then subpoints. I think it allowed me to stay focused and include particularly relevant information. But it did not help me while speaking. I found it hard to speak extemporaneously because I was using my full outline." Admittedly, some graduate students in my seminar err on becoming too depen-

dent on their full-sentence outlines while presenting their speeches orally; often, these students become acutely aware of the delivery problem after the fact when they watch their own recorded invitational speeches and contrast their more staid delivery in the first seven to eight minutes of their speeches with their more honest, engaging, impromptu deliveries while facilitating the question-and-answer sessions.

21. Of the thirteen students in my fall, 2017, class, only one seemed disgruntled: "I don't really understand why the speeches were necessary. I guess so you know that we can write & deliver. Overall, I'm not sure I took the value out of it that you wanted" (Anonymous).

22. Stephen Andon, email message to Donna Marie Nudd, January 25, 2018.

23. One of those is a paired assignment, in which a pair of graduate students creates and tries out a successful interactive learning activity that will specifically work to teach a concept (e.g., fallacies, Monroe's Motivated Sequence) applicable to undergraduates enrolled in public speaking courses. The other is a group assignment that lets students improvise handling a situation as a TA that is "ethically, academically, legally, or interpersonally problematic"—for example, dealing with a class full of students challenging an instructor's test questions or meeting one to one with a student who was offended by another student's speech.

20

Disrupting Disruption

Invitational Pedagogy as a Response to Student Resistance

A. Abby Knoblauch

Early in the first chapter of her 1999 book *Feeling Power: Emotions and Education*, Megan Boler notes that the classroom is a space that links education and parenting, explaining that both realms are often fraught with struggles for control and autonomy, struggles that many educators label as resistance. In fact, taking the parent-teacher analogy further, Boler argues that sometimes students "may resist the educator's suggestions, no matter what that suggestion is," simply (although it is hardly simple) to assert some form of power. The "parental cliché, 'Do what I say because I know what's best for you,'" she believes, "is in part an invitation for the young person to rebel and say 'No, I'll decide what's best for me!'" (p. 4). In other words, Boler reads a teacher's assertion of authority as an invitation for student resistance.

It is difficult to imagine *inviting* student resistance in this way, at least consciously. Many educators would say that they encourage disagreement, but this particular form of resistance—disagreeing solely to refuse agreement—seems less welcome. And yet, this sort of resistance can be quite common, especially in classrooms in which students are asked to interrogate their preconceived notions, deeply held beliefs, or adherence to dominant ideological values. In this chapter, I will begin by briefly discussing forms of resistance within the context of critical or liberatory pedagogies, especially within college composition classrooms.[1] Next, I will analyze Kopelson's notion of a "performance of neutrality" as one response to student resistance, exploring reasons for an attempt at teacher neutrality and the problems with this performative pedagogy. I will then offer communication scholars Foss and Griffin's (1995) proposal for *invitational rhetoric* as a more productive theory on which to base pedagogical practice, particularly when attempting to interrogate dominant cultural ideologies. Finally, I connect what I call an *invitational pedagogy* to Boler's notion of a "pedagogy of discomfort" (1999, p. 175), suggesting that, while emotional discomfort is inevitable and even productive, an invitational pedagogy can reduce resistance sometimes sparked by feelings of threat and keep open the lines of communication. In brief, this chapter asks that we disrupt our own ideas of

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disruptive pedagogies, arguing that sometimes the most radical pedagogy is one that neither directly challenges students, nor performs neutrality, but instead attempts to avoid an intent to persuade in favor of an invitation to understanding.

BACKGROUND

The issue of student resistance in the classroom has garnered a surfeit of responses, in part because of the slippery nature of the term *resistance* itself. Resistance to authority can connote positively, as is the case in much resistance theory, based largely on Freire's landmark work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2003/1970) in which Freire details his literacy work in Latin America as a form of resistance against an oppressive social structure. Proponents of critical composition pedagogies (also often termed *liberatory*, *emancipatory*, or *radical pedagogies*), primarily drawing on the work of scholars such as Freire, Giroux (1983, 1988), and Shor (1980), also see resistance as productive. Bizzell (1991), hooks (1994), Kennedy (1999), and Pratt (1991), for example, write about resistance in terms of liberation from hegemonic structures. But, as Welsh (2001) points out, "legitimate" resistance is often imagined as students recognizing and working against dominant ideologies (pp. 556–557). When students defy instructors' efforts to unveil the false consciousness under which the students are assumed to be operating, however, such resistance is deemed less productive (or, more optimistically, simply a step toward more legitimate resistance of hegemony).

None of this is to say that liberatory or radical pedagogies are inherently problematic. Indeed, I am attracted toward their primary goals. I cannot but hope that one result of a university education is a student's heightened ability—and even desire—to challenge his or her deeply held beliefs. There are, however, a number of teacher-scholars who reject such approaches, particularly within the composition classroom. Critics of liberatory pedagogies have long lamented what they see as attempts at indoctrination in such classrooms—a troubling form of persuasion in which students feel pressured to adopt the politics or viewpoints of the instructor. Perhaps the most (in)famous of such critiques is Hairston's (1992) scathing characterization of radical pedagogy as one that "puts dogma before diversity, politics before craft, ideology before critical thinking, and the social goals of the teacher before the educational needs of the students" (p. 180). Fulkerson (2005), too, voices concerns over the drive toward political conversion in what he calls *critical cultural studies classrooms*.

In his 1998 article "The Arts of Complicity," Miller echoes many of these critiques, but also draws attention to the seductive appeal of critical pedagogies, asking, "If we aren't in the business of liberation, uplift, and movement, however slow, towards a better social world, what is it we're doing in our classrooms?" (p. 12). But his subsection heading "Everybody Get in Line: Liberation and the Obedient Response" highlights concerns about indoctrination, or even student performance of indoctrination. In attempting to incorporate tenets of radical pedagogy into his own classrooms, Miller found that many students "resisted the 'politicization' of the classroom; those who didn't seemed overly eager to ventriloquize sentiments they didn't believe or understand" (p. 11). In other words, as a young man at the video store recently explained to me, as a student, you need only to deduce what groups the professors love and/or hate to succeed. Once you figure that out, he explained, you can write papers that reflect the professor's viewpoint and get an A. Unknowingly, this young man encapsulated one of the primary critiques of liberatory pedagogies. This is hardly the kind of critical thinking toward which most of us are striving.

Understandably, practitioners of critical pedagogy disagree with such representations of their classrooms. Wood (1993), for example, holds that liberatory instructors work *against* indoctrination and dogmatic teaching, attempting instead to "empower students and give them genuine voices of resistance" (p. 250). Stenberg (2006) paints a complex picture of liberatory classrooms, voicing concerns but ultimately arguing that the true liberatory composition teacher values critical inquiry, not a predetermined critical goal. And it should be noted that liberatory classrooms, like all classrooms, are complex, shifting, and dynamic. Yet a number of scholars (including Gorzelsky, 2009; and Welsh, 2001) continue to draw attention to students' resistance to critical or liberatory pedagogies based primarily on issues of power and conversion in college writing classrooms. It seems that despite more nuanced forms of critical pedagogies, many students are still responding negatively to instructors who voice their political viewpoints in the classroom, undermining the liberatory goals of such courses.

Despite these concerns, by 1995, Dennis Lynch had already noted (apprehensively) that within composition studies the question had become "not, should teachers bring their politics into the classroom, but, how should teachers and students together approach, resist, negotiate, affirm, transform, make use of, etc., the political relations and commitments that circumscribe and define the writing classroom and its activities?" (p. 351). I would argue that Lynch's anxiety is still somewhat misplaced, or at least misarticulated, as no classroom is void of politics. The instructor brings her political beliefs into the classroom, as do the students, whether she intends to or not. Whereas some teacher-scholars (such as Hairston, 1992; Lynch, 1995; and Soles, 1998) would prefer to avoid overt treatment of "political relations and commitments" (Lynch, 1995, p. 351), radical teacher-scholars hold that the composition classroom is precisely the place to address such issues. *How* teachers and students address those issues is still the topic of much scholarly discussion, in part because actual classroom practices vary so greatly.

The concerns surrounding critical pedagogies that I have noted revolve around the crossing of boundaries: the lines between education and indoctrination, critical thinking and conversion, resistance and reproduction, even the classroom and the public sphere. In all of these border disputes one can hear echoes of two primary issues: authority and resistance. Given that instructors have the authority to validate or refuse a student's response to any text, students often read such teacherly responses as attempts to convince students of the teacher's perspective. Karen Kopelson explores one common instructor response to such resistance: what she calls *a performance of neutrality.* I explore why Kopelson (and others) might gravitate toward performative pedagogy, discuss some of the concerns I have with this performance, and then offer an alternative pedagogical approach that I believe addresses many of the problems inherent in a performance of neutrality.

DISRUPTING STUDENT RESISTANCE

A Problematic Performance

As Kopelson explains, the move toward critical pedagogies and the attendant focus on human difference in the college writing classroom has sparked a shift in the forms of student resistance. Drawing on the work of Johnson (1994), Kopelson notes that instead of simply resisting the universality of the college writing requirement, students now see the more politicized college writing course as "an intrusion of sorts, resenting and often actively rebelling against what they may experience as the 'imposition' of race, class, gender, sexuality, or (more generally) cultural issues onto their 'neutral' course of study" (p. 117). This is especially true in geographical areas where socially liberal ideologies are seen as contributing to the decline of "traditional" values. In these cases, student resistance can be read as "protective": of self, of family, of communal values (Kopelson, p. 119).

Of course, asking most students to rethink any deeply held belief can result in classroom disruption, whether that's outward resistance, student silence, or passive-aggressive behaviors. It is easier to understand this disruption when we imagine the positionalities of the students in a first-year writing course, however, particularly at schools such as the Midwestern state university at which I teach. Often hailing from small towns in relative geographical isolation, many of these students are, for the first time, away from home, away from their families, away from everything that they've known. Not only have their surroundings changed, but they are suddenly being asked to question their political beliefs, their understandings of the world, sometimes even the implications of their religious faiths. Regardless of from where our students hail, many of their beliefs are rooted in family, church, and community—sources of knowledge that many students are, understandably, uncomfortable critiquing. Student resistance to more politically charged classrooms, then, can be read as loyalty to family and community, as well as a fear of shattering those few things that students, now attempting to navigate new communities and experiences, hold as comforting certainties. It is hardly surprising that the disruption of these beliefs might cause resistance to the curriculum and the instructor.

The form that this resistance takes can be a result not only of the student's personal and social histories, but also of student (and teacher) expectations based on the teacher's age, gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, able-bodiedness, or socio-economic class. In other words, student resistance can be informed by geography; personal, family, state, and larger social histories; as well as the students' and teacher's social positionalities. As Kopelson points out, "overtly 'critical' pedagogical approaches may be especially ineffective, and even counterproductive, for the teacher-subject who is immediately *read* by the students" as Other, as a member of a marginalized group (p. 118). While some teacher-scholars such as hooks, Jarratt, and Pratt call for overtly politicized classroom spaces in which students are directly challenged and made uncomfortable, the visibility of the teacher's social positionality in relation to the students' can make such pedagogical approaches especially problematic. When an older white male walks into the classroom, for example, for many students he immediately embodies the role of teacher. He is the one-who-knows and therefore may be more easily viewed as someone who has the authority to challenge students. But if the instructor does not conform to images of traditional authority—is young, female, transgender, does not identify as heterosexual, and/or is non-white, for example—the instructor is often read as attempting to forward a personal activist agenda and is dismissed as biased.

Because many teacher-scholars in composition and rhetoric agree with Boler that "the obligation of educators is not to guarantee a space that is free from hostility—an impossible and sanitizing task—but rather, to challenge oneself and one's students to critically analyze any statements made in a classroom, especially statements that are rooted in dominant ideological values that subordinate on the basis of race, gender, class, or sexual orientation" (p. 4), Kopelson suggests that we develop pedagogies that are "sneakier," performing a stance of neutrality even if such neutrality is impossible or even undesirable (p. 121). She sees this performance as a "self-conscious masquerade that serves an overarching and more insurgent political agenda" (p. 123). It "feigns itself, *perverts* itself, in the service of other—disturbing and disruptive—goals" (p. 123, emphasis in original). When the instructor performs political neutrality, Kopelson argues, students are less likely to charge bias and may, then, focus more critically on texts and ideas they might ignore if they believed the instructor had a personal stake in them.

Kopelson notes that the risks of performing political neutrality include self-erasure of difference and the reinscription of assumptions about dominant culture and authority (p. 139). Yet she reminds us that all identities and pedagogies are a form of performance and that this is but one possible pedagogical practice to help combat student resistance to human difference–based curricula. I echo Kopelson's concerns about the attempted self-erasure of difference, even if that erasure is but a performance. I can see the potential liberatory move of that momentary (and strategic) denial of political positionality, but I wonder, too, about the implications of such denial itself. As hooks reminds us, "the person who is most powerful has the privilege of denying their body" (p. 137). Scholars need to pay attention, then, to who is asked to deny the body, or the body politic, and who is not. Of course "asking" assumes a form of agency, the privilege to accept or refuse the invitation to deny. Kopelson might argue that, given the strength of student resistance to challenging conservative values, especially when the instructor embodies the very "difference" the course is addressing, the choice is always already loaded. But I am persuaded by Banks who argues that when we act as if bodies do not matter, we run the risk of (falsely) assuming that "any *body* can stand in for another" (2003, p. 38, emphasis in original). Furthermore, while all identities may be performative, some identities are more easily performed than others. Kopelson seems rather certain that such a performance of neutrality is possible, and I do not want to dismiss her experience, but some identities are, literally, written on the body. While those marked as "other" might be able to perform practices associated with more traditional authority (lecturing, for example), this does not necessarily erase their perceived "otherness."

Still, we cannot avoid the difficulties inherent in asking students to question their views on human difference, especially when the instructor embodies one or more of those markers of "difference." For those instructors for whom a performance of neutrality seems problematic or even impossible, I offer Foss and Griffin's 1995 theory of invitational rhetoric as a basis for pedagogical practice that disrupts conventional notions of authority while allowing space to interrogate both students' and instructors' belief systems.

An Overview of Invitational Rhetoric

In their article, "Beyond Persuasion," Foss and Griffin argue that Western rhetoric's historical association with persuasion reflects patriarchal values of dominance and change, functioning from within a "power-over" framework in which the rhetor determines self-worth by attempting to control the lives or viewpoints of the listener(s.) Objecting to this (mis)use of power and to the conflation of rhetoric with persuasion, Foss and Griffin propose invitational rhetoric as one alternative. They define invitational rhetoric as a theory rooted in the feminist principles of equality, immanent value, and self-determination where immanent value refers to the idea that all beings are worthy as they are, and self-determination reflects the belief that individuals are the experts on their own lives (p. 4). Based in these principles, a rhetor practicing invitational rhetoric does not desire to change or persuade the listener because the listener, not the rhetor, is seen as the best authority on his or her life.

A rhetoric based in these principles is one that challenges the primacy of persuasion. If one begins with the premise that listeners and rhetor are equals, that listeners need not be changed, and that listeners are the experts on their own lives, then change can no longer be the primary goal of this form of rhetoric. Instead, the goal of invitational rhetoric is better understanding of all viewpoints offered and of the individuals who hold those viewpoints. Within an invitational framework, the rhetor offers her perspectives, thereby inviting the audience to see the world as the rhetor does and, in turn, the rhetor listens to all perspectives offered. She "does not judge or denigrate others' perspectives but is open to and tries to appreciate and validate those perspectives, even if they differ dramatically from the rhetor's own" (p. 5). Ideally, all audience members respond in kind, listening to the rhetor's perspective and then offering their own. In this ideal situation, rhetor and audience approach each other as equals within a framework of mutual respect to come to a better understanding of all possible facets of the issue at hand as well as of the participants themselves. In short, then, invitational rhetoric is a rhetoric of understanding, one in which the rhetor invites the listeners to enter her world without attempting to persuade the listener(s) to adhere to the rhetor's beliefs.[2]

Perhaps the key word in this brief overview of invitational rhetoric, particularly when one imagines it in a classroom, is *ideally*. *Ideally* the listener accepts the rhetor's invitation. *Ideally* differences are examined in an environment of mutual respect. *Ideally* the rhetor does not seek to persuade the listener. And *ideally* all participants are treated equally. But of course we know that the classroom environment is not ideal. The classroom—any classroom—is rife with unequal power dynamics; people are silenced, sometimes unintentionally and sometimes intentionally; and respect for classmates, instructors, and even students is not always present. Additionally, it is difficult to imagine avoiding the desire to persuade, especially when faced with vast political chasms and with those who espouse racist, sexist, homophobic, or otherwise disturbing social or political values. Why, then, do I offer invitational rhetoric as a potential site for strategies of productive disruption? Because despite its challenges, a pedagogy based in invitational rhetoric provides instructors with a framework from within which they can challenge viewpoints without inducing a sense of threat (and therefore resistance) in students whose views differ from the instructor's. Additionally, from within an invitational frame, instructors need not silence their own beliefs or profess a neutrality they do not actually feel.

Invitational Pedagogy and a Pedagogy of Discomfort

There are many similarities between what I am calling an *invitational pedagogy* and what Boler calls a *pedagogy of discomfort*. Boler notes that "a pedagogy of discomfort is not a demand to take one particular road or action. The purpose is not to enforce a particular political agenda, or to evaluate students on what agenda they choose to carry out, if any" (p. 179). The goal of a pedagogy of discomfort is for all involved—teachers and students—to "explore beliefs and values; to examine when visual 'habits' and emotional selectivity have become rigid and immune to flexibility; and to identify when and how our habits harm ourselves and others" (p. 185).[3] Such language echoes Foss and Griffin's notion of equality and self-determination. Boler goes on to explain, however, that while "an ethical pedagogy would seem to require listening with equal attention to all views and perspectives," some of those perspectives "are difficult, even dangerous" (p. 179). Attempting to really listen to racist views, for example, can indeed be difficult, and validating such views by listening for understanding could be dangerous. Similarly, asking students who hold such views to interrogate them can produce nonproductive forms of classroom resistance. Yet failing to engage such viewpoints is also problematic and, as Boler notes, "any pedagogy or curricula potentially evokes resistance, fear, and anger," but we, as educators, need to find ways to make such responses more productive and self-reflexive, using often-uncomfortable emotions to spark change and action (p. 183). An invitational pedagogy recognizes the resistance, fear, and anger inherent in most attempts to interrogate deeply held beliefs, perhaps especially those that Boler (and I) would label harmful or dangerous, but explicitly removing the pressure of change or conversion from the pedagogical equation can actually reduce student feelings of threat and defensiveness.

Some scholars find this concept problematic. Fulkerson (1996), for example, worries that invitational rhetoric's emphasis on the equal offering of perspectives makes real social and political change difficult, if not impossible, as people are not asked to abandon racist or homophobic views. Yet, I would argue that more direct attempts at persuasion do not necessarily succeed in changing ingrained racist or homophobic beliefs, either. As Foss, Griffin, and Foss (1997) explain, "trying to understand a racist's or a misogynist's position and inviting that individual to consider alternative perspectives . . . is one approach to interacting with such individuals—one that is no less viable or predictive of change than is persuasion" (p. 123). Foss, Griffin, and Foss advocate trying to understand racist or sexist views and, in an invitational format, hope that the listener will also try to understand the views of the rhetor who is (presumably) not (or less) racist or sexist. In other words, because an invitational rhetor attempts to create a safe space in which multiple viewpoints can be heard, thereby reducing the feelings of threat and defensiveness in the listener, there is an increased chance that the audience member might at least hear such alternatives. And within such invitational frameworks, rhetor or listener *may* be moved to change his or her view, even if this is not the primary goal of the rhetor and even if such change does not happen immediately. In other words, directly confronting racist or homophobic views seems rarely to lead to the desired change; perhaps attempting to listen with understanding can create an environment in which the person holding racist views might consider alternatives.

Within the classroom environment, attempting to let go of the intent to persuade can be incredibly useful, if incredibly difficult (and even, perhaps, ultimately impossible). Of course, as a teacher who identifies herself as a feminist, I would be lying if I said that I did not hope to change sexist, homophobic, racist, or classist viewpoints. I do. My attempts at persuasion, however, have rarely been successful within the classroom. When students are asked to question those things of which they have always been certain—belief systems that may be rooted in familial structures, home communities, and religious faiths—they can feel as if they are being asked to *change* their beliefs and therefore often respond with defensiveness, further entrenching themselves into the safety of these communal ways of thinking. When students believed I was trying to "convert" them, they resisted that conversion. An oppositional approach simply did not work in such instances. At best, it often felt as though the "good" students were simply parroting back to me what they believed I wanted to hear, a form of mimesis that Boyd (1999) critiques.

Yet, when I began to let go of the intent to persuade my students and made my invitational approach transparent to students, they were less likely to immediately retreat into defensiveness. This is not to say that simply explaining an invitational approach eliminates student resistance; it is, however, to say that making students aware of invitational rhetoric as a classroom practice provides strategies for both instructors and students when faced with moments of emotional or psychological distress. Maher (2002) agrees, noting that one tactic to avoid students feeling as though their "ways of being" are "demonized" by the instructor (p. 86) is what Maher calls an "invitational interaction" (p. 87). Although different from the invitational pedagogy I am describing here, Maher acknowledges that the first step in creating a more productive classroom environment is explicitly naming the pedagogical framework from within which the instructor is working (p. 87). What, then, might this pedagogy look like?

An invitational pedagogy proceeds from the most basic tenets of invitational rhetoric. First, persuasion is not the instructor's primary goal. This is different from a performance of neutrality in that the instructor need not pretend to be apolitical. Instead, the instructor acknowledges her own political opinions, as well as the cultural logics that inform her claims.[4] Such a move is hardly radical, but to do so without the intent to persuade students of the superiority of the instructor's viewpoints is more difficult than it sounds. Of course the instructor believes her viewpoints are (mostly) correct—that is why she holds those views. But when students sense an intent to persuade, many respond in kind; such a cyclical process could lead to better understanding, but it is more likely to lead to resistance. When students are attempting to win what they see as an argument, they are less likely to listen for understanding, and less likely to remain open to the possibility of change.

Working from within an invitational mindset can also help produce the conditions of safety and value forwarded by Foss and Griffin. When students feel as though they are not being recruited to the liberal agenda, when they feel that they are being heard and valued, they tend not to feel as though their ways of knowing and being are threatened. As psychotherapist Carl Rogers (1970) explained, the largest barrier to effective communication is a sense of threat. Working to reduce that feeling of threat and judgment between interlocutors is, according to Rogers, the only way toward understanding, negotiation, and effective communication. Invitational rhetoric and a pedagogy based on its intent to understand rather than persuade is one way in which to reduce a sense of threat in students, thereby reducing their resistance and increasing the likelihood that they will at least attempt to hear alternative views.

An invitational pedagogy, then, is an *explicit* attempt by an instructor to critically engage students without an intent to persuade them of a particular political or social position. While change may happen, change is not the primary goal. Within such a framework, both students and instructor can offer any perspective, challenge any perspective, and yet must adopt none. Additionally, the instructor herself must be open to the possibility of change, sharing that vulnerability with students. Central to this pedagogy is also an understanding of the theory of invitational rhetoric by both instructor and students so that all participants have a common language and framework (offering of perspectives, intent to persuade, self-determination, immanent value, etc.). Additionally, students should be reminded regularly of the instructor's intent to work from within an invitational frame, especially within moments of discomfort or resistance. Finally, instructors should understand that an invitational approach is not a panacea. Like all classroom practice, no single pedagogical strategy works in all situations. But being explicit with students about the improbability of conversion within the classroom, despite the instructor's beliefs or desires, helps to create the conditions of safety and value that reduce feelings of threat and defensiveness.

I want to be clear that I am not advocating an "I'm okay, you're okay" approach to discomfort wherein racist or sexist beliefs are simply "validated" by the instructor. Nor am I implying that instructors can completely relinquish their desire to persuade students to work toward social equality; certainly we should be working toward a more egalitarian society. What I am questioning is the viability of expecting students who were raised within familial or communal structures that have reinforced and perpetuated social inequality to abandon those cultural logics within one or two semesters. Many would say that instructors working within a critical pedagogy are asking only that students *question* their beliefs, not necessarily change them. But when students imagine that there is a correct answer to this form of questioning, one that contradicts their communal ways of knowing, they often interpret this as the instructor forcing a liberal ideology upon them. It then becomes easier for students to dismiss the entire course as an attempt at indoctrination.

Critics such as Fulkerson (1996, 2005) and Condit (1997) would respond that the sense of threat can never truly be eliminated because of the unequal power relations at play within the university. And they would be correct: I hold the grade book and therefore savvy students might feel pressure to reproduce my political views. In the face of such power dynamics, instructors must attempt—as they do on an almost daily basis—to evaluate students on the quality of their work and not the content of their views. While sometimes difficult, it is hardly a new struggle. Kopelson might argue that a performance of neutrality would better subvert students' desire to echo the professor; yet, as a woman discussing gender, many students simply assume I am a feminist. As a professor in the humanities, most students assume I am socially liberal. Despite any attempt to perform political neutrality, students make assumptions about instructors, just as instructors make assumptions about students.

Additionally, performing a political neutrality can be particularly problematic for instructors whom students view as a biased "Other." And given the persistence of student resistance to liberatory pedagogies, it seems clear that more blatant forms of oppositional classroom practice are not always leading to the kinds of results hoped for by instructors. Simply *not* addressing issues of inequality also seems an untenable alternative for those instructors dedicated to social justice. An invitational pedagogy, however, provides a way for instructors and students to work toward understanding, particularly when persuasion is not possible. Being explicit with students about the improbability of persuasion can reduce the sense of threat that impedes effective communication and may at least open the possibility of disrupting, or at least questioning, students' adherence to dominant ideologies in a way that more traditional approaches often cannot.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Given the radical nature of invitational rhetoric, coupled with the interesting potential of this rhetorical theory as pedagogical practice, the scholarly engagement with this topic seems surprisingly limited. Ryan and Natalle (2001) argue that invitational rhetoric has not garnered much response primarily because it lacks theoretical grounding; I contend that invitational rhetoric has not received much attention, particularly in the fields of rhetoric and composition and particularly in relation to pedagogy, because there has been little discussion about how to operationalize such a theory in the classroom. There are a few exceptions, but most are within communication studies (Bone, Griffin, & Scholz, 2008; Glenn, 2004; Lozano-Reich & Cloud, 2009; Novak & Bonine, 2009; Pollock et al., 1996). Thus far, there are no book-length studies in publication and few discussions at all within the realm of composition and rhetoric.

Much work is still being done in response to student resistance—too much, in fact, to even begin to list; this fact alone points to the need for a new area of investigation into issues of authority and power in the classroom. As educators struggle to find more productive ways to work toward social equality, to push students toward new and sometimes uncomfortable ways of thinking, they might look toward feminist rhetorical theories (Banks, 2003; Glenn, 2004; Hindman, 2002; Micciche, 2007; Ratcliffe, 2005) in order to inform their praxis. Because feminist rhetorical theories are particularly concerned with issues of authority, power, language, and social equality, and because all classrooms are loci of language, power, and social identities, feminist rhetorical theories provide rich terrain from which to theorize and construct pedagogical practice. Ritchie and Ronald (2006) offer one such resource in their book *Teaching Rhetorica*, but much more work is necessary in this area so that we might reduce our students' resistance not simply to our own political leanings, but toward critical questioning and critique in general.

CONCLUSION

An invitational pedagogy that explicitly attempts to remove the intent to persuade, even if the desire to persuade is ultimately unavoidable, can help diminish student resistance to what is often viewed as a desire to convert them to liberal politics. Such praxis can be especially useful for instructors who, by the visibility of their gender, race, sexual orientation, size, age, or able-bodiedness, do not perform what many students see as the role of authority. In such situations, when the teacher in the room is seen as "Other," invitational pedagogy allows teachers to acknowledge their own worldviews while simultaneously disrupting the charge of bias that students sometimes level against instructors who do not identify with dominant social positionalities. In working toward understanding and listening rather than persuasion and conversion, instructors and students have a better chance of reducing the sense of antagonism that can result from more traditional liberatory pedagogies. Furthermore, an invitational pedagogy disrupts the belief that the most effective critical approach is, in fact, the most critical. When students are invited to understand a variety of viewpoints, including their own, without being asked to adopt any, they are less likely feel the need to defend the communities from which these viewpoints have stemmed. Invitational rhetoric and a pedagogical practice constructed from its basic tenets reimagines the classroom space as one in which all viewpoints can be voiced, all viewpoints can be challenged, and no viewpoints must be adopted. It therefore expands the possibilities for critical examination of all belief systems, including the instructor's. Such a move, for students, might be the most disruptive pedagogy of all.

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NOTES

1. I have often chosen to use the term "college composition classrooms" (or sometimes "college writing classes") throughout this chapter to refer to introductory writing courses at the university level. While approaches to these courses vary greatly, most are some form of introduction to college-level writing. I should also note that, in the U.S., the first-year writing course is typically a universal requirement: all students must earn the course credit before graduation.

2. Foss and Griffin note that persuasion may happen, but it is not the rhetor's goal. Change, they explain, happens constantly as entities interact with one another. It is with the *desire* or *intent* to change or persuade that Foss and Griffin take issue.

3. There are also similarities between an invitational pedagogy and forms of liberatory pedagogies. In fact, an invitational pedagogy might be seen as one strategy for enacting the goals of a liberatory

classroom. For those liberatory instructors for whom change is the primary goal, however, invitational pedagogy would differ quite dramatically, both in practice and objective.

4. Ratcliffe defines cultural logics as “a belief system or way of reasoning that is shared within a culture—for example, even though not all Green party members think exactly alike, certain tenets associated with the Green party form a recognizable Green cultural logic” (10).

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21

An Invitation to Reason

The Process of Discovery Essay

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Twenty years ago, when I first read "Beyond Persuasion: A Proposal for an Invitational Rhetoric" in a doctoral seminar called *Argument Theory*, I was intrigued, especially by the first sentence: "Acknowledgment of the patriarchal bias that undergirds most theories of rhetoric is growing steadily in the communication discipline."[1] For five years before this seminar, I had been an adjunct in a variety of English departments, and in those years, I had many uncomfortable experiences with some aspects of traditional argument and persuasion, but I could not put my finger on what was wrong. Some of this discomfort came from textbooks that portrayed argument as a win-lose situation, a form that forcibly asserted two sides of an issue for the sole purpose of convincing the audience members that they were wrong. Some of this discomfort came from a mandatory faculty-development session in which a director of composition taught us her mantra for refutation—"squash them like a bug." In her view, the only successful persuasive essay was one that convinced readers to believe the writer's ideas, so the opposition's argument had to be "squashed like a bug on a cement floor." Some of my discomfort came from the memories of working in a writing center where I heard a female student berated by a male tutor who said that while her essay was well written, it was "too reasonable" and was "a very weak argument." When she explained that she did not feel comfortable arguing either side of the issue, the tutor basically told her to "make it all up" because she had to "pick a side."

All of these memories flooded back as I reread that first sentence about the "patriarchal bias" of traditional theories of rhetoric. Suddenly, I realized that I was not necessarily uncomfortable with the concepts of argument and persuasion on their own but with the way they were traditionally represented to students: as patriarchal, violent, manipulative, antagonistic, distancing, and silencing.

As the doctoral seminar progressed, we read perspectives from a wide variety of voices—from the public sphere as well as the academy—who were redefining the concept of argument to be more productive and engaging rather than antagonistic and silencing; in my mind, I kept connecting them back to the concept of invitational rhetoric. We learned theories of mediation and negotiation; we studied groups in society that were actively working toward more productive views of argument (e.g., the Public Conversations Project and the Public Agenda Group); and we explored the metaphors used by society when discussing controversial topics. Although all of the readings sparked "eureka!" moments in my mind and helped me become more hopeful that we could redefine how our students view argument and persuasion, I kept coming back to one key question: Although all of these areas provided hope for a nonadversarial view of spoken argument, how could all of these ideas be integrated into a written argument? How could I represent argument as dialogic in a form so monolithic as the written essay? As I pondered this challenge, the term *invitational rhetoric* kept coming back to my mind, and I wondered: How could I create a written-essay form that acted as "an invitation to understanding as a means to create a relationship rooted in equality, immanent value, and self-determination . . . [that] constitutes an invitation to the audience to enter the rhetor's world and to see it as the rhetor does"?[2] In this chapter, I trace my efforts to answer this question using the essay form I developed.

My journey to find a way to create a written form of invitational rhetoric began with my dissertation, in which I created a writing class that reflected the key aspects of invitational rhetoric. From there, I developed a course with the primary goal of trying to teach students a new way to write their arguments. As I pondered how to do this, I realized that before I could require students to write more dialogic and invitational texts, I first needed to introduce this new atmosphere into every aspect of the class. Consequently, I had to ensure that everything—from textbook selection to class discussions to online discussions to the written essays—would reflect the key concepts of invitational rhetoric.

In working to integrate invitational rhetoric into the class, I had three primary goals: encouraging conversations to create a dialogic community, exploring facets of issues by introducing alternative styles of writing and thinking, and reexamining worldviews by integrating the public and the private. While the class as a whole was designed to meet these three goals, certain class elements supported some goals more than others. To create a more dialogic community, for example, we sat in a semicircle every class period, class topics were stated as questions on the syllabus, students were encouraged to be actively engaged in classroom discussions by asking questions and engaging their peers, and the computer-discussion boards allowed students who may have been a bit shy in the actual classroom to be part of our discussions by offering them a chance to think before offering their opinions.

When exploring alternative styles of writing and thinking, I purposely chose texts that were not arranged in a pro-con structure and that were interdisciplinary, and all three essays that my students were required to write in the class reflected a new argumentation style. Finally, when emphasizing the importance of reexamining worldviews, I encouraged students to explore any dissonance they felt and their personal reactions to our topics in their exploration journals, thus allowing students a safe space where they could work through their ideas prior to class. The online discussion boards, class discussions, and student essays also helped in meeting this goal.

By ensuring that every aspect of my class encouraged dialogue and emphasized community, students learned that their "self-worth" in our class was not "derived from and measured by the power exerted over others and a devaluation of the life worlds of others."[3] In the class, they experienced a supportive atmosphere in which people respected each other as they grew. All of the class attributes named previously helped me embrace the three main traits of invitational rhetoric in all aspects of the class—equality, immanent value, and self-determination—so that students saw the first-year argument class as a place to "gather together, learn from one another, [and] work cooperatively and creatively."[4] Students were invited "to reflect on and explore their beliefs, and come to a new understanding."[5] Also, by engaging in dialogues in which a variety of voices from the class were heard, students were encouraged to explore the diversity of opinions that exist rather than simply restating the dominant opinions, thus allowing students to explore more actively the issues, their opinions, their classmates' opinions, and the interconnectedness that exists among all of these elements. In class, students learned to listen openly and honestly, recognizing that the respect they expected to receive was exactly the same level of respect others would like to receive. I emphasized that while learning to listen respectfully to others, they also were learning to set their own agendas aside so that they did not dominate the situation. Listening became an act against adversarial intentions—an act that fostered respect.

Once the holistic environment of respect, dialogue, and listening was established for our class, I returned to the challenge of integrating these values into the writing assignments. How could I create a written form that "privileges mutuality, respect, caring, power-with, [and] interconnection" rather than the values of traditional argument such as "hierarchy, competition, domination, alienation, and power-over, traits that will not contribute to a communicative community"?[6] As I pondered this challenge, I kept thinking of the term *invitational* and asking myself, "What would invite me into a conversation?" The answer soon became clear: a question. Questions often invite us into conversations, so in this revised essay form, the writer would ask a question to invite the reader into the topic. Instead of privileging a thesis at the start of the essay that directly tells readers what they are supposed to think before reading the rest of the essay, a question would encourage writers to invite readers into the reasoning process.

But as I decided that a question would replace the thesis that is usually used in traditional written arguments, my training in writing instruction kicked in: How effective will the introduction to an essay be if it is only a question? What else could the introduction do in the essay? Again, I turned to the article about invitational rhetoric for answers, and I realized that the students' essay would start with "an invitation to understanding" and allow the reader "to enter another's world to better understand an issue and the individual who holds a particular perspective on it."[7] I determined that the best way for the reader to enter the writer's world is to have the writer relate what led to the asking of the question that appears in the introduction—a vivid picture of the exact moment that triggered the question in the writer's mind.

Once I decided that the essay would open with a question rather than a traditional thesis and would invite the reader into the precise moment that led the writer to ask the opening question, I had to think about what the rest of the essay would do. How could the written argument act as an invitation for understanding? What does the rest of the essay do? And then it occurred to me: When we ask a question, we follow a mental path to answer that question. We reach a decision by thinking through key ideas and exploring perspectives, exploring the connections that drive our thought processes, and exploring how all of these paths lead us to a conclusion. I then realized that the body of the essay would demonstrate in writing the step-by-step process—the actual thought process—that the writer followed to answer the question. The essay as a whole would open by inviting the reader into the exact moment that triggered the essay, ask the question the writer would answer, and then show the reader the mental processes followed in answering the question. At this point, I had created the process of discovery (POD) essay.

In the POD essay, students had to be attentive to the effects their writing would have on their readers so that the communication was more mutual than one sided. Students invited readers into the discussion of the issue—into the dialogic thinking that led to the written result. Attempting to represent the dialogic elements of communication in a writing assignment was a challenge in a first-year class because students were accustomed not only to writing the five-paragraph theme but also accustomed to thinking of the teacher as the only audience. Nevertheless, they welcomed the opportunity to engage with a new style of writing that promoted communication and respect rather than adversarial tension. Students embraced the opportunity to explore the interactions that arise between their opinions and others, to consider both their ideas and the potential readers' ideas, and to examine the connections between their ideas and the society around them.

Because this was a new form for students and I could not find any samples of it in existing textbooks, I wrote a sample for students, and that sample became the first reading assignment for the class as a whole. Here is the sample I gave to the students:

Ima Student
ENGL 251
April 33, 2057

These College Kids Today . . . America's Failure or America's Hope?

On yet another snowy Saturday in Wisconsin, I hopped on Facebook to kill some time before I balanced my checkbook, and, as usual, I was quickly drawn in. As I read and scrolled, scrolled and read, I learned that someone rescued some kittens that had been thrown into a dumpster, and a group of local college students shoveled the driveways of housebound people in their town. A warm smile came across my face as I scrolled on. I passed the usual number of adorable animal videos with montages of baby elephants chasing birds, puppies falling asleep in their food, and kittens popping out of closets, and I was quickly lulled into a happy mood. This mood was suddenly shattered, however, as I continued to scroll down. Jolting me back to reality was an image of a group of white male students issuing a Nazi salute at their prom. The post was defending the action as "free speech" and made many bold statements: The boys were just kidding around and were being unfairly criticized; they did not mean any harm, and a childish mistake should be ignored; America is becoming too politically correct; since these fine young men were headed to college, they should not have their lives ruined. Shortly after being disgusted by this image, I was hit with two equally disturbing posts. One defended a group of fraternity brothers who were dressed in blackface at a party, saying that they were just joking around, and another showed a group of college students trying to snort condoms up their noses to pull them out of their mouths because they thought it was funny. The happiness I felt about snow-shoveling students quickly faded and caused me to wonder: What is going on with college kids today? Are they there to become educated or to delay entering adulthood?

Because YouTube is the place to find videos on practically anything, I immediately opened a tab and did some searching. When I entered the term "stupid college stunts" into the search box, a pathetic series of videos popped up of students getting drunk, bragging about skipping classes and wasting their parents' money, getting hurt due to intoxication and machismo, cheating their way through projects and exams, bragging about how many times they had been to the ER for alcohol consumption, and sundry other behaviors that clearly demonstrated that far too many college students today are not there for an education or to create a brighter future for themselves; they are there to party, abuse the system, and make a mockery of education. Considering the average college debt for students is up to $37,000, thus making student debt a $1.5 trillion issue (Friedman), I could not understand these behaviors. Why are you in college if all you are going to do is party and slack off?

Knowing that searching YouTube specifically for “stupid college stunts” could be seen as skewing the results, I then thought back to a news story I had seen on TV many months before. The program told the stories of several different parents whose children had died from acute alcohol poisoning in their freshman year of college. The parents all had similar stories: They sent their children off to college, believing that they would be safe and would get a great education, but instead of visiting campus for homecoming, they visited campus to take home their dead children. The closed-circuit videos provided showed students too drunk to open doors for themselves; walk without support; offer consent; and, in some cases, breathe on their own. Parents spoke passionately about the death of their children and how colleges need to fix the problem, but some of the campus representatives and their lawyers who were interviewed subtly implied that “kids will be kids” and that this is just part of “the college experience.” As someone who lives in a college town, I have seen the students roaming from bar to bar on “Thirsty Thursday,” and I remember shaking my head at a new local ordinance where people are fined for vomiting in the streets, but is this really what college means to a majority of the students?

Determined to dig deeper into this issue, I turned to the local newspaper to see if this was also a local problem. In the past, I had seen entries on the police blotter for “underage consumption,” “stolen property,” and “disorderly conduct” on campus, but nothing stood out as severe as what I had seen on YouTube or on that news show. As I flipped through the paper on my way to the police blotter to see what kind of trouble was brewing on campus this semester, I was stopped by a few articles about local college students. In one story, a biology major named *Anna* was working with a local charity to collect shoes that no one wanted anymore, and the shoes were used to feed the needy in a local metro area. She explained how the shoes that are resaleable are sold at a discount, with that money going to food banks, and the shoes that are not salvageable are turned into raw materials, with the profits given to food banks. She also emphasized that this was keeping a lot of waste out of local landfills. In her first year of doing the drive on campus, she collected 600 pairs of shoes, mainly by herself, but in the second year, she recruited more help on campus and collected over 1200 pairs of shoes, feeding well over 1000 people. The article included other examples of Anna’s charity work—acting as a mentor for international students, volunteering with a local dentist to provide free dental care for the poor, tutoring her peers, etc.—and quoted several people on campus praising Anna’s work. One professor spoke about how, in the first year of the drive, she saw Anna literally carrying bags of unwanted shoes on her back across campus to the storage area. A vision of this petite student hauling shoes across campus made me smile.

Bolstering this positive view of a college student, I read several short articles about other students on campus. One discussed how four undergraduate students were headed to our state capital to present their research to politicians and several business owners. Another talked about a group of three students whose new invention led them to win the state competition, thus propelling them to the national innovation competition in Washington, DC. One news snippet talked about a first-generation student who started doing research with his professor as a freshman and now, as he was graduating, he was headed to a fully funded PhD program. The final item that caught my eye was a picture of our campus' honors students volunteering at our local homeless shelter, making care packages for people in need. As these more positive images floated through my head, I started to wonder if these stories were a better portrayal of college students, or was it just the students at my local campus?

If I was going to search YouTube for negative examples, I decided to do a different search this time: "college students volunteering." Several videos popped up. Students were volunteering their time over spring break to help build houses in a Southern town ravaged by tornadoes; students were posting videos about how to volunteer in college and the benefits of doing so. Videos encouraged students to read to children and the elderly in their communities, to volunteer overseas, and to consider joining the Peace Corps upon graduation. Worrying that I again skewed the results by looking only for examples of volunteering, I then did a very general search: "college students." A variety of positive articles still popped up: students learning to be more accepting of transgender classmates; students offering advice to high school seniors who were growing anxious about college; students helping to combat the issue of homeless college students; and other videos that showed a series of positive, helpful, non-drunk students. The same website that made me fear the worst was now offering me hope, but what was I to believe at this point? Which image was true?

The time had come for me to turn to the experts before I could draw my final conclusions. Were college students really volunteering as much as those on my local campus? According to the Corporation for National and Community Service programs, 31.27% of college students in the nation volunteer in some way, and in our state, Wisconsin, 35.4% of college students volunteer, which is above the national average. Knowing that on average nearly one-third of college students in the nation reported volunteering gave me hope. But what about the drinking issue on campuses? Is it as bad as I thought? Although nearly 60% of students ages 18 to 22 had had at least one drink in the month they were surveyed, the rate of binge drinking—"a pattern of drinking that brings a person's blood alcohol concentration (BSC) to 0.08 grams percent or above . . . [which] typically happens when men consume 5 or more drinks or women consume 4 or more drinks in about 2 hours"—was only at 25% (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention). While some may see 25% as being far too high, at least the prevalence was not as high as the YouTube videos, news reports, and police blotters would lead us to believe. As the tides started to change in favor of college students being much better than the stereotype we often see, I had to find out one final fact: How many students actually finish an undergraduate degree? According to an informational memorandum from the University of Wisconsin System, while nationally 58.9% of students who enter college earn an undergraduate degree, in Wisconsin, that average is 62.5% (University of Wisconsin System). A strong majority of students who begin college complete their degrees. That was very reassuring.

What started as shock about and disappointment in college students when I was on Facebook had changed. Seeing more positive examples of college students made me realize that there was hope, and it also reminded me that sometimes we jump to conclusions based on limited information. Think about it: As a society, we know not to essentialize a trait or perspective across all people of a certain race, gender, social class, etc., so why are we so quick to say that "all college students are _______" or "these kids these days"? Every generation seems to think that younger people are a problem, but, in reality, this feeling is usually based on misperceptions and tunnel vision. As a member of Generation X, I am not a slacker, and I do not expect life to be easy, so I need to remind myself of this whenever I fall into a judgmental mindset. Every generation faces challenges, and every generation will be misunderstood or misrepresented in some way, but I will no longer be part of the problem. The next time you think about essentializing negative traits across all members of a certain group, ask yourself this: Do you reflect the negative stereotypical label someone put on your generation, race, gender, or social class? Probably not.

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After reading "These College Kids Today . . . America's Failure or America's Hope?" we annotated it and explored the content: What did they think about the assertions? What kinds of sources were consulted? What was the writer proving in the text? After discussing the content, we then looked at the actual structure of the essay: How did the essay open? How was this similar to and different from other "arguments" they had read? We analyzed the essay in great detail to prepare students to embrace a more dialogic view of written argument so they could see that "change occurs in the audience or rhetor or both as a result of a new understanding and insights gained in the exchange of ideas," insights that contributed "to the understanding by all participants of the issue and of one another."[8]

To guarantee that students would grow accustomed to the questioning nature of dialogic argument as we advanced through the class, they were advised to note in their journals any questions that arose in class that interested or intrigued them, whether they were raised on their own, through class discussions (in class and on the conference boards), or by the professor in commentary or lectures. These questions allowed students to maintain a list of potential topics for essays as well as avenues to brainstorm either on their own or on the conference boards. By maintaining their growing list of questions, they quickly learned that questions are not always easily answerable by one voice or by one stance, and this was a crucial lesson behind the entire course: More than one answer is acceptable, likely, and realistic.

While students easily understood the role of questions and dialogue in our class discussions, they struggled with how this style could be used in a written essay, so I distributed the following assignment sheet, discussed it, and addressed the students' concerns:

Questions, Contemplation, Exploration, and Inquiry

Many times, we begin considering very important issues from contact with or exposure to a simple, ordinary occurrence, one that sticks in the mind and triggers questions to consider. But why are questions so important?

First, questions provoke thought about a subject, and without questions, many discoveries would never have been made by scholars. If Newton had not rubbed his head and said, “Why did that apple fall from the tree and give me this bump on my head?,” he would not have ruminated about gravity and discovered a crucial scientific law.

Second, questions help us think through a decision clearly and logically: To answer a question, one considers several perspectives and options before arriving at an answer. When faced with the question, “But General Washington, when is the best time to attack the British?,” the General had to think carefully about his options and their consequences. If he had not followed a careful thought process in his decision, his troops’ suffering at Valley Forge may have been all for naught.

Third, questions are intriguing to readers because, when asked a question, a reader is invited into the writer’s world and asked to reason with the writer; therefore, questions also bring people together in the quest for a larger answer. “Why can’t we all just get along?” were Rodney King’s words after the 1992 Los Angeles riots. What an important question!

Now it’s your turn to consider a question, just as Ima Student did in her essay about college students. A startling image on Facebook triggered Ima to ask a question, think through the answer to that question, and then reach a decision by the end of the essay. You will do the same about a topic that you find important or that you have always wanted to explore. Try to avoid hackneyed topics and explore something new, interesting, and thought provoking. Your essay will reflect the specific moment that triggered the question in your mind, the exact question raised, the stage-by-stage thought process you followed to pursue an answer to the question, and what final decision you reached with regard to the question. Make sure you ask a question that you can reasonably answer in a few pages.

In order to fully explore the path that led to the answer of the question you present in the first paragraph of your essay, your essay must be *at least* 900 words in length. You are welcome to write a longer paper, but you must meet this minimum requirement to adequately explore your question/topic. Also, ***you are required to consult at least one (1) but no more than four (4) sources for this essay;*** thus, you will also create a Work(s) Cited page that follows MLA format at the end of your essay.

When students first attempted the POD form, they struggled; after all, who had ever suggested that an argument could be an invitation to a respectful dialogue? The peer-review sessions we held with their initial drafts were primarily dedicated to emphasizing to students that they needed to use the POD style and not a traditional argument form. Quickly, however, students excelled at the new style, saying that using this form made them feel more like college students who were reasoning through issues and less like high schoolers who were trained to fit every idea into a standard five-paragraph argument structure and were rewarded for restating the same arguments over and over again on hackneyed topics. Students quickly adapted to addressing issues important to them in ways that promoted authentic dialogues, respect, and understanding. Students who had been trained to rely on traditional argumentative forms in advanced placement classes and high school honors English classes were now reasoning through original issues in ways I had not seen in any of my previous classes.

While I cannot outline here entire samples of my students' essays in the POD style, I want to share a few examples from actual students that demonstrate how a writer can invite the reader into the essay with an opening question:

Student 1

The corn stands twelve feet tall, nearly blocking out the sun from my sight. In late July, walking corn fields is not a desirable job, but someone has to do it. That someone is me. I have lost all bearing as to where I am in the field; usually, I am much more careful. It could take hours to work out a location in here. Just follow the rows; eventually, I will find my way out. There is no real hurry. I take time to think and observe the changes in the corn. I walked this field weekly since the middle of May, the corn just little shoots then. The changes are phenomenal. I pull an ear off the nearest plant, pull back the husks, and start counting. By counting the rows and how many kernels long the ear is, I can make an accurate guess as to the yield potential. 270 bushels an acre? This cannot be right. I count again. 270 it is. This would bode for an impressive year if the weather pans out for the producer. I think back to ten years ago and farther; this was unheard of. No grower would expect anywhere near this. What has caused this explosion in yield potential? The effects of modifying the DNA of corn have increased the yields dramatically. This raises the question of the ethics behind this matter. Is it really okay to change the way plants are supposed to be made? Weren't they created in a specific way for a specific reason? Are genetically modified organisms (GMOs) the future of agriculture, or could they be sending the world down a perilous path of self-destruction?

In the rest of the essay, the student led the reader through her thought process in pursuing an answer to the question. She reviewed research from her classes, searched the internet for more perspectives, and turned to the Greenpeace website to see all sides of the issue. In the end, the student reached the conclusion that the benefit of feeding more people was more important than the risks associated with GMOs. As an agricultural business major, the student was a bit predisposed to argue that GMOs were beneficial, but at least, in the POD essay, she explored opinions that she otherwise likely would not have pursued and developed her ideas much more carefully than she ever had in classroom discussion.

Student 2

A couple days ago, I played with my dog outside. It was a quintessential fall day: The sun was shining; the air was crisp; and the leaves were beautiful, falling, and fragrant. "Playing" with my dog involved only a tennis ball and a ball thrower called a *Chuck-It*. As I lifted the Chuck-It in preparation for launching the ball, my dog was more than anxious to chase it. She stared at me with wide eyes, and she had one front leg bent in the air; she was ready for the ball. If I waited too long to launch the ball, she warned me of her impatience with an excited bark. Her ears were floppy and attentive, and her short tail wiggled slowly from side to side in anticipation. When I finally threw the ball, she frantically chased after it and when she was running back to me, I noticed that she was practically prancing because she was so happy. This was not an isolated incident. Every day for the past two months, I came home from school, every day my dog scratched at the closet where the Chuck-It was, and every day my dog was more than ecstatic to play with a plain tennis ball; she could not have asked for anything more. But it was only a couple days ago that a question whirled through my mind: Why are people so focused on fancy material possessions and not simple pleasures to make them happy in life?

The body of the essay did a stellar job of inviting the reader into the topic and then reasoning through to the end. She thought about her own background with materialism, society's focus on materialism, and the science behind our need to accumulate things. By the end of the essay, the student not only reached an answer to her question, but she also had a personal "eureka!" moment: She realized that she had been a victim of materialism her entire life and that the time had come for her to focus less on material items so that she could actively embrace the happiness of experiences and not just things.

Student 3

It was 10:00 on a Saturday night, and I did not want to go to bed yet, so I turned on the TV and began watching an interesting scene of a man in a mechanized suit protecting an alien and her child. After ten minutes, I found out that I was watching *District 9*, a movie I had been meaning to watch since it came out in 2009. Although I found the ending sort of cliché and the acting overdone, I was excited to see that FX was playing it again immediately afterward, and I decided to watch it from the beginning and give it a fair chance. I turned it off, however, right after I saw the "No aliens allowed" signs; the movie had been playing for only five minutes. Though no one has ever made a movie exactly like it before, I could not help but think of how it basically supplanted African Americans from Civil Rights era movies with aliens. Social commentary has a limited scope of main ideas from which to choose, so it may be hard to avoid seeming unoriginal when similar movies start with the same basic ideas for their stories; however, is this movie unoriginal? More important, is there any hope for an original social commentary when people have already commented on most issues?

The student did an excellent job of inviting the reader into her world and the process she followed while answering the question—a question that on the surface seems to be about whether or not movies can ever be original but that went on to explore deeper issues of the uses of social commentary in our society. In the end, she reached the conclusion that even though many films may address similar issues, they all do so differently and can reach different and thus more audiences, which will only help raise awareness on a variety of social issues.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

When I heard that a collection was being put together to mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the release of the "Beyond Persuasion" essay, I was not quite sure if I should respond and share my version of written invitational rhetoric because of some of the criticisms I have faced over the years from students and colleagues. Some saw my POD assignment as simply a delayed thesis essay that is no more likely to reflect inquiry than an essay written in a traditional, five-paragraph style. What is most important here is that while writing the essays in a style that invited the reader into the reasoning process, students learned to explore issues more comprehensively than before rather than simply manipulating the research to prove their preconceived ideas to the reader. No instructor can ever guarantee that students are sincerely considering the various perspectives of an issue regardless of the style of the written text, but my students experienced two benefits. First, students learned that inviting the reader into the thought process they followed when answering a question often shed light on the complexities of social issues, which also demonstrated to students that questions often have more complex answers than they first realized. Second, students who were not very comfortable with asserting and defending a thesis, such as those students who may have ideas that do not reflect the dominant view of society (the “pro” or “con” stances) were able to feel empowered to express their opinions and be heard.

Other criticisms I faced stated that my attempt to create a written version of invitational rhetoric was simply a bland form that would not really engage an audience in any meaningful way and that would not be as powerful as more traditional forms of written argument. While society at large and many writing instructors encourage more traditional views of argument as a survival skill for students, my teaching them an alternative style allowed the students to broaden their horizons and to consider various points of view and ways of expressing ideas. As someone who has taught thousands of first-year students at a variety of schools—private and public, two-year and four-year, large and small—I can honestly say that having students explore the POD style led to essays that were never bland and that allowed students to explore new topics—topics that may not have been viewed as valuable in a more traditional argumentative structure. Students presented with the POD style became immersed in the energy of inquiry and embraced the excitement of college-level thinking and decision making. Students learned to be thoughtful people as they reached decisions and helped create in their writing “an environment that facilitates understanding, accords value and respect to others’ perspectives, and contributes to the development of relationships of equality.”[9]

My experiences with the POD assignment showcase the value of inviting others into the reasoning process with a focus on understanding. If a traditional course, such as the college-level composition course I describe here, can be productively reconceptualized to incorporate invitational approaches to expressing ideas, I find myself wondering what other foundational courses also could be infused with invitational rhetoric. Might there be other courses in which adversarial approaches to persuading others could become places in which students learn to engage audiences while treating them with equality, immanent value, and respect? I suspect so.

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NOTES

1. Sonja K. Foss and Cindy L. Griffin, “Beyond Persuasion: A Proposal for an Invitational Rhetoric,” *Communication Monographs* 62, no. 1 (1995): 2.
2. Foss and Griffin, “Beyond Persuasion,” 5.
3. Foss and Griffin, “Beyond Persuasion,” 4.
4. Karen A. Foss, Sonja K. Foss, and Cindy L. Griffin, *Feminist Rhetorical Theories* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1999): 47.
5. Foss, Foss, and Griffin, *Feminist Rhetorical Theories*,” 87.
6. Foss and Griffin, “Beyond Persuasion,” 5.
7. Foss and Griffin, “Beyond Persuasion,”13.
8. Foss and Griffin, “Beyond Persuasion”, 6.
9. Foss and Griffin, “Beyond Persuasion,” 17.

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Considering the Alternative in Composition Pedagogy

Teaching Invitational Rhetoric with Lynda Barry's *What It Is*

Susan Kirtley

As most first-year students quickly realize during the first term at university, that rite of passage, the first-year writing requirement, frequently focuses on argument. In fact, Andrea A. Lunsford, Keith Walters, and John J. Ruszkiewicz's popular composition textbook states directly in its title that *Everything's an Argument*. John D. Ramage, John C. Bean, and June Johnson's similarly popular composition textbook touts the value of *Writing Arguments*, while Annette T. Rottenberg and Donna Haisty Winchell's *The Elements of Argument* presents, according to promotional materials, "a clear path to learning about argument." Diverse theories of composition, from expressivist to social-constructionist, maintain different emphases regarding writing instruction. However, they generally turn and return to argument as the basis of first-year writing. Furthermore, although classes are informed by different theories and use different textbooks, most still stress a certain type of argument based in traditional notions of persuasion and require a typical, thesis-driven organizational structure for essays that must be written in the customary text-based format.

Is there another way to teach composition that explores more than argument? Is there an alternative pedagogy that might utilize another way of writing and seeing? In their 1995 article "Beyond Persuasion: A Proposal for Invitational Rhetoric," Sonja K. Foss and Cindy L. Griffin establish invitational rhetoric as a feminist alternative to traditional means of persuasion. In invitational rhetoric, "rhetor and audience alike contribute to the thinking about an issue so that everyone involved gains a greater understanding of the issue in its subtlety, richness, and complexity" (Foss and Griffin 5). Given this approach, invitational rhetoric seems like an excellent fit for composition courses aimed at highlighting different means of written self-expression. Yet, for all of its value, invitational rhetoric rarely appears in composition textbooks. When it does come into focus, it is highlighted only briefly as an alternative to argument, and sometimes, in contrast with Foss and Griffin's description, as merely a less adversarial argument.

Given the weight afforded traditional argument in composition textbooks (and consequently in composition classes), one might wonder what an alternative idea of composition

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pedagogy rooted in invitational rhetoric could look like in action. In the 2008 heuristic writing manual *What It Is*, lauded playwright, comic artist, and novelist Lynda Barry employs an approach that can be viewed as an alternative, invitational form of composition pedagogy. She resources the trappings traditionally associated with education and invites the reader to render experiences and images through his or her own writing practice. A blend of visual and textual elements, *What It Is* utilizes invitational rhetoric as a pedagogical practice while encouraging multimodal compositions that represent one's perspective in innovative ways not necessarily reliant on argument. This article explores invitational rhetoric as represented in various fields, particularly composition and rhetoric, and examines how Barry's *What It Is* serves as a model of invitational rhetoric. The article also explores how the book can offer a way of teaching invitational rhetoric that provides an alternative to the traditional notion of argument most commonly presented in composition classes.

INVITATIONAL RHETORIC IN EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS

Foss and Griffin offer the idea of invitational rhetoric, presenting an alternative to the patriarchal notion of "rhetoric as persuasion" (2), writing that "embedded in efforts to change others is a desire for control and domination, for the act of changing another establishes the power of the change agent over that other" (3). Rather than seeking to persuade one's audience, "invitational rhetoric is an invitation to understanding as a means to create a relationship rooted in equality, immanent value, and self-determination. Invitational rhetoric constitutes an invitation to the audience to enter the rhetor's world and to see it as the rhetor does" (5). Thus, invitational rhetoric is a means of sharing one's point of view, an invitation rather than an expectation marked by a commitment to parity, respect, and choice regarding one's audience.

As a compositionist and a feminist, I was immediately struck that such an approach seems extremely valuable and certainly merited inclusion within my own writing pedagogy. While much of the field of teaching writing (particularly as it is commodified by publishers through textbooks and teaching materials) focuses on teaching and writing argument, I follow the thinking of such scholars as Jane Tompkins, who notes: "I've come to realize that the classroom is a microcosm of the world; it is the chance we have to practice whatever ideals we may cherish. The kind of classroom situation one creates is the acid test of what it is one really stands for" (656). In my classroom, I "stand for" writing pedagogy that stresses creativity and collaboration—skills vital in the academy, the working world, and life beyond the classroom. In his introduction to *Gender in the Classroom*, Isaiah Smithson comments that "university education thrives on competition and separation, encouraging students to learn by competing with one another" (16). However, this does not have to be the only way. Invitational rhetoric in the classroom can help foster a noncompetitive environment that strives to include all student voices in an atmosphere of respect and tolerance.

Realizing that invitational rhetoric represented a particularly important contribution to composition pedagogy, I thus set out to learn more about how invitational rhetoric has been received and utilized. While some scholars debated the concept, many found the idea particularly well suited to educational settings.[1] Education scholars and feminist theorists have also cited the potential of invitational rhetoric in pedagogical settings.[2] Yet much of the scholarship on invitational rhetoric in education comes from communication studies and, for my purposes, does not directly apply to my teaching in composition and rhetoric. For example, in "Offering Invitational Rhetoric in Communication Courses," David Novak and Brent Bonine describe a practical strategy for incorporating invitational rhetoric into communication studies classrooms, recounting a brief activity in which the instructor explains principles of invitational rhetoric and then asks students to offer perspectives on controversial issues. After the dialogue, the class discusses the merits of invitational rhetoric. The project, however, does not investigate the teaching of writing from an invitational stance.

Invitational rhetoric does appear in the field of composition and rhetoric, but only rarely.[3] Diane D. Belcher makes a very brief mention of invitational rhetoric in "An Argument for Nonadversarial Argumentation: On the Relevance of the Feminist Critique of Academic Discourse to L2 Writing Pedagogy," encouraging readers to see Foss and Griffin's work as one possibility for educators looking to change the "agonistic academic system" (9). However, an emerging group of scholars within composition and rhetoric are engaging with invitational rhetoric. The most comprehensive and useful studies of the potential of the idea come from the dissertations of Kathleen Marie Hunzer and A. Abby Knoblauch. In her dissertation, titled "Diversifying the Discourse of Argument: Argument as Communicative Dialogue in First-Year Composition," Kathleen Marie Hunzer explicates her project to develop a first-year writing course influenced by Rogerian and invitational rhetoric in the hopes of "creating a dialogic community, teaching alternative styles of argumentative writing, and encouraging the integration of public and private voices" (49). However, while Hunzer states the influence of invitational rhetoric on her pedagogy, particularly in developing a "dialogic community," she still works under the rubric of argument—a different type of argument—but still an argument.[4]

Like Hunzer, A. Abby Knoblauch also sees the value of incorporating tenets of invitational rhetoric into her composition class and did so as part of her dissertation study. She built on this dissertation research in subsequent articles[5] and currently stands as the most published scholar studying invitational rhetoric in composition studies, and her helpful contributions merit additional discussion. Knoblauch expresses her early interest in bringing invitational rhetoric into the writing classroom in her 2008 dissertation project, titled "Teaching toward Understanding: Feminist Rhetorical Theories and Pedagogies in the College Composition Classroom." In the study, Knoblauch strives to bring feminist rhetorical theories, including invitational rhetoric, rhetorical listening, and embodied pedagogy, into the writing classroom. Knoblauch contends that invitational rhetoric has rarely been studied in the field of composition "because there has been no discussion about how to operationalize such a theory in the classroom" (90). Therefore, in her study, Knoblauch develops what she calls an *invitational pedagogy* based on principles fostered by Foss and Griffin's work. According to Knoblauch, "[A]n invitational pedagogy constructed from the basic tenets of invitational rhetoric asks that instructors and students find ways to engage with each other outside of an intent-to-persuade framework, and works toward better understanding of both issues and individuals" (71). Knoblauch particularly focuses on the idea of "offering perspectives" in her classroom, a strategy that she feels is particularly effective "when encountering strong resistance from students" (91).

Knoblauch conveys her use of the technique in a writing class at the University of New Hampshire. After the experiment, the author calls for additional work bringing invitational rhetoric into composition studies, stating, "I would like to continue this conversation for myself . . . [t]he potential of such a concept seems enormous and crucial, but students and I still struggle with the practice" (229). I contend that looking to new sources outside of traditional academic publications and venues can help extend this conversation and can offer additional ideas for "operationalizing" invitational rhetoric in composition classes. Thus, my work with

Lynda Barry's *What It Is* suggests a model of invitational rhetoric in action and helps demonstrate how one might bring invitational rhetoric into the composition classroom.

When considering the role invitational rhetoric might play in writing instruction, it is helpful to contemplate potential textbooks and readings and to ascertain what these writing guides value and offer in the way of alternatives to argument. I therefore turn to Knoblauch once again: Her 2011 article "A Textbook Argument: Definitions of Argument in Leading Composition Textbooks" presents a comprehensive study of a range of composition textbooks. The project ultimately discovers that invitational rhetoric is rarely mentioned, and when it is discussed, "the importance of such alternatives is quickly undermined" (253) or inaccurately identified as another form of argument. Knoblauch proposes "including a variety of argumentative approaches in composition textbooks would be a step toward reflecting more dynamic practice" (264). While this thorough study is incredibly helpful in identifying the paucity of alternatives to argument as presented in the most popular composition textbooks, in this particular analysis Knoblauch posits invitational rhetoric as one variety of "argumentative approach" rather than a rhetorical practice not linked to persuasion.

Andrea Lunsford, an author of one of the books analyzed in the study, *Everything's an Argument*, responded to Knoblauch's article in a blog posting on the St. Martin's website, stating that "teachers of writing need to step up to the challenge: we need to articulate and model these alternative means of argument, learn to work effectively with them, and share them and their methods with our students," explaining that she thinks "particularly of Foss and Griffin's 'invitational' rhetoric, which aims at understanding and exploration." Yet in Lunsford's textbook the authors refer not to invitational rhetoric but to "invitational *argument*" (emphasis mine), an important misunderstanding not mentioned by Knoblauch in her analysis. This change by the authors points to a concerning trend I have noted when studying scholarship on invitational rhetoric as understood within the field of composition and rhetoric: Invitational rhetoric is often defined as a different, less adversarial, and more collegial form of argument rather than a stance which does not intend to persuade or argue. This misinterpretation demonstrates how rooted in argument the teaching of writing has become, particularly as it has been institutionalized in textbooks and teaching materials. I thus contend that even as compositionists work to bring invitational rhetoric into our classrooms and our research, we might fruitfully look elsewhere for inspiration in what some consider an unlikely source: a textbook (of sorts) not from a scholar normally associated with the academy but from renowned artist, author, and comics creator Lynda Barry.

CROSSING BOUNDARIES: BARRY'S *WHAT IT IS*

Throughout her career, Barry has encouraged her readers to enter into a relationship with her creations by filling in a final panel of a comic or drawing a character. Scholar Ozge Samanci briefly notes that two of Barry's other works, *The Greatest of Marlys* and *One Hundred Demons*, show qualities of invitational rhetoric. Samanci argues that Barry aims, in *Demons* in particular, "to motivate the audience to gain insight about their own personas" (192–93). However, I believe that, as the most reader-directed and pedagogically focused of all of her works, *What It Is* offers the most comprehensive, refined model of invitational rhetoric in Barry's oeuvre. This analysis focuses on *What It Is* as an illustration of invitational pedagogy as well as a productive teaching text.

While Barry is perhaps best known as the creator of the alternative comic *Ernie Pook's Comeek*, it was her role as a teacher that inspired *What It Is*. Drawing on her instruction at Evergreen State College in the 1970s and her teacher Marilyn Frasca, Barry teaches an intensive writing course titled "Writing the Unthinkable" at venues across the country. In the class, Barry leads students through a series of exercises and activities, inviting the students to focus on writing about images. Encouraged by her own experience and the success of her students, Barry adapted the writing class into the genre-bending visual *Künstlerroman*/writing workbook/comic book/collage collection *What It Is* (2008) before turning her attention to teaching readers how to draw images in the companion workbook *Picture This* (2010).

What It Is, published by Montreal-based Drawn and Quarterly, is a far cry from the mimeographed, hand-stapled books of Barry's early career as an author and artist. It is a solid, oversized book, measuring just over eight and a half by eleven inches and featuring 208 lavish and colorful pages. The cover highlights a monkey along with a collection of monsters, flowers, and animals, as well as a question printed in sturdy capital letters: "DO YOU WISH YOU COULD WRITE?" *What It Is* is loosely divided into four sections, each marked by a different colored border around the pages. The opening section is titled "What It Is" and asks a series of questions, such as, "Do you wish you could write?"; "What is a memory?"; and "How do we recognize something?" Each question appears handwritten on a page and surrounded by a collage of drawings, paintings, and various ephemera (Figure 22.1), but the collages do not answer the questions. Instead, the assemblage of found and created images ruminates on the queries, at times seeming to imply a response, while at other times encouraging another line of investigation. These question pages draw a great deal from vintage school materials, such as old textbooks and children's books. Barry noted in an interview with Sean Rogers that she drew inspiration from Doris Mitchell, a schoolteacher who saved her students' work over the years and whose collection Barry inherited and made great use of in the book. The trappings of education used in the collages thus evoke a nostalgic feeling—the smell of crayons and sharpened pencils and the tactile delight in ripping up papers and pasting with glue—calling up joyful associations with school, rather than the red pen marks many immediately connect with writing instruction.

A visual *Künstlerroman* detailing Barry's development from a young girl to an artist and author interrupts the inquiry pages; the narrative is interspersed throughout the text and takes the form of a loose, unstructured comic painted on legal paper. In these sections Barry eschews panels and borders, opting instead for a freer, less restricted format. The comic offers the story of a lonely girl, with a terrifying "Gorgon-like"(66) mother searching for magic and imaginary friends (Figure 22.2). This "Lynda"[6] struggles to find her voice as a writer while facing a repressive family, peer pressure, and uncaring teachers. It is only after years of conflict that Lynda begins to utilize the creative process outlined in the book to unlock her ability to compose. Over time and with the help of college professor Marilyn Frasca, the girl returns to a state of play, searching for images in writing and art.

Having established the importance of the creative process in Lynda's own life, the activity book turns the focus back to the reader, inviting him or her to take part in various creative exercises based on the ones first developed by Frasca and later adapted by Barry in her Writing the Unthinkable courses. In this creative process the reader is joined by Sea-Ma, a friendly sea monster, as well as various other creatures including a Magic Cephalopod and the Near-Sighted Monkey, characters who encourage and interact with the reader. The third section, "Let's Make a (Free/Do It Yourself) Writing Kit," builds on the activity book by offering additional exercises

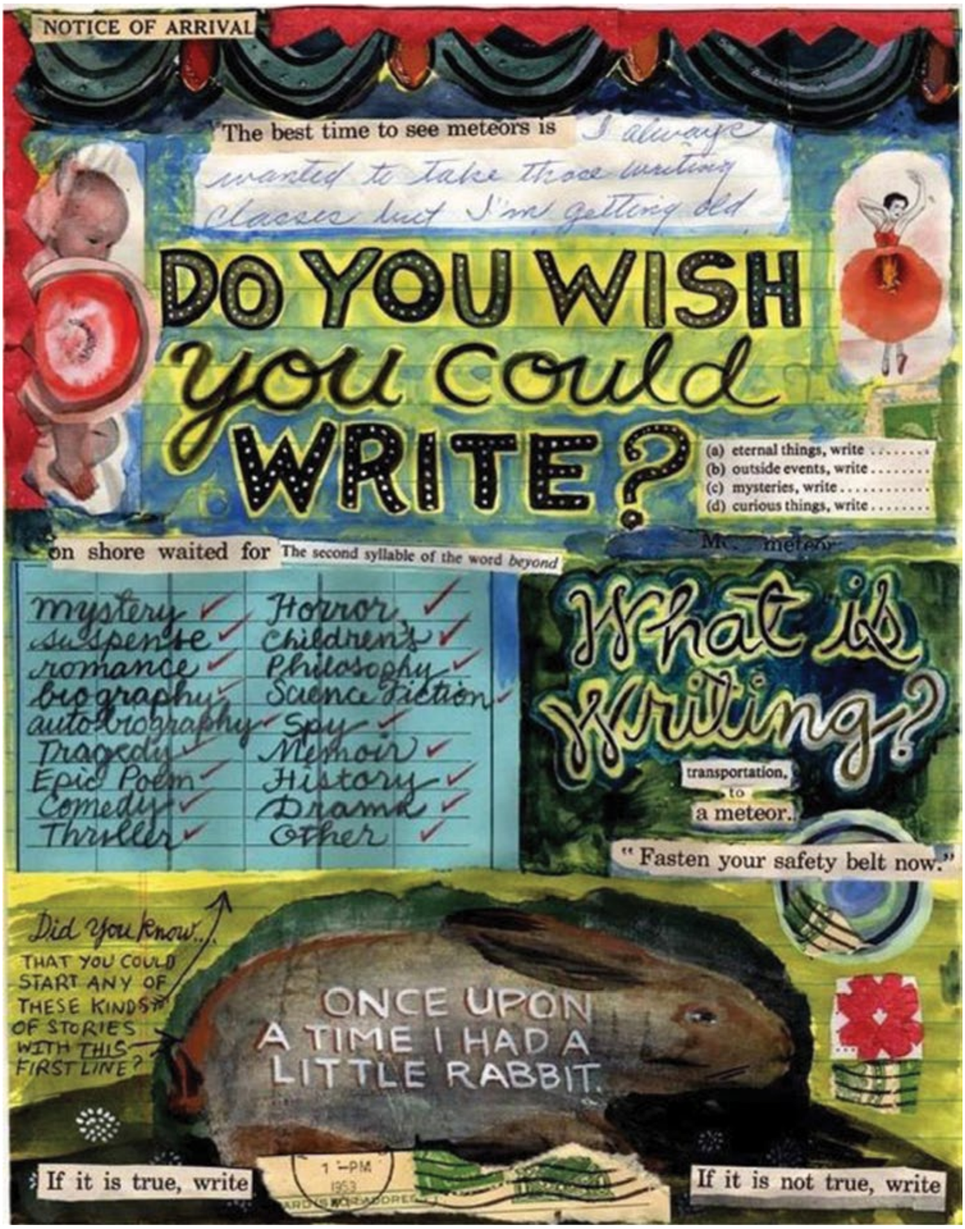

Figure 22.1. Collage page (Barry, *What It Is* 87).

and tutorials designed to develop a creative spark in the reader. The final section is Barry's "Notes on Notes," an insider look at her own journal and a glimpse into the author's individual creative process. The "Notes" section features Barry's own sketches, journal entries, and doodles.

Some critics, such as Juliet Waters, responded to the unconventional format of the book with confusion and even annoyance. As Waters suggests, she "felt some of the buzzing, bitter irritation that accompanies this question, 'Excuse me, but when do these formless things turn

Figure 22.2. Lynda and her mother (Barry, *What It Is* 66).

into monkeys?'" Yet the book's nonlinear, amorphous, and effusive structure reinforces the idea that it is the readers who may take these pieces and make with them what they will. The audience also holds the power to study the text in an order that makes sense to each individual, dipping into various sections randomly or following a more linear progression. Beyond this critique, the critical reception was generally positive, and *What It Is* received a prestigious Eisner award for best reality-based comic book in 2009.

INVITATIONAL RHETORIC IN *WHAT IT IS*

While it is unlikely that Lynda Barry set out intentionally to invoke invitational rhetoric as a pedagogical approach, *What It Is* serves as an excellent example of the idea in action and helps demonstrate one (somewhat unconventional) way of integrating invitational rhetoric into pedagogy. This is not a theoretical text but a practical, active one that offers an alternative to teaching argument in the traditional way, if one is brave enough to look to a "comic book" for inspiration.

Foss and Griffin note that the two primary rhetorical forms of invitational rhetoric are the "offering of perspectives" and the "creation of external conditions that allow others to present their perspectives in an atmosphere of respect and equality" (7). These forms are very much present in *What It Is*. For example, Barry's personal narrative as presented in the comic is one of the key components of a stance invoking invitational rhetoric, as it "offers a perspective," thus making a connection with the reader. The comic genre redistributes authority and agency to the audience, or an external condition that levels the "critical plane," as scholars such as Sandra Harding suggest. The comic form, linked with the funnies one consumes along with breakfast in the daily newspaper or the comic books of youth, is generally assumed to be a medium of the masses, a disposable genre linked to popular culture. Comic art is proletarian, common, and has the potential to establish an immediate bond with the reader based on a shared, communal experience. While Barry's latest endeavors, including *What It Is*, have evolved from her early black-and-white weekly comics to colorful hardback tomes, the narrative pairing of text and image in recent projects is still immediately recognizable as a form of comic art.

Barry's unconventional take on the personal narrative in comic form also works to establish a bond with the reader. The scrapbook-like format suggests a do-it-yourself project compiled from discarded bits and scraps. As previously indicated, these personal narratives are a key component in the offering of perspectives, as Foss and Griffin note: "Individual perspectives are articulated in invitational rhetoric as carefully, completely, and passionately as possible to give them full expression and to invite their careful consideration by the participants in the interaction" (7). Throughout her career, Barry has depicted girls in her works, and many readers and critics assumed that these young women were autobiographical representations of the author. Barry has indicated that, while inspired by her life, these characters are fictional.[7] In *What It Is*, however, Barry moves away from fiction and offers her most autobiographical representation of self in the coming-of-age comic depicting her development as an artist. This emotional and intimate portrait of maturation through tumultuous times certainly offers what Foss and Griffin might call a "full expression" of identity, proposing a story of self that asks for studied and "careful consideration."

In the narrative in *What It Is*, Barry presents a younger version of herself, Lynda, struggling to express herself through art, offering a pained and poignant self-portrait. This example of an individual perspective is passionate; Barry offers her life and story as a point of connection with others. The author does not shy away from honestly expressing her difficulties. Rather, Barry depicts a moment as a child when she felt inadequate as an artist (Figure 22.3):

> By then I knew who the best artists were in our class, who were the best writers. Out of 30 kids there were about ten that stood out and were good at something. The rest of us started wishing. I wish I could draw. I wish I could write. I wish I could dance. I wish I could sing. I wish I could act. I wish I could play music. I wish I could be funny. (80)

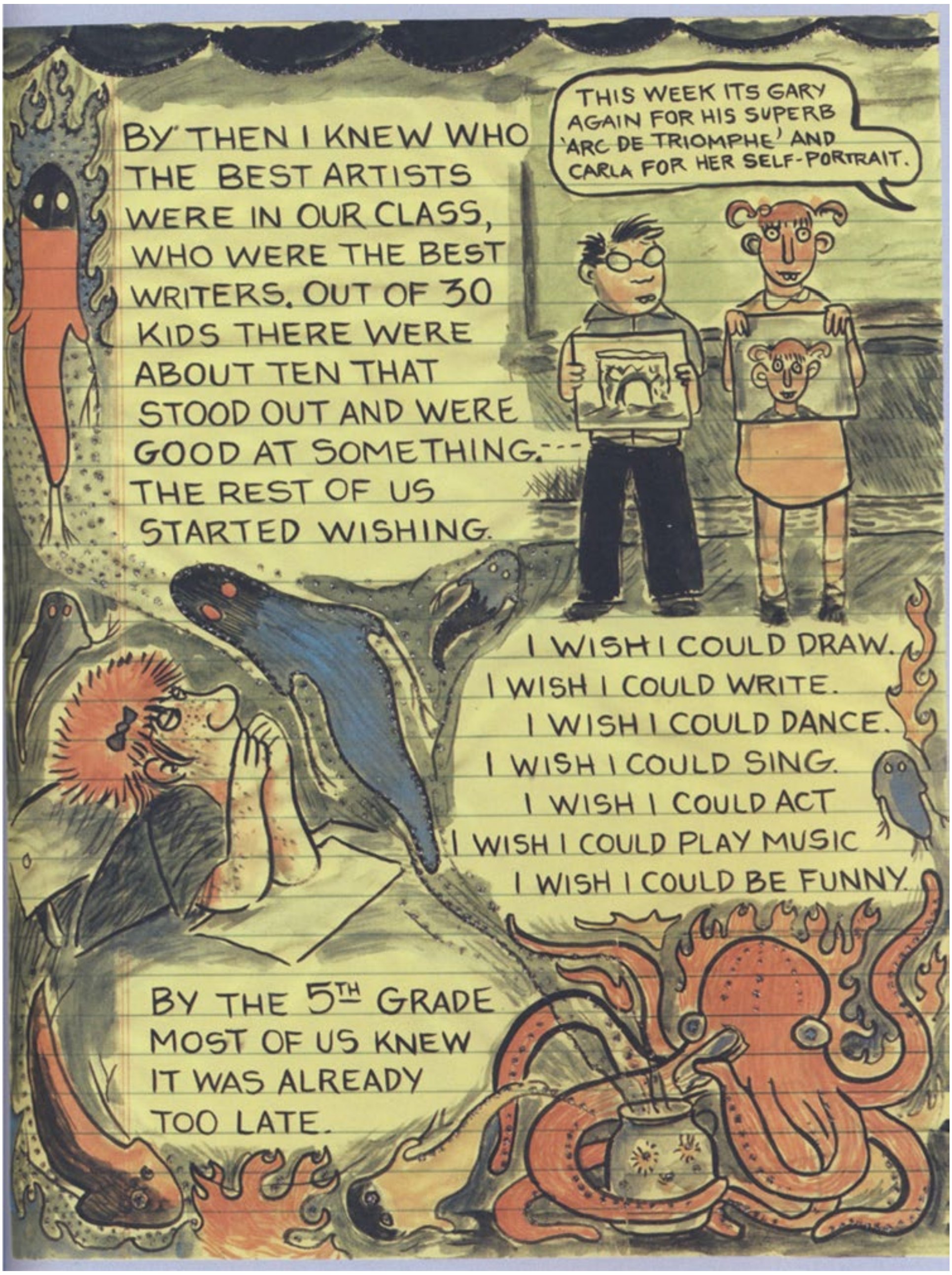

Figure 22.3. Lynda wishes she was good at something (Barry, *What It Is* 80).

This young Lynda struggles with inadequacy, and in sharing this emotional moment Barry opens herself, sharing her perspective and her struggle as a writer, artist, and creative person.

In the conclusion to the first section of the book, an adult Lynda breaks the fourth wall and directly addresses the reader, establishing an immediate connection and setting up a dialogue that invokes an "I" (Lynda) and a "you" (reader). While a book cannot create an actual, physical discussion, Barry moves to second person, suggesting a "mutual" or shared experience and invites the reader to play along. The adult Lynda explains that rather than trying to tell the reader what she discovered when working with Marilyn Frasca at Evergreen, it is better to show "us," for, as the narration explains, "I could go on trying to explain all that I learned from Marilyn or how I accidentally became a cartoonist because of it, or I can just show you how to do it. It's not hard. All you need is a paper and pen and a little bit of time" (136). Barry proffers her narrative, her life story as an artist and author, visually and textually, and invites the reader into her process. She presents her method as an option the reader might pursue with very few resources and no obligation. Barry suggests that the technique is not difficult, requiring limited supplies and little time commitment, and establishes an opportunity for the reader to participate, but only if he or she chooses to do so. There will be no recriminations or punishment for noncompliance.

Foss and Griffin assert that invitational rhetoric is marked by the "openness" with which the "rhetors are able to approach their audiences" (6), and Barry as rhetor presents an extremely exposed stance in her work. She shares her failures, mistakes, and miscommunications with the audience, allowing the reader insight into her perspective. Barry shows readers her experiments as a creative person and provides an intimate insight into her "individual perspective" in the "Notes on Notes" section that concludes the book. In doing so, she presents an extremely unguarded point of view. In the opening to the "Notes," Barry shares the "notes I made while I was working on this book" (189), giving the reader a sense of her process through an assemblage of sketches, doodles, and writings.

One of these pages is titled "Little Women" and features the figures of four women pasted onto yellow legal paper (Figure 22.4). The women wear old-fashioned clothing with bits of cloth and ribbon affixed. This gives the images a tactile, three-dimensional feel. Each woman has a painted face resembling a skull, and the text below explains, "Here are my rejected little women I like them so much But have been told they are not LYNDABARRY enough" (200). These macabre little figures are not what longtime readers of Barry's comic strip *Ernie Pook's Comeek* would expect. The women were supposed to be on the cover of a new Penguin edition of Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* but were ultimately rejected. In revealing this frustration, Barry invites the audience to her process and evolution as well as her feelings of disappointment. This creates another potential tie with the reader by allowing the audience to see the author's letdowns in addition to her successes. Referencing this genuine experience adds another layer of authenticity to Barry's narrative and also points out her vulnerability in sharing her history.

In the offering of one's unique perspective, Foss and Griffin suggest utilizing "re-sourcement," in which "the rhetor deliberately draws energy from a new source" (9). In *What It Is*, Barry playfully "re-sources" and utilizes the trapping and ephemera of a traditional educational setting, such as textbooks, legal paper, and lined notebooks, as well as the tools often associated with school, including paints, markers, crayons, and pencils. Barry plays on positive associations with school (such as the creativity one feels when doodling with a marker) but chooses to reject the rules (declining to color within the lines). She rips and tears and pastes offbeat and vibrant collages. She refuses to fill in the blanks, instead offering more questions. While

Figure 22.4. ***Little Women*** **figures (Barry,** ***What It Is*** **200).**

the pages feel familiar, the tools and techniques of the schoolhouse are reimagined to ask questions and invite a response; rather than presenting information and quizzing the student with the expectation of an answer (and a correct answer at that), these pages take the tools and techniques of education and break them down, offering a newly reimagined pedagogy.

Barry also creates a great many "essay questions" but prefaces them with the statement "P.S. We do not know the answers," which frees the reader from anxiety about having the "proper" solution. These are simply queries or mysteries, presented in hopes of stimulating a response or inviting a dialogue, but not begging for one particular answer. There is no opposition or competition, and there are no right answers; the reader wins if he or she chooses to play along. Every reply, including no reply, is completely acceptable in this environment free from recrimination and censure.

What It Is continues this playful, interactive approach to writing by re-sourcing or engaging with educational settings and symbols in a distinctly light-hearted way. "Re-sourcement," according to Foss and Griffin, requires "two processes of disengagement from the framework, system, or principles embedded in the precipitating message and the creative development of a response so the issue is framed differently" (9). Barry cleverly enacts an interactive, re-sourced pedagogy that nods to traditional ways of teaching, but steps away from them by structuring the discussion in an unconventional way. An example of this interactive, re-sourced pedagogy is found on a page that asks "What Is the Past?" For this collage Barry pastes a child's homework assignment along with pictures from schoolbooks as well as her own illustrations (Figure 22.5). The follow-up question asks, "Where Is It Located?" with boxes indicating "everywhere, nowhere, somewhere, anywhere, elsewhere, here." All of the boxes are checked. Barry calls upon the school assignment but upends it—disrupting the "fill in the blank" exercise by choosing all of them. Two small fragments of pasted text adorn the page; one states "little ghosts come a-knocking with hands like these," suggesting a Halloween song or rhyme.

Another textual snippet quotes Walter de la Mare's poem, "The Cupboard": "I know a little cupboard, With a teeny tiny key" (qtd. in Barry 18). The original poem, though not cited on this page, continues on, "And there's a jar of Lollypops / For me, me, me." "The Cupboard" references a great delight, candy and sweets, locked away in a small repository to be opened "when I'm very good, my dear, / As good as good can be, / There's Banbury Cakes, and Lollypops / For me, me, me." The excerpt hints at a childhood treasure to be unlocked for good behavior, just as Barry's creative process might unlock prizes hidden away in the past.

The page continues to bring together and re-source ephemera of education, suggesting an alternative vision of pedagogy by incorporating small bits of vintage homework chosen specifically to emphasize the value of trying, of making an attempt. The collage features a slip of aged paper with old-fashioned cursive writing explaining, "Howard can write cat, rat, can, car, cap and his name. I will have him write it on the top of this page. Show it to Grandma, Grandpa and all. With love Coraline" (18). At the top of the paper, a child's hand scrawls "Howard Chill." This small excerpt enacts a dialogue between a teacher/mentor and a child. The collaboration celebrates "Howard's" writing abilities and sets up his accomplishment for praise from others. This fascinating moment has been re-sourced as a centerpiece to questions of the past, what it is and where it is located, and Barry places numerous images of animals with their gazes focusing on this writing sample. Painted birds, a paper chick, a delicate squirrel, a bunny/octopus hybrid and numerous single eyes all fixate on the hand-painted questions and, in particular, this delicate triumph of Howard and his instructor. Barry creates an audience for "Howard Chill," applauding his efforts to create.

Not only must the invitational rhetor offer perspectives and employ re-sourcement as Barry has done in her book, but, according to Foss and Griffin, he or she must also "create three external conditions in the interaction between rhetors and audience members—safety, value, and freedom" (10). Once again, *What It Is* provides an exceptional demonstration of these external conditions. Foss and Griffin define safety in invitational rhetoric as "a feeling of security and freedom from danger" (10), and the form of *What It Is* as a book offers Barry's perspective for the audience without the fear of repercussions or penalty for disagreement or noncompliance. The loose, flowing style of the book and the constant reminders that any response or lack of response is acceptable establishes a safe environment for the reader to experiment and play.

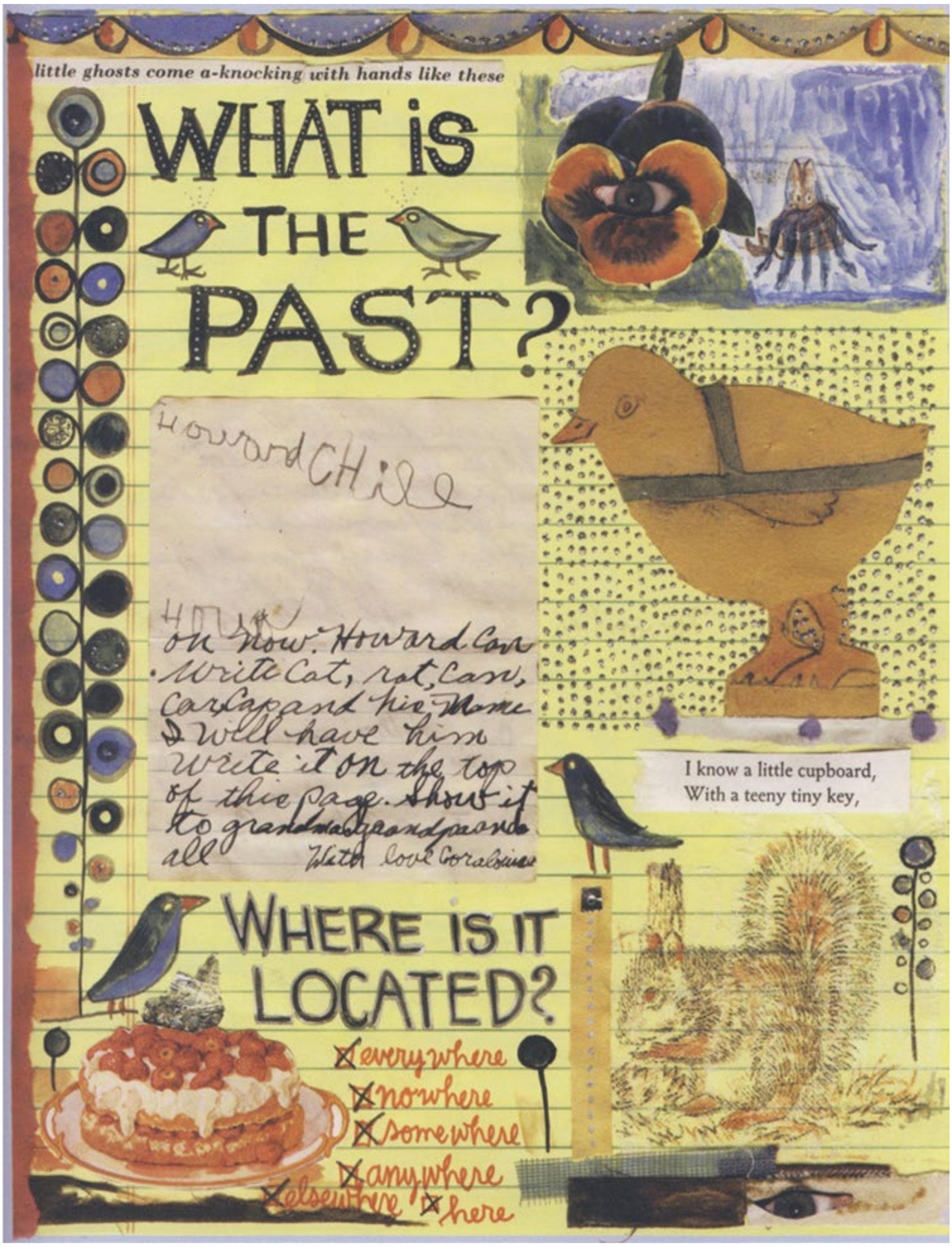

Figure 22.5. "What is the Past" collage page (Barry, *What It Is* 18).

While Barry does not set out to judge the reader's contributions or lack thereof, in her career she has developed an oeuvre marked by a theme of exaltation of the ordinary as evidenced by the visual personal essays in *One Hundred Demons* or the many strips about the small details of childhood in *Ernie Pook's Comeek*. It is consequently no surprise that Barry firmly establishes the value of a reader's potential contributions through creative pursuits. Barry creates a space beyond the workbook's directions that allows for the reader's possible creations. Foss and Griffin explain that the invitational rhetor must establish value, "the acknowledgment that audience members have intrinsic or immanent worth" (11), and *What It Is* points out, in numerous ways and forms, the value of each person's story. In a black-and-white comic shaded in blue found on page 164, Barry offers a treatise on valuing the commonplace for everyone, with an assist from Sea-Ma (Figure 22.6), a friendly sea monster with soft, rounded teeth, a wide smile, and a festive headscarf. Surrounding Sea-Ma, small fragments of text are pasted at the top of the page. One snippet states, "REVIEW," while another says, "Write Today for FREE," and a final excerpt imparts, "The word moment." These pieces of text function as titles of sorts, framing the comic below and asking the audience to pause and review while reminding the reader that he or she might write this very day for no fee whatsoever, again reinforcing the safety and freedom of the environment.

Valuing the audience is key in invitational rhetoric, and the characters in *What It Is* are depicted as caring for the reader. Sea-Ma, the pleasant-looking sea demon, addresses the reader and explains, "It's a good place to start. Memory . . . [i]t will work for anyone who has any kind of curiosity about writing or remembering. Especially people who always wanted to write but were too confused about how to even start" (164). Sea-Ma acts as a friend; encouraging but not goading, she presents possibilities without pressure. The narrative text in the comic that follows draws attention to the worth inherent in even the smallest details and moments. The narration reads, "The ordinary is extraordinary. The ordinary is extraordinary. The ordinary is the thing we want back when someone we love dies or leaves or falls out of love with us" (164). Beneath the text boxes there are small snapshots from life: a sleeping dog, a stick of gum, a match. The drawings are simply rendered in black-and-white ink with washes of blue and gray paint. Small chains of circles separate the comic panels. The effect is that of jewels or pearls on a necklace, all connected yet each special and important. All of the items depicted are ordinary but resonate beyond the scene in the reader's imagination.

The narration continues: "It's the little thing that brings them back to us unexpectedly. We say 'reminds us' but it is more than reminding—it's conflagration—it's an inundation—both fire and flood is memory. Its spark and breach so ordinary, we do not question it—the atom split. The little thing" (Barry 164). Barry indicates that when split, the atom, the smallest of particles, creates enormous power, just as small memories and experiences have much larger implications. This comic suggests, through a unique pairing of simply rendered, quotidian images and poetic, evocative language, that even an individual's most mundane moments are worth remembering and everyone has the ability to capture these small, precise images.

Barry emphasizes the import of each reader's experience and creates a structure for calling up and expressing these images, and she does so without anticipating a particular product. She therefore allows the audience great freedom of choice in deciding how to respond to the prompts. Foss and Griffin call for "freedom, the power to choose or decide" when utilizing invitational rhetoric, and, as previously indicated, in *What It Is* there are no punishments for not following directions or for choosing not to reply. Barry offers her life experience and writing exercises, but does so in absentia, without expectations. This book offers a safe space where the reader-writer can enjoy the freedom to read, to experiment, to reject. Stakes are high in traditional classrooms, and writing in the "wrong way" or about the "wrong things" may have serious consequences for students. In *What It Is*, Barry recounts "Lynda's" struggles to simply write and draw for the joy of it. Instead, two questions plagued her: "Is this good? Does this suck?" (123). These two questions debilitated her, and for "the next 30 years," her "main feelings were doubt and worry" (129). Within the paradigm of strict judgment and ranking, Lynda felt imprisoned, unable to create the "bad" images. Barry also suggests a world beyond the traditionally taught notion of argument as a yes/no, pros/cons debate. She notes, "While I move my pen, I hear sentences, like this one for example. Spoken internally from

Figure 22.6. "The Ordinary is Extraordinary" comic page (Barry, *What It Is* 164).

one part of me to another. Spoken and listened to—heard and recorded, but not thought over much or at all at first. When I keep my pen moving it is not a yes or no situation" (157). This passage invokes an internal dialogue with the self that respects ambiguity and allows space for uncertainty and exploration outside Manichean thesis statements and traditional arguments.

In the activity book section of *What It Is*, Barry presents exercises designed to help readers "find images." The author further clarifies: "[T]hough we use writing here, once you feel what an image is, the form is up to you" (138), thus offering readers a chance to make up their own options, should they choose to complete the exercises. In this section, the book takes on a more didactic tone. Phrases such as "List the first 10 images that come to you from your word" (154) assume more of what Karen Foss and Sonja Foss might call "advisory rhetoric" as outlined in the book *Inviting Transformation: Presentational Speaking for a Changing World*. In the book, Foss and Foss note that "advisory rhetoric is communication designed to provide requested assistance. It is developed in response to an implicit or explicit request from others for advice or information" (6). Thus, although this section of the book operates with a more focused and commanding tone—asking readers to try these various exercises—one can assume that the reader who has sought out this book and is still reading has done so in the hopes of learning from Barry's method of writing. Barry also constantly disrupts and undermines the instructional tone, encouraging the reader to "just fill in the flowers [if] you get stuck" (151) or "draw beads on a string" (172) when struggling. Furthermore, the tone is always inspirational without being aggressive. The section is specifically titled "Adjustable Activity Book," and the text notes that the activities contained therein are "Safe. Simple. Practical. Economical" (137). What follows are a variety of "fill in the blank" exercises that the reader can do in the book, on a separate sheet of paper, or not at all. The external conditions allow the audience to choose how and when—not to mention whether—they will try Barry's method. Overall, *What It Is* evokes a much more welcoming approach than most composition textbooks, encouraging the reader to explore, free from censure.

CONCLUSION: *WHAT IT IS* IN THE COMPOSITION CLASSROOM

While Barry's book offers a clear alternative to argument for writing pedagogy, instructors used to conventional texts might wonder how to incorporate invitational rhetoric into writing classes utilizing *What It Is*. What might such an approach look like in practice? Moreover, why should one engage in such an endeavor? As Foss and Griffin suggest, invitational rhetoric is not the only approach, but it can be an effective option. With this in mind, I plan on structuring my own first-year writing course to discuss and engage in a variety of rhetorical strategies and situations, including invitational rhetoric. Rather than spending the entire term searching for arguments in everything we see, marshaling evidence to counter opposing points of view, or studying which type of appeal is most likely to persuade, I would like to spend at least some of our class time composing each writer's personal perspective. These would be shared with the classroom community in a respectful environment that encourages creativity and innovation instead of imposing strict forms and structures. To foster a curriculum that incorporates invitational rhetoric, I propose assigning the personal narrative, an essay which works especially well when paired with the text *What It Is*.[8]

Influenced by the process movement and in particular the expressivist school of thought, personal narratives were once considered a cornerstone of first-year writing. However, over time such assignments have, to some extent, fallen out of favor.[9] I believe coupling the assignment with an understanding of invitational rhetoric might reinvigorate the personal narrative. Furthermore, approaching the narrative through *What It Is* encourages a multimodal response, expanding the notion of offering one's perspective beyond the limited, text-only responses most often found in first-year writing. This approach provides a variety of options for students to share their narratives as one aspect of the course.

Not only does *What It Is* employ an invitational stance through its form, it also invites alternative, multimodal approaches to composition. In his article "More Than Words: Comics as a

Means of Teaching Multiple Literacies," Dale Jacobs argues: "Reading and writing multimodal texts, then, is an active process, both for creators and for readers who by necessity engage in the active production of meaning" and furthermore, "Every act of creating meaning from a multimodal text . . . contributes to the ongoing process of becoming a multimodally literate person" (24). The comic and visual collage style of *What It Is* thus engages the reader to actively make meaning from the text and invites the participant to respond as the student feels is appropriate, whether that be a traditional text-based approach or a multimodal composition. In this way, the offering of perspectives through the personal narrative is freed from traditional notions of argument *and* from traditional text-based forms and structures.

Therefore, the next time I assign the personal narrative in first-year writing, I plan on working through the process by explaining notions of invitational rhetoric and framing the assignment as enacting an invitational stance. Students will then read *What It Is*, and as a class we will work through many of the activities from the workbook section. In addition, the class will discuss and explore Barry's narrative comic as the offering of her perspective and meditate on the question collages and notebook pages, discussing what we see and experience. The students will create their own responses to invitational rhetoric and Barry's book and will be free to experiment with style, form, and subject as best suits each individual. As the instructor, I always participate in class writing activities and assignments, just as I will with this process, creating my own composition. Ultimately, all of us will share our pieces, presenting the compositions to one another in a classroom anthology. I do not plan to give the products a letter grade but rather use a form of contract grading in which those who productively and thoughtfully participate in the process are awarded full credit. This type of evaluation allows for experimentation and reduces risk, which I hope will promote a feeling of safety as well as relieve fear of recrimination for "doing it wrong."

While I believe that *What It Is* provides a powerful resource for compositionists working to reenvision the teaching of rhetoric, there are limitations to such a project. When *What It Is* becomes a part of the official curriculum, it is required, and therefore the student must participate, reducing the free and unrestricted element of the text. The book is also limited in that it does not allow for an actual, physical dialogue, a reciprocal "offering of perspectives" in which viewpoints are shared and there is a true "willingness to yield," for Barry is an absent author. This lack of a dialogue with the author, however, can be addressed in a classroom setting in which students share narratives with one another and the instructor as outlined above. In this way, the writers can experience in person the power of invitational rhetoric. Despite any challenges, I feel that bringing invitational rhetoric into my writing pedagogy, and doing so with the help of such an exceptional and multimodal textbook, outweighs the complications.

Scholars Lozano-Reich and Cloud ask, "By what standard, then, are we to decide when and under what conditions invitational rhetoric would be productive?" (221). This question is an important one, and Barry's work provides an unusual and outstanding response. *What It Is* vividly demonstrates the possibilities of invitational rhetoric to invite audiences into a discussion about imagery and creativity. While *What It Is* might strike some as an unconventional resource for rhetoricians, it is important—as Foss and Griffin point out with their pioneering work—to rethink traditional notions of rhetoric and of productivity, challenging received wisdom. Barry's work invites the audience and our students to write in an unpressured manner, resourcing and reinvigorating the trappings associated with education, valuing the contribution of the audience, and moving beyond binaries. *What It Is* offers alternatives not only to how we approach writing instruction but also to the types of writing we value. Moving beyond argument, beyond the thesis-driven essay, and beyond the purely text-based treatise, *What It Is* depicts and teaches another idea of productivity in composition—a multimodal composition that seeks not to persuade but to connect. It is my hope that additional studies of works such as Barry's that utilize an invitational approach might lead discussions in new directions, inspiring thoughtful conversations about the ways in which such an invitational pedagogy might be incorporated into conventional classrooms.

What It Is asks, "Do you wish you could write? What is writing? What is an image?" These are excellent questions to ponder, and professional rhetoricians and instructors can find much to emulate in ruminating on these queries, following the wisdom of the Meditating Monkey, Sea-Ma, and the Magic Cephalopod, sharing narratives and inviting others to join in a continuing dialogue in composition classrooms. Furthermore, inspired by Barry's questions, scholars might well ask: "What is rhetoric?"; "Why argument?"; and "Why not study comics?" As we rethink the traditional methods of teaching writing and rhetoric, I would encourage us to ponder the state of the field of composition. Why is it that argument has become the standard in our classes? What alternatives might there be to such an approach? In addition, how might teaching texts move beyond traditional prose to include multimodal compositions? And finally, how might we expand our horizons in teaching writing? In this article I offer Lynda Barry's book *What It Is* as an opportunity to enact invitational rhetoric in composition classrooms, filling a gap in our curriculum by exploring alternatives to the tradition of equating the teaching of writing with the teaching of argument as persuasion. Composition instructors willing to look outside of the academy, those brave enough to shake things up, might gain a great deal from bringing this book and its approach into the curriculum.

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NOTES

1. Foss and Griffin's proposal for a rhetoric free of influence was met with skepticism by some scholars, such as Celeste M. Condit, Nina M. Lozano-Reich and Dana L. Cloud, as well as Mark Pollock, Lee Artz, Lawrence R. Frey, W. Barnett Pearce, and Bren A. O. Murphy. In response to these critiques, other scholars such as Jennifer Emerling Bone, Cindy L. Griffin, and T. M. Linda Scholz, as well as Kathleen J. Ryan and Elizabeth J. Natalle, defended invitational rhetoric and called for a more comprehensive reading of Foss and Griffin's text, working to correct misunderstandings of the concept.

2. For research on invitational rhetoric in the field of education, see Kirk and Durant's "Crossing the Line: Framing Appropriate Responses in the Diversity Classroom." The authors discuss a "choice of a story format as discourse . . . guided by values explicated by Foss and Griffin's (1995) theory of invitational rhetoric" (830). Kirk and Durant state that "invitational rhetoric provided us a more complex and nuanced understanding of the issue at hand" (831). For more scholarly investigations of invitational rhetoric from a feminist perspective, see Webb, Allen, and Walker's "Feminist Pedagogy: Identifying Basic Principles"; Webb, Walker, and Bollis's "Feminist Pedagogy in the Teaching of Research Methods"; and Bowers and Buzzanell's "The Space Between: Using Peer Theater to Transcend Race, Class, and Gender."

3. While only a few scholars in composition and rhetoric have incorporated invitational rhetoric into writing classrooms, two books on public speaking from an invitational perspective would serve as excellent resources: Sonja K. Foss and Karen A. Foss's book *Inviting Transformation: Presentational Speaking for a Changing World* (2012) and Cindy L. Griffin's textbook *An Invitation to Public Speaking* (2011).

4. Traditions of scholarly publication tend to encourage, and even privilege, argumentative rhetorical strategies. While I advocate the teaching and use of alternatives to argumentation, in this article I have

adopted a persuasive stance due to the nature of academic writing. While this is highly ironic, it was, I believe, necessary.

5. In addition to her dissertation and 2011 article, Knoblauch published "Disrupting Disruption: Invitational Pedagogy as a Response to Student Resistance" in 2012. In this piece, Knoblauch contends that a pedagogy inspired by invitational rhetoric serves as the most effective approach to student resistance, for an "invitational rhetoric and a pedagogy based on its intent to understand rather than persuade is one way in which to reduce a sense of threat in students, thereby reducing their resistance and increasing the likelihood that they will at least attempt to hear alternative views" (129).

6. For clarity, I refer to the author as *Lynda Barry* or *Barry*, and the autobiographical character depicted in the text as *Lynda*.

7. See Lynda Barry's 1989 interview with Thom Powers.

8. Once again, in my writing courses I plan to incorporate invitational rhetoric in addition to, but not to the exclusion of, discussions of argument and persuasion.

9. See Thomas G. O'Donnell's "Politics and Ordinary Language: A Defense of Expressivist Rhetorics" and Sherri Gradin's *Romancing Rhetorics: Social Expressivist Perspectives on the Teaching of Writing*.

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Part IV

EXPANDING THE INVITATION

23

The Theory of Invitational Rhetoric

Anticipating Future Scholarship

Sonja K. Foss and Cindy L. Griffin

Inviting Understanding provides us with the opportunity to reflect back on a theory that we began to develop in 1992, a theory that has grown in many exciting directions and that we hope will continue to mature. Revisiting the origins of the theory of invitational rhetoric and the various influences that came together to serve as the impetus for its development has given us a renewed appreciation for the risks we took in developing and advocating for the theory as well as for those who have challenged, extended, and applied it in various ways. Now that this volume is complete, we turn our attention to anticipating the future of the theory of invitational rhetoric, speculating about the trajectory of the work on invitational rhetoric and the various paths that work might take. The essays in this volume suggest five questions that we believe offer fruitful routes for further exploration of the theory. We hope that those scholars and activists interested in the theory and application of invitational rhetoric will pursue the answers to our questions and ask questions of their own.

IN WHAT WAYS MIGHT THE THEORY OF INVITATIONAL RHETORIC BE FURTHER DEVELOPED?

Our first question has to do with how the theory of invitational rhetoric might be extended and elaborated in the future: *In what ways might the theory of invitational rhetoric be further developed?* The essays in this book suggest a number of promising avenues. One has to do with the forms that invitational rhetoric can assume. Largely studied as a discursive form, invitational rhetoric also can assume visual and mediated forms, as Benjamin R. Bates and Alina Haliliuc suggest with their analyses of graffiti and film. The preliminary theorizing they have done of nondiscursive forms of invitational rhetoric easily could be built upon to answer questions such as these: How do the differences between discursive and nondiscursive rhetorical forms intersect with invitational rhetoric? What visual elements best translate into the characteristics of invitational rhetoric, and how might those translations best be achieved? Do nondiscursive forms of invitational rhetoric introduce new possibilities for thinking about how invitational rhetoric operates in general?

A second avenue worth pursuing involves rhetorical strategies and options. The theorizing about invitational rhetoric following our initial article often focused on the general strategies or rhetorical options that characterize invitational rhetoric and differentiate it from persuasion. But invitational rhetoric involves virtually infinite communication components besides the nature of the strategies involved, all of which can serve as prompts for additional research. If we use the classical canons for the purpose of illustration, we note that we know little about what characterizes invention, organization, style, and delivery in invitational rhetoric. Stephen M. Llano provides a model for such theorizing with his proposal for three types of inventional materials used in invitational rhetoric, and, certainly, other aspects of invention deserve exploration such as the types of *topoi* and patterns of reasoning that are more invitational than persuasive. Following Llano's lead, we ask additional questions: Are we are likely to see certain organizational patterns used with invitational rhetoric? In what ways do different language styles correlate with invitational rhetoric? Are some modes of delivery always or inherently aligned with invitational rhetoric?

The intersections between invitational rhetoric and interpersonal communication theory deserve attention and suggest a third avenue worth exploring. Bryant Keith Alexander and Michele Hammers make a concerted effort to engage in invitational rhetoric across differences of various kinds and implicitly suggest some rhetorical forms that might characterize invitational rhetoric at the interpersonal level. Their work prompts us to ask: What are the ways in which invitational rhetoric and interpersonal communication align? Are there significant differences? Are there particular ways in which to offer perspectives and to create the external conditions of safety, value, and freedom in interpersonal interactions? Are there more rhetorical forms than just these two that need to be implemented if rhetors are to be effective interpersonal communicators using invitational rhetoric?

A fourth potential avenue for investigation regards refusals. Scholars who theorize invitational rhetoric largely assume that the invitation to engage with another is accepted. But it often is not. Jill Swiencicki begins to explicate such refusals in her analysis of Terry Tempest Williams's efforts to engage others who hold dramatically different perspectives, suggesting a number of questions: How can rhetors remain invitational in the face of such refusals? Are there ways in which such refusals can be done invitationally? What rhetorical forms are most effective in maintaining a relationship between rhetor and potential audience when the audience refuses the rhetor's invitation? What kinds of transformation are possible in situations of refusal to engage?

We note that the axiological, epistemological, and ontological assumptions of invitational rhetoric also will benefit from additional exploration. We ourselves made such an effort in our essay in this volume, and the previous efforts of Sally Miller Gearhart in 1979 and Kathleen J. Ryan and Elizabeth J. Natalle more recently continue to be models of such theorizing. But the assumptions underlying invitational rhetoric are complex, so some key assumptions of the theory have not yet been identified and explored. What additional theorizing of the metatheoretical foundations would make invitational rhetoric a clearer theory and one more easily implemented? If contradictory assumptions have been identified, how can those contradictions be reconciled? Similarly, criticisms of invitational rhetoric need to continue to be expressed, examined, and addressed, as Jennifer E. Bone, Cindy L. Griffin, and T. M. Linda Scholz suggest, prompting us to ask these questions: What are the legitimate criticisms of invitational rhetoric that should prompt revisions in the theory? How might those interested in the theory correct the misinformation and inaccuracies that continue to be perpetuated around it?

HOW MIGHT INVITATIONAL RHETORIC CONTINUE TO INFORM APPROACHES TO PEDAGOGY?

A number of essays in *Inviting Understanding* deal with pedagogy and the ways in which invitational rhetoric works in educational settings, prompting a second question as we look to the future: *How might invitational rhetoric continue to inform approaches to pedagogy?* Donna Marie Nudd illustrates the key role that invitational rhetoric can play in the training of new teachers, and Patricia Hawk and Rachel Pokora demonstrate how it has informed the mission of a university department and effected a change in the curriculum and environment of an entire university. Kathleen M. Hunzer and Susan Kirtley apply invitational rhetoric to composition pedagogy, and A. Abby Knoblauch explores the role the theory can play in decreasing student resistance while still allowing for critical inquiry in the university classroom. These essays suggest additional questions for future research on and engagement with invitational rhetoric: What courses might productively be infused with invitational practices and approaches to learning? How might the alignment of curricular objectives and invitational rhetoric affect understanding of what counts as learning and ways of evaluating learning? Are there ways in which the application of invitational rhetoric to institutional policies and practices might address persistent problems in educational settings, such as low graduation rates, students' lack of engagement, conflicts around issues of safety and diversity, or even the workloads of faculty and administrators?

IN WHAT WAYS ARE NEW COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES AFFECTING INVITATIONAL RHETORIC?

The essay by Sonja K. Foss and Jeanine Warisse Turner suggests yet another question and direction for future work on invitational rhetoric: *In what ways are new communication technologies affecting invitational rhetoric?* New technologies of various kinds are dramatically changing the nature and functions of communication. In light of these changes, we ask a number of questions: Are there ways in which the practice of invitational rhetoric benefits from the use of such technologies? Is invitational rhetoric easier to apply using some technologies rather than others? Are there ways in which the practice of invitational rhetoric is more difficult because of these technologies? Are the theory's axiological, epistemological, and ontological orientations more difficult to enact because of such technologies?

IN WHAT WAYS MIGHT THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF INVITATIONAL RHETORIC INFORM AND INTERSECT WITH EFFORTS TO ENACT SOCIAL CHANGE?

In a number of the essays in *Inviting Understanding*, the authors note that invitational rhetoric cannot be separated easily from typical persuasive efforts to transform society. They thus suggest a fourth question that can guide additional research: *In what ways might the theory and practice of invitational rhetoric inform and intersect with efforts to enact social change?* Kristen A. Hungerford suggests in her analysis of the dialogue among football players around the issue of protest that invitational rhetoric can serve as a precursor to significant group decisions.

Marilyn DeLaure Bordwell's analysis of Ella Baker's rhetoric points to ways in which invitational rhetoric can work in concert with persuasion to effect change. Roberta Chevrette and Joshua Hendricks, in their analysis of the movement Murfreesboro Loves, similarly suggest that protests can be invitational and can prompt social transformation. Sarah De Los Santos Upton sees a role for invitational rhetoric in community development, which typically is regarded as a persuasive effort. These essays prompt consideration of questions such as these: Is the line between persuasion and invitational rhetoric too tightly or narrowly drawn? How might those interested in social change and social justice productively combine persuasive and invitational rhetoric? Are there strategies that make this combination more or less successful? How is agency conceptualized in a situation in which both invitational and persuasive efforts are combined? When a situation is addressed through invitational and persuasive rhetoric, what is the definition and nature of change as a result of that dual approach?

IN WHAT WAYS MIGHT INVITATIONAL RHETORIC INFORM RESEARCH METHODS?

We conclude our efforts to anticipate the future with thoughts related to the essay by Karen Taylor, Rita Durant, and David Boje, in which they use invitational rhetoric in their interviews of individuals involved in a crisis situation. Their essay prompts us to suggest the following question for future exploration: *In what ways might invitational rhetoric inform research methods?* Because invitational rhetoric's objective of understanding is clearly relevant to most research objectives, we ask the following: How might the theory and practice of invitational rhetoric facilitate researchers' efforts to achieve this objective? Are there existing research methods with which invitational rhetoric is most easily aligned, both in terms of the design of the research project as well as its implementation? Might an invitational stance suggest entirely new approaches to research—approaches grounded in safety, immanent value, and self-determination? Are research questions grounded in an invitational orientation different from those grounded in a persuasive worldview and, if so, how might the differences offer rhetorical scholars different kinds of findings and insights?

The questions we suggest here indicate that, although the theory of invitational rhetoric has evolved in significant ways, there still is much work to be done to make it into the robust theory it has the potential to become. If invitational rhetoric is to be given equal opportunity with persuasive rhetoric—and we sincerely hope it will be—it could become part of the toolbox of communication skills every rhetor and rhetorician possesses. If the theory is to be given full rein to do the work it can in the world, however, its contours must be well known so that it can be applied easily, its functions accepted as appropriate ones for communication, and the types of interactions it describes seen as important. The essays in this volume do much to accomplish these objectives and to affirm the theory's place in the communication discipline. We are proud to have been a part of this effort and look forward to the new research and activism centered in the theory and practice of invitational rhetoric that we anticipate will grow from this volume.

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Compendium of Publications Related to Invitational Rhetoric

Sonja K. Foss, Cindy L. Griffin, and Andrew Gilmore

JOURNAL ARTICLES

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