

# In Situ Rhetoric: Intersections Between Qualitative Inquiry, Fieldwork, and Rhetoric

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## Abstract

This special issue examines intersections between qualitative and rhetorical inquiry through (re)introducing rhetorical fieldwork. We define rhetorical fieldwork as a set of approaches that integrate rhetorical and qualitative inquiry toward the examination of *in situ* practices and performances in a rhetorical field. This set of approaches falls within the participatory turn in rhetorical studies, in which rhetorical scholars increasingly turn to fieldwork, interviews, and other forms of participatory research to augment conventional methodological practices. The special issue highlights four original articles that employ, exemplify, and reflect on the value of rhetorical fieldwork as a form of critical/cultural inquiry. In this introduction, we not only introduce the key themes and articles in the special issue but also compile our take on the state of the art of rhetorical fieldwork in an effort to introduce this form of research practice to those who have not encountered it before.

## Keywords

participatory critical rhetoric, rhetorical fieldwork, rhetorical field methods, qualitative inquiry, rhetorical inquiry, mixed methods

Since as early as the 1980s, rhetoricians have theorized the diverse, intersectional, and multimodal qualities of contemporary rhetoric by documenting, observing, participating in, and analyzing forms of *in situ* rhetoric. Expanding from a traditional focus on analyzing already documented texts (i.e., speech transcripts, photographs, films, newspaper articles), growing numbers of rhetoricians interested in *in situ* rhetoric privilege “being there” to experience rhetorical performance as it happens in communities (Blair, 2001). Engaging in rhetorical fieldwork, they travel to places where rhetoric happens, speak to people who co-produce and co-experience it, and record their impressions. Modes of qualitative inquiry such as ethnographic participant observation, interviewing, and oral histories enable field-based rhetorical scholars to engage myriad forms of vernacular rhetoric in everyday, but otherwise inaccessible, places. These ways of knowing, in Conquergood’s (2002b) words, are “grounded in active, intimate, hands-on participation and personal connection” (p. 146). Field-based rhetoricians recognize “ethnography’s potential for delivering new kinds of data and for providing answers that are otherwise elusive” in conventional rhetorical texts (Cintron, 1998, p. 327). This “participatory turn” in rhetorical inquiry is rapidly gaining momentum and promises to expand and challenge some of the central theoretical, methodological, and praxis-oriented assumptions of rhetorical inquiry (Cintron, 1998; Endres & Senda-Cook, 2011; Hauser,

2011; Hess, 2011, 2015; McHendry, Middleton, Endres, Senda-Cook, & O’Byrne, 2014; McKinnon, Asen, Chávez, & Howard, 2016; Middleton, Hess, Endres, & Senda-Cook, 2015; Middleton, Senda-Cook, & Endres, 2011; Pezzullo, 2007). The success of these approaches to *in situ* rhetorical fieldwork, which Middleton et al. (2015) synthesize under the rubric of *participatory critical rhetoric*, depends on deep engagement with the traditions and lineages of rhetorical inquiry, qualitative inquiry, and critical/cultural studies.

Rhetorical inquiry is or is not a subset of qualitative inquiry depending on whom you ask. Even considering its intellectual intersections with qualitative scholarship, ethnographic practice, and performance studies, rhetorical fieldwork maintains a *rhetorical focus*, meaning it is ultimately concerned with how material/symbolic resources are practiced, performed, mobilized, and disseminated in ways that have influence and consequences for our understanding of

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the world (Blair, Dickinson, & Ott, 2010; DeLuca, 1999). Rhetorical inquiry is a humanistic practice of theorization and interpretation. Rhetorical criticism is a distinct (albeit multifaceted) approach to the analysis of texts with little formal connection to the traditions of qualitative inquiry. Indeed, many rhetoricians resist formal discussion of “method” because of its structural, formalistic, and postpositivistic connotations. However, given Denzin and Lincoln’s (2011) definition of qualitative research as “a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible” (p. 3), an argument can be made that rhetorical inquiry is a type of qualitative inquiry. For many qualitative scholars, textual analysis is a mode of qualitative research wherein written texts constitute a source of naturalistic, empirical data that can be analyzed using a variety of frameworks (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Lindlof & Taylor, 2010; McKinnon, 2012), including rhetoric as a form of cultural communication (Philipsen, 1992). Critical discourse analysis, for example, attends to written texts or transcripts of spoken texts to uncover how power is exercised through language (Fairclough, 2010; Tracy, McDaniel, & Gronbeck, 2007). Similarly, it could be argued that rhetorical analysis is a mode of textual analysis that attends to persuasive features of texts. As such, there is fuzziness in the relationship between rhetorical criticism and qualitative inquiry. While we do not seek to necessarily reduce this fuzziness, we are interested in the productive intersections, tensions, and offerings between rhetorical criticism and qualitative inquiry as materialized in rhetorical fieldwork.

The turn to rhetorical fieldwork has primarily focused on importing theories and practices of qualitative inquiry into field-based rhetorical criticism, speaking to other rhetorical scholars about the value of this form of analysis, and demonstrating how rhetorical fieldwork expands and challenges some of the assumptions of rhetorical theory and criticism. In doing so, the participatory turn in rhetorical studies contributes, for example, to an expanded notion of the text, the central focus of study for rhetorical criticism. While previous moves in rhetorical theory and criticism have expanded focus to visuals, space/place, and bodies, critics continue to examine these via already documented texts. The participatory turn, drawing from Conquergood’s (2002b) critique of the valorization of written texts over other modes of experience, further expands the notion of text by focusing on *in situ* texts that highlight intersectional embodied and emplaced experiences of rhetoric that resist written textualization and situate the emplaced body as a central site for comprehension (Conquergood, 1991). Moreover, drawing from qualitative scholarship on the role of researchers and reflexivity, the participatory turn has called attention to the importance of reflexivity, critical judgment, and the embodiment of the critic as central concerns in rhetorical criticism. Rhetorical fieldwork takes seriously the role of the critic through a focus on reflexivity, asking fundamental questions

about the epistemology and ontology of being in the field and taking stock of the critic’s relationship to participants or rhetors (Alexander, 2006; Denzin, 1997; Madison, 2011; Middleton et al., 2015; Morris, 2010). These contributions expand beyond the practice of rhetorical fieldwork to contribute to the field of rhetoric writ large by expanding and challenging central assumptions of the field, such as role of the critic, texts, context, and purpose of criticism.<sup>1</sup>

While these moves are important to rhetorical scholarship, rhetorical fieldwork practitioners could do more to articulate how a rhetorical perspective on fieldwork can contribute to qualitative inquiry. Qualitative inquiry is not blind to rhetoric as a concept. The “rhetorical turn” in ethnography and qualitative inquiry (Atkinson, 1990; Conquergood, 1992; Hammersley, 1993; Van Maanen, 1988) recognized the value of rhetoric for writing up research and engaging issues of representation. However, this turn only scratched the surface of the ways that rhetoric can contribute to the practices of qualitative inquiry throughout the research process. As such, this special issue arose out of our desire to call on *in situ* rhetorical critics to articulate what value rhetorical fieldwork can bring to qualitative researchers for the entire process of qualitative research from conception, to data collection, to analysis, to dissemination. We began this project with the idea that qualitative research’s interpretive aim can be augmented by a rhetorical sensibility that attends to contests over meaning, deliberation, advocacy, and strategic communication in everyday public life. Attention to rhetorical inquiry provides pathways for integrating description, interpretation, and performance with assessment of the practical, evaluative, and strategic role of discourse in making change. Beyond these initial hunches we brought to the invention of this special issue, we have learned from the contributors’ articles the many other ways that a rhetorical approach not only intersects with, but also provides potential contributions to, qualitative inquiry.

The purpose of this special issue, then, is to foster more integration and bidirectional conversation between rhetorical and qualitative inquiry. More specifically, the articles in this special issue offer three pathways for dialogue. First, the special issue, taken as a whole, (re)introduces *in situ* rhetorical fieldwork as an emerging scholarly practice that is not only productive within rhetorical studies but is of interest to qualitative inquiry. Second, the special issue sketches out intersections, productive tensions, and offerings between rhetorical fieldwork and qualitative inquiry. Finally, the articles stand as exemplars of rhetorical fieldwork that highlight the range of theoretical and methodological moorings in these approaches and detail starting points for more cross-fertilization between rhetorical and qualitative inquiry.

In the remainder of this introduction, we begin with a review of the development of approaches to rhetorical

fieldwork, including key touchstones in this development, and definitions of key terms. In doing so, we articulate the participatory turn in rhetorical studies. In an effort to demonstrate how rhetorical fieldwork engages with qualitative inquiry, we then examine areas of intersection, productive tension, and offering. We conclude with a review of the articles in the special issue that collectively offer new knowledge and advance discussion across the multiple disciplinary homes of rhetorical studies, qualitative inquiry, and cultural studies through vectors of space/place, memory studies, archival studies, public deliberation, security, gender, media, affect, ethics, visibility, bodies, and materiality.

## The Participatory Turn in Rhetoric

The development of participatory, or fieldwork-based, approaches to rhetoric stems from recent developments in the discipline.<sup>2</sup> Yet, the notion that rhetoric is a practical art with everyday discursive outcomes and therefore should be studied in “real world” settings can be traced back to its ancient roots. The history of rhetoric finds its Western roots in Plato, Aristotle, and ancient Greek sophists. Among the sophists was Isocrates, who taught rhetoric as a practical and *active* art that offered a “way to become an active member of a political community” (Haskins, 2006, p. 195). As the discipline moved through millennia, its practical side has been sustained largely through pedagogical means (Brummett, 1984) as students train for participation in civic life.

In the 20th century, however, theory and method in rhetorical criticism became significantly attuned to *post hoc* reflections and textual analytic approaches. Within the growth of the social sciences in the modern university and a disciplinary need to specify a “method” of criticism, Wichelns (1925) advocated for the literary criticism of oratory. Believing that the spoken word differs from the written word and necessitates its own method, he suggested that critics should apply the approach of literary criticism to the analysis of speeches. Throughout the 20th century, students and scholars of rhetoric alike practiced rhetorical criticism as the mainstay method of understanding historically significant moments of public oratory, such as presidential addresses and what the ancient Roman rhetorician Quintilian termed “the good man [sic] speaking well” (as cited in Bizzell & Herzberg, 2000). In examining the archives of great speeches, students and scholars of rhetoric recuperated historical and cultural details, recreating a rhetorical situation and assessing the effectiveness of rhetoric through it (Bitzer, 1992). While the discipline remained committed to textual analysis, there was also significant debate regarding the ethics, purpose, and outcomes of the analytic approach as prominent voices expressed concern about what is missed through “cookie cutter” forms of etic criticism or the critic’s detachment from enactment of rhetoric (Black, 1978; McGee, 1990; McKerrow, 1989; Wander,

1983). The nuance of this trajectory is deserving of a more thorough review than what is offered here.<sup>3</sup> Suffice it to say, the textual analytic approach has been a dominant understanding of rhetorical method for the past century.

Toward the end of the 20th century, new developments in rhetorical theory and methodology began to surface that laid the groundwork for the participatory turn. On the theoretical side, critical rhetoric and its political commitments to ideological critique, emancipation, and power (McGee, 1990; McKerrow, 1989; Wander, 1983) encouraged critics to embrace the performative nature of rhetoric (Conquergood, 1991, 1992, 2002b), seeing rhetoric in their everyday lives (Hauser, 1999; Ono & Sloop, 1995; Sloop & Ono, 1997) and in the streets (Haiman, 1967). Critical rhetoric, as outlined by McGee (1990) and McKerrow (1989), provides a framework and critical praxis that took issue with the detached “objective” critical stance frequently maintained by rhetorical critics. In reaction to postmodern theories about media fragmentation, audiences in modern society were not subject to fixed “apparently finished” discourses that were open to critical inquiry, such as presidential inaugural addresses (McGee, 1990). Rather, audiences were exposed to a number of fragmented messages, often in competition with each other, about political and social issues. Critics, therefore, were placed in the role of inventors as they assembled fragments suitable for criticism (McGee, 1990). Critical rhetoric was less about analysis of discrete instances of public address and more about examining the complexities of addressing publics (McKerrow, 1989). This repositioning of criticism, whether one took on the perspective of critical rhetoric or not, shifted rhetorical criticism as a practice, giving critics a much more active role in rhetorical analysis and in the production of messages.

Other theoretical trajectories also emerged during this period that offer foundations for the participatory turn in rhetorical studies. Departing from grand historical moments as seen through the speeches of world leaders, the vernacular turn in rhetoric invited consideration of those everyday discourses that are often written “out of history” (Ono & Sloop, 1995, p. 19) or those smaller discourses that inform public opinion writ large (Hauser, 1999). In turning toward these discourses, rhetorical critics aimed to theorize about how particular vernacular discourses are challenged by oppressive systems and competing logics of judgment (Sloop & Ono, 1997). Theory was developed to attend to how particular marginalized groups form social movement coalitions with other groups (Chávez, 2013), enact resistance through counterpublic acts (Asen & Brouwer, 2001), and engage in tactical rhetorics (de Certeau, 1984) to challenge imbalances in power.

Inquiries into vernacular communities often necessitated ethnographic, performance, and other methods to gain access to these forms of undocumented discourse. A

number of scholars recognized that the textual approach to understanding rhetoric limited their ability to engage in thorough critique of the actual lived experiences of those individuals or sites under investigation. Consequently, many turned toward empirical methods (Hauser, 1999) and the rich tradition of ethnography to augment textually based approaches (Cintron, 1998). For example, Pezzullo (2001, 2003) turned toward the field to incorporate the voices of those performing active protest, finding that participant observation and interviews assisted by offering an “opportunity to witness and record discourses that are left out of traditional written records—the cultural performances that often are altered or excluded when translated into written words” (Pezzullo, 2003, p. 350).

While theories of vernacular rhetoric produced rhetorical scholars that took to local communities and everyday discourses, other scholars began to realize the importance of situated methodologies and ethnographic approaches for different reasons related to the rhetorical phenomena under consideration. For example, museums and memorials are inherently emplaced rhetorical encounters that cannot be adequately examined through photographs or written accounts, requiring scholars to visit them (Blair, 2001). Scholars visiting these sites also began to reflect upon their own personal relationships with them. Blair (2001) reflects on how reading public commemorative art included the embodied experience of those attending to memorials, including her own dread as she encountered the Holocaust Memorial in Washington, D.C. Similarly, a variety of rhetorical inquiries have explored museums with focused attention on the rhetoricity of space and place (G. Dickinson, 1997; G. Dickinson, Blair, & Ott, 2010; G. Dickinson, Ott, & Aoki, 2005, 2006). Moreover, critics have augmented their understanding of the rhetoric of museums through interactions or interviews with docents and visitors (Chevette & Hess, 2015; Katriel, 1994). Moving beyond museums and memorials, rhetorical scholars have used participatory methods to examine the rhetoricity of space and place in spaces of consumerism (Aiello & Dickinson, 2014; G. Dickinson, 2002; G. Dickinson & Ott, 2013; Modesti, 2008; Stewart & Dickinson, 2008), places of protest (Endres & Senda-Cook, 2011; Endres, Senda-Cook, & Cozen, 2014; Herbig & Hess, 2012; West, 2010), parks (E. Dickinson, 2011; Senda-Cook, 2012, 2013; Zagacki & Gallagher, 2009), and cities and suburbs (G. Dickinson, 1997, 2015; Fleming, 1998; Senda-Cook, Middleton, & Endres, 2016; Wood, 2009).

Taken together, these forays into participatory approaches to rhetorical inquiry represent a strong undercurrent of interest in texts that need to be experienced in the field. While *ad hoc* in their development, these scholars paved the way for a more programmatic understanding of the participatory turn in rhetorical inquiry. In 2011, two key essays provided compelling arguments for altering the place and function of rhetorical criticism through examination of *in*

*situ* rhetorical practices. First, Middleton et al. (2011) offered “rhetorical field methods” as an integration of critical-rhetorical principles with a participatory epistemology to examine the lived experiences of individuals who are embedded within rhetorical social practices, particularly attuned to issues of power, marginalization, and resistance. Second, Hess (2011) offered “critical-rhetorical ethnography,” which takes up classical rhetorical theories of invention, *kairos*, and *phronesis* through ethnographic means, thereby inviting critics to participate in the political activities and public advocacy found within vernacular communities. Together, Middleton et al. (2015) have laid out *participatory critical rhetoric*, which synthesizes both rhetorical field methods and critical-rhetorical ethnography toward offering a nuanced account of the participatory turn in rhetoric and a critical approach to *in situ* rhetorical inquiry. Participatory critical rhetoric is not a prescriptive set of methods for rhetoricians in the field, but instead a set of theoretical and methodological thematics that undergird rhetorical fieldwork, including accounting for the critic’s political commitments, the scholar’s critical embodiment, emplacement in the (con)text of rhetoric, and multiperspectival judgments as they are gained through interactions in the field. Participatory critical rhetoric is one approach within the growing movement of rhetorical fieldwork; it is an approach that is particularly rooted in a lineage of critical and cultural studies. Increasingly, journal articles and books are advancing a variety of forms of rhetorical fieldwork. An edited volume called *Text + Field* (McKinnon et al., 2016) reveals the diversity of approaches and intellectual lineages that have been invoked by scholars using field methods. Additional edited volumes in development attend specifically to the significant role of rhetorical fieldwork in pursuing research on place, ecology, and materiality. Yet, as noted above, this growing energy around the participatory turn in rhetorical studies tends to focus primarily on importing qualitative inquiry into rhetorical criticism and highlighting the ways in which rhetorical fieldwork benefits rhetorical inquiry. In other words, much of this research speaks to other rhetoricians (and understandably so). The next important moment in rhetorical fieldwork involves unpacking what Middleton et al. (2015) call “new avenues of exploration” (p. 22) for ethnographers and other qualitative researchers that come from engagement with rhetoric.

## Key Terms in Rhetorical Fieldwork

For the purposes of this special issue, we offer some key definitions as a starting point for understanding the intersections of rhetoric and fieldwork. We offer that *rhetorical fieldwork is a set of approaches that integrates rhetorical and qualitative inquiry toward the examination of in situ practices and performances in a rhetorical field*. We outline the key terms that make up our definition of rhetorical fieldwork below.

## Rhetoric

Rhetoric is at the center of rhetorical fieldwork; it is the primary heuristic through which critics view their experiences in the field and the materials gathered through that experience. Although traditionally conceived as the use of language—or the available means of persuasion in a given situation (Aristotle, 1991)—to persuade an audience, the contemporary study of rhetoric has broadened its scope to a form of discourse (broadly conceived to include verbal and non-verbal form) that not only reflects but also actively constructs our worlds. We draw from Blair et al.'s (2010) definition of rhetoric as “discourses, events, objects and practices [whose] character [is] meaningful, legible, partisan, and consequential” (p. 2). This definition not only retains the importance of civic life, deliberation, and advocacy that founds the Aristotelian definition but also recognizes that the civic does not rely on a narrow public/private sphere model. Civic life is also tied in to everyday embodied and emplaced experiences. To this, we add a critical dimension that underscores the force of rhetoric as a form of power/resistance/transgression, along the lines of the critical turn in rhetorical studies. Critical rhetoric recognizes the need for political praxis in the spaces of systematic oppression (McKerrow, 1989). As such, critics who take up the “partisan and consequential” character of rhetoric are guided by a sense of urgency to not only witness but to *enact* and *participate* in their critical sensibility in the context of contestations over identity, meaning, and discourse.

## Qualitative Inquiry

In the pursuit of understanding and interpreting everyday and mundane rhetorics, rhetorical scholars have explicitly turned to qualitative research to support a participatory critical practice that incorporates tenets of interviewing, participant observation, and fieldwork into rhetorical criticism. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2011),

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. Qualitative research consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including fieldnotes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. (p. 3)

Although the banner of qualitative inquiry is wide, the essays in this special issue primarily align with a critical/cultural studies lineage of qualitative inquiry. This lineage distinguishes itself by bringing to the fore consideration of

power and the means by which privilege and marginalization are perpetuated.

## The Rhetorical Field

Rhetorical fieldwork entails engaging with the field to examine the everyday rhetorical practices that occur there. As Bailey (2006) suggests, fieldwork “is the systematic study of ordinary activities in the settings in which they occur” (p. 1). Yet, as Middleton et al. (2015) argue, the field is not just the site of research, but also an active participant in field-based rhetoric. Fieldwork places rhetorical critics in a naturalistic field and employs tools, such as participant observation, interviews, and oral histories, which are common to qualitative researchers. Participatory rhetorical approaches have embraced Denzin and Lincoln's (2011) notion of the *bricoleur*, who patches together multiple perspectives and methodologies into the analysis of cultural phenomena. This means that participatory rhetorical researchers have taken up a variety of topics and theories, including environmental (justice) crises (E. Dickinson, 2011; Druschke, 2013; Endres, 2009; Endres, Sprain, & Peterson, 2009; Herndl et al., 2011; Pezzullo, 2001, 2007; Senda-Cook, 2012, 2013; Senda-Cook & Endres, 2013), vernacular discourses and everyday rhetoric (Ackerman, 2003; Cintron, 1998; Clair, 2011; Hauser, 1999, 2011; Hess, 2011; Pezzullo & Depoe, 2010), media production and consumption (Dunn, 2012; Herbig & Hess, 2012), memory and museum rhetorics (Aoki, Dickinson, & Ott, 2010; Armada, 2010; Blair, 2001; Blair & Michel, 2000; Chevrette & Hess, 2015; Choi, 2008; Clark, 2010; G. Dickinson et al., 2010; Hess & Herbig, 2013; Kelly & Hoerl, 2012; Owen & Ehrenhaus, 2014; Smith & Bergman, 2010; Taylor, 2010), theories of place/space (Aiello, 2011; Aiello & Dickinson, 2014; Edbauer, 2005; Endres & Senda-Cook, 2011; Ewalt, 2011; Fleming, 2009; Modesti, 2008; Rice, 2012), deliberation and citizenship (Asen, 2015; Asen & Gurke, 2014; Middleton, 2014b; Rai, 2010; Simonson, 2010), social movements and counterpublics (Chávez, 2013; Endres et al., 2014; Ewalt, Ohl, & Pfister, 2013; Herbig & Hess, 2012; Middleton, 2014a; Rand, 2014), and rhetoric of science and medicine (Baake, 2012; Blakeslee, 2000; Graves, 2005; Ploeger, 2009), that have informed the particular projects that fall under the participatory rhetorical fieldwork banner. Methodologically, the various rhetorical studies have taken up oral histories (Endres, 2011; Pezzullo & Depoe, 2010), interviews (Chevrette & Hess, 2015; Hess, 2011, 2015; Pezzullo, 2003; Senda-Cook, 2012, 2013), observation (Hauser, 1999), participant observation (Endres & Senda-Cook, 2011; Hess, 2011; Pezzullo, 2003, 2007; Senda-Cook, 2012, 2013), and documentary film (Herbig & Hess, 2012; Herbig, Hess, & Watson, 2014), displaying a range of possibilities available for engagement.<sup>4</sup>

## In Situ Rhetorical Practices and Performances

The object of study for practitioners of rhetorical fieldwork is *in situ* rhetorical practices and performances. The term *in situ* describes something that is in its original position or place, and, therefore, links to observing phenomena in their naturalistic settings through fieldwork. It follows that *in situ* rhetoric refers to naturally occurring rhetoric that is accessed, documented, and interpreted as it occurs in the moment of rhetorical invention. We view rhetoric as practice and performance, both of which emphasize the embodied, emplaced, and intersectional experience of rhetoric as it happens. A conventional text-centric approach to rhetoric analyzes rhetoric that has been documented and, therefore, detached from its original instantiation. While there is clear value in this sort of approach for understanding the rhetorical force of texts as they circulate beyond inception, there is also a “flattening” that occurs in the textualization (Blair, 2001, p. 275). *In situ* rhetoric is an all-encompassing sensual experience that happens in a particular time and place and through particular bodies. In other words, rhetoric, especially its forms encountered in the field, is an intersectional (Enck-Wanzer, 2006; Light, 2015; Middleton et al., 2015), embodied, and emplaced experience. The concepts of rhetorical practice and rhetorical performance tap into this experiential quality of rhetoric. Senda-Cook (2012) defines rhetorical practices as “mundane, embodied, and repetitive actions; they are the daily arguments and compromises that compellingly convince us of who we are and how we ought to act” (p. 131). Likewise, rhetorical performances are the contingent, intentional, spontaneous variations on rhetorical practices that are deployed in efforts to transgress, resist, or reify the implications of rhetorical practices. The distinction between practices and performances is similar to the difference between *poiesis*—making, not faking—and *kinesis*—breaking and remaking (Conquergood, 1992). The former offers a reservoir of rhetorical enactments that are intelligible and allow communities, identities, and discourses to cohere. They repeat and become recognizable ways of making manifest rhetoric in the service of identity, community, ideology, or process. The latter are improvisations that foretell the possibility for new rhetorical worlds; they disrupt the banality of practices. Both are embodied and emplaced; both can be used to reproduce or challenge hegemonic structures and expectations; both call attention to vernacular, everyday, and minor rhetorics that might otherwise go unnoticed or undocumented.

## What’s Rhetoric Got to Do With It? Intersections, Tensions, and Offerings

Rhetorical fieldwork and qualitative inquiry share some important assumptions. At the most basic level, both approaches to research seek to make sense of (more than)

human experiences in our worlds. Drawing from humanistic, interpretive, and critical assumptions, rhetorical fieldwork and critical qualitative research push against tenets of postpositivism and instead seek to interpret the multiple ways in which we understand (more than) human experience.<sup>5</sup> Both seek to study phenomena in their naturalistic setting using an emic focus on particulars (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011), engaging in thick description (Geertz, 1973), and in many cases emphasizing the everyday performances and practices of communication and culture. As Denzin and Lincoln (2011) note, “qualitative research is many things to many people. Its essence is two-fold: (1) a commitment to some version of the naturalistic, interpretive approach to its subject matter and (2) an ongoing critique of the politics and methods of positivism” (p. 8). From this perspective, rhetorical fieldwork can be seen as a form of qualitative inquiry that is uniquely focused on the strategic, persuasive, and civic force of discourse (including the verbal, non-verbal, visual, embodied, and other non-linguistic forms of discourse). Rhetorical inquiry does not seek a general account of cultural practices as may be the case with other forms of qualitative inquiry, especially ethnography, but rather seeks an account of the power of discursive systems in reflecting, engaging with, and (re)making worlds. Although *in situ* rhetorical fieldwork takes many forms, as we detailed earlier in this essay, we are particularly interested in those forms that emphasize critical/cultural approaches. In this section, we offer several areas of overlap, intersection, productive tension, and offerings between rhetorical fieldwork and qualitative inquiry.

## Critical/Cultural Approaches

Many (although not all) approaches to rhetorical fieldwork are grounded in critical rhetoric or critical/cultural studies (e.g., Cintron, 1998; Middleton et al., 2015; Pezzullo, 2007), and, therefore, intersect with critical/cultural studies traditions in qualitative inquiry (Conquergood, 1991, 2002b; Denzin, 2003; Denzin & Giardina, 2015; Denzin, Lincoln, & Smith, 2008; Madison, 2005; Thomas, 1993). Participatory critical rhetoric, for example, highlights relations of power, politics, and participation that occur as rhetorical critics seek to make sense of the complex rhetorical dynamics of marginalization, resistance, and control. Moreover, this approach emphasizes *doing rhetoric* (Hess, 2011; McHendry et al., 2014) as a critical process that seeks to intervene, disrupt, and reimagine more just material/discursive relations. Similarly, critical ethnography (Conquergood, 1991; Madison, 2005; Thomas, 1993) attends to power, justice, and resistance. As Madison (2005) argues, critical ethnography is a *doing* of critical theory that comes with an “ethical responsibility to address processes of unfairness or injustice within a particular *lived* domain” (p. 5). Denzin (2003) offers that “Critical ethnographers go

beyond thick description of local situations to resistance performances texts/events that urge social transformations” (p. 33). Both participatory critical rhetoric and critical ethnography assume that critical research is more than a set of abstract theorizations but is also fundamentally tied to everyday experience (Ono, 2011).

There is significant alignment in these approaches to the study of power/resistance/transgression as it is practiced and performed through everyday experience. This is not to say that critical rhetoric and critical qualitative inquiry are the same; one cannot be collapsed into the other. Rather, in addition to differing disciplinary vocabularies, there are productive tensions between critical/cultural rhetorical and critical/cultural qualitative scholarship (not to mention the tensions within each) as to differing theories of power and resistance, the role of researcher reflexivity, the “text” as an enabling and constraining mode of inquiry, and what research projects can look like. Essays in this special issue engage with intersections and tensions about the extent to which each field grapples with the crisis of representation (Dunn), movement (Light), performance (McHendry), and ethics (McKinnon et al., 2016).

### Everyday Encounters

Rhetorical fieldwork and qualitative inquiry share a focus on *in situ*, everyday experiences. Drawing from vernacular rhetoric (Hauser, 1999; Ono & Sloop, 1995), critical approaches to fieldwork highlight the value of using it to access those everyday rhetorics that would otherwise go unnoticed, undocumented, and unexamined (Endres, 2011; Hess, 2011; Middleton et al., 2011; Pezzullo, 2003). Rhetorical fieldwork’s focus on everyday, mundane, in-the-moment performances aligns with similar movements in qualitative inquiry. Recall Bailey’s (2006) definition of fieldwork as an engagement with everyday, ordinary experiences and Denzin and Lincoln’s (2011) emphasis on examining human experience in its everyday natural setting. Narrative ethnography, for example, encourages an outlook on ethnography that draws from the stories that make up everyday social life (Tedlock, 1991). Similarly, Goodall (2005) often examined those narratives that feature in our everyday lives, such as our own familial or relational narrative inheritances. Narrative ethnography invites consideration of the epistemological function of story as it pertains to our daily lives (Goodall, 2012). Yet, rhetorical narratives and the performance of everyday stories have their own particular meanings, especially when tied to particular *rhetorical* fields that are embedded in advocacy, argumentation, and deliberation. These convergences also lead to questions across rhetorical and qualitative inquiry such as: What does it mean to textualize everyday experience through rhetorical analysis, narrative, or qualitative inquiry? How do we come to experience, participate in, and

represent everyday vernacular experiences? What are the power dynamics involved in analysis of the vernacular? The essays in this special issue engage with some of these questions and offer insight into a variety of everyday experiences from encountering sex workers at the Moonlight Bunny Ranch (Dunn), to visitors at the 9/11 memorial in New York City (Light), to security checkpoints at the airport (McHendry), to grassroots immigrant rights groups, the Christian Right, and the dead (McKinnon et al., 2016).

### Performance

Rhetorical studies and qualitative inquiry scholars increasingly turn to performance studies as they seek to examine “embodied practice and event[s],” which Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1999) describes as “a recurring point of reference within Performance Studies” (para. 1). As a robust interdisciplinary field, performance studies encapsulate a complex set of meanings of performance that range from an event (e.g., theater or the everyday performance of identity) to a method for analysis of performances, to a theoretical and epistemological framework for making sense of cultural life. Madison and Hamera (2006) term this the “triad of *theory, method, and event*” that forms performance studies (p. xiii). In another triadic relationship, Conquergood (1992) characterizes the development of performance in cultural studies through *mimesis* (imitation), *poiesis* (making, not faking), and *kinesis* (breaking and remaking). Throughout these conceptions of performance studies, we see that performance—as embodied practice and event—can be an object of study, an act of criticism, a mode of engagement, and a product of research. In all of these manifestations, as Gencarella and Pezzullo (2010) suggest, “performance is often conceptualized as a creative act that occurs in specific times and places, and that promises to repeat, transform, contest, or transgress established cultural patterns” (p. 2).

Following Pezzullo’s (2014) lead, we are less interested in delineating the distinct differences between performance, rhetoric, and qualitative inquiry, and more interested in the ways that each “overlap, multiply, and coexist in ways that are partial, temporary, and modest, but significant and ideally courageous” (p. 98).<sup>6</sup> While there has been much scholarship that looks at the intersection between rhetoric and performance (e.g., Fenske & Goltz, 2014; Gencarella & Pezzullo, 2010; Pezzullo, 2003), and between ethnography (or other modes of qualitative inquiry) and performance (e.g., Conquergood, 1991, 2002b; Denzin, 2003; Madison, 2005; Pollock, 1998), there is less scholarship that has put the three in conversation (e.g., Conquergood, 1992; Pezzullo, 2003). Conquergood (1992) positions performance as a tie that binds rhetoric and ethnography—“the borderlands terrain between rhetoric and ethnography” (p. 80). Although there has been some criticism of his

portrayal of performance as play and rhetoric as politics (e.g., Shaffer, 2014), both rhetoric and qualitative inquiry are approaches that seek to understand the always already political performances of everyday life. If one believes “the world is a performance, not a text” (Denzin, 2003, p. 11), then performance provides a rich framing for both rhetoric and qualitative inquiry. The move away from “text” may be less controversial for qualitative scholars than for rhetoricians because the text has been the traditional object of study for many years. Yet, as McHendry reveals in his essay, performances of security in airports are a complex site for analysis that merges rhetoric and qualitative inquiry. As Madison (2014) notes in her reflection on the relationship between rhetoric and performance, “We celebrate the fact that performance enriches rhetoric through embodied purpose, heartfelt empathy, and symbolic action while rhetoric politicizes performance through contested assumptions, discursive power, and critical publicity” (p. 111). Adding qualitative inquiry into this mix, we celebrate that qualitative inquiry is not only enriched by both rhetoric and performances but also enriches them through its attention to a situated interpretation of the world as “rhetorically constructed and performatively realized” (Conquergood, 1992, p. 80).

Performance studies does not merely provide a frame for symbolic action; it also offers methods of *doing*, or performing criticism in innovative ways (e.g., Sloop, 2014), creating performance writing (e.g., Hartnett, 1999; Pollock, 1998), engaging in reflexive performance (auto)ethnography (e.g., Bochner & Ellis, 1996, 2002; Denzin, 2003; Madison, 2006), and mounting staged performances (e.g., Conquergood, 2002a; Schechner, 1985; Turner, 1982). While performance stands at a productive intersection with rhetoric and qualitative inquiry, tensions also arise over definitions of performances, efforts to collapse and subordinate the distinctions between these disciplines, and the articulation and enactment of politics. McHendry’s essay in this special issue engages most prominently with performance through his examination of performances of security in airports and his experiment in writing his analysis alongside his fieldnotes. We also see a performed dialogue between McKinnon, Asen, Johnson, Chávez, and Howard in their meditation on ethics in rhetorical fieldwork.

### Bricoleur/Bricolage

Qualitative inquiry and rhetorical fieldwork share an interest in the concepts of *bricoleur* and *bricolage* to describe both an approach to and the products of research. Denzin and Lincoln (2011) conceive the qualitative researcher as a “*bricoleur*, or maker of quilts . . . deploying whatever strategies, methods, and empirical materials” necessary to address the phenomenon under examination (p. 4). Taking on the stance of a *bricoleur*, *in situ* rhetorical critics turn to the set of tools afforded by qualitative, ethnographic, and

performance-based approaches that provide a window into the everyday lived experiences of rhetoric in a way that already documented texts (e.g., speeches, television shows, and newspapers) cannot. “The interpretive *bricoleur* produces a *bricolage*; that is, a pieced together set of representations that are fitted to the specifics of a complex situation” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 4). Yet, it is not just rhetoric that can benefit from the tools of qualitative inquiry. As we will argue more strongly in our response article that concludes this special issue, rhetoric can be a part of the qualitative *bricoleur*’s approach, exposing the unique lineage of rhetorical inquiry that focuses attention to rhetorical strategies ranging from classical to critical, attunes the researcher to deliberation, advocacy, and public discourse as central modes of everyday experience, and reveals how naming, framing, and omission function within communities as modes of power/resistance. As the essays in this special issue reveal, there are many possible artful articulations between rhetorical and qualitative inquiry, depending on the topic and questions that guide the research and produce a variety of quilts. Each of the articles in this special issue performs *bricolage* through its combination of texts, methods, and products across a variety of everyday rhetorical phenomenon.

### Reflexivity and Role of the Researcher

Both rhetorical fieldwork and qualitative inquiry emphasize the importance of the role of the researcher on the research process and dissemination of its findings. Reflexivity has achieved the status of a “god-term” in qualitative inquiry, making it an essential concept as researchers prepare to enter the field. Yet, although rhetorical scholars have debated the role of the researcher since the 1970s, reflexivity *per se* has only sporadically entered the scholarly conversation about rhetorical criticism, most often by those scholars engaging in fieldwork (e.g., Conquergood, 1991; Hess, 2011; Middleton et al., 2015; Morris, 2010; Pezzullo, 2007). Building from Conquergood’s (1991) term, Morris (2010) defines rhetorical reflexivity as “an unceasing process of self-engagement, deeply reading one’s multiple cultural, political, ideological situatedness and its implications, privileges, relations to others, and effects” (p. 105). Morris’s engagement with reflexivity calls for conventional rhetorical critics, not just rhetorical fieldwork practitioners, to engage in this powerful process. The essays in this special issue highlight a variety of forms that rhetorical reflexivity can take: from Dunn’s reflection on how her preconceived notions of “prostitution” played into her ability to recognize the activities at Moonlight Bunny Ranch as “sex work” to McHendry’s accounting of how his embodied performance as a white, male, cisgender person affected (and privileged) his experience of airport security. McKinnon et al.’s dialogic essay on ethical dilemmas in rhetorical fieldwork is an

exercise in self-reflexivity that is nuanced through the dialogue between each fieldworker's experiences. These engagements reflect the rhetorical nature of reflexivity.

### Pedagogy

The participatory turn in rhetoric also invites a reconsideration of pedagogy, understood here both as classroom instruction and as a performative method of investigation (Denzin, 2009). Although the essays in our special issue do not directly relate to classroom pedagogy, they do take up pedagogy in the everyday ideological sense, as change inspiring research operating beyond the halls of academia. Brummett (1984) has long argued that rhetoric has important pedagogical consequences for the academy, especially when students are offered essays that are accented with "propositions about how rhetoric actually works in the world, essays that identify some rhetorical tactic, strategy, device, etc., and attempt to account for its effectiveness in general" (p. 97, emphasis in original). In this sense, rhetoric has always taken up an outward focus on the everyday actions of rhetors and is especially rewarding for students who examine "real world" contexts and performances. Participatory approaches that invite students to set out into the world to find community organizations or public protests will find generative controversies that provide clues into the rhetorics of public deliberation. As mentioned above, this approach to rhetoric is quite old; Isocrates and other sophists in Ancient Greece directed students to engage in rhetoric outside of the walls of the academy. Different, however, is the accenting of participatory approaches with reflexive pedagogical sensibilities (Lindlof & Taylor, 2010). In this sense, the classroom becomes a space for reflexive stances on the engagement with public controversies. Students can return to examine the vital relationship between Self and Other, all the while implicating the larger elements of research projects into the rhetorical landscape.

Along these lines, viewing participatory rhetorical fieldwork as pedagogy follows, as many qualitative and performance researchers do, Freire's (1970) call to interrogate larger critical questions of oppression and suffering. For example, participatory critical rhetoric's commitment to immanent political participation invites a parallel thinking about the nature of the classroom and impact of scholarship (Middleton et al., 2015). Other critical pedagogy theorists share similar commitments in training students to see and embrace the performative potential of emancipatory politics (Boal, 1979; Garoian, 1999). Participatory critical rhetoric and other engaged rhetorical approaches encourage students to see beyond the classroom and take active sides in public controversies, bringing the critical lessons learned from one's life experience back into the classroom for reflexive examination. Parallel with a "critical performative pedagogy that turns the ethnographic into the performative

and the performative into the political" (Denzin, 2003, p. xiii), critical/cultural approaches to rhetorical fieldwork politicize the everyday experiences of life in the field. As McHendry's essay illustrates, even the most mundane and tedious acts—such as going through airport security in a post-9/11 world—can provide opportunities for reflexive political performance. These performative moments not only inform the classroom, but they also invite scholarly artistic expressions that interrogate the spectacular politics of our time (DeLuca, 1999; Garoian & Gaudelius, 2008). The essays by McHendry and McKinnon et al. enact alternative forms of writing to illustrate the performative and critical pedagogical potential of participatory approaches to studying rhetoric *in situ*. Collectively, these intersections between rhetorical and qualitative inquiry—critical/cultural, everyday, performance, *bricolage*, reflexivity, and pedagogy—form a solid foundation from which to explore further intersections, productive tensions, and, most important, offerings that can benefit the practice of both rhetorical and qualitative inquiry.

### The Essays

This special issue includes four essays that approach the intersection between rhetorical fieldwork and qualitative inquiry, bookended by this introduction and a response essay. Together, they form a prism reflecting a multiplicity of perspectives, assumptions, and contributions that not only highlight rhetorical fieldwork and how it benefits from scholarly conversations in qualitative inquiry but also present contributions to qualitative inquiry (that we will take up in the response essay). Dunn opens the special issue with her examination of rhetorical fieldwork as a means to achieve a long-standing goal of media cultural studies to combine analysis of production, representation, and audience in one study—in this case, an analysis of the Moonlight Bunny Ranch and its mediated alter ego *Cathouse*. The rhetorical perspective she brings to this case allows her to think through the ways in which the crisis of representation in qualitative inquiry hinges on rhetorical practices of constructed authenticity within production, representation, and audience. The next two essays engage with significant spaces of public life: the 9/11 memorial and airport security screenings following the events of 9/11. Light brings critical rhetoric, visual ethnography, affect, and aesthetics together in an intersectional *moving methodology*. This approach allows Light to narrate how an encounter with the 9/11 memorial constitutes a *surveilling flaneur* that moves through (and outside) the memorial. Based on fieldwork from his experiences with airport security, McHendry uses a rhetorical performance lens to examine the tension between a *security-performative* and a *resistance-performative*, both of which connote affective states of performing security and resistance within the contemporary

airport space. His intervention into critical security studies highlights how his rhetorical performance lens contributes to an understanding of the rhetorical phenomena that infuse the production of security at airports. In a move away from a close analysis of one case, McKinnon, Johnson, Asen, Chávez, and Howard meditate on the ethics of rhetorical fieldwork through a dialogue across a set of cases from their diverse field experiences. While rhetorical fieldwork has much to gain from qualitative inquiry's attention to ethics, McKinnon and her co-authors importantly highlight the ways in which the rhetorical concepts of context and judgment offer a different lens through which qualitative researchers might engage with ethical dilemmas and concomitant power dynamics.

Although the overall story of this special issue focused on the productive possibilities found in the intersections between rhetorical fieldwork and qualitative inquiry, there is no one voice that is privileged. Rather, these essays form a heteroglossia (Bakhtin, 1982), a rich, multivocal, story that we hope opens the door to continued conversation and innovation around the promise of participatory rhetorical inquiry for readers of *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies*.

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### Notes

- For more on the ways in which rhetorical fieldwork advances and contributes to rhetorical inquiry (which is not the focus of this special issue), see Hauser (2011); Hess (2011); McKinnon, Asen, Chávez, and Howard (2016); Middleton, Hess, Endres, and Senda-Cook (2015); Middleton, Senda-Cook, and Endres (2011); Pezzullo (2007).
- Our introduction not only introduces the key themes and articles in the special issue but also compiles our take on the state of the art of rhetorical fieldwork and offers an essential reading list of sorts. As such, we offer a more robust set of references than might ordinarily be included in an introduction. We do this in the hope that our reading list will benefit those readers interested in learning more, practicing, and engaging in conversation with rhetorical fieldwork.
- For a more robust account, see Bitzer and Black (1971), Campbell (1990), and Henry (2001).
- For a detailed theoretical and methodological discussion, see Middleton et al. (2015).
- While we recognize that some qualitative scholars and schools of research seek to approximate truth through post-positivism, we are mainly interested in this special issue in the adherences between critical and interpretative qualitative methods and rhetorical fieldwork.
- Pezzullo is speaking to the relationship between rhetoric and performance, but we are extending it to include qualitative inquiry as well.

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