

Call for Papers

Reflections Special Issue: Rhetorics of Reproductive Justice in Public and Civic Contexts
Guest Editors Maria Novotny, Lori Beth De Hertogh, and Erin Frost

Recent reports reveal that the U.S. has the highest rate of maternal deaths in the developed world, particularly among low-income, rural, and African American women (NPR, 2017). Changes to the Supreme Court endanger the viability of *Roe v. Wade*. In Iowa, a judge threatens to ban nearly all abortions once a fetal heartbeat can be detected (NPR, 2018). In Wisconsin, the state legislature rejects the repeal of the “cocaine mom law,” which opponents argue forces undue medical care on pregnant women (Reuters, 2017). These reproductive threats are not limited to only women’s rights. For example, in Oklahoma, Governor Mary Fallin signed a law allowing adoption agencies to discriminate against LGBTQ couples, single individuals, and non-Christians (New York Times, 2018). Such action would threaten individuals who cannot biologically reproduce but seek access to alternative-family building options to have a child.

These examples demonstrate the numerous ways reproductive rights in the United States are under assault from social, economic, and political mechanisms that seek to dismantle individuals’ abilities to make informed reproductive choices—or any reproductive choices at all. But just as importantly, these examples illustrate the urgency for and the possibility of community-based rhetorics that speak to, define, and make visible methods of counteraction. We seek examinations and examples of public rhetoric and civic writing that engage reproductive justice. More specifically, this special issue focuses on community activities and activism as sites of resistance to the trends we describe above.

In briefly tracing the field of rhetoric’s scholarly landscape, we already see this kind of rhetorical work occurring. However, it has largely occurred in theoretical spaces; for example, scholars such as Mary Lay, Laura Gurak and Clare Gravon (*Body Talk: Rhetoric, Technology, Reproduction*), Marika Seigel (*Rhetorics of Pregnancy*), and Robin Jensen (*Infertility: Tracing the History of a Transformative Term*), to name a few, have established an exigence for rhetorical scholarship that addresses intersections between reproductive bodies, discourse, and technology. We seek to highlight community-based activities that parallel this scholarly work, rooting a material-rhetorical response to reproductive (in)justice in community writing, community engagement, and public rhetoric. We seek both a shift and alliance between traditional scholarly modes of resistance and public, unruly rhetorics (Alexander, Jarrett, & Welch). Recently emerging national issues (like those cited above) call for a new body of scholarship that is responsive to these quickly-evolving, kairotic moments where reproductive rights, perhaps more so now than in decades past, are under such direct public attack. In light of such circumstances, the goal of this special issue is to begin to move rhetorical research on reproductive issues toward community-based scholarship by emphasizing the ways and means through which organizations, groups, and communities engage reproductive rights in civic and public contexts.

With this in mind, we seek submissions that will serve rhetorical and public scholars of reproductive justice in helping shape and define this growing research area; we welcome works that consider potential usage by non-academic stakeholders, as well. We especially encourage proposals that engage rhetorics of reproductive justice through the context of community writing and public and civic rhetorics and that, in some fashion or another, consider the following questions:

- How can we use rhetoric and public writing to achieve reproductive justice in civic and public contexts?
- What can we learn from organizations/programs/activists engaged in reproductive justice? How do these communities use public writing for reproductive justice?
- How might we move discussions of reproductive justice beyond feminist rhetorical lenses? What other lenses—queer, trans, decolonial, networked, legal—might be leveraged for and advantaged by the presence of such discussions?
- What does reproductive justice look like for indigenous women, women of color, and the LGBTQ+ community?
- What does reproductive justice look like in digital spaces? What are the limits and benefits of tackling reproductive threats in these spaces?
- How might we take up discussions of reproductive justice produced by non-academic writers and rhetors?
- What interdisciplinary and participatory approaches might help us identify and respond to contemporary reproductive threats?
- What examples exist in our field that move rhetorical theory towards applicable toolkits and methods guiding public action and advocacy on issues related to reproductive justice?
- What sub-fields, or related areas of inquiry, might rhetoricians draw upon to engage in actions that support reproductive justice?
- What is our role or responsibility as rhetoricians serving the public when it comes to addressing issues of reproductive justice?

We welcome shorter pieces, as well as innovative and creative approaches to the topic of reproductive justice, that are rooted in public and civic contexts, methods, and approaches and that directly engage in the community sites and spaces where such activism occurs. Individuals, co-authors, or research collectives should submit a proposal of no more than 500 words as a .pdf file by September 1, 2019 to the three guest editors (Maria Novotny - novotnym@uwosh.edu, Lori Beth DeHertogh - dehertlb@jmu.edu, and Erin Frost - froste@ecu.edu). If you have questions, or would like to pitch an idea prior to formally submitting a proposal, feel free to contact the guest editors.

Please note that we are announcing this CFP early to provide researchers additional time gather community-engaged research connected to reproductive justice.

Timeline for Submissions

Proposals due: September 1, 2019

Authors notified: September 15, 2019

Full articles due: December 15, 2019

Revision requests to authors: March 15, 2020

Revisions due: June 15, 2020

Anticipated publication date: Fall 2020