

Book Review

Bodies of knowledge: Embodied rhetorics in theory and practice

by A. Abby Knoblauch and Marie E. Moeller

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A. Abby Knoblauch and Marie E. Moeller's *Bodies of knowledge: Embodied rhetorics in theory and practice* attests to the integral nature of the body and embodiment to rhetorical studies and technical and professional communication (TPC). Responding to Jacqueline Jones Royster and Gesa E. Kirsch's (2012) call to expand epistemological frameworks in rhetorical studies, Knoblauch and Moeller's text examines the integral role of the body and embodiment in rhetorical knowledge-building. Specifically, this text traces the rhetorical complexities of 1) body as "flesh" situated in and influenced by intersectional power systems; 2) embodiment as a contextual, interactive, and intra-active experience between a body and others; and 3) embodied rhetoric as recognizing the body as intrinsic to knowledge construction and articulation (p. 7–9). Grounded in intersectional and interdisciplinary perspectives, this edited collection successfully explores the complexities of the body, embodiment, and embodied rhetoric and offers scholarly, practical, and pedagogical implications for TPC.

TPC has long considered the body and embodiment as integral to documentation, design, and decision-making. Specifically, TPC's recent turn to social justice challenges embodied neutrality by amplifying frequently marginalized embodied experiences and knowledge-making practices (Haas & Eble, 2018). Responding to this social justice turn, TPC scholarship has centered the embodied experiences, perspectives, and knowledges of identities frequently discounted by dominant systems (Agboka, 2014; Baniya, 2022; Bennett, 2022; Colton & Walton, 2015; Gonzales et al., 2022;

Itchuaqiyag & Walton, 2021; Jones et al., 2016; Mckoy et al., 2022; Walton et al., 2019). Offering insight into the rhetorical relationships between the body, embodiment, and rhetorical knowledge-building, this edited collection complements TPC's social justice goals by challenging normative understandings of knowledge construction associated with "white cisgender, heterosexual, middle/upper/class, able-bodied males" (p. 13) through scholarship that represents a "breadth of voices, bodies, and frameworks" (p. 11). Inclusive chapters offer interdisciplinary insights relevant to areas of TPC such as sociopolitical advocacy, technical design, textual studies, academic scholarship, and classroom teaching.

Part I is organized around the theme of "affect, sense/s, [and] permeability" and builds on existing scholarship in embodied rhetorical theory. Sara DiCaglio's "Towards an Olfactory Rhetoric: Scent, Affect, Material, Embodiment" highlights how rhetorics of scent demand that we recognize the body's "vulnerability, interconnectedness, and materiality" (p. 59). She demonstrates the ecological nature of rhetorics of scent through examples like pollutants that impact individual bodies and collective communities. Scot Barnett's "Violence and Beneficence in the Rhetorics of Touch" similarly addresses a gap in embodied rhetorics by building on the work of scholars such as Shannon Walters (2014) which postulates touch as rhetorically generative. Analyzing a museum art installation, *Telematic Dreaming*, this chapter considers how telepresence technologies that facilitate interaction between performers and museum guests can have rhetorically violent implications. Barnett argues that an "ethics of touch" must account for embodied vulnerability and the affective risks associated with touch.

In "Disrupting Embodied Silence," Katherine Bridgman calls for embodied disorientation and indirection to disrupt and critique white, privileged silence and to instead encourage collaboration and coalition between white bodies and people of color. Likewise, Julie D. Nelson's "Embodying History: The Bodies and Affects of Museum Rhetorics" recognizes the power of embodied rhetorics to challenge individual perceptions. Nelson offers a comprehensive overview of affect theory and explains how organizations like the

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International Civil Rights Center and Museum can apply affective and embodied rhetorics to facilitate epistemological practices that challenge oppressive histories and systemic marginalization. Similarly exploring the persuasive potential of embodied rhetorics, Nadya Pittendrigh's "The Role of Intrabody Resonance in Political Organizing" draws from personal experience with anti-prison activism to demonstrate how intrabody resonance, "which involves putting oneself in another's place" (p. 99), can rhetorically shift negative public perceptions towards marginalized populations like the incarcerated. Theories offered by this section would be particularly beneficial for TPC scholarship and graduate TPC coursework centered around public memory, law, embodied usability and user-experience design.

In part II of this edited collection, chapters discuss issues of "advocacy, policy, [and] citizenship." Meg Brooker, Julie Myatt, and Kate Pantelides's "Discomfort Training in the Archives: Embodied Rhetoric in Feminist Advocacy" discusses discomfort training, a process in which bodyminds learn to ignore or suppress "embodied knowledge for strategic means or to purposefully put one's body in an uncomfortable space in order to persuade" (p. 108). I appreciated how this article drew parallels between an archive related to a 1913 demonstration in Washington, DC and the readers' own embodied experiences with a women's march in Nashville, Tennessee. While the archival discussion was fascinating, the most engaging part was the writers' embodied experiences responding to their own discomfort training. Ruth Osorio's "Rewriting Maternal Bodies on the Senate Floor: Tammy Duckworth's Embodied Rhetorics of Intersectional Motherhood" is a stand-out chapter in this edited collection. I particularly appreciated Osorio's intersectional framework attuned to disability and social justice and her application of it to an analysis of Senator Tammy Duckworth's use of her multiply marginalized body to rhetorically argue for including disabled mothers of color in the workplace.

Kristie S. Fleckenstein's "Fannie Barrier Williams's Citizen-Woman: Embodying Rhetoric at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition" offers similarly persuasive understandings of embodied rhetoric by examining Fannie Barrier Williams's use of animation and reanimation to critique social understandings of African American women; to reshape ideas of both the Black and white citizen-women; and to call for an "ethic of accountability" in which all bodies are influenced by and "answerable" to others. Another stand-out piece in this section, Megan Strom's "Criminals and Victims: The Embodied Rhetorics of Unaccompanied Latinx Children as Represented in Spanish- and English-Language Media" engages rhetorical and discourse analyses to examine representations of unaccompanied Latinx children in US Spanish and English newspapers. While this collection reflects predominantly qualitative research, this piece successfully blends both qualitative and quantitative methods to investigate the trends and sociopolitical impacts of language circulated by US media. The chapters in this section engage deeply with offered examples, allowing readers to effectively contextualize the rich theories presented; they are applicable to academic and non-academic TPC readers invested in areas such as activism, law, and policy.

The final section of the book discusses matters related to "textuality, multimodality, [and] digitality." Collectively, these articles offer important theoretical insights into the role of embodiment for TPC's social justice goals. Vyshali Manivannan's "The Successful Text is Not Always the One that Murders Me to Protect You" critiques through both form and content how standard academic

documentation and design conventions draw from and validate oppressive Western epistemological understandings. Manivannan argues that by standardizing the knowledge-making practices of "straight, white, able-bodied, neurotypical men" (p. 188), academic conventions may promote systemic ableism, racism, and homophobia. Challenging these practices through non-conventional documentation choices, this chapter offers embodied insight into the experience of writing with chronic pain and insightfully demonstrates how seemingly neutral documentation practices common in TPC may erase both the body and the embodied writing process.

In "Hooking Up Embodied Technologies, Queer Rhetorics, and Grindr's Grid," Caleb Pendency applies new materialist and queer theory to examine the impacts of embodied technologies and how they can influence users' interactive engagement and self-understanding. He analyzes Grindr as an embodied technology that influences user habits and maps their daily engagement in relation to hook-up culture. He explains that while embodied technologies like Grindr may promote connection between users and celebrate LGBTQ identities in digital spaces, such potential is undermined by a systemic capitalist tendency toward "cultural and identificatory exclusion" (p. 214). Such insights demonstrate a need for TPC to critically reflect on the social justice implications of seemingly inclusive digital technologies and applications. Also examining the embodied impacts of technology, Kellie Sharp-Hoskins and Anthony Stagliano's "Matters that (Em)Body" discusses the concept of "digital hauntology" for digital writing studies and urges readers to consider the material and environmental implications of technological networks that contribute to writing products in academia and the workplace.

Another stand-out article for TPC social justice work is Temptuous Mckoy's "Avowed Embodiment: Self-identification, Performative Strategic Attire, and TRAP Karaoke." Building on William Cross's self-identification theory, Nigrescence theory, Mckoy offers a theory of avowed embodiment, or "the act of outwardly declaring/showcasing one's identity through the physical body or strategic attire" (p. 224). Mckoy applies this framework to the hashtag #Tee4TheTrap, associated with t-shirts that celebrate and validate Black lived experiences and knowledges and that are worn by attendees of TRAP karaoke, rooted in the US South and reflecting "traditionally Black, or trap, music" (p. 228). She explains that avowed embodiment involves individual and communal identification, communication, and celebration/resistance of "who they have come to know themselves to be" (p. 224) and requires that participants first accept and avow their Blackness. Such a framework supports TPC social justice work by amplifying frequently marginalized perspectives and experiences and may be applied "to various embodiments in different spaces and times" (p. 232). Collectively, these chapters call for TPC to question and critique the social justice implications of standard knowledge-making practices across material and digital modalities and provide frameworks and methods through which TPC scholars and practitioners may facilitate more socially just practices.

Reflecting a range of theoretical insights regarding the roles of the body, embodiment, and embodied rhetorics in the construction and evaluation of rhetorical acts of knowledge-making, *Bodies of knowledge: Embodied rhetorics in theory and practice* offers vital insight for TPC social justice work. Specifically, this book extends TPC intersectional considerations for the rhetorical, ecological, material, and social justice impacts of documentation and design

practices regarding race, gender, and disability. A limitation of the collection that is recognized by the editors' introduction is a lack of attention to BIPOC and trans perspectives. In addition, more extensive and direct attention to the intersectional and social justice implications of provided theories would strengthen this collective work even further. Although both TPC scholars and practitioners will benefit from the insights offered by this collection, the theoretical focus of inclusive chapters may constrain practical application in industry contexts. Undergraduate instructors using this text may want to scaffold concepts for students who may be unfamiliar with embodied rhetorical theory. Because of the intricate theory offered by this collection, its use in TPC graduate coursework is highly recommended. Specifically, this text would benefit course content that intersects with embodied rhetorics and methodologies, public memory, usability, digital rhetorics, user-experience design, and/or legal rhetorics. Future TPC work might build from the powerful social justice implications of this collection by translating these concepts for technical and professional audiences outside the academy and/or more extensively evaluating the intersectional implications of embodied rhetorics.

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