

2017 CCCC: Research Network Forum

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Project Abstract:

“Performativity, Positionality, and Relationality: Identity Pathways for a Feminist Rhetorical Pedagogy”

This dissertation posits that a relationship between a feminist rhetorical pedagogical model and autobiographical theoretical tenets engage students in the personal writing process and introduce them to the ways that feminism can change the approach, analysis, and writing of autobiographical texts. Inadequate attention has been given to the ways that autobiographical theory and the use of non-fiction texts contribute to a feminist pedagogy in upper-level writing classrooms. This dissertation corrects that by focusing on food memoirs as vehicles in a feminist pedagogical writing course. Strands of both feminist and autobiographical theory prioritize positionality, performativity, and relationality (Smith and Watson 214) as dynamic components of identity construction—specifically, identity pathways—and thus become frames through which this class was taught and studied.

This study posits that Royster and Kirsch’s four feminist rhetorical practices— Critical Imagination, Social Circulation, Strategic Contemplation, and Globalizing Point of View (19)—taken together offer a model for instruction geared to help learners chart identity pathways in the context of one semester of their undergraduate rhetorical education. This model is operationalized through a writing classroom that focused on feminist ideals, using a food memoir, *The Language of Baklava* by Diana Abu-Jaber, as the vehicle of inquiry. This study offers a starting point for analysis of food memoirs in university writing classrooms by focusing specifically on the ways that students understood and applied the framework, model, and vehicle of the study. This dissertation prioritizes the composition and valuing of individual and communal lived experiences expressed through the articulation of identity pathways. Teachers and scholars can use the knowledge and takeaways gained in the study to better support and advocate for the inclusion of students lived experiences in writing classrooms and pedagogy.

Project Questions:

- 1) How do I best represent the depth and scope of my project and my scholarly interests on the job market?
- 2) What other clarification or explanation would be helpful in communicating the purpose, and exigency of my dissertation to potential employers?
- 3) What components of my dissertation should I highlight in order to show potential scholarship and pedagogical interests?