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Reviving Rhetoric Through Conversation: Feminist Rhetorical Pedagogies for a Deliberative Democracy

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REVIVING RHETORIC THROUGH CONVERSATION: FEMINIST RHETORICAL
PEDAGOGIES FOR A DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY

by

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ABSTRACT

Scholars have long discussed the possibilities of a deliberative democracy in which the people of the nation engage in public dialogue and discuss the pressing political, social, and economic issues of the day, in order to encourage political participation (Gripsrud et al. xix). This thesis suggests that in order to achieve something resembling a deliberative democracy, there must be an increase in rhetorical education throughout a student's schooling in order to foster the skills that young people need to participate in public deliberation once they leave the classroom. In order to achieve these educational goals, this thesis also proposes that educators should be looking to the educative nature of conversational rhetoric inside and outside the classroom. Doing so could be important in cultivating what Paulo Freire calls a "critical consciousness" in which citizens engage with society, politics, and culture in an educated and interested manor. The thesis begins with an exploration of major deliberative democracy theories and classical practices of rhetorical education before turning specifically to the work of Madeline de Scudéry and Margaret Fuller, who both gave women voices through means of conversational rhetoric during times where there were not many other opportunities for women to participate politically. By examining these aspects of rhetorical history and practice, the thesis concludes that by implementing feminist means of rhetorical education in classrooms, educators can foster the skills students need to take outside of the classroom in order to participate in and cultivate a more deliberative democracy.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements.....	iii
Abstract.....	iv
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
Chapter 2: Overview of Deliberative Democracy Theory.....	4
Chapter 3: Isocrates, <i>Phronesis</i> , and Modern Connections to Classical Rhetorical Education.....	10
3.1 A Conversation on <i>Phronesis</i>	14
Chapter 4: Women, Rhetoric, and Conversation.....	22
4.1 Madeline de Scudéry and Conversational Rhetoric.....	22
4.2 Margaret Fuller and the Boston Conversations.....	27
Chapter 5: Modern Conceptions of Women’s Rhetorics.....	32
Chapter 6: Pedagogical Manifestations.....	37
Chapter 7: Conclusion: Implications for Civic Engagement and Deliberative Democracy.....	42
Works Cited.....	46

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The use of the word “rhetoric” often has a negative connotation when uttered by news anchors or politicians in our presently sordid state of public affairs. But to those of us who study in the field of “rhetoric,” the term is an intellectual playground on which to explore its many meanings and uses historically and contemporarily. One question that I am particularly interested in is what rhetoric *can* be, despite the preconceptions that the public may have on the subject. Rhetoric can, in fact, be an educative tool to cultivate a citizenry that not only has a desire to learn and engage in political and social matters, but one that has the ability to think critically about such matters in order to improve the overall state of affairs of a community, nation, or even the world. If educators are able to cultivate this desire for political participation in their students, we could begin fostering a deliberative democracy, wherein the people of the nation engage in discussion and deliberation in order to inform political decisions.

Rhetorical education is an area of inquiry that has been widely explored by scholars of rhetoric and education alike. With this thesis, I explore notions of rhetorical education and the types of rhetoric that we should include in such an education that works toward the goal of cultivating a civically educated citizenry. Throughout the project, I investigate rhetorics which feature dialogue as an educational tool, particularly rhetorics of women, who have been using dialogue to serve educational purposes for hundreds of years. Feminist rhetoric focuses on decentralizing rhetorical practice and

promotes rhetoric based in consciousness raising structured around dialogue and the creation of understanding between participants. These aspects of feminist rhetoric are essential to the cultivation of deliberative democracy, and if we can encourage these practices in our classrooms, we can increase and improve civic engagement in our communities. Ultimately, I argue that in order to develop a deliberative democracy in the United States, a rhetorical education should be implemented in both primary and secondary education, not just at the post-secondary level. Further, this rhetorical education should be centered in feminist rhetorics and pedagogical practices in order to equip students with the tools they need for active political participation outside of the classroom. Utilizing these skills, students may be able to engage in deliberation in an informed and passionate manner.

To launch this argument, in chapter two, I begin with an exploration of some of the foundational literature pertaining to deliberative democracy theory, including the works of thinkers such as Jürgen Habermas, Nancy Fraser, John Rawls, and James S. Fishkin. In chapter three, I turn to the rhetorical education and its origins in the works of Isocrates, while also incorporating the works of modern philosophers of education such as John Dewey and Paulo Freire in order to posit that a rhetorical education can cultivate a passion in learners that leads to a kind of *phronesis* that they can apply beyond the classroom and into their own public lives. Chapter four begins the exploration of women's rhetorical education, namely in what Jane Donawerth refers to as "conversational rhetoric." In this chapter, I explore the work of Madeline de Scudéry and how conversation was used educatively in the French salons; I also look to Margaret Fuller's *Boston Conversations* to further explore the use of conversational rhetoric.

Chapter five explores the modern methods of feminist rhetoric that continue to employ practices resembling conversational rhetoric. For instance, this chapter includes explorations of “consciousness raising” and Foss and Griffin’s “invitational rhetoric,” as both involve a similar educative dialogue to that of Scudéry and Fuller. In chapter six, I offer some ways in which this rhetorical education may manifest in classroom instruction and a brief discussion of when in a student’s education these rhetorically educative aspects should be implemented. Finally, chapter seven concludes the thesis with implications for the future and closing remarks on the potential of rhetoric to enhance the education of young people in the United States.

CHAPTER 2

OVERVIEW OF DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY THEORY

Deliberative theories of democracy have become increasingly popular in several academic circles, including those of political science, communications, sociology, and philosophy. Theories of the deliberative democracy vary; there are some who call for a decentering of voting as the defining democratic practice, while others call for more opportunities for the people of a democracy to deliberate and discuss major issues facing a community. Largely, “deliberation” refers to practices that would be involved in a deliberative democracy, particularly political discussions, dialogues, and conversations used for political decision making. In the introduction to their collection, *The Idea of the Public Sphere*, Gripsrud et al. discuss three types of public decision making: voting, bargaining, and deliberation. They state that, “Whereas voting is a procedure for integrating individual preferences, and does not necessarily involve communication, both bargaining and deliberation depend on communication,” and more specifically that, “deliberation is oriented towards mutual understanding and provisional consensus” (Gripsrud et al. xix). In a pure deliberative democracy, deliberation would take the place of voting altogether, and the people would participate in discussions that would decide the outcome of an election. While the authors of this reader initially frame theories of deliberative democracy as either voting or deliberation, for the purposes of this thesis, I would like to examine theories of deliberative democracy that apply deliberation to democratic practices already in place (i.e., voting). In other words, these theories not only

explore how deliberation functions in the democracy we already have in place, but they also posit ways for deliberation to be improved upon and understood for the purpose of maintaining a healthy democracy in which the voices of all of the people are heard, rather than just the voices of the powerful few. In my imagined deliberative democracy, I do not call for a direct upheaval of voting; rather, voting and deliberation would coexist.

Political conversations would be made more public and easily accessible, there would be more town hall-style meetings for people to discuss their concerns, and political discussion would be encouraged, so that voters can confidently cast informed votes.

Scholars trace the origins of democracy and deliberation back to ancient Athens, as democracy ebbed and flowed in the times of the great *polis*; however, this notion of turning toward deliberation in our modern, primarily Western, democratic government is a relatively recent focus for scholars across disciplines in the last 45 years. Initial interest in the concept of deliberative democracy is often attributed to the work of German philosopher, Jürgen Habermas, especially his 1962 book, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. In this landmark work, Habermas discusses the ideal of a “bourgeois public sphere,” which has become increasingly difficult to maintain because of the transformation of the public sphere discussed therein. Throughout the work, he traces the history and the discussions of such a public sphere, citing other thinkers such as Hegel, Kant, Marx, Locke, Mill, Bentham, and several others spanning different countries and eras. Habermas grapples with the blurring of the “public” and “private spheres” and how these make up “civil society.” In his own exploration of the ancient Greek *polis*, he states, “The public sphere was constituted in discussion (*lexis*), which could also assume the forms of consultation and of sitting in the court of law, as well as

in common action (*praxis*), be it the waging of war or competition in athletic games,” while the private sphere was primarily ascribed to the home (Habermas 3). Habermas later goes on to discuss how, “the bourgeois public sphere may be conceived above all as the sphere of private people come together as a public,” and that private citizens engage in a “political confrontation” in which they participate in an exchange resembling a debate “over the general rules of governing relations” (27). Largely, these exchanges in civil society should occur separate from the state, according to Habermas (138).

Throughout the work, he traces locations of public and private discussion at several points in Western European history, namely in France, Germany, and Great Britain. Habermas examines the interactions between the public and private in these locales, particularly how citizens use civic discourse to form a range of public opinion. He also discusses how the press contributes to the public sphere and its role in constructing public opinion, and how it tends to weaken the idea of a truly bourgeois public sphere as the press often depends on “social hierarchy” (136). Overall, Habermas’s ideal of the bourgeois public sphere depends upon participation of the people, and many of the democratic institutions that are in place do not support this liberal model because of the exigencies (e.g. the press) which lead to private interests and competition in the public sphere.

In a 1990 essay titled “Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy,” Nancy Fraser offers a critique of Habermas in which she introduces her idea of publics and “counterpublics,” a more nuanced model of the public sphere present in the dominant late-capitalist societies. Fraser argues that, “in stratified societies, arrangements that accommodate contestation among a plurality of

competing publics better promote the ideal of participatory parity than does a single, comprehensive, overarching public” (136). Fraser’s contention suggests that many publics exist simultaneously in Western democratic societies because of existing societal inequality. She argues that deliberative processes become increasingly difficult in capitalist societies because those in power tend to have control over the public sphere. Instead of one single public, she calls for, “*subaltern counterpublics* in order to signal that they are parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs” (136). Ultimately, Fraser aims to ground some of Habermas’s ideas in actual democratic societies. While Habermas offers an ideal liberal public sphere, Fraser maintains that for deliberation and civic discourse to function in a democratic society, we must consider how discourse moves between counterpublics that account for the disenfranchised communities who are often the products of late capitalism and even democratic institutions.

Moreover, American philosopher John Rawls contends that a major aspect of public deliberation is the use of “public reason.” He claims that, “public reason specifies at the deepest level the basic moral and political values that are to determine a constitutional democratic government’s relation to its citizens and their relation to one another” (Rawls 206). In his 1997 essay, “The Idea of Public Reason Revisited,” Rawls discusses how public reason plays into our societal decision making and political values. While Rawls’s essay discusses several matters concerning the advocacy of public reason, I would like to focus on Rawls’s treatment of public reason in relation to its usefulness to deliberative democracy theory. He suggests that when engaged in a political deliberation,

one must practice public reason in order to navigate political discussions effectively, as public reason focuses on taking into account the relationship between differing viewpoints and political doctrines. Rawls posits that the use of public reason will lead citizens to think more critically about political matters and will also encourage citizens' engagement with fundamental issues. Additionally, Rawls suggests that, "Deliberative democracy also recognizes that without widespread education in the basic aspects of constitutional democratic government for all citizens, and without a public informed about pressing problems, crucial political and social decisions simply cannot be made" (209). However, I would take Rawls's argument a bit further. Not only do citizens need to be civically educated, but they also need to be rhetorically educated in order to fully utilize "public reason." A rhetorical education gives students the tools that they need to reason through the plethora of information available within the public sphere, or as Fraser would suggest, the many publics and counterpublics. Rhetorical thinking and public reason can help citizens navigate the trepid waters of the power structures and inequality that both Fraser and Habermas discuss in order to cultivate a functioning deliberative democracy. Rawls's public reason might be especially useful for deliberation when it comes to exchanges between the publics. Concurrently, rhetorical education would enhance political understanding further, especially one that promotes sharing experience in order to come to understanding between deliberators.

While the work of Habermas, Fraser, and Rawls discuss the theoretical foundations of deliberative democracy, the final work on deliberative democracy theory I would like to examine is James S. Fishkin's *When the People Speak: Deliberative Democracy and Public Consultation*, a work that applies deliberative democracy theory

to 21st-century exigencies. In this work, Fishkin expands his previous research on deliberative democracy, while also incorporating other major voices who discuss the matter. Written in 2011, *When the People Speak* updates previous theories of deliberative democracy to reflect technological changes and emergences like the internet. Throughout the work, Fishkin aims to address the many exigencies that call for a deliberative democracy and also works through the constraints which have made implementing such a democracy difficult. For instance, he discusses that the United States was envisioned as a deliberative democracy at its founding; however, “the technology of the persuasion industry has made it possible for elites to shape opinion and then invoke those opinions in the name of democracy” (Fishkin 6). I contend that Habermas, Fraser, and Rawls would all agree with Fishkin in identifying the press and its power structures as on major constraint upon public reason. Media narratives and corporate interests especially deter the cultivation of public reason because then the press tells people what they should focus on, rather than reasoning through the issues themselves. As Rawls argues, the “persuasion industry” is precisely why education is necessary, so that public reason may prevail in the public sphere. We must educate our students rhetorically, so that students may think critically about the dangers posed by the persuasion industry.

CHAPTER 3

ISOCRATES, *PHRONESIS*, AND MODERN CONNECTIONS TO CLASSICAL RHETORICAL EDUCATION

In order to better prepare citizens to exercise public reason in a deliberative democracy, we need to emphasize rhetorical education for students earlier in their schooling. While the focus of this thesis lies with feminist pedagogies as crucial to the cultivation of a deliberative democracy, the ancient Greek pedagogy of Isocrates offers valuable resources as a starting point, as he was an important figure in discussing “rhetorical theory and education together” (Bizzell and Herzberg 43). Further, Isocrates was not necessarily what we would call a “feminist,” as J.R Muir points out, “According to Isocrates, education is valued as preparation for political life, women do not participate in politics, and there is therefore no reason for women to be educated” (259). However, many of Isocrates’s thoughts on education can be modernized and comparable to modern feminist pedagogies and theories of rhetoric. Some major recurring motifs from the educational theories of Isocrates are the importance of education, education’s function in a civic society, and the importance of rhetorical education.

Many of Isocrates’s sophistic predecessors were speaking in more politically stable times than Isocrates himself, and because of the political unrest during the time that Isocrates began to write, Isocrates interacted with ideas of rhetoric and rhetorical education differently than those who came before him. He remarks, “Athens is in such a state of confusion and chaos that some people no longer use words naturally but transfer

them from the finest deeds to the basest activities” (Isocrates, “Antidosis” 256). As political strife grew, rhetoric became chaotic and operated differently than in the time of the Sophists. Sophists focused their rhetorical skills in persuading an audience to any topic by whatever means necessary. However, Isocrates needed to change the rhetorical game in order to encourage a united Greece, which in turn required a cultivation of community and leadership encouraged in the polis, rather than the types of persuasion proposed by the Sophists. John Poulakos points out that,

Unlike the Sophists, Isocrates found himself in a dispersed culture, one plagued with the ills inherent in excessive individuation— conflicting claims and competing interests. His reaction to this state of affairs manifested itself in a rhetoric pointing away from the periphery and towards a center. At this center, there lay arguments for the need of leaders, the importance of rhetorical education, the benefits of political stability, and the advantages of panhellenism.

(82)

For the sophists, this individuation worked because Athens was thriving in a prosperous time during the rule of Pericles. When Pericles died, Athens became a place of unrest, and Isocrates wanted to see peace restored and a united Greece. Because of this goal, Isocrates aimed to promote unity with a focus on the good of the community. In encouraging a civic rhetorical education, his hope was to restore the polis through the practice of ethical, non-manipulative rhetoric. Similar ideas of rhetoric and rhetorical education will be echoed in the feminist theories of “conversational rhetoric” that I will discuss in the next chapter.

Interestingly, the latter description offered by John Poulakos concerning Athens could equally apply to our own contemporary moment involving political strife; and accordingly, our own polis might effectively be strengthened with a renewed commitment to rhetorical pedagogies. Current political culture in the United States has seen the rise of extremist groups that were thought to be dormant and radical ideas which our current leaders espouse and ultimately encourage these groups to spread hate and unrest. I am speaking generally about the presidency of Donald Trump and the ideologies that he validated by encouraging polarizing notions during his campaign and has continued to circulate during his presidency. The often racially charged language that Trump uses has ultimately encouraged such groups as white nationalists and neo-Nazis (as seen in former Grand Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan David Duke's pronouncement at a white supremacist in Charlottesville that Trump embodied his values in taking the country back). Takis Poulakos asserts that "power has a discursive base and that the words of a leader are as authoritative as is the text produced" (27). This idea stems from Isocrates's piece offering advice to a young ruler or Cyprus, *Nicocles*. Poulakos states that students of Isocrates who read this oration would note that, "because the authority of a given discourse lies in the audience's attitude toward the speaker, it is the quality of the speaker's rhetorical education that is the principal factor here, not the quantity of the speaker's wealth, his rank or social status" (29). So, perhaps if rhetorical education was stronger in the United States and educators were able to cultivate a rhetorical awareness amongst their students, the public may have recognized the ideologies that Trump was manipulating during his campaign. Without the critical thinking that a rhetorical education can produce, many fell prey to Trump's absurd but extremely effective

rhetorical tactics. Perhaps some of these issues could be avoided if a robust rhetorical education was present in schools so that critical thinking and practical wisdom was more prevalent amongst the voting population.

Another important tenet of Isocrates's rhetorical education is the idea of education as imitation, repetition, and hard work. He states in *Against the Sophists*, "But to choose from these the necessary forms for each subject, to mix them with each other and arrange them suitably, and then, not to mistake the circumstances (*kairoi*) but to embellish the entire speech properly with considerations (*enthymemata*) and to speak the words rhythmically and musically, these things require much study and are the work of a brave and imaginative soul" (Isocrates 65). I like to think of this as a poetic version of academia itself because as scholars, we take in ideas and make them our own in some way by use of arrangement and style. In imitation, one does not simply copy down an idea and do nothing with it; instead, one thinks critically about an idea and how it is used, its context, its audience, etc. in order to use the idea in conjunction with other ideas to form an argument or a conversation. This is more or less one of the primary aims of teaching writing to first-year students in a university. Robert Hariman describes the process by asserting,

A more artistic imitation would start with the basic outline of [Isocrates's] *paideia*, the goal of the articulate citizen and the program of habituation amidst a broad range of discourses. Add to this his emphasis on creative imitation of models of eloquence and practical wisdom in order to activate the richness and power of the best possible political language. (228)

If educators can equip students with the “best possible political language,” perhaps more critical decisions would be made when discussing political ideas and ideologies, and arguably more important, when voting to elect our country’s leaders. If political discussion is just about taboo until students enter the university, then rhetorical education should begin earlier in a student’s schooling so that they might be able to cultivate rhetorical skills to take with them when they begin to vote. Additionally, not all citizens even attend college or university, so rhetorical education should begin in primary and secondary schools in order for the majority of the citizenry to develop and utilize these habits of mind.

3.1 A CONVERSATION ON *PHRONESIS*

Furthermore, one of the most notable passages in the *Antidosis* states, “Both teachers and students have their own parts to play: in particular, the pupils’ responsibility is to bring the requisite natural ability, and the teachers’, to be able to educate these kinds of students, but common to both is practical experience” (Isocrates 241). Isocrates discusses experience to be of utmost importance to a rhetorical education. In doing so, he broke away from the more sophistic definition of rhetoric that dealt with *episteme* rather than *doxa*. Takis Poulakis states, “Experience wrests doxa from tyche, then, by guiding doxa toward practical wisdom, that is, toward the place where intellect and imagination, reason and emotion intersect” (88). Isocrates was more concerned with experience creating practical wisdom, or *phronesis*, rather than a mastery of knowledge, which set him apart from some of his contemporaries in terms of pedagogical approach. Isocrates notes, “For since it is not in the nature of man to attain a science (*episteme*) by the possession of which we can know positively what we should do or what we should say,

in the next resort I hold that man to be wise (*sophos*) who is able by his means of conjecture (*doxa*) to arrive generally at the best course” (254). He goes on to say that this kind of inquiry of conjecture can help to achieve “*phronesis*,” which can then be used as part of a constructive deliberation.

While the idea of *phronesis* is generally more often associated with Aristotle, Isocrates’s idea of practical wisdom is essential to the ideas of his rhetorical education. Steve Schwarze asserts that, “reason need not be the dominant element or starting point of *phronesis*; submission and passivity before displays of beauty can lead to wise action, too, apart from any rational calculation” (92). For Isocrates, *phronesis* is more performative than the typical definition that we associate with Aristotle which argues that *phronesis* should be used for rational deliberation. In other words, Isocrates’s *phronesis* garners an individual and collective judgment outside of rational deliberation in which the *paideia* should include a cultivation of the self, alongside culture and community. According to Ekaterina Haskins, “By making character and political identity contingent upon recurrent performance addressed to the polis, Isocrates may be said to have successfully synthesized the traditional poetic *paideia* with the political emphasis on public performance” (56). Thus, Isocrates’s notion of *paideia* is more constitutive, as these performances focus on shared identities rather than pure persuasion, a notion that opposes Aristotle’s typical conception of rhetoric’s function as purely deliberative. Isocrates was concerned with cultivation of democracy and the healing of the polis, which could be realized through debate and compromise. According to Alistair Miller, “The practical wisdom needed to deliberate in human affairs requires not only practical reasoning and a grounding in the humanities but an understanding of the social, political

and cultural context in which this reasoning takes place (an understanding developed in large measure by the study of the humanities)” (192). In striving for unity and democracy, rhetoric functions as not only a productive way to discuss matters publicly, but the *phronesis* that one cultivates in the study of rhetoric helps to develop a better understanding of public life in general.

Similarly, modern philosopher John Dewey, whose ideas about education serve as the foundation of our contemporary liberal arts education, also speaks on a kind of practical experience necessary in the classroom. He states, “Men live in a community in virtue of the things which they have in common; and communication is the way in which they come to possess things in common. What they must have in common in order to form a community or society are aims, beliefs, aspirations, knowledge – a common understanding – like-mindedness as the sociologists say” (Dewey 4). So, in Dewey’s terms, communication is the way that people must share their ideas and beliefs with others in order to form a community. It is with dialogue that citizens can realize this “like-mindedness.”

Further, Dewey also explains that, “A democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience” (87). While we do not experience democracy in these ways at present, through rhetorical education and the exchange of ideas that such an education can foster, perhaps we can move closer to what Dewey suggests. Ronald Walter Greene discusses Dewey’s ideas and the relationship between communication and ethics: “The translation of the classical idea of *phronesis* into the modern vocabulary of an aesthetic-moral theory of communication authorizes rhetorical studies, as a discipline of the ethical state, to

intervene and care for the communicative capacities of its students” (198). Rhetorical education should cultivate *phronesis* as an ethical responsibility to the students and even to communities as a whole. Without it, we leave our students to enter a world of dangerous rhetorical practices with no skills to be able to navigate the public sphere critically.

Moreover, rhetorical pedagogy cannot function properly if students in such a class do not put in the work of reading and engaging with the material. Isocrates states, “We acquire knowledge through hard work, and we each put into practice what we learn in our own way” (“Antidosis” 243). Educators often find it difficult to motivate students who may not be interested in a certain subject, particularly if the students are simply fulfilling a requirement set to them by the school. One way to engage students who may not want to be engaged is through passion. According to Arash Abizadeh, “character (*êthos*) and emotion (*pathos*) are constitutive features of the process of phronetic practical deliberation: in order to render a determinate action-specific judgment, practical deliberation cannot be simply reduced to logical demonstration (*apodeixis*)” (267). This concept of the constitutive features of rhetoric can also be applied to the classroom. Along with being able to share their own experiences, encouraging vulnerability and passion in the classroom might help encourage students to engage with material, especially if the material is presented to them in an appealing way. Teachers of rhetoric may want to demonstrate some of their own rhetorical skill in presenting information and material in a manner that engages their audience, which in this case is a classroom full of young students.

If we are ever to achieve a deliberative democracy of sorts, there must be an understanding of rhetoric and its many applications because in studying argumentation and even just the way in which language works aids in one's ability to articulate their ideas to an audience. David Stock argues that often students leave school without the skills needed in order to articulate their ideas well, and therefore are not well-versed in the rhetorical skills necessary to defend or pitch their ideas to an audience of their peers. He states, "Rhetorical literacy also intends to contextualize all language arts—speaking, listening, reading, writing—in the broader act of communication" (Stock 9). An understanding of rhetoric develops critical thinking skills that are essential for good deliberation. In order for deliberation to function properly, the participants must be engaged by being able to research certain topics for themselves, and they must demonstrate the ability to listen to and consider opinions that differ from their own. According to Nimrod Aloni, "Since the inception of humanistic education, one of its fundamental ideals has always been the importance of developing human potentialities to their fullest extent and the cultivation of well-rounded personalities" (1077). If anything, studying rhetoric can foster *phronesis*, or practical wisdom, that is surely required if a deliberation is to ever function properly, as *phronesis* is essential to Rawls's idea of public reason. If *phronesis* is practical wisdom, rhetorical studies can help foster this wisdom in the exploration of experience that differs from one's own and the discussion of the rhetorical construction of the issues and events facing the world. The cultivation of *phronesis* in the classroom ultimately gives students the tools to reason effectively.

The idea that *phronesis* is something that can be taught is more characteristic of the Sophists than of Isocrates or Plato. However, the Isocratean notion of experience in

relation to *phronesis* is an important one to note. To Isocrates, experience is essential to rhetorical education, so perhaps if *phronesis* cannot be taught, it can be learned through experience in the classroom through the sharing of experiences between classmates and the instructor. Carrie Birmingham states, “phronesis recognizes the importance of community in teacher education and school settings... In a time when society’s moral questions are polarizing, emotionally laden, and associated with partisan politics, phronesis speaks as an alternative voice for the place of ethics in education” (322). It is essential for educators to exhibit their own *phronesis* in the classroom to set as a model for students.

This is where the work of Paulo Freire becomes relevant; moving away from a banking model of education and letting students explore their own experiences and the experiences of others can perhaps begin to cultivate a phronetic classroom. In his quintessential work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire asserts, “Dialogue with the people is radically necessary to every authentic revolution.” With this work, Freire introduces his notions of critical pedagogy. Not only was this work paramount to education across a number of disciplines, but it also serves as a guide for social and political justice. Taught in graduate programs of education and beyond, Freire remains an influential figure for pedagogy across the academy. Freire’s liberated pedagogy centers on dialogue, as well as shared experience in the classroom in order to achieve liberation inside and outside of the classroom, particularly for traditionally oppressed peoples. Freire’s work was revolutionary in the sense that he advocated for revolution itself, but also that it was a monumental work for pedagogy around the world while also crossing disciplinary borders.

In addition to Freire's inclusion of the oppressed, his opposition to the oppressive nature of the traditional "banking concept" is an essential part of the pedagogy. The banking model is oppressive because it assumes that, "knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing" (Freire 72). This assumption creates an imbalance of power in the classroom, one that is not conducive to the liberation of the oppressed. Freire's pedagogy states that

The educator's efforts must coincide with those of the students to engage in critical thinking and the quest for mutual humanization. His efforts must be imbued with a profound trust in people and their creative power. To achieve this, they must be partners of the students in their relations to them. The banking concept does not admit to such partnership—and necessarily so. (75)

The banking method of education suppresses ideas and disrupts the path to liberation. Instead, Freire proposes a "problem posing" education method in which, "people develop their power to perceive critically *the way they exist* in the world *with which* and *in which* they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation" (83). This education method disperses the power dynamic of the classroom. Instead of one person, the teacher, holding the power in the classroom, everyone in the room becomes educator.

Further, Freire offers his pedagogy in the hopes of liberating oppressed people, and this begins in the classroom. The acknowledgement of oppression in traditional classroom settings is paramount to Freire's pedagogy. In introducing his ideas, he states that his pedagogy is one that, "must be forged *with*, not *for*, the oppressed (whether individuals or peoples) in the incessant struggle to regain their humanity. This pedagogy

makes oppression and its causes objects of reflection by the oppressed, and from that reflection will come their necessary engagement in the struggle for their liberation” (Freire 48). Freire’s ideas are largely grounded in the idea of inclusion. In order to create and implement a pedagogy that aims to liberate oppressed people, those who are oppressed must be included in that conversation. I will not dispute the fact that Freire’s work is important and in multiple senses of the word, revolutionary. However, as I have recently explored several works that discuss the elision of women and their ideas in traditional rhetorical histories, I have discovered that women have been theorizing dialogue as rhetorical and educational practice throughout Western history. Freire may have been one of the first to utilize this type of education as a call to action, but women have also been using dialogue for education for at least half of a millennium. Jane Donawerth, in her quintessential work *Conversational Rhetoric*, argues, “Women thus theorized conversational rhetoric well before the twentieth-century interest in conversation as an analogy for effective composition” (16). The next chapter will elucidate upon several historical spaces involving women’s participation in rhetorical education.

CHAPTER 4

WOMEN, RHETORIC, AND CONVERSATION

While scholarly interest in conversational rhetoric may be relatively recent, there is a long history of women who have used this practice for educational purposes, which I will trace throughout this chapter. In this chapter, I explore notions of feminist rhetoric and education, beginning with French noblewoman Madeline de Scudéry and her use of “conversational rhetoric” during the French Renaissance. During this era, conversation and dialogue were functions of the court and were often educative in nature. I then hop across the pond to 19th century Boston, Massachusetts, to consider the rhetorical and educative roles of Margaret Fuller’s work involving her Boston Conversations, which included a series of community conversations that facilitated education for women at the time. If we aim to explore and advance rhetorical critical pedagogies, we cannot exclude women’s rhetorics or pedagogies. Feminist rhetorics chiefly contribute to larger narratives of education’s role in the advocacy for the civic engagement involved in liberated pedagogy. In particular, I explore how conversational rhetoric offers a decentralized dialogic practice that educates participants; thus, giving them the tools to contribute to their communities.

4.1 MADELINE DE SCUDÉRY AND CONVERSATIONAL RHETORIC

Seventeenth-century France saw the formation of salons by French noblewomen, wherein women would hold conversations concerning a wide variety of topics and interests. Jane Donawerth’s pivotal work *Conversational Rhetoric* explores notions of

dialogues often used by women that have been excluded from traditional rhetorical histories. She states, “By the seventeenth century, conversation had become a major social art and a means of advancement for the middle as well as aristocratic classes in Europe” (Donawerth 19). The inception of these salons included discussions of taste and even gossip, but as the salons went on, their topics of conversation turned toward politics and events of the day. Written in the form of a dialogue, at first glance, Madeleine de Scudéry’s “Rhetorical Dialogues” may seem to be some sort of idle chatter of women at court; however, there is much more to these dialogues than it may seem. For instance, Donawerth describes conversational rhetoric by positing, “Conversation encompasses small-group communication, from any private, informal verbal communication, to artful verbal dialogue used in informal leisure and social activities” (11). Scudéry begins the “Rhetorical Dialogues” with a definition that states, “Since conversation is the bond of society for all humanity, the greatest pleasure of discriminating people, and the most ordinary method to introduce into the world not only civility, but also the purest morals and the love of glory and virtue, it appears to me that the company cannot be entertained more agreeably, nor more usefully, than to examine what we call ‘conversation’” (96). This definition of conversation points to more than just the everyday exchanges that we have when communicating with other people. The “Dialogues” point to a much loftier type of conversation that has a goal to educate and elucidate on subjects that might not come up in those everyday exchanges. Donawerth argues that, “Scudéry views conversation as a model for all discourse, defends women’s right to an education (especially in the private rhetorics of conversation and letter writing), and attempts to incorporate women into public display through these private-public arts” (29).

In fact, as the salon discussions took on many different topics of conversation, there was a particular educative aspect to these exchanges. In her comprehensive history of French parlor rhetoric during the Renaissance, *The Age of Conversation*, Benedetta Craveri states,

As if by magic, the art of conversation radiated a soothing oblivion and created a harmonious atmosphere offering relaxation, entertainment, and instruction while banishing, if only for a few hours, ‘the troublesome griefs that our life is full of’ and life's many dramas. Imbued with a tragic sense of religion and sin, nobles, while committed to defending their own prestige and political power, found a fount of joy in conversation among the few. (338)

While much of the conversation that Craveri describes was often frivolous and flirtatious, salon conversations were also used as a means for education, as many different topics were discussed, including societal matters and current events. Women of the court created this space for conversation where they were free from many of their regular duties, and in something often seen as leisure, education often took place. As Craveri also points out, “Conversation was not only a means of escape. It was also an education in the world – for many the only one available,” and that it “taught the ‘beauty of language’” (343). As women during this time may have been given a basic education in order to make good companions for their husbands, they would not have had much of an opportunity to continue their education. The humanistic value placed on individuals and their thinking made it possible for the salons where this conversation would have been taking place to continue education for many women who would not have otherwise been given the opportunity to further their education. While this opportunity for education was

not available to all women at this time and only given to women of nobility and some middle-class women, exploring parlor rhetoric among communities of women during the French Renaissance still disproves narratives that women were not rhetorically or pedagogically active before the late 19th century.

Furthermore, Scudéry's "Rhetorical Dialogues" not only encourages conversational rhetoric, but the form of the "Dialogues" themselves encourages conversational exchange, or dialogue, as a preferred mode of rhetoric. According to Jane Donawerth, "Scudéry is revising the rhetorical tradition by offering conversation as a model for public discourse" (17). In writing her theories of conversation in the form of a dialogue, Scudéry advocates for conversation to be the primary mode of discourse in public settings as well as private. Concurrently, Danielle Griffin states, "Scudéry never explicitly defines conversation; rather, she models an ideal of conversation in her writing. When Scudéry composes the dialogue, she enacts the conversational theories she is outlining" (410). In composing her work in the form of a fictional dialogue where she discusses how conversation can function in society, Scudéry's character Amilcar states,

And how can it be otherwise when they do not have judgment enough either to let those around them speak or to know that society ought to be a free [exchange], that there ought to be no tyranny in conversation, that each person has a role and a right to speak in turn, and, finally, that this[ideal] will never be [achieved] except through the attention of those who listen, so that those who speak well have the privilege of speaking more than others. (107)

Scudéry's characters themselves set out to discuss the guidelines for having productive conversations. Here, Amilcar's proclamation echoes many of the modern feminist

theories of rhetoric and discourse by modeling a “free exchange” liberated from “tyranny in conversation.” As I will demonstrate in the following chapter, these values not only permeate modern feminist rhetorics, but also the concepts involved in liberated pedagogy. As Donawerth states, “The women’s tradition emphasized conversation as a model for all discourse, collaborative and consensual communication, and the art of listening; it acknowledged the gendered nature of communication and took gender as a means of persuasion; it explored techniques of embodied rhetoric in elocution” (144). This type of rhetorical thinking (how conversation underscores all discourse) is seen throughout the “Dialogues” and saturates feminist thinking throughout history.

Similarly, the notion of *politesse* marked later seventeenth-century thinking, and meant that, “People could take part in worldly exchange on an equal footing, and as long as the discourse was regulated and solidarity was guaranteed, no other authority was required” (Craveri 358). Conversation played a large part in this type of discourse, and the goal of these conversations was not necessarily persuasion; rather, they represented a community made up of different ideas. To illustrate this point, Craveri posits, “As the touchstone of seventeenth-century *politesse*, conversation had adopted its rules in order to guarantee harmony and the free exchange of ideas. Having started life as an idealistic challenge, conversation had gradually developed a system of communication that...made it possible for society to provide itself with its own forum” (358). As salon conversations shifted more toward political and societal matters, the idea of keeping the conversations free from hierarchy became increasingly important, since “In aristocratic salon society fueled by the favor of an absolute monarch, private conversations might very well garner more power than speech in public forums” (Donawerth 24). While most of these

conversations occurred in circles based in nobility, this engagement in conversation still gave the opportunity, especially for women, the ability to discuss matters in which they would not normally have a say. In turn, many of the discussions that took place during the salons had an impact on public discourse as well. If these types of conversation based in the French notion of *politesse* could be present in French dialogues during the Renaissance, how do these ideas show up in more modern conceptions of discussion and dialogue?

4.2 MARGARET FULLER AND THE BOSTON CONVERSATIONS

In the search for an answer to the aforementioned question, I now turn to 19th century Boston to explore the rhetorical functions of Margaret Fuller's Boston Conversations. Margaret Fuller was an American essayist and women's rights activist. In 1839, she began a project known as the Boston Conversations, which were intended to, "give women an opportunity to apply their school learning to ends more noble and meaningful than domestic duty and pleasant conversation" (Garrison 96). Fuller held several conversations over a period of five years in a bookshop belonging to her friend, fellow activist, and educator Elizabeth Palmer Peabody. The Conversations consisted of female participants, except for the Spring 1841 installment, which was coeducational. The roles of American Antebellum women strikingly reflect those of the women in Renaissance France, as both groups of women were educated mainly to make entertaining wives for their male spouses. As an advocate of women's rights and education, Margaret Fuller sought to, "[provide] women the chance to apply their limited rhetorical training and hone their oratorical skills" (96). The Conversations asked the gathered women to discuss their place in society and led to a myriad of philosophical

discussions. While the French parlors mostly included French noblewomen, the Boston Conversations were made up of primarily middle-class women, who would have had some formal rhetorical training in school. According to Garrison, Fuller's "overall 'ambition' rests on helping women become better thinkers," and that, "the Conversations do not pretend to expand knowledge but enhance women's ability to utilize what they know to deepen their own thinking and convey those thoughts clearly and persuasively to other participants" (101). In other words, even though Fuller was a staunch women's rights activist, her main goal for the Conversations was not necessarily to persuade the participants to action; rather, the goal was to give the participants persuasion skills that they may use in situations of discourse. She also gave women an opportunity to speak on matters that they may not have had otherwise.

Furthermore, the rhetorical values that Fuller instilled into her Conversations were based in several sites of rhetorical theory and practice. Kristen Garrison discusses these sites in her entry into David Gold and Katherine Hobbs's edited collection *Rhetoric, History, and Women's Oratorical Education*, a collection dedicated to filling in the gaps in rhetorical accomplishments made by American women that rhetorical histories have generally elided from canonical work. Garrison discusses two particular sources of rhetorical inspiration used by Fuller: Richard Whately's *Elements of Rhetoric* and Eliza Farrar's conduct book, *The Young Lady's Friend*. Garrison points to how Fuller utilizes Whately's ideas, which involve, "attention to the discovery of arguments as an exercise in logical reasoning. Persuasive speech, in short, starts with sound logic. We see his influence in Fuller's desire to cultivate strong reasoning through her Conversations" (101). In fact, according to Annette Kolodny, "While Fuller had first encountered the

dialogue as a pedagogical device at Alcott's Temple School, it was not until she began using Whately at Greene Street that she found the means to convert dialogue into conversation aimed at probing received wisdom and arriving at collective reassessments" (366). As Fuller's goals involve cultivating the skills needed for strong discourse, one of the major skills involved in this cultivation was the idea that sound logic and reasoning should prevail in rhetorical thinking; thus Whately's philosophy of logical thinking was paramount to Fuller's conceptions of productive conversation. To demonstrate this principle, Garrison states, "Rather than insist on her view, using whatever rhetorical skill she possessed to recommend it, Fuller provides instruction regarding the importance of uncompromising standards when pursuing the truth; not only is conveying thought to word challenging, but the challenges become more difficult the deeper one goes" (103). Whately's advocacy for logical thinking is seen throughout Fuller's own cultivation of the minds of the women involved in the Boston Conversations. As Charles Capper states, "She was a most powerful advocate of an activism of the mind and, to some extent, the social mind. And there was no other woman in America who came close to filling that role" (523). Unfortunately, many of these women may not have been taught to think for themselves, so Fuller seeks to cultivate the skills needed for critical thinking by using Whatelean logic in order to develop their rhetorical skills; thus, her activism lies in this facilitation of women's thinking.

Moreover, Garrison also explores the work of Eliza Farrar, author of a popular conduct book, by stating, "Farrar's conduct book proves especially insightful when used to examine how rhetorical canons were refracted through conversational rhetoric" (105). In examining Farrar's work, Garrison focuses specifically on rhetorical delivery and

invention by discussing rhetorical listening (listening that is engaged and reflective). She states, “We can infer that being an attentive listener would necessarily influence when one speaks – for instance, one participant would not interrupt another, nor would someone dominate the conversation. Conversational delivery, then, is influenced by a speaker’s heightened sensitivity to her audience” (Garrison 107). For Fuller, listening is an important part of the process incorporated into these conversational exchanges. In her work *Rhetorical Listening*, Krista Ratcliffe offers a comprehensive exploration of rhetorical listening as a rhetorical practice. Ratcliffe describes rhetorical listening as, “a stance of openness that a person may choose to assume in relation to *any* person, text, or culture” (17). While the term “rhetorical listening” was not coined until the 20th century, as the intellectual leader of the Conversations, Fuller demonstrated the practice of rhetorical listening in a manner similar to the openness that Ratcliffe describes. Without practicing good rhetorical listening, discussion serves little purpose if ideas are not built from the positions of others. To this point, Garrison discusses the implications for the canon of invention by positing, “another’s *response* to our words carries tremendous inventional value, lost if we fail to listen. Farrar wishes to give young women instruction that will help them become better speakers, and her point is that they will discover what to say and how to say it by listening to others” (106). Part of Fuller’s larger goal was to teach women how to discuss matters logically, and for her, the only way to do this well is to practice good listening skills. Listening strengthens one’s own argument by listening to the voices of others and shaping ideas by building upon the experiences and philosophies of others.

In fact, the sessions of the Conversations that were coeducational did not go nearly as well as the ones that consisted of only women. This was due to the fact that the men who were invited to participate in the conversations did not respect the parameters of the Conversations and did not practice any rhetorical listening skills. Instead, they tried to talk over one another, and the conversations were largely unproductive. Garrison states, “The various digressions characteristic of this meeting demonstrate a failure to listen and thus engage, as the all-female group did, in a collaborative inventional process” (109). As the men had not attended the previous sessions, they did not understand the proper way to engage in conversational rhetoric, especially rhetorical listening. Because of this lack of knowledge and general lack of respect for the platform, the men often tried to change the subject and would talk over one another. Garrison also points out that, “The art of conversation depends upon a respect for the topic and the audience” that the men present did not engage in (109). The men present were most likely used to the structure of public speaking or debates wherein they would be acting as a sole rhetor and the focus of the discourse. They may have also seen the rhetorical guidelines of the Conversations to be arbitrary because they were set down by a group of women led by a woman, and therefore they were less than. However, this notion of respect for the audience is one that carries into several modern conceptions of feminist rhetoric, and one that is essential in pedagogical practice as well.

CHAPTER 5

MODERN CONCEPTIONS OF WOMEN'S RHETORICS

If we take Donawerth's idea that "Scudéry translates the power of language to conversation and feminizes the rhetor," as well as Kolodny's notion that, "Fuller was consciously trying to fashion a set of rhetorical strategies appropriate to the emerging feminist consciousness of her era," we can see how the concepts involved in the projects of both Scudéry and Fuller reflect the work that contemporary scholars of rhetoric have performed to discuss their conceptions of feminist rhetorics (Donawerth 21; Kolodny 361). For instance, in her 1973 essay, "The Rhetoric of Women's Liberation: An Oxymoron," Karlyn Kohrs Campbell makes a pioneering argument that, "The rhetoric of women's liberation is a distinctive genre because it evinces unique rhetorical qualities that are a fusion of substantive and stylistic features" (562). This initial argument formulates the foundation of gender criticism, in which Campbell suggests that this type of rhetoric needs to be recognized as separate from other types of criticism.

Campbell suggests that a major reason for this distinction is that while it shares the qualities of several other types of rhetorical criticism, a feminist approach to rhetorical criticism "attacks the entire psychosocial reality, the most fundamental values, of the cultural context in which it occurs" because feminist rhetoric functions in a society that values individualism and self-determination, which are values largely rejected by feminist rhetoric (563). For instance, Campbell also highlights the stylistic differences that feminist rhetoric has compared to other types of rhetorical analyses, by stating that

the feminist paradigm involves “consciousness raising” which is “meetings of leaderless groups in which each person is encouraged to express her personal experiences. There is no leader, rhetor, or expert” (565). This elimination of the rhetor not only counters the ideals of individualism, but also leads to the idea that rhetoric should be cultivating rather than coercive as many conceptions of rhetoric tend to be, and that through cultivation and respect, the audience shall be persuaded. Further, Campbell expands on her ideas in a speech she delivered as the Carrol C. Arnold Distinguished Lecture for the National Communication Association. She explores the rhetoric of conversation by stating that it is, “dialogic, involving more than one person (or, in rare cases, more than oneself), 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” (Campbell 4).

Furthermore, the idea of respectful and inclusive dialogue has taken off in terms of feminist rhetoric. Foss and Griffin’s concept of “invitational rhetoric” builds upon Campbell’s feminist rhetoric and applies it to ideas about what rhetoricians should strive for upon attempting argumentation. Foss and Griffin describe their idea of invitational rhetoric as “an invitation to understanding as a means to create a relationship rooted in equality, immanent value, and self-determination,” and in doing so, “the invitational rhetor does not judge or denigrate others’ perspectives, but is open to and tries to appreciate and validate those perspectives” (5). The main tenet of the theory is that if the audience and the rhetor gain a mutual respect for each other, it makes the audience and even the rhetor herself more receptive to persuasion, and if they are not to be persuaded, that is okay because they at least have some understanding of the audience’s perspective

and can treat that perspective with respect. These ideas go back to the concept that Campbell laid the foundation for, that this type of rhetoric does not really have need for a leader or a rhetor if everyone in the rhetorical situation is equal. Alexander and Hammers's performative essay seeks to actually perform invitational rhetoric as Foss and Griffin have conceptualized it. They state, "[Foss and Griffin's] 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*." (Alexander and Hammers 6).

This kind of "invitation to rhetoric" is seen in the conversational rhetoric of both Scudéry and Fuller. As Danielle Griffin argues, "Instead of dominance and antagonism, Scudéry's dialogues advocate collaboration and structurally perform each member's contribution to the discourse" (415). Similarly, Garrison, based on the account of the conversations from the writings of Elizabeth Palmer Peabody, describes the "collaborative and cooperative nature of their discussion by illustrating how each comment reflects the individual's effort to advance the thought of the group" (106). By examining the works of Scudéry and Fuller in conjunction with the pivotal work in contemporary feminist rhetorical thinking, we can see that women have been performing this type of rhetorical work for hundreds of years, and these are not the only instances of conversational rhetoric utilized by women throughout time. There are several contemporary projects that focus on bringing the rhetoric used by women throughout the past to the narratives of rhetorical history. Jane Donawerth points out that, "Women have been excluded from histories of rhetoric because historians of rhetoric have privileged the individual, not collective, political and rhetorical actions; immediate, not persistent,

influence for change; and an understanding of politics based mainly on office-holders” (4). Donawerth explains that the exclusion of women from rhetorical history is due to the fact that most entries focus on a single rhetor, rather than the collective energies that have generally belonged to women. I generally take her point, but she also leaves unaddressed the fact that women have been generally oppressed by Western society throughout history. Even if women were using and learning rhetoric, the rhetoric of women would not have been considered worthy enough to be “canonical” by the white males who have primarily contributed to constructing the histories of rhetoric.

Moreover, I have previously discussed Paulo Freire and his theories of education, and I now turn to explore how the conversational rhetorics of women can offer new insight into Freire’s concepts. As outlined in chapter three, Freire’s position offers a pedagogy in which educators liberate their classrooms by use of a dialogic exchange including experience and understanding that leads to a subsequent liberation of the oppressed inside and outside of the classroom. Thus, Freire’s position is basically “invitational rhetoric” for the classroom. An essential aspect of Foss and Griffin’s model of “invitational rhetoric” is that rhetors must cultivate an environment of respect for the audience for this type of persuasion to take place. They state, “Because of the nonhierarchical, nonjudgmental, non-adversarial framework established for the interaction, an understanding of the participants themselves occurs, and understanding that engenders appreciation, value, and a sense of equality” (Foss and Griffin 5). Foss and Griffin’s theory posits that the goal of “invitational rhetoric,” should not necessarily be to persuade, but that if the exchange of ideas occurs in a respectful manner, the rhetor and audience may come to an understanding together. Freire’s ideas are very similar to the

ideas I have been exploring in relation to conversational rhetoric. When discussing ideas of critical pedagogy, we as scholars cannot exclude the work that women have done with conversational rhetoric for hundreds of years before Freire made his arguments about liberated pedagogy. The educative nature of conversational rhetoric should not be overlooked, as education is one of the sole objectives of this type of rhetoric. Fuller especially wanted to give women the skills to think and think critically about subjects of importance. Scudéry also sought to give women a space to engage in conversation that was not only entertaining but also educational in nature. Additionally, the educative nature of conversational rhetoric could help educators to cultivate the *phronesis* that is essential to engaged political participation, a major tenet of achieving deliberative democracy. In creating a space where students can share their experience and learn from the experiences of others through listening and reflecting in conversation, a student is more likely to come away from the classroom with some degree of “practical wisdom.”

CHAPTER 6

PEDAGOGICAL MANIFESTATIONS

In chapter two, I discuss some foundational theories of deliberative democracy, one of which was Nancy Fraser's idea that there is not one overarching public sphere, but that there are many parallel publics and counterpublics existing simultaneously. She states that deliberation should occur within and between these many publics (Fraser 136). In order for educators to equip their students with the skills they need to participate in deliberation on a larger scale, students must be taught in a manner that emphasizes the power structures and social strata present in democratic society, so that they may navigate the existing publics and perhaps eventually foster a unity between them. Not only should instructors focus on feminist rhetorical practices in the classroom, but they should also enact a feminist pedagogical approach. While feminist rhetoric and feminist pedagogy often go hand in hand, as this thesis demonstrates, there are a few additional pedagogical considerations I feel it important to discuss: pedagogies that foster community in the classroom and the optimal age to begin implementing feminist pedagogies.

Most feminist pedagogies focus on fostering environments where students should feel comfortable not only sharing their opinions and beliefs without oppression, but also their experience as a type of knowledge to be shared with others to create an understanding of those who may be different from them. In a study on "experiential learning," DeSantis and Serafini posit that, "we engage in a political process by creating a

learning community in which students and instructors are invited to engage in dialogues, activities, and assignments that require all of us to critically analyze and challenge ourselves and one another on our positioning and practice as learners, educators, and responsible citizens” (87). Educators should focus every aspect of their pedagogy in feminist ideals to the best of their ability in order to promote inclusion and understanding in the classroom to help our students navigate the oppression present not only in schools, but also in democratic society. Especially if students are to understand the “persuasion industry” as Fishkin describes the public sphere, they must learn about oppression early and often, while also engaging in practices in the classroom that combat this oppression, whether it be related to race, class, gender, sexuality, ability, etc. (6). William N. Denman calls for a recultivation of the “citizen-orator” in order to restore voices to the voiceless, “who have historically been unheard, as well as those whose early education, upbringing, and cultural roots have discouraged active participation in civic life.” One of the methods that Denman discusses to achieve this goal is to make courses, “a forum for civic participation” (12). As feminist rhetoric favors dialogue as the preferred method of persuasion, conversational rhetoric is an ideal way to set up a “forum” for classroom discussion and activities.

In an examination of what she calls “procedural feminism,” Cassandra Woody provides an excellent example of an assignment that helps to engage students with their own values and experiences. The assignment has students write an essay on a value that they hold and why they hold that value. Woody states that,

By asking students to investigate the origin of their values, the project recognizes students’ personal experiences and beliefs as supporting evidence for personal

values claims. Students are able to write about a personal topic as they simultaneously defamiliarize that topic by looking below the surface to map out the origins of the values they hold. (487-488)

Projects such as this should be implemented in humanities and social science classrooms at every education level. If we allow students to write about their values, they may come away from the assignment with a better understanding of why they hold the values they do, and in doing so, they might also think about values that may oppose theirs and why people hold other values that differ from their own. A written examination of values may also make students a bit more comfortable discussing their values aloud with their classmates. Woody goes on to say that, “the assignment encourages a dialogic exchange between the self (in this case the student) and the outside world as it slows argument, holding students in a place of analysis rather than moving to persuasion” (488). Woody’s assignment even mirrors the goals of Foss and Griffin’s invitational rhetoric as the assignment encourages understanding rather than direct persuasion. With this assignment, students move to understand their values, not necessarily argue for them, as many typical writing assignments ask students to do.

Moreover, while scholars of rhetoric and composition often discuss pedagogy for the college classroom, particularly the first-year writing classroom, I would like to posit that feminist conversation-based critical pedagogies should not only be implemented in college classrooms, but that these practices and pedagogies should also be introduced in primary and secondary classrooms. College students can be stubbornly set in their ways when they finally reach their first-year writing courses. However, if feminist pedagogies and rhetorics are implemented in classrooms earlier in a student’s education, perhaps

students may enter college classrooms with a more open and engaged approach to learning that many current college students reject upon entering the college classroom for fear of things like being indoctrinated by liberal professors. I would go so far as to suggest that these practices should be started from the very beginning of a student's educational journey for a couple of reasons. First, children are much more impressionable than young adults. If educators can start implementing small doses of conversational rhetoric in elementary school classrooms, children can learn to speak and listen in ways that are crucial to learning how to participate in civic conversation in their future schooling and in the world beyond the classroom. Additionally, not everyone attends college, so we should expose middle and high schoolers to dialogue and discussion in the classroom, so that the dialectical playing field, so to speak, is level when these students enter the "real" world, whether that be after college or high school. Exposing students to these concepts earlier prevents further oppression of those who may not receive the rhetorical education that some receive at a college or university.

In a study of deliberative communication practiced in an elementary school in Finland, Tammi and Rajala conclude that deliberative communication altered "the interactional patterns and the power processes [students] uphold. The results reveal how something seemingly trivial, such as deliberating about a field trip, provided the pupils with positions as democratic participants allowing them to point out issues that mattered to them and to seek for a common resolution" (627). As Tammi and Rajala point out, these elementary schoolers were questioning the power structures of the classroom, which is an essential aspect for feminist rhetoric and pedagogy. One reason perhaps that many scholars do not explore the idea of implementing these pedagogical changes in

primary and secondary school classroom could be that in the United States, there are several exigencies that might prevent such changes. These exigencies might include standardized testing, lack of funding for education especially in impoverished areas, teacher shortages, overcrowding, and a plethora of other issues that plague the United States education system. In order to truly realize a deliberative democracy through the implementation of the pedagogy that I have discussed in this thesis, the United States education system itself requires vast improvements as well. However, if educators are able to take small steps toward this pedagogy, such as including more classroom discussions and deliberative activities, there still might be hope for the future of our democracy.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION: IMPLICATIONS FOR CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY

bell hooks, who drew much of her inspiration from Freire's ideas, states that, "Engaged pedagogy does not seek simply to empower students. Any classroom that employs a holistic model of learning will also be a place where teachers grow and are empowered by the process. That empowerment cannot happen if we refuse to be vulnerable while encouraging students to take risks (21). hooks also posits that, "Despite the contemporary focus on multiculturalism in our society, particularly in education, there is not nearly enough practical discussion of ways classroom settings can be transformed so that the learning experience is inclusive" (35). Healthy democratic society can never be realized if there is not inclusion of all people. If educators incorporate methods of inclusion into their teaching methods, there is a better chance that those students will go on to be more inclusive in their own lives as well. hooks also asserts that, "Making the classroom a democratic setting where everyone feels a responsibility to contribute is a central goal of transformative pedagogy" (39). hooks's ideas concerning this transformative pedagogy bears striking resemblance to the ideas of the conversational rhetoric. Danielle Griffin states, "Dialogue and conversation, like all genres, must be actively and deliberately conducted, constructed, and shaped to reflect the social realities of women and other marginalized groups and to enable their participation in rhetorical discourse" (21). While the conversations held by Scudéry and

Fuller did not necessarily capture the voices of oppressed people (other than women themselves), their ideas are only enhanced by adding the voices of other groups on the margins of society.

In their essay dedicated to exploring consciousness raising rhetoric involved in third-wave feminism, Sowards and Renegar posit that, “Third wave feminist rhetoric creates space for sharing experiences, reading stories, and developing a critical perspective. Third wave consciousness-raising rhetoric simultaneously reaches a large, public audience, but also sparks private, internal dialogue and self-persuasion” (549). Many feminist scholars argue that we are now in a fourth wave of feminism; however, the consciousness raising rhetoric that became popular in earlier waves is an essential aspect of the classroom engagement needed to foster a liberated feminist pedagogy. Additionally, “Third wave feminists share their stories, listen to others' stories, consume popular culture in ways that they find empowering, and create new vocabularies to enhance their own lives, but these activities do not necessarily lead to social activism in its traditional forms” (Sowards and Renegar 548). A feminist rhetorical pedagogy that emphasizes conversational rhetoric and dialogue in the classroom encourages students to explore different modes of conversation, whether it be digital communication, group activities, or de-centralized class discussions. The classroom practices will help establish students' willingness to engage in larger discussions taking place outside of the classroom. Moreover, as both hooks and Dewey explore the notions of education's importance to democracy and vice versa, women have been utilizing democratic education all along by practicing conversational rhetoric, and contemporary feminist rhetoricians seek to continue the educative nature of conversation.

Freire's work has been extremely important to pedagogical practice across the world and across disciplines, and his condemnation of the "banking model" of education saturates modern pedagogical thinking. However, as I have demonstrated in this thesis, Freire was not the first to posit that education can take place through the means of dialogue. Both Scudéry and Fuller performed rhetorical thinking that inherently displaces the solitary rhetor in their conversational rhetoric, while congruently using their conversational methods for educative purposes. Education is paramount for political participation and civic engagement, and by practicing conversation in the classroom, the education that we facilitate with our students can be used by our students to engage in conversation outside of the classroom. A. Abby Knoblauch states, "the values of feminist rhetorics can help better communicate across difference, then a pedagogy that takes those values not only as consent, but also practice, helps reinforce the importance of such cross-cultural communication, especially within the classroom." She also takes the position that, "all feminist pedagogy *is* feminist rhetoric" (259). This idea stems directly from the ideas of "consciousness-raising," and we need to keep these types of practices alive in our classrooms so that we can continue to give our students the skills they need to think critically, so that they can further employ their rhetorical skills in their lives outside of our classrooms. We may not come to ever realize a true deliberative democracy, but we can at least adopt some of the mindsets and practices that go along with the theories of deliberation. The public perception of what rhetoric is used for is already negative, so part of changing that perception is making rhetoric accessible to lay people.

Thomas Farrell asks, "what sort of public persons we wish to be." If we truly have the desire to make the world, or even just a community a better place, we must

demonstrate the desire to speak out. Deliberation can never occur unless we, the people, wish to exercise this type of participatory deliberation. Farrell continues, “To make some of the conditions for such a hearing available and perhaps even contagious has been...I am tempted to say, the larger aim of rhetorical studies” (“Practicing the Arts” 96). As the study of rhetoric moves toward this type of respect and community building, these conditions are where the audience feels and hears rhetoric and actually considers it rather than dismissing it as “mere rhetoric.” This should be one of the main goals of rhetorical studies when considering what rhetoric can be, as it has the potential to be and do many things, one of which is a participatory deliberative democracy. If rhetoric is used to cultivate the ideas of the audience through respectful means, then rhetoric can be much more productive and can heal its bad reputation as means of manipulation. Rhetoric has the potential for good, especially when considered as part of a deliberative society because, as Farrell states, “It is an art, perhaps the only art, of making things matter” (“Philosophy Against Rhetoric” 196).

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