An Annotated Bibliography on Rhetorics of Reproductive Justice

An Annotated Bibliography on Rhetorics of Reproductive Justice is a project motivated by several overlapping exigencies. When we began our collaborative research and writing for this project in the fall of 2019, we were unaware that in the months to follow we would face a global health pandemic, accompanied by the reignition of the Black Lives Matter movement. As we revisit this bibliography in the summer of 2020, we have a new lens through which to view the purpose and potential of this project—now, more than ever, we see how a resource like this can help support the fight to dismantle race-based health disparities, social injustice, and white supremacy by amplifying the voices of the Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) who started, and who continue to sustain, the reproductive justice movement. These are the individuals and communities who “have been the pioneers” of the reproductive justice movement (Ross and
Solinger, 239) and the individuals and groups who face the greatest risk in forwarding its vision and values.

This bibliography is the result of a collaborative, cross-institutional effort by scholars and masters-level graduate students from James Madison University (Dr. Lori Beth De Hertogh, Becca Evans, Philip Meador, Megan Palmer, Jamie Phlegar, and Michelle Smith), University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (Dr. Maria Novotny), and North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University (Dr. Kimberly Harper). It was reviewed by Dr. Natalie Fixmer-Oraiz, Assistant Professor of Communication Studies at the University of Iowa, and by Tia Murray, doula and founder of Birth Wise Doula Services, located in South Central Wisconsin. We intentionally highlight the collective voices and experiences informing this bibliography, as we see this practice as essential to forwarding public action in rhetorical scholarship on reproductive justice.

In crafting this bibliography, we strove to be diverse and inclusive through both the authoring and peer review process. Graduate students who were enrolled in a “Rhetorics of Reproductive Justice in Health & Medicine” course at JMU played a critical role in researching and selecting community organizations and scholarly materials. The perspectives of these young activists and scholars shaped the contour and content of the bibliography at every turn. Kimberly’s work on the ethos of Black motherhood played a key role in emphasizing the intersection of race and gender as issues all too often ignored in mainstream reproductive justice discourse. Maria and Lori Beth’s ongoing work in community-based infertility activism informed decisions behind including materials that speak not only to those who are able to have children, but also to those who are not. As we curated the bibliography, we reached out to Natalie and Tia—scholars and activists of color—to review, critique, and add to our bibliographic selections. Thus, this bibliography is a bricolage of lived experiences, perspectives, and intergenerational identities, and we hope our efforts toward diversity and inclusion are reflected in our citational choices.

We envision this bibliography being used primarily by rhetorical students, scholars, and educators involved in community-engaged
reproductive justice work, but we hope it will also be helpful to those outside of the discipline and, indeed, outside of academia. Though extensive, this bibliography is not exhaustive, and we realize that much more content could be included. This project is intended to serve as a starting place—as a resource that, as it is taken up by rhetorical scholars and community activists, will surely evolve and expand.

As we designed the bibliography, we made the collective decision to organize its contents into four sections:

1. Community Organizations
2. Scholarly Sources
3. Legislation
4. Additional Selected Readings

Readers will find that each annotation is accompanied by a series of tags. These serve as bibliographic metadata to help users find related resources as well as to demonstrate the intersectional and interstitial nature of reproductive justice work. A complete list of all tags included in this bibliography can be found at: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1N_7-aOR9u-23dceQBjOWirGS6QrSacpo3QgA31C0oHc/edit?usp=sharing

A key departure from other bibliographies in rhetoric and writing studies is the “Community Organizations” section, which lists over twenty organizations directly engaged in reproductive justice advocacy and activism. We’ve included this section for three reasons: First, it embodies Reflections’ commitment to promoting and supporting public-facing, community-engaged work. Second, we want rhetorical scholars to acknowledge that community activism around reproductive justice has a long and rich history that precedes scholarly interventions. And third, we believe in promoting the voices and stories of the communities who are speaking truth to power. As Loretta Ross reminds us, if you “tell your truth, you’ll get amazing results and responses” (Ross, MAKERS, https://www.facebook.com/makerswomen/videos/1286476171460704/). By including community organizations in this bibliography, we hope
to amplify and honor the voices and truths of these organizations and encourage other rhetorical scholars to do the same.

Although many of the sources included in the “Scholarly Sources” section come from rhetorical studies, many do not. In collating sources, our approach was intentionally multi-disciplinary and we strove to include the work of scholars from disciplines ranging from communication studies to women and gender studies. Our objective was to acknowledge that reproductive justice is not, nor should be, solely confined to rhetorical scholarship. While we encourage rhetorical studies to take up more scholarship on reproductive justice, we acknowledge that this work needs to occur in conversation with the communities, the disciplines, and the sociopolitical climate that continues to shape this work.

This includes legislation. As we write this introduction, the Supreme Court ruled that civil rights laws protect LGBTQ workers from discrimination, affirming gay and transgender workers are now protected by federal law. The significance of such legislation will certainly trickle down and impact future reproductive justice pursuits. In addition to legislation supporting LGBTQ workers, cities across the country are finally implementing laws favoring police reform in an attempt to better serve Black and Brown communities. For rhetorical scholarship on reproductive justice to be interventional, we cannot ignore the impact of legal rulings. We have, therefore, included a “Legislation” section in this bibliography. Reading and tracing current and future legal action to reproductive justice positions us to mobilize our scholarship within the legal frameworks that mediate reproductive rights and justice.

Finally, as we mention in the introduction to this Special Issue, we understand that the reproductive justice movement grows out of, and is directly related to, the fight for Black liberation and for the liberation of all BIPOC. One resource, created in response to the renewal of the Black Lives Matter protests and murder of Ahmaud Aubery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd, is https://rj4blacklives.org, a website created and hosted by SisterSong, a leading reproductive justice organization. If there is one source our readers engage with, we hope it is this one. While we could have included this website within
the bibliography, we made the collective decision to call readers’ attention to it here as it weaves together a series of exigencies informing reproductive justice work today. We encourage readers to cite this website, read this website, and—most importantly—engage with the work proposed on this website. Ultimately, we hope that this resource, combined with the bibliographic content below, helps rhetorical scholars bring our scholarly and community advocacy to the people and places where it is most needed.

**COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS**


Access Reproductive Care - Southeast (ARC) helps Southern families living in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, South Carolina, and Tennessee obtain safe and affordable reproductive care through financial and logistical support. ARC empowers communities through advocacy, education, and leadership development. Founded in 2015, ARC - Southeast works towards helping all Southerners gain full access to care and support around their reproductive health decisions without bias or barriers.

*Tags: Activism, Access, Community, Human Rights, Families*


Advocates For Youth (AFY) is a national organization that partners with youth leaders, adult allies, and youth-serving organizations to advocate for policies regarding honest sexual health information. Started in 1980 and housed in Washington D.C., AFY envisions a society that views sexuality as normal and healthy. With core values of rights, respect, and responsibility, they champion abortion access and support for young people in the Global South. AFY provides the resources and opportunities necessary to create sexual health equity for all youth.

*Tags: Access, Advocacy, Education, LGBTQIA+, Race, Youth*

Black Women's Health Imperative (BWHI) is a nonprofit organization that has worked for the past 35 years to secure health equality for Black women across the nation. Founded in Atlanta, GA, in 1983, BWHI is the first nonprofit organization focused on advancing and protecting the health and wellness of African American women and girls by promoting “physical, mental and spiritual health and well-being.” Through advocating for improved policies, educating the next generation of leaders, and amplifying and mobilizing the voices of Black women and organizations, BWHI is committed to increasing the health equity of African American women across the nation.

Tags: Black Women, Community, Health, Well-being, Representation


Founded in December 2004, California Latinas for Reproductive Justice (CLRJ) is a statewide organization “committed to honoring the experiences of Latina/xs to uphold our dignity, our bodies, sexuality, and families.” Recognizing Latinas’ reproductive health and rights through reproductive justice frameworks, CLRJ emphasizes the intersection of social, economic and community-based issues that promote social justice for the Latinx community. CLRJ cultivates leadership in policy and advocacy through community engagement, research, and narrative storytelling.

Tags: Advocacy, Bodies, Community, Families, Latino


Empowered Birth Project was started in 2013 through personal documentary narratives that highlighted Katie Vigos’ pregnancy. With a strong focus on encouragement, birth, and motherhood, Empowered Birth Project now has a community that provides a voice to all birthing people to help them feel supported, empowered, and comfortable in their experiences. Empowered Birth Project can be found on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Tumblr.

Tags: Activism, Visual Rhetorics, Social Media, Pregnancy, Motherhood, Community, Childbirth

Founded in 1989, with a main office in California and satellite offices in New Mexico and Oregon, Forward Together works to lift up women of color in leadership positions and unite communities to fight for rights, recognition, and resources for all families. Through programs like “Art As Power” and “Echoing Ida,” Forward Together harnesses the power of art and compelling visuals to disrupt oppressive narratives and champion reproductive justice, healthcare access, family-focused leave policies, and more. Their work in state-level policy making is based in inclusive leadership and teaching practices that recognize there is no one way to be a family.

Tags: Activism, Social Media, Visual Rhetorics, Community, Family-Building


The Guttmacher Institute is a leading research and policy organization that for over 50 years has focused on advancing sexual and reproductive health and rights in the United States and worldwide. In addition to policy and advocacy work, The Guttmacher Institute has a repository of credible research which is accessible to the public via their website. Their research focuses on abortion, contraception, HIV and STIS, and teen reproductive health.

Tags: Abortion, Contraception, Health, Human Rights


In Our Own Voice: National Black Women’s Reproductive Justice Agenda is a national initiative which partners with Black Women for Wellness, Black Women’s Health Imperative, New Voices Pittsburgh, SisterLove, Inc. and SPARK Reproductive Justice Now. The initiative serves as an avenue for Black women’s reproductive justice organizations and activists to amplify reproductive justice efforts at the state and national level. They engage in this work by organizing their attention around abortion rights and access, contraceptive equity, and comprehensive sex education.

Tags: African American, Policy, Access, Legislation
MAKERS. n.d. “Loretta Ross, Feminist Organizer.” Accessed November 9, 2019. https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1286476171460704. MAKERS is a media company that supports the women’s movement by providing their audience with interviews from women who are engaged in changing the world. In this interview, activist Loretta Ross shares her personal history with pregnancy, sterilization, and becoming a reproductive activist. Ross illustrates her journey in a total of fifteen small videos. In them, she discusses why feminism did not work for Black women and how Black women created their own agenda to meet their needs, such as the founding of SisterSong, and explains how the term “women of color” came to exist. Ross also talks about the work involved in starting and maintaining a rape crisis center as well as the need to include transgender women as part of the reproductive justice conversation. Follow MAKERS on Twitter @MAKERSwomen. Tags: SisterSong, Women of Color, Transgender, Rape

NARAL Pro-Choice America. n.d. Accessed November 13, 2019. https://www.prochoiceamerica.org. The National Association for the Repeal of Abortion Laws (NARAL) was established in 1969 at the “First National Conference on Abortion Laws: Modification or Repeal” in Chicago. The organization contends that reproductive rights are necessary to achieve gender equality. NARAL’s values and vision focus on reproductive freedom that includes affordable access to health care options and support for individuals choosing to start and raise a family, such as receiving fair pay and time off after birth or adoption. In 2019, NARAL celebrated the 50th anniversary of its fight to protect reproductive freedom across the nation. Tags: Rights, Access, Families, Healthcare, Reproductive Freedom

National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health. n.d. Accessed November 19, 2019. https://wwwlatinainstitute.org. The National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health (NLIRH) is dedicated to guaranteeing health justice and dignity for Latinas, their families, and their communities. Founded in 1994, NLIRH advocates for policy change with on-the-ground activists and leadership training, as well as community organizing and civic engagement at the local and national levels. They focus on abortion access and
affordability, sexual and reproductive health equity, and immigrant women’s health and rights.  
Tags: Latina, Activism, Access, Community, Civic

The Native American Community Board formed the Native American Women’s Health Education Resource Center (NAWHERC) in 1988 as the first resource center located on a reservation in the U.S. NAWHERC offers programs such as language immersion, public awareness campaigns for reproductive justice, and leadership development. They also run a food pantry and advocate violence prevention and community education. NAWHERC publishes a biweekly newsletter called “Indigenous Women’s Reproductive Watch” that covers a variety of health-related topics for Indigenous women and their families.  
Tags: Native American, Access, Advocacy, Agency, Health Literacy

[https://www.plannedparenthood.org](https://www.plannedparenthood.org).  
Planned Parenthood, founded in 1916, operates more than 600 health centers nationwide, providing high-quality, affordable medical care to the communities they serve. The organization also provides communities with sex education programs and resources to “empower all people to make informed choices about sexuality and relationships, and lead their healthiest lives” (n.d.).  
Tags: Healthcare, Abortion, Education, Access

[https://resolve.org](https://resolve.org).  
Founded in 1974, RESOLVE is dedicated to ensuring that those who are challenged in their “family building journey” are empowered, educated, and supported. As a national organization, its mission is to provide “access to care, advocacy for coverage, access to support and community, access to education, awareness of all family building options.” Their advocacy focuses on infertility and towards building their “capacity, proficiency, and structure to guide and respond to state and federal public policy that impacts people’s ability to build
a family.” To support this work, RESOLVE hosts and/or sponsors several community advocacy events, including: a national ‘Advocacy Day’ which takes place annually in Washington D.C., ‘National Infertility Awareness Week,’ which occurs annually at the end of April to increase infertility awareness, a ‘Night of Hope’ event honoring infertility activists, and several ‘Walk of Hope’ events which are local organized awareness events taking place in cities around the U.S.

Tags: Access, Advocacy, Agency, Families, Family-Building


Romper’s Doula Diaries is a series of videos that follows four doulas and their clients in a narrative format. Currently in its second season, Doula Diaries is breaking the stereotype that Doulas are only available during the birthing processes of individuals that identify as white. Highlighting various stories and backgrounds of individuals expecting, Doula Diaries allows for a raw perspective into the birthing journeys of women bringing babies into the world, while visualizing the support a Doula can provide during this incredible time.

Tags: Activism, Midwifery, Motherhood, Doula, Childbirth, Bodies, Birth Workers


SisterSong is one of the founding reproductive justice groups that has inspired an abundance of work across the nation. The organization has worked to build “an effective network of individuals and organizations to improve institutional policies that impact the reproductive lives of marginalized communities.” Started in 1997 in Atlanta, Georgia, SisterSong strengthens the collective voices of Indigenous women and women of color to help eradicate reproductive oppression and ensure the protection of human rights. Through partnerships with mainstream groups such as Black Mammas Matter Alliance, Trust Black Women, and the Center for Reproductive Rights, RJ training & leadership development, arts and culture programs, and outreach events, SisterSong helps communities represent themselves while advancing the needs and perspectives of women of color.
Tags: Activism, African American, Contraception, Human Rights, Marginalized, Oppression

SPARK Reproductive Justice Now is an LGBTQ+ reproductive justice organization. Based in Atlanta, Georgia, SPARK’s mission is to build new leadership, change the culture, and advance knowledge in Georgia and other Southern states to ensure individuals and communities have the resources and power to make sustainable and liberatory decisions about reproductive health. The organization anchors its work around the historical lasting legacy of the enslavement and exploitation of Black people in the South and center their initiatives around Black women, women of color, and Queer/Trans young people of color. As an organization, they provide leadership development, organize civic engagement, and offer reproductive justice content through digital outreach initiatives like the SPARK monthly podcast.
Tags: African American, LGBTQ+, Policy, Access, South

Students for Reproductive Justice (SRJ) was founded in 2016 by a group of Loyola University students who were committed to fostering a sex positive environment that provides resources and information about sexual health in the city of Chicago. The organization is committed to several reproductive justice projects, including: demanding improved access to reproductive healthcare for all students; TxtJane, a free and confidential delivery service for sexual health products; and a Pads & Tampons Campaign, which seeks to provide free menstrual hygiene products for students.
Tags: Youth, Access, Institutions, Collective

Created in 2012 in Seattle, Surge is a reproductive justice group that strives to end reproductive oppression and secure access to reproductive health services for all. Surge stands with communities of individuals whose “bodies, lives, and families have been subject to state and social control.” The organization focuses on access to reproductive healthcare for immigrants, birthing and reproductive
justice for imprisoned women, and comprehensive and progressive sex education. By advancing racial and reproductive justice and knowledge throughout the Seattle community, Surge works to empower and advance community engagement, education, freedom, human dignity, safety, and policies.

_Tags: Access, Bodies, Community, Health, Race_

_[http://tewawomenunited.org](http://tewawomenunited.org)._

Founded by Native women in 1989, Tewa Women United is a multicultural and multiracial organization that works to amplify Indigenous women’s voices and to end violence against Native women, girls, and Earth Mother. The organization also promotes body sovereignty and ancestral ways of knowing and healing through their Indigenous Women’s Health and Justice Program, which uses an intersectional approach to “braid together issue areas of gender justice, birth justice, environmental justice, economic justice, healthy sexuality and body sovereignty, advocacy and healing for survivors of sexual violence.”

_Tags: Advocacy, Families, Community, Education, Women of Color, Native American_

_[http://www.artofinfertility.org](http://www.artofinfertility.org)._

The ART of Infertility is a national arts organization based in Michigan and Wisconsin. Founded by Elizabeth Walker and Maria Novotny in 2014, the organization curates art exhibits and collects oral histories portraying the intimate moments of grief that have led fertility patients to create. Exhibitions reveal the often unseen and everyday encounters of infertility told from the perspectives of women and men who have suddenly found themselves confronting unanticipated paths of family-building. The mission of the organization is to make infertility visible and generate public awareness about the barriers to reproductive fertility care and access to alternative family-building options.

_Tags: Infertility, Art, Curation, Family-Building, Access_

Founded in 1992 by Gloria Steinem, URGE is a campus chapter-based organization that focuses on educating and engaging young people as advocates for sexual and reproductive justice through training, canvassing, and national leadership. URGE hosts Reproductive Justice Leadership Institutes to introduce young people to the reproductive justice movement and to build activist communities and cross-country connections between campus chapters. To address the broad field of reproductive and gender equity, URGE educates people on abortion, parenting, health and wellness, sex and culture, and civic engagement.

Tags: Activism, LGBTQ+, Education, Representation, Intersectionality, Public Rhetorics, Youth

SCHOLARLY SOURCES

Articles


This article argues that rhetoricians of health and medicine can benefit from new methodological orientations that more fully account for conducting digital research with vulnerable online communities, particularly communities centered around pregnant and birthing people. More specifically, this article introduces a feminist digital research methodology, an intersectional methodology that helps rhetoricians of health and medicine contend with the overlapping rhetorical, technological, and ethical frameworks affecting how we understand and collect health information. To support this methodological shift, the author draws from a five-year case study of an online childbirth community called Birth Without Fear.

Tags: Methodology, Motherhood, Ethics, Online, Community


In this special issue honoring the rhetorical legacy of Our Bodies, Ourselves (OBOS), guest editors Sara DiCaglio and Lori Beth De
Hertogh examine how this landmark feminist text can inform current trends in feminist health rhetorics and reproductive justice. The authors “posit that the seed for disciplinary convergences” between rhetorics of health and medicine and feminist rhetorics “can be traced to the legacy of OBOS which [...] ignited conversations about the need to acknowledge the fundamental feminist idea that knowledge over one’s own body and one’s self is essential for reproductive justice.” The issue includes nine texts, organized according to four frameworks that represent distinct rhetorical approaches to feminist health activism.

Tags: Our Bodies, Ourselves, Feminist Health Rhetorics, Feminist Historiography, Health Literacy


Arlene Geronimus’ work centers on a controversial theory (at the time of publication) called the weathering hypothesis. Geronimus theorizes that social inequality has the potential to affect the pregnancy and birth outcomes of Black mothers and children. For example, a pregnant woman who is living in impoverished conditions might be exposed to lead paint and consequently place the fetus at greater risk of developing learning disabilities in utero. Specifically, she states, “For all social classes, members of minority groups are subject to racial or ethnic discrimination that can be costly to health” (210). This suggestion lends itself to the current conversation happening about Black maternal health and the suggestion that racism is also a factor when considering the needs of Black women.

Tags: Infant Mortality, Teenage Pregnancy, African-American, Health Disparities


In this article, Angela Haas and Erin Frost use a technofeminist methodology to examine how fetal ultrasound technology undermines individual agency. Haas and Frost argue that the ubiquity of ultrasound technology and its visual artifacts in Western culture positions female bodies as frontiers to be surveilled and exploited. Drawing from decolonial, post-structuralist, embodiment,
and rhetorical theories, the authors explore the tensions between ultrasound technology’s medical value in Western society and its potential to produce rhetorics that disempower pregnant, potentially pregnant, and infertile bodies.

**Tags: Healthcare, Technology, Visual Rhetorics, Embodied**


In this article, Hinojosa Hernandez and De Los Santos Upton call for health communication and Latina/o communication scholars to work closely together to counter the reproductive injustices and instances of gendered violence taking place at the U.S. and Mexico border. Using an autoethnographic lens and personal testimony, the authors explore the subject of reproductive injustice at the border. Throughout the piece, they demonstrate how the convergence of racist, patriarchal, and militaristic values lead to a “continuum of micro- and macro-level aggressions, brutality and patriarchal violence” inflicted upon women of color and their children (Hinojosa Hernandez and De Los Santos Upton 2019, 1).

**Tags: Advocacy, Border, Families, Immigration, Latinx**


Drawing from the General Account Office 1976 report on consent issues in Native sterilization, Jennings argues that Indian Health Service physicians failed to provide appropriate documentation or gain informed consent from Indigenous Cherokee women who were sterilized. She suggests that adopting a “more dialogic approach to clinical conversation” (4) enables physicians working with Indigenous communities today to have “a more nuanced understanding of consent and literacy within a tribal context” (1). Jennings’ work contributes to research in reproductive justice that focuses on health literacy, rhetorics of health and medicine, and an individual’s right to bodily and reproductive autonomy.

**Tags: Indigenous, Native Communities, Sterilization, Family Planning, Consent, Health Literacy**
Robin Jensen’s article examines how historical “shifts in reproductive metaphors for infertility” can inform how scholars understand contemporary discourses about infertility (27). Drawing from three historical texts to trace the evolution of language used to describe infertility, Jensen demonstrates how the language used to describe “reproductive agency” shifted from agricultural and biblical metaphors to terminology that reflected a more medical and mechanical understanding of the body and fertility. Ultimately, Jensen suggests that using medical terminology to describe fertility unfairly positions women as being solely responsible for their “failure” to access medical treatments that can potentially resolve their infertility (43).

Tags: Infertility, Reproductive Agency, Metaphor

Kimala Price provides an explanation of the reproductive justice movement in this article. She details reproductive justice’s goals and values, discussing the movement through the lens of narrative analysis. Price explores the stories of individuals and organizations involved in the reproductive justice movement, answering three central questions: “What is reproductive justice? How does it differ from “choice”? What is the political, social, and cultural context from which this “reproductive justice” framework emerged?” (43).

Tags: Activism, Histories, Human Rights, Rights, Women of Color

Yam investigates how an Instagram account called @empoweredbirthproject uses visual rhetoric to resist Instagram’s censorship policy and challenge normative frameworks for birthing bodies. More specifically, Yam argues that the @empoweredbirthproject uses images to “critically evaluate” medicalized birthing technologies as well as normative notions of what birth should look like, who is an expert in the birthing process, and where childbirth should take place. The article underscores how
visual modes rhetorically demonstrate how non-normative birthing bodies embody and enact alternative forms of “expert knowledge” around childbirth (12).

Tags: Birth Images, Visual Rhetoric, Nonnormative

**BOOK CHAPTERS**


This chapter offers an intersectional analysis of reproductive freedom in the context of Asian American women. Foo argues that reproductive freedom is more than access to abortion rights, and that Asian American women face particular cultural challenges to having reproductive choice. Impairing Asian American’s reproductive freedom is rooted in a historical and cultural tendency to not discuss sex and sexuality. Foo suggests that sex as a taboo topic has direct implications for how Asian American experiences reproductive freedoms. For instance, from a historical perspective, reproductive care for Asian American women has faced obstacles through national and international governmental policies to control the Asian American population and a cultural tradition to privilege the male over the female, often resulting in Asian American women experiencing several pregnancies until a male is born. The impact of this historical tendency to deny reproductive freedom has contemporary implications, which foo cites as: continual contraceptive abuse via the prescription of hormonal contraceptives like Depo-Provera, language and cultural access to abortions, Medicaid managed care, prevalence of western reproductive health practices over eastern practices, and access to sexual health information and care.

Tags: Asian American, Policy, History, Sterilization, Cultural Studies, Choice

Gutiérrez provides some of the first scholarship documenting “Latina organizing for reproductive justice” (216). Her analysis focuses particularly on two predominant Latina groups in the nation—Puerto Ricans and Mexicans. Gutiérrez addresses common myths and misconceptions about Latinas. She provides a brief overview of the research on Latinas reproductive and sexual health, such as high mortality rates due to cervical cancer and the high rate of AIDS among Latina women. Gutiérrez articulates the historical reproductive oppression of Puerto Rican and Mexican women by both the government and society. The resistance of reproductive oppression by Latina women was born out of a resistance to the broader exploitation of Latinas by the US. From grassroots organizing in the 1960s and 70s to the formation of the Latina Roundtable on Health and Reproductive Rights (LRHRR) and National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health (NLIRH), Latina women have been fighting against reproductive oppression in their communities for centuries.

Tags: Latina, Histories, Oppression, Access


In this chapter, Ruth Hubbard draws parallels between racial hygiene in Germany and the present-day practices of medical professionals seeking to target and test for hereditary disabilities. Hubbard discusses the problematic nature of these scientific “tests” and outlines society’s “excessive preoccupation with inherited diseases” (101). Hubbard is explicit about her belief that all women should have the right to have an abortion; but she also recognizes that there exists implicit judgements about which lives are “worth living.” Hubbard states that, “prenatal interventions implement social prejudices against people with disabilities” (102). Overall, Hubbard articulates a powerful argument that these new scientific interventions do not expand medical choice, it simply replaces old constraints with new ones.

Tags: Disability, Eugenics, Access, Oppression, Healthcare, Ethics

In this book chapter, Maria Novotny and Lori Beth De Hertogh argue that rhetorics of self-disclosure is a critical component of infertility activism, particularly in the context of women’s healthcare. Too often social norms and discursive practices silence the complex, rhetorical experiences infertile bodies encounter. Novotny and De Hertogh draw upon their own embodied experiences of infertility to illustrate “how self-disclosing infertility acts as a counterstory” to dominant women’s health narratives that privilege pregnancy. This self-disclosure framework is extended to other scenes of infertility activism, including how it emerges in two infertility organizations: The ART of Infertility and RESOLVE: The National Infertility Association. The chapter concludes with an acknowledgement that self-disclosure is a vulnerable and risky act. Nonetheless, the authors find that such risks should be weighed in the reality that experiences of infertility and reproductive loss continue to go unnoticed or privilege narratives that “celebrate the ‘beating’ of infertility.” They argue that self-disclosing infertility makes space for the more nuanced, and not always hopeful, experiences of reproductive loss.

Tags: Self-Disclosure, Infertility, Embodied, Activism


This chapter argues that women of color have historically been viewed as a threat because they can reproduce the next generation of persons of color and, thus, become a deterrent to colonial power. Smith overviews colonial efforts to eradicate Indigenous sovereignty through the deliberate sterilization of Indigenous women in the U.S. She draws on the history and governmental policies supporting sterilization of Indigenous women, the blind prescription of hormonal contraceptives like Depo-Provera, governmental policies influencing Indigenous women’s access to abortion services, and the deceptive rhetoric of reproductive “choice.” The chapter concludes with a series of reproductive principles that directly counter
these historical, colonial traditions denying Indigenous women reproductive freedom.

Tags: Indigenous, Colonial, Policy, History, Sterilization, Choice

BOOKS


In Rhetorics of Motherhood, Lindal Buchanan studies the intersection of motherhood, rhetoric, and public discourse. Buchanan discusses how motherhood is contextualized in American society and invites the reader to consider the rhetorical implications of motherhood’s “exalted status” as a topoi (7). To support this theory, Buchanan discusses how the 2008 McCain/Palin presidential campaign used Palin’s role as a mother in their strategy to connect with voters. Buchanan asserts that mother “operates as a god term within public discourse and connotes a myriad of positive associations” (8). Offering a historical context to rhetorics of motherhood, Buchanan discusses the pivotal roles of Margaret Sanger and Diane Nash through the intersection of motherhood, race, and gender, exploring how these intersections affect Black mothers’ ability to use motherhood as a rhetorical appeal.

Tags: Rhetoric, Ethos, Republican Motherhood, Maternalism, Intersectionality, Topoi


In this book, Deirdre Cooper Owens details early American gynecology’s reliance on, and abuse of, Black enslaved women. Enslaved women were often subjected to experimentation by gynecologists, who believed that Black women could endure more pain and trauma than white women. In comparison, Cooper Owens explains how Irish immigrant women were also treated as a lesser ethnic group by gynecologists. While white male doctors are typically credited as pioneers in the field of gynecology, we do not often hear about the women they experimented on and the ways their medical writings perpetuated racist views about Black and Irish women. Cooper Owens’ book brings awareness to these women’s stories.

Tags: History, African American, Healthcare, Medical/Medicine

In Homeland Maternity, Natalie Fixmer-Oraiz traces the intimate entanglements of motherhood and nation in the recent history of U.S. reproductive politics. Noting motherhood and reproductive justice as intense sites of cultural and political struggle, she analyzes a series of heated public controversies that captured widespread attention in the years following 9/11. Analyzing the opt-out revolution, public debates over emergency contraception, the so-called Octomom, and teen pregnancy in popular media, Fixmer-Oraiz demonstrates how policing maternal bodies is rhetorically tethered to securing the nation, with profound and troubling implications for reproductive justice.

Tags: Motherhood, Nation, Homeland Security, Rhetoric, Cultural Studies


Interrogating Gendered Pathologies points out, interrogates, and formulates tactics to intervene in patterns of gendered pathology that are unjust. This work assembles a transdisciplinary approach from technologies, rhetorics, philosophies, epistemologies, and biomedical data that surround and construct the medicalized body and seeks to reattach them to bodies and to corporeal experience. The purpose of the collection is to consider the lived effects of biomedicine’s gendered norms on embodied experiences—on people’s lives. This collection resists notions of embodiment as separate from, or necessarily in opposition to, biomedical knowledge and in doing so, informs how we understand embodied experiences in relation to reproductive justice. The essays in this collection contribute to the burgeoning field of health and medical rhetorics by rhetorically and theoretically intervening in what are often seen as objective and neutral decisions related to the body and scientific and medical data about bodies. The authors in this collection all operate from the belief that biomedicine as an institution treats some bodies unjustly based on identity characteristics, but the authors approach this central idea with different theoretical commitments, epistemologies, approaches, and frameworks which inform our understanding of the biomedical apparatuses that mediate reproductive health.

Tags: Biomedicine, Pathology, Gender, Transdisciplinary
Gurr, Barbara. 2014. Reproductive Justice: The Politics of Health Care for Native American Women. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press. In this book, Barbara Gurr discusses reproductive healthcare issues pertaining to Native American women. To explore these issues, she describes the experiences of women living on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota (where Gurr lived for more than a year) and the healthcare available to women through the Indian Health Service (IHS). Gurr explains how intersectional experiences of race, gender, and class create significant reproductive health disparities for Native peoples.

Tags: Indigenous, Healthcare, Health Disparities, Women of Color

Johnson, Bethany L., and Margaret M. Quinlan. 2019. You’re Doing it Wrong!: Mothering, Media, and Medical Expertise. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press. Bethany Johnson and Margaret Quinlan analyze the pressures women face to make all the “right” decisions when it comes to pregnancy and motherhood. Coming from an intersectional feminist approach, they investigate the history of advice given to mothers through various forms of media—from nineteenth-century documents to Facebook. Drawing from their own experiences, others’ stories, and analyses of media sources, Johnson and Quinlan discuss how medical expertise around pregnancy and childcare has evolved over the years.

Tags: Healthcare, Histories, Media, Young Motherhood

Johnson, Jenell M., and Susan Merrill Squier. 2018. Graphic Reproduction: A Comics Anthology. University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press. In this anthology, Jenell Johnson argues that comics are a way to navigate multitudes of reproductive experiences through a graphic medium. Johnson positions comics as narrative medicine, and this book explores various themes of reproduction with several collected comics on everything from queer reproductive bodies to navigating postpartum depression to miscarriages. Including strips from Alison Bechdel’s Spawn of Dykes to Watch Out For and Johnson's own Present/Perfect, the book serves as a discursive and visual space to explore the complexities of reproduction through a graphic lens.

Tags: Representation, Visual Rhetorics, Narrative, Infertility, Self-Disclosure, Media

In From Hysteria to Hormones, Amy Koerber traces the history and evolution of the concept of hormones and how the term metaphorically serves as a replacement for the notion of female “hysteria.” Koerber argues that the discovery of hormones played a key role in the “transformation from mythical to scientific understandings of women’s bodies and the health problems that they experience” (xiii). In tracing the history of the term “hormone” as a medical concept, Koerber illustrates how the term “did not necessarily replace older notions like hysteria,” but instead came to embody a blend of biomedicine with old, sexist ways of understanding women’s reproductive abilities (xiv), knowledge that continues to influence the types of reproductive healthcare women receive today.

Tags: Hormones, Hysteria, Rhetorical History, Metaphor, Health


In this book, Iris Lopez takes up issues of sterilization by examining the ways it has been used both as a form of oppression against marginalized women and as a form of voluntary birth control. Drawing from narratives of Puerto Rican women, Lopez demonstrates the complexity of these women’s reproductive health decisions in terms of race, gender, society and culture, and the history of sterilization and eugenics.

Tags: Sterilization, Women of Color, Eugenics, Healthcare


According to Ross et al., reproductive justice includes the right to not have children, the right to have children according to the desires of the parents, and the right to parent children in safe and healthy environments. McClain’s book speaks to the third point and offers a practical discussion about the challenges Black mothers face rearing children in America. McClain’s book discusses the intersection of race, mothering, and politics by addressing the topics of power, education, spirituality, and the body. She asks “What does it mean to become suitable for a society that isn’t really suitable for you? If I am often confronted with evidence that our society doesn’t respect Black
children as children or Black adults as humans, what does that mean to prepare someone for this place” (82)? In an attempt to answer these questions, McClain discusses strategies that Black mothers use to circumvent the violence, emotional stress of racism, and societal pressures Black children experience.

Tags: Intersectional Feminist Activism, Black Maternal Politics, Marginalized, Mid-Wives


In her book, Kim Owens argues that birth narratives and birth plans are powerful rhetorical genres that women use to assert agency over their birth experiences. Owens examines how the process of “birth writing” functions as an everyday form of feminist rhetorical agency, which she defines as “a series of assertions over time and space rather than exclusively as specific instantiations in or for a particular moment or event” (Owens 2015, 2). Owens’ book contributes to conversations about how women use writing as a rhetorical tool to enact reproductive justice in healthcare settings that mediate pregnant and laboring bodies.

Tags: Birth, Embodied, Pregnancy, Healthcare, Agency


In Killing the Black Body, law professor Dorothy Roberts gives readers a historical overview of the reproductive injustices Black women have suffered since arriving in America. Roberts’ work connects the stereotypical images of Black motherhood (e.g., mammy, welfare queen, matriarch, jezebel) with specific legislative acts meant to stymie Black women’s reproductive rights. For those scholars looking for a critique of the eugenics movement and Margaret Sanger’s role, Roberts offers Sanger’s campaign as a “case study in the role of political language and objectives” (79) in forming how we understand reproductive justice. The case study reveals the power of language and reproductive rights —specifically coded language when crafting legislation that is meant to further marginalize women of color and poor women. Roberts’ research on forced sterilization and the use of the contraceptive Norplant details how government officials reinforced stereotypes to force poor women into contraceptive trials.
In this text, Roberts also writes about race and genetic marketing, which is a precursor to her 2012 book *Fatal Invention: How Science, Politics, and Big Business Re-create Race in the Twenty-First Century*.

Tags: Black Motherhood, Race, Eugenics, Sterilization

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This edited collection is the work of SisterSong activists and other scholars. The book’s twenty-six essays are divided into four parts and focus on the reproductive justice work of women of color in the United States. Section one focuses on the history of reproductive activism, while section two provides readers with theoretical arguments. Section three explores legislation and policy, and section four offers selected poems related to reproductive justice.

Tags: Reproductive Justice, Pro-Life Feminism, Critical Race Theory, Critical Feminist Theory, Roe v. Wade, Hyde Amendment

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This book, created as a primer for reproductive justice by Loretta Ross and Rickie Salinger, provides a comprehensive explanation of the central concepts of the reproductive justice movement, with a focus on how the movement differs from the pro-choice versus anti-abortion movements. Ross and Salinger stress that the reproductive justice movement is fundamentally about human rights.

Tags: Human Rights, Intersectionality, Marginalized, Rights, Women of Color

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In *Color of Violence*, “The Color of Choice: White Supremacy and Reproductive Justice,” Loretta Ross discusses the relationship between white supremacy, population control policies, and reproductive justice. She argues that reproductive justice consists of reproductive rights set in a framework of human rights and social justice, and that it can be used to “counter all forms of population control that denies women’s human rights” (1). Ross calls for activists to focus on the laws, policies, and community attitudes that impact the choices available
to different classes and races of women and “dissect strategies of population control” (13) in order to achieve full reproductive justice for all women.

**Tags: Activism, Women of Color, Rights, Oppression, Reproductive Agency**


In *The Rhetoric of Pregnancy*, Marika Seigel uses a feminist lens to rhetorically analyze how historical and contemporary pregnancy manuals function as a form of user documentation for how to manage pregnancy, which she argues has been medically framed as as “risky” experience. Looking at historical texts such as Ballantyne’s 1914 handbook *Expectant Motherhood*, along with more recent resources like BabyCenter.com, Seigel shows how pregnancy manuals rhetorically define, manage, and control women’s bodies throughout pregnancy and labor.

**Tags: Pregnancy, Technical Communication, Feminism**


In this book, the authors detail the history of reproductive justice activism carried out by women of color. Through original case studies, interviews, and historical research, the authors show how African American, Asian American, Native American, and Latina women have fought for their reproductive rights over the years. This groundbreaking activism by women of color is contrasted with mainstream movements and their narrow focus on “choice.” The authors explore issues like identity politics, inclusion, and the future of women’s activism.

**Tags: Activism, African American, Latino, Indigenous, Women of Color, Identity Politics**


Vinson’s book offers scholars working in feminist and reproductive rhetorics insights on issues such as visual representations of teenage pregnancy, counternarratives as a means of rhetorical intervention, and social media as tools for everyday public activism. Vinson
employs a variety of methods (e.g., rhetorical analysis, interviews, focus groups, storytelling) to argue that young women strategically embody the problem of teenage mothering in ways that “speak back” to dominant narratives that rhetorically situate teenage motherhood as a national crisis (ix).

Tags: Young Motherhood, Public Rhetorics, Feminism, Social Media, Visual Rhetorics

LEGISLATION

S.142 - Hyde Amendment Codification Act.
The Hyde Amendment severely restricts the use of federal funds for abortions (SEC. 301.). After the original bill was passed in 1977, lengthy court challenges led to a single exemption on the use of federal funds—when a mother’s life was in danger. Exemptions in cases of rape or incest were added during the first Clinton Administration.

Tags: Abortion, Access, Federal Funds, Legal

The Oklahoma Criminal Sterilization Act of 1935 allowed the state to legally sterilize individuals convicted of three or more crimes involving “moral turpitude.” Jack Skinner, who was determined by the state to be a habitual offender, argued that this violated the Fourteenth Amendment, particularly the Equal Protection Clause, primarily because white-collar criminals were not subject to compulsory sterilization. The Court ruled that the Act did violate the Fourteenth Amendment, and further noted that because the procedure is irreversible, sterilization laws should be subjected to “strict scrutiny.”

Tags: Sterilization, Legal, Eugenics, Equal Protection Clause

In 1971, William Baird provided Emko Vaginal Foam (a vaginal spermicide contraceptive) to an attendee of his lecture on birth control and overpopulation at Boston University. Baird was charged
with a felony by the state of Massachusetts for the distribution of contraceptives to unmarried people. This case focused on the precedent established in Griswold v. Connecticut concerning the right to privacy. While the Supreme Court struck down the Massachusetts law, it was not on privacy grounds. In a 6-1 decision, the court held that the distinction between single and married people in the law failed to meet the “rational basis test” in the Fourteenth Amendment’s Equal Protection Clause. While married people were entitled to contraceptives based on the decision of Griswold v. Connecticut, withholding this same right to single people without a “rational basis test” exposed a flaw in the law. In the majority opinion, Justice Brennan stated, “it is the right of the individual, married or single, to be free from unwarranted governmental intrusion into matters so fundamentally affecting a person as the decision whether to bear or beget a child” (405).

**Tags:** Contraception, Legal, Access, Equal Protection Clause


This landmark 1971 case focuses on whether a woman’s choice to have an abortion falls under the Fourteenth Amendment’s “right to privacy.” The court found that while the state has legitimate reasons for protecting the health of pregnant women, the interest varies over the course of a woman’s pregnancy and the law has to account for these variations. The state does not have the right to regulate an abortion in the first trimester. This case determined that the Constitution protects a women’s right to abortion without unrestrained government restriction. It is only in the third trimester that the state may regulate or prohibit abortions; however, the state can only impose these regulations in the law in situations when abortion is necessary to preserve the mother’s life.

**Tags:** Abortion, Legal, Access, Right to Privacy


In this seminal case, the Supreme Court upheld the constitutional right to have an abortion as determined in the decision of Roe v. Wade
(1973), though the Court modified the standard for scrutinizing the restrictions on that right. Using the “undue burden” test, which states that legislatures are prohibited from making a law too burdensome or restrictive on an individual’s fundamental rights, the Court determined that one of the provisions of Pennsylvania’s abortion control law failed that test. However, the other four provisions were upheld, and the decision also altered the trimester guidelines established in Roe v. Wade, allowing states to intervene earlier in a woman’s pregnancy.

Tags: Abortion, Access, Activism, Bodies

This case centers on a Nebraska state law that prohibited “any partial birth abortion” with the exception of procedures that are necessary to save the mother’s life. Leroy Carhart, a Nebraskan physician, sought suit on the grounds that the law violated the due process clause of the Fourteenth Amendment, claiming the law was unconstitutionally vague and placed undue burden on physicians and female patients seeking to undergo the procedure. In a 5–4 decision, the Supreme Court held that “Nebraska’s statute criminalizing the performance of ‘partial birth abortion[s]’ violates the U.S. Constitution, as interpreted in Casey and Roe.”

Tags: Abortion, Legal, Access, Birth, Burden, Due Process, U.S. Constitution

In 2012, representatives of the Hobby Lobby Store sued the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, Kathleen Sebelius, over the contraceptive requirement in the Affordable Care Act (ACA). The owners of Hobby Lobby operated the business based on their Christian values, which included the belief that contraceptives are immoral. The plaintiffs argued that this requirement violated both the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment and the Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993 (RFRA). This case determined that a for-profit business could deny its employees health coverage for contraceptives based on a company’s religious objections.

Tags: Contraception, Religion, Affordable Care Act, Access
Young v. United Parcel Service (UPS), Inc. is a Supreme Court case that centers on discrimination under the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Pregnancy Discrimination Act. In 2006, Peggy Young had taken a leave of absence to undergo *in vitro* fertility treatment. The procedure was successful and Young became pregnant. Young was advised by medical professionals to not lift more than twenty pounds, though in her job with UPS, Young was required to lift up to seventy pounds. Due to her inability to meet this work requirement, and because Young had already used all of her family/medical leave time, she was forced by UPS to take an extended, unpaid leave in which she lost medical coverage. After giving birth in April of 2007, Young continued to work for UPS. Young then sued UPS for discrimination under the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Pregnancy Discrimination Act. UPS moved for summary judgement and argued that Young could not show that UPS made this decision based on her pregnancy and that her pregnancy did not constitute a disability. The district court dismissed Young’s claim and the U.S. Court of Appeals affirmed. The Supreme Court then held an interpretation of the Act that requires employers to provide pregnant workers the same accommodation as others with similar bodily limitations.

**Tags: Pregnancy, Discrimination, Legal**

After the 2010 Affordable Care Act (ACA) passed, companies that offered health plans were required to provide screenings and preventative care, pursuant to the guidelines created by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The HHS guidelines also included contraceptive methods (among other services) for women with reproductive capacity. The regulations include an exemption for contraceptive coverage for religious employers. The petitioners in this case were religious organizations that argued the mandatory contraception coverage violated the 1993 Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA). Taking into account the importance of this decision, the Court remanded (“returned”) this case back to the lower courts for reconsideration. This was in
an effort to afford both parties an opportunity to seek a decision that respects the religious freedom of organizations and grants employers contraceptive coverage.

Tags: Access, Contraception, Legal, Affordable Care Act

ADDITIONAL SUGGESTED READINGS

Community Organizations


Articles


Books


