

Research Statement

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Recognition, agency, and belonging have long occupied a central place within rhetorical inquiry because they illuminate how communities come to understand themselves. These concerns animate my scholarship as I investigate the rhetoric of Latinidad, borders, and agency to understand the communicative practices that cultivate coalitions and social movements. My work proceeds from the conviction that rhetoric informs the symbolic frameworks that influence which histories are remembered, whose voices acquire ethos, and which experiences become part of public understanding.

My scholarship first developed from questions emerging in the Rio Grande Valley, a region whose public identity has frequently been diminished to narratives of crisis, illegality, and surveillance. Those representations obscure the intellectual, cultural, and civic traditions that have long characterized border/ed communities. My book project, *Bordered Agency at the Mouth of Crisis*, responds to this tension by developing bordered agency as a rhetorical concept that explains how Latina leaders cultivate coalitions within spaces historically defined by exclusion. Through rhetorical analyses of Sister Norma Pimentel, Dr. Juliet V. García, and Juanita Valdez-Cox, I examine how religious advocacy, educational leadership, and community organizing reshape public understandings of the border while advancing alternative vocabularies of belonging. Collectively, these figures demonstrate that rhetorical agency emerges through relationships with the communities and histories that continue to influence public life.

These questions continue in my work on prophetic rhetoric. My journal article, published in the *Journal of Communication and Religion*, examines the relationship between moral witness, public advocacy, and immigrant recognition. I consider how prophetic discourse reorganizes the ethical terms through which immigration is debated. Instead of appealing primarily to policy or partisan identification, Sister Norma Pimentel's rhetoric invites audiences to confront questions of moral responsibility and collective obligation. In my article, I reflect a broader interest in the rhetorical practices that alter public judgment by expanding the moral vocabularies available for interpreting contemporary social issues.

Recognition, agency, and belonging also guide my pedagogical scholarship. My work on botánica pedagogies examines community spaces as sites of rhetorical education. I am interested in how pedagogical traditions circulate across communities, how knowledge is preserved through cultural practice, and how communication maintains forms of belonging that often remain absent from conventional educational narratives. These questions extend into my scholarship on borders, where I examine the communicative barriers of accessibility in higher education. My concern is not limited to physical access, though. I ask how educational institutions cultivate conditions that allow students to fully exercise their intellectual agency.

More recently, these concerns have expanded into online environments. My research on algorithmic borders considers how systems of verification increasingly participate in determining recognition, access, and participation within contemporary society. Verification technologies, algorithmic decision making, and digitized infrastructures establish new forms of bordering that influence whose presence becomes subject to continual verification. By extending border rhetoric into

online contexts, this work examines how longstanding questions concerning recognition persist even as the sites of rhetorical negotiation continue to evolve.

My interest in recognition, agency, and belonging also informs my engagement with rhetoric as a discipline. Conversations concerning the future of rhetoric as a discipline often ask whether the field remains relevant within an increasingly interdisciplinary academy. I approach this question from a different perspective. The enduring significance of rhetoric lies in its capacity to explain how communication shapes civic culture, technological change, and collective memory across diverse contexts. My work, therefore, examines the future of rhetoric as an opportunity to reconsider the intellectual contributions rhetoric continues to make across the humanities and social sciences.

Methodologically, my scholarship is grounded in rhetorical criticism. I employ narrative criticism, cluster criticism, and close textual analysis to examine speeches, public addresses, interviews, digital artifacts, and community texts. Although the archives vary considerably, each project returns to a common set of questions concerning recognition, agency, and belonging.

My research agenda continues to expand into new rhetorical realms while remaining anchored in questions of recognition, agency, and belonging. I remain interested in the communicative practices that shape collective life across geographic, pedagogical, and digital spaces. As my scholarship develops, I seek to conceptualize how rhetoric informs civic life in border/ed spaces. Across every article and book, I return to the same perennial question: How does rhetoric shape the conditions under which individuals and communities come to recognize themselves, one another, and their place within the world they collectively inhabit?