

Archival Quest: Research Writing Pedagogies To Recover Historical Rhetorics that Centralize Latinx Voice & Inquiry

Loretta Ramirez

This article considers a pedagogical approach that centralizes student-led archival retrieval of rhetorics. The precise context of the author's inquiry is situated in a Californian classroom wherein the author teaches writing in a Latinx Studies department, serving predominately Chicana first-generation demographics. In that context, the article responds to students who struggle to locate meaningful rhetorical models to bolster articulation of self and identity formation within academia. To tend to student needs, the author details the development of an upper-division writing course, *Archival Quest: Reclaiming Latinx Rhetorics*. The course's chief learning outcome is for students to practice research methodologies that advance epistemological freedoms in support of rhetorical sovereignty in their writings. The article provides writing samples by students exercising authority on largely untapped archives that potentially impact knowledge and mobilization of a voice to achieve varied academic and social endeavors while meeting students' sense of cultural rhetorical inheritances. Although featuring a course developed to serve specific demographics, the author models a framework that suits broader student populations seeking pedagogies of inclusion and equity in research and representation. The article's primary goal is to formulate pedagogy that delivers students opportunities to assume responsibility for presenting an academic voice reinforced by rhetorical belonging.

In Christina Fernandez's photography series *María's Great Expedition*, the artist offers six self-portraits that restage her great-grandmother María's life as a migrant single parent in early twentieth-century California. Fernandez's body serves as a surrogate for narrating María's memory, yet this endeavor is articulated through a reimagining that is fragmented into episodic and overly-stereotyped visualizations. In *1927, Going back to Morelia*, one image from *María's Great Expedition*, Fernandez channels María as a romanticized nomad with silent-era Hollywood cupid's bow lips and slick pixie hair perching on luggage, alone on chunky gravel beside train tracks. In this deserted nowhere space, there is no train station, leading one to imagine that María will grab her belongings and jump onboard as a train nears. Although a knitting project is draped across her lap and a letter unfolds in her left hand, these objects of interwoven threads and words fail to alleviate her exaggerated impatience.

Instead, María stares to the horizon, straining to detect motion along the track—an effort that parallels Fernandez’s straining to perceive distant family pasts that may transport potential for her future-forward action. Such future-forward action is Fernandez’s attempt to capture her own self-portrait as accurate articulation of a past she embodies. This form of self-articulation is compromised, however, within Fernandez’s own obscured history, leaving her—like María—stranded in her journey.

In *María’s Great Expedition* and especially in *1927, Going back to Morelia*, Fernandez teaches the importance and challenges of locating predecessors as we embark on quests to articulate self. This quest is one I detect in my students. The reality of my Californian classroom space is that I teach writing and rhetoric in a Latinx Studies department, serving predominantly Chicana first-generation students. In that context, I watch students struggle to locate meaningful rhetorical models to support articulation of self and further their identity formation within academia. Like Fernandez, my students seek a form of belonging—a belonging rooted in rhetorical genealogies wherein a voice from the past might inform the voice of today. I watch students imagine that such a voice from the past must exist, and it must feel like home when they find it. More importantly, that voice might help them express selfhood in a way that their world will better understand them. I speak of the academic world wherein my Chicana students often encounter non-receptive audiences. Lack of reception is due to lack of familiarity—in both my student-rhetors and their academic audiences—regarding Chicana rhetorical inheritances that have not been widely transported by the books, libraries, and archives that inform scholarly writing and assessments.

Let us return to María waiting for the train, her knitting and letter disregarded as she leans towards the train tracks, desiring conveyance into the future where Fernandez waits to receive her. María’s lack of attention to the threads and words in her hands signals neglect—not by those of the past living their lives—but by history’s gatekeepers who do not convey the stories that women like María carry. Fernandez emphasizes this loss by the wayside, a loss of story and artifacts that might accurately help Fernandez not only narrate the lives of ancestral Chicanas but locate her placement in that cultural lineage. Frustrated, Fernandez’s portrayal of María pivots between the artist’s poignant longing to embody her ancestor and apparent lack of perceiving the real María, concealed even from family under dominant narratives of Hollywood photographic conventions. Contemporary Chicanas in Fernandez’s photography fail to embody their histories due to lost fragments, re-composed only by imaginings shaped by popular culture. This failure also brings forth the need to recover such wayward histories. This confrontation is one that Chon Noriega describes in Fernandez’s works as an “internal critique” of the art world’s lack of attempts

(especially in museum spaces) to help document and piece together lost narratives of “an alternative cultural history for the American West” (13). My goal is similar—to perform an internal critique of composition pedagogy to create space where my Chicax students might better articulate themselves to themselves and others.

In this article, I consider a pedagogical approach that centralizes student-led archival retrieval of rhetorics that allow students to discover, explore, and potentially elect meaningful rhetorical antecedents. This pedagogy’s primary outcome is for students to practice research methodologies that advance epistemological freedoms in support of rhetorical sovereignty in their writings (for “epistemological freedoms” see Ndlovu-Gatsheni). Regarding rhetorical sovereignty, I imagine a writing environment in which students might centralize their goals and elect the modes, styles, and languages that best advance such goals (see also Lyons 449-450). On my campus, I have collaborated on and spearheaded course developments that centralize students through archival research writing. This effort includes a first year stretch composition course that I co-developed in summer 2021, an already existing upper-division historical rhetorics course (*History of Chicano Rhetoric*) that was my first platform to teach archival research, and an upper-division research writing theory and methodology course (*Archival Quest: Reclaiming Latinx Rhetorics*) that I created and secured in my university’s 2022-2023 catalog.

I have already circulated the study of my lower-division stretch composition and its use of archival pedagogy in a separate article, “Digging the Archives in Composition Stretch Programs,” so I focus here on my most recent project, the development of an upper-division *Archival Quest* from my studies of student outcomes performed in my *History of Chicano Rhetoric* courses. The student writing from previous iterations shaped my curricular design for *Archival Quest*, allowing me to actualize this three-course sequence (first-year composition, historical rhetorics, and archival theory and methodology) on the campus where I work. The aim of my three-course sequence and my writing and rhetoric pedagogy is to insist that students—at every major train stop along academic journeys—are not abandoned in a nowhere space, awaiting a vehicle to articulate a future-forward self. The pedagogy I advocate focuses on student journeys of locating, understanding, and practicing elected rhetorical inheritances.

I define rhetorical inheritance as a claim to voice that derives from and fortifies one’s sense of belonging. This belonging is situated in student election of one or multiple intersecting cultural associations within various heritage options, contextualized in local and temporal identification. Rhetorical inheritance is not a birthright but a dynamic sense of voice, impacted by one’s living relationship with communication experiences and mitigated by historical

(dis)connection. In my classes, historical disconnections are prominent, making election of rhetorical inheritance a quest to uncover, claim, and articulate identity. I resist assigning students rhetorical analysis projects that assume a cohesive identity within Latinx cultures. Indeed, I am often at odds with myself as I privilege Latinx rhetoric in an ethnic studies department while knowing that this centralization supports notions of “alternative” rhetoric. I recall cautions by Ellen Cushman and colleagues that “each alternative rhetoric risks replicating the very same epistemological hierarchies and boundaries of exclusion created by the imperial difference of Western rhetoric” (2). Though I continue to prioritize Latinx rhetoric in the context of my ethnic studies classes, I make no assumptions that my Latinx Studies majors and minors crave an essentialized representation of Latinx voice or that they are satisfied with Latinx rhetorical surveys as conveying their imaginings of their cultural rhetorics.

Accordingly, I advocate notions of rhetorical inheritance to centralize my students rather than an “alternative rhetoric” thus equipping students with various theoretical and methodological tools in pursuit of knowledge-making and supporting students as they seek rhetorical models that appeal to and reveal their sense of identity and voice. In my three-course sequence of archival studies writing and rhetoric classes, I ask students to recover voices from primary sources, contextualize sources in historical locations, establish sources as cultural rhetorics that function within intersectionalities of race, class, gender, and sexuality, and evaluate sources’ legacies through modern perspectives. Students exercise authority on largely untapped archival fragments that potentially impact knowledge, development, and mobilization of voice to serve varied academic and social endeavors. In this way, I join efforts prominent in recent decades by composition scholars such as Pamela VanHaitsma, Wendy Hayden, Jessica Enoch, and James P. Purdy, yet I bridge scholarship on pedagogical innovation in composition with Latinx studies.

Decolonizing and Delinking through Archival Research Writing

The archival writing pedagogy I describe here is a decolonial rhetorical process because my Latinx students locate distinct ways to expand community and self-declarations. I again reference Cushman and colleagues in conceiving decolonizing rhetorics as offering “options, rather than alternatives, and do[ing] so in an effort to pluriversalize rhetorics without universalizing or authenticating another alternative approach to rhetoric” (2). Indeed, in my design, rhetorical histories are less about relating a piece of Latinx rhetoric and more about each student serving as an audience for the rhetoric of the archival piece. Simultaneously, I envision students as rhetors themselves who do not prioritize a response to external, imaginary, normative performances. This rhetorical study is less about examining an external audience (via a tra-

ditional rhetorical analysis assignment) than shaping a rhetorical persona to prioritize an inner audience. Such reshaping of rhetor-audience relations facilitates delinking from one privileged form of semiotic and epistemological system by allowing an examination of rhetorical traditions that do not entirely derive from colonial imposition.

I speak of delinking writing studies from a thread of rhetorical history that privileges a northwestern European trajectory traveling from Aristotle's Greece into northwestern Europe and northeastern United States. A norm in composition is to link rhetorical strategies to an ancient Greek origin, thereby positioning other rhetorical trajectories as derivative and infantilized (for historical infantilization as colonizing mechanism, see Dussel; see also Quijano). Conversely, delinking devises trackways particular to individual desire. Informing my ideas on delinking are Walter Mignolo's "Delinking" and "Epistemic Disobedience and the Decolonial Option," Damián Baca and Victor Villanueva's *Rhetorics of the Americas*, Iris Ruiz and Raúl Sánchez's *Decolonizing Rhetoric and Composition Studies*, Romeo García and Damian Baca's *Rhetorics Elsewhere and Otherwise*, and Romeo García and José M. Cortez's "The Trace of a Mark That Scatters: The Anthropoi and the Rhetoric of Decoloniality."

Like many of the above decolonial writing and rhetoric scholars, I practice delinking to fortify belonging that supports convergences of Latinx rhetorical histories and practices but also attends to specific spaces in time and place, encounters, and individuals. This view recalls Malea Powell's descriptions of cultural rhetorics as spaces "practiced into being through the acts of storied making, where the past is brought into conscious conversations with the present and where—through those practices of making—a future can be imagined" (388). For my students, I propose conscious conversations between present learners and textual spaces that impact the communicative modes of the southwestern United States as expressed today and shaped by individuals who navigate various life experiences and rhetorical spaces (see Cedillo et al.).

Yet, the specificity of my teaching in Latinx Studies should not limit this pedagogy to Latinx students but serve as consideration for how we might expand historical rhetorics in more diverse writing inheritances. Indeed, my classes attract students majoring in other ethnic studies departments and the general student body who seek to satisfy writing requirements in a way that represents knowledge production within an ethnic studies field of interdisciplinary inquiry and social action. Many students in ethnic studies composition and rhetoric courses crave validation as writers whose immediate rhetorical lineage remains outside traditional writing opportunities. By contextualizing writing strategies within various rhetorical inheritances, we may guide students to enter historical rhetorical lineages to actively lead in formation of academic voices that do not conflict with cultural rhetorical identities.

I also pull from my positionality as a first-generation Chicana and Apache-Mescalero former student who experienced meandering academic journeys full of prolonged stops at abandoned nowheres. My academic journey consisted of one BA (Anthropology), three MAs (English with emphasis on narrative theory, Art History with emphasis on medieval Iberia, English with emphasis on Chicana rhetoric), and one PhD (English with emphasis on Chicana multimodal rhetoric and critical composition). I earned my last three degrees while teaching at a community college, then a private catholic university, and finally two public state universities. At nearly fifty years old, I completed my dissertation, and twenty years after beginning my teaching career, I secured a tenure-track position. My excessive degrees and years of teaching before feeling myself to have arrived confirm prolonged isolation in academic life where my only role models, as excellent as they were as mentors, expressed experiences unfamiliar to mine. Yes, they articulated an academic rhetoric I might mimic to achieve the success they modeled. Still, the validation I would then receive was based on performativity in a rhetorical vehicle that did not derive from my cultural home. My academic history speaks to a need for validation I could not locate from the educators at each station of my journey. In my five degree programs, I studied with only one Latino and no Latina instructors.

Accordingly and throughout my education, I opted to perform silently in classrooms rather than practice vocabularies and rhetoric that felt clumsy in my mouth. This silence was fortified by the absence of literature that might have helped me better understand myself through rhetorics that might have flowed more smoothly into my mind and from my mouth. Only when I entered my PhD program did I receive guidance to situate my home rhetoric into academic settings. My faculty advisor handed me Cherríe Moraga's *Loving in the War Years*; I soon realized that it took me decades to feel that rhetoric was not just an area of study but an action and art that I embodied. That realization validated me as a speaker. It mobilized my voice. My rhetorical vehicle finally arrived to carry my story onwards into academia, a story that I had silently held—yet internally shaped ever since my starting point as a member of a family, community, and culture.

In many ways, my experiences testify to the still-extant predominance of educational narratives wherein Latinx students struggle with erasure of home identities after lengthy attempts to navigate nomadic borderlands between personal and academic linguistic and rhetorical spaces. Such reports have been abundant in Latinx educational biographies for decades. We might evoke Richard Rodriguez's memoir, *Hunger for Memory*. Even in his early years, Rodriguez realizes that once indoctrinated in classrooms, he is compelled to inhabit a new textual home wherein he takes his "first step toward academic success, away from his family. [...] He cannot afford to admire his parents"

(51). Beyond personal narrative, many studies of Latinx first-generation students explore conflicts between home and academic identities. In “If You Show Who You are, Then They are Going to Try to Fix You’: The Capitals and Costs of Schooling for High-Achieving Latina Students,” Leslie Ann Locke, Lolita A. Tabron, and Terah T. Venzant Chambers examine enormous family and cultural losses students may feel compelled to accrue to chase competitive ambitions in classrooms. The authors argue that students from traditionally marginalized groups enter academic spaces with undervalued cultural capital (14). The result is often cultural-identity suppression to avoid assessment of academic ability and/or scrutinization as a “real” student; this suppression distances students from family, culture, and rhetorical traditions (26, 30). The authors conclude that for Latina students, it is challenging to bring an authentic self to academic settings since achievement alienates mobilization of cultural self (27).

One response to situations wherein students stand at crossroads between cultural and academic selves is to cultivate notions of *nepantla*. Modeling this tactic is Juan Guerra’s critical composition pedagogy that extends concepts of in-betweenness, or *nepantla*, as a state of empowerment—*nepantla* referencing Nahua metaphysical liminal states. Guerra writes that “transcultural repositioning is a rhetorical ability that members of our [Chicanx] community often enact intuitively,” and these members are advantageously positioned between cultures to “develop a rhetorical practice that mainstream dwellers who rarely venture outside the matrices of their own safe houses are not likely to cultivate” (34). Recalling Gloria Anzaldúa’s borderland-dweller, Guerra embraces “nomadic consciousness” and elicits educators to foster spaces of in-betweenness wherein students might compose reflections on their travels between socio-linguistic identities to engage critically with their immediate worlds.

It is crucial to note that this nomadic borderland state situates Chicane writers as constantly practicing skills of rhetorical adaptations, which, although enabling varied critical insights, can perpetuate ever-bending performativity to suit immediate audiences. I do not advocate an academic experience that continues to ask some students more than others to twist themselves in rhetorical knots. I seek an academy that makes more accessible opportunities for students to elect rhetorical vehicles that suit their intersectional identities and rhetoric that expresses such intersections. While my pedagogy appreciates audience, context, and rhetor positionings as core to writing strategies, I aim to make normative in classrooms not nomadic rhetoric so much as stillness to first un-earth rhetoric that provides companionship for students’ self-articulation. My primary attention is to equip learners with skills to unearth historical rhetorics that offer blueprints for building their rhetorical vehicle. Once such rhetoric is identified and practiced, students might construct and mobilize their own

rhetorical vehicles—and embark on a quest to advance an academic voice that does not sound unfamiliar to self.

Students Unearthing and Constructing

While archival studies entered my writing courses a decade ago when I adopted Baca and Villanueva's *Rhetorics of the Americas*, it was not until the COVID-19 pandemic that I paired readings of archival rhetorics with student-centered archival research writing. The reason was three-fold. First, I experienced several semesters of positive student interest in archival research that increasingly populated class readings. Second, during emergency relocation to online teaching, I realized many academic, museum, and community repositories were making available more holdings that could be accessed for primary research. Third, I felt urgency as pandemic death tolls escalated, and I realized that with the tragic loss of life that disproportionately impacted underrepresented communities, we were losing many living archives before we had enough chance to even explore cataloged archives already waiting for attention. The time was now to enlist student power to preserve living and collected archives.

Since Fall 2020, I have incorporated archival research writing to suit various skill levels and course outcomes in my first year composition and history of rhetoric courses. As I write today, in Spring 2023, I am teaching my new course, *Archival Quest: Reclaiming Latinx Rhetorics*, which features archival research as decolonial methodology. Launching *Archival Quest* puts into practice a design I manifested from observing student work performed in my *History of Chicano Rhetoric* classes (Fall 2020 and 2021). This course's historical emphasis accommodated primary-source rhetorical studies. I was accordingly able to isolate student engagement with greater precision since, by topic, the course already centralized rhetoric and history more so than in conventional composition courses. Focusing specifically on Chicane rhetoric also helped me assess how non-Chicane students might transfer our project to their positionalities. In studies of student performances, I concentrated on one assignment, the Archival Rhetoric Research Paper (ARRP).¹

The ARRP requires students to achieve five tasks: select an archival piece, research its socio-political historical context, analyze its rhetoric, integrate that rhetoric into original contexts, and critically evaluate the piece's rhetorical contributions. The ARRP's final task—assessing rhetorical contributions, typically placed in students' conclusion paragraphs—became my primary focus as I examined student engagement with pieces as perhaps reflecting cultural legacy and personal impact on student identity and/or voice. I received forty-eight final drafts from two semesters. Thirty-one of these students self-identified as female (sixty-five percent), with twenty-four identifying as Latina (fifty

percent), three Asian-American, three Anglo-American, and one Pakistani-American. Seventeen submissions were from students who self-identified as male (all of whom identified as Latino).

Striking is that students most prominently selected two main rhetors: student activists and Chicanas (sometimes both). Thirty-eight percent of submitted ARRPs featured student activists (including Los Angeles walkout participants and journalists, education fundraisers, and feminists), and twenty-five percent featured Chicana rhetors (including feminists, labor, political, poet, journalist, and 1960s-1980s student activists). Another leading trend in ARRPs was that students honed rhetorics into specific genres, such as activist reports, creative nonfiction, theatrical performances, poetry readings, and muralists. Attention to multimodal rhetorics was represented in nineteen percent (including business flyers, home altarpieces, mixed-media pop art, and murals in living spaces). Prominent rhetors such as César Chavez and Reies Lopez Tijerina were featured in thirteen percent, predominantly by examining rare speeches and interviews. While eighteen percent expressed desire during prewriting and exploration stages to locate LGBTQ+ archival pieces, during research only four percent secured pieces associated with Chicana LGBTQ+ rhetors that they would feature in the ARRPs.²

The Fall 2020 and 2021 *History of Chicano Rhetoric* classes were administered online and employed solely digital archives and online databases. As previously noted, my classes were impacted by greater availability of digital archives that propagated as many university and museum archival spaces shifted to emergency online access during the most dangerous years of the pandemic, and many institutes also provided high-resolution scans of letters, articles, and pamphlets to my students through individual requests. This made available during the pandemic archival pieces that otherwise would necessitate physical contact and thus student travel time and expenses. Not only were archives more accessible to less privileged demographics, namely undergraduate populations, but online formats accommodated archival studies (see also Purdy for discussions on ways digital archives expand undergraduate knowledge-making projects). Digital archives, databases, and physical holdings required lengthy online exploration and correspondences that in my *History of Chicano Rhetoric* classes occupied many weeks of activities that remote learning readily acclimated for discovery. Though existing archival repositories always limits students through the privileging of dominant historical narratives, the ARRPs indicate sustained scholarly curiosity rooted in students' desire to seek rhetoric that meaningfully related to their identities (see also VanHaitisma's discussion on student-driven inquiry in digital archives).

The ARRPs also empowered students. The prominence of my students choosing student activists as rhetors is most telling evidence for my assertion.

Students pursued rhetors who had traveled similar identity routes and could inspire their continued academic ambitions and participation in securing justice. Indeed, challenge and conflict were central to many papers and, when my students were confronted with intersecting identities, they often highlighted strategies to make change. This was most prominent in ARRPs featuring Chicana issues, as demonstrated in the following examples, which are represented by students' conclusion paragraphs. In sharing these, my intention is to explore ways that my students seek to locate Chicana issues, elect archival pieces that both satisfy those interests and inspire new engagements, establish understandings of their pieces' rhetorical functions within historical cultural contexts, overlap the piece's rhetorical purpose with their own present-day observations, and practice the study of rhetoric as a possible blueprint to build and advance their rhetorical vehicles.

In the conclusion of a study of an article by Francisca Flores, entitled "Equality," published in *Regeneración* magazine, which Flores both edited and published, one student writes:

[Flores'] fearlessness on taking on criticism from those against the Chicana feminist movement while being an effective activist and leader is what is truly inspiring about her. Flores is especially impressive in the fact that she spent [her] formative years in a sanatorium where some may have lost hope or the will to fight for others, which is what may be the most fascinating part about her. She harnessed challenges into motivating herself and others [...] to demand better treatment for women. [...] Though some may have seen her activism as a type of betrayal to Chicano and Latino culture, it was the complete opposite. Her main goal was to empower all within the culture, which [includes] the women who were not empowered from the start and who still, to this day, are often treated as secondary citizens to men within the culture. She was a pioneer in her [...] demand [that] contraceptives and abortion rights be available to all women to let them take control of their own body and destiny. Many of her works are still relevant today because a lot of the same issues are still being ignored or argued over. [...].³

This statement concludes the student's examination of Flores's primary argument in "Equality," which admonishes Chicano Movement male leaders for stifling Chicana potential and recognition within the movement. Flores writes that "the primary struggle for liberation of the Chicana is the freedom for the whole family. [...] We cannot afford intra-fratricidal struggles. And no

one can swear commitment to win liberation and at the same time subjugate part of the movement” (5).

Confrontation of intra-cultural division seems to draw the student’s primary focus, evidenced by the conclusion that begins with attention to Flores “fearlessly” enduring criticism. The student takes up a position as Flores’s defender against those who “may have seen her activism as a type of betrayal to Chicano and Latino culture.” Insisting that Flores’s advocacy was the “complete opposite,” the student protects Flores’s efforts, perhaps revealing the student’s motivation to study Chicana intra-cultural gender conflicts as topics that inspire emotion and conviction in the student’s life. Indeed, the student seems to share with Flores similar gender values and views on the ongoing need for social justice. Indicating familiarity with disempowerment, the student observes that Flores’s concerns are “still relevant today” and “still being ignored or argued over.” This recognition that both Flores and the student perceive similar intra-cultural divisions opens the student to emotionally engage with the historical contexts that inspire and inform Flores’s activism. In other words, once the student identifies familiarity with a rhetor’s convictions and challenges, the student endeavors to unearth the blueprint that may have constructed Flores’s rhetorical vehicle.

In the ARRP’s body text, the student details Flores’s biographical context, emphasizing Flores’s decade as a teenager in a sanatorium throughout the 1920s (due to exposure to a tuberculosis surge). The student references this history in the conclusion when applauding Flores’s tactics to persevere as “what is truly inspiring” in Flores’s legacy. The student is moved by the way Flores, even while hospitalized, envisions an empowered future for herself, her nurses, and her fellow patients. Flores survived the Great Depression, tuberculosis surge, and extensive isolation—another possible parallel that the student appreciates amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, consequential economic upheavals, and extended quarantines. Impacted as well by the pandemic during similar formative young adult years, the student reflects, “where some may have lost hope or the will to fight for others” Flores’s effectiveness as an activist and leader was not only unfazed but strengthened. The student perceives in tragedy an ability to “harness motivation” for betterment of life. It is also a point of interest for the student that among the patients Flores engaged with while hospitalized were female veterans from the Mexican Revolution whose insurgent narratives mobilized Flores’s claim to Mexican inheritance of female revolution, a perceived legacy that Flores applies to help her articulate confrontations of the United States’ racial, gendered, and socioeconomic inequities (NietoGomez 35). The ARRP tracks this thread of Mexican and Chicana female rhetorical legacies—from women of the Mexican Revolution to Flores’s mid-twentieth-century activism. This is a rhetorical inheritance that the student ultimately

defines through the course of the paper for the purpose of launching the student's own convictions and voice.

As articulator of this particular thread of Chicana rhetorical history, analyzer of Flores's rhetorical tactics, defender of Flores's rhetorical purposes, and advocate for ongoing protection of Chicana rights to "body and destiny," the student extends a self-elected rhetorical legacy into current reality. The student begins to position self as the living body to carry the female activist rhetorical lineage that the paper meticulously maps. Indeed, the student ends the essay with an assertion that Chicanas "to this day, are often treated as secondary citizens to men within the culture." Flores's rhetoric collapses time for the student as the "pioneer's" legacy encourages present-day activists to extend rhetorical purposes with Flores and the Mexican Revolutionists. Here, the student's metaphorical train arrives.

While the above ARRP demonstrates this pedagogy's objective—for a student to locate a meaningful cultural rhetorical antecedent to facilitate rhetorical belonging—other students who found less comprehensive matches still utilized sources to centralize self. In another sample, a student applies a contemporary feminist lens to analyze a newspaper image of the painting *Mexicano-Americano* and accompanying artist's statement by Herman Sillas, Jr., as published in *La Raza* newspaper, a bilingual Chicano activist publication based in East Los Angeles, in November 1967.⁴ The student originally accessed *La Raza* volume one, number two; after reviewing the issue and in search of a Chicana rhetor, the student was drawn to the multimodal project of analyzing both textual and visual rhetorics employed by Sillas in his art and statement, written in Spanish to target specific reader demographics. The accompanying visual depicts Sillas's vision of Chicano experiences—a painting plane bisected. One half of the image portrays symbols of Mexico, including a giant black crucifix looming over a Mesoamerican pyramid, at the bottom of which a decapitated head (possibly of an Aztec figure) bleeds out as a bullfighter stands at attention; the other half offers symbols of America, including a smaller golden crucifix floating next to a giant clock with a golden bell beneath it and two decapitated heads (possibly a Native American and African American). In the middle of the divide is a figure, featured from torso up and also split in half—its Mexican half is a reddish-brown male with thick mustache and large sombrero, and its American half is a light-skinned female with bared, bleeding breast. Behind the half-Mexican male is a diminutive figure of a woman robed in red who faces slightly downwards to her left towards the male's back. Behind the half-American female is a diminutive figure—a man in business attire who faces forward and extends his right arm to seize the woman's shoulder. The Mexican-American woman is prominent in the United States experience yet vulnerable to mechanisms of body control.

The seizing of the woman hooked my student's interest in its depiction of Mexican-American femaleness as dominant yet dominated in Mexican-American United States realities. The resulting ARRP expressed intrigue in how Sillas opens discussion with Chicano Spanish readers about female centrality in the United States family and how American contexts threaten such centrality within and without Chicana communities.⁵ Chicanas, per the student's interpretation, are cultural carriers. The student saw Sillas's argument as appealing to Spanish-speaking readers to recognize restricted Chicana potential—and that impact on community. The conclusion follows:

Overall, Sillas' main claim in "Mexicano-Americano" is to help Chicanos and Chicanas understand that all Chicana share issues with trying to identify in America; however, women often have to deal with greater struggles. [...] Sillas highlights the gender divisions and oppressions that have existed since the Chicano Movement. Unfortunately, his rhetorical strategy is still relevant in the ongoing efforts to address Latinx issues as the world and many of its norms rely on the male attitudes that often underestimate women's capabilities. Additionally, the issue of feminism and identity with the Latinx community reveal unfair gender pay gaps, LGBTQ issues, arbitrary reproductive policies, mental health issues, and many others that sadly seem like never-ending cycles . . . Chicanas from all generations need to unite to stop the oppression cycles . . . For older Chicanas, it may be standing up to their husbands; for younger Chicanas, it may be to voice their opinions in a career full of men. But for every Chicana, [we have] to be standing together in solidarity to dismantle years of patriarchy . . . Only when the borderline is erased through peace and acceptance will Mexicans and Americans, and women and men, become united.

Though focusing on a male rhetor, this second sample, like the first, explores rhetoric the student views as conveying notions that community strength relies on Chicana empowerment. Sillas argues that Chicanas are essential to the progression of the Chicano Movement and ongoing community. In the body of the ARRP, the student also contextualizes Sillas as advancing the rhetoric of contemporary Chicana activists connected with the Brown Berets, such as Gloria Arellanes who notably resigned from the organization due to poor treatment of Chicanas by male colleagues and Chicanas who expressed similar grievances in the student organization, MECHA. While aiming to locate the history of Chicana inner-cultural struggles within activist organizations, my student seemed drawn to examining how a male ally employed visual

rhetorics to reach a broad audience, along with the Spanish-language artist's statement. The student appreciates Sillas' efforts as a Chicano who uses his privileged rhetor's voice to confront males for dividing and disempowering the entire community by marginalizing female contributors. Yet the student also places Sillas's visual and textual rhetoric as dependent on contemporary Chicana rhetorics—dismantling standard narratives of a Chicano Movement that derives from male rhetors by examining Sillas as part of a rhetorical thread spun from Chicana voices (see also Maylei Blackwell's work on similar "retrofitted history" or counter-memories that destabilize entrenched hierarchical histories).

While the student applauds the "help" and "highlights" that Sillas offers, he concurrently laments that Sillas' efforts "unfortunately" have yet to be actualized as "the world and many of its norms rely on the male attitudes that often underestimate women's capabilities." The ARRP states that Sillas's "rhetorical strategy is still relevant" yet has not reached its potential. This modernized application of Sillas's rhetorical legacy manifests when the student extends a historical argument about gender divisions during the Chicano Movement to modern-day intra-cultural divisions that the student identifies concerning "unfair gender pay gaps, LGBTQ issues, arbitrary reproductive policies, [and] mental health issues." The student specifically notes historical sequences of self-defeating divisions repeated across time within Chicana communities, thus mentioning "cycles" twice in the conclusion—"never-ending cycles" and "oppression cycles."

Yet, along with these negative series, there co-exists rhetorical activism that passes from 1970s Chicana activist rhetors to Sillas to the student. Accordingly, the student, like Sillas, attempts to break the negative "oppression cycles" in the final lines of the essay, going as far as directly appealing to Chicana audiences by proposing that every Chicana contribute "in solidarity to dismantle years of patriarchy." Metaphorically boarding the train, the student advances personal articulation of what the world might become if "older Chicanas" begin "standing up to their husbands" and if "younger Chicanas . . . voice their opinions in a career full of men." The student asserts authority to move future-forward to empower more immediate contemporary agendas.

Embarking on the Quest

Though *History of Chicano Rhetoric* offers opportunity for students to practice archival studies, this pedagogy should not be reserved solely for specialized cultural rhetoric courses but offered in mainstream writing programs. I developed *Archival Quest* to serve this purpose. After examining students' archival findings in the historical rhetorics course, I realized students would benefit from reflecting not only on their chosen rhetor but ways their projects po-

tentially impact academia and community. Specifically, *Archival Quest* practices research methodologies to recover historical rhetorics and explores ways theory shapes knowledge production in Latinx Studies. While my university already offers courses both in theories of writing and literacy and in research methods in rhetoric and composition, neither emphasizes construction of rhetorical vehicles to facilitate awareness and practice of epistemological freedoms and rhetorical sovereignty.

To emphasize such freedoms and sovereignty, *Archival Quest* fosters attention to wider Latinx and individual counternarratives. Such an approach decentralizes instructors as storytellers while students collect pieces from primary sources to forge and embark on new tracks and stories that suit their identity and goals. Indeed, students' final project, a portfolio, moves archival skills from tasks of uncovering past voices to asserting present self. Construction of an archive of self mobilizes student awareness of their positionality, ethical knowledge production, and rhetorical purpose within diverse and dynamic writing environments informed by human conditions and cultural practices. (For my complete semester design, please see the Appendix.)

Although I created *Archival Quest* to serve specific student demographics and departmental objectives in Latinx Studies, the framework I model serves students who are not Latinx Studies majors and/or identify as Latinx students. The course suits students seeking pedagogies of inclusion and equity in research and representation. Such values are not exclusive to ethnic studies. The main goal of *Archival Quest* is to provide a capstone for students to assume responsibility for presenting an academic voice supported by rhetorical belonging. While in my lower-division composition courses students are introduced to archival studies and practice research writing to locate voices that resonate with their imaginings of their developing academic persona, and while in my historical rhetoric course students construct and mobilize their rhetorical vehicles, in *Archival Quest* students pivot towards self-presentation; they self-articulate as an imminent university graduate and prepare to compete for career or graduate school opportunities. In other words, the train is departing nowhere space.

Still, as noted previously, many students continue to be challenged in locating precise rhetorical antecedents. This was especially true for students in my *History of Chicano Rhetoric* classes who felt limited by Chicana LGBTQ+ archives. While Chicana rhetorical archives were also limited compared to Chicano primary source availability, recent attention by feminist scholars and museum curators spotlighting Chicana historical contributions assisted student searches. Indeed, our first sample ARRP benefitted from resurfaced interests in Francisca Flores's activities—a 2018 publication by Anna NietoGomez and a 2019 Vincent Price Art Museum exhibit, *Regeneración: Three Generations of Revolutionary Ideology*.⁶ Until these recent features, Flores's role in decades of

Chicana feminist history had been overshadowed by privileged voices in both the Chicano and Feminist movements. It was fortunate timing that my student sought her Chicana activist while Flores's name still resonated after these events.

Similarly, *La Raza* (sourced by our second ARRP sample) was recently exhibited at the Gene Autry Museum (2017-2019).⁷ I cannot know to what extent students' archival searches were impacted by recent heightened awareness of *La Raza* or Flores. Neither student launched their projects with foreknowledge of the exhibits, yet museum media may have impacted search algorithms and accordingly reached students. Whatever the case, I am grateful for rising interest in *La Raza*, Flores, and Chicana rhetorical histories. However, waiting for scholarship and museum exhibits to unearth underrepresented rhetoric is not our only option.

The next development in archival pedagogy is to emphasize ways that students might tap into living archives in an organized way to expand local repositories. While students across my three-sequenced archival curriculum have explored living archives—e.g. through oral history interviews ranging from parents to peers, community leaders to homeless veterans—I am also piloting outreach to access local living archives. In the past year, I have organized a team of student assistants to record stories and holdings of university alumni who participated in 1960s and 1970s Chicana student activist activities. As my student team builds our own archives and models primary source acquisition to their peers, I become even more hopeful that the metaphorical train Christina Fernandez awaits is surely arriving—that we can more precisely represent our own rhetorical self-portraits when our past is recovered. We have seen significant efforts within scholarly communities to publish on historical rhetorics to assure students that we all possess varied and valuable historical rhetorical cultures. However, waiting for research to arrive is not the only solution. Rather, students can participate right now in re-discovery of antecedents from which they can rebuild, fortify, and flourish.

Notes

1. This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRB) from the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs at California State University (approval no. 21-290, secured April 23, 2021 in advance of all featured classroom studies). All student participants provided written informed consent for publication of this case report.

2. Digital archives that students explored included Chicana por mi Raza, UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center, Bracero History Archive, Latino GLBT History Archive, Race & Ethnicity Research Guide at the Digital Transgender Archive, Calisphere, Library of Congress, Photogrammer, and Digital History. Primary source databases included the *Historical Los Angeles Times* and *Historical New York Times*.

3. The student located *Regeneración*, vol. 2, no. 3, 1973 at California State University, Channel Islands John Spoor Broome Library institutional repository.

4. The student located *La Raza*, vol. 1, no. 2, Nov. 1967 at University of California, Los Angeles Chicano Studies Research Center.

5. Sillas's artist's statement on the female figure reads, "Las figuras demuestran una mujer adelante revelando que la mujer en la sociedad Americana ha surgido como fuerte y dominante personalidad en la relacion de familia" (p. 1).

6. The 2019 exhibit, *Regeneración: Three Generations of Revolutionary Ideology* at the Vincent Price Art Museum in East Los Angeles highlighted manifestations of *Regeneración*: 1) a political newspaper published in Los Angeles by the Mexican anarchists Flores Magón brothers (1900-1918); 2) Flores's publication (1970-1975); and 3) community art journal (1993-99).

7. *La Raza* was featured in a 2017-2019 Gene Autry Museum exhibit in Los Angeles, part of the J. Paul Getty's Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA initiative.

Appendix

Following is my semester design for *Chicano and Latino Studies 411- Archival Quest: Reclaiming Latinx Rhetorics*:

- Week One. Query: How might writing function as reality-making? Introduction to archival projects; begin exploring theories on knowledge production.
- Week Two. Query: How might archival reclamation projects support epistemological freedoms and rhetorical sovereignty? Continue exploring theories and methodologies of knowledge production; submit theory and methodology expository essay one.
- Week Three. Query: What is an archive? Who archives? Which productions merit archival designations? Introduction to archival methodologies. Explore histories of archive collection processes and colonizing knowledges; begin information literacy training, emphasizing primary sources and archival methodologies; submit expository essay two.
- Week Four. Query: How might archival engagement reanimate silenced counterstories? Exploration of counterstories beyond alphabetical; introduction to multimodality. Archival rhetoric research project assigned; begin research in archives and share preliminary findings with peers.
- Week Five. Query: How do we select theoretical frameworks to suit one's rhetorical purpose? Continue exploration of multimodal counterstories. Examine sample archival research studies across various ethnic studies scholarly focuses such as feminist, LGBTQ+

studies, decoloniality, critical race theory, biopolitical, socialism, advocacy, etc.; continue research in archives and scholarly databases; prewrite on positionality.

- Week Six. Query: How do we select methodological frameworks to suit one's rhetorical purpose? Continue exploration of multimodal counterstories, continue examination of sample archival research studies, continue research, submit expository essay three.
- Week Seven. Query: How might we write original research? Practice writing about archival findings; submit archival methodology practice paper.
- Week Eight. Query: How might writing histories of rhetorics decolonize current and future rhetors? Share with peers annotated bibliography that contextualizes primary source in historical contexts; archival project outline due.
- Week Nine. Query: What is citational justice regarding both plagiarism and selection of secondary sources? Reengage information literacy strategies and practice source integration; archival project draft due.
- Week Ten-Eleven. Query: How might scholarly writing conventions function as rhetorical decisions, negotiable and fluid across various contexts? Continue revising and workshopping.
- Week Twelve. Query: What are our counterstory and scholarly contributions? Begin self-reflection journaling on archival research, writing, and revision stages; final draft of archival project due.
- Week Thirteen. Query: How do we curate an archive of self? Portfolio assigned. Introduction to portfolio construction. Review portfolio examples to establish genre; begin to compile evidence of acquired skill-sets, scholarly and/or professional purpose, potential contributions, and rhetorical persona and positionality.
- Week Fourteen-Sixteen. Query: What does my research reveal about me? Continue to construct portfolio (focusing on student authority to explain their writing in relation to personal identity, academic goals, and discursive belongings). Workshops, peer reviews, portfolio presentations, and/or instructor conferences in support of curating and revising portfolio. Final portfolio due.

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