“The FEMEN body can do everything”: Generating the agentic bodies of social movement through internal and external rhetorics

Roberta Chevrette & Aaron Hess

To cite this article: Roberta Chevrette & Aaron Hess (2019) “The FEMEN body can do everything”: Generating the agentic bodies of social movement through internal and external rhetorics, Communication Monographs, 86:4, 416-437, DOI: 10.1080/03637751.2019.1595078

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/03637751.2019.1595078

Published online: 28 Mar 2019.

Submit your article to this journal

Article views: 166

View related articles

View Crossmark data

Citing articles: 1 View citing articles
“The FEMEN body can do everything”: Generating the agentic bodies of social movement through internal and external rhetorics

Roberta Chevrettea and Aaron Hessb

Communication Studies, Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro, TN, USA; Rhetoric and Communication, College of Integrative Sciences and Arts, Arizona State University, Phoenix, AZ, USA

ABSTRACT
Recent theorizing recognizes the body’s importance in resistant performances characterizing the streets and screens of contemporary activism. In this essay, we examine how the transnational feminist organization FEMEN constructs embodied agencies through material and mediated means. Rather than focusing only on public appearances, we draw from fieldwork with FEMEN, utilizing participatory critical rhetoric to also examine the internal rhetorics shaping protest activities. Analyzing how FEMEN’s training prepares and produces individual, collective, and entangled bodies extends the communicative study of social movements by attending to corporeal molding behind the scenes. FEMEN constructs a gestural routine that enables activists to reexperience their bodies through rhetorics of powerful vulnerability, challenging gendered discourses while increasing rhetorical agency through enacted resistance and embodied solidarities.

ARTICLE HISTORY
Received 23 May 2018
Accepted 8 January 2019

KEYWORDS
Corporeality; body rhetorics; social movements; internal rhetorics; rhetorical agency; rhetorical fieldwork; FEMEN

Social movements and protests are profoundly communicative in their use of symbols to sway audiences toward certain beliefs and actions. While rhetorical scholars have long been interested in the communication processes of social movements (Griffin, 1952), recent turns have focused on embodied, material, and affective elements of protest by incorporating participatory orientations (Hess, 2011; McKinnon, Asen, Chávez, & Howard, 2016; Middleton, Hess, Endres, & Senda-Cook, 2015; Middleton, Endres, & Senda-Cook, 2011), studying visual rhetorics and rhetorics of place (DeLuca & Peeples, 2002; Endres & Senda-Cook, 2011; Rai & Druschke, 2018), and examining the role of bodies in social movements (DeLuca, 1999b; Enck-Wanzer, 2006; Pezzullo, 2003). However, much research on social movement rhetoric remains focused on protests themselves: public confrontations where activists take to the street to mobilize support for social change. Less research has examined behind-the-scenes activities influencing activist rhetoric. This study extends existing research by utilizing fieldwork with the transnational organization FEMEN to attend to internal rhetorics that mobilize activists’ bodies and their rhetorical capacities. Analyzing how FEMEN’s training prepares and produces
individual, collective, and entangled corporealities offers insight into varied and intersecting modalities of embodied public engagement.

FEMEN serves as an ideal case for understanding how body rhetorics operate at multiple levels to shape social movement actions. The organization was founded in Ukraine in 2008 by university students Anna Hutso, Sasha Shevchenko, Oksana Shachko, and Inna Shevchenko, who is now recognized as the movement’s leader (Margot, 2015). Initial protests focused on prostitution, sex tourism, and gender inequality in Ukraine, issues FEMEN members drew public attention to through the mode of activism they branded “Sextremism.” As the movement expanded its geographical reach, its foci expanded to include abortion, homophobia, dictatorship, fascism, and religious oppression. The organization is currently headquartered in France, where Inna Shevchenko and several Ukrainian activists became political refugees after a controversial 2012 protest in Kiev in which a topless Shevchenko sawed down a cross with a chainsaw.

FEMEN has drawn media and academic attention due to their controversial styles and places of protest. Scholars have analyzed FEMEN’s modes of activism as they relate to feminist politics, examining their protests as acts of feminist translation (Valente, 2015) or, alternately, imperialist feminism (Ivey, 2015), and emphasizing how street performance and body protest extend realms of political action (Eileraas, 2014; McAlister, 2015; Veneracion-Rallonza, 2014). Through the use of participatory critical rhetoric (Middleton et al., 2015), our analysis attends to the corporeal molding of the activist body through both internal and external rhetorics. We examine the rhetorical and agentic capacities of bodies as they act on the ground generating connections between members, the movement, and audiences. By integrating literatures on body rhetorics and social movements with our findings, we advance theoretical propositions related to the construction of individual, collective, and entangled corporealities through both body rhetorics and embodied actions. We argue that FEMEN training constructs a gestural routine that enables activists to reexperience their bodies through an embodied rhetoric we call powerful vulnerability. As their gestural routine challenges gendered performances, FEMEN members engage the politics of the body to counter dominant discourses while also increasing their own bodily capacities and rhetorical agency through enacted resistance and embodied solidarities.

Social movement research, public arguments, and the body

Since at least the 1950s, rhetorical scholarship has been interested in the ways social movements organize, make claims upon larger publics, and resist oppressive systems of power (Griffin, 1952). In its early foci, rhetorical research on movements examined rhetoric generated by leaders. Simons (1970) believed that “the survival and effectiveness of any movement are dependent on adherence to its program, loyalty to its leadership, a collective willingness and capacity to work, energy mobilization, and member satisfaction” (p. 3). To assess such effectiveness, scholars would examine motivational strategies and discourses that maintained followership, focusing primarily on verbal and argumentative strategies. For example, Stewart (1997) looked to how growing frustration within the civil rights movement encouraged Stokely Carmichael to lead a new generation of advocates in the Black Power movement through a “militant, confrontational rhetoric” better suited to Carmichael’s generation (p. 429).
Social movements are mobilized not only by verbal arguments of leaders; they are also generated by and through bodies, including the formation and/or performance of a collective body. Melucci, Keane, and Mier (1989) describe collective action as a rhetorical form “whose models of organization and solidarity deliver a message to the rest of society” (p. 12). While earlier studies presumed an existing group of people for whom movement rhetoric would serve a tactical purpose, an important shift came from McGee’s (1980) argument that social movements were a “set of meanings and not a phenomenon” (p. 234). Recognizing movements as “essentially rhetorical” (Cathcart, 1972, p. 86) opened the communicative study of movements to address a range of suasory aspects including DeLuca’s (1999a, 1999b) focus on social movements’ use of persuasion in ways that exceed the verbal dimensions of rhetoric.

DeLuca (1999a, 1999b) examined the centrality of visuals of protesting bodies for new social movements in which activists use “image events” to attract media coverage. His research demonstrated how grassroots organizations “slight formal modes of public argument” in favor of a politics centered on “images of bodies – vulnerable bodies, dangerous bodies, taboo bodies, ludicrous bodies, transfigured bodies” (1999b, p. 9, 10). Bodies as arguments operate “not through traditional rational argument but through a kind of corporeal performativity” (Harold, 1999, p. 66). Lunceford (2012) attends to rhetorical functions of the nude body specifically, arguing that the naked body in protest “is unlike other symbols because the individual inhabiting that body has, presumably, some degree of agency” (p. 8). The choices activists make deploying their bodies impacts how the body, as symbol, is received by audiences.

Other extensions of social movement research have focused on the body not only for its signifying capabilities and ability to draw media attention but also on the materiality of bodies engaging in and moved by protest rhetoric. Middleton et al. (2011) call for expanding textual hermeneutics with an experiential focus recognizing how bodies are influenced by rhetorical action. Enck-Wanzer (2006) advocates an intersectional rhetoric addressing how protests integrate words, bodies, and images with “important political/identity-constituting implications” (p. 187). Endres and Senda-Cook (2011) focus attention on how bodies of protesters reconfigure, and are shaped by, places. Conceiving of protest as embodied and experiential draws attention to protest rhetoric as it acts on bodies, and produces particular feelings and consequences.

Understanding how words, bodies, and images together articulate collectives and impact audiences also requires theorizing rhetorical strategies of social movements as they interact with and are impacted by media. The social reliance on media technology to comprehend and circulate political rhetorics and images has reshaped processes of traditional deliberation and activism, including the ways bodies are deployed. DeLuca and Peeples (2002) describe this larger social frame as the “public screen,” which moves the public sphere toward visual publicity and “transform[s] the rules and roles of participatory democracy” (p. 127). In theorizing the public screen, DeLuca and Peeples (2002) examined the public protests of activist groups. How those protests are prepared and organized behind the scenes remains undertheorized. In the following section we address the importance of internal rhetorics in activism and our use of participatory critical rhetoric to access these rhetorics in the case of FEMEN.
**Accessing internal rhetorics through participatory critical rhetoric**

Attending to various dimensions of public protest rhetoric has enabled robust understandings of how social movements make arguments and shape realities. With a few exceptions, however, movement research has primarily taken an external perspective, focusing on moments activists publicly take to the streets for purposes of social agitation. What this scholarship often misses is the internal planning, coordination, and training inherent to social movement. In the counterpublic literature, Fraser (1990) identified “spaces of withdrawal and regroupment” activists utilize as “training grounds for agitational activities directed toward wider publics” (p. 68). As activists move inward, they create “protected enclaves” (Mansbridge, 1994) or “safe spaces” (Squires, 2002) away from the public eye. Within these spaces, activists engage in internal rhetorics aimed at strategizing for public action. Yet, scholars have infrequently examined internal rhetorics of mobilization and training occurring behind the scenes.

One notable exception came from Stewart (1991) who, recognizing that rhetorics of the streets are only a “narrow slice of social movement rhetoric,” (p. 68) looked to the internal documents of the Knights of Labor to determine differences between internal and external rhetoric, finding strategies of identification within the organization. Chávez (2011, 2013) has also provocatively attended to the internal rhetorics of different activist organizations to understand their coalitional strategies, believing that analyzing “internal discussions and rhetorical sense-making, alongside their public rhetoric” is important for understanding “the kinds of labor that make coalitional moments possible” (Chávez, 2013, p. 16). Importantly, internal rhetorics within social movements operate as “sites to invent rhetorical strategies to publicly challenge oppressive rhetoric” (Chávez, 2011, p. 3). As we discuss below, the inventive strategies of FEMEN include internal planning and training for various embodied engagements with other members and in anticipation of public entities, such as media and law enforcement.

Certainly, gaining access to the internal rhetorics of activist organizations is difficult. While a textual perspective may not fully yield the type of access necessary to glimpse into the background of a movement and particularly the embodied actions occurring behind the scenes, engaging in participatory critical rhetoric provides a vantage point to directly experience the internal and external rhetorics performed by, in this case, FEMEN. Although rhetorical scholars have previously used fieldwork to augment textual understandings of rhetorical performances (Blair, 2001; Cintron, 1997; Pezzullo, 2003), in recent years sustained attention has been given to the role of fieldwork in producing a participatory epistemology and experiential standpoint that alters the critical judgment found in traditional rhetorical analysis (Hess, 2011, 2016; McKinnon et al., 2016; Middleton et al., 2011; Middleton et al., 2015). These recent works utilize a variety of interpretive and qualitative tools to apprehend performances of rhetoric within embodied and emplaced contexts. Those taking up a participatory orientation can advocate alongside vernacular discourses that seek changes in oppressive discourses (Hess, 2011). By advocating from within, those rhetorical critics learn not just of inventive discursive practices, but also of the larger tactical uses of media. Scholars have attended to the function of media in the field (Herbig & Hess, 2012); yet few, if any, have examined the backstage planning that informs protest rhetoric.
Through participatory critical rhetoric, we examine the rhetorical processes and behind-the-scenes engagements that are vital to FEMEN as a social movement. This methodological stance attends to how the movement is constituted through and inscribed upon individual and collective bodies through actions of resistance. FEMEN clearly utilizes the naked female body as a sign capable of capturing attention from the public screen. However, the body is not only rhetorical in its instrumentality in FEMEN’s image events; it is also the site on which various struggles and forms of agency are materially enacted for FEMEN members. Parallel with Grabill, Leon, and Pigg’s (2018) discussion of how fieldwork enables researchers to “describe and capture” the assembling of agencies (p. 194), the use of participatory methods enables an examination of FEMEN’s body rhetorics as not only externally directed, but as also impacting activists’ intersubjective relationships and embodied solidarities.

Our analysis is based on data collected in situ at FEMEN’s annual Spring Training Camp, including field notes, photographs, and promotional materials. The camp, attended by the first author in 2014, was a five-day long immersion and training including participants from France, Spain, Ukraine, Quebec, Holland, Sweden, and the United States. As a broad training of rhetorical capacities that begin with the body, activities included fitness training, training in “the FEMEN aesthetic,” a workshop on resisting arrest, and a protest resulting in the arrest of twenty-two participating activists. Our data set also includes six interviews with activists, ranging between one and two hours in length. In what follows, we examine the internal rhetorics informing protest activities by drawing directly from field notes and qualitative interviews to texture our analysis with thick descriptions, beginning with how individual activists undergo physical training to prepare for political action. The subsequent sections trace how rhetorical capacities of individual bodies are harnessed into FEMEN as a collective of bodies and voices acting together, as well as the entangled bodies of resistance that define FEMEN’s direct actions.

**Visuality, materiality, and corporeality: The agentic bodies of FEMEN**

FEMEN activists engage body rhetorics and rely on visual publicity. In what has become their trademark, topless protests use activists’ bodies as a canvas. Through image events, FEMEN activists position their protests to be noticed amidst “an unceasing flow of images and entertainment” (DeLuca & Peeples, 2002, p. 134). Highly staged, heavily circulated photographs foreground members in front of iconic buildings and cityscapes with controversial slogans painted on their breasts. Direct actions captured by media feature activists targeting prominent people in places such as government meetings and churches where activists shed their clothes and shout slogans such as “Fuck You Putin!,” “Abortion es sagrado!,” “Topless Jihad!,” and “Homophobe shut up!” before being escorted away by security guards or police. By utilizing the partially naked body as both message and tool, FEMEN activists use “corporeal expressivity,” which Brouwer (2005) describes as “emphasizing the salience of flesh and body in the production of rhetorical acts” (p. 358). Drawing on “the effectiveness of the naked form to elicit a response” and to “evok[e] a visceral reaction” (Lunceford, 2012, p. 9), FEMEN’s strategies purposefully mobilize media gazes to call attention to women’s subordinate positions.

The body rhetorics of FEMEN, however, are not limited to the representational power of bodies or the affective power of circulated images. As our analysis will illustrate, rhetoric
acts on the bodies of FEMEN members as they deliberately reclaim bodily agency, and seek to increase the body’s capacity through training. Agency is understood as “the capacity to act” or as having “the competence to speak or write in a way that will be recognized or heeded by others” (Campbell, 2005, p. 3). In thinking about the agentic bodies of FEMEN, we are interested in the movement’s multidimensional use of body rhetorics drawing on rhetorical capacities of individual, collective, and entangled bodies, as well as how activists increase their own bodily capacities and feelings of power and agency through enacted resistance and embodied solidarities. Noland (2009) connects agency to the performance of bodily gestures, which she articulates as “physical movements of the body, limbs, or digits to phonic gesticulations [that] have a definite direction, a specific velocity, rhythm, scope, tonicity” (p. 212). Through the reexperiencing and reenactment of these “learned techniques of the body” (p. 2), the body becomes a central site for understanding agency through the acculturation of embodiment as well as resistance to larger cultural codes of the body.

Because agency is best understood as contextually bound and gestural in character, our analysis attends to embodied agencies generated in various contexts where FEMEN members appear as rhetorical actors. As Gunn and Cloud (2010) remind us: “How we contend with agency depends on the particular circumstances and material specificity of a given event” (p. 73). Below, we analyze how FEMEN’s internal rhetorics build agencies across multiple contexts and capacities. We address the training of the FEMEN body as occurring through the preparation and performance of a “gestural routine” (Noland, 2009, p. 1), or a set of practiced, embodied, and meaningful movements that occur through body and voice. This routine enables activists to resignify and “reexperience” the female body in agentic ways (Noland, 2009, p. 191).

**The individual activist body: Reclaiming corporeal agency**

FEMEN’s Spring Training Camp, attended by the first author, engages activists’ physical bodies as well as rhetorics of the body. According to FEMEN’s manifesto, painted on the wall of the room where activists engage in physical training, patriarchy “immobilizes the body, hinders its movements, and then you find yourself your body’s hostage” (see Figure 1). FEMEN’s rhetoric of women’s bodies as held “hostage” by others draws from a commonplace found in feminist rhetoric: “the language of self/body ownership as a rhetorical strategy for political mobilization” (Petchesky, 1995, p. 387). Because women’s lived experiences can “lead to a certain level of self-reflexivity and self-consciousness about corporeality” (Pezzullo, 2003, p. 357), much of FEMEN’s action is centered upon reclaiming corporeal agency.

When asked about motivations for joining the movement, activists frequently described a felt sense of injustice, the feeling of entrapment or imprisonment in/by one’s own body. One woman addressed why she joined FEMEN, stating, “I had a lot of anger inside, waiting to get out.” Another woman described, “I was always suffering in my life… because I was a woman.” FEMEN activists shared a sense of having been reduced to passive bodies: “They want us to keep our mouths shut and vaginas open,” one activist stated during the camp’s opening meeting. By participating in FEMEN actions, members therefore resist what they articulate as a silencing imposed by their female embodiment. Brouwer (2005) describes “modes of corporeality” as the ways “social actors...
render bodies (their own bodies and others’ bodies) salient” (p. 351); in this case, members’ shedding of clothes in the moment of protest changes the body’s signification from a passive vessel of patriarchal imprisonment to a vehicle of active resistance.

Many members emphasized the act of toplessness as central to their commitment to FEMEN, noting what to them seemed an obvious absurdity: men can show their nipples in public, and women cannot. Given activists’ mobilization by this unequal regulation of gendered bodies, FEMEN’s topless protest strategy cannot be seen as merely a means of capturing media attention. Instead, the unclothed female body is also a direct and individual means by which members reclaim rights to public space. Redefining the naked body as capable and active produces rhetorical agency, countering the immobility and hindrance of action seen in FEMEN’s definition of the body’s captivity under patriarchal control. In both activists’ experiences and resulting images, FEMEN’s body rhetorics engage what we call powerful vulnerability. Carr-Gomm (2010) argues, “human beings are at their most vulnerable when naked but, when engaged in a protest, are also strangely powerful” (p. 130). Resignifying and reexperiencing their bodies and nakedness enables members’ to increase feelings of power even in the face of larger systems of disempowerment, achieving “a sense of autonomy and empowerment in the face of political realities over which they have little control” (Souweine, 2005, p. 536). This is evidenced in FEMEN’s fight against overarching societal structures through the confrontational baring of bodies in relation to ideologically significant places, persons, and symbols. As stated in their manifesto, “Our Weapon is our Naked Breasts!” (see Figure 1).

While nakedness is one means for FEMEN members to express – and experience – individual strength, the training activists engage in emphasizes the physical preparation needed for fighting patriarchy, further redefining the female/feminine body as active through running, push ups, sit-ups, squats, and other physical activities. As described in promotional materials for the camp, FEMEN activists engage in fitness training to

Figure 1. FEMEN manifesto.

At the beginning, there was the body, feeling of the woman’s body, feeling of joy because it is so light and free. Then there was injustice, so sharp that you feel it with your body, it immobilizes the body, hinders its movements, and then you find yourself your body’s hostage. And so you turn your body against this injustice, mobilizing every body’s cell to struggle against the patriarchy and humiliation. You tell the world: Our God is a Woman! Our Mission is Protest! Our Weapon is our Naked Breasts! And so FEMEN is born and extremism is set off.

FEMEN Manifesto

Figure 1. FEMEN manifesto.
create the movement’s “strong warriors.” Despite the grumbles, winces, and vocalized pain of new recruits that resonated throughout Headquarters during the training camp, personal conversations and interviews suggested that women found feelings of power and agency in the strength and endurance training. Several recruits noted that whether or not they decided to join FEMEN after the camp, they were inspired to “stop being lazy,” illustrating how the movement’s rhetoric acts on individual bodies by constructing them as both symbolically and physically powerful.

FEMEN training inscribes itself on individual bodies through experiential rhetorics of movement as agency. As Shevchenko put it during one of the sessions, “FEMEN is not about taking off your top, it’s about making that body move, invade buildings, do things.” As activists engage in repeated direct actions and physical training, over time the body’s capacity for action is altered. For example, on one morning of the camp several recruits found themselves locked out of headquarters. Peering through the chained gate into the warehouse courtyard, no one was around. The recruits began to take out cell phones to attempt to contact the activists inside. Meanwhile, a seasoned activist had arrived. She quickly climbed to the top of the brick wall and began shouting until someone was sent down to unlock the gate. As a longstanding FEMEN activist her body took the necessary actions to overcome any physical obstacles placed in her way, revealing how repeated actions train the body for particular responses.

For FEMEN activists, training constructs the body as a site of power rather than merely a sight for consumption. By countering inscriptions of the female body as weak, fragile, and vulnerable, physical empowerment also brings with it the potential of liberation from violence and subordination. Arguing for “a feminist theory of physical liberation” Roth and Basow (2004) understand women’s physical power as a potential catalyst for social change (p. 257). This is seen in FEMEN’s approach to physical capability as power. As Shevchenko continued to bark out orders at the training camp, she reminded the women of the embodied possibilities emerging from FEMEN action: “the FEMEN body can do everything. Occupy buildings, jump onto a car, but you have to see it here first,” she said pointing to her head. “If you imagine yourself doing it you can do it, with a little physical training,” she continued. Physical capacities thus become the manifestation of members’ mental strength. As activists reclaim their naked bodies and train their physical strength, they mobilize a gestural routine that is enhanced through the preparations for collective action at the site of protest, which we turn to in the next section.

**The collective body: Agency in unison**

The emphasis FEMEN places on training bodies for participation in the collective movement rather than physical training as exclusively or even primarily a means of individual fitness illustrates the entanglements of individual bodies and agencies with movement rhetoric and the generation of collective empowerment. In this process, the gestural routine constructed by FEMEN extends to the construction of a collective body and the rhetorical capacities of that body. The formation of a collectivity is essential for constructing a social movement: members must recognize themselves “as members of a community, allies in a struggle for justice” (Asen, 2017, p. 332). In FEMEN training the collective subject is enacted through physical training as well as the preparation and coordination of activists’ bodies for protest actions.
Above, we described the ways strength and cardio training reshapes and resignifies individual bodies as ready for action. This process also constructs community belongings through repeated synchronization of movements. Whether shouting in a group, doing push-ups in unison, or jogging with journalists following, the repetition of activities over the course of the camp required FEMEN bodies to move together. In a fieldnote excerpt, the first author notes:

As we ran through the streets of Paris, with many members dressed in FEMEN gear and flowers in their hair drawing attention to our embodied spectacle, I felt proud of us: a team of feminist warriors preparing our bodies for the fight, our running together expressing our unwillingness to adhere to constraints placed on our bodies. Rather than make eye contact or exchange smiles with people we passed, we stared straight ahead with determined concentration.

As members make their individual bodies more agentic through physical training, they construct the body of the group and its rhetorical agency. As argued by Lucaites, “every rhetorical performance enacts and contains a theory of its own agency – of its own possibilities – as it structures and enacts relationships between speaker and audience, self and other, action and structure” (cited in Enck-Wanzer, 2006, p. 176). The performance of a gestural routine through activists’ repetitive motions in concert, or their movements through space as a cohesive entity, constructs embodied relationships in relation to real and imagined audiences. One activist described the importance of the appearance of unity: “there are no individual personalities in FEMEN, we act as one.” As Lunceford (2012) notes, “a mass of protesting bodies can be an awe-inspiring sight, mainly because they exist as more than simply bodies at a particular place and time. Rather, they have mobilized for a cause to make a statement together” (p. 5). The action of making a statement together not only constructs relationships between FEMEN and viewing publics but also between activists themselves.

Direct action training further reinforced the collective body of the group. To prepare new as well as seasoned activists for protests, the camp featured opportunities for activists to practice corporeal forms including yelling, coordinating their actions and voices, and stylizing their appearance through costuming and makeup, activities explicitly undertaken for the purpose of strengthening the rhetorical capacities of the public performance of protest. A workshop called “Training FEMEN action” included shouting slogans in unison at high volume and learning to respond to other members’ cues. As activists practiced coordinating their shouts, emphasis was also placed on conveying emotion through the body and making the voice aggressive, a stance heightened through the use of facial expressions demonstrating anger (see Figure 2). This manipulation of individual voices and expressions was undertaken with the explicit rhetorical purpose of enacting a unified display of aggression, illustrating how corporeal molding simultaneously shapes the individual and collective body. A field account in which the first author describes her own experience of this vocal and visual training illustrates this process:

While practicing responding to others’ vocal cues to scream in unison, we were told we needed to look angry for the camera. To reinforce this, we engaged in a shout off. Face to face with another line of activists, each side of the line screamed slogans back-and-forth, in unison. Two walls of voices, close enough to spit on one another, we shouted “Homophobe shut up!,” “Aborto es sagrado!,” and “Not a sex toy!” into one another’s faces. My partner, a seasoned activist, glared coldly into my eyes as she yelled, her voice shrill but her face full of...
Fire. Shouting back at her, and projecting from my diaphragm, I was confident in the power of my voice, so I was surprised and felt a little “called out” even, when Inna said my voice was too calm. So I moved my voice up into my throat, which changed the register from loud and deep to a more scratchy, bothered sound. The difficulty in getting the same volume from my throat as from my diaphragm also changed my face, creating a more pained expression as I yelled the words. This shift was met with approval from Inna, a warm individual whose praise it felt good to receive. Around me, the other activists nodded their encouragement, and by the end of the session I had acquired the title of: “the loud American.”

As this account illustrates, individual capacities were built and maintained through training forms of corporeal expression intended to contribute to the efficacy of the collective movement. The body is not only rhetorical to the extent that it stands for (symbolically laden) or against (literally enacted) something but that in standing with other activists it reinforces feelings of embodied solidarity through intersubjective experiences. This process builds coalitional relationships and subjectivities that are essential to social movement action. As Chávez (2010) notes, “the study of coalitions also calls us to question what motivates people toward social movement” (p. 144). For FEMEN activists, the experience of coalition further expands the agency of individual bodies as they become a part of something bigger than themselves. The experience of collectivity thus encourages activists to politicize their belongings.

Much like resignifying and reexperiencing the naked body enables individual activists to escape feelings of patriarchal confinement, the training of the protesting FEMEN body—a process that inscribes individual gestures within a collective performance of solidarity—disrupts existing gendered discourses through embodied processes: by engendering new bodily gestures. As Noland (2009) explains, “en-gendering techniques of the body (such as modest smiling or curtsying) have a remarkably firm grip on the body … The socially preestablished meanings of these acts are difficult (and sometimes impossible) to dislodge” (p. 195). For this reason, there is agentic potential in breaking from established sensations accompanying gendered routines. In the experience described above, the powerful
screaming and facial contortions performed by the first author displays a rhetorical as well as embodied rupture in gendered performance.

A training workshop dedicated to the FEMEN aesthetic – the production of a specific visual appearance – further illustrates how the training of activist bodies for cohesive protest is undertaken with audiences in mind. The wearing of red lipstick was emphasized in relation to the performance of aggression. Not only does the use of makeup strategically manipulate the tools of patriarchy but it also serves to highlight the expression of activists’ open mouths for image capture (see Figure 2). Displaying several examples of activists shouting, Shevchenko remarked, “See how it emphasizes her expression?”

Recognizing that the embodied spectacle of naked made-up women activists will garner media attention, FEMEN cultivates the visual appearance of powerful vulnerability and, in doing so, trains bodies to attract the gaze of the camera and to further dramatize the movement’s aims. Moreover, the cultivation of specific symbols including bare breasts, lipstick, and flower crowns as related to the larger movement enables an individual to stand in for the collective; this use of synecdoche allows even direct actions undertaken by solo FEMEN activists to represent actions of a larger body. We turn to direct actions in detail in the following section to illustrate further entanglements between bodies and rhetorical production.

**The entangled body: Agency in resistance**

FEMEN’s direct action events and the images they produce rely on their interactivity. Action shots capture activists in various stages of undress confronting male figures of power, including heads of state and religious leaders. However, the figures of power members most frequently face during direct actions is the police. The second day of FEMEN’s training camp therefore included multiple training sessions on resisting
arrest. Figure 3, a hand-painted sheet with instructions for direct action, illustrates the steps of direct action: activists stand, legs spread apart, signs or fists in the air, screaming loud in synchronization with the FEMEN team. They face their enemy – here portrayed as the police – resist arrest, and stand united.

During training, emphasis was placed on prolonging protests until the last possible second, which FEMEN activists describe as “staying the place” (see Figure 2). Participants also trained to maintain physical and symbolic unity in order to enhance protests’ duration and impact. Training emphasized two strategies for accomplishing this, both of which were cultivated in relation to the presence of cameras documenting the action. One strategy is the “chaining together” of activists seen in step 10 of Figure 3, the purposes of which are multifold. First, the chain reinforces FEMEN’s appearance as a unified collective. Second, it keeps the messages written on members’ bodies visible. And third, it requires police call for backup in order to break activists apart, thus extending the length of the action allowing more time for images to be captured by press and passersby.

Another strategy for resisting arrest as long as possible deals with what to do once the chain is broken. At this stage of being “captured,” members melt to the ground, bodies becoming heavy while still kicking and screaming, which frequently necessitates multiple officers in order to pick an activist up off the ground. These practiced strategies enact an individual gestural routine – that of visceral screams and expressions—with a collective movement of entanglement. Together, they symbolically enact the embodied solidarity and powerful vulnerability of the activist organization.

These strategies for resisting arrest were reinforced through a training activity called COPS vs. FEMEN, in which activists paired off with one member acting as the FEMEN activist and the other as the police trying to take her down. Emphasis was placed on physically resisting arrest while also continuing to make the slogans written on activists’ bodies visible to the public. In this manner, FEMEN activists self-consciously train to resist in front of, and for, the public screen, emphasizing protest strategies such as continuing to scream until out of the camera’s view. Only after FEMEN members are carried out of the spaces of media capture and deposited in police vehicles do they relax their bodies, voices, and expressions.\(^5\)

Seasoned FEMEN activists and new recruits put this training into action on the third day of training. The target was Marine Le Pen, a member of the European Parliament and President of the National Front, who had a press conference scheduled during the camp. Together, activists came up with the action’s components: the slogan “Fascist Epidemic”; the designs that would be painted on activists’ bodies – a European Union flag with the stars arranged in a swastika shape; and the formation they would take, marching through the street like an army.\(^6\) Preparing themselves on the morning of the action, the seasoned activists worked together to quickly paint flags and slogans on the twenty-two activists present while a photographer captured images of the preparation. The following field account describes the first stage of the protest:

When everyone was painted and dressed in black pants with military boots, we hopped a train to the Champs Élysées wearing jackets we could quickly discard. Off the train and near the press conference we received a signal from Inna. A flick of two mascaraed fingers applied our Hitler mustaches. Our jackets dropped to the ground and, conscious of the exposure, I felt a rush of cold air on my naked breasts as we began to march. Stomp
stomp stomp, the sound of boots pounding on pavement echoed through the street and off the buildings.

We begin to shout: “Fascist Epidemic! Fascist Epidemic!” As we approach journalists documenting our action, we keep marching—they have to move quickly, ducking out of our way. I do feel powerful. When Inna starts beating on the hotel windows, we follow. I get a few pounds in, the windows giving a little as we hit them. “Marine, Come Out! Marine, Come Out!”

No longer feeling vulnerable about my nakedness, I feel empowered by the bodies around me and the reactions we are receiving as people gather on the street and at the windows. Sweat drips down my bare skin as I use all my energy to shout, “Marine, Fascist! Marine, Fascist!”

After about twenty minutes of yelling, we march back down the middle of the street, still screaming, a long stream of girls with Inna at the helm—much like when we were running, just now in a different context. “Fascist Epidemic! Fascist Epidemic!”

As FEMEN seeks to spark political change through spectacular performance, the traction of these images relies on their use of embodied rhetorics, which as Enck-Wanzer (2006) notes, serve to confer visibility on social movements, “[dramatiz[ing]] the scene in ways words alone might not make possible” (p. 178). FEMEN members place themselves in conflict scenes and pose for the camera in the hopes that the media or their own photographers will capture an iconic image. In doing so, they deliberately deploy nakedness in conjunction with other iconic symbols such as crosses, flags, headscarves— or in our case, swastikas and Hitler mustaches— to create disruptions. As leader Inna Shevchenko put it, standing on the rooftop patio of their warehouse squat, the function of these tactics is to “press the point where it hurts.” FEMEN thus situates their protests for the public screen through their use of controversial imagery. Further seen in this excerpt is the generation of collective agency through the activists’ coordinated movements; as their bodies push forward and journalists have to move out of the way, the collective’s power is demonstrated at the level of embodied action. This ability of FEMEN activists to literally move audiences through their use of body rhetorics is tied specifically to the protesting nude female body. FEMEN’s gestural routine challenges gendered corporealities while also utilizing them to their advantage through the cultural prohibition against touching women’s breasts. Also evidenced in this excerpt is how the reactions activists’ bodies generate and the physical energy protest requires allow activists to forget feelings of self consciousness connected with their bodies. Instead, activists rhetorically reexperience their bodies as action and agent.

The following field note describes the second stage of the protest, resisting arrest:

Around the corner, Inna stops chanting, an air of pride in her voice as she looks back at us grinning. But when we get to the spot where we left our jackets, they are gone. Unable to board the Metro without them, we are now surrounded by police. We form chains as practiced in training, arms linked together and held behind our backs. As an audience begins to gather, taking pictures and videos on their cell phones, Inna explains the purpose of our action to a journalist. We are chained in straight lines at first, a silent army behind Inna as she speaks. After a few minutes, we are advised to chain up in a circle making us more difficult to break apart. We face outward, our painted breasts visible to the cameras. In our circle we begin to shout. “Don’t Be Scared of Our Breasts! Don’t Be Scared of Our Breasts!”
We follow other members’ cues to periodically change our slogans, “Fight Fascists, Not Feminists!” We keep yelling as the police wait for back up. My sweat mingles with the women my arms are locked with, rolling down our bodies together. My throat hurts now and I cough occasionally or stop yelling periodically to recover, but I feel good, strong, stronger than the police, and THE MAN. My face is stern, angry as I yell, jaw clenched, serious and unrelenting.

As they surround us and push us together our circle folds in on itself, still chained. I begin to feel afraid. Lacking the ability to move in any other direction, one activist begins jumping up and down. We follow suit, yelling. “Shame, Shame!” I see the paint is rubbing off of my breasts onto the officer’s uniform in front of me. The black fabric is thick and rough against my skin. When one of the other officers points to the paint on his clothes, he steps back holding his gloves in the air to show he is not touching us. The others step back too and we are able to spread back out into our circle.

This field account again demonstrates the ways bodies coalesce in the action of protest; in this case their solidarity is embodied through collective resistance. Cathcart (1978) argued that “movements are a kind of ritual conflict whose most distinguishing form is confrontation” (p. 253). As seen here, confrontation enhances not only the individual body’s agentic potential (i.e., feeling strengthened through the performance of physical power) it also contributes to the embodied construction of coalitional subjectivity through confrontation as activists’ bodies, in this case, literally brush up against their enemies. In performing defiance, individual bodies become part of a collective resistance. As FEMEN members consciously deploy the visuality of united bodies to generate sites, and sights, of resistance, they create antagonisms through embodied arguments that expose the limit points of dominant discourse and “open potential spaces for change” (DeLuca, 1999a, p. 50). This field account further shows how the rhetoric of powerful vulnerability is not only an imagistic construction; instead, it is an embodied rhetorical experience. The feeling of being surrounded by uniformed policemen with the power to enact bodily violence produces vulnerability, but the ability to use the naked body as an agentic weapon – requiring the police to back up – reinscribes the body with power, revealing how FEMEN’s claim “Our Weapon Is Our Naked Breasts!” refers not only to the symbolic weaponizing of the body but rather to activists’ embodied experiences. Ahmed (2004) argues that “intensity may impress upon the surfaces of bodies through negation: the surface is felt when something is felt ‘against’ it” (p. 27). In this case, FEMEN emerges as a “sociality of bodily surfaces” (Ahmed, 2004, p. 31), as the bodies of activists collide with representatives of the state, resignifying and reexperiencing the vulnerable body as powerful in confrontation.

The final stage of protest – the arrest of activists – is illustrated in the following account:

Back up has arrived and they finally begin arresting us, going for Inna first. We keep shouting, resisting, relinking our circle as members are taken one by one and thrown in vans. As our circle shrinks, some of the girls “melt” to the ground, as trained. We are staying the place. Keeping the action going until the last second. I watch as male cops, four per women because of the way we are chained, grab the activists, reaching for hair, throats, nostrils. It looks painful.

At one point after I am down on the ground, in an entirely different place in the circle now— one of the police manages to catch my arm. I remember a statement from training: “If you lose your arms you have nothing!” I wrest my arm back and lock it behind me with another
activist. This keeps me there until finally it is just two of us. When they break us apart something gets caught in my hair and I feel some of it rip. As I am carried through the air, I keep yelling, one hand in a fist. I give a struggle of my legs toward the end, really just for the visual impact, not actually trying to break free. The other activists, still shouting from the police vans, shoot approving glances as I go by.

The police throw me in a van but then start to pull me back out. This scares me, and I grab another activist, who holds onto me as the others hold onto her: “No,” they shout! “Let her stay,” the police say. We breathe a collective sigh of relief. We ARE like one body, one voice.

As is apparent from this account, the arrest stage of the direct action event enables the media capture of striking conflict scenes that mobilize FEMEN members’ bodies as simultaneously powerful and vulnerable, and emphasize the violence of patriarchy and the police state as female activists appear overpowered by male police. Training of the protesting body prepares activists to meet the public screen with screams, entangled with others as police attempt to dismember the FEMEN body. The use of a symbolically vulnerable (naked) body thus becomes a resource for FEMEN activists as protest images feature institutionally powerfully individuals – typically men in uniform – violently arresting protesters. A mural painted in FEMEN’s Headquarters portrays these confrontations, depicting activists and police in various stages of protest and arrest (see Figure 4).

DeLuca (1999b) argues that these types of images utilize “a nascent body rhetoric that deploys bodies as a pivotal resource for the crucial practice of public argumentation” (p. 10). However, the body rhetorics employed by FEMEN not only serve external aims, they also have internal implications as FEMEN members enact the empowered body through collective resistance, and as a consequence find themselves feeling more powerful. As activists rely on one another in the field, embodied solidarities are “felt as an intense

Figure 4. Mural.
'impression” (Ahmed, 2004, p. 31). The modes of corporeality FEMEN activists engage through their synchronized gestural routine and bodily entanglements require bodies to press against one another, contributing to the construction of coalitional subjectivities through physical sensation.

Through the use of participatory critical rhetoric to engage FEMEN, our analysis has offered a means for looking beyond bodies as representational to instead experience the feeling of embodied empowerment frequently spoken of by FEMEN members. In an interview with a former FEMEN activist, we discussed this:

FEMEN activist: Before you take your clothes off you’re, you’re nervous of course and all of these things go through your head and you try to remember, uh, what you must do. But as soon as you take the first step and throw your clothes off, the nerves disappear and you feel brave and strong and aggressive and ready to, uh, fight the enemy … you really feel strong when you do it.

Roberta: Yeah. That’s how I felt.

This experience of enhancing bodily power is central to the movement’s cultural work. As these acts are repeated, FEMEN’s rhetorical actions internalize the aims of the movement for members by inscribing a sense of empowerment on individual bodies and creating a collective body through physical training and the embodied solidarities enacted as activists place themselves in situations of conflict and potential violence. In the movie, I Am FEMEN, one activist expresses, “I’m not a part of FEMEN, I am FEMEN” (Margot, 2015), a claim repeated by others during training. As individual bodies align with FEMEN through the repetition of an individual, collective, and confrontational gestural routine they become the resistance. The resistance, moreover, becomes them: shifting bodily inscriptions, signifying and materializing bodies as action, changing vulnerability into power, and transforming individuals into a coalition of bodies. In the final section, we draw conclusions about how examining internal rhetorics of activist organizations through critical participatory rhetoric extends theorizations of body rhetorics in social movements.

**Generating agentic bodies through internal and external rhetorics**

Internal and external rhetorics together shape social movements, their rhetorical potentials, and their publics. By utilizing a participatory approach to attend to internal rhetorics as they contribute to FEMEN activism, and to the movement’s external rhetorics, our analysis addresses how rhetorical agency and bodily capacities are generated through multiple contexts and actions as activists prepare for and engage in protest. While we have discussed the capacities of individual, collective, and entangled bodies discretely, these corporeal forms clearly build on and reinforce one another in the movement’s multidimensional use of body rhetorics to shape individual and social action. The current analysis shows how FEMEN’s behind-the-scenes training prepares bodies to act alone and in coalition and confrontation with others, focusing on how resistant actions and embodied solidarities generated through training and protest influence individual feelings of power and agency and intersubjective experiences. Through the individual training of the body, the enactment of collective embodiment, and the body’s ability to stand strong in confrontation, activists reexperience their bodies, which Noland (2009) describes as the subject
becoming “alert to the distinction between meaning-making for others and being a material support for that meaning, or, more precisely, being a material and animate support for that meaning” (p. 191). For FEMEN activists, reexperiencing their bodies through movement creates new sign systems and meanings for their bodies, enabling new bodily possibilities for themselves and their audiences.

This essay highlights many of the internal rhetorics that guide activists in decision-making processes regarding body rhetorics as a protest tactic. Learning of this preparation provides vital insights into ways protest rhetoric shapes and is shaped by current media practices. In its focus on immediacy in the rhetorical exchange, participatory critical rhetoric approaches include examining the “contexts that impact present-day conflicts [as] an important part of examining the ongoing process of rhetorical invention” (Middleton et al., 2015, p. 129). FEMEN’s rhetorical invention is bolstered by the corporeal enactment of protest that is crafted with due attention to the performative body. The training for the camera as reported by the first author’s experiences in the field illustrates FEMEN’s inventive practices and preparation. Other social movements that engage in direct action tactics may have similar responses to the demands of protest in the intersections of the streets and screens of contemporary activism.

FEMEN activism engages the public screen through its deliberate production of powerful images and its use of the body to capture media attention. However, FEMEN is also comprised by groups of activists who are, first and fundamentally, embodied individuals engaging in physical actions in relation to others. Enck-Wanzer (2006) has argued that reducing body rhetoric to an instrumental role limits our understanding of “what the rhetoric itself is up to—what cultural or social work it is accomplishing” (p. 179). Looking specifically to the body rhetorics that are performed by FEMEN members, attention to the internal and external rhetorics of the movement have allowed us to attend to body rhetorics as they move in multiple directions. Powerful vulnerability is a rhetorical form generated from the internal preparation of the body in order to create cultural and gendered dissonance. Combining paradoxical performances of vulnerability and power through corporeal forms including nakedness, yelling, synchronized movements, and animated facial expressions, the movement’s internal rhetoric and training enables FEMEN to create an overall gestural routine that is enacted at the moment of protest.

Noland (2009) contends that gestures are built within social codes, but that “through retraining, dissonance can be created on the level of the gestural, and thus discursive norms can be brought into confrontation with movement practices in such a way as to subvert cultural expectations and challenge dichotomous structures” (pp. 174–175). FEMEN, by retraining women’s bodies, brings various corporeal expressions into confrontation. The naked form that can be culturally associated with sexuality is confronted with discordant painful expressions. The female body that can be culturally associated with fragility is confronted with the ability to climb walls or occupy any space it chooses. The police body that can be culturally associated with male power and violence is confronted with cameras prepared to document the violences enacted against women’s bodies. As DeLuca (1999b) notes, “images of bodies at risk are encapsulated arguments” (p. 14). In the case of FEMEN, our analysis has shown that these encapsulated arguments do not exist separately from their production. In other words, while images of powerful vulnerability do encapsulate arguments that can be encountered by various audiences, the use of
participatory critical rhetoric attends to how the enactment of powerful vulnerability not only acts on audiences, it acts on FEMEN members at the bodily level.

As FEMEN activists engage in corporeal arguments, they arrange bodies and agencies. Noland (2009) contends that theories of agency can be understood through “variations of performance” (p. 3) whereby the subject can enact corporeal resistance through body movements that stand contra acculturation practices. Each confrontational moment affords the possibility of transformation as the body is “reexperienced” by both FEMEN member and audiences, meaning that “through repetition, through reenactment, the subject may reexperience her own moving body as an embodied sign – that is, as a sign and as a form of embodied animation” (p. 191, emphasis in original). This is evident in FEMEN protesters’ reflections upon their actions as a mode of reclaimation. As one interviewee put it: “It’s also a way to express yourself and really get the power back in a way that you felt you lost during [patriarchal] incidents, or attacks, or situations.” FEMEN, through the use of powerful vulnerability, engages corporeal resistance by enabling its members to reexperience their bodies and to reimagine their nak-edness, their power, and their rhetorical agency. The production of an “embodied sign” via the reexperiencing of the body crafts a gestural routine that provides “positions of enunciation [that] render the subject socially legible … a body coherently marked” (p. 191, 192). FEMEN protesters and other activists that engage in body rhetoric enable new sign systems through performances that provide new meanings for activist and audience alike. As social movements transform members’ bodies, they produce agencies that then further serve as rhetorical proofs for any audience members desiring to feel the same sense of agency over their own bodies. Importantly, these gestural routines occur at the bodily level, engaging in a visceral rhetoric that itself has generated more rhetorical effects than the slogans, chants, and words shouted by FEMEN members. Animated by political power and nakedness, FEMEN rhetorically confronts the cultural ascriptions found in body rhetoric while also performing political arguments against the state. As Stormer (1999) succinctly notes, “Political rights are corporeal rights” (p. 64). FEMEN requires audiences to sort through the embodied dissonance of powerful vulnerability as a means of understanding the dangers and consequences of fascism or patriarchy.

Our analysis has also demonstrated that as activists reexperience their bodies through training and the enactment of protest, internal rhetorics shape activists’ public engage-ments and generate the intersubjective and embodied solidarities necessary for collective action. In FEMEN’s case, the resignification of the body that occurs through individual, collective, and confrontational enactments is consequential for members given that “technical, political, and popular discourses have historically tended to relegate women to bodies in a derogatory sense” (Pezzullo, 2003, p. 357). Through the construction of a new gestural routine, FEMEN members engage the politics of the body and their own embodiments to challenge dominant discourses while regenerating bodily agencies. By contributing to the understanding of body rhetorics as they produce new embodied pos-sibilities for activists, this essay points scholars to further engage with movement rhetoric as it unfolds in multiple contexts and moves in multiple directions, shaping internal and external audiences. In a time when political polarization and attacks on marginalized iden-tities have left many bodies without power, it is perhaps more important than ever to return to, and continue to further flesh out McGee’s and other social movement scholars’
insights through the lens of embodiment. Social movement is a generative act: a set of meanings – and we would also add a set of bodies, gestures, and embodied engagements – that condition and produce possibilities for transformative action.

Notes

1. DeLuca was not the first rhetorical critic to recognize the importance of the body in movement rhetoric; however, embodied discourses had primarily been treated as a supplement to verbal appeals rather than rhetorics in themselves. We focus our attention on DeLuca (1999a, 1999b) here because of his theorizing of the body in relation to media systems, which is relevant to our examination of FEMEN’s strategies.

2. For further discussion of FEMEN’s use of nude protest see Valente (2015) and Veneracion-Rallonza (2014).

3. FEMEN’s foregrounding of attractive white women at the center of their fight against women’s global oppression has generated critique from women of color feminists and especially Muslim women. FEMEN’s protests frequently enact a form of imperial feminism that positions white, western women as agentic subjects, while exoticizing and Othering differently positioned women (e.g., Mohanty, 1991). For further discussion of this critique of FEMEN’s action see, for example, Ivey (2015).

4. Chávez (2010) importantly theorizes “coalitional subjectivities” as they emerge within and facilitate political alliances of distinctly located queer and migrant activist groups, a process producing what she calls “differential belonging” (p. 144). We recognize that our use of coalition differs from Chávez in this manner, as we deploy an understanding of coalition not to understand the alliance between different activist groups but to unpack the performative formation of a collective body through the coalescence of individual bodies and subjectivities.

5. In fact, we were advised to be as friendly as possible in our interactions with police once out of the sight of the cameras.

6. One interesting source of disagreement came when debating the placement of one of FEMEN’s black activists in the center of the front row of the marching formation; some activists argued that it was tokenism – “it’s like saying, ‘oh look, we have a Black one,’” one woman stated. Other activists from FEMEN France argued that she should be visible for the cameras precisely because she was a French citizen who deviated from the National Front’s vision of the “ideal” citizen. These behind-the-scenes debates offer insight into the ways members plan their actions for the public screen; they also reveal dissident voices within the planning of FEMEN actions, voices that are not reflected in the captured images circulated by the press.

Acknowledgements

Earlier versions of this manuscript include a presentation from both authors at the 2015 Western States Communication Association conference, and a portion of the first author’s doctoral dissertation. This project greatly benefitted from the insights of Daniel Brouwer, Karen Leong, and Tom Nakayama, and was supported by the Hugh Downs School of Human Communication at Arizona State University, in the form of a Summer Research Grant. The authors thank Editor Tamara Afiﬁ for her support of this manuscript and rhetorical fieldwork, and the three anonymous reviewers whose remarks have informed our arguments.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.
Notes on contributors

Roberta Chevrette is an Assistant Professor of Communication Studies at Middle Tennessee State University. Using rhetorical and qualitative approaches, her research focuses on processes of belonging and exclusion, examining how ideologies of race, gender, sexuality, culture, and empire impact national identities, global relationships, and social movements.

Aaron Hess is an Associate Professor of Rhetoric and Communication in the College of Integrative Sciences and Arts, Languages and Cultures, at the Downtown Phoenix campus at Arizona State University. Using innovative methodological intersections between textual analysis and participatory approaches, his research explores the complex ways digital technology augments rhetorical expression and reception.

References


