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Engaging Movement(s) In and As Pedagogy

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Engaging Movement(s) In and As Pedagogy

To move is to undergo change. Physical, emotional, and cognitive shifts require us – as individuals and as part of various collectives – to make space for growth. Although movements inspire visions of brighter futures made possible by such growth, the processes of change inevitably produce feelings of discomfort and uncertainty. Our discontent often serves as a catalyst, reminding us to take stock of our progress and assess whether to stay the course, quicken our pace, change directions, or take a much-needed break. Deciding which course of action best serves our goals and ourselves can be complicated. As this special issue highlights, feminist pedagogy offers a robust set of theoretical and applied resources to inform such choice points and to explore the inherent tensions in movement(s) and social change.

The contributions articulated here were first presented at the Organization for the Study of Communication, Language, and Gender's (OSCLG) 45th annual conference, held in October 2022. As the conference co-planners, we felt an urgent need to center the communicative processes and methodologies exploring Movement(s). We were meeting in Minneapolis, Minn., a city that continues to grapple with George Floyd's murder by police officers in May 2020. The story of Floyd's death sparked national protests and broader calls for racial justice and police reform. Our call sought to explore how communication and language undergo Movement(s), particularly as we aim to mobilize others for meaningful change. Though the activism inspired by Floyd and others served as a key starting point, other national and global events prompted more expansive thinking about movement and its symbolic and material implications. For example, Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, and the subsequent refugee crisis in Europe, underscored the importance of attending to the experiences of human migration as well as the ways we can use communication to move others to act for social change.

Our experiences of planning OSCLG's first in-person conference since 2019 offered reminders of the embodied and temporal dimensions of movement(s) as well. The ongoing evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic sparked particular discomfort and uncertainty. Were people ready to move back to in-person gatherings? What would it look like to return to "normal" as people navigated varying levels of risk tolerance, especially amid new viral strains and changing guidance on masking and social distancing? Hurricane Ian's arrival in Florida just days before the conference offered further challenges, impacting travel plans for several OSCLG members.

Despite the contingencies and disruptions, many of us were able to safely gather to share insights, ideas, and questions. It is gratifying to see the dialogue begun at the conference continued in this special issue. Rachel Silverman has assembled a diverse collection of contributors offering their ideas for how we can engage with movement(s) from a feminist pedagogical perspective. Fostering movement(s) in taken-for-granted ways of thinking is especially centered in this issue's contributions.

One of the hallmarks of feminist pedagogy is to raise awareness of lived differences. Janine Armstrong's critical commentary offers a roadmap for increasing students' capacities to understand intersectional identities. Not only does she offer relatable entry points for perspective-taking, but she also underscores the importance of expanding the voices included in supplemental classroom materials to include works on and by diverse individuals. Perspective-taking is similarly at the heart of Shauna McDonald's teaching activity, which aims to help students understand the histories of social movements. By creating digital visual representations of various "waves" of feminist movements, students learn about the prevailing strategies and discourses of various activist groups.

Additionally, two contributions highlight strategies for raising consciousness of and providing resources for taking action on issues of gendered violence. Acknowledging a need to move away from polarizing conflict and ideological divisions, Sarah Jones offers a model for facilitating civil dialogue in the classroom. This approach provides students with tools for having difficult conversations and engages them in perspective-taking on discourses of consent. Janell Bauer illustrates the possibilities for using microblogging as a form of digital activism. In doing so, she teaches students to move from a position of empathetic awareness to productive action that calls out gendered violence and increases its visibility on social media.

Finally, Stone Watt reminds us that movements can inspire reflection and change in our own pedagogical practices. Specifically, she explains the strengths of using individualized contract grading to emphasize agency and well-being within a classroom community.

Together, these essays provide us with resources for deepening understandings of social movement histories, raising consciousness and sparking activism, fostering dialogue and intersectional thinking in classrooms, and engaging movements to shift entrenched pedagogical practices. In short, they provide us with a roadmap for change in ourselves and in our students.