

Feminist Resilience at the Heart of Coalition Work

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Abstract: This chapter recounts the author's experiences working within groups as she considers, "How can we work with each other and with other scholars in rhetoric and across disciplines to create coalitions situated in lived experiences and feminist praxis, as we teach, learn, write, and research across different places and positions?" Through the author's membership in feminist professional and community organizations, with an extensive history in coalition work and as a writing teacher, she sees the connections between feminist rhetorical resilience, writing studies, and the buildings of classroom communities, to coalition work. Prevalent to her understanding is the need for a feminist ethic of care and trust in the mission of the coalition to bring goals and events to fruition.

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Introduction

After reading the Call for Papers for the summer 2023 special issue of *Peitho: Coalition as Commonplace: Centering Feminist Scholarship, Pedagogies, and Leadership Practices*, I sat for a moment and paused on the question, "How can we work with each other and with other scholars in rhetoric and across disciplines to create coalitions situated in lived experiences and feminist praxis?" (Clark-Oates, Maraj, Matzke, Rankins-Robertson). My initial thought was, "Well, within coalitions we should teach each other, learn from each other, and write together, not just work together." I wondered, "Could writing be the thing that helps us learn from each other?" and also wondered, "Could writing in times of retreat, together and apart, be an answer to helping us get to know how each of us is positioned and the places from where each of us comes?" As I formulated a response to the questions, I imagined the voices of scholars whose works have spoken to me and helped shape me throughout my career.

In a polyphony of voices, I'm reminded of values and lessons that I've clung to regarding community writing (House, Rosenberg) and community listening (Fishman, Garcia, House), difference (Kerschbaum), resistance (Anzaldúa, hooks, Enoch), language and experience (Lu), writing as a feminist (Ede and Lunsford), and as a Chicana (Ruiz, Ritchie), feminist rhetorical

resilience (Flynn, Sotirin, Brady), solidarity and illusions of solidarity (Mohanty, Restaino), hope (Glenn), care (Royster, Kirsch), and storytelling (Cisneros). This is a short but important list of scholars and their work that contribute to the ideas I have regarding coalitions. These are the voices that have carried me to the place where I am now, as a junior faculty and member of The Coalition of Feminist Scholars in the History of Rhetoric and Composition (CFSHCR) and the Coalition for Community Writing (CCW). While it's important for me to focus on why I chose to belong to these coalitions, it's also important to reflect on why I am intent on continuing to engage. I feel that I must also trouble the reasons I may have stayed away. So, I come with my thoughts, hopes, and ideas for ways we might make note of what has been going on in coalitions, what is going well and not so well, and what we might do to begin to see our way forward as we coalesce with each other and others outside our field.

An Offering Wrapped in Chances Taken to Do Something Different

This chapter is an offering, from me, an Assistant Professor of Rhetoric and Composition at a Hispanic Serving Institution in Southern California. In the moments during which I question the value of this offering, I recall Chicana feminist, Gloria Anzaldúa, arguing for the *mestizaje* to be brought into dialogues on power relations and across disciplinary boundaries (1990). This work done by Anzaldúa and many others to make a space for my work to be included is a path cleared before me. I set off with gratitude and hopeful anticipation of what lies ahead for coalitions and our field, as we do work that guides us toward positive change.

Hesitance becomes encouragement to contribute to a conversation started years ago toward moving us, the field, and coalitions within our field “beyond the perceived patriarchal (hierarchical and competitive) structures of our disciplines and professional organizations and the masculinist practices that had long guided them,” as Cheryl Glenn and Andrea Lunsford imagine in “Coalition: A Meditation,” written for the 2015 Fall/Winter edition of *Peitho* (11). There are complications still, nearly ten years after Glenn and Lunsford recognized a need for change, as coalitions in our field are “still far too pale” (12). The absence of people of color in coalition is also a challenge brought about by the fact that there is such a small percentage of people of color who have Ph.D.'s in the country, much less in Rhetoric and Composition. Some of the complication with who decides to become a member of a coalition is also brought about by past constructions of coalitions as being built and maintained by white men and women and how this construction has kept others out by way of association with the term “coalition” and what this means to them based on past experiences. I am positive and hopeful that over time, dismantling of past constructions of coalition is possible.

Similar to the concept of *mestizaje*, what I offer is a mix and blend of story, theory, experience, ideas, and voices that have formed my scholarship and membership in coalition. Blended within, I draw on the concept of feminist rhetorical resilience. Commonplace definitions of resil-

ience are typically applicable to individuals, rather than groups. I take a chance of incorporating the principles of feminist rhetorical resilience into this piece as I see an overlap of issues regarding labor, and needs for relationality, sociality, and agency, as well as a dependence on resources held by those involved with coalitions. In *Feminist Rhetorical Resilience* (2012), Elizabeth Flynn, Patricia Sotirin, and Ann Brady note that “feminist rhetorical resilience includes actions undertaken by rhetors, usually women, who, with varying degrees of success, discursively interact with others, resulting in improved situations despite contexts of significant adversity” (1). When I think of coalition work at present, I often think of it as women’s work, although I know this is not always true. This, I assume, is because of a lifetime of associating women with care and community work.

In recent experiences, I see that feminist agency and rhetorical action are at the heart of coalition work in that coalitions within rhetoric and composition often call upon feminist concepts such as social justice, equity, care, and gender, thus complicating conventional rhetorical understandings of terms such as “context, engagement, audience, production, and exigency,” similarly to the foci of feminist resilience (7). It is feminist concepts and, often, feminine bodies that connect coalitions and feminist resilience, and it cannot be ignored that “Women carry out at least 2.5 times more unpaid work than men” (www.news.un.org). The more time I have spent in coalition, I have noted that coalitions are “relational, dynamic, responsive in and to contexts,” while “creating and animating capacities and possibilities,” like the concept of feminist resilience (8). It is for these reasons I argue that approaching the future of coalition work with principles of feminist rhetorical resilience will take the adversities faced at present and offer relational and social answers to some issues we have with making connections and building bridges across difference. One of the ways I posit we do so is through writing. I will expand on this position as the chapter moves forward.

Coalitions have the potential to nurture souls of academics who require engagement in feminist praxis based on personal values, to fulfill communal needs, engage in reciprocal work, and respect for the needs held by some, to nurture others. Coalition work requires that members be resilient in the face of adversity, and also that the coalition as a group be resilient as it “shapes, enacts relationships among selves and others, speakers and audiences, things and dreams, bodies and needs, and so on” (Flynn, Sotirin, and Brady 7). Coalitions can be productive spaces for the building of relationships that allow for the sharing of the “why” of their participation without reservation, which can be done through writing and discussion. Like feminist resilience, coalition work also “enables fresh perspectives on feminist themes of empowerment, growth, health, and transformation,” all of which also require care and trust within the relationships (Flynn, Sotirin, and Brady 22). As the chapter moves forward, I will also expand on the need for an ethos of care and the value of taking time to build trust within a coalition. First, I will share some of my story, to help give insight as to my belief in the power in coalition, and recognition that coalition work begins in undergraduate and graduate school and continues with encouragement from respected mentors, and in interactions with esteemed scholars.

Getting Involved in Coalition Work

During my education at New Mexico State University (NMSU), there were two major opportunities that shaped my future interests and visions for coalition involvement. The first was being selected as a Fellow in the Borderlands Writing Project (BWP), a satellite project of the National Writing Project. In BWP, I was taught to help students see the value of their experiential knowledge (Lu & Horner). Also essential to my time in BWP was my own experience of feeling the power that comes from writing together and sharing of that writing. In preparation to hold my first writing classes, I gleaned as much knowledge and preparation to teach writing from listening to teacher's stories from kindergarten through doctoral programs as I did from pedagogical readings, if not more. This is the beginning of my belief in writing being essential to forming the care and trust necessary to see goals come to fruition in groups of individuals who are unknown to each other.

I was also fortunate to spend six years as a research assistant and participant-observer to retired professor Christopher C. Burnham in a History of Rhetoric course focused on an assignment titled "The Advocacy Project." This assignment led students through the rhetorical process of organizing a social justice focused project that they would use to get their peers to act by the final day of class. Being exposed to and part of the organization of more than a hundred advocacy projects helped me to visualize the path of work toward bringing about social change.

The power behind small gestures that reach numerous people became apparent to me through this work and took on a new level of energy in my dissertation research study, as I learned of the role of small gestures as enactments of feminist resilience and their role in change over time (Trujillo). As a research assistant, I repeatedly witnessed the potential of groups made up of like-minded individuals, and non-like-minded individuals who were persuaded to pool their resources to effect change, to take actions of varying degrees, because they believed in something presented to them by a peer. This is not unlike working in coalition toward seeing goals and tasks through, based on beliefs in the work being done. Formation of the topic for the advocacy project, plans toward seeing the project through, brainstorming, troubleshooting, and moving through stasis, or stuck points all took place through writing.

Over the course of the last three years, I have been actively involved in CCW and CF-SHRC. Had it not been for the fact that I knew Jessica Enoch was involved with The Coalition of Feminist Scholars in the History of Rhetoric and Composition (CFSHRC), I probably wouldn't have made an effort to join. Having read Jessica's "Para la Mujer': Defining a Chicana Feminist Rhetoric at the Turn of the Century" and, "Survival Stories: Feminist Historiographic Approaches to Chicana Rhetorics of Sterilization Abuse" while in the master's and doctoral program, I knew that she was aware of the complexities existing in America among mestizaje, and issues faced by Latino communities over many decades (2004, 2005). I knew through her writing that Jessica cared

about how bodies, particularly the bodies of women, are remembered and treated. This helped me to consider that the CFSHRC might have more like-minded members and gave me a push to look into the group and to step up for membership. This reminds me of the importance of the work that I do, of the need to keep writing, not knowing who is going to remember what I have written and those whom I value in my scholarship.

Had I not met Veronica House at the Conference on Community Writing and felt the warmth in her presence and sincerity in her efforts toward inclusion, I wouldn't have become affiliated with the Coalition for Community Writing (CCW). My first interaction with Veronica felt as if she had welcomed me into her home as she made sure I was comfortable, called me by name, and when I showed interest in belonging to CCW, she made a space for me to use what I felt I could contribute. Veronica's actions served as another reminder to me, that it is not just what we write that has an impact on fellow and up and coming scholars, but what we say and how we behave when no one else is watching is equally as important.

To begin, I would not have attended the Conference on Community Writing without the encouragement and invitation of Lauren Rosenberg, my then, dissertation chair and advisor. Lauren's work with CCW and articles, such as "Navigating Difficulty in Classroom-Community Outreach Projects," brought me to think more about the places I wanted to spend my academic time (2017). I could see through her projects and publications how Lauren's relationships with research participants had spanned years, and how important writing in the community and listening in community was to her and other writing teachers. It is essential that we not take for granted that our students know what is available to them in the way of coalition. We must make invitations, and act as attentive hosts to newcomers to our coalitions.

I also know that without the money and time to travel, research, and connections to a network, I might not have ever known these coalitions existed. Unless a faculty member or student has the time, funds, or encouragement, not many are going to find coalitions in the field of rhetoric and composition as existing or as being open to them. It is imperative that coalitions become more present, work to create and maintain community, and once they have members, particularly those who have been excluded, they should work to help those who join want to stay. Coalitions are relational, they are social, and should be attentive to not only the exigencies of the field, but the exigencies faced by their membership at varying stages in their academic careers.

In work I recognize as coalition work, although it was done strictly through writing, I joined many authors to contribute to a Guest Edited Special Issue of *Writers, Craft & Context* titled, "Conferencing Toward Antiracism: Reckoning with the Past, Reimagining the Present." I consider work that I have done with groups focused on bringing about change to fall under three types of coalition work: as an active participant in the role of speaking and contributing through labor, writing, and discussion; in the role of support by contributing ideas and some written labor; and as a

contributor solely through writing.

In a most recent role that involves labor, writing, discussion, outreach, and will require presentation, it has been my pleasure and honor to work with Aurora Matzke toward organizing the Feminist Workshop at the Conference on College Composition and Communication in 2024. While the organizers of this event are not named as a coalition, the work done in this Workshop and the preparation it takes to put on the workshop feels like coalition work, as it brings together like-minded individuals to focus on abundance and center our workshop time on the “rich and vibrant ways differing Feminist Latinx scholars, through their situatedness, scholarship, community work and teaching yield contributions to our field,” through discussion and by drawing on the power of written testimonio (Trujillo and Matzke).

While I feel that all three types of work are important, considering feminist praxis, they require different types of action that for me, all are still bound to an ethos of care. In these settings, I consider core feminist values to include, but not be limited to considerations of how power is distributed or shared, to creating and maintaining equitable spaces, to connecting social justice to all teaching and learning, acknowledgement and valuing of experiential knowledge, and the championing of diversity and inclusion.

Challenges Faced by Coalitions

While there are many issues on which I could focus regarding challenges faced by coalitions, I have chosen to discuss only a handful in depth. I will not pause on all issues, but will not ignore that there are general issues within coalitions that cannot be anticipated, and are realities of meetings, so there must be a willingness to allow for mistakes made and for regrouping. These issues could include issues such as inexperienced or disinterested facilitators, the necessity of meeting objectives on the agenda within a particular timeframe and, in the interest of time, not stopping to form working relationships.

I want to note that it can also be jarring to join a coalition and come face-to-face with unknown members and with members with far more experience and history with the coalition than a new member possesses. It is probable that there will be differences of opinions and life experience and sensations of being steamrolled by confident speakers and those comfortable with and accustomed to sharing firm positions. Other issues faced can include imbalances in the labor load, difficulties forming and maintaining trust within the group, behaviors antithetical to equity and inclusion, waning motivations for belonging, conflicting priorities, and hidden agendas.

The challenges listed above are the unfortunate issues of current organization of coalitions and meetings offering few opportunities to build community among participants who are often made up of members from diverse backgrounds, who are unknown to each other, or are only

known through publications, or conference presentations. This can be problematic for graduate students in coalitions who are only beginning to publish, and don't have background knowledge of seasoned academics, or the work that is being done outside their focused areas of interest. The probability of many challenges exists in many groups where different individuals come together to accomplish goals. I return here to my position that much of the imbalance of sharing of voices, the motivations for belonging, the possibilities of membership, experience, intentions, and research interests can be shared through taking time to write and share with each other in retreat once a year. Retreat offers a chance for a coalition to regroup and give members a chance at forming relationships that can be difficult to nurture face-to-face, much less online.

Online Meetings

With the prevalence of online coalition meetings, I think of Stephanie Kerschbaum's *Toward a New Rhetoric of Difference*, and her discussion of perception and disclosure regarding others in shared spaces—paying mind to that which we count as similarities or differences with those with whom we are gathered. Kerschbaum notes in “Signs of Disability, Disclosing” that she “defined markers of difference as dynamic, emergent, and relational rhetorical cues deployed by interlocutors to point to or engage difference between themselves.” In her article, Kerschbaum's aim is “to deepen our understanding of the meanings of disability that emerge as people move among material artifacts and environments.” I wonder then, how online coalition meetings orient the membership to others in the online space where personal experience is oftentimes not disclosed, nor are there markers through which to make connections other than the physical, visualized in photos, small squares, and names in white font on a black background. Without writing, sharing, or discussion beyond addressing the tasks of the coalition, the field must consider how perception and disclosure are occurring and how this affects the coalition overall.

Accommodation and Overcommitting

It should also be taken into consideration that many newer coalition members, although faculty members, are a few years from having been graduate students and have become accustomed to saying “yes.” This, of course, is also true for graduate students who, often by virtue of needing to make money, have been those in groups to take on labor before fully considering the time and energy that will be demanded of the accepted tasks. Coalition members in composition and rhetoric, for varying reasons, come prepackaged with vulnerabilities, memories of marginalization, and a need for the same care and consideration we have worked to give research participants. It's important that established coalition members go out of our way to make sure all members feel safe to say “no,” are respected, heard, and appreciated—as coalition work can also turn into uncompensated emotion work. Taking care of membership may be even more difficult, when the members are not known to each other. This difficulty can be compounded when a member does not know their fellow coalition members well enough to feel they can say “no” without reper-

cussion of becoming an outsider or even self-driven anxieties about belonging that come from past experiences and preconceived ideas of who belongs and who does not in coalition.

The White Nature of Coalition Work

Some things just don't feel like they are for a Chicana, and coalitions are one, unless it is a coalition for resistance and racial justice. I find it interesting that the term coalition is daunting, as opposed to group, gathering, organization, alliance, or association. This is not the chapter for interrogating the way certain words conjure images of whiteness and for whom this takes place, but my experience is that coalitions is one of those terms that brings about feelings, similar to those brought about when I walk into a restaurant, or clothing store and know "this place isn't for me." It's not easy to explain exactly why until one takes the time to sit down and deconstruct the feelings of exclusion, they don't realize how often these feelings include details such as color, design, images, text, behaviors, and titles.

While I don't argue that we should call coalitions something else as a field, I do think we can remove some of the ideas that coalitions are only for some, by making ourselves more present, and being inviting to others' whom we notice are not aware that they could become involved. Coalitions could be well served by reaching out to graduate students, to junior faculty, and undergraduates through social media, invitation emails, and through conference presence. Social media presence is growing for coalitions, but it is still not enough. When a student or a new faculty member assesses what is available in their fields, coalition involvement should be front and center. As the field of rhetoric looks to create coalitions across the disciplines, and to extend the relevant work already being done, coalitions should exist as organizations that are welcoming, inviting, and transparent beyond a small group of people.

What Can Be Done

Coalitions present possibilities for advocacy, mentorship, community outreach, creation of activities and gatherings. These positive aspects of coalition work become more likely when approached with a feminist ethos of care. With care, it becomes more likely that mentor type relationships will form in coalition. And as members are added each year, these relationships serve to model how to contribute to, belong, and perform in coalition. In *Feminist Rhetorical Resilience*, Flynn, Sotirin, and Brady write that resilience "begins from a place of struggle and desire," both of which are experiences known to coalitions within our field at present. Resilience is creative, animating the potential of whatever comes to hand as a suitable rhetorical 'resource,' be it music, linen, or family narratives" (7). Within coalition are bodies, stories, experiences, knowledge, foresight, care, effort, organization, resources, and interest. I see in feminist rhetorical resilience the relationality, agency, and sociality that I have seen in coalitions and know that there was strength in numbers, but more so in relationships. These relationships need creating, and nurturing, howev-

er.

In coalition, and as “a group of distinct individuals who come together to cooperate in joint action toward a mutual goal (or set of goals) --not forever, but for however long it takes,” I posit that we should be intentional about creating and maintaining community (Glenn, Lunsford). Formation of community can be accomplished through writing, reflection, and sharing by the membership regarding what they hope to offer and gain by belonging. As a community, the coalition can offer a place for work, where members can leave and return as necessary throughout their careers, dedicating “however long it takes” to each fulfill their individual needs for membership. It occurs to me that members join coalition for a variety of reasons, ranging from a need to build a curriculum vitae, to searching for a way to fulfill a need as an academic who is seeking opportunities to bring about change, a combination of the two, and many reasons around and in between. I draw also from Jacqueline Jones Royster and Gesa Kirsch’s approach to research with an ethos that involves “care, introspection, and attention to the material conditions of the past and the present. It demands that we pay attention to how lived experience shapes our perspectives” (664). It is these perspectives that I believe will help to shape coalitions over the years, as members join, leave, and with hope, return.

I believe the key to having members return is in members moving beyond joining and accepting tasks, and roles, with an assistance toward thinking, writing, and sharing about how the coalition fits into their career, and what they can contribute as a community member. For me, coalition is a special gathering of people, as it is not just a group, or meetings with people with shared goals, but a community in which members can form alliances, which suggests relationships, association, and benefits. Relationships suggest that we get to know the people with whom we coalesce, and this can be achieved through sharing of experience through writing. Writing, I posit, should take place before joining to express one’s intentions and goals for belonging, and during membership in writing retreats.

Retreating Toward Coalition

To think of a coalition as a productive academic community is to commit to the provision of a place where experience inside and outside academia can be stored, drawn from, and replenished, for the sake of the fields of rhetoric and composition, and beyond. This can be accomplished through literal time taken to retreat as a coalition, to write, and get to know one another, as well as to retreat from the group and return when ready, if ever, to offer the experiences they have gathered, once again. I wonder if this is the future of conference gatherings, as we have fewer financial resources, support, and time taken to organize conferences.

Taking into mind the ways that we could work with each other and scholars across disci-

plines, I believe that taking time to form community within the coalition attends to feminist praxis and to strengthening the relationships between the coalition members. Relationality is important to the success of a coalition, as it is reliant upon the resources the members can provide. By taking time to retreat, at a minimum, annually, for the sake of writing and sharing, the membership opens the possibility for reduction of feelings of exclusion, and the hurried nature of meetings where the agenda is longer than the time allotted for the meeting. With consideration of the necessities required of coalitions, such as in material and non-material contributions, we can only know what each member can or wants to contribute by taking time to ask, and then listen to written or verbal responses.

I strongly feel that an ethos of care, trust, and relationality are necessary for a group to function. It takes trust to share lived experiences, dialogue to come to know difference outside of categorization and taxonomizing, as well as reflexivity and reflection to examine where we have been and where we would like to see our fields headed (Kerschbaum; Kirsch; Royster). This behavior is what I advocate for when these groups meet, particularly in retreat. We come up against coalition as a commonplace and can't ignore that we don't always know in these precarious political times who our allies are and that as a commonplace, coming together as a coalition may mean one thing for some, and not the same for others.

Locating Members

In order to work with each other and with other scholars in rhetoric and across disciplines to create coalitions situated in lived experiences and feminist praxis, we must begin by taking time out to share knowledge about ourselves with others. I draw from feminist and composition scholars Gesa Kirsch and Joy Ritchie, as they approach caring as requiring "one to place herself in an empathetic relationship in order to understand the other's point of view" (21). Thus, when in coalition, time must be taken to learn about where the membership is located, to move away from essentializing coalition contributors based on what we can see and to avoid taxonomizing across difference (Kerschbaum, Rich). This can be achieved through writing, discussion, or both. As well, an ethos of care means that we feel responsible for others, respecting differences that exist as individuals and in communities. I envision writing and sharing in response to questions similar to the following:

- Why have I chosen to be a part of this coalition?
- What can I contribute to this coalition?
- What do I hope to receive as the result of belonging to this coalition?
- What change do I hope to be a part of as a member of this coalition?

Members are often pressed for time when gathering, requiring that meetings move directly into the business of coalition rather than sharing the places from which we have come, and what inclusion in the coalition means to each member. This could take place at an annual, online retreat, for instance. Even as Fitzsimmons and Prasad share in this issue, there is a marked difference between being able to contribute and wanting to contribute. Questions such as those listed above can give a coalition member a chance to also ask themselves if their contributions are in response to being accustomed to accommodating, or over committing. These reflections could assist someone with withdrawing from the coalition or keep them from withdrawing in sight of what they can contribute.

While motivations for coalition membership cannot be controlled, taking the time for membership to write about and explore their motivations for participation may prove surprising, as members locate the ways they can contribute, wish to contribute, and may gain beyond what they initially expected. Labor is also an issue in coalition work, as asking members to meet or retreat annually for the sake of community formation requires time and mental energy. I do believe, however, that there is a tradeoff; for the time and labor invested in building a strong coalition, there is the possibility of less turnaround in membership, better considered use of resources, and fewer chances of exclusion or members leaving without sharing the reasons why.

Coalitional Trust

Trust is also necessary for objectives to be met in coalition. This can look like trusting the value of the work that is taking place, trusting the mission of the coalition, or trusting effectiveness of small gestures that come to pass through coalition work. I return here to my position that coalition requires the formation of community through sharing that comes from discussion and writing, as it is through these actions that membership can explore what trust means to them in professional settings. Because coalition work is situated in lived experiences, time is required to build trust for sharing these experiences and rapid turnaround in coalition makes it less possible for trust to form. With consideration to the coalition work I have done, which is predominantly in the Coalition for Community Writing, the meetings take place via Zoom, between classes, meetings, appointments with students, and sometimes during time that has been set aside for writing but pushed aside to do other meaningful work. Coalition work takes place in meetings, as well as outside meetings requiring that the coalition member keep a focus on hope, change, relationality, and reciprocity as motivators for this unpaid labor. This leaves little time for relationship or trust building, and this is not the fault of the leadership, but a reflection on the way that coalition work is organized.

Conclusion

I envision a coalition as a productive space for inclusion that can work to disassemble fictions that challenge oppressive situations caused by and doing harm to teachers, administrators, researchers, scholars, community members, and our organizations. The field of rhetoric holds the potential to exemplify the sustaining of internal coalition work, as well as set the example for other coalitions through that which can be seen in the way of manifestos, mission statements, vision statements, strategic plans, and publications, as well as through the non-material that can be seen through recognition of social change.

In the model of coalition I imagine, and through enactments of feminist rhetorical resilience, I posit that “‘personal reflection’ becomes a means of enacting more radical forms of belonging” (Hsu 142). Coalescing looks like coming together to care for the self, for others, and as a result, for the whole, which comes to knowledge through taking time in retreat as a coalition to explore the motivations for the work, what can be given, and what might be gained. Participating in coalition requires relationality, a tenet of feminist rhetorical resilience, as it does agency, and sociality, but I argue that we cannot fully offer of ourselves as members until we take the time to reflect on our experiences as we engage feminist scholarship and rhetorical practices, share our positions openly, and discuss our locations in our fields and in our research.

It is all too often that in coalition, positions on topics are rumored, one’s scholarship is “understood,” and difference is gathered through first impressions and assumed through superficial interaction. As we work to reshape coalitions, it is time that we “change shape to meet the exigencies of...circumstances” faced in our field, in academia, and as a country as these circumstances are important to the work we do (Flynn, Sotirin, and Brady 9). To accomplish this, we must think of coalitions in the same way that we think of our writing classrooms, requiring writing, discussion, and reflection as we discover and share our locations in our research and visions and explore what has come from and been taken away by our experiences. By doing what we already know how to do, and doing it well, we have a chance at serving in coalition in the most meaningful ways and uniting across experiences, differences, and shared goals.

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