

*Symposium*

## Writing Program Administration: A Queer Symposium

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INTRODUCTION BY WILL BANKS

The idea for this symposium originated for me in the summer of 2013, when I attended the Council of Writing Program Administrators conference in Savannah, Georgia. I was somewhat surprised then that the conference committee had chosen the theme “Queering the Writing Program.” Conversations around queer work had been decidedly absent at previous CWPA events, so much so that I wondered how we might have a whole conference themed around queer issues, theories, methods, etc. In fact, looking back now at the last ten years of CWPA conference programs reveals that only 8 out of 1,122 sessions (0.7%) were in some way explicitly marked as focusing on LGBTQ+ topics. This percentage does not change when broken down by individual paper titles. LGBTQ+ issues remain less than one percent of the conversation across the last ten years of this conference.

But I was also excited to attend the 2013 event: after all, here was a major annual conference in my field and “queer” was going to be more than a side category or an option of one among many “inclusivity-oriented” strands. Had queer rhetorics come of age?

It wasn't long, however, before I began to think that something wasn't quite right. It wasn't just the paucity of sessions I found at the conference focused on queer work or explicitly engaging queer frames for analysis. Sure, this absence had struck me as odd when I initially went through the program since one can hardly get through the programs at our conferences without tripping over the conference theme keywords in the session titles. No, it wasn't that, exactly. Sitting down now with my old program, a quick count of the session titles, including the plenary addresses ( $n = 125$ ), shows

that only 3% made any explicit reference to the conference theme; three of those were the plenary sessions. And it wasn't the fact that in the remaining session, only one paper/presentation among the three was explicitly queer themed in some way, making the percentage of actual "queer talk" at the conference even smaller than it might have initially seemed.

Or maybe it was: maybe it was surprising that for a conference focused on "Queering the Writing Program," after the plenary addresses, there was virtually no explicitly queer work happening at the conference. How could that be? And as I sat in session after session, not one presenter framed their argument about assessment, or hiring, or instructor evaluation, or program design, or textbook selection in terms of queer theories of labor, production, assessment, pedagogy, identity, gender, etc. And then finally, one presenter said what I'd been suspecting all along: "I know this session doesn't really address the conference theme, but it turns out, we don't really know anything about queer theory, and we didn't want to embarrass ourselves by reading one or two articles and then trying to make our presentation connect to them." A few people in the room chuckled knowingly. Frankly, it was the most honest moment of the conference for me, far more so than in the session where one presenter forced herself to read a Judith Butler essay, squeezed a quotation out of it and into her introduction, and then never brought it up again. A queer theory drive-by.

Of course, on some level, conference leadership only gets us so far. The CWPA Board and the conference planning committee can theme the conference and invite the plenary speakers, and they can set up a great new thread in the program that year called "Speaking Out" sessions, but if writing studies, and writing program administrators more specifically, do not take queer and trans work seriously in our day-to-day work—engaging with it as experienced WPAs, making it part of our graduate training programs and coursework, helping early-career WPAs to see how queer and trans inclusivity matters, not just for LGBTQ+ persons but also in terms of theorizing our work—then all the themed conferences in the world will probably do little to effect changes many of us would like to see in our discipline. This failure to reimagine our work has real, embodied consequences, as well. It means that queer and trans scholars in our field do not see CWPA as a space that invites them and their experiences in. It means that queer and trans scholars themselves may struggle to see the connections that exist between their lived experiences, queer/trans rhetorics, and administrative work—and it means that when queer and trans scholars find themselves occupying administrative roles, they may not be prepared to imagine how such spaces both resist their bodies and ideas and how their bodies and theories might also change those spaces for the better. In 2009, when

Jonathan Alexander and I published “Queer Eye for the Comp Program,” perhaps the first explicitly queer exploration of WPA work in our field, we had also struggled to imagine ways that queer theories could inform and disrupt our administrative work. So much of what we had seen and done in our years as writing center and writing program administrators was based in neoliberal frames of zero-sum competitive economics and seemingly unflinching policies rooted in organizational hierarchies of control. The queer theoretical frameworks for our research seemed not to speak at all to our administrative issues, and led us to conclude at the time that “queerness may be, at best, a marginal enterprise” in writing program administration (97). In some ways, the colloquy of voices in this symposium suggests that we still struggle to bridge the space between what we imagine theoretically and what we do in the daily practices of administration—but we are also starting to get there. The problem, as much as anything, may simply be a failure of imagination, an inability (yet) to see antinormative options for programs conceived in a need for mass normalization—of student writers, of programs, of an emerging discipline.

Beyond the members of CWPA, of course, the impact may be even greater. This absence means that issues and concerns of queer and trans students are not necessarily at the forefront of administrators’ minds when designing curriculum, selecting textbooks, imagining assessments, or any of dozens of other day-to-day activities that directly impact the lives of queer and trans students, as well as the lives of queer and trans writing instructors, and ultimately of all our students and colleagues. When Nicole Caswell and I began asking these questions at our own institution, particularly in terms of the writing center and WAC programs we direct, we found the resulting institutional pushback extremely frustrating (Caswell and Banks). Tenure helps, a bit, when the university attorney calls and leaves an intimidating voicemail; it helps when the provost calls you to his office to talk about “what y’all are doing over there in the writing center”—all because we bothered to ask about (and attempt to track) persistence and retention issues specific to LGBTQ+ students. While we were not dissuaded from doing this work, and ultimately found support from the administration, it seems that even wanting to do this work raised a host of red flags with upper-level administrators and some students/parents who had brought this work to their attention.

When the editors of this journal asked me about putting together a symposium to explore queer issues and writing program administration, despite being uncertain if there were enough queer and trans WPAs in our field to create a robust conversation, I was certain that there were queer and trans scholars who had engaged and been engaged by various aspects of writing

and administration; I knew there were scholar-teachers who could help me and readers of the journal to unpack some of the complexities around these issues and to suggest some future directions for our work together in writing program administration. To that end, I asked a number of queer- and/or trans-identified writing studies scholars, most of whom were current or recent WPAs, to respond to the following large questions:

1. How have your experiences as a queerly embodied person impacted your work with writing program administration—as an administrator or a teacher, or both?
2. What LGBTQ+ theories or methodologies do you think have had the biggest impact on your teaching and administrative work, and why?
3. What sort of LGBTQ+ works (research, theory, methodologies) do you wish had been available to you in graduate coursework, especially coursework around teaching writing and writing program administration?
4. I also asked them, while thinking about their stories and experiences, to imagine they were teaching a graduate course in writing program administration/writing center administration, and what LGBTQ+ works and texts they thought would be important to include right now, and perhaps why.

The answers below suggest a host of rich spaces for additional research and application by WPAs and for writing studies more generally. I hope that the stories and experiences in this symposium encourage readers to imagine how LGBTQ+ experiences, bodies, theories, and methods can engage WPA work at not only the theoretical level but also in our day-to-day administrative work.

### 1. STORYING EXPERIENCE

*How have your experiences as a queerly embodied person impacted your work with writing program administration—as an administrator or a teacher, or both? Is there a story of your experiences with teaching and/or administration that illustrates how your being or identifying as LGBTQ+ has been important in that work? In short, do you have a story that makes it clear how LGBTQ+ bodies/experiences are impacted by WPA work?*

*Collie Fulford*

I was hired as first-year writing (FYW) director immediately out of my PhD program. I had been out to the hiring committee, and during the on-site interview, I had asked about the culture for gay people on this southern campus. Although the answers were not completely reassuring, the people I met seemed to take my question in good faith, and I thought my family and I would be okay moving for this job. I looked forward to learning about HBCU culture and seeing what I could contribute.

It took me some time to figure out ways to belong as a white and queer person at this primarily Black and straight university. At the time I was hired, there was not yet an LGBTQA center on campus, nor an organization for faculty and staff; both of these came later. I felt isolated in my queerness during those first years. I think that was a factor in my relatively cautious leadership style. Mostly at first I lay pretty low, taking the temperature of colleagues and the measure of the existing writing culture more so than initiating ambitious changes.

However, several years ago, my colleague Kathryn Wymer and her students approached me specifically because of my identity as a queer WPA. Kathryn was teaching the first LGBT literature class our department had ever offered. Midway into the semester, her students pointed out that the handbook commonly assigned for writing classes included a writing sample that struck them as harmfully heteronormative, cisnormative, and antifeminist. The edition also lacked inclusive pronoun advice. I had been responsible for leading the committee that made textbook selections. And I'm queer. How had I missed this?

Meeting with the class was humbling. Students wove together queer theoretical perspectives and their personal experiences to show me that a program's endorsed text can do harm. Even more challenging, they talked about teaching practices that mirrored the erasures they noted in the text. I felt appropriately called to task. Fortunately, the handbook's authors and publisher met our criticisms with real respect—even gratitude—for pointing out the problems in time for revisions to the next edition. The students pushed back against an authoritative text, and they changed it. Beyond text selection, my colleagues and I still have work to do to normalize queer- and trans-inclusive teaching practices.

We have presented and written about this experience because it struck us as a moment of queer agency and student-faculty partnership that has consequences for student equity (Wymer and Fulford). The students helped me see that taking a quiet back seat on queer issues is not appropriate as a program leader. Resting tacitly on my own identity as a queer person won't get

the job of equity done. It's not about me. It's about what Trixie notes below: "We have to remember that we're working with people, people with bodies, feelings, lives outside the academy," and therefore our actions (and inactions) within the structures of the academy have real human consequences.

*Timothy Oleksiak*

Some faculty are WPAs and others have WPA work placed upon them.

Like Collie, I was also hired as a WPA immediately out of my doctoral program and then again when I went on the market a second time. Emotional and financial needs were more determinant than my personal, professional goals. I didn't study WPA work in graduate school, but I am actively curious about institutional structures and have a knack for administration. I also love attending well-run meetings. During campus interviews, I asked pointedly, "I'm gay, is that going to be an issue here on this campus?" and I listened to how folks responded.

I wasn't interested in being in a space where my mentioning being gay was going to be a problem, so I asked during interviews. I make it a conscious point to say to students that their instructor is gay. It is a declarative statement totally unrelated to the task at hand: "I'm gay, what did you like about the reading for today?" During classes, I draw many illustrations from my LGBTQIA+ experiences to help clarify students' questions or ideas we talk about in class. I imagine many of our straight colleagues also organically and purposefully draw upon their own lived experiences as illustrations. I do not struggle with coming out in the classroom, in the ways that many queer and trans faculty have in the past (Crew and Norton; Morrison) and still do.

When students enter my office, they notice books with phrases/titles like "queer" and "No Tea, No Shade" and "Color of Kink." I think these students put one and one together to make *gay*. I move through the world as a low-femme man, so people presume (often correctly) that the man they are engaging with is gay, but that is still a presumption. I perform something other than straight in the classroom, and because I think that my queerness might not always be recognized, I state it. I think intentionally about marking space as queer. There is, however, always in the back of my mind the question of whether or not my being gay is going to be a meaningful category of difference for someone. Sometimes my gayness speaks louder than my socks. And for some people, that's discomfoting. And if and when that discomfort arises, I then have to do the emotional work of either putting folks at ease or wondering if I should.

*GPat Patterson*

While I haven't yet served as a WPA, I do have a story about my queer, trans body as it aligns (or misaligns) with WPA work. It's a short story, and it goes back to my time in graduate school. My graduate program didn't offer a WPA course. What it did offer, however, were two intern-type positions where graduate students could serve as assistant WPAs, learning the trade alongside the director. To earn one of these slots, a grad student had to apply with a vita, a cover letter, and a trove of teaching materials; these documents would then be reviewed by the current graduate students serving as assistant WPAs. Generally, seniority comes into play, too, so that a student toward the end of their coursework would be given preference over a student new to the program, who had more chances to apply. As a cautious person, I'd waited to apply after other students in my cohort had already served as WPA. My waiting also gave me a chance to acquire coursework and other training in digital writing experience. My application materials, I imagine, were as polished as they could be for a PhD student toward the end of their studies.

While I certainly didn't expect to be given a WPA slot, I had hoped my training, experience, and enthusiasm for the position would give me a solid chance. There was nothing, however, to prepare me for the content of the email rejection I received from my assistant WPA peers who explained that, while I was a "talented educator" with "strong application materials," they nevertheless felt I "lacked the professional polish" needed for administrative work. As the only out queer person in the rhetoric and composition grad program, as someone whose gender performance was demonstrably gender-nonconforming, and as someone who identified as genderqueer at a time when few folks understood nonbinary trans identities (and, indeed, "non-binary" wasn't even recognized in the popular lexicon), it was abundantly clear to me that the "polish" I lacked had little to do with my competency or aptitude for the job.

That kind of gatekeeping didn't just affect me on a personal level. As someone who specializes in queer and trans work—in an academic job market that (to this day) tends to read this expertise as too specialized to qualify as a pressing departmental need—being denied the only WPA training available to me (an experience often prized by search committees) meant that my chances on the job market were even more precarious. And, indeed, rather than getting the tenure-stream job I now hold straight out of graduate school, I spent five years on the non-tenure-track.

Rejected from WPA work back then, I threw my energies into acquiring the expertise needed to teach professional and technical writing—and it

was that experience in professional and technical communication (not my published scholarship in queer and trans rhetorics) that helped me claw my way out of economic precarity.

*Trixie Smith*

As a new tenure-track faculty member straight out of grad school, I was directing the university writing center and also serving as the faculty sponsor for our student Lambda organization. I had control over the space of the writing center, so it also became the home for Lambda and its regular meetings. The writing center became a queer space because, as an out queer woman, I had moved into it and opened it up for other queer faculty and queer students. The writing center became the cohost for a workshop on safe sex practices, the training space for Lambda's speakers' bureau, the place to draft and revise materials for events and grant requests. The stash of condoms, dental dams, and AIDS testing kits provided by the local AIDS education organization were stored in my office and in the writing center, so they were thus available through the writing center and through my office. This visibility brought other queer students to me and to the center. I definitely think it helped draw queer students to the center as a place to work.

I was simultaneously teaching the lesbian studies seminar for the women's studies program and a cross-listed course in lesbian literature, and I see all of these events as intersecting. The more out I became, the more I was called on as an example, as a spokesperson, as a mentor, as an informant, as a leader. And the more queer the writing center became.

By the time I moved to my next writing center and next university, queer administrator was a fundamental part of my identity. Building up an existing writing center meant that I was going to be building a queer-friendly place, but over the years, it has come to mean so much more than that. Our WC space is a place for social justice work, for challenging the status quo in our college and on our campus; it is a place where diverse students come to work, as both employees and writers—and we consciously define diversity very broadly, from our trans students to our students of color, to our neurodiverse students, to our disabled students, to our range of disciplines, and certainly to our queer students with a broad range of identities. Being a queer administrator has meant that (again) the WC often hosts workshops and events that are related to queer issues (put on by a range of organizations across campus, not just the WC); that queer theory is a part of our training for consultants and in the WC administration class; and that queer ways of thinking are a part of my administrative decision



making. My personal philosophy and my philosophy for the center is that we're all just humans working with humans; we have to remember that we're working with people—people with bodies, feelings, and lives outside the academy—and this way of thinking, for many, is rather queer indeed.

In my queer rhetorics courses, I have cishet students ask why we talk about sex so much. Can't we talk about queer theory without talking about sex? Because it's not their own lived experience, they don't get it: you can't take queer sex out of queerness; it is a fundamental part of its existence. I feel the same way when I talk about my administration. I can't take the queer out of my administration because it's a fundamental part of my existence and it colors both the what and the how of my decision-making processes. So even though this cishet student doesn't get it, I still want them in the queer rhetorics class because I think they can learn something from the experience and perhaps become a little more queer in their thinking. The same is true for administration and WPA work; I want queerness in administrative discussions because maybe our non-queer colleagues can learn something new about difference, about taking new perspectives, about re-orienting themselves, their programs, their assignments. It also creates space for queer students/administrators-in-training to be out and brave with their own queer ideas.

*Michael J. Faris*

In 2006, I rollerbladed into my first-year writing class dressed in drag—a short skirt and tube top, a wig, and makeup. I had just been passing out fliers on campus advertising Oregon State's Pride Week, and I thought, why not teach in drag and discuss bodies as rhetorical, as making arguments? I don't really remember my students' conversation or responses that day (other than I think they got the point that bodies do make arguments).

I do remember writing that year in Lisa Ede's graduate seminar about how tightly bound our normative assumptions about writing are with our normative assumptions about gender. Early on in my MA program, I was developing a nascent understanding that the norms of composition studies privilege certain ways of being in the world, and that genres do work to normativize people, including the genres of gender. As Lauren Berlant argues, "Genres provide an affective expectation of the experience of watching something unfold, whether that thing is in life or in art" (6). Her point is that genres do normative work, orientating us in space and time and to each other. In a two-page broadside for our first project, with scissors and tape, I cut and pasted together quotes from punk songs, Geoffrey Sirc's

“Never Mind the Tagmemics, Where’s the Sex Pistols?” and other texts to explore the norms of forms. The takeaway: they sucked.

I carry these two memories with me now, two graduate degrees and two academic positions later, as the WPA at Texas Tech. I’m perhaps a much more conservative teacher now. I probably won’t ever teach in drag again, though I do talk about sex more explicitly in classes, often couched in more nuanced discussions of power, the public/private distinction, and normativity than when I was a graduate student. Texas Tech has a standard curriculum for our two-course sequence, in part because our program is mostly staffed by graduate part-time instructors, so many of our teachers are teaching for the first time, and we have a high instructor turnover rate. Like others in this symposium, I think my queer experiences have led me to value a diversity of approaches to teaching. Thus, when I learn about graduate students experimenting in their classes—one dressed up in costume for a lesson!—I think, oh, yeah, that’s a fucking risk, and it’s awesome that you took it. Like Banks and Alexander, I don’t think we can create queer writing programs—writing programs are too institutional to ever become fully queer—but as they write, “the real value of a queer WPA lies in how the WPA validates or welcomes the sort of queer guerilla tactics that would act at the local levels, in individual classrooms or assignments” (97).

For me, being a queer, white, visibly able-bodied man has meant practicing a certain slantwise orientation toward the program, toward writing, and toward teaching, an idea I return to below.

## 2. THEORIES & METHODS

*What LGBTQ+ theories or methodologies do you think have had the biggest impact on your teaching and administrative work? What theorists/ideas do you find yourself returning to again and again when you’re faced with teaching and administrative dilemmas? Why do you think these thinkers/ideas are so important to your practices?*

*Timothy*

Linda Adler-Kassner’s *Activist WPA* is a really delicious and important intellectual contribution to the way I consider my WPA work. The link she articulates between strategies and ideals has been helpful for me prior to coming to my current position, where my first move was to negotiate funds for the CWPA Consultant-Evaluator Service to come in and help set an agenda I could point to for buy-in at the department and college level.

Worldmaking is an increasingly important concept in my research, teaching, and administration. I understand worldmaking as a queer con-

cept that situates writing as a mode of survival within worlds that extend well beyond publics, an understanding shaped, in part, by Berlant and Michael Warner's "Sex in Public" and Warner's *Publics and Counterpublics*. They help me see where my program fits into the larger institution and community, and they help me pay attention to the specific needs circulating around the Boston area.

The work of Aja Martinez and those working with these critical race theory methods is important especially when thinking through our journalism and advanced non-fiction writing courses. Professional programs also need to think about the counterstories available in business writing genres like report writing and even memos. It is crucial that WPAs working across disciplinary boundaries are able to play cool when we inevitably hear statements about students and about writing that we know to be either regressive or harmful, as enacting stock/colonialist stories. As such, I find myself reaching toward Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's *Touching Feeling* and Becky Thompson's *Teaching with Tenderness*. I need to be kind to those whose professional interests are not the same as mine. Handing someone John C. Bean's *Engaging Ideas* is not the same as listening to someone talk about how frustrating it is when seniors do not know how to write in APA format, you know? So, I think part of our WPA scholarship has to be how to keep a cool head or how to engage those who do not know writing and the teaching of writing like we do. Studying this stuff is leading me to think more carefully about queer listening as an important part of administrative work, as a way to build on Krista Ratcliffe's *Rhetorical Listening*.

Finally, *Women's Ways of Making It in Rhetoric and Composition* (Balfanz, Davis, and Mountford) and the chapter on administration in Cheryl Glenn's *Rhetorical Feminism and This Thing Called Hope* are important to me for understanding which battles to pick and when to keep my head down (the tensions among silence, speech, and listening are always ethical and come with emotional labor). The first semester of my first tenure-track job, I presented a 5-year plan to the highest administrative council on campus. My budget was lauded but denied, which put my program on the university's radar when it wasn't ready for that level of scrutiny. The result was that things were much more difficult to the extent that more people were now focused on the program. I have spent a lot of time since then reflecting on my culpability and where others around me might have supported me differently had we all known that the program needed less of a spotlight. I say this, of course, not to denigrate others, but to highlight the need to be full of care in terms of visions we have for our programs' developments.

*Collie*

I confess, I did a double take when Will asked this question because I realized I had not often turned to explicitly LGBTQ+ theories and methodologies as my touchstone ways of working. Then again, one thing that queer theory teaches us is that texts can be queer—or read queerly—even when the authors do not identify their work as forwarding queer perspectives. So here I offer several antinormative articles that have afforded me solace and rationales at critical points in my administrative work.

For example, early in my WPA life, I experienced unexpectedly high discomfort when I encountered a department-wide grading rubric for writing posted on a colleague's door. Investigating, I learned that it had served as a standard departmental reference point for many years, origins unknown. That's not to say that everyone used this rubric, but it was a norm that my colleagues knew well. I needed to do some work to unpack the dissonances between my resistant reaction and this cultural norm. "Big Rubrics and Weird Genres: The Futility of Using Generic Assessment Tools Across Diverse Instructional Contexts" (Anson et al.) offered me empirical reasons for resisting all-purpose rubrics. Although not positioned by its authors as a queer theory piece, this article's thoughtful questioning of decontextualized standardized rubrics and careful analysis of why they are futile makes the kinds of antinormative moves that queer theorists make, moves that were already part of my own theoretical and pedagogical practices.

Another antinormative yet not-queer piece that has stayed with me is Laura R. Micciche's "For Slow Agency." Micciche identifies an anxiety-producing common context of WPA work, those "conditions that are made to feel like emergencies" (82), and argues that we can counter this fiction with contemplative and collaborative administrative practices. More feminist than queer in its approach, Micciche's piece nevertheless questions and destabilizes higher education's normal labor culture in ways that resonate with queer thinking. Years into my WPA gig, I was anxious over all that I had not accomplished, all the conditions that I had yet to change with my colleagues and students. Micciche's work helped me reframe programmatic incompleteness as a necessity rather than a failing.

Tara Pauliny's "Queering the Institution: Politics and Power in the Assistant Professor Administrator Position" was the first piece I read specifically about queer persons in WPA positions. It also addresses the common yet contested situation of assistant professors serving in program administrative roles. Far from handwringing about that, Pauliny explains how these inherently queer positions can be enacted with more agency than the field generally imagines. Pauliny identifies the central conundrum for would-be

activist WPAs: “an apparent impasse is created when one is both part of an institution and working to upset that institution, or when one is both authorized and de-authorized by an institution.” Yet her article demonstrates that adopting a queer stance toward the role gives rise to possibilities for productive disruptions.

*GPat*

The queer theorist I turn to again and again in my classroom is Judith Butler—but not, perhaps, in the way one might expect. The quote I return to is from Butler’s *Undoing Gender*, where she asks: “what forms of community have been created, and through what violences and exclusions have they been created?” (225). I return to this quote over and over again, because it helps me solve a disciplinary dilemma I face when teaching rhetoric: the vision of our field that gets communicated through composition textbooks suggests to our students that the study of rhetoric focuses on a neoliberal version of Aristotle’s “available means of persuasion,” one in which arguments are to be measured simply by how persuasive they are.

Rarely, if ever, do we mention the broader impact of our arguments—the conduct our arguments inspire. And that’s a problem: our field (again, at least as it’s communicated to undergraduates) tends to divorce rhetoric from ethics. When ethics come up in composition contexts, it seems to happen after the fact—after a student has presented the instructor (or their peers) with a problematic, dehumanizing argument. Instead, we tend to focus on the quality of a student’s sources, whether or not they meet academic guidelines, whether they anticipate readers’ rebuttals, and whether they avoid rhetorical fallacies.

The open secret, however, is that this isn’t how arguments work in real time. Arguments need not be fair, or even factual, to persuade their intended audiences. In the Trump era of “alternative facts,” all one needs to do is repeat a lie, pepper it with enough vitriol to rile up an audience’s fear/anger, and gaslight reasonable bystanders until they’re forced to engage (and thus grant credibility to) a dangerous argument.

My dilemma is this: the way we introduce rhetoric to undergraduate students—the majority of whom will go the rest of their lives without ever thinking of rhetoric once they’ve met their degree requirements—is plain terrible.

Queer theory, as an intellectual practice, gave me the theoretical tools, as Deborah Britzman and Jen Gilbert would put it, to do the work of “thinking about our thinking” (82). Queer theory opened up the space for me to dare disciplinary heresy and question whether the way we’re defining

rhetoric actually works in real time. And, as I've said, to my mind, it doesn't work. Queer theory, then, gave me the permission to queer our definition of rhetoric—to tell my undergrads: “Sure, your textbook says rhetoric is about the study of the available means of persuasion. But that's boring and it doesn't really give you any context for understanding what rhetoric is about and why a person might want to study it.” Queer theory enabled me to offer an alternative definition of rhetoric as “the study of storytelling, the way people tell stories to inspire people to believe certain things and to act on those beliefs—and the consequences therein.”

That emphasis on consequences is important to the way I teach rhetoric, in the sense that I refuse to divorce rhetoric from ethics. Drawing from Butler, I'm clear with students that rhetoric does a good many things, but the most important among them is that rhetoric communicates who belongs (and who doesn't) in our vision of community. Queer theory allows me to emphasize that rhetoric communicates—through the stories we tell, the stories we repeat, and the stories we refuse—who will be seen as human. Queer theory allows me to be clear that the ultimate goal of rhetoric ought to be to expand (not foreclose) our vision of community. Queer theory allows me to attend to arguments that dehumanize—to ask students to articulate what conduct an argument inspires, when, for example, the most powerful government official in our country characterizes an entire group of people as violent criminals and sexual deviants. How does repeating this argument, this white supremacist talking point, allow us to strip people of their humanity? And, once that dehumanization is “accomplished” through repetition, how does this racist construct enable agents of the state (and their accomplices) to violate people's most basic human rights (to say nothing of inter/national law)?

I want students to understand that there are a lot of shitty arguments out there. I want students to understand that persuasion isn't some kind of gold standard to determine an argument's success. I want students to understand that “talking points” aren't just a way to tally one's wins on a political leaderboard; we must attend to the wake, the violent afterlife of the stories we tell. We must take them seriously enough to follow them through to their (often deadly) conclusions. And we must ask ourselves: Is this the story we want to tell? And, if it isn't, then we must do the courageous work of telling new ones.

*Trixie*

There are a couple of queer women/theorists I turn to the most often. One is Sara Ahmed, specifically her ideas in *Queer Phenomenology* about (re)

orientation. As an administrator, I often ask myself if I'm stuck in a rut, are there other paths/solutions/ways of being in this moment that could be equally viable if not even better than what I've known or what's been done before? The idea of changing my perspective in order to see new possibilities is hard, challenging sometimes, but also an important method of changing/challenging the status quo. Consequently, when I'm mentoring and teaching new graduate coordinators, would-be administrators, or even new administrators, I recommend they read Ahmed: *Queer Phenomenology, On Being Included, Living a Feminist Life* (especially her discussion of citation practices), and *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* are all good choices that can challenge administrators to think queerly in order to be more effective WPAs.

I also draw on Gloria Anzaldúa a good bit. Her history of challenging the *status quo* in multiple arenas can be inspirational to a WPA who also wants to challenge the *status quo* and the administrative idea, often inherited, of this is how we have (always) done it, so this is how we should do it now. As a queer administrator, I'm usually quite adamant that change can be good and productive. We need to listen to voices we haven't listened to in the past—students, adjunct faculty, community members who are hiring (or not) our students, overworked NTT faculty who do so much of the teaching in first-year writing, as well as graduate TAs who carry the other bulk of FYW teaching. We have to listen more to students of color, international students, ELL students, others who speak/write in a variety of Englishes, who have different rhetorical patterns for building arguments, who practice a range of techniques for translanguaging, code meshing, and other linguistic mashups, as well as those who have other genres and forms to show us. While this may not be a strictly queer agenda, it is part of my queer agenda, which I see being informed by lesbian/feminism, and cultural rhetorics methodologies, as well as queer theories and practices. Anzaldúa's ideas about borderlands help me think about the highly varied experiences of students in my class, clients in the writing center, even consultants in the writing center; and when I think about this range of experiences, I also have to ask myself what barriers these students have overcome to be here, what baggage are they carrying on and in their bodies, what has writing been/done/allowed/not allowed in their pasts? Anzaldúa inspires me to see these varied experiences as strengths, so I want to help my students/staff/faculty to also see these as strengths for themselves and their students/clients. How can we build from these strengths in productive ways, in humane ways, something more than what the various authors explicate for readers in *This Bridge Called My Back* (Moraga and Anzaldúa)?

I also find Anzaldúa (and Joy Harjo) important for thinking about the need to trust your gut, your intuition (the snake). This is so important for WPAs. My favorite image from Anzaldúa is that of her cutting up her manuscript into small bits in order to rearrange it and revise it. I think we have to do this as administrators sometimes, break things down to smaller parts so that we can see what we need, what we don't need, and how to put it together in new and different ways.

I also draw on various ways of thinking taken from cultural rhetorics scholars such as Malea Powell, Andrea Riley-Mukavetz, Qwo-Li Driskell, Angela Haas, and others, some of whom identify as queer and some who don't. They help me think about relationality, reciprocity, community/culture, and decolonialism, which I see as tied up in queer ways of thinking as well. Whenever I read an indigenous text like Thomas King's *The Truth about Stories* or Shawn Wilson's *Research Is Ceremony*, in my head I'm constructing a parallel text that makes the same moves from a queer perspective, so they're all tied up together for me.

### *Michael*

I'm not sure I have a great answer to this question without risking writing for pages and pages and pages. I'll try to focus. Like Trixie, I have found Ahmed's work to be greatly influential in my thinking. In addition to the books Trixie listed, Ahmed's recent *What's the Use? On the Uses of Use* traces the word *use* in order to explore queer uses, or "how things can be used in ways other than for which they were intended or by those other than for whom they were intended" (198). Queer use comes from "releasing a potentiality" (200) of objects or spaces, drawing on affordances that might have been ignored as their uses have become standardized. We might ask how to make queer use of a classroom? A rubric? A textbook? Or even a writing program?

While Ahmed's call in her conclusion leads to "throw[ing] usage into a crisis" (209)—perhaps an impracticality for WPAs—I do find her argument provocative and worth considering alongside conversations in critical pedagogy and queer theory. As I read critical pedagogues like Paulo Freire and bell hooks (among so many others), critical pedagogy isn't about critique or merely unveiling ideology; rather, it's about challenging and changing our normative practices about what it means to be together in the world. That is, a classroom informed by critical pedagogy is one in which students and teachers together invent new ways of relating and being together—ones that challenge masculinist, racist, ableist, straight, and colonial norms. A queer use of the writing classroom—using it as it wasn't intended or



planned—this potential for new relationality is perhaps where I’ve been most influenced by queer thinking. As many queer thinkers have argued, those most marginalized by society are potentially also those who are most inventive in developing new ways of being and being in relations with others. In an interview with *La Gai Pied*, Michel Foucault famously explained that what is most threatening about gay men isn’t gay sex, but rather their new intimacies, which threaten society’s expectations of how we should act and relate to each other. Consequently, as a WPA, I encourage my teachers to “think outside the box” (to use a tired cliché) about how they architect their classes and classrooms: how do their decisions and actions encourage or discourage ways of relating, of being, in the world? Can a writing class offer new modes of intimacy, relationality, or publicity? Can a WPA foster the sort of queer guerilla tactics promoted by Banks and Alexander?

It seems that I should mention two other important concepts. The first comes not from queer theory exactly but from feminists of color: intersectionality. I think it’s incredibly important to read the work of marginalized scholars, and reading the work of feminists and queers of color has led me to value intersectional analysis as a WPA. Intersectionality sometimes gets reduced too easily to how marginalized folks have intersectional identities, but as Kimberlé Crenshaw first articulated intersectionality, it is a mode of analysis that attends to how various axes of difference and oppression intersect and operate institutionally. That is, “Intersectionality is inextricably linked to an analysis of power . . . [that] emphasizes political and structural inequalities” (Cho, Crenshaw, and McCall 797). If we take seriously calls by feminists and queers of color that we cannot ignore the intersections of class, gender, sexuality, ability, race, nationality, and so on, we must interrogate our writing programs for how they include and exclude in a variety of intersectional ways.

The second concept comes from Sedgwick: cross-identification. Queer thinkers have been tackling the incredible difficulty of cross-difference alliances for decades. For example, Cathy Cohen has famously argued that queer politics too often ignore difference and issues of power concerning race, gender, and class, thus contributing to the reproduction of social hierarchies. In *Epistemology of the Closet*, Sedgwick makes a claim she calls “axiomatic”: “People are different from each other” (22). This claim might seem banal, but Sedgwick’s exploration of it is also powerful: differences don’t *mean* monolithically, and instead we *do* things with difference. As Ramzi Fawaz comments on her work, Sedgwick was a theorist of multiplicity, “promiscuous” in her cross-identifications (18):

Sedgwick's identity politics . . . are precisely a politics of *cross-identification*. At her most forceful, Sedgwick posits cross-identification as having life-or-death implications: in the absence of the ability to identify with others, we become incapable of grasping or wholly insensible to the fact of human multiplicity and consequently lose any ethical ground on which to construct a mutual sense of care, investment, and love, even for ourselves. (20)

As a queer WPA, I am constantly working to not identify others monolithically, to instead identify across differences and to promote amongst teachers the willingness and even eagerness to cross-identify with each other and with students, which can “multiply or complicate the very possibilities and meanings of their own identities,” as well (Fawaz 20).

### 3. WHAT IF?

*What sort of LGBTQ+ works (research, theory, methodologies) do you wish had been available to you in graduate coursework, especially coursework around teaching writing and WPA (if you experienced any)? What key ideas about teaching writing or WPA work need to be re-thought or re-engaged through the lenses that LGBTQ+ works provide? In what ways do you bring LGBTQ+ works to your teaching and administration now so as to address the gaps you experienced as a graduate student?*

*Timothy*

I'll pose my response in the form of three questions and then elaborate a bit below:

1. What can queer theory teach us about the financial dimensions of WPA work?
2. How can queer theory help WPAs engage with multiple stakeholders (perceived and actual)?
3. What can queer theories and rhetorics teach WPAs about identifying, documenting, and understanding emotional labor?

**Finances.** Administrators are closer to the business side of the university than teachers and researchers. I prefer not to draw sharp lines around those three positions but unless and until you are an administrator, learning the business of the university is an act of will. For WPAs money is not a choice. We have to think about finances: how to get money and how to use it responsibly and how to adjust ethically to cuts when they come, as they always do.

WPAs who teach classes on administration would serve students well to engage them on financial issues, both rhetorically and as a social justice concern. May we think not only about how to get money, but what money is used for and how WPA budgets might contribute to social justice work and equity across campuses. Too often finances are considered via logics of straight time and a kind of familial inheritance logic (I'm thinking of Halberstam's *In a Queer Time and Place* here) that keeps WPAs focused on what is good for our own to the detriment of how programs can perform methods of queer kinship. If our programs have genealogies that intersect/link with other programs, maybe we turn toward Elizabeth A. Povinelli's "Notes on Gridlock: Genealogy, Intimacy, Sexuality" for a touch of inspiration?

What would WPA work and writing programs do if we were allowed to think about such things? And we need to not allow austerity and discussions of tight budgets to silence conversation on socially just, equitable budgeting practices. How can we queer WPA budgets? This might be nearly impossible to do given that my WPA experiences have revealed how often budgets are used to pit programs against each other, how conversations of social justice and equity are often silenced when it takes emotional and physical energy to request modest finances.

**Stakeholders.** I talk often with colleagues who neither know what I do nor share the same level of commitment to WPA work. But my responsibilities require an interdisciplinary approach that attracts students from across colleges. WPAs are in unique positions to translate programmatic and disciplinary needs to those who have a perceived or actual interest in what we are doing. Translating WPA needs to multiple individuals is a rhetorical challenge and where there is a rhetorical challenge, queer rhetoric and theory can offer guidance. I also have to work with for-profit and nonprofit communities to offer useful and interesting internship experiences for students. Explaining the work of rhetoric and composition to businesses can sometimes be daunting but often is surprisingly delightful how aligned the perspectives are. For example, recently, I was talking with a potential business partner and this person mentioned that their company gives timed writing as part of the interview. I braced myself in the way that compositionists can when we hear "timed writing." But they knew immediately not to focus on grammar and mechanics and how to look for the types of thinking that we teach in our classes. So, as I listened more, I was able to relax, if that makes sense.

**Emotional Labor.** All academic labor benefits from unrecognized emotional labor. In this regard WPAs are not different (see Richard Miller's "Critique's the Easy Part" and Micciche's "More than a Feeling," for exam-

ple). However, when part of the requirements of WPA work is to speak with non-rhetoricians, students, those outside the university, and administrators who are not hip to rhetoric and composition, translating what it is we do is emotionally draining, exhausting, and yet often also satisfying work. However, it took me nearly two semesters to receive \$1,500 for a pilot study at my former institution. The process involved interacting with my department chair, the chair of another department, my college dean, and the college dean's administrative assistant. During meetings I had to speak with folks whose knowledge of rhetoric and composition and resistance to honoring my expertise was frustrating. Though CCCC and CWPA have encouraged the hiring of WPAs at the associate level or higher, this is often cost prohibitive for small universities or colleges. I was placed in a position as a pre-tenure faculty member to have to persuade people in positions well above my own with wider institutional knowledge and power. If my experience is common, many folks simply cannot turn down administrative gigs if they are offered to them right out of graduate school. Saying that assistant professors should not have to engage such work does not pay attention to the reality that assistant professors are regularly hired to do this work. Given that reality, how might we provide departments/programs and untenured WPAs with frameworks for supporting these faculty while recognizing the very real problems that emerge for untenured administrators?

### *Collie*

I was fortunate. Queer persons were valued and queer theory and other theories of difference were woven into key courses in my graduate program in the early 2000s. Although we did not have a WPA course, I recall reading Butler and Sedgwick in our general theory class and collaborating with classmates on a ridiculous performance illustrating some of the concepts. In a research methods course, Anne Herrington assigned Harriet Malinowitz's *Textual Orientations*, a study of an experimental writing course designed specifically for lesbian and gay students. I was also mentored in basic writing pedagogy by Marcia Curtis, who integrated queer and nonwhite readings into the custom textbook for the course (*The Composition of Our "Selves"*). If I'm recalling correctly, Curtis had successfully positioned basic writing as a credit-bearing course at UMass Amherst by designing a curriculum that met a general education requirement in cultural diversity. Basic writing is almost always under some sort of institutional duress, so this action was an instructive example of how to work on behalf of students by creatively side-stepping normative framings of first year writing. That subversive curricular move, the inclusive textbook, and the critical pedagogical community

of basic writing practitioners had a queering effect on my teaching and on my awareness of how WPAs make things happen.

Probably the most important theoretical preparations I had, however, were from Donna LeCourt's Writing and Difference class. During my first year of grad school, I recall struggling with Derrida, Butler, and Foucault, then gradually gaining traction with the concept of difference through readings LeCourt introduced to us. That class rewarded me with hyper-awareness of relationships between the marginalized and the normative and an unshakeable investment in those whose discursive practices disrupt what we think of as standard.

Because WPAs are so often caught up in day-to-day institutional labor, the lenses afforded by LGBTQ+ and critical race and class theories remind us who and what we are working for. No doubt the 2020 version would differ from the 2003 iteration, but courses that adopt a principle of interrogating educational commonplaces in light of scholarship on a wide range of differences are crucial for any aspiring WPA to take.

### *GPat*

My answer is simple: I wish there'd have been *any* course in queer or trans rhetorics available to me. Any training I acquired around LGBTQ+ scholarship came through my (optional) graduate coursework in women's, gender, and sexuality studies. To be clear: this additional coursework was invaluable to me, and I urge any student interested to put in the extra time and effort to acquire a graduate certificate (or minor) if one's institution offers it. That said, I'd have loved to have worked with a rhetoric and composition scholar who specialized in either queer or trans rhetorics. What I'd like to pose here, in this "what if?" section, is the following question: what if we took queer and trans rhetorics seriously enough that graduate programs prioritized hiring specialists in both of these areas? I say both of these areas because queer and trans rhetorics are distinct areas of study and, as a field, we need to really practice mindfulness when we're throwing around the LGBT moniker or "queer" as an umbrella term, because both of these rhetorical moves tend to erase the presence and rhetorical contributions of our trans students and colleagues.

### *Trixie*

In the late 1990s, I was completing my doctoral work in composition and rhetoric as a track inside an English department; I was also completing a graduate certificate in women's studies and doing as much queer work/reading as I could. I even took an independent study in queer theory that my

professor chose to label as gender studies in my paperwork so the word queer on my transcript “wouldn’t be a problem.” A couple of years later my graduate committee insisted I change the title of my dissertation from *Creating Safe Space for GLBT Students in the Writing Classroom* to *Creating Safe Space for Diverse Learners in the Writing Classroom*, a move that felt completely wrong to me. I tell this story to illustrate a fact about my graduate experience: I was having conversations about comp-rhet and administration and I was having conversations about queerness and gender and women studies, but they seemed to be running on parallel tracks that didn’t intersect. I kept trying to intersect them and kept meeting resistance, not because my professors were homophobic or completely resistant to these ideas, but because they lacked the creativity and orientation that allowed them to see the benefits, or even methods, of interanimating these conversations.

During these early days, Malinowitz’s *Textual Orientations* was so important and her phrase that LGBT students were often forced to write outside of their “most secure rhetorical footing” has stuck with me (37). In fact, I just used this phrase when talking to our WC staff about why our center now has a language statement and why we’re focusing on language diversity this year (The Writing Center @ MSU). More than just queer students are being forced to write outside of what they know (and how they know) to write, but this is definitely something I learned from a queer thinker/writer. Likewise, queering the classroom, the center, the policy in order to find more effective methods of moving forward is something I learned from queer ways of thinking, from queer theorists and practitioners. So, yes, I wish I had learned something, anything, about queerness in administration during my graduate studies.

### *Michael*

Like my collaborators, I experienced a dearth of queer theory or queer and trans rhetorics in graduate coursework in rhetoric and composition. When readings on sexuality were assigned, they were sometimes older texts assigned in a series of weeks when we were asked to consider “difference” briefly, before moving on. Instead, I read a lot on my own, and luckily I had a dissertation committee member from literary studies who was an expert in queer theory and who helped me navigate the field for my exams reading list in social theory.

But I can’t say that I’m that much better as a professor now. Sure, I’ve taught a graduate course on “Sexual Politics and Rhetoric.” But can I be honest? I’ve taught a graduate course on writing program administration and didn’t assign anything related to queer or trans concerns. In this ten-

week summer course, we read quite a bit of WPA scholarship, students worked on their own projects, and we engaged in smaller projects, like a practice assessment project, but a course can't cover everything, and so I had to make decisions about what to leave out. But I'm still wondering, what could queer thinking teach us as WPAs? Perhaps it's time to figure that out.

### QUEERING WPA: A SYLLABUS

Prompted by a list of texts Michael initially contributed to this symposium, and by our own experiences with how absent queer works have remained in writing studies, we began to imagine a sort of queer WPA syllabus. If we had the opportunity to teach or facilitate a WPA graduate course or seminar/workshop, what readings might we want to add and why? Creating such a list gnaws at us, of course, because none of us wants to create any sort of authoritative canon of queer and trans texts. As such, we note reasons for each text or set of texts we list below, and we hope that our readers will see this list as one that represents a moment: these are the texts we might choose right now, at this moment in our field's history and development. Ultimately, we hope that our fellow WPAs will begin to imagine where some of these works might fit into current graduate courses on writing program administration and writing centers, as well as courses focused on how we teach writing more generally at the post-secondary level:

- Berlant and Warner's "What Does Queer Theory Teach Us about X?," the Introduction to Sedgwick's *Epistemology of the Closet*, and Warner's introduction to *Fear of a Queer Planet* in order to introduce some queer ways of thinking;
- excerpts from Gayle Salamon's *Assuming a Body: Transgender and Rhetorics of Materiality* in order to imagine how bodies are both rhetorical and material, and how the presence or absence of bodies changes spaces, including classrooms and programs; Melanie Yergeau's *Authoring Autism: On Rhetoric and Neurological Queerness* to forge connections among bodies, dis/abilities, and queerness;
- Ahmed's *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Intellectual Life*, which provides a wonderful discussion of how institutions resist diversity work (while claiming to promote it) and might make a wonderful pairing with James E. Porter et al.'s article "Institutional Critique";
- Rosemary Hennessy's *Profit and Pleasure*, particularly the introduction and "Queer Visibility in Commodity Culture," to help us think through the ways bodies and identities are marketed, but also to imagine more queer ways of thinking about finances and budgets;

- Berlant and Warner’s “Sex in Public” to challenge notions of the public/private distinction, to raise questions about how a writing program might mediate intimacy and privacy in certain ways, and to challenge us to think about what we mean by public or civic engagement;
- Britzman’s “Is There a Queer Pedagogy?” and “Queer Theory and Its Strange Techniques”; a chapter from Alexander’s *Literacy, Sexuality, and Pedagogy*; Donald Hall’s “Cluelessness and the Queer Classroom”; and Stacey Waite’s *Teaching Queer: Radical Possibilities for Writing and Knowing*—all to explore queering pedagogy and the relationships between sexuality, literacy, and pedagogy;
- Banks and Alexander’s “Queer Eye for the Comp Program,” Pauliny’s “Queering the Institution,” and Harry Denny’s “A Queer Eye for the WPA” to ask if, and how, we might queer work in institutional settings;
- G Patterson’s “Queering and Transing Quantitative Research” and Caswell and Banks’s “Queering Writing Assessment: Fairness, Affect, and the Impact on LGBTQ Writers” in order to challenge the ways that data and positivist notions surrounding metrics in programmatic assessment are often taken up uncritically in WPA work;
- Alexander and Rhodes’s “Queer: An Impossible Subject for Composition,” excerpts from Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands/La Frontera*, McRu-er’s “Composing Bodies; or, De-Composition,” Sirc’s “Never Mind the Tagmemics, Where’s the Sex Pistols?,” excerpts from Alexander and Rhodes’s *On Multimodality*, Waite’s “How (and Why) to Write Queer”—all of which challenge normative constructions of writing;
- Howard’s “Sexuality, Textuality: The Cultural Work of Plagiarism”—a fabulous essay that shows how rhetorics of sexuality run through how we talk about writing (in this case, plagiarism);
- Crenshaw’s classic article on intersectionality, Alyssa A. Samek and Theresa A. Donofrio’s conversation on “Academic Drag,” chapters from Moraga and Anzaldúa’s collection *This Bridge Called My Back* (particularly by Moraga, Audre Lorde, the Combahee River Collective), and Eric Darnell Pritchard’s critique of discourses around bullying that leave race and class oppression unaddressed, and Johnson’s “‘Quare’ Studies, or (Almost) Everything I Know about Queer Studies I Learned from My Grandmother”—all to bring attention to issues of positionality, difference, and power;
- excerpts from Ahmed’s *Queer Phenomenology* to promote a discussion of how we are oriented toward objects, others, and the world, *The Promise of Happiness* (particularly her chapter on “Feminist Kill-



- joys”), and *Living a Feminist Life* (a portion paired with Susan Miller-Cochran’s CWPA keynote on not “losing your soul”);
- the introduction of Jack Halberstam’s *The Queer Art of Failure* to promote a discussion of how logics of futurity and success might be challenged or queered, alongside Caswell and West-Puckett’s chapter on “Assessment Killjoys”;
  - Kathryn Bond Stockton’s chapter “Growing Sideways, or Why Children Appear to Get Queerer in the Twentieth Century” as an exploration of non-linear models of “growth” and “change” which can disrupt the metaphors of reproduction and futurity that remain central to our writing programs and curricula (see also Lee Edelman’s *No Future*);
  - David Halperin’s essay on “The Normalization of Queer Theory,” where he explores how queer theory might becoming trendy, divorced from the lived realities of queers and too often simply used to explore “subversion” or “transgression”;
  - selections from *Intersectional Pedagogy: Complicating Identity and Social Justice*, edited by Kim A. Case, which challenges us to think about how intersectionality plays out in the classroom, through topics, pedagogies, assignments, student responses, etc.;
  - Denny’s *Writing Center Journal* essay “Queering the Writing Center” or selections from his *Facing the Center*, which asks us to think about identity(ies) in the writing center, in our work with writers, in our writing, as well as selections from (or perhaps the whole book) *Out in the Center: Public Controversies and Private Struggles*, which continues this questioning but brings in various voices and positions;
  - the introduction to Laura Greenfield and Karen Rowan’s *Writing Centers and the New Racism*, which they label “A Call to Action”—while the ideas in this collection are centered on racism, they are also applicable across marginalized identities and ask us to reconsider business-as-usual in our centers through our administrative practices; and excerpts from, Greenfield’s *Radical Writing Center Praxis*, which offers a powerful argument for change as well as a range of approaches to accomplish this change; and
  - hooks’ “Love as the Practice of Freedom,” which is a powerful call to look at the politics of the academy in a different light, paired with Lorde’s “Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power” to expand the ways we look at love/erotics and its/their role in our decision-making processes.

## PARTING GLANCES

The stories and experiences here suggest a number of ways that WPAs and the broader field of writing studies could engage its work differently through queer and trans lenses, not just in terms of theoretical imaginings but also in terms of our day to day work with budgets, hiring, assessment, and curricular planning. To highlight some of these, we offer the following:

1. Our field works diligently to keep *queer* and *WPA* operating in separate contexts, as separate work: queer and trans rhetorics “belong” in cultural rhetorics or specialized research contexts, it seems, but not in the day-to-day operations of writing program administration. And yet, as queer and trans WPAs and writing teachers, the theories and scholarship we gravitate toward are often those which are working from or which seem to open a space for antinormative practices. We queer our work as a practice, even if we don’t/can’t always name it as such. This is a queer WPA world-making practice. We would like to see more space for remaking administration.
2. Historically, queer and trans work has been particularly about bodies, about the connections between our theories and our bodies. As such, one way WPAs can remake our world is through continual returns to the body and its experiences in our research and in our administrative practices: who is building curricula? What curricula? How might we resist intuitional writing and representational practices that enact trauma on student bodies by remembering the bodies that are experiencing the curricula we build? And how might we invite students into the curriculum building process, further leveling out some of the institutional hierarchies at play in our work?
3. We could also engage ourselves—as well as graduate students and faculty colleagues—more fully with queer and trans rhetorics as part of how we develop and articulate our administrative philosophies. From work on queer and trans kinship to work on disrupting reproductive capitalist logics, to the significant work done in the last decade on affective economies, queer and trans theory is poised to offer us meaningful ways to reorient ourselves to the work of writing program administration. This is structurally disruptive work that we believe is needed in higher education generally at this moment.

Queer and trans work is about LGBTQ+ people, but it not just about them; it is about bodies and sex/uality, but it also not just about those things. The productive tensions that have emerged for us as we have tried to understand ourselves as writers, activists, scholars, teachers, and administrators—as we have tried to bring our lived experiences to spaces where our bodies, emotions, and values are rarely at the center of our work—have started to show us how we might reimagine much of the research and scholarship we engaged with as graduate students. As is typically the case with marginalized identities and work, we have done much of this on our own time, looking for theories to make sense of our daily tasks, struggles, and successes without disciplinary, curricular, or collegial/campus supports already in place. But we hope the stories (and counterstories), theories, examples, and texts we’ve highlighted in this brief symposium demonstrate why that work has been important to us and why it might also be important to other graduate students and WPAs-in-training, as well as to current WPAs and for our discipline more generally. There are new worlds to build together through our programs; we’re excited for more WPAs to join us in that work.

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