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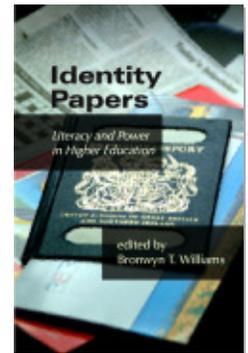Published by Utah State University Press

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THE FEMINIST WPA PROJECT
Fear and Possibility in the Feminist "Home"

Shannon Carter

*Postmodern discourses are all "deconstructive" in that they seek to
distance us from and make us skeptical about beliefs concerning truth,
knowledge, power, the self, and language that are often taken for grant-
ed within and serve as legitimation for contemporary western culture.*
<div align="right">—Flax Title</div>

*When the dominant group is homogeneous, its shared assumptions
stand little chance of identification, and when this group benefits
from maintaining these assumptions, there is even less chance that the
assumptions will be critically interrogated.*
<div align="right">—Alcoff and Potter Title</div>

Narrating the rhetorical spaces in which I came to compose and contin-
ue to recompose one Feminist WPA Project involves a certain amount of
what Shirley K. Rose (1998) has called "indiscretion" and every indiscre-
tion involves risk. This is a story of the fear and possibility at once limit-
ing and inspiring the rhetorical and philosophical choices I made while
composing and, ultimately, *re*composing the Project in response to the
fluctuating nexus of power that similarly governs any social space—risk
further compounded by the tenure-track (rather than tenured) status of
my position, the traditionally and materially marginalized status of the
projects under my direction (the basic writing program and the writing
center), and the fact that the locus of this project is a challenge to the
status quo—the very systems at once authorizing my position and fund-
ing the learning spaces under my "direction" while limiting my choices
and shaping the possible and the valuable within those programs I have
been "empowered" to change.

Ultimately, this Feminist WPA Project embraced the epistemic privi-
lege feminist epistemologists like Sandra Harding (1996) and bell hooks
(1996) argue marginality affords in an attempt to rework the system of
literacy education in ways that validate nonmainstream literacies and

worldviews rather than continuing to duplicate the dominant social order. The agents of change in this Project are (1) tutors working one-on-one with students in a variety of disciplines, at a variety of levels, with a variety of backgrounds, (2) peer-group leaders working with our basic writing students in small groups (less than seven), and (3) the non-mainstream students working with these tutors. Yet while my own story, including the acutely contextualized nature of the project itself and the difficulties I experienced, is quite personally and locally driven, the challenges I will explore are not unique. That is, any project attempting to subvert the dominant social order will be risky and will require rapid and constant shifts among multiple subject positions.

In *Rhetorical Spaces: Essays on Gendered Locations,* feminist epistemologist Lorraine Code (1995) illustrates the limits and fluidity of power with the useful metaphorical construct "rhetorical spaces." According to Code,

> Rhetorical spaces are fictive but not fanciful or fixed locations, whose (tacit, rarely spoken) territorial imperatives structure and limit the kinds of utterances that can be voiced within them with a reasonable expectations of uptake and "choral support," an expectation of being heard, understood, taken seriously. (x)

In every construction of public, professional, and personal identity, I must abide by the "territorial imperatives" shaping the exchange—not simply the verbal exchange itself but the actual subject positions I construct and the shape-shifting these spaces must continually endure.

As the director (not yet tenured) of a writing center and a basic writing program (always already marginalized), I must consistently weigh the feminist responsibility to challenge inequities with the risks inherent in this challenge. This balance is very, very complicated, for reasons I hope this chapter will illustrate. Through this Feminist WPA Project, I hoped to embrace the revolutionary potential of the learning spaces under my direction by working collaboratively with tutors to recompose the writing center and the basic writing program as spaces where students from nonmainstream groups could safely challenge the ways in which mainstream literacy education may unfairly exclude their very rich social histories in order to find space within the master narrative of the academy for the, in bell hooks' words, "oppositional world view" (hooks 2000) presented by marginalized narratives. In this Project, tutors, as research practitioners, would (1) chart the disruptions in literacy education, especially with respect to nonmaintream students and

(2) ultimately reshape literacy education in ways that open up space for nonmainstream ways of knowing.

While I continue to stand by the feminist utopian vision informing this Feminist WPA Project, I was to encounter several fault lines in the execution of this idealistically charged plan, and the flaws exposed in this narration should reveal even more fault lines in their expression. That is, risk informed my choices and my options in the performance of this Feminist WPA Project, but risk has also informed the narration of this performance. The risk shaped the earlier version of this essay that I sent to the editor, a version flattened and disembodied by fear—of not being "taken seriously," of misrepresenting my project, my colleagues, my students, and myself. Though this fear is always justified when one undertakes a new project, the shape-shifting and misrepresentations fear inspires become even more clear when we put these stories in print because print is static and linear and time must be "represented" rather than experienced, and the multitude of subject positions forced by the rhetorical spaces of the institution must also be frozen in time, separated from the rhetorical spaces informing these multiple subjectivities and, in the end, misrepresented.

In this chapter, I negotiate the power structures of print as I compose myself on the page, narrating the ways in which I compose my various selves within the academy and among multiple audiences (tutors, students, colleagues within and beyond the department, upper administration, the community) with varying degrees of power, all the time pressing against the norms the feminist me tells me must always be suspect for they always oppress (sometimes knowingly, often unknowingly) those who are not members of the culture of power the academy represents (and often dictates). The rhetorical spaces of print force me to misrepresent my Feminist WPA Project, including successes and failures, and the multiple subjectivities I have been forced to inhabit and compose and discard and recompose throughout the life of this project. These shifting and sliding subjectivities are necessarily frozen and somewhat muted as the performance of this project is narrated, forcing me to privilege some readings of these events over others just as we must when narrating any social space within the confines of the page.

DEFINING INSTITUTIONAL SPACES

Two years in the newly formed, tenure-track position of writing center and basic writing director at a rural, state university in a department with a Ph.D. program and a very active faculty (actively student-centered

and actively productive in ways valued by the academy with numerous publications of books and articles) have offered this new academic many opportunities to negotiate risky rhetorical spaces. As I narrate the acutely situated story of my attempts to implement a WPA Project informed by feminist theories, I hope to make clear the ways in which the fear informing the spaces was rarely a response to openly adversarial relationships within the institution—I nearly always felt complete support in the design and execution of this Project, though I should admit that I only discussed the specific and radical ways in which I was attempting to recompose the writing center's identity with people whose conceptual systems clearly matched my own. The members of my department have been regularly, openly, and privately supportive; a few even helped me read the power landscape of the university early on when my inexperience and (sometimes) naiveté made these "territorial imperatives" illegible to me. The director of first-year composition has been an incredible and continuous confidant and mentor, and, unlike the experiences of many other writing center directors, the head of the department and other administrators and faculty in this department and beyond have never made me feel my budget was in danger or that the writing center was at all unappreciated. Yet, as Louise Wetherbee Phelps (1995) explains in "Becoming a Warrior: Lessons for a Feminist Workplace," we must "acknowledge the inherent asymmetry of power within any large social organization with any degree of hegemony" (324).

So while the tacit expectations and limits of my position and the programs I direct were never articulated in any explicit way, I did understand the power structures that shape the ways in which the possibilities of the writing center and the basic writing program can be, in Code's words, "heard, understood, taken seriously." In the painful rhetoric of the oppressed, in other words, I knew my *place* from the very beginning.

In "Keeping Close to Home," bell hooks (2000) helps her readers understand the importance of the "oppositional world view" those from marginalized groups can provide, if only the appropriate framework "for such naming" were available. As hooks explains, this oppositional world view

> must be articulated and named if it is to provide a sustained blueprint for change. Unfortunately, there has existed no consistent framework for such naming. Consequently both the experience of this difference and documentation of it (when it occurs) gradually lose presence and meaning. (221)

From the seemingly empowered position as director of the writing center and the basic writing program, I have worked hard to compose and recompose a "consistent framework for [this] naming," a space in which an "oppositional world view" can "provide a sustained blueprint for change" in the writing center and the basic writing program, areas traditionally marginalized and traditionally identified as the learning space struggling writers should call "home."

In 1989, Texas State Legislature quite forcefully defined learning spaces like these as the institutional "home" for nonmainstream writers in Texas public universities by requiring students unable to pass skills-based, standardized tests like the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills Program (TASP) to enroll in "remedial" coursework for which they would receive no college credit. These writing centers and basic writing programs were thus charged—no longer simply by institutional mandate but by Texas law—with changing these nonmainstream writers in ways that mimic institutional standards, further strengthening the power of institutional norms by forcing these students (by law) to conform to these norms or leave the campus entirely.

The first goal of this Project was to *compose the writing center as a center for research,* which means composing the tutor as research practitioner and the center itself as a learning space uniquely situated to observe the disruptions in literacy education, including why such disruptions may occur and what we can do about them when they do. In fact, such research may help us understand the ways we can reshape literacy education in response to the lessons we learn from these disruptions, especially moments where these disruptions may reveal injustices in the dominant social order.

Composing the writing center as a space where writers can come to understand the various forces shaping the "tacit expectations" of academic literacy was a second goal of this Project. That is, this Project required us to reshape the writing center as a space where writers can learn to read and understand the tacit expectations of the rhetorical spaces shaping the particular literacy project they are attempting to compose, including the instructor, disciplinary, and institutional expectations limiting and shaping the epistemological and rhetorical possibilities within that space. Most important, the writing center should be composed as a place where all writers can come to understand that academic literacy expectations are not natural but rather cultural and thus arbitrary.

In all cases, the feminist "home" informing the project is a deep-seated belief, informed by critics like Bruce Horner (1996), Min-Zhan Lu

(1994), and Victor Villanueva, Jr. (1997), in the tendency of mainstream literacy education to force nonmainstream writers to change—linguistically, politically, socially, culturally, personally. That is, arguments that linguistic choices cannot be separated from social, personal, political, and cultural choices and that standardized academic discourse is a cultural construct rather than the natural or "pure" state of language reveal the ways in which forcing students to conform to institutional norms in their literacy practices is a far less innocent political move than merely helping them be successful. As Nancy Maloney Grimm has argued in *Good Intentions: Writing Center Work for Postmodern Times* (1999), writing centers that do not recognize and work against this political truth are complicit in perpetuating unjust social practices, forcing our nonmainstream students to make one of two equally distasteful choices: either accept and assimilate into this dominant culture (erasing any difference) or leave the academy entirely. In these learning spaces, there is no room for the "oppositional world view" that hooks contends our nonmainstream writers can offer.

The writing center should be rewritten, then, in ways that challenge the tendency of literacy educators to erase difference and treat nonmainstream ways of knowing and communicating as suspect, thus forcing educators to understand that such tendencies to erase difference as one would erase a stray or unintentional mark while composing are implicit in teaching students to avoid error (that which is nonstandardized) and embrace standardized English, what bell hooks describes as "white supremacist, capitalistic patriarchy" (2000, 226), because such methods ask these students to adopt academic discourse with no regrets about the inevitable loss of their nonacademic, non-White ways of knowing and being.

As hooks explains,

> Within universities, there are few educational and social spaces where students who wish to affirm positive ties to ethnicity—to blackness, to working-class backgrounds—can receive affirmation and support. Ideologically, the message is clear—assimilation is the way to gain acceptance and approval from those in power. (226)

The message is especially clear to those from the margins—often those working in the writing center and the basic writing program: assimilate or leave. Learn to perform in ways the academy values or leave the academy. But because the force and inherent inequity within this academy is especially clear in marginalized learning spaces like writing centers and

basic writing programs, we are, it would seem, in an especially powerful position to compose these educational spaces as places "where students who wish to affirm positive ties to ethnicity [. . .] can receive affirmation and support."

A POSITION FOR CRITIQUE

As Nancy Grimm (1999), Marilyn Cooper (2001), and Anis Bawarshi and Stephanie Pelkowski (2003) have argued, the writing center as a politically and, often times, *physically* marginalized learning space is in an excellent position to critique the institutional norms that, in fact, mute diversity by forcing writers who have not yet mastered the discourse of the academy to reconstruct their subject positions in ways that more readily mimic the dominant social order. Writing center scholars like Stephen North (1984) and Jeff Brooks (1991) have shaped the identity of the writing center as a place where, as North puts it in what has been considered the Writing Center Manifesto, "writers, not necessarily their texts, are changed" (1984, 438). As writing center workers and advocates have composed our writing centers in promotional materials, in conversations with students and faculty at our various institutions, and in the pages of our journals, we have continued to shape them as places where students can learn to write in ways the academy can value. It is only recently that scholars like Elizabeth Boquet (*Noise from the Writing Center*, 2002), Nancy Maloney Grimm (1999), and Marilyn Cooper (2001) have begun to challenge this construction of the writing center identity, calling upon us to instead shape our work and our centers in ways that work against the institutional norms that we now see as unfair to our marginalized students.

The nondirective methods perpetuated by what has become, for many, "writing center orthodoxy" encourages tutors to empower the writer by letting her do all the talking and all the work and forbids tutors to critique the assignment or the faculty member who assigned the project. According to critics, such methods actually reify institutional norms by failing to challenge these norms, thus treating academic ways of knowing as "natural" and anything deviating from that standard as "unnatural" or "immature." Grimm challenges our "good intentions" by forcing us to understand "literacy practices are *cultural* rather than natural" (1999, 33), something we can only begin to know when "teachers and tutors who are white and middle class [. . .] recognize that we, too, are raced, gendered, and classed subjects rather than just 'normal' people" (73). As I have explained, I hoped to recompose our writer center

as a site for intellectual inquiry because, according to Marilyn Cooper, "writing centers are in a good potion to serve as a site of critique of the institutional structure of writing instruction in college" (2001, 336).

At this point, a further misrepresentation of the Feminist WPA Project is necessary for storying purposes: I must break the various identities I negotiated into those for tutor consumption, student consumption, and "public" consumption (the version of the writing center I presented to administrators and other faculty who may not share my epistemological framework). In doing so, I hope the various slips and dangers of the Project itself will become more obvious and the ways in which I have since rewritten this project will seem more innovative than reactionary.

The Writing Center at Texas A&M University-Commerce is pretty typical: writing center workers (peer tutors and graduate assistants working on degrees in, for the most part, History and English) work with writers at all levels in all disciplines across the campus, and while the percentage of basic writers working in our center is less than 30 percent, our center is deeply affiliated with the basic writing program because each of our basic writers is required to work with small groups and peer tutors twice a week, sharing concerns, paper topics, and evidence for and drafts of papers they are preparing for English 100 (one of our basic writing courses) or other writing-intensive courses not part of the basic writing program. I construct the identity of our basic writing program for tutor consumption in the pages of teaching notes that narrate the daily activities for the novice teachers who staff these basic writing labs. In keeping with the feminist principles of my WPA identity, however, I left ample room for critique of this composed identity. Whenever possible, the tutors, teachers, and I shared decisions that affected programs under my care, working to reach consensus with programmatic changes. Though these programs were already quite strong when I came in to manage them, the collaborative and consensus building techniques I had come to value and associate with a feminist managerial style allowed us to rework the writing center and the basic writing program in ways that better supported the diverse backgrounds of our students and the variety of literacy projects they were assigned. But in many ways, these feminine managerial styles actually left space for these tutors to reinforce the dominant social order instead.

The much more aggressive WPA Project Louise Wetherbee Phelps (1995) executes and then examines in "Becoming a Warrior: Lessons of the Feminist Workplace" was deeply informed by her feminist core value set as well, and as such she too felt compelled to employ feminine

managerial techniques like shared authority, "cooperation, dialogue, nonhierarchical structures, and caring" (293). As she explains, creating "a safe utopian space"

> required both practically and morally that teachers of the program be treated as primary agents of change in themselves not as simply executing a director's will or serving as hapless instruments of ideology and institutional compulsion. (310)

I felt similarly compelled to share the power where I could, treating my tutors, whenever possible, as "agents of change in themselves," thus conflating the writing center identity I had constructed through this Project for student consumption with the one constructed for tutor consumption.

As a new, idealistic administrator filled with romantic plans of social change brought about by shared authority, cooperation, and caring, I could not predict disruptions in this feminist utopian project, disruptions I now understand were inevitable. Early on, I was certain that if given the chance, tutors and marginalized students alike would embrace the epistemic privileges informing marginalized learning spaces like the writing center and the basic writing program as an "educational and social space where students who wish to the affirm ties to ethnicity [. . .] can receive affirmation and support" (hooks 2000, 226). I felt it was my duty to shape the learning spaces under my direction in ways that invited change, and the only way I could do this as a responsible feminist was to share the authority with these tutors, collaboratively determining and reaching the Project goals, and thus reconstructing the identity of the writing center and, in turn, recomposing the academy in ways that transform these social spaces into territories less hostile to our nonmainstream students, perhaps even incorporating their marginalized narratives into this dominant social order.

Most problematic about the naiveté with which I approached and shaped this Feminist WPA Project was the ways in which I read the power of my particular position and the assumption that challenging the academy would be a project the traditionally successful undergraduate and graduate tutors working in the writing center would readily embrace. In fact, in some cases the tutors involved in this project felt not empowered by this attempt to redistribute power but angry, anxious, resistant, and frightened by it. In her own feminist plan to collaboratively reshape the writing program at her university along with the help of the teachers working in the program, Phelps (1995) encountered similar resistance

(only on a grander scale) and only then began to understand "that an increase in authority, voice, and autonomy is not an unqualified good in and of itself" (311). As my own feminist utopian vision began to crack and peel Phelps' remark to an instructor friend began to resonate within the walls of my own writing center more and more loudly: "I've just begun to understand what an incredible risk I took—assuming that any group of teachers who just happened to be here could become capable of collectively inventing a new writing program. And that they would want to" (313). Until tutors began to resist my project, I was unaware of the hold the institutional norms would have on them, all of them students who have found success within the dominant social order and very few of whom felt that standardized academic discourse had forced them to change in any ways that made "keeping close to home" uncomfortable or even impossible. For these reasons, I was unaware of the extent to which pure collaborative managerial techniques, like non-directive tutoring strategies, may help my tutors reify institutional norms in their work with the nonmainstream students. Until I made the goals of this Project quite clear to them, I simply could not assume that they would work against any institutional norms that my feminist "home" had taught me unfairly constructed our nonmainstream students. If I believed the dominant social order had the power to dictate values and worldviews, I had to believe that this social order would be no less likely to shape the values and world views of my tutors. For the same reasons writing center orthodoxy may reify institutional norms by failing to challenge them, feminist managerial techniques may yield program goals that simply mimic the injustices of mainstream literacy I hoped the writing center would challenge.

So part of the trouble I encountered in this Project came from not only the inadequacy of some feminist managerial styles that are too "soft" to challenge the dominant social order in any real way—a disconnect I will explore in some detail later—but also the important ways that a marginalized social space like the writing center cannot openly challenge the institution upon which it, in fact, depends. To be sure, the public identity I hoped to shape for faculty and administrative consumption was most certainly not the one I described above. The writing center for public consumption is absolutely not the one that seeks to challenge institutional or societal norms. Once again, like a good Southern woman, I knew my place, and my writing center constructed on the political and, in fact, material margins of the academy/literacy education knows her programmatic place as well. In fact, I regularly negotiate

rather risky rhetorical spaces in the promotional material and activities I create, distribute, and perform, and ask my tutors to perform.

OF ETHICS AND IDEOLOGY

For these reasons, in progressively complex rhetorical moves, I carefully manipulate those rhetorical spaces that could threaten the existence of my writing center or my tenure, assuring the consumers of the writing center's public identity that we are here to serve their students and only rarely (and then very carefully) educating them about the limits and possibilities of writing center work—in terms that are once invitational, and, I must admit, passive aggressive. In promotional materials like the letter I send to faculty across campus inviting them to attend an annual open house, I use rhetoric like "As you know . . ." (when I know many do not know), and I invite them to attend any one of our weekly tutor training meetings to talk to us about the specific literacy demands of their courses or their disciplines (sadly, most decide to use this time to help us understand the style guide appropriate for their discipline). As Patricia Dunn (2000) argues in her study of the matrix of power inform-ing writing center work via instructor's marginal comments on student papers, "When writing centers are run or staffed by those without ten-ure and criticized by those who have it, it is risky for directors to pro-test philosophical differences publicly" (30). At some level the writing center identity must be constructed in ways the institution will accept because we are absolutely dependent upon our institutional context, even for our very physical "home": the walls, the roof, the furniture, the power—in fact the monies that pay us to hire our workers and the monies we pay these workers once we do. As Muriel Harris explains in "Presenting WC Scholarship" "a writing center is a particular *place* [. . .] with an ever-present need to contextualize."

I must promise faculty that the writing center will, as North (1984) promised, "change the writer" or even promise some that the writing center will change the text, but I certainly should not promise to do what I can to change the institutional construct of literacy education. A writing center that is necessarily a part of the institution (materially, politically) cannot exist with such an adversarial identity. Again, I know my place. So disruptions will always exist between the public identity I construct for my programs and the true ideological construct of these spaces, and I do not feel that these disruptions endanger the integrity of the WPA Project itself.

More troublesome, however, are the disruptions that occur in my attempt to conflate the composed identity for tutors and the one for student consumption. As I explain, it seemed unethical to impose my social vision on my tutors in the same way I felt it unethical for our tutors and teachers to impose their worldview on their students, especially their nonmainstream students for whom this change would mean moving away from home so completely that, like Richard Rodriguez (1983), they simply could not return home. But because of the seductive force (and the power) of the master narrative and because so many of my tutors, though working in a marginalized learning space with many marginalized students, were not, in most rhetorical spaces, marginalized themselves, they were probably less likely to criticize that master narrative. Once again, they were excellent students for the most part (and always had been); therefore, they did not automatically challenge the institutional norms because, admittedly and quite understandably, they valued the dominant social order and hoped to teach these students what they felt they needed to know in order to find success within that dominant social order as well. Tutors are no more unsituated free agents than any one else, and they can not/will not automatically challenge the institutional constructs that often mute diversity any more than modern travelers from the West would challenge metaphorical constructs perpetuated by western maps that North is up and East is right. Without understanding the ways in which the value set informing American literacy education are cultural rather than natural, most tutors will continue to reify institutional norms by reading student diversity as deficit and helping marginalized students learn to overcome their nonmainstream ways of knowing in order to assimilate as completely and quickly as possible. Such instructional choices are rarely made with any malice. In fact, these novice teachers may reify institutional norms with the best of intentions—they want their student writers to succeed and it is likely the student writers want the same, by most any means necessary. The tutor may not understand the ways in which they may be forcing these students to abandon "home" for the academy. As qualitative studies like Anne DiPardo's *A Kind of Passport* (1993) have revealed, the dominant social order can be very seductive, especially for the professionally ambitious and traditionally successful students we hire to work in our writing centers. Indeed, our tutors with marginalized identity markers may be just as likely to "fail to acknowledge the culturally specific and arbitrary nature of academic expectation" as our tutors with more mainstream

social histories, upholding the dominant culture without critiquing it in the face of diversity, albeit with what Nancy Grimm (1999) calls "Good Intentions." Thus, the Feminist WPA Project could only succeed with more directive and, perhaps, more masculine managerial techniques that helped tutors read student need in more culturally sensitive ways.

My own tutors cared about their students very much. Many of the tutors involved with the basic writing "labs" spent countless hours in my office fretting about students with poor attendance, resistant students, and students with wonderful ideas who simply "could not write." The levels of authority I felt compelled to share within the confines of the Project allowed tutors the space to rework their labs in ways they felt more appropriately addressed the needs of the students. In the rhetoric of the Project, the tutors were the "research practitioners," "organic intellectuals" in the unique position to explore the theory possible when applied to the real world, observing where theory breaks down and where it works. I trusted the research practitioners, and I felt certain the tutors in the writing center and those working from the teaching notes in their basic writing groups would be in a better position to observe the efficacy of the tutoring strategies I advocated, reporting successes and reworking failures. But these were novice teachers, and, as novice teachers, they may have difficulty reading what didn't "work." Worse yet, the determinations of efficacy may be made in terms dictated by the master narrative. In fact, in the race to help these students succeed in the academy, many of my tutors went in search of worksheets that would help these students construct a thesis or a paragraph "appropriately"—after all, wasn't that why they were here? Is it right to deny these students what they need to be successful in the academy, they may ask, often instinctively reading literacy education in the ways the dominant social order reads literacy—as a neutral and natural skill-set rather than a highly ideologically and culturally charged one.

Some of my tutors resisted the construction of the writing center as a place that would help students explore the differences between their lives and the representations of the dominant culture, often unable (or unwilling) to help these students develop strategies for negotiating these spaces in ways that simultaneously validate home and yield success in the culture of power because, in employing purely collaborative managerial techniques informed by the fear of imposing my own social vision upon them, I had left them in the dark and I had failed to recognize the powerful ways the master narrative would likely construct their own understanding of literacy education just as it had most everyone else's

understanding—certainly those who had not been invited to challenge this master narrative. Given this, I can only imagine the kind of resistance my nonfeminist, noncomposition specialist graduate assistants and tutors must have felt when I came in and began asking them to help me rework these programs, programs I "direct" and programs for which I am best trained and for which I am, ultimately, responsible. As I've already explained, many excellent changes were implemented because this shared authority empowered so many tutors to help rework the program—multiple changes that supported the feminist utopian vision informing the Feminist WPA Project, albeit unknowingly. However, the desire for the "director" to offer "direction" was clear very early on. Many times, I would offer tutors several possibilities, hoping they would read the situation and implement the best solution. But while this seemed to be the best, most feminist approach, for the first few months (and with every new tutor that followed) I felt some degree of anxiety emanating from the tutor. Several even said, "Just tell me what you want me to do, and I'll do it." I could not. I felt doing so would invalidate my Feminist WPA Project.

So though we were able to rework the programs in some excellent ways, the expectation that someone needs to be "in charge" continued to dominate my interactions with a handful of these tutors and teachers. Specifically, these folks may have felt that if the designated "boss" has entrusted many important decisions to her staff, then perhaps the boss is unnecessary and perhaps an equally effective job is to be had without her. I am only aware of one staff member who felt this way, but one is enough to reveal a fault line in the system.

ISSUES OF POWER AND CHANGE

Early in this chapter, I suggested that rhetorical spaces may be a useful way to read the power landscape of any project challenging the dominant social order, especially those projects offering such challenges from the margins of the dominant social order, at once a part of and marginalized by the power landscape dictating norms and the dominant core value set. In "Feminist Writing Program Administration: Resisting the Bureaucrat Within," Amy Goodburn and Carrie Shively Leverenz (1998) warn us that "it is crucial that feminist administrators who wish to challenge the existing power relations understand the norms that nurture and support these relations" (276–77). This chapter is an attempt to understand these norms, and I hope new versions of this Feminist WPA Project will more adequately address them.

Too often, the WPA, and, especially, the female, feminist WPA, is not "heard," "understood," or "taken seriously" (Code 1995, x) by her audience. The feminist agenda is often not valued or understood because it takes on the status quo in spaces where the status quo is unproblematically valued. The female WPA's message is often not heard because she is a member of an undervalued group (a woman teaching composition, a largely misunderstood and thus marginalized subject area). The female, feminist WPA is dismissed in many rhetorical spaces in the academy unless she can shape effective arguments within the boundaries and "territorial imperatives" of the rhetorical spaces in question.

When we are able to move past the ideal, we are in a better position to successfully negotiate the rhetorical spaces involved in this new Feminist WPA Project. My work with tutors and teachers involved in the programs I direct must acknowledge the power landscapes and territorial imperatives shaping each and every rhetorical space and this work may, therefore, require more masculine managerial techniques like coercion and control. I am not arguing that we must completely abandon the more feminine managerial techniques like collaboration and consensus, but we must understand the ways in which dissensus and control are not failures in the project itself but rather opportunities to better understand the "territorial imperatives" structuring these interactions. At times, working against the status quo will require more forceful methods, but it is only in doing so that these programs can provide "the consistent framework" for the "naming" of the "oppositional world view" bell hooks tells us our students from marginalized groups can provide, if only given the chance.