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Facing the Center

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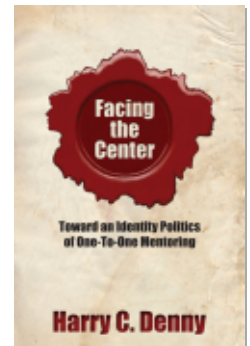
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FACING SEX AND GENDER IN THE WRITING CENTER

Scene 1: Kyle comes to my office in the early evening. The center has gotten quiet, so I initially think he's about to tell me he is closing up and heading home. Instead, he says he'd like my advice on a session he's currently having. Kyle's working with a male freshman who's writing an essay in which he's making what Kyle perceives as a homophobic argument in opposition to same-sex marriage or other gay-rights topics. Kyle wonders how he should handle the student. Before responding, I wonder why he has approached me? Is it because of my own identity as a relatively out, but not terribly vocal gay faculty member, or is it because he's genuinely interested in my perspective? Then again, Kyle, in the prior two years that I've worked with him, hasn't approached me before. Is it because I'm a safer figure to talk to in relation to this situation than his friends otherwise hanging out in the writing center? What does this situation suggest for the climate in the writing center?

Scene 2: An orthodox Jewish student gets banned from a writing center after he interacts abrasively with the women he encounters over a series of months: he commands them to correct his work, shouts at them when they refuse, and stares at their breasts. When male administrators and tutors interact with him, he is compliant and self-restrained. How typical is this sort of gendered relation? How does a writing center honor traditions tied to religion or culture while ensuring they don't confound commitment to diversity or a safe workplace and learning environment?

Just like race and class, our sex, our gender, and the politics attendant to them are ubiquitous in writing centers and to the people that circulate through them. These components of our identity are among the most legible on our bodies and the faces we present. They are also fraught with complication and the potential for misunderstanding. Wrongly reading one person's sex or presupposing values around gender and sexual expression presents minefields as well as opportunities

for learning. Our postmodern society and culture make possible fluid codes that are paradoxical: invariably visible and hence public, but intensely private and difficult to challenge. Referencing moments when we check a sex box on some form or glance to a gendered ideograph, knowing and thinking, “That’s me,” Donna Haraway (1991), the renowned biologist/feminist/science fiction writer, argues such acts perform our socialization and—almost as importantly—our recognition of its operation in smooth and seamless ways. In checking ourselves, literally and symbolically, we give testimony to the hegemonic fashion by which sexuality and gender operate and also hint at the risk attendant to expressions that run counter to the dominant expressions. The automatic functioning of mainstream gender and sexual identity politics, the seemingly effortlessness of expressions that appear normal, even natural, of course, begs their very question. As we mark who we are, we signify the operation of social and cultural forces on us.

People’s access to education and literacy is charged with politics and carries the weight of wider historical relations, all of which impact on their sense of agency and facility with writing for particular discourse communities, most often the academic. Our gender and sex are among those political and historical variables that cut through the scene of tutoring. For some, the point of *entrée* into this conversation vis-à-vis writing centers revolves around gendered notions of writing—that there are uniquely male, female, feminine or masculine ways of doing and learning it. While such insight has validity, it also can be essentialist and prescriptive, papering over the diversity of expression and eliminating possibility for dialogue about how gender and sex play out in everyday exchanges in conferences and beyond. Such notions about how we recognize and respond to gendered or sexualized interpersonal conflict or issues that exceed the text in writing centers make me nervous. I’m never entirely convinced about the degree to which people are even cognizant of the dynamics and imprint of their identities, in whatever way they are expressed and inscribed on bodies and interaction. My preference is to err on the side of consciousness-raising and problem-posing, to make a space for positing what we believe and challenging what might otherwise seem commonsense. In other words, I want to name and dialogue about the dynamics of gender and sexual face in writing centers. I’ve argued before in this book, and I’ll do it again, recipes for “how to” are not so interesting to me as the questioning of “what makes possible” dynamics that might go unrecognized. I’m

not positing a program for how we deal with issues of gender and sexuality when they arise in sessions. I'm not advancing a sense that sessions focused, for example, on high-order concerns need to follow any particular protocol read through a feminist or queer theory lens. Instead, I'm proposing that gender and sexuality make possible and intersect with other elements of our individual and collective identities, as writers, students, tutors, administrators, faculty, whatever. Gender and sexuality are central to who we are and provide a register of what's possible.

Unlike other chapters in this book, I approach this one feeling aspects of who I am foregrounded in my consciousness more than others. I feel and experience this face more intensely than others. My whiteness provides a level of everyday privilege that is so natural and smooth that I rarely question it. Only when race inserts itself into everyday life, as if somehow exterior to me, do I come to realize I am myself raced and benefit directly, tangibly, from that racing. The distance between my middle-class reality with its comfortable living wage and my working-class roots grows wider each year, yet student loans and rent remind me of the material "tax" people like me pay, that diminish our earning power and social mobility and keep us from moving easily toward "ownership class" existence. In those moments of clarity, I am acutely aware of my relative class privilege, even though I still hold the neurotic belief, one that many like me who have jumped class positions feel, that it's all temporary and fleeting, that my fraudulent existence as middle-class will be revealed and taken away at any time. Those voices, quite honestly, rarely shove other more pressing concerns aside in my thinking. Instead, it's my sexual identity as a gay man that confounds my standing; it challenges dominant codes of gender and sex and how they are performed on a day-to-day basis. My masculinity is often suspect—I'm never quite "one of the boys," but women in my professional life don't feel any necessary need to ally with me, no doubt the result of my own performed paternalism and sexism. A day rarely passes when gender identity politics don't assert themselves at the oddest of moments and in the strangest of ways. From speculation about the leadership hierarchy in our writing institute—who counts as "alpha males" (or their proxy female equivalents) and who doesn't—to the informal protocol (and violations of it) of how we deliberate and make decisions, gender is insinuated into assumptions and discourse practices. Even more, bodies themselves are sites on which a careful set of expectations are overlaid—women's bodies

are subject to scrutiny (too much skin, too sensual, too informal), while men's rarely elicit such explicit questioning. Likewise, emotion and expression are embraced in prose, but allowed bodily performance only in very prescribed contexts and with only particular personae—the hysterical female, the fretting gay man, the angry person of color. Tension arises when affect and interpersonal interaction venture from polite casualness to intensity, rawness or vulnerability. It reveals a continuum of tolerance and latitude directly tied to conventional expressions of gender and sexuality that roughly parallel the hierarchies in place for race and class in our society. Coming to understand amorphous politics or the range of cultural assumptions about identity, gender in this context, presents another set of faces people must learn to manage, regardless of whether they are dominant, oppositional or subversive possibilities.

I write from the position of a writing center director in one of the more unusual contexts that a person can find her or himself. Around the country, many more women serve as directors and professional staffers than men, yet the directorship of the writing centers at St. John's is exclusively male. How that came to be is complete happenstance, but the role gender plays for us is rather vexing. The typically male privilege of leadership—"taking charge" and "running with the ball"—is challenged by our reality of a multi-campus writing center that requires coordination and collaboration. We boys can't just go off on our own. My benchmarks for writing center administration are contradictory and encoded with gender politics: I'm accustomed to writing centers where graduate students, disproportionately women, take on the lion's share of the day-to-day operations, or writing centers managed by an administrator aloof or removed from the usual hum of the center. Having the benefit of full-time associate directors on both of St. John's main campuses, I've repeatedly returned to wondering what role gender, even sexuality, plays in my struggle to be a better administrator leading two straight men: To what degree does my stubbornness or tendency to act unilaterally reflect weak leadership or a gendered approach? How does my need to nurture and cultivate relationships dovetail or challenge expectations of women and men? How do our struggles to work together as a cohesive team signify our inability as men to collaboratively problem-solve and manage a team, or the inability of straight men to rally behind a gay person? To what extent does being gay and out intersect with or complicate gender assumptions and

tensions? Often I channel my dad and his life in the army. I think of its policy of “Don’t ask, don’t tell” toward homosexuals: As long as identity isn’t disclosed, service members may serve, lest it impact on unit cohesion because, the thinking goes, straight men can’t rally behind a homosexual leader. Although that mindset presumes so many linkages between sexuality and gender and leadership that are flawed and problematic, I’m left wondering if the policy could be on to something, especially in moments of self-doubt.

When I’m thinking about these sorts of questions, I quickly turn to popular usage of feminization. I first encountered the concept as an undergraduate in history courses where professors would talk about the face and feminization of poverty and education. In both cases, it signified an ominous turn, the intensification of a social problem (“That can’t be good,” I thought): the ranks of the poor becoming dominated by female-headed households, itself a code for the stigmatized welfare state. Likewise, feminized education meant an institution somehow had been overrun by women, an evidently problematic turn of events. Later I would discover feminism as a pedagogy, a process, a democratic mechanism, not anti-male but pro-collaboration and suspicious of unwarranted competition. From Susan Miller’s (1991) work, I learned that this notion of feminization, particularly when it’s invoked in composition studies, cuts any number of ways—one direction that held powerful, even utopian, possibilities of feminist theory re-imagining social space as more egalitarian, and other directions that served to marginalize and diminish the work of individuals, collectives and units. If, as Miller speculates, composition studies programs have become the potty trainers of novice writers’ work, what must that bode for writing centers, frequently positioned as the sites for further, more intensive discursive remediation? Questions of gender are also complicated by discourses around sexuality. Just as the politics of feminism holds out the possibility for a society where masculinities and femininities don’t index a person’s worth or domination, it, along with critical race and class theories, makes possible a questioning of the place, function and implications of how our sexual personae and practices play out. Contemporary sexuality studies aren’t just about making our society and culture safe for sexualities on the margins; this scholarship also studies the immediate and wider implications of organizing individual identities and social relations around practices defined by an ongoing and self-perpetuating struggle over what’s normal.

Sex and gender play out in writing centers on an everyday basis in ways that are often very typical. Composition courses and other disciplinary subjects invite students to take on controversial subjects or issues that might appear to be unconventional. The first scene isn't terribly unusual today, even at a Catholic institution with a complicated historical relationship to the issue of sexuality. That Kyle took pause to question whether to help a student write what he viewed as a homophobic paper is progress; more typically, the tutor would just go forth, enabling, even fostering, such rhetoric. Still, the question of how we mentor oppressive discourse is one for local debate and ethics statements, though my centers have consistently advocated that tutors work from their positions of comfort and mentor students to consider how assumptions about audience (its composition and needs) reflect bias or require complication. More pressing to me are the deeper questions about the climate that has been created in the writing center. On one level, Kyle's comfort with approaching me represents a positioning of me as an object of safety, someone to whom posing questions on issues related to what Jonathon Alexander (2008) might call sexual literacy is non-threatening. Still, I wonder about the message for the student, regardless of whether he is pro- or anti-homophobic, and whether Kyle's reaction was tantamount to a sort of regulation of speech and writing. On another level, I wonder how we naturalize or contest sexual expression? To what degree was that performance—stepping out of a session to consult a director, enacting a kind of regulation, stifling even indirectly—impacting on how a client might approach the next occasion. Then again, as a point of process, my staff and I always mentor tutors to collaborate and reach out to others when in doubt, to model appropriate and productive information-seeking behavior. The moment, nevertheless, begs exploration of which occasions cause us to speak to the face and diversity of sexual expression, how we make it possible, and why we make the choices we do. More often than not, talk of sexuality is going to come up in essays or projects that students are writing for courses that force them to grapple with society's and their own attitudes and biases. The contemporary controversies around gender and sexuality are stock fodder for discussion because they are rife with arguments, counter-arguments, and meta-cognitive learning about every point on the road to discovering one's own rhetoric and the challenges to it. In the midst of every object lesson, however, are real students, tutors, administrators, and faculty

alike, for whom learning isn't just an abstract possibility. Visible or not, self-aware or not, they are the referents whose presence cannot be quashed.

Connected to such moments of unexpected dialogue—surprising deliberations, disquieting exchanges—I'm reminded of the frequency with which sex plays out in writing centers. The ordinary practice typically revolves around peer tutors dating, breaking up, or setting friends up with others. It's *Days of Our Lives* or *The Real World* meets the writing center. Like any other workplace or public domain where people intersect with one another, romantic entanglements are bound to happen, frequently with problematic results that hopefully don't disrupt the ordinary operation of the unit or create an environment where mentoring and learning can't happen. The other scenario that I lead this chapter with might be specific to New York City where sizable orthodox religious communities are relatively common in the outer boroughs and suburbs where I direct(ed) writing centers. We've had Muslim students uncomfortable working with members of the opposite sex, whether Islamic or not, and we've also had Hasidim or other orthodox Jewish men refuse to work with women in my centers. In these contexts, it's a difficult negotiation of public and private, of the secular and the religious, of the faces that are possible and permitted, but it's also a moment where historical and theological marginalization of women impacts in very material ways. We've also had female tutors complain about culturally isolated men objectifying them in overt ways (e.g., ogling their breasts) that these men might not do at home because women in their communities dress or present themselves in veiled ways. The situation begs a complicated set of questions about whose burden it is to adapt or accommodate to whom and to what effect. Like the dynamics around sexuality, these moments of gender conflict are fraught with policy and political complications. I've tended to assent to these students' cultural needs (and biases), opting for compromise aimed at making the center's environment more comfortable for any population, yet leaving unchallenged the cultural tensions at the heart of the dynamic. Sometimes, discomfort is going to exist regardless, irresolvable. The situation also leaves me wondering about tipping points or thresholds I would allow a student or consultant to cross: Would I permit racially- or class-segregated tutoring? What about political beliefs? How would I respond to someone who refused to work with a member of a sexual minority?

This chapter next explores the socio-cultural history of gender and sex to provide a shared route into their discussion. Such background understands these elements as critical to who people are—everyone negotiates their gender and sexuality—and also underscores the social and contested quality of gender and sex. Our classrooms and writing centers, like any space where people interact, are terrains where individuals and groups must come to terms with (or are conscripted into) positions that dovetail with mainstream, dominant expectations or roles. But people also find themselves in search of resistant or subversive positions to assume, all parts of negotiations on which this chapter will focus. In the everyday work of conferences and mentoring, writing centers are central sites where this sort of activism is possible (and common), but learning spaces anywhere can take a cue from these dynamics and integrate them into pedagogy.

THEORIZING SEX, GENDER, SEXUALITY AND THE WRITING CENTER

Before turning further to the ways in which the gendered and sexual face of the center can be covered, oppositional and resistant, it's important to create a common ground in theories relevant to these variables. Like the explosion of activism in the 1950s and 1960s around the other identities that this text explores, gender and sexuality experienced similar ruptures that reverberated widely across the society. This era represented a culmination of changes that paralleled and riffed off those happening around other movements or in reaction to them. At the same time, the shifts in gender and sexuality had their own genealogy that's important to honor. When speaking of the shifting status of women, we have to complicate the picture and return to the industrial revolution that swept the U.S., changing it from an agrarian-based economy into an industrial powerhouse, and arguably lasting well into the late twentieth century. Coming out of the Civil War, a middle class began to take stronger root throughout the country, enabling re-invigorated notions of the public and private. In antebellum American society, middle-class women were firmly ensconced in the private domain of home; while men took on roles as symbolic patriarchs, women held sway over home and as time went on the domestic sphere extended outwards from the physical location of the home to schools and institutions of broader moral education. In a public arena where commerce and government were viewed as suspicious sites of activity where the

base instincts and nature of men were realized, women were positioned as pure, moral counter-weights and mothers of the republic and its children, shepherding them toward virtue and righteousness. Women's rights re-appeared with high national profile in this context, leveraging the moral status of women in society as a way to their public citizenship and governmental participation. When national suffrage passed for women in 1920, the struggle was still over their symbolic role in society; the divide between public and private hadn't broken down in broad terms for those who were economically privileged. Working-class women and women of color of any class position, in contrast, weren't as policed or hemmed in by more elite notions of domesticity. Economic reality forced women of lesser economic means out into the public domain in search of paid labor. For women of color, primarily African Americans, their place in public was tenuous at best because it had been profoundly undermined by Jim Crow segregation. And where segregation wasn't the law of the land, everyday racism and marginalization made life in public always subject to careful negotiation, regardless of one's wealth.

Following the cultural renaissance and openness of the 1920s, the nation's experience with the Great Depression and Second World War further transformed and challenged the place of women (and men) in society, particularly with regard to notions of the private and public. The economic meltdown shattered familial relations in profound ways. With wide swaths of the nation experiencing dramatic unemployment rates, men were very often unable to care for families and frequently left them in search of work in other parts of the county. This began the nation's experience with poverty being concentrated in female-headed households, especially in urban areas, where public and private safety nets kept them from outright abject existences.¹⁴ Once the war effort brought an end to the Depression, Victorian notions of the family couldn't reassert themselves. Men, if able or possible, participated in military service. Those left behind joined the war effort that came to be dominated by women's labor. For the first time in national history, women across the board were mobilized and encouraged to leave the private domain

14. Prior economic downturns had happened when the society was still largely agrarian and subsistence living meant that families could at least survive without aid from others. It also helped that in those times, families had extended networks of mutual support, whether with extended relations or cross-generational support. If grandma and grandpa couldn't offer support, then aunts, uncles, cousins, brothers and sisters were around for aid. Moreover, families were also larger.

for public participation. It was framed as patriotic duty: the Mothers of the Republic were repackaged as Rosie the Riveters. At war's end, dominant ideology quickly shifted, and (middle-class) women were implored to return to their roots—to their homes. But at least two generations of women and men had come of age since the last vestiges of Victorian mythologizing of domesticity had given way to twentieth century economic and social realities. Having lived through economic depression and wartime, these people, often new arrivals to middle-class domesticity, had no benchmarks for social expectations of the moral propriety to come. Television (e.g., *Leave it to Beaver*) and moral education campaigns (e.g., *A Date with the Family*) served to casually instruct codes of proper suburban behavior and etiquette, even as the first media firestorms about delinquent youth, rock-and-roll music, and subversive culture underscored problems in paradise. Beginning with the 1950s and continuing throughout the early Cold War period, people faced intense pressure to embrace a middle-class ethos wrapped up in the sentiments of suburban life where the public and private were once again broadly managed and coerced. Women were supposed to shift the technological prowess that they had displayed in the war years to the home front, making way for men to take up their rightful place in industry and business but also enabling women to transfer their former “talents” to transforming the private domain. In effect, industrial specialists were retooled as domestic engineers. Women were supposed to apply the same gusto and verve to meal production and house cleaning that they had once put toward work on assembly lines or precision welding.

In the midst of all the domestic tranquility that was supposed to mark peacetime, movements were breaking out everywhere throughout the 1950s and 1960s, as D'Emilio and Freedman (1997) have chronicled. From the counter-culture movement of the beatniks on the coasts to the civil rights movement throughout the south and the student right's movement on college campuses throughout the nation, socio-cultural transformation and challenges to national (if not generational) hypocrisy were afoot in the midst of a wider zeitgeist for sameness. Although the 1950s are often remembered as halcyon days of sock hops and drive-ins, the conflict of the *West Side Story*'s Jets and Sharks and “duck and cover” were closer to reality. Throughout the New Left (SNCC, SCLC, CORE, SDS, the Black Panthers), most organizations were dominated by men who largely took for granted female activists who participated in the movement or ignored women's

issues as opportunities to complicate agendas or visions for social justice.¹⁵ Women were widely active in New Left activism, yet few received national attention or assumed high profile leadership positions. They were viewed as supporting characters, roles secondary to the men championing visible change. Although simmering throughout the 1950s, as Betty Friedan captured so well in her 1963 work, *The Feminine Mystique*, women began to organize along three main routes in the wake of the 1960s New Left activism. Liberal feminism sought to make social and cultural change through mainstream political venues, most prominently identified with the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) that sought to change the U.S. Constitution to guarantee equality. It also had profound, long-lasting impact with Title IX that brought equity to college sports and greater scholarship access for women, as well as with anti-discrimination efforts of affirmative action policies at all levels of governments and corporations. Cultural feminism was ostensibly an oppositional movement, much like its racial analog, Black Power, in the 1970s, and advocated a complete break from gender oppression and movement toward a utopian vision of a post-patriarchal society. A third wave of feminism, socialist-feminism that emerged in the 1980s worked to bridge sex/gender as a critical lens through which to view our identities as structured and structuring.

Paralleling the same tensions around the roles and status of women and men in society—that the public domain was decidedly coded as a masculine, male-dominated space and the private relatively exclusive to female/feminine influence—possibilities for different sexual expression, beyond the confines for procreation and conventional family/relational units, also emerged as economic and social shifts happened. As agrarian families slipped away from being the primary economic engines of society, people began to move to urban (and later suburban) areas that offered varied or different living possibilities, and they also began to find and explore same-sex romantic relationships in space that made them more viable and safe. At the same time, social scientific disciplines were emerging and growing their knowledge of “deviance” studies, juxtaposing and naming “abnormal” sex acts as person-ages, personalities, or identities. Before the late nineteenth century, all

15. SNCC stands for the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee; SCLC, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (of which Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was the leader); CORE, the Congress for Racial Equality; and SDS, Students for a Democratic Society.

forms of non-procreative sex, whether or not with a same or opposite sex partner, was treated as more or less equivalent and equally problematic, but as the fields of anthropology, psychology and sociology grew, scientists worked to define sexual relationships, practices and identities. As knowledge grew about differences, they gained wider dissemination and notice. The more sexuality was studied, the greater the attention it got, the more society began to know of the possibilities, the more people came to understand these aspects of themselves, and the more they sought outlets and spaces to express it. The relative sex segregation of the Depression and war years led people to encounter sexual identity, often unintentionally aided by military and government screening attempts (in their attempt to root out homosexuals in their midst, both often ended up telegraphing it as a possibility that people hadn't otherwise had the ability to name or conceptualize). By the 1950s (even with its intense culture of conformity), gay people saw other movements organizing and moving for social change. While the gay community was far more tentative and nervous than other movements of the time, it mobilized for action and gained momentum. This activism reached a critical threshold in the late 1960s when activists followed the lead of other identity movements and began to take on an oppositional stance to mainstream oppression. Throughout the 1970s, gay power and its liberationist agenda gave way to what we might recognize today as a movement organized around equal rights and protection under local, state and federal laws, if not some degree of mainstream tolerance and acceptance.

In composition and writing center studies, the "social turn," as theorists like James Berlin (1996, 1997) and Lester Faigley (1992) have termed it, has internalized the intellectual, cultural, and social transformations of the last forty to fifty years. As with the other identity formations that earlier chapters have addressed, gender and sexual identity politics have come to be understood as critical factors impacting on the very possibility of claiming an identity and producing it in relation to communities. Elizabeth A. Flynn writes, "A feminist approach to composition studies would focus on questions of difference and dominance" (2003, 574). Similar to class and race identity politics, gender and sexuality in our society stratify and differentially position people, so, as Flynn suggests, the composition classroom with its critical exploration of self and agency (at least in many curricula) becomes a logical site to consider how masculinities, femininities, and sexuality interact

and impact on individuals, communities, and society. Susan Jarratt (2001) extends the concept to include insight on how teaching writing enacts inclusion (or exclusion) in gendered terms as well as how our language use performs the same structuring dynamics of differentially positioning women and men. In connection to writing center conferences, Meg Woolbright summarizes the imperative as “teaching methods that are non-hierarchical, cooperative, interactive ventures between students and tutors talking about issues grounded in students’ own experience” (2003, 18). The values that each of these women advocate are entirely consistent with a pedagogy rooted in building and fostering critical awareness of the structures and systems that produce divisions in society. Short of turning composition courses and writing centers into group therapy or unsolicited consciousness-raising sessions, which critics like Richard Fulkerson (2005) have argued against, sound use of this pedagogy fosters deep thinking, audience awareness, and student engagement, learning outcomes few would contest. If we accept, as Woolbright points out, that apathy and resistance are hallmarks of Millennial Generation students, then giving them tools by which to reclaim and foster their own sense of agency and influence over learning and self-reflection might be among our best offerings as a profession. Queer theory complements this agenda, not just by offering another lens by which to understand how society structures difference, but by advocating a “reading against the grain” pedagogy that, in the first instance, challenges and destabilizes hegemonic binaries and renders most as fluid, as positions on continua. In earlier work, I’ve argued that queer theory also “considers ways in which language and epistemology construct and constrain possibilities for (sexual) identity and their implications for public and private practices” (2005, 43).

To channel Michel Foucault (1977, 1978), then, gender and sexual practices, discursive and performative, represent opportunities to study their archeology and genealogy. While digging around these concepts tells us a good deal about moments in time (what Foucault (1977) names as an archeology), a genealogical tracing of their roots speaks into the historical emergence of a set of practices. The present day discourses and performances of gender and sexuality represent a culmination of shifts around the economic and cultural meaning of women and men in society, the range of masculinities and femininities possible (or permissible), and how all of these play out in whatever local context. How we do learning and teaching in classrooms and conferences

intersects with a wide range of conventions. Looking into the everyday work of one-to-one tutoring represents a local and intense pedagogy that produces not just writers and the texts that capture their words; everyday writing center practice reflects the challenges and tensions with learning that can be (and must be) taken up elsewhere in the academy. Just as we can see students and tutors alike struggling with and against gender and sexuality, with practices that are received or carved out on their own, what we make and inscribe as normal or otherwise has tangible consequences for inclusive practice as well as for what too often goes forward as hegemonic and unquestioned. This chapter will next consider the practices that lead to and make possible assimilation, resistance, and subversion of gender and sexuality.

COVERING SEXUAL POLITICS IN THE WRITING CENTER

It's important to begin a conversation on gender and sexual politics by exploring the ways in which writing centers contribute to their covering or assimilation. By and large, writing centers foster collaborative, supporting, and empathetic environments and pedagogy. They strive to be safe spaces or contact zones where racial difference is generally celebrated. More often than not, these inclusive domains have disproportionate representation of women, as tutors or clients, a reality that confirms stereotypes of men's reluctance to seek help (and women's comfort doing it). This gendering of support and peer mentoring becomes all the more intense when a space doubly signifies as remedial, somewhere a person who is deficient goes. I'm not saying that in reality, women are any less reticent about deficiency or getting "fixed"; there's just more of a perceived social stigma that goes along with men seeking help, as if reaching out diminishes our masculinity. In this sense, the scenario with the orthodox man on whom I focus at the beginning of the chapter is more a fluke than not. Writing centers, as spaces whose feminization ought to precede them, become arenas where the support they provide and the cultural assumptions that go along with them present unfamiliar points of contact between people who might not otherwise be thrown together. Lauren Fitzgerald, who directs the writing center at Yeshiva University (a peer university and active force in the writing center community in New York City), has the completely opposite situation with a staff of peer tutors who are only men. Since the daytime undergraduate population is exclusively male, peer tutorials were same-sex experiences. Lauren once mentioned at a

local meeting of writing center directors that unlike men in other situations who have to be coached in one-to-one tutoring's collaborative rituals of posing questions and dialoguing, these men didn't require training in those skills because they had come to her after spending their adolescence studying the Torah and Talmud in Hebrew school, where the very pedagogical practices writing centers value happen in a same-sex environment. Typically, novice tutors spend considerable time learning to collaborate, negotiate and grow relationships, oddly enough learning gendered ways of interacting that often run counter to their instincts, especially when they are men. Whenever I walk through one of my writing centers at St. John's, during what seem to be effective sessions, I'm almost always struck by how much the tutor is talking versus listening, by how active versus passive the student is. Too often, when sessions seem off track or problematic, even if students or tutors are unaware of it, it's the inability to recognize silences and embrace them that's the problem to me. In most cases, it's the guys who won't shut up, and the female clients who defer. It's in those moments I wonder to what degree, to what extent, my tutors reify people's gendered experiences with teaching and learning.

Our socialization in the dominant ways of expressing gender, even our sexualities, is how writing centers play a role in fostering assimilation or covering, even if it's never fully conscious in the training and practice we do. If we accept what Susan Miller (1991), Jarratt (2001) and others have told us, that academic discourse and the wider discursive practices of academy are gendered, privileging masculine forms of expression, then we would expect to see flashpoints all over sessions where students are encouraged to play into patriarchal norms. Eavesdropping on sessions will often reveal gender bias: Male tutors unable to allow silences to happen, to seize upon lulls to switch from questioning and problem-posing and move straight to offering up directive advice, a masculine need to fix things. These tentative insights confirm what Laurel Johnson Black (1998) found in *Between Talk and Teaching: Reconsidering the Writing Conference* a conversation analytic project that focused on writing conferences between composition instructors and their students. Even though this study wasn't looking at peer tutors per se but at interactions where the participants had greater power relations than typical in writing center contexts, the dynamics, as best as I can tell, and Black's insights have validity and relevance. She found significant performative gender differences between female

and male students and teachers alike. Female students were more likely to be tentative, evasive, and cooperative, while their male counterparts acted with confidence and sought to dominate or contest interaction with teachers of either sex. Male teachers tended to interrupt women much more often than men and coax them toward shared positions through discourse markers that indicate they're in cahoots with one another. That sort of relationship-making didn't appear to happen when these men conferenced with male students; instead, by and large, dominance was ceded to male teachers, and the male students tended to resist more through silence and passive challenge. Though they didn't tend to use relational markers with either sex, female teachers acted like their male peers by controlling the direction and flow of talk. Black's study indicates that our pedagogy in sessions enforces and normalizes gendered ways of collaborating and interacting, but it also suggests where some roots of conflict might lie. What does it mean when either tutors or students don't perform in their gender prescribed or mainstream sorts of ways? How do we react? Do we make allowances to improvise, or do we have trickster tools to which we can reach?

By and large, I don't think writing centers have techniques and strategies to cope because this sort of pedagogical enforcing of gender happens in compulsory, hegemonic ways. The work of composition, whether in conventional classrooms or face-to-face sessions, almost never takes up reflection on the insidious ways in which learning to write normalizes gender as Black documents so well. It's an automatic functioning of domination that goes on unfettered in the background. As Black recalls about her own experience as an undergraduate:

I realized that I didn't see myself as an active participant in such social and power relations (with teachers). Rather, I saw the traditional relation of teacher and student as "right" and "natural." Positioning myself within those structures, I willingly participated in my own domination, only occasionally and vaguely aware I was doing so. (Black 1998, 65)

Like Black, I look back on my own sessions and am a bit chagrined. In what ways did I enact male patterns of domination? How do I construct the students as gendered Others? Yet just in that moment of recognizing my own complicity in gendered teaching/learning binaries, I also begin to think about how I might perform at gendered cross-purposes by being a gay person. By being nurturing and allowing silences to happen, by deferring to where students wanted to take the session, by acting

self-effacing to defuse my status as a proxy expert for academic writing, was I feminizing myself? To what degree was that problematic, and to what extent was that enacting gendered stereotypes around sexuality?

Oddly enough, in writing classes I've seen over the years, curricula often focus on self-awareness or critical consciousness of social, cultural, political, even economic forces at play. Students are coming to the awareness of their agency and voice or the social construction of their ways of thinking, doing and being, even while the pedagogy operative in their classrooms and conferences works to reinforce dominant rules of performativity. If the paradox of the composition classroom and writing center conference is stark, I wonder whether the disciplines do any better. I remember once debating gender politics and writing with a colleague in chemistry who took great pride in the neutral quality of writing lab reports in her field, or our male psychologist colleague who shared her sentiment and was a bit dismissive of what he called the humanities' compulsion toward fluff, emotion and confession. In that bracketing of gender, was the result really neutral? If the rhetorical style that made them recoil was so thoroughly gendered—feminine, in fact—what must the default position signify? Their thinking, not isolated I suspect, led me to concede that the disciplinary conventions and genres of modes, process, argument, mechanics and style may not be intrinsically gendered; rather, the values attached to communication performance and rhetoric don't step out of modes of signifying masculinity and femininity. A lab report doesn't seem gendered, and constructing an essay in MLA as opposed to APA format doesn't scream out queer politics either. But how students conduct analyses and produce documents are certainly gendered: Group work and collaboration are rife with gendered interaction, and writing processes and attitudes certainly reflect similar codes and social roles. To deny the role of experience or the impact of emotion makes gender transparent, yet institutional and disciplinary histories themselves are frequently stratified in terms of gender and sexual representation. In their wake, identity politics creeps back again and reasserts itself. If women and sexual minorities are historically excluded from some fields and migrate toward others, what must the impact be on their rhetorical and linguistic environments, of what's possible and permissible as opposed to what's just natural or conventional? What might it mean to erase presence of a central element of who we are, or to so naturalize the dominant that the marginal is rendered invisible?

At a recent IWCA national conference, I sat in on a session focused on exploring the ways in which diversity gets played out in writing centers. Once given our charge by the facilitators, small groups broke up to address scenarios from a variety of perspectives, ranging from policy and training to recruitment and management issues. My group focused on a scenario that dealt with an issue of sexuality. About five minutes into our discussion, the conversation took an odd direction. Participants asked what policies our writing centers have for staff members who are “flamboyantly” or “openly” gay. One person specifically asked, should tutors be allowed to wear t-shirts imprinted with an “I kissed a boy” slogan if they’re men? Another person responded by saying her center’s director has taken care of “that problem” with “the gays,” by issuing a dress code where men were required to wear collared shirts and women blouses. What if, I wondered, instead of statement-making t-shirts, a woman just wanted to wear a nice oxford shirt, or some guy a loose, billowing shirt. As much as I was struck by the dilemmas and responses offered, I was also surprised that the conversation was happening at all. The talk developed like no one present was him/herself a member of a sexual minority. I glanced away, perplexed, trying to see if anyone would meet that gaze and affirm, via grimacing, rolling eyes, whatever, that I wasn’t just experiencing the moment in my head, the product of an overactive, hypersensitive imagination.¹⁶ Later I would learn that other queer people in the small group were just as struck, but couldn’t speak up. I wound up raising my hand and awkwardly came out as one of “those people,” a queer in their midst, present but not visible, inadvertently passing as one of the majority. Even later, when I was telling the story of that moment to a straight colleague, he too questioned why any director wouldn’t stop a staff member from “flaunting” or making an issue of their sexuality. Further stunned, I moved on. The whole experience reminded me of the power of invisibility and the dominance of assimilation.

In his 2007 *Covering*, Kenji Yoshino speaks directly to the pressures and pitfalls that gender and sexuality assimilation place on individuals in public settings. Women, he argues, confront dual threats, presenting faces that can’t be either too feminine or masculine. If they signify

16. I thought, as a director, my first question would be, “How well are these tutors performing? Are they solid, effective mentors? Otherwise, what’s all the fuss? Students and tutors ought to be allowed self-expression so long as it isn’t offensive or overtly distracting in the immediate context.”

in ways too gendered, they are not taken seriously enough, but if they signify in ways that step outside of norms, they're seen as threatening. We only need to look to contemporary politics and the plight Hillary Clinton faced as she ran for the Democratic nomination for President in 2008. She was suspect if viewed as too brash, calculating, or outspoken, yet she was branded as pandering if she displayed emotion or vulnerability or challenged the gendered way in which she had been treated. Gay people face a similar paradox, but only in specific contexts where their visibility has become safe. Sexual minorities who cover (or are covered), Yoshino argues, perform in gender normalized ways, participate in the dominant culture without upsetting its routines, don't insert their identity into interaction as a rhetorical gesture to persuade people, and can't advertise a cohesive, functional community beyond the mainstream. The experience at the writing center conference represented an occasion where my sexuality was passing so seamlessly that the straight people in the audience felt safe to speak in ways they'd likely never do otherwise. For a moment, I was one of *them*. I still wonder whether people would have spoken in the same way had we gays been more visible.

When I now return to the moment with Kyle that I shared at the beginning of the chapter, I wonder whether I've covered my identity, my face, with my tutors, made who I am palpable in ways I'd never do at home or in my community. If we were closer, if they knew more about me, my life, I wouldn't feel so covered. The student with whom Kyle works is just as vexing. He testifies to the smooth operation of heterosexuality and the naïve dogma that can accompany it in his assumption that any reader of his essay couldn't possibly be an object of it, that his world could be free of *them*, that *they* could be an abstract concept. In this student's blissful ignorance, there's honesty too; he doesn't veil his beliefs behind politically correct responses designed to offend no one. In what he writes, he lays out open, raw, and exposed thinking usually reserved for the privacy of one's own home and security of one's community. In sharing his thinking, the student holds the potential for genuine learning through challenge and dialogue. Yet Kyle didn't want to meet him on those terms, to accept views offensive to his own sensibilities and to his notion of common decorum, as starting points to mentor someone toward a better argument, even if the position, Kyle thought, was immoral. Still, I can imagine, having been in the spot myself as a tutor, of facing down a session where someone needed help developing

or revising an essay predicated on homophobic rhetoric. The moment presents an ethical impasse: Our jobs are to mentor and collaboratively learn and the content of one's thought shouldn't factor into that context; yet common decency, learning climate, and workplace environment dictate safety, not just against physical violence, but also the harm that can result from verbal abuse. Would we require an African American tutor to mentor a white supremacist, or a Jew to help an anti-Semitic skinhead? Why would sexuality be any different? I suspect it's because the tolerance we hope for and the diversity we celebrate don't translate into a social and cultural consensus about sexual minorities.

These tensions also play out in the world of teaching and learning beyond the writing center. Strategies to contend with them are no easier either, because context confounds how we can respond. In spite of academic freedom, institutional realities can preclude frank discussions, and our courses or students might be inappropriate or not prepared for them, respectively. Over the years, I've become sensitive to the reality that students reach my classroom (anybody's classroom) not necessarily signing on to be proselytized in multiculturalism or primed to embrace my subject positions. Most of the time, being queer—or straight or a man—doesn't have a place in the conversations that are ongoing in any particular curriculum. Frequently enough, talk does turn to difference, in all the ways that this book addresses, and I'm under an obligation to complicate and make possible a whole range of understanding, not to let any particular ideology go unchecked or position take on a naturalized status. This duty comes from knowing that not all ways of signifying who we are are visible in our classrooms, and from being aware that students take on journeys of gender and sexual discovery at different times. How we frame and make possible information can have consequences, productive and harmful, right away or days, months, and even years down the road. Creating space for this gentle activism and discovery can also serve to change education. Faculty across the disciplines speak all the time about their frustrations with and hopes for engaging students in meaningful ways that help material come alive and be relevant. One valuable way to make learning resonate is to enable students to connect their own lives (and our own) to their subject matter and to foster the sorts of critical thinking and literacies that assume their perspectives aren't totalizing. To have students understand the moral and intellectual merit of our partial perspectives is one of the best and lasting gifts we can provide.

FOREGROUNDING AND QUEERING SEXUAL POLITICS IN THE WRITING CENTER

In the prior section, I explored the dynamics by which gender and sexual identities don't just get normalized, but also foster accommodation to the exclusion of difference. I want to shift gears and return to notions of opposition and subversion in the context of these identity formations with an eye toward how every move (conscious or otherwise) to enforce or enact a "natural" or normative position, always presupposes a range of possible identities that aren't. Opposing heteronormativity in society today might seem common or routine. Beyond transitory moments with political correctness in mixed social situations, I find the sway of dominant assumptions around gender and sexuality as hegemonic as ever. From comedic asides on game shows ("Don't get me wrong, I didn't mean it *that way*," one guy says to another) to stock representations throughout popular culture (the desexualized gay friend, the "Don't ask, don't tell" talk show host or news anchor), gender and sexual norms are no less rigid, even if more nuanced today. In everyday life, I've seen colleagues invoke their marriages and families to duck out of extracurricular duty and to police my own relationships ("You'd understand if you had children." "Well, we're *actually* married, so..."). A journey down the bureaucratic path to register and use domestic partner benefits is so byzantine and daunting that it's really not worth the effort, yet were I to marry the first woman I met on the street, she'd immediately have access to my benefits. Friends keep legal powers of attorney and living wills with my partner and me, hoping if a medical crisis were to arise, we could serve as a third party who can attest and vouch for their relationships, particularly in places where hospitals have no compelling legal need to respect same-sex partners. Being oppositional—even separatist, in this context—in order to pull it off with security, is an understandable position for sexual minorities to take. In reaction to a society and mainstream culture that kills by a million cuts, many work to stave off this everyday oppression and create safe houses, spaces where no one fears physical or discursive violence. The world beyond can be destructive enough. Given this ongoing experience with what can feel like an onslaught against self and community, I appreciate the moments when "grrl power" comes to the rescue, and women turn inward and coalesce, intentionally excluding men, to develop networks of mutual support and response. In those

moments, a community provides safety and shared history and experience, a bond ties people, providing profound existential, even spiritual, connections that render translation unnecessary.

When I think of oppositional folks in writing centers, I see consultants and colleagues who refuse to conform to dominant expectations of gender and sexuality, regardless of whether institutional culture is warm or cool to them. Most are not performing their opposition in a self-conscious manner; they perform their personages as a matter of course, not as street theater for public benefit. These folks are oppositional at their core, characters whose affects and personalities have long roots and authenticity even when they've been arguably cultivated to intensify their individuality. I see Larry, a former graduate student colleague of my partner, who comfortably navigated a persona that bobbed and weaved from queer or transgender to working class and anywhere in between (he proudly identified as "white trash"), coming to tutor as often as not in a Dress Barn moo-moo as in jeans and an over-sized sweatshirt. I picture Christina, a young lesbian who tutored for me, who I knew was gay even before she came out to me and her peers in a class. I knew how to read her, and she me. I saw her play out crushes and heartbreak, even though we never directly talked. Around the country, in and around writing centers, I think of colleagues whose sexuality precedes them, whether they identify as queer or not, as a political sexual minority or not. I'm most proud of friends like Michele, Kami, Jay, and John, who are role models and path-makers for sexual minorities, young or fully-grown alike. I wish I were as strong and confident as they are. They live out loud and proud, without apology or invisibility.

Juxtaposed to these folks who refuse to blend or to cover themselves, a whole other set of people have a performativity that also fundamentally challenges dominant codes of gender. It's not an issue of strategic refusal, rather one in which the way they signify plays upon cues that people wrongly construe. I often joke that these people throw off my radar (gay-dar) for reading and accurately interpreting gender and sexuality. For example, Sensitive-New-Age-Guys (SNAGs) whose emotive manners and affect constantly throw me off. I confuse these SNAGs as gay men because they display our stereotypes of comfort with women, speak into their feelings, and appear vulnerable. They are the Kurt Cobains of the world, soulful men quick to hug and secure with caring. He's the metrosexual or skateboarder dude who exists in stark contrast to the oafish fraternity or sports guy who one of my colleagues

once witnessed sitting in class flexing his biceps for self-glorification or some imagined audience to marvel at. In my writing centers, I have a range of male tutors, frequently SNAGs, from the young Professor Kingfield-types to the granola guys, each intuitive, gentle, empathetic, and active listeners. Women, for their part, seem to have a wider range of femininity that makes reading their codes just as difficult. From the “sporty spice” athletic types to the earthy free spirits, their identities aren’t often subject to such scrutiny and negotiation. These people who throw off my radar are powerful to me because they contest dominant codes, not by rejecting and setting up new possibilities for signifying, but by working, consciously or not, to get past identity, to make it so fluid and illusive that it’s meaningless or refuses to let signifiers stick. For this generation of young people coming of age, a post-identity world just might be very well plausible in very liberal, tolerant communities. However, by and large, pressure to conform to relatively rigid norms of performativity is now the stuff of legends. Behind nearly every high school and college mass shooting is an ostracized individual, and the proliferation of anti-bullying policy and laws across the states and school districts signal wide-spread harassment of queer or queer-appearing youth.

To be visible, speak out, or perform gender and sexuality in oppositional ways is powerful and requires a self-assuredness and sense of safety that I don’t myself possess. Confronting and challenging dominance in explicit ways represents confidence in one’s own agency to make change or flout conventions. As I’ve mentioned in other chapters, action can’t always be understood in such binary terms of assimilation and opposition. In some situations, the consequences of rejecting the hegemonic pose real material consequences: the loss of a job and earnings, the threat of violence, the possibility of isolation. Those spaces and conditions make the question of agency more complicated and nuanced. If a cloud of threat, actual or perceived, hangs over a decision to cover or not, regardless of the situation, then to what degree is choice genuine or done under duress? Although I’m “out” to anyone who inquires, I rarely foreground my identity in public situations. In most respects, I’m the covering gay man that Yoshino writes about, not because I harbor any deep-seated shame about who I am. It’d be easy for me to blame institutional or situational contexts, but I rarely encounter spaces that aren’t safe or inclusive. Regardless, what might otherwise seem assimilationist represents moves toward subversion, a

set of responses which cope with power relations in the everyday. For the majority of queer youth, especially for those who have come to terms with their identity, they are masters of Logue's (1981) rhetorical readiness and disguise and signifyin' that Gates (1986) speak into. As I've written about elsewhere, maintaining liminality as a central feature of pedagogy might be the best of what queering writing centers has to offer (Denny, 2005). This sort of borderland practice underscores a transitory, fluid existence that disrupts the polarity of margin and center, forcing one to bleed into the other. Even better, in writing centers, these contact zones champion discursive complication and the (de)mystification of process, rhetoric, and audience. A subversive, even queer, writing center practice turns on tutors and clients alike coming to recognize the arbitrary nature of the dominant, enabling both to make strategic decisions to play along or to create cogent responses should they choose to resist or further challenge and question. By making conferences potential spaces to challenge what's natural or not, conventional or not, received wisdom or not, our pedagogy makes possible and internalizes widely transferable critical thinking and active learning, both of which lead to stronger, more engaged staff and students, vibrant intellectual communities, and better citizenship, whether on campus or beyond.

Challenging the status quo or received wisdom is part and parcel of what happens on any campus. Such critical and active thinking doesn't just propel the life of writing centers; it's the stuff of dynamic learning and teaching across the disciplines in college life. The everyday practice of dialogue, of push and pull, of problem-posing, and of collaborative learning is rife with productive conflict and with transformative possibilities for coming to understand self, classrooms, communities, and society. How we come to naturalize and/or disrupt identities in writing centers, however these subject positions are understood, articulated, and performed, can't be confined to these spaces. Teaching and learning beyond them need to interrogate how forms of gender and sexuality are naturalized, promoted, marginalized, and elided, where appropriate. As often as not, disciplinary context will preclude such discussions. Where and when we ask students to make concepts and material relevant with their own experience, and when we choose relevant examples to scaffold to them, we can provide occasions to challenge, not reify what's hegemonic. In that questioning, possibility is born, to learn and grow and to become and explore. On occasion, a person

with a marginalized identity gains confidence to persist in the face of prevailing winds that trumpet convention. For another, it's the courage to contest those conventions and chart a path of one's own. Our writing centers and classrooms will not always be the arenas where people "come out" to themselves or the public; still, consultants, directors, professors, and administrators must resolve themselves to the reality that it will happen and anticipate their role (and its ethics) in the negotiations of gender and sexual identities.

PARTING THOUGHTS

This chapter began with two scenarios, one with Kyle that I experienced and another relayed to me (but lived in another context). With Kyle, I'm not sure I had all the right answers, but I was fully aware of the modeling I was obliged to provide. The response had to create a space for the student and Kyle to not make assumptions about audience, whether rhetorical or interpersonal, and it had to anticipate Kyle's and his client's own journeys to self-identity as well as those for the sexual minorities very likely present but not known or named in their lives. As one of those sexual Others that both may or may not have been aware of in their lives, I felt the uncomfortable obligation to respond as spokesperson for my community and as a reasoned, rational faculty member. It meant checking the visceral and reacting in a calm, cool, and collected manner that today I can't help thinking signified in ways that made me seem far more amenable to everyday, naturalized homophobia. In a similar vein, with the student who insisted on treating women badly, he was never quite a boor, but never performed the gentle sensibility we presume (yet never speak of or through) in conferences and classrooms. There again, no response comes to mind that feels like it does justice to the gender and sexual violence that happens to women in symbolic and real ways *and* that ensures our ideals of meeting anyone on their own terms. I wonder today, when I witness routine sexism, when and how I must intervene. Failing to speak against or to even create the conditions to contest the inertia of everyday oppression or heteronormativity, in effect, leads to complicity on some level. I don't know that we can pick every occasion to battle, but I do believe we must consider using strategic moments, where appropriate, as productive occasions for learning, teaching, and, most import, social justice.

Returning to the notion of fluidity between margin and center that I've mentioned at the end of each chapter, it's not a question of one

or the other, of swapping out positions. I just don't see a world where sexual minorities are no longer stigmatized or marginalized. So much of our society and culture and their structures and institutions are predicated on binary notions of gender and sexual identity; to disrupt the hegemonic would indeed be revolutionary change, utopian even. But it's like wishing away capitalism because it doesn't work so well for some, however large that population of some is. The rest benefit to such a degree that's there's no compelling reason to change, to brake the inertia behind it. When I think of the face of the writing center, when I look out across the floor at who is coming to the space and works there, I'm proud that we have a great mix of women and men. As I say elsewhere, that's just not always the case in other sites. But when I begin to dig deeper beyond people's surface sex identities that are more or less legible, gender and sexuality become much more fluid and hard to contend with. Like class, some people can convert or pass as the center; they chose to hide or render invisible marginal gender and sexuality formations. Conversely, the center or mainstream can be ignorant of the minority expressions all around them, making its dominance self-fulfilling and perpetuating.

When a student, tutor, or even an administrator in a writing center confronts the question of whether to be assimilationist, oppositional, or subversive, each position carries with it assumptions about power, historical context, and rhetorical need. Rather than demand of someone that they just select one position instead of moving between them, a more sustainable response might involve strategic decisions about when to do one rather than another. Unlike our race, ethnicity, or sex, identity formations and politics around gender, sexuality and class are, in the first instance, expressed through symbolic capital that each signify in relation to complex cultural protocol that are ripe for change, yet codified into extremely intransigent positions and meanings. While hope springs eternal that long-held prejudice and exclusion will dissipate like a mirage, the reality is that their ability to survive is well-honed and adaptable. Thankfully, so too is the opposition and quest for social justice.