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DO LGBTQ-IDENTIFIED, POSTSECONDARY WRITING
INSTRUCTORS COME OUT IN THEIR CLASSROOMS?

By

Michael Baumann
B.A., Marian University, 2013
M.A., The Ohio University, 2015

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Faculty of the
College of Arts and Sciences of the University of Louisville
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
in English/Rhetoric and Composition

Department of English
University of Louisville
Louisville, Kentucky

December 2019

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A Dissertation Approved On

October 14, 2019

by the following Dissertation Committee:

Dr. Karen Kopelson, Director

Dr. Stephen Schneider

Dr. Kristi Maxwell

Dr. Lara Kelland

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In her book *Acknowledging Writing Partners*, Laura Micciche describes writing as “a practice of indebted partnerships in complex collaboration” with a wide ecology of human and nonhuman agents, including “feelings, time, animals, and random material phenomena” (6, 23). In addition to thanking Laura for her excellent book and all of the reflections it’s invited...

I’d like to acknowledge, first and foremost, the queer people who have died so that we might consider a wide selection of choices when it comes to our closets, and so that I could write this dissertation. I would also like to acknowledge:

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ABSTRACT

DO LGBTQ-IDENTIFIED, POSTSECONDARY WRITING INSTRUCTORS COME OUT IN THEIR CLASSROOMS?

Michael Baumann

October 14, 2019

Influenced by scholars of queer performativity and identity intersectionality, my dissertation investigates how and why LGBTQ-identified postsecondary writing instructors perform their identities in their classrooms. Scholars in the field of rhetoric and composition have examined these critical questions as early as 1974 and several times since. However, oppressive, regressive sexual politics; a maelstrom of contemporary public confessions made possible and prolific through new media; and an increasingly intersectional landscape of queer people all provide exigency to update our coming out conversation.

This dissertation is the analytical writeup of a national study that I conducted in 2018. I surveyed approximately 100 LGBTQ-identified postsecondary writing instructors in the United States and completed approximately 20 semi-structured interviews to investigate the following central questions: 1. Do LGBTQ-identified instructors come out and/or pass in their postsecondary writing classrooms? How? Why? 2. Does identity intersectionality affect instructors' motivation to perform queer identity in their

postsecondary writing classrooms? How? 3. Do LGBTQ-identified instructors perceive any impacts of their queer identity performances on their writing pedagogies?

I conclude that teachers of writing perform identity in intricately intersectional, contextually contingent, and often productively disruptive ways; that the exercise of queer cunning is a powerful, generative rhetoric and episteme; and that queer research methods and methodologies matter because they reveal new ways to discover knowledge in our discipline.

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VIGNETTE I

I'm 22 years old, and I'm teaching college writing to twenty-two 18-year-olds.

It's 2013, I'm a graduate teaching assistant, and I'm gay. And I'm not going to tell them that—as if they don't doubt their sapling teacher already.

I walk to classes in this rural Midwest college town paved with bricks that date back to 1890, when lean fathers would teach their sons how to haul. I think about that when we talk about the poem "Autumn Begins in Martins Ferry, Ohio" as a "way in" to our class discussion on Appalachian rhetorics. I think about James Wright's "proud fathers" and "clucking" mothers and their sons who grow "suicidally beautiful."

I'm passing, I hope, while I fumble through desperately rehearsed lesson plans and try to make friends at a new school where I came out to the faculty in my cover letter. "I am a skinny, Roman Catholic, slightly charming farm boy from Walton, Kentucky. I'm also queer," I wrote. "In college, my peers have sometimes questioned the way I perform my gender, so I have learned to question our culture's understanding of identity. This is why I want to study here."

In another class discussion, my student David (also my dad's name) accidentally lets it slip that he's gay during a classroom discussion. I know it's an accident because he halts mid-sentence and shuts his eyes and hangs his head, which creeps red now.

David sits in the back, and you can feel more than hear squeaks and rustles and gasps when twenty-one lighthouses sweep over to him. "Danger," they recite. "Storms and rocks."

"Woah, I'm gay too." Sweep back, I will them (and they do): pivot, gawk, thankfully no longer at David. After class, David says "thank you for doing that" and tries not to cry, and he drops my class the next week.

In a graduate class later that year I read "Some Notes of a Homosexual Teaching Assistant in His First Semester of Ph.D. Work" published anonymously in College English in 1974. Oh, I wept and I wept, and I thought I might write a dissertation in response.

CHAPTER ONE

COMING/OUT

Coming out is not strictly a matter of conscience: it is an academic responsibility.
—Louie Crew

How do we address the needs of teachers who are “out of the closet” without disregarding the needs of those whose institutions, whose communities, whose families, whose innermost fears keep them “in the closet”? How do we encourage the highly vocal [teacher] without scaring away the quiet Anon[ymous teacher].? These are questions that we cannot with any fairness ignore as we look ahead to the next 20 years of Gay Studies in composition. Anon., after all, doesn’t retire until 2015.
—Paul Puccio

INTRODUCTION

In 1974, just one year after homosexuality was removed from the *DSM*, and when it was still a federal crime to be queer, Louie Crew and Rictor Norton edited a special issue of *College English*. Their collection, called *The Homosexual Imagination*, featured a visibly invisible anonymous contributor. Cloaked in the pseudonym “Anon.,” this writing/literature instructor wrote “Some Notes of a Homosexual Teaching Assistant in his First Semester of Ph.D. Work,” and in the last few sentences, he asks the que(e)ry: “what are the risks of having a dissertation topic on a homosexual theme in literature approved and made public?” (336).

Well, here I am. Obviously many, many rhetoric and composition dissertations have explored “a homosexual theme,” but I uniquely place mine in direct conversation

with 1974's Anon. and with Paul Puccio, who presented at the 1994 Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) on a 20-year anniversary panel of that special issue of *College English*. At the end of *his* paper, Puccio asks many important questions (epigraph), the last of which requests another 20-year update.

I'm a couple years late, but this dissertation performs that update. The prime objective of my project is to learn more about how and why queer-identified instructors perform their identities in their writing classrooms. I am interested in what motivates and intimidates them, their methods of performance, and the impacts of their (non)disclosure on writing pedagogies. By investigating my research questions through qualitative interviews, I have found strong patterns indicating that teachers of writing perform identity in intricately intersectional, contextually contingent, and often productively disruptive ways, as they have for decades. Therefore, I argue that queer(ing) methods and methodologies can productively challenge and therefore extend our ways of knowing about writing and how to teach it. Furthermore, I believe my findings are helpful not just for LGBTQ people, but for all teachers, researchers, administrators, and students as well. As Harriet Malinowitz puts it, "Ultimately, bringing lesbian and gay discourse into the composition class will be fraught with significance for heterosexual students as well, since all people are implicated in the large social drama of sexuality, just as we are all implicated in social dramas regarding race, gender, and class" ("Construing" 47).

In the following chapters, I interpret data from this national interview-based study I conducted on whether queer-identified writing instructors come out and/or pass in their

classrooms today, why, and to what end.¹ This dissertation answers queer writing instructors' expressed calls for guidance; acknowledges contemporary political and cultural exigencies; and leverages queer research methods to extend our existing writing-classroom-coming-out knowledge. Before interpreting the results of my study, however, it is important that I first share some context. Therefore, this introductory chapter elaborates on these interventions; reviews existing literature to identify what we have yet to learn; and explains my research design.

STUDY SIGNIFICANCE

The importance of this project, which I further substantiate in the literature review, extends beyond personal interest: this study responds to explicit requests, answers to political urgency, and engages innovative, intersectional methods.

Explicit requests: First, this study responds to explicit calls—historic and contemporary—for a kind of “academic handbook” on whether or not to come out as a college writing teacher, and how. 50% of my 2017 pilot study participants expressed their unsolicited desire for a “should-I-come-out-in-class” resource, and newer instructors and

¹ I use the words *queer* and *LGBTQ* (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Queer) interchangeably in this dissertation. Sometimes, my terms are unavoidably inconsistent with the scholarship that I cite because over the years, queers have chosen different epithets, often striving to be more inclusive, and each with its own implications and associations. Unfortunately, while the “umbrella term” *queer* risks homogenizing a quite heterogeneous identity and can even feel traumatic for some, more comprehensive initialism (e.g., *LGBTQQIAP*: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, Questioning, Intersex, Intrasex, Asexual, Pansexual) would be not only cumbersome but also perpetually at risk of a larger issue, erasure. For example, initials often elide those who identify as genderfuck, nonbinary, gender nonconforming, agender, aromantic, panromantic, polyamorous, demisexual, demiromantic, skoliosexual, two-spirit, and more. The breadth of possible terms reminds us that identity is ever-evolving and that language is limited, transnational and multicultural, and infinitely insufficient. In short, my language will inevitably fall short, so this dissertation takes its cues (and its Qs) from my research participants' contemporary self-identification.

GTAs from the later study reflected on a need for guidance from the wisdom of their more experienced colleagues. My participants also reflected on their own high school and undergraduate years and, by recalling how useful it would have been for themselves, concluded that it might also be useful for their own students to have such a visible mentor or model for classroom coming out.²

Additionally, several scholars have historically called for such work. Mary Elliott, for instance, writes in her seminal article on the subject, “Coming Out in the Classroom: A Return to the Hard Place,” that “Very few writers provide practical suggestions for methods of coming out (exceptions are Mittler and Blumenthal; Adams and Emery). Yet at a recent CCCC all-day workshop for lesbian and gay teachers, I observed that such suggestions seemed to engage most of the participants, even those who had taught for many years” (695). Moreover, as previously mentioned, Puccio specifically asks teachers beyond the year 2015, “How do we address the needs of teachers who are ‘out of the closet’ without disregarding the needs of those whose institutions, whose communities, whose families, whose innermost fears keep them ‘in the closet’?” (n.p.). Matthew Cox, in his 2017 CCCC presentation offered that “coming out” questions might extend into what he calls the “working closet” of professional, technical, and corporate writing spaces. Though not fully in rhetoric in composition, but rather English Language Education, Cynthia Nelson reminds us in her book *Sexualities in English Language Education* that teachers still do not agree on best practices of coming out and that “Even

² One viable reason for such a lacuna in queer role models, as Sherrie Gradin so importantly argued at CCCC in 2015, is the casualty fallout from the ’80s AIDS Crisis in America: there are far fewer queer (particularly gay male) administrators, teachers, and researchers in rhetoric and composition now 40 years later (“Risking Queer Gentrification” np).

teachers who are not gay themselves, or who choose not to come out, could follow up questions about marital status by facilitating a discussion of broader issues to do with family configurations” and heteronormativity (96). Finally, Doug Cloud argues in “Rewriting a Discursive Practice: Atheist Adaptation of Coming Out Discourse” that even writing instructors with *nonqueer* stigmatized voices (those of atheists, for instance) should adapt and make use of “coming out” rhetorics and epistemes. In short, teachers in our field want guidance, and my goal for this study is to offer some.

Political and cultural exigency: Our field’s interest in queerness demands updates due to new political exigency. For instance, when Elliott wrote her “Coming Out” article in 1996, her straight colleague argued that ““gay issues”” were of little or no import because of their lack of media coverage; however, as Elliott points out (re: media coverage of gays in the military, queer civil rights since the mid-1970s, over a decade of AIDS history, and regular inclusion of gay and lesbian issues and characters on television sitcoms/dramas) such a claim was false then, and it’s certainly even more obviously so now.

Indeed, just one year after Elliott’s article was published, entertainer Ellen DeGeneres televised perhaps the most (in)famous contemporary coming out performance, followed over the decades by many high-profile, even viral, queer disclosures in various contexts and professions. The advent of social media has also invited individual disclosures that participate in collective, grassroots coming out counternarratives (e.g., #MeToo). Further still, every selfie, post, tweet, Linked-in profile, vlog, blog or other creative nonfiction we self-publish on the Internet is a hybrid performance of coming out, calling out, calling in, and/or passing. In our Internet-

mediated culture, riddled with authenticity issues, what *is* disclosure, and what are the politics of visibility and legibility? In short, an accretion of coming out narratives in American politics, entertainment, and athletics “have pushed the genre of confession to the forefront of the public mind” according to (appropriately surnamed author) Dave Tell in *Confessional Crises and Cultural Politics in Twentieth-Century America* (1).³ There are important political implications of coming out / calling out for audiences beyond ourselves, and we must investigate them.

Furthermore, queers and allies have celebrated an increase in visibilizing progressive sexual politics: the establishment of National Coming Out Day (October 11) in 1988 to commemorate the previous year’s March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights, the election of many openly queer people to public office, the scrubbing of queer identities (homosexuality in 1973 and transgender identity in 2019) from the list of disorders in the *DSM*, the repeal of DADT and DOMA during the halcyon of an Obama Administration, and an unprecedented era of tolerance for queers.

Despite these victories, queers still anticipate many cultural and political projects, particularly during a Trump Administration. In this new national order, we witness the rise of anti-P.C. and -safe space discourse, along then with the rise of legitimized, rationalized, ratified, sanctioned violence toward difference (ableism, homo-, queer-, and transphobia and -violence, sexism and misogyny, racism, classism, and xenophobia), and

³ As Pamela L. Caughie argues in *Passing and Pedagogy: The Dynamics of Responsibility*, it is because “Passing, with its corollary, coming out, has become an obsessional interest in popular entertainment and a major *topos* of our critical and professional activity” that the phenomenon of coming out is also relevant in our classrooms (13). Indeed, I agree with Jonathan Alexander’s central contention in *Literacy, Sexuality, Pedagogy: Theory and Practice for Composition Studies* that sexuality is inextricable from the fabric of our classroom tapetries. Alexander opens his book with the reminder that “Sex and sexuality, and the complex personal and political issues surrounding them, are a powerful part of our daily lives” as they “saturate our public conversations and permeate the media” (1).

such a posturing has motivated some of the most deadly productions of domestic terror in America. For example, the president has banned trans people from serving in the military, the FDA still injects its MSM donation policies with queerphobic hematology, and the global queer community is still healing from not only the regular murders of trans people—particularly trans women of color—but also from the tragic mass shooting of 49 primarily Latinx queer people at a gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida in 2015. These current events remind us that the world is still neither fully inclusive nor safe for queers and especially queer people of color.

One might only hope, however, that such events and policies will awaken Americans to the urgency of swinging the pendulum back. As Edward Jayne writes in *College English* in 1975, “yes, gay liberationism has been very important in queer world building, but homosexual aversion, labeled ‘homophobia,’ has been equally important as a countervailing source of inspiration,” and “its rejection would be essentially to deny ourselves [. . .], our identity, with consequences almost too dangerous to imagine” (62, 67). Though dated, this is still true today: as my review of pertinent literature demonstrates, homophobia in the academy and questions of “should I come out to my class?” still fret writing instructors in 2019.

Intersectional methods: My research complements existing scholarship by exploring how writing pedagogies can benefit from queer theory, a central question in queer composition. My research also contributes to existing scholarship by engaging qualitative interview methods with postsecondary writing instructors across the nation, which no significant work—other than Susan Talburt’s *Subject to Identity: Knowledge,*

Sexuality, and Academic Practices in Higher Education—has done.⁴ As I demonstrate in the literature review, other empirical studies have theorized about students’ and administrators’ queer identities, but the only studies that critically investigate teachers’ coming out/passing in classrooms are limited in that they focus only on high/middle school contexts and only on one institution or teacher. Additionally, so much of the work done in queer composition has been primarily theoretical, and few projects of this nature in our field analyze interviews as data (with the exceptions of Russ, et al. and McKenna-Buchanan, et al., which are both situated in Communication Studies). My investigation invites multiple, diverse postsecondary teachers to participate in qualitative interviews, and I have discovered new insights into contextual motivations for teachers to come out, pass, neither, or both.

My study also provides an important need in queer composition scholarship: attention to intersectionality. As Alexander and David Wallace remind us in their “Queer Turn,” scholars like Robert McRuer, Connie Monson, Jacqueline Rhodes, and Jan Cooper have offered a “theoretical call to arms, arguing, among other things, for a more intersectional understanding of identity,” but perhaps Shereen Inayatulla puts it best in a queer-themed special issue of *The Writing Instructor* when she writes, “We need a framework that appreciates intersectionalities as a part of the performance of pedagogy” (312; n.p., my emphasis). In short, most scholarship on coming out in writing classrooms has focused on primarily white, cisgender people from the same generation and institution. By widening my pool of interview participants in a national context, I

⁴ Though situated in Education Studies, this SUNY “Identities in the Classroom” book has been taken up by many in rhetoric and composition, including Karen Kopelson, Zan Meyer Gonçalves, and Michelle Ballif.

uniquely pay attention to queer sexuality as it intersects with race, geography, age, generation, and more.

Overall, I sense the kairotic need for us to revisit conversations about coming out in the composition classroom because it's palpable that contexts have shifted. Over 20 years have "passed" since Elliott's super-cited article on coming out in the writing classroom. Since then, only a handful of scholars in our discipline have published about teachers coming out or passing: it has been a *big deal* to come out in the '70s, '80s, '90s, and early aughts—much riskier; is it still so? More likely, it is *differently* so today.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The college classroom has come to reflect transformations in our national population by inviting more students into the Ivory Tower, with spikes in more diverse intersections of identity, including race, class, gender, age, ability, sex, sexuality, ethnicity, nationality, military status, etc. Therefore, one of the most important applications of the term "identity" in our field has been a pedagogical one (Young 88). It is in our composition classrooms—which, as we've learned from Mary Louise Pratt, are contact zones rife with politics—that identities become most significant for us.

However, I will bypass a comprehensive portrait of the importance of "identity" in writing studies so I can turn specifically to *queer* identity as it intersects with composition, a topic that according to Alexander and Wallace is still "emerging" ("Queer Turn" 302). Indeed, Rhodes (in her recent call for a 2018 special issue on queer rhetorics for *Pre/Text: A Journal of Rhetorical Theory*) argues, "In the 25 years since Pre/Text's first special issue on queer rhetoric, too much and not enough has happened with the

queer in rhetoric and writing studies” before reminiscing: “what happened to sex/ual rhetoric?” (n.p.). And despite Alexander and Rhodes’ 2011 claim that “queer” is one of composition’s “impossible subjects”—because of the impossibility of imbricating school and sex, and due to a kind of fundamental resistance that a concept like “queerness” has to a concept like “composition/composure” (179)—it has proven itself a significant topic in rhetoric and composition. For even Alexander and Rhodes quickly clarify (after damning queer as an “impossible” subject for composition): “We are here, and we are queer, and while our presence in the field of rhetoric and composition has, at times, been variously ignored, tolerated, and occasionally (if rarely) somewhat celebrated, we have resisted the field’s disciplining” (189). I will support their observation in the following review of select literature before examining scholarship on queer coming out (or not) performative pedagogies in composition classrooms and determine what has yet to be said on the subject since the 1990s and early 2000s (when we find that conversation at its most prolific).

The tenure of queerness in rhetoric and composition studies is most clearly/queerly evinced in Matthew Cox and Michael Faris’s “Annotated Bibliography of LGBTQ Rhetorics” published by *Present Tense: A Journal of Rhetoric in Society* as well as Alexander and Wallace’s “Queer Turn in Composition Studies,” both of which trace decades of queercomp work in order to demonstrate both its emphases and its gaps.

Alexander and Wallace offer a most helpful survey:

To date [2009], the body of queer composition research is composed mainly of two single-authored books (Malinowitz; Gonçalves), one edited collection (Spurlin), three special issues or clusters in journals (*College English* 65.1,

September 2002; *JAC* 24.1, 2004; and *Computers and Composition* 21.3, September 2004), one online collection (*Computers and Composition Online*, Fall 2004), and a handful of stand-alone articles (e.g., Alexander, “Transgender”; Alexander, “Straightboyz4Nsync”; Elliott; Gibson, Marinara, and Meems; Miller). Our analysis of this literature reveals three distinct theoretical and pedagogical moves in this scholarship. (305)

Those “moves” include: 1) combating homophobia in students’ writing and discussing the existence (or not) of openly queer writing instructors; 2) (pro)actively folding the experiences and voices of LGBTQ-identified students and teachers into our writing and literature pedagogies; and 3) most recently, the paradox of an imperative of queer visibility in our classrooms/culture—while avoiding the risk of reifying an essentialistic homo/hetero binary and self-tokenization. Scholars dedicated to queer work in rhetoric and composition have in turn addressed these three trends, and common among their work is the question of queer pedagogy. Especially handy for my study, certain queer scholars highlight performative pedagogies in our classrooms, a focal concept as I chronologically trace the decades of queercomp scholarship, beginning with the 1970s.

During the ’70s and ’80s, “queer” had not yet been rhetorically reclaimed by activists and academics who preferred “gay and lesbian” or the far more clinically sanitized “homosexual,” the latter referring most often to gay men. Nevertheless, gay and lesbian studies had begun to intersect with writing and rhetoric in academic spaces: most queer work in English studies involved literary criticism, and it wasn’t until 1974 that a flagship journal in composition studies (*College English*) dedicated a special issue to *The*

Homosexual Imagination.⁵ Though dated, attention to this special issue is paramount because it signals a “breaking open” of sorts that liberated rhetoric and composition scholars to publish about how cultural homophobia inflicted/inflected/infected/affected the state of the field. I focus particularly on Louie Crew’s introduction to the issue because he mandates classroom coming out. Then I turn to the anonymous account of one tortured teacher’s choice *not* to come out.

Crew writes in his intro, “It takes a great deal of courage for a homosexual to be homosexual in a non-sexual situation such as an English classroom discussion. But remarkable things might occur if we were permitted our freedom,” especially considering that “in few other areas of teaching are there so many opportunities to contribute to students’ self-awareness, self-growth, and self-acceptance” and that “Gays have uniquely valuable contributions to make to the dialogues shaping our collective culture” (287, 288, 290). Though most of this introduction mandates that queer English professors teach homosexual content, at one stunning moment Crew also informs them: “One thing we have to say directly to the gay teachers in our audience is rather painful. Coming out is not strictly a matter of conscience: it is an academic responsibility” (288). (In 1974!)

⁵ *Imagine*: the special issue was published just one year following the APA’s vote to remove homosexuality from the list of mental disorders in the *DSM* and during the “calm before the storm” of The American AIDS Crisis—at a time when homosexuality was still illegal in 45 States. Of course, due to the nature of publication timelines, we know that this means the call came out (so to speak) well before 1974, and so did the submissions and editions of this collection. As Bernhard Frank put it in the very next volume of the journal (incidentally in itself a coming out):

I am still bowled over by *College English* devoting an entire issue to us; such a kosher-stamp to homosexuality in academic is paralleled only by our removal from the psychiatric sick-list. Like someone who has just caught a glimpse of himself on TV, I finally know that I really exist. P.S. Based on a dossier which included my activities at the Gay Center, and my gay publications, I have since received my promotion. As for my relationship with my colleagues, it has vastly improved, for now there are no secrets rattling in my closet. (76)

The collection also offers “Some Notes of a Homosexual Teaching Assistant in His First Semester of Ph.D. Work.” The author, “Anon.,” in one way comes out by publishing this nonfiction piece; in another way, he passes—as anonymous—while detailing his internalized homophobia and intersections of various other identity markers, such as religion and age, that impact his choice to stay “in the closet” to his students as an English professor. Aside from its poignant affect, this article is especially important to me both personally, as it has in part inspired this dissertation when I read it during *my* first semester of graduate work, and scholastically, as it has inspired direct responses and additional disclosures from more and more colleagues through the decades: Anon. bravely authors the first of many chapters of an entire field’s coming out narrative.

During the latter half of the 1970s and into the 1980s, scholars offered various responses to Rictor Norton, Louie Crew, and others who published in that special issue of *College English*. Later, Norton and Crew responded to the responses. Bernhard Frank, Don Slater, Stanley Weintraub, Edward Jayne, and Gordon K. Thomas, for example, each offered clarifying points, documented personal experiences of coming out to students in gay lit courses, added items to manifestos, and voiced thanks, celebrations, and critiques. Some instructors even shared queer pedagogy activities such as literary selections, lectures, and trust exercises for the English classroom.

Over the decades, scholars have gradually added the terms “homosexual,” “gay,” “lesbian,” and eventually “queer” to their lists of student and teacher identities. Queercomp scholars argue that writing pedagogues should include queerness in our discussions about “authentic voice” and in CCCC’s 1974 “Students’ Right to Their Own Language,” our resolution that affirms “students’ right to their own patterns and varieties

of language—the dialects of their nurture or whatever dialects in which they find their own identity and style” (1).⁶

Though arguably all queer theory is inherently critical, 1981 marks an emerging focus on queer institutional critique: several scholars began to condemn homophobia in the academy, in individual institutions, the field writ large, and even the larger governing organization of our field, the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE). For example, Richard J. Follett’s “Censors in our Midst” discusses academic freedom for queer English instructors, and Louie Crew and Karen Keener’s “Homophobia in the Academy: A Report of the Committee on Gay/Lesbian Concerns” updates the field about NCTE’s efforts to combat homophobia in the Academy. After taking the temperature of the field with a national survey, Crew and Keener lament that discrimination based on homophobia persists in the Academy (and in elementary and secondary education settings) despite NCTE’s 1976 resolution opposing discrimination against gays and lesbians and NCTE’s newly established Committee on Lesbian and Gay Concerns. In their super depressing litany of survey responses, they conclude that “Gay and lesbian teachers are in professional peril even when they do not publicly profess or discuss

As Wallace and Alexander argue, there are unique ways of talking, writing, and making meaning for queer people, even if they occupy sometimes invisible identities: “The inability to speak in one’s authentic voice is a recurrent theme of homosexual literature” (“Queer Rhetorical Agency” 274). Also, in “Construing and Constructing Knowledge as a Lesbian or Gay Student Writer,” Harriet Malinowitz urges us:

Think, then, of our lesbian and gay students, who enter writing classes in which they are asked to do such things as reflect upon the ‘self,’ to narrate personal events, to interpret texts in ways that reveal the subjectivity of the writer and to write research papers on topics that are ‘of interest to them.’ Think of how they are told to be aware of issues of audience, subject, and purpose, and to claim textual authority. Then consider the convoluted dimensions these rhetorical issues take on when lesbian and gay writers inevitably have to choose between dominant discourses of heterosexuality. Lesbian and gay writers do not have to be familiar with reader-response theory to know that in a homophobic society, the transaction between a heterosexual reader and a homosexual text can yield explosive meanings. (38-39)

homosexuality” (684). Consequently, disagreements about whether or not teachers should “publicly profess” in the classroom (and how) erupted in the 1990s.⁷

Incidentally, the 1990s also welcomed the reclaimed term “queer” both in the streets and in the academy, both as a particularly embodied, affective, and disruptive deconstructive method of *queering* and as an identity marker for people who do not align with “straight” or what is now called “cisgender.” This decade ushered in what some might characterize as inclusive, others as critical, others as politically disruptive, and still others as all three pedagogies. In any case, “1995 saw the publication of Harriet Malinowitz’s *Textual Orientations*,” Cox and Faris note, “which served as a touchstone for composition studies” because it is “one of the earliest book-length projects in rhetoric and writing studies to address sexuality and pedagogy” (n.p.). In her later monograph, Malinowitz follows up on her *Pre/Text* article published just three years earlier, “Construing and Constructing Knowledge as a Lesbian or Gay Student Writer,” in which she confides: “To even conceive of reconstituting writing classes as ‘safe’ places for lesbian and gay students is not simple” (44). In *Textual Orientations: Lesbian and Gay Students and the Making of Discourse Communities*, her self-described liberatory pedagogy (t)asks students to recognize and challenge heteronormativity: “Leaving sexual identity out of the classroom,” she writes, “is not an accident; it is an expression of institutionalized homophobia” (23). Malinowitz employs (auto)ethnographic methods to

⁷ Mary Elliott shares a helpful review of these disagreements, from Crew’s 1974 mandate (coming out is an “academic responsibility”) to a 1984 special issue of *Radical Teacher* on “Gay and Lesbian Studies” in which “contributors highlight problems associated with the politics of coming out in the classrooms” to a 1994 special issue of the same journal on “Lesbian/Gay/Queer Studies” in which contributors argue that “coming out is *no longer* an issue.” Elliott cites, in short, “an ambivalence of discourse on coming out” (“Coming Out” 695, original emphasis).

discuss her own positionality as an “out” lesbian in her classroom and her students’ coming out narratives in a themed “queercentric” writing course.

Following this seminal work—and due also, no doubt, to queer rhetoric and composition scholars’ taking up of Judith Butler’s influential *Gender Trouble* and later *Bodies that Matter* and *The Psychic Life of Power*, in which she popularized her notions of performativity—the field took significant interest in performative pedagogies. In writing studies (cf., Malinowitz, Kopelson, Gonçalves), and even outside of writing studies (cf., Caughie), this meant infusing composition curricula with queer, deconstructive, postmodern, and performative rhetorical theory.

In a performative pedagogy, one common *topos* pertinent to my study is the phenomenon of *passing*. Pamela L. Caughie, for instance, investigates passing, ambiguity, and authority in the classroom in “‘Not Entirely Strange,... Not Entirely Friendly’: Passing and Pedagogy.” She argues that, especially noticeable during the ’90s, “Passing dramatizes the situation we find ourselves in as members of a classroom and an institution profoundly changed over the past two decades” (785). As Caughie reminds us in her work, particularly in her larger project *Passing and Pedagogy: The Dynamics of Responsibility*, there are many ways to consider pedagogical “passing”: passing classes, passing in the hallways, passing notes, passing as an experienced authority, passing as various identities; in short, “We are always ‘passing’ in the classroom,” she writes, and “the teacher as well as the student is already in the position of imposter” (787). Regardless of queer status, writing instructors make daily decisions to pass or come out by disclosing or withholding information about their age, marital status, political beliefs, race and ethnicity, taste in music, etc. Additionally, since for Caughie “writing is the site

where subjectivity emerges,” it is a prime pedagogical tool that we can and should employ (as Malinowitz has noted) to help students “pass” across terrains of identity (169).

Brenda Jo Brueggemann has also published on passing: though not about queer identity *per se*, her “On (almost) Passing” offers a personal narrative about her self-broadcasted “hard-of-hearing” identity, a liminality that allows her to pass as either deaf or hearing. Significantly, like Caughie’s work, this piece situates passing with/in writing pedagogies: as Brueggemann reflects beautifully, “My premier pedagogy for passing is, of course, writing. It is a ‘passageway,’ a ‘pass’ or ‘through writing, I pass’” (660). By 2002 Brueggemann is writing not about passing so much as “Coming-out Pedagogy” (with Debra A. Modellmog). Though wary of the consequences, they encourage language teachers to come out in classrooms. “Our identities pose risks,” they say, “that the academic might explode into the personal; that our students might project their fears and desires onto us as they become more aware of their own performances of identity; that the class might become a series of comings out and coming undone as the students confront (the possibility of) their own disabilities, their own queer desires” (312).⁸ Despite these caveats, there are also “Risky Rewards” in a performative coming out pedagogy (Brueggemann and Modellmog 331). Precisely because of this risk-reward bricolage, scholars in the field have disagreed in the ’90s and early aughts about whether teachers should pass or come out—or both/neither.

⁸ Also, as Kate Adams and Kim Emery argue, “every stereotype and misconception will get stapled to you” (“Practical Strategies” 32). *Or*, as Karen Kopelson puts it, “a multiplicity of risks associated with the ‘out’ instructor’s becoming the text, the content, the focal point of the class,” or else “to engage the specular and become the spectacle” (“Dis/Integrating” 21).

In 1996, Mary Elliott wrote arguably the most important contemporary journal article on coming out in the writing classroom. She argues, “Such work is absolutely necessary to the eventual professional legitimizing of gay and lesbian issues, literature, students, and teachers,” an eventuality that *I* argue, more than 20 years later, still has fully to be realized. Specifically referencing coming out as a pedagogical issue, Elliott writes, “No doubt, a pedagogy of disclosure and visibility can challenge tautological claims that historical social absence justifies and explains further social absence” (694). Michelle Gibson, Martha Marinara, and Deborah Meem appear to agree: In “Bi, Butch, and Bar Dyke: Pedagogical Performances of Class, Gender, and Sexuality,” they explore how and why teachers perform various identities in their classrooms. In addition to the pedagogical affordances of such performances, they “critique both the academy’s tendency to neutralize the political aspects of identity performance and the essentialist identity politics that still inform many academic discussions of gender, class, and sexuality” (69). They tell personal stories because “The stories told by both lesbians and working-class academics help form class consciousness and serve a strategic political purpose. In marking stories ‘lesbian’ or ‘working class,’ the lives contained therein are less invisible and give the narrators—students and faculty—a political site from which to speak and act” (72). They move beyond “authentic” voice into a metaphor of “essential” voice, and they encourage more teachers to come out. Not everyone is so convinced, however.

In the early 2000s, for example, Karen Kopelson’s highly taken-up “Dis/Integrating the Gay/Queer Binary: ‘Reconstructed Identity Politics’ for a Performative Pedagogy” argues that a pedagogical application of performativity is “most

conspicuously absent” from composition scholarship—despite her reminder that, “as Pamela Caughie argues, pedagogy might well be ‘the site where performative theory comes to have public relevance’” (18). As Kopelson puts it, “out is in,” so we should discuss “the perils and pleasures of coming out, or being visible, in the composition or English studies classroom” (19, 18). Soon after, Kopelson wrote “Rhetoric on the Edge of Cunning: Or, the Performance of Neutrality (Re) Considered as Composition Pedagogy for Student Resistance” in which she draws from *mêtis* rhetorics to advocate for a performative pedagogy of *ambiguity* (neither disclosing nor passing as queer, or feminist, or radical in *any* way). This strategic, cunning method anticipates and assuages students’ suspicion of and resistance to an(y) inappropriately charged political agenda in an English classroom (which they otherwise expect to be neutral).

Kopelson elaborates in “Of Ambiguity and Erasure” that such a performative pedagogy is cunning precisely because it prevents students from “discerning and resisting the political agenda that I do have, the axe that I *am* grinding” (565). “I see these moves,” Kopelson continues, “as the effective rhetorical and performative *strategies* of a marked teacher-subject struggling to keep students receptive to the political issues I *do* raise in my courses” (564). As “an easy read” (“I look like a dyke”), Kopelson constructs an *ambiguous* identity through teacherly performances—never coming out, but also not trying hard to pass (563). Rather than a “sacrificial act of voluntary self-erasure,” this move also queers binaries of us/Other by constructing “*productively indeterminate* teacher-identities” (565). Considering debates about teachers’ queer (in)visibility, perhaps the most useful route is the queer dialectic that Kopelson offers—ambiguity—which helps “rescript the scripting of our body-texts” (564). Since this conversation hasn’t been

revisited with significance since the early 2000s, and since the uncertainty of whether or not to come out in the classroom has never been (can never be?) satisfactorily resolved, I argue that it is time to reopen the investigation.

As for the future of queer scholarship in rhetoric and composition, I have recognized an urgent need for new conversations regarding the intersectionality of identity (cf., Crenshaw, Cho, and McCall), which many (hooks, Ratcliffe, Inayatulla, and others) argue we have neglected. As Harriet Malinowitz articulates in *Textual Orientations*, while “queering the brew” (that is, when thinking about identity intersections), “We must remember that ‘inclusion’ itself doesn’t indicate that the brew is queered; queering comes from the possibility that alien discourses will not only, like silent partners, *be* in the brew but will *reconstitute* it as an altogether new concoction” (252). In other words, it’s not enough simply to acknowledge that new voices, bodies, and identities exist in the classroom cauldron; rather, we should also recognize how they *overlap* and invite multiple perspectives to influence the status quo.

Zan Meyer Gonçalves also calls for more intersectional attention in queercomp scholarship. In her 2006 book *Sexuality and the Politics of Ethos in the Writing Classroom*, she investigates her university’s undergraduate Speaker’s Bureau for the LGBT outreach center and determines that their composing practices as queer-identified writers help combat homoviolence and heterosexism on their campus. Having sensed a lack of intersectionality in the field’s queer qualitative work, Gonçalves deliberately interviews a diverse pool of participants but generally, I argue, a poverty of attention to intersectionality has fretted queer studies in composition.

This literature review demonstrates the impressive assembly of queercomp knowledge that we already have. However, I believe there's always more to learn about coming out in classrooms, especially considering that flagship pieces on the conversation themselves often call for more work. As Doug Cloud eloquently argues as recently as 2017, the untapped "flexibility and possibility of coming out discourse" could mean a "sea of change" (184). For example, the only studies that critically investigate *teachers'* coming out/passing in writing classrooms, are limited in that they focus primarily on high/middle school contexts or that they focus on only one institution/instructor at a time. My study focuses on postsecondary instructors from diverse geographic and demographic contexts, which will help us learn more about the various contextual constraints we may or may not face, impacting our performative pedagogies.

Additionally, as noted earlier, my semi-structured interview-based methods alone render my project even more unique. Although I've reviewed relevant, qualitative monographs that rock, my study attends to critical lacunae in the study of queer rhetoric in/and composition. For example, Malinowitz's mixed-methods (auto)ethnographic and discourse analysis study attends nicely to postmodern theoretical understandings of intersectional identity in undergraduate students; Caughie's work on multiple applications of the term "passing" within pedagogy is almost purely theoretical, as is Kopelson's work on strategically ambiguous performative pedagogies; Susan Talburt (writing for education but taken up in rhetoric and composition) employs interpretive ethnography to look into the lives of three lesbian professors (only one of whom is a writing instructor, and only one of whom is not white); Zan Meyer Gonçalves again attends commendably to intersectionality, though like Malinowitz, only with

undergraduate students at one institution in her (auto)ethnography; and Alexander offers sometimes autoethnographic case studies about student literacy practices, not so much on “coming out.” All of these studies leave out trans people. The most recent (2015) and topical (“To Be or Not To Be Out in the Classroom”) qualitative study I could find comes from Tim McKenna-Buchanan, Stevie Munz, and Justin Rudnick from the Communication field. The authors interview 29 LGQ college teachers about whether they disclose or conceal sexual orientations in their classrooms—in order to study Communication Privacy Management Theory.

These excellent projects have given the field so much to think about. My study contributes by intentionally focusing on intersectionality, particularly type of institution, age and generation, and race and ethnicity. My study also uses interview-based qualitative methods, which afford an investigation of the recursive nature of coming out genres. Furthermore, my study extends ongoing disciplinary realizations regarding the ethics of (queer) qualitative methodologies and responds to historic and contemporary cries for a “coming out guidebook.” Again, though much has been written about coming out, even in our field, my study responds to new political exigency, shares an overdue update, features innovative methods, and attends critically to intersectionality.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Sharan B. Merriam reminds us in *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation* that research helps us either learn something new; apply new knowledge to assess, evaluate, and improve our discipline; and/or eventually enact social justice with new findings (4). A *qualitative* approach in particular is so useful for this study on

teachers' classroom performances of identity because I am primarily "interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (5). Moreover, method(ologie)s in queer qualitative research can feel vexed. We might turn to Kate Livingston, who argued in her proceedings during the 2016 Cultural Rhetorics conference that the intersection of qualitative research methods and queer theory troubles notions of permanence/stability identity, "out" status, anonymity, and permission. Caroline Dadas writes in "Messy Methods: Queer Methodological Approaches to Researching Social Media" that "a queer methodology enables an understanding of how the public/private continuum influences multiple parts of the research process" (60). One way, according to Dadas, is refusing linear progressions through recursive approaches. "Queer methodologies," she writes, "can remind us that those methods will sometimes require disruption" (71). A national interview-based study working with queer-identified people, for instance, has productively destabilized my ethical understandings of inclusivity and access, identity/identification processes, consent, anonymity, risk, and representation, especially while working with recursive genres like coming out narratives.⁹ Despite feeling vexed, I designed a strong study, which I rationalize in this section and critique in the conclusion of this dissertation.

Overview: I surveyed approximately 100 LGBTQ-identified postsecondary writing instructors in the United States with voluntary sampling methods (Appendix 1). I

⁹ The application and protocol for this study were approved in March 2017 by the IRB at The University of Louisville (IRB #17.0193). Survey participants acknowledged their informed consent before proceeding, and interview participants completed an informed consent form before answering interview questions.

solicited respondents by advertising the study through The CCCC's Queer Caucus SIG (Special Interest Group)'s list-serve and closed Facebook group, as well as the Writing Program Administration's national listserv (WPA-L).¹⁰

The survey focused on demographic and contextual diversity because it was designed to invite a richer dataset for an intersectional analysis. I therefore combined criterion and convenience sampling methods to conduct approximately 20 semi-structured interviews. After informing participants of consent (Appendix 2), I asked them the same set of primary interview questions (Appendix 3), though I often asked follow-up questions for clarification and to explore emerging themes.¹¹ I audiorecorded and transcribed the interviews with basic tools, iTunes and Microsoft Word, before finally performing four passes of qualitative coding on the interview transcriptions: open coding,

¹⁰ Qualitative researchers in writing studies often draw from non-probability sampling for participants of their studies (and mine is no exception). As Jackie Grutsch McKinney puts it,

In many fields, only surveys that utilize probability sampling will be considered valid; however, non-probability sampling (what I've called convenience sampling) is quite common in writing center studies and Rhetoric and Composition in general. This might be attributed to the fact that the populations under study in writing studies cannot be easily counted. For one, federal privacy laws prohibit teachers or administrators from distributing or posting student lists publicly. Likely, the use of nonprobability sampling might be attributed to the field's emphasis on qualitative research, a lack of knowledge about sampling techniques, or an ambivalence toward survey data and the associated positivism that turns attitudes and beliefs into numbers. (81)

I believe that the already complicated relationships between knowledge production in the Humanities with probability sampling, privacy, and positivism are exacerbated even further in an identity-based study, particularly in one inflected with and/or focused on *queer* identities—due to additional, sensitive, and highly situational ethics and politics of passing and outing in queer communities. Therefore, these are my sampling criteria: participants must be current instructors (part-time or full-time lecturers; graduate teaching assistants; or assistant, associate, or full professors) who are teaching or have taught one or more of any writing courses at the postsecondary level. Participants also must be at least 18 years old and identify as queer, gay, lesbian, bisexual, trans* (or otherwise nonheterosexual or non-cisgender).

¹¹ Semi-structured interviews offer enough space and flexibility for the storied and recursive nature of identity narratives, especially closet narratives. As Joy Ritchie and Kathleen Boardman write in "Feminism in Composition: Inclusion, Metonymy, and Disruption," identity in composition cannot be locked, "constricted in a narrative" but rather "narratives of experience should be encountered as catalysts for further analysis of the conditions that shape experience," which is itself already highly interpretive (588). Qualitative interviews about coming out stories unlock such interpretive potential.

process coding, axial coding, and selective coding. These codes helped me develop a grounded theory with which to analyze my dataset. But before I used them full-force, I first conducted a pilot study.

Pilot study: In order to refine my research methods before launching the national version, I conducted a pilot study in 2017. Through a combination of criterion, snowball, and convenience sampling methods, I invited 6 queer-identified writing instructors to participate in a semi-structured, audiorecorded interview. These initial conversations helped me revise my research and interview questions for the future by discovering naturally recurring motifs that interested me the most.

For example, many of my participants revealed that they feel motivated to pass, and I learned that they even more frequently chose *outside* the false binary that I'd asked about. Many writing instructors intentionally romp in the ambiguity of what Kopelson has described as a strategically indeterminate performative pedagogy. Unfortunately, I had assumed (incorrectly) that most queer-identified writing instructors choose to come out to their classrooms as a whole, so most of my research and interview questions focused on the effects of coming out. I needed to revise my questions so that future interviews could explore more styles of performance.

I also noticed that all of my participants discussed how other parts of their identity interacted with their queerness. Their age, gender, race, and location, for example, factored into their performances of queer identity. However, all 6 pilot participants were white, cisgender GTAs in the same English Department at a large, public, Ph.D.-granting university in the Midwest, so I realized that I needed to broaden my scope and invite

diverse perspectives in order to better study intersectionality, which is why I built the demographic survey.

Before reporting on the national data, which is the meat of this dissertation, I would like to turn inward. The pilot study was a success because it helped me think inclusively, critically, and inventively about the ethics and implications of my research. By the end of it, I felt invigorated to redesign my study and take it to the national level. And thanks to Dr. Andrea Olinger's Methods in Composition graduate course, for which I conducted the pilot study, I have been reflecting (forever inadequately) about my positionality while designing, conducting, and coding my research.

(Re)searcher role: What is not only wonderful, but also liminal, and also even limited about my research and about all of our work is that our own complex identities saturate our research. Wendy Bishop reminds us that “all research is rhetorically situated” (5); Rebecca Moore Howard writes in “Why This Humanist Codes” that data collection, coding, and interpretation are all ways to impose order (79). Therefore, our research design decisions bear rhetorical and political consequences (Broad 201-02, 207). That is all to say that we must attend to our own researcher bias and positionality always in all ways that we can.

I've realized that my researcher role is complicated because I am (not) among the population I am studying, so I need to consider my ethical relationships with my research participants. I am colleagues with all of these people and actually friends with some of them, and we have similar but different jobs. Additionally, as a fellow queer / queer fellow, on the one hand I realize some of the potential risks of discomfort and trauma associated with discussing sexuality; on the other hand, our many identity intersections,

maybe especially in this case our common queerness, inevitably influences interviews. Peter Smagorinsky gets me in my feels when he writes this passage in “The Method Section as Conceptual Epicenter in Constructing Social Science Research Reports.”

Limitations and cautions about the data collection procedures also merit attention. Interviews, to return to this example, are not benign but rather involve interaction effects. Rosenthal (1966) examined researcher effects in behavioral research and identified a myriad of characteristics that can affect the relationship between a researcher and participant, in turn helping to shape the data that emerge from the collection process. For instance, female participants tend to be treated more attentively and considerately than men, female researchers tend to smile more often than their male counterparts, male and female researchers behave more warmly toward female participants than they do toward men (with male researchers the warmer of the two), White participants are more likely to reveal racial prejudice to a White researcher than to a Black one, gentile subjects are more likely to reveal anti-Semitic attitudes to a gentile researcher than to one whom they perceive as Jewish . . . the list seems endless. Making some effort to account for these phenomena helps to explain the social construction of data in studies involving researcher-participant interactions. (395)

I think everyone conducting qualitative interviews should read that passage. Even though Bob Broad reminds us that “We are strongest as researchers when we combine our methodological passions and strategies,” we should also consider their potential limitations for best possible research accuracy and ethics (207). For instance, Broad also cautions us to consider the “pros and cons of ‘personal preference’ and ‘personal

attachment' in scholarly inquiry" (201). He argues that position reflection can help us better interpret empirical data, especially if we realize that "what we observe, notice, and care about in the world—are revealed obscured, filtered, and shaped by our values and beliefs" (201). Rather than trying to stuff preconceptions away, which is impossible fully to do, our energy might best be spent on what we might gain from what we already know. After all, as Broad argues, reflecting on positionality "does not mean we devalue, misunderstand, or shun each other's favored methodologies; it simply helps us understand and be more aware that we may have a strong personal preference for one over another, and we probably also have special gifts for conceiving and executing research projects within our favored research paradigms" (202).

I also reflected on my positionality after I read Susan B.A. Somers-Willett's book *The Cultural Politics of Slam Poetry*, in which she approaches similar questions about the constructions of identity in performative genres and modalities. In the introduction, she writes meaningfully and eloquently about her qualitative researcher position. After reading her introduction, I realized that I don't feel hindered by my position, and I don't want to make my position illegible, so instead I write with it at the forefront of my mind. The performance of identity across intersections of race, class, university status, geography, sexuality, gender, generation, etc., reveals both affordances and constraints for teachers of writing, and I wish to consider many of them, even if they might trouble my own role as researcher-teacher in the body that I have. My close relationship with the study theme and with some of the participants developed both an intimacy and a bias that were, respectively, useful and problematic for the project. So much to consider—and it's not all necessarily clear, queer, bad, or good.

Considering my position during the design of the study and through its distribution, I finally examined the data. I hand-coded transcriptions of my interviews with four passes, described in more detail next.

Coding methods: Johnny Saldaña's *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers* helped me discern my coding methods. Coding can help a qualitative researcher develop a grounded theory, which according to Saldaña "involves meticulous analytic attention by applying specific types of codes to data through a series of cumulative coding cycles that ultimately lead to the development of theory—a theory 'grounded' or rooted in the original data themselves" (55).

I was tempted to choose narrative coding and motif coding because coming out narrative genres rely on personal stories. According to Saldaña, narrative coding applies to the literary elements of qualitative texts in the form of stories, and motif coding applies to oral history projects, and in particular with identity studies (296).¹² However, I still

¹² Coming out narrative genres rely on personal stories. Alexander and Wallace write in their "Queer Turn" that "Queerness helps us see important connections between our personal stories and the stories that our culture tells about intimacy, identity, and connection" (303). Similarly, Kenneth Plummer writes in *Telling Sexual Stories* that "ethical systems are built around notions of storytelling" (99). Furthermore, Stacey Waite draws from Nancy Miller's *Getting Personal* to argue in *Teaching Queer* that we can transform the authorial voice of the storyteller into spectacle in our classrooms: the questions that narratives produce are essential, Waite writes, and indeed it's impossible to separate pedagogy from personal narrative: "I do not believe the story of my scholarship is separate from the story of my life or the body I live" (15).

However, Michel Foucault might argue that collecting coming out narratives or other narrative genres of sexuality is a problematic historical practice of containment and depoliticization. As he argues in *Discipline and Punish*, the story and life of the Other "belongs to a certain political function of writing," a technology that employs stories either for potentially exploitative, tokenized entertainment or for labors of politics and change; additionally the "turning of real lives into writing is no longer a procedure of theorization: it functions as a procedure of objectification and subjection" (92). Speaking specifically about the "carefully collated life" of patients in mental or delinquency institutions, Foucault's ideas readily transfer into the theorization of other nonnormative identity storytelling, such as coming out narratives. However, for Foucault, collecting "coming out" narratives or other *straightforward* proclamations of sexuality is a problematic historical practice because the collections seek to contain identity with labels—which incidentally also reduces the political potential of "coming out" narratives, illuminating McRuer's criticism in different light. Also, this is not the first time Foucault has offered this argument. In his *History of*

thought process coding was most useful because I was more interested in sequences and strategies than in plots and metaphors. As Saldaña puts it, process coding is appropriate for virtually all qualitative studies, but particularly for grounded theory research that extracts participant action/interaction and consequences and the documentation of routines and rituals” (296). In my interviews, I observed my participants’ accounts more like sequence than plot. Though some narrative elements, such as metaphor and dialogue, exist in their storytelling, they discussed strategies and goals more than scenes, characters, and other literary devices. Therefore, the series of cumulative cycles I selected are: open coding, process coding, axial coding, and selective coding.

Open coding, or initial coding, helped me organize my data into a less overwhelming and more manageable index. Actually, Saldaña recommends this coding method because it’s appropriate for all qualitative studies, and it’s especially user-friendly for qualitative researchers who (like me) are just learning to code. In addition to familiarizing myself with my data, this “first major open-ended stage of a grounded theory approach” provided me with an “inventory of topics for indexing and categorizing,” as this pass of coding “assigns labels to data to summarize in a word or short phrase” (292, 295). I marked moments when interviewees discussed their teaching

Sexuality I, for example, when one confesses deviant sexuality, it is at once a liberation (a defiant reclamation of linguistic constraints) and an obedience (to the social obligation to confess immorality and to behave thus as expected). Finally, in an interview with Jean François and John De Wit, Foucault personalizes this conversation. He reveals that he would rather resist a proclamation of sexuality (*Wrong Doing Truth-Telling* 261-62). He posits that refusal to be identified according to and by his sexuality is also a refusal of any obligation to identify through and by his behavior and appearance. Rejecting the idea that individuals identify with a particular sexuality category, Foucault privileges ontology over rhetoric. That is, he argues that his being is more important than the limited and limiting rhetorical construction of his being and even argues that rhetorical constructions can be dangerous and counterproductive. While he doesn’t argue for dishonesty, he (much like Kopelson, cited above) does argue for ambiguity or at least for resistance to the obligation to identify. In his own words, “I want to be able to do what I want, and I do it. But don’t ask me to proclaim it” (*Discipline and Punish* 62).

performances, for example, and I marked moments when they discussed student conferences or intersectionality. In other words, open coding “breaks down qualitative data into discrete parts, closely examines them, and compares them for similarities and differences” (295). That way, a researcher may return to those moments during a second pass of coding.

My second pass, **process coding**, used gerunds (“-ing” nouns) to describe research participants’ actions. By marking moments of *coming out*, *passing*, and *writing*, for example, I began to learn how classroom actions are “strategic, routine, random, novel, automatic, and/or thoughtful” especially as those actions “emerge, change, occur in particular sequences, or become strategically implemented through time” (Saldaña 111).

Next, in *Basics of Qualitative Research*, Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin distinguish open coding from my third coding method, **axial coding**. “In open coding,” they write, “the analyst is concerned with generating categories and their properties and then seeks to determine how categories vary dimensionally. In axial coding, categories are systematically developed and linked with subcategories” (143). As Saldaña puts it, axial coding “extends the analytic work from Initial Coding” because it “explores how the categories and subcategories relate to each other. Properties and dimensions refer to such components as the contexts, conditions, interactions, and consequences of a process” (291). Though distinct, all of the passes are interrelated: “The purpose of axial coding,” for instance, “is to begin the process of reassembling data that were fractured during open coding” (Strauss and Corbin 124). Once these data have been reassembled, they are ripe for the choosing.

During my final cycle, **selective coding**, I simply picked moments that illustrate my emerging grounded theory the very best so I could use them as representative examples in my write-up. As Strauss and Corbin put it, selective coding involves “integrating and refining the theory” (143). Saldaña recommends a top-ten list: “Regardless of codes applied to them, extract no more than 10 quotes or passages from your [data] that strike you as the most vivid and/or presentational of your study. [. . .] Reflect on the content of these 10 items and arrange them in various orders” (275). After these four passes of coding, I felt prepared to begin developing a **grounded theory**, which “requires the researcher to use a specified set of procedures to code data in a series of passes (open, axial, and selective). Data are examined for dimensions and properties, compared with similar phenomena, regrouped and reconceptualized until a provisional theory emerges inductively from the analysis and is further tested through theoretical sampling” (Glaser and Strauss 125). Basically, once I’d finished coding, I was ready to write.

The grounded theory that has emerged for me is infused through the following three data chapters that each in turn show what I learned about how LGBTQ-identified instructors are expressing identity in their classrooms, how intersectionality and context impact these instructors’ performances, and finally any perceived student reactions to their performances.

VIGNETTE II

When I was a college freshman, I joined the speech and debate team. (No, I don't know why either. One of my coaches is one of the best writing teachers I've had, though.)

During one coaching appointment he told me that he's noticed I'd been sad lately. And "... You know you're gay, right? It's okay to be," he said. I was so angry—wide, wild eyes—how dare he—and I yelled at him that he was wrong, and I slammed the door behind me.

When I was ready to come back, I came back. I came out.

We've since joked about it.

Over the next four years of competition, this same coach helped me earn regional, state, and national championships with speeches about queer rhetoric and identity. This same coach helped me write my grad school cover letter. The opening line was: "I am a skinny, Roman Catholic, slightly charming farm boy from Walton, Kentucky. I'm also queer."

CHAPTER TWO
TO PASS OR NOT TO PASS IN THE WRITING CLASS?
THAT IS THE QUE(E)RY.

You can't see it—or you can: queerness is (in)visible. Sometimes, like with other identity intersections such as ability, race, and economic class, which each carry their own traces of (in)concealable proof, LGBTQ identity is etched explicitly and indubitably and even permanently onto our skin: as Mary Elliott cautions us, “some of our bodies can not disembody identity” (700). However, at other times, LGBTQ identity *isn't* displayed explicitly or indubitably or even permanently on our skin: LGBTQ-identified people often enjoy the luxury to temporarily modify or repress gender expression and customize costumes of sexual orientation, which we can call “passing privileges.”¹³

¹³ It's important to remember that only *often* do LGBTQ-identified people enjoy the privilege to pass: one can often decide in the moment whether to pass or not, which implicates one method of flexing agency in the writing classroom. Another (and perhaps more useful) articulation than “the privilege to pass” might sound like “the privilege to disclose”—as opposed to being outed, the necessity to disclose for accommodations, or the necessity to remain “closeted” (due to the consequence of death—of one's meticulously curated self or selves or credibility, of one's career or income/livelihood, of one's spirit, and sometimes literally of one's living body). Therefore, one can perform various visual and verbal rhetorics, rituals, discourses, and semiotics in order to camouflage, highlight, or disrupt audiences' interpretations; we can “pass,” “come out of the closet,” costume, perform, masquerade, show, tell, hide, disclose, avow, admit, lie, deceive, tell the “truth,” choose some of these, none, all. As with all rhetorics, successful coming out and passing performances depend not only on a rhetor's encoding but also on an interlocutor's decoding; the performance's “success” is contingent on the queer individual's intent, performance's plausibility, and audience's approval.

But why would anyone pass or come out? Generally, queer people have performed identities (in)visibly in order to survive potential consequences, to reclaim pride for identity, and to accomplish political work, among other aims. More specifically, my study investigates why queer-identified postsecondary writing teachers might pass or come out, and my data reveal that their pedagogies, riddled with coming out and passing performances, are motivated by reasons ranging from apathy to propriety to fear of consequences to teachable moments to connecting with students to political activism. Indeed, even if politics is not the goal, “anticipated political goals [can be] scripted onto some of our body-texts from day one, before we can even hand students the syllabus” as Karen Kopelson observes about the bodies of queer composition instructors (“Cunning” 119). Therefore, whether their LGBTQ identity is highly visible, quite invisible, or somewhat ambiguous to their students, instructors of writing and rhetoric may come out, pass, neither, or both in their writing classrooms.¹⁴

¹⁴ But why the college/university writing classroom, specifically? As early as the formal beginnings of the field of rhetoric and composition, when in the 1970s Louie Crew and Rictor Norton edited their special issue of *College English* on queer identity, and as recently as 2017 when Stacey Waite published *Teaching Queer: Radical Possibilities for Writing and Knowing*, many scholars have made the case for the writing classroom as one of the most fruitful spaces to theorize queer identity. This is because, despite Jonathan Alexander and Jacqueline Rhodes’s sardonic claim in “Queer: An Impossible Subject for Composition” that queerness and composition are fundamentally antithetical, they are also, paradoxically, inextricable from one another. Studies like Alexander’s *Sexuality, Literacy, Pedagogy*, Susan Talburt’s *Subject to Identity*, Harriet Malinowitz’s *Textual Orientations*, and Zan Meyer Gonçalves’ *Sexuality and the Politics of Ethos in the Writing Classroom* make the collective argument that sex/uality is embedded in language and ontology, so students of writing and rhetoric are already thinking, writing, and talking about sex all the time. Malinowitz argues in other words that “bringing lesbian and gay discourse into the composition class will be fraught with significance for heterosexual students as well, since all people are implicated in the large social drama of sexuality, just as we are all implicated in social dramas regarding race, gender, and class” (“Construing” 47). Actually, Stacey Waite argues in *Teaching Queer* that writing and teaching are both inherently queer practices because they help us remember that the field of rhetoric and composition is not interested only in what’s composed—with composure—but also and perhaps more interested in processes of *composing*, *uncomposing*, *decomposing*, and *recomposing*, alongside processes of *becoming*, *unbecoming*, and *rebecoming*. Indeed, Gonçalves argues that “ethos [is] possibly the most important site of rhetorical work and learning” because thinking about writing as a performance of identity engages students in context and audience, and “Teaching writing is about inviting students to examine and explore the roles

As I hope to have adequately argued in the previous chapter's literature review and in the preceding footnote, the postsecondary writing classroom is a ripe rhetorical site to deeply examine queer performative pedagogies. And when we deeply examine performative pedagogies, we can harvest insights into how to refine our crafts of teaching (and) writing. For instance, in this study, I have isolated and analyzed writing instructors' recollections of passing and coming out performances in their classrooms. We can learn uniquely from their experiences about the potency of applied rhetorical strategies during moments of avowal, such as *to prépon* (for example, when a queer instructor stylizes identity performances appropriately for their audience), *parrhēsia* (a "truth"-telling disclosure), and *mētis* (a "cunning" rhetoric of ambiguity), as well as contextual factors, such as *tropos*, *ethos*, *kairós*, and *technê*. Furthermore, we can interrogate "authenticity" as a social construction, theorize the political power and pedagogical utility of confessional/performative rhetorics in our classrooms, and ultimately guide teachers in the field toward better practices of pedagogy.

or identities they are performing and the ideologies they are creating, reproducing, or resisting in relation to those identities" (4, 134). The writing classroom is arguably the best space where students can begin to make sense of the multiple and conflicting discourses that they encounter inside and outside the classroom and begin to develop skills for negotiating their own senses of ethos and identity (29). Similarly, Alexander writes,

In some ways, the personal has always been a vexed subject in composition, at least since the work of [. . .] expressivism. As compositionists, we worry about how much we are asking students to disclose about themselves when composing. [. . .] After all, what writing, except the most rote reporting, *is not* personal to some extent? Suggesting that certain kinds of experiences should not be discussed publicly, such as sex and sexuality, is to foreclose on the fullest understanding we might have of the human experience, both individually and collectively. (182, 184)

This is all not to mention that writing is a foundational skill taught in some capacity at every postsecondary institution across disciplines, and that many writing instructors and students identify as queer. In short, the writing classroom is a rich, rhetorical site for my investigation (richer perhaps than almost any other kind of classroom) because students are constantly asked to think about language, rhetorical choices, and (increasingly) culture, politics, and identity.

Though lengthy and primarily descriptive, the purpose of this first data chapter is to acquaint you with my research participants, share broad findings about experiences of disclosure in their writing classrooms, and begin to theorize their queer performative pedagogies. To do so, I first discuss writing classroom contexts; next, discuss queer disclosures as rhetorical processes; and finally, individually tackle coming out, passing, and ambivalent performances.

CONTEXTS

Composition classrooms can be highly political spaces, despite their students' expectations. Kopelson cites Johanna Atwood, Dale Bauer, Linda Brodkey, and others in "Rhetoric on the Edge of Cunning" to illuminate how students expect their writing courses to function as neutral, apolitical educational spaces. As Kopelson writes, "This may be especially true of the composition classroom, as composition, perhaps more than any other university course, is expected by students to be without content, to involve little more than impartial instruction in the transferable and neutral skill of writing 'correctly'" (117). Therefore, students often resent and resist the "imposition" of *unexpected* identity-based cultural issues into the curriculum.

While some students may not mind, or might even quite appreciate, politically inflected themed courses, other students may find progressive identity politics in their writing classrooms biased and therefore inappropriate for their writing pursuits, which they believe are supposed to be neutral and objective, not subjective. Additionally, as Grant Farred argues, students may join the "anti-P.C. movement" in which "backlash against marginalized constituencies is so widely sanctioned" (632). Instructors who come

out as queer, then, are always already interpreted as embodied extensions of an unwelcome, liberal (even “The Gay”) agenda, which frets, productively challenges, and therefore ultimately extends our field’s ever-growing understandings of “best practices” for writing pedagogies.

Further still, as writing instructors we often believe in our composition classes’ role/roll within the larger university ecology of general education—as a place where students develop not just a critical literacy of reading, writing, and composition, but also a critical literacy of *college* (Nowacek, *Agents of Integration*; Adler Kassner & Wardle, *Naming What We Know*; Russell, “Activity Theory and Its Implications for Writing Instruction”; Harris, *A Teaching Subject: Composition since 1966*). Regardless of whether students are proficient in meaning-making, critical thinking, genres and rhetoric, etc., it remains true that they will almost definitely benefit from a college course, often during their first year, in which they will be able to work collaboratively with peers, develop a personal relationship with their instructor, and be called on in class by name. In other words, the writing classroom functions as a sort of “university homeroom” because it is required of all undergraduates and because its cap size is (well, should be, according to the NCTE’s best practices: 16) so very small, rendering it a uniquely rich context in which instructors and students can interact intimately through discussion. Thus, college writing classrooms—embedded as they are with options, implications, affordances, constraints, disciplines, and rewards—might at times amplify writing and rhetoric instructors’ (and students’) voices with literal or metaphorical podiums or soapboxes or bullhorns, or else at other times silence them with statutes and rituals of decorum and propriety. The writing classroom in particular is a matrix of power, an ecology with

multiple human and nonhuman agents, stakeholders, and gatekeepers. Further still, many of my interview participants (12 of 17) discussed “authentic voice” as a unique aspect of the writing classroom: in these spaces, we expose how discourses, identities, and culture mediate expressive literacy practices and in what ways these powers and politics that saturate the writing classroom uniquely encourage or discourage moments of authentic disclosure of self—more, perhaps, than classrooms in any other discipline.

I ask, therefore: What does it mean to be a college writing teacher who identifies as “Other,” “margin,” and/or “nonnormative” in some way (here, queer) and then to share or withhold that information from students?¹⁵ What motivates writing instructors’ performative decisions, and what are their consequences and rewards? These questions and their answers matter, for as Kate Kaul reminds us, “Disclosure has risks and benefits; and we can never know in advance quite what a disclosure will cost, or what it will make possible” (“Risking Experience: Disability, Precarity, and Disclosure” 171). So: Do instructors come out in their classrooms?

PROCESSES

In short, sometimes: My data reveal that LGBTQ-identified instructors typically make choices consistent with queer literature, narratives, and scholarship that our field

¹⁵ The implications, politics, and methods of performative pedagogies are, in short, multifarious; though *this* study focuses on queer gender and sexuality as they intersect with additional layers of identity, one could of course ostensibly ask similar questions related to coming out and passing as/for other identities—for instance as instructors of color, instructors with disabilities, younger and older instructors, instructors with religious and political affiliations or none at all, etc. (cf., Cloud 165).

has inherited over the last decades.¹⁶ There are three main choices, in order of increasing frequency: choosing to pass entirely (as in Anon., 1974), deciding to come out at opportune moments (as in Elliott, 1994), and choosing to perform more ambiguously (as in Kopelson, 2000s).

My data also reveal that writing instructors generally feel more comfortable coming out today due in large part to shifts in our culture and politics that have led to more protections for queer people. Indeed, sometimes these instructors even feel *compelled* to come out: they feel compelled to join the “woke” cause with more (and more sustainable) visibility, more representation, and more inclusivity for diverse voices, bodies, and perspectives. As I demonstrated in the introductory chapter, this is mostly thanks to spikes in political exigency during contemporary cultural moments such as highly public coming out narratives and movements like #MeToo, so it is vital that we respond with our instruction of rhetoric, our teaching of writing, our composed and composing bodies, and the postsecondary fabrics of our classrooms and institutions.

My study also reminds us that coming out and passing are recurring processes, not one-time events. Accordingly, it was rare that I found a research participant who has, does, and will continue to make a consistent choice about coming out or passing in

¹⁶ Everyone’s story is different, and it is important not only to acknowledge diversity, but also to celebrate and to critically remember it, for as Chimamanda Adichie has argued in her now viral lecture on stories, “The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make *one* story become the *only* story” (n.p.). According to Adichie, a single reified story can “rob people of dignity” by convincing its “characters” to obey lest they suffer various disciplines. But just as stories can damage, they can also heal: the more stories we tell, the more we can dismantle what François Lyotard has famously labeled “tyrannical metanarratives” that corrupt and control. Again, everyone’s story is different, and it is often in those exceptional stories that I found the most compelling illustrations of whether or not LGBTQ-identified writing instructors’ queer performativity in the classroom.

composition classroom contexts; rather, it was more often the case that my participants make highly contextual, *inconsistent*, and sometimes even contradictory decisions.¹⁷ As one instructor Amanda, who has been teaching composition for 12 years, put it, “I disclose or come out in different ways to different people at different time periods and in different contexts, right?”¹⁸ Or, as another participant Beau reflected, “You come out several times because you’re always doing that—uh, *hello*—every semester. Yeah, or not—yeah. Like, every semester I have to come out to my students.” In other words, instructors often wait for what Mary Elliott has called an opportune “‘golden’ moment” to come out in their classrooms, because while

¹⁷ I could use words like “select,” “pick,” “opt,” “elect,” etc., in this study, but for the sake of simplicity, I *choose* to use the words “choose” and “decide” (and “choice” and “decision”), which I distinguish as the following: While a choice indicates an ongoing commitment to a series of consistent performances of identity (e.g., “I choose to come out as trans in my classrooms.”), a decision indicates an in-the-moment performance (e.g., “I decided to pass as straight when my student asked me about my rainbow bumper sticker.”). Of course, regardless of diction, all of these words imply a degree of agency that is altogether flimsy from the beginning. Informed in part by Althusser’s speech act theory, Judith Butler predicates her acclaimed and oft theorized notion of performativity on cultural performances that must necessarily respond to circumstance. She writes,

As a public action and performative act, gender is not a radical choice or project that reflects a merely individual choice, but neither is it imposed or inscribed upon the individual, as some post-structuralist displacements of the subject would contend. The body is not passively scripted with cultural codes, as if it were a lifeless recipient of wholly pre-given cultural relations. But neither do embodied selves pre-exist the cultural conventions which essentially signify bodies. Actors are always already on the stage, within the terms of the performance. Just as a script may be enacted in various ways, and just as the play requires both text and interpretation, so the gendered body acts its part in a culturally restricted corporeal space and enacts interpretations within the confines of already existing directives. (“Performative Acts and Gender Constitution” 526)

In other words, that people make performative choices or decisions at all is an illusion because, after measuring potential consequences and rewards, we “choose” or “decide” from a limited list of pre-selected options. For instance, my participants recognize that they can choose or decide to reaffirm, subvert, or perhaps sail between Scylla and Charybdis, as it were, but rarely (perhaps never) do they “start with a blank slate” unencumbered by language, identity scripts, and contrived templates for identity performances.

¹⁸ I use pseudonyms in this dissertation to protect my research participants’ anonymity. I invited participants to select their own pseudonyms. For those who opted not to make a selection, I preserved cultural identity as much as possible in my assignments.

Self-disclosure implies the personal, the unacceptable or difficult, and the uncomfortable; self-disclosure of sexual orientation surely packages all three. Self-disclosure in the congruent or “golden” moment rather than the incongruent moment can mitigate fear by removing much of the artificiality and sense of “wrongness” from the disclosing moment, a sense that can be confused with the value of the disclosed content itself. (“Coming Out in the Classroom” 704)

Even when I encountered those few instructors who *have* made the consistent choice to pass as straight or cisgender in every class to date (such as Charles, Leah, and Alex), they all *also* are “out” to some degree in their personal lives *and* all unequivocally/univocally imagined future classrooms or institutional contexts in which they plan to make a different decision. For example, Charles reflected on how he was “only” a first-year instructor (at the time of our interview), and if he had the opportunity to teach an LGBTQ-themed writing course he would come out “as an authority thing,” or in any case he has thought about casually referencing his boyfriend. Take, for another example, Leah, who (at the time of our interview) had just earned her Ph.D. and was about to transition to a full-time, tenure-track faculty position at a new university where she will be a new Writing Program Administrator (WPA). Though she has not come out to students as bisexual in her prior teaching experience, she plans to offer an introductory “lightning presentation” slideshow with images of her feminist tattoo and of her participation in a Pride parade. For Alex, who teaches at a non-affirming Southern Baptist university in the South, hers is a choice chiefly predicated on current religious institutional context.¹⁹

¹⁹ In religious communities, particularly Christian ones, “affirming” and “non-affirming” refer to whether or not the community generally accepts and “affirms” LGBTQ-identified people based on religious dogma regarding sinful activity.

However, that's just for now: "if I were at an affirming university, how would I do it?" she asks, especially because "there's a part of me that is, I think, just generally sick of not being fully out, you know—it's kind of exhausting."

While Charles, Leah, and Alex *presently* pass and plan to come out in *future* situations, still other participants pointed out that, conversely, while they *used* to come out—pressured, for instance, by a sense of duty in a past political and geographic context—they *no longer* feel obliged. For Aaron, for example, the urgency to come out has dissipated over time, and so his decisions have also shifted in pattern: "I think there was a political moment in which it was very useful. I'm not sure about its continued utility." Aaron recalls teaching ten years ago when "things were different, and I think probably more necessary." (That is, it felt more necessary to come out in his writing classrooms "for political action and activity, and coalition.") Aaron goes on to say that he taught in California during Prop 8.²⁰ Aaron even reflected on the emergence of the term *coming out* as a linguistic response to invisibilization and silencing of queer bodies and voices during the AIDS Crisis. ("Right? That's why we do that. That's why it's called 'coming out.'") In his words:

I think maybe I've changed over ten years, or maybe the culture's changed a little over ten years—I haven't decided which—but being in my body in front of a class and being authorized by the State to be was a powerful thing, and it sort of sent a powerful message, I think, and so I did sort of more actively more often (not always, but more actively more often) sought opportunities to sort of articulate the

²⁰ "Prop 8" is a pop abbreviation for "California Proposition 8," a piece of anti-gay, 2008 marriage protection legislation.

way that those identities were articulated with power in those moments, right?

because I thought that was important. It's less important now, I think. Also, I may just be too old and not give a shit anymore.

Additionally, when instructors take positions at institutions that they interpret as less queer-affirming, they sometimes feel “re-closetized.” Shereen Inayatulla’s term refers to “the phenomenon of closetedness imposed on (teacher) bodies [. . .] by being mistaken and unread” (n.p.). Even if an instructor has been primarily “out,” sometimes they feel pressure to “go back in,” which supports Inayatulla’s intersectional metaphor of the closet as a revolving door.

Furthermore, consistent choices can prove especially challenging for trans instructors, such as Josh, Lupé, and Cash, and instructors with trans partners, like Lisa. These decisive moments especially lend themselves to process due to overlapping queer layers (gender *and* sexuality, for example) and therefore multivalent opportunities to come out and/or pass in several ways. Lisa said, for instance, that “this [coming out] was kind of weird for me because it really happened with my partner’s transition.” Her partner’s male-to-female (MTF) transition has not only meant that she could come out for the first time as an individual in a queer relationship, but also as pansexual/bisexual/queer/gender-fluid herself. After chuckling, Lisa added:

Because I kind of at the time identified as bi or, you know, pan or something like that before that, but because I had been seen more with straight partners except for... so, like, my friends, I really didn’t share that with colleagues or with students or anything like that, but then as my wife came out as transgender and transitioned, then there was that move by my part to say, “No this is great with

me.” I’m [laugh], you know, this fits with my sexuality; this isn’t against that, so it was odd—it was kind of odd—especially, actually, with my parents. This is probably not relevant to your study, but I never told them that I had ever had any same-sex experiences or feelings or anything, and then I obviously had to tell them that [laughs].

Later, Lisa reflects on a similar new exigency with her college writing students, especially as a WPA and a graduate faculty member responsible for training new GTAs. Another instructor Josh distinguishes how for him “coming out as trans isn’t coming out as gay,” and explains that “me being trans is not people’s business unless I want it to be, whereas I feel a lot more comfortable being out as gay and performing a kind of gayness visibly and verbally” in his writing classrooms—which (he argues) “is true for a lot of trans people.”

As a trans man interested in men, Josh simultaneously comes out (as gay) *and* passes (as cisgender). “I don’t know if... are they coding me as a gay man?” he asks, or “Are they seeing me, or are they able to read my transness immediately?” On a related note, trans instructors also face far greater risks of *being outed*, discursively and institutionally. For another example, Cash offers this narrative:

Since [the initial phase of coming out] I started taking hormone replacement therapy, starting in June of this past summer, and I taught for the first time at [my university] that fall, so it was only, like, 2 or 3 months on testosterone, and [my university]... I believe to my knowledge and many others that I’m the first person to transition there, while going to school there, and so they didn’t really have the systems to accommodate some of the name changes that I was asking for, and so

whenever I went into the classroom on my first day, I was staring at 20 freshmen faces with their instructor's name, uh, [Samantha], and they had me walking to the front of the room looking the way that I do with my name on the syllabus being [Cash], and so I just kind of did what I always do and make a joke out of things.

Sometimes, as Cash explains here, trans instructors are always already *out* even if they did not *come* out. All three of my trans interviewees mentioned this in their interviews, in addition to naming other discursive agents (such as voice, anatomy, clothing, and textual examples) that “out” them involuntarily in class.²¹

Charles, Leah, Alex, Aaron, Josh, Lupé, Cash, Lisa, and almost every other participant in my study remind us that coming out and passing decisions are neither erstwhile nor unilateral—a reminder that is at once both significant and unastonishing to me; after all, much like writing itself, coming out and passing are ongoing, recursive *processes*, dependent on and arising from contexts, as Robert McRuer, Caughie, Cloud, and others have all argued. (See my literature review for a more in-depth discussion.) However, while I acknowledge this characteristic of coming out / passing as process, I

²¹ With no books and only a handful of flagship journal articles in our field that focus on transgender identity rhetorics and writing pedagogy (Gibson, Marinara, and Meem, “Bi, Butch, and Bar Dyke: Pedagogical Performances of Class, Gender, and Sexuality”; Wallace, “Out in the Academy”; Alexander, “Transgender Rhetorics”; Marinara, Alexander, Banks, and Blackmon, “Cruising Composition”; Fox, “From Transaction to Transformation”; and Geiger II, “Unpredictable Encounters”), it is critical that we involve trans narratives in our teaching chronicles. As Jonathan Alexander writes in “Transgender Rhetorics: (Re)Composing Narratives of the Gendered Body,” “transgender theories can inspire pedagogical methods that complement feminist compositionist pedagogical approaches to understanding the narration of gender as a social construct” (45). In other words, feminist pedagogies remind us that ideological baggage pervades our institutions, and therefore our pedagogical preparation and practice; as I have argued in the review of literature, our critical orientation toward power, identity (especially gender, sex, and sexuality), and agency in the writing classroom are crucial for our ever-evolving understandings of how performative pedagogies factor into the construct of “best teaching practices” (a construct in and of itself).

will nevertheless present more of my findings categorically with the following three brackets: coming out, passing, and “and/or,” the latter of which refers to instructors who choose to opt out of making a definitive choice—or those who make many different decisions over time, depending on situational contexts and pedagogical goals. Each of these instructor-choice categories yields insight into queer performative composition pedagogies, so I will attend to each in turn, commencing with coming out.

COMING OUT

Some of my interview participants choose to come out as LGBTQ-identified to the students in their writing classrooms. My interviews suggest that this is due to a number of catalysts: the felt sense of “a queer’s duty,” a teachable moment, an icebreaker or rapport-building activity, visibility and consequent safety for all (but especially potentially queer-identified) students, or because a student asked directly about their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. To illuminate coming out as either strategic or routine responses to environmental conditions, I track in this section the experiences of Aaron, Beau, Diego, and Robert, whose richly intersectional identities I illustrate with their own words (as I transcribed them) before offering my analysis.^{22, 23}

²² According to Johnny Saldaña’s *Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*, “Strategic actions/interactions are purposeful or deliberate acts that are taken to resolve a problem and in so doing shape the phenomenon in some way,” whereas “Routines are actions/interactions that tend to more habituated ways of responding to occurrences in everyday life such as having an established protocol to follow” (133).

²³ Especially considering the nature of coming out as a process and the infinite fluidity, plurality, chronotopicality (cf., Prior and Shipka), and contestability of gender and sexuality binaries, it is perhaps obvious but nonetheless notable that queer participants identify differently at different times, an implication on which I elaborate in the conclusions and implications of my study. Therefore, these excerpts’ accuracy can only extend through the duration of the interviews themselves.

Aaron: “I am a cisgendered, white, male, gay, working class, Jewish... can you write fast enough? [laugh] ... graduate student—soon-to-be adjunct (possible) faculty?” At the time of this interview, Aaron (a doctoral candidate in his 40s who has taught composition for over a decade at several universities and in several parts of the country) taught at a large, public, Midwest Ph.D.-granting university.

Beau: “I’m old. No, just kidding [both laugh]. I’m 35. I’m white. I consider myself gay and queer to certain degrees. [. . .] Appalachian male.” At the time of this interview, Beau had been teaching college composition for over six years, and he had just accepted a full-time, tenure-track professorship and WPA position at a public, Midwest satellite campus.

Diego: “I identify as a gay man. I also identify as Latino, in my 30s, and I’m on tenure track.”

Robert: Robert submitted some of his answers to our interview in his own written prose:

Sex: Male

Orientation: Gay, Same-sex, Kinsey Scale: 6²⁴

Gender: Masculine (of a Mercurial rather than Martial sort...)

Age: 59 (becoming an Elder...)

Race: Human (mixed) [I should note here that during our interview, Robert elaborated that he passes as white but by describing himself as “mixed human”

²⁴ Alfred Kinsey developed the widely influential and controversial Kinsey Scale from his own national (U.S.), interview-based qualitative research on human sexuality. Kinsey published about this scale (0-6, with 0 indicating “exclusively heterosexual” and 6 indicating “exclusively homosexual”) for his Institute for Sex Research at Indiana University during the 1940s and ’50s.

he's "fucking with the categories" as an activist site of protest and as a lesson to his students; more technically, Robert traces his heritage as English, Irish, French, German, Scottish, and Native American.]

University Status: Senior Associate Professor

Personally, I identify as a Gay Male...NOT Femme and NOT Butch...but rather of the Articulate sort...i.e., I am NOT from Mars...and NOT from Venus...but rather I'm from Mercury.²⁵

To begin, let us revisit Aaron's aforementioned experiences: recall that he no longer feels the same exigency to come out as he used to when teaching in California's political climate last decade. However, *also* recall that when he did still feel that urgency, Aaron's impetus to come out in the writing classroom has historically been almost 100% political, particularly when positive and/or suasive messages can extend credibly from a body like his: "I am an authority because I'm a man, and in a 40-year-old body," Aaron self-attributes, "and I just get to say shit."

This is all to say that, although Aaron now mostly passes as straight (Recall: "I'm not sure about its continued utility"), that which motivates his comings out, infrequent

²⁵ Queer identity and astrology enjoy quite the robust relationship, both historically and in a renaissance, of sorts, of contemporary queer popularity built on a common interest in *topoi* such as anti-positivist narrative heuristics, anti-essentialist identity category fluidity, and spectral rhetorical agency. To learn more about this intersection, please reference Mannov Olesen's *Queer stars: Astrology, Queer Subjects and Knowledge Production* (2014) or Waisler and Wolfe's *Queer Astrology: Presentations from the Queer Astrology Conference, San Francisco, July 2013* (2014). From my brief research, I understand that Robert mentions some inner celestial bodies, which include the sun, the moon, Mercury, Mars, and Venus and due to their proximity to the Earth more intimately shape daily lives and moods, as they soar more rapidly through the star chart and the Zodiac. (The "outer planets" Jupiter, Saturn, Neptune, Uranus, and sometimes Pluto impact larger life happenings since their orbits unfold more sluggishly.) Though subject to much subjection, most interpret the war-lord Mars as the ruler of primal instincts such as anger, survival, aggression, and sexual desires; the love goddess Venus as the romance ruler; and communicative, expressive, volatile Mercury as analyst, sorter, and grouper.

though they may be, has been consistent: LGBTQ political activism. Whether related to a specific political policy or not, Aaron reflects on coming out in the more general context of ideological oppression. “In other situations,” for instance, “I have purposefully come out in order to challenge people’s perceptions about what power dynamics should be. [. . .] I mean, I’m gay and I’m in front of the class.”²⁶

Aaron may not feel the same political exigency, but others today do, like Beau who began coming out specifically in response to President Trump’s administration. This political catalyst motif, on which I elaborate later, pervades my research. Beau often comes out to students during conversations before class—when he mentions his partner (rather than “girlfriend” or “wife”). Even though “partner” is an arguably ambiguous term, Beau explained, it is less definitive than other spousal labels because it is more gender neutral. Therefore, he reasons that his students can interpret his use of “partner” as a moment of queer coming out, even though many ostensibly heterosexual cisgender people have popularly appropriated the term, rendering it less queer and therefore less of a queer avowal, less of a coming out.

Beau jokes that on the first day he doesn’t just offer an unfiltered *parrhēsia* like “As a gay man. . . I’m here to teach you,” but sometimes, Beau continues, he *is* more explicit and pedagogically purposeful. Once while joking with his students about a campus-wide student writing event that he’d orchestrated, he said ““Oh yeah. Wow, that

²⁶ Regarding the leverage of coming out narratives as activist tools, in “Boys’ Own Stories and New Spellings of My Name: Coming Out and Other Myths of Queer Positionality,” Robert McRuer zooms in on queer storytelling and particularly on coding coming out narratives. He demonstrates that gay and lesbian theorists and activists have critiqued homosexual coming out narratives because they are markedly and predictably scripted—rigid, constricting genres rather than queer liberations. McRuer acknowledges that when radical historical events unravel, LGBTQ individuals’ identities shift, so they must then negotiate new articulations of their identities through the genre of the coming out narrative. I elaborate on McRuer’s critique later in the “passing” section.

was, like, really gay, wasn't it?' And my students were like, 'Uh,' and I was like, 'Because I am one, so I can make that joke,' and then they were like, 'Oh,' and they really started laughing." But what motivates Beau?

Yeah. Why... So I think that's the biggest reason why. It's because, and quite frankly, when Trump was elected, and my students were devastated—the ones in our class—two actually came to my class crying and were afraid and were uncomfortable, terrified, and that's what happens. And I thought at that moment, "This is why I have to come out to my students," because I have to make them feel like they're in a comfortable place and they're in a supportive environment, that they're in a safe place, that they can talk about their lives, quite frankly. I mean, you know, what the hell are we doing if we're not attending to our students' lives and not making them feel comfortable in a learning environment, so that was kind of the beginning. And also I felt kind of like a hypocrite. Like if I teach about all this shit [queer theory in a themed FYC class], then why shouldn't I come out, then? You know? I mean, if I'm asking them to just talk about their own gender identities, to talk about their own, why would I not disclose mine, too? And also [laughs] at 35 I just don't give a fuck. I mean, I'm—this is who I am.

Aaron and Beau feel politically motivated to come out to their students, to "tell the truth" about who they are in acts of avowal, *parrhēsia*, since the *tropoi* of their coming out narrative and impact their *ethoi* as authoritative, political bodies with knowledge, experience, and credibility.

Diego and Robert's motivation involves pedagogical utility too; however, their vision responds not so much to political efficacy as it does to a desire to foster classroom community. Diego and Robert come out on the first day of the semester to their entire classes as an icebreaker activity.

"I don't make a big deal out of it," Diego said. "Just in passing, I guess." As Beau mentioned, Diego comes out *in passing*, which (in addition to its superficial double entendre and its rich potential for linguistic complexity/playfulness) offers insight into a different strategy: building rapport with his students. He believes that most of them will appreciate his candor and vulnerability, even if others might interpret his avowal as political and agendized.

The way I do it now is I have a day when I talk a little bit about who I am and, you know, where I'm from, and so I do talk about how I live with my husband, and that kind of outs me in that regard, so it's not necessarily this long thing about my beliefs or my pedagogy or anything along those lines. It's more just as a get-to-know-you kind of a thing.

Rather than *parrhēsia* here, Diego employs coming out as more of a *technê*, a strategic rhetoric of *pathos* that is less performative and embodied and more objective and functional: beyond just breaking the ice, Diego's outcome for coming out is to motivate his otherwise reticent students to speak up due to increased rapport. His theory is that if the instructor shares something personal, then the students might feel more comfortable to share as well. This becomes evident in his later reflection, worth quoting at length.

Yeah, but [sigh] even then, I think that there *is* a pedagogical intent, not so much for the coming out piece as much as the icebreaker, get-to-know-you part.

Currently [laugh] my population of students right now is very quiet. They feel very... anxious, and they feel kind of nervous about sharing anything, even if I really hardly ever ask them to share anything about themselves. [. . .] So my newest approach recently has been to try to take some days to “put myself out there” a little bit so that they know a little bit more about me in the hope that they relate to me a little bit more as a person and not just this evaluator. I think it’s time well spent; I’ve noticed that folks are a little less reticent—that they’re more, not *eager*, but willing to say what they think, so there is a pedagogical reasoning. [. . .] I think this [FYC] is the best place for it. But I will say that this isn’t something that obviously has been easy, because I think that if—how do I phrase it? [laughs]—I feel like if I were to miss that opportunity at the beginning, I don’t know if it would be something that I could bring up, necessarily. I would kind of struggle with that, and there have been times in the past when I felt like... I felt like—for whatever reason (It’s hard for me to put myself back in those situations in the past.)—but when I felt like I needed to come out to my students, there was some kind of urgency, some kind of exigence, and it felt a little more awkward, like, why is this coming up [laughs] right? [. . .] It always seemed to be something... disingenuous? Insincere, you know? [. . .] I feel like doing it at the beginning sets the stage; it lets them know who I am on-on a very superficial level, um, but it’s still something.

For Diego, part of the point of coming out involves vulnerability and exposure—exposure for *all* students so that they can begin to challenge and question dominant narratives of heteronormativity through pathetic appeals during a kairotic moment. Diego

also reflected on an exposure that's specifically and uniquely for potentially queer students—so that they can feel comfortable *vis-a-vis* a demonstration of allyship and even mentorship. He said, for instance: “I’ve also thought ‘well, what if there is a queer student in-in the classroom? Would it be helpful to know that there’s someone else in the room?’ I don’t know the answer to that, but I feel like, well, that’s something that they—something extra they can think about.”

Others mentioned that, like Diego, their students have motivated them to come out. Marcus said, “I have students, who have various sexual identities or whatever, come out and say that in the classroom.” And Amanda offered an even more explicit interpretation of the positive impact of coming out to students, “I think it’s important to come out in the sense that it can be really meaningful for the queer students who are in the room—to actually find somebody who can be a model or a mentor—just see somebody out in the world.” Finally, Robert also recognizes the possible presence of queer students. He jested, “I’m sorry: I know that there are lesbians and gays in my class. I can tell [laughs]. I have ‘Gaydar.’” In fact, similar to Diego, Robert comes out to all of his students at the same time at the beginning of the semester: “At the beginning of each semester, in each course, we of course have the ‘getting to know you.’ And then I call down the roll, and the person that interviewed them introduces them, okay? I’m in the roll. So when we get to me, I say, ‘Well, okay, you’ll wanna know something about me.’” Robert specifically mentions his “partner”—specifically that title—which for him (like Beau argues earlier) is a way to come out in every class, just as Diego (also a cismale) uses “husband.”

We can deduce not only from the interviews, but also by mining the survey data that, though arguably all participants in my research comprise a marginal community, privileged identity intersectionality matters (a notion on which I expand in the next chapter). Privileged identity intersectionality is largely what enables, for instance, writing instructors like Aaron, Beau, Diego, and Robert to come out in their classrooms. They're also all cis men and seasoned professors. Their privilege is, to some degree, visibly encrypted into their bodies, legible in such a way that enables them safely to visibilize their queer identity intersection(s), at least more safely than some of their queer colleagues in other classrooms: visibly *not* visible in this section, for instance, are women, trans men and women, and newer faculty and GTAs, many of whom calculate anticipated risk and execute the informed, deliberate, pedagogical choice to pass. Passing, therefore, is the subject of the next section.

PASSING

Some of my interview participants typically choose to pass as straight and/or cisgender to the students in their writing classrooms—at least for now. And, while certainly passing is ultimately and only actualized in its reception, and my study cannot account for how students are reading and responding to their instructors' performances of identity, this section focuses on instructors' *intent* to pass (or not) rather than their "success."

Also, before inspecting my research participants' passing pedagogy practices, I must briefly spotlight a critical distinction: passing *as* versus passing *for*. In perhaps the richest work on pedagogy and passing in our field, her monograph *Passing & Pedagogy*:

The Dynamics of Responsibility, Pamela L. Caughie devises a new meaning for passing as a metaphor for *all* subjectivity. While Caughie subscribes to a theory of passing *for* (a way to interpret and understand *all* forms of subjectivity), my colleagues often operate the term *passing* more “traditionally” or conventionally to signify passing *as* something, someone, somewhen that you’re not.²⁷ Since my research participants are exclusively

²⁷ Due to the intricacy of Caughie’s distinction, it’s worthwhile to break out this extended footnote: since “[p]assing’ in its most traditional usage refers to the practice of assuming the identity of another type or class of persons in order to pass oneself off as a member of that group, for social, economic, or political reasons” (20), it is an act of appropriation that (thus) “at once reinforces and disrupts the binary logic of identity” on which it relies (21). Therefore, passing “carries certain pejorative connotations of deception, dishonesty, fraudulence, or betrayal. It designates an effort to disguise or suppress one’s racial heritage, racially marked body, or sexual orientation” (20). Perhaps less reductive is Caughie’s account of passing *for*: “‘Passing’ in my use, without the ‘as,’ names a practice in which an original model or presence can be neither presumed nor assumed. Instead of attempting to (re)claim the real thing, I am arguing, we can (re)claim the act of passing as itself an ethical [*ethos*-oriented] practice” (25).

That is, for Caughie, passing (rather than “a concept that implies a misrepresentation of oneself”) involves “the constant slippage from the discursive to the embodied, from the represented to the real thing” (3, 187). Just as a writer might *imitate* linguistic grammars and/or perform them via the rhetorical canon *elocutio* (“style”), the performing teacher-subject might more or less successfully navigate “slippage between mimesis [imitation] and performativity [elocution]” and can subsequently capitalize on, get lost in, or otherwise manipulate these moments of slippage in their classrooms. Indeed, “[p]assing in pedagogy recognizes that slippage as inevitable” (86). This is because “*all* subjectivity is passing, even the subject position of the teacher-scholar who is engaged in the deconstruction of identity” (2, my emphasis). For Caughie, *passing* functions as a comprehensive metaphor for pedagogy (and the agents who populate pedagogy—students, teachers, texts), as it is a phenomenon “central to the structural dynamics and ethical imperatives of the pedagogical relation” (1). As I hope to have adequately demonstrated through Caughie’s arguments, the metaphor *passing* positively saturates our profession—passing remarks, passing in the hallways, passing classes (or not), and of course passing *as* various identities that we are not and *for* various subjectivities that we are. And, for Caughie, passing is necessarily bound up in notions of power and author/ity:

[T]he desire to pass structures our identifications, motivates our performances, and defines our relations to others in the classroom and in the profession. Passing confers authority, not only on the one who passes, but also on the one who awards the passing grade, for no single act shores up the authority of the professor and reaffirms the status of the discipline more than the act of determining who passes. (57)

Caughie draws from Heidegger, Husserl, Hegel, and Sartre, all of whom are of the argument that it is not materials themselves but our *experiences* of them that—forgive the entendre—*matter*. In this phenomenological sense, *all* identity performativity, whether that subject’s becoming includes instances of avowal (e.g., “coming out”) or disavowal (e.g., passing *as* Other), is passing *for* the phenomenological subject. That is, paradoxically, even a person who “comes out” regularly is passing *for* a subject who is “out of the closet.” Passing, in essence, is a discourse and a literacy of power, and by coming out, or merely by *not passing* (as), one risks much because passing involves “mastering not just the grammar of another

interested in the more “traditional” operative of passing *as*—straight, cis, butch, femme, able-bodied, neurotypical, more experienced, younger, older, etc.—that specific interest therefore will focus my analysis. For my interviewees, though, passing might sometimes seem like an inaction, like a “not-choice” or, as opposed to a “come out,” an opt-out or a cop out. For my interviewees, passing is a (albeit sometimes *passive*) performative choice. That is, even though passing indeed involves *opting* out of the choice to *come* out, it also indeed involves the *opting in* to the choice to blur, mask, ignore, erase, (re)write, lie, trick, allude.

My research participants who choose often to pass—Leah, Charles, Alex, and Marcus—help confirm existing knowledge in the field, that those who pass often do so as a response to a direct question from a student regarding their sexual orientation and/or gender identity or because they find their sexual identity irrelevant, non-topical, and/or inappropriate (because it is *too* sexual). I will now introduce this set of passing participants, illustrate passages from their interviews about how and why they pass, and theorize their experiences. First, let us hear more of my research participants introduce themselves:

Leah: “I identify as female and feminist. Those are also not related, but both important. I do pretty hardcore identify as working class. I think about that a lot. Um, and white, which I don’t think about as much because I don’t have to because I have white

language but its characteristic gestures and intonation so that one can perform as a ‘near native speaker’” (35). In other words, passing is “the acquisition of linguistic and rhetorical skills, not the assumption of another’s identity” (35). Those risks for the person passing (*as*), then, include “not being detected but being corrected, being exposed as a fraud not because of who she really is but because of what she is professing to be” (35). Therefore, Caughie’s “passing” in its crudest definition is the performativity of subjectivity; Caughie’s passing is a metaphor for the *whole* “subject,” for the phenomenological self, the “I”: Passing *is* us; we are passing always / all ways.

privilege. [. . .]. Am I technically middle-aged? I don't really know." Leah identifies as bisexual and, at the time of this interview, she had been teaching high school and college English literature and composition for over seven years. She had just accepted a full-time, tenure-track teaching and administration position at a large, public, Midwest Ph.D.-granting research university.

Charles: "So: cis, gay man, white, though not always interpreted as white [laughs], millennial (I have no problem adopting that persona) [laughs . . .]. Middle class, I would say, even though I make [laughs] not what middle class—well, I come from a middle-class family, though." Also, at the time of this interview, Charles (age 22 and a first-year instructor of composition as a M.A. teaching assistant) taught at a large, public, Midwest Ph.D.-granting university.

Alex: In her completed survey, Alex indicated that she is a white, 27-year-old, cisgender lesbian who was at that time teaching her eighth semester of college composition as a doctoral candidate at a large, Southern Baptist university in the South.

Marcus: "So I identify as gay, and I identify as a gay man. I use the pronouns 'he, his, and him,' and I'm African American. I am 32, and I'm an assistant professor at [small, private, Jesuit (Catholic), liberal arts university in New England] and I'm tenure track, so I just finished up my tenure review last year." Martin has been teaching composition for 10 years.

Leah, Charles, Alex, and Marcus strive to pass as straight and/or cisgender instructors to the students in their writing classrooms, at least for now. In order to move forward, let us first rewind: As I discuss earlier, Alex teaches at a large, Southern Baptist university in the South, and when she completed my survey and indicated her interest in a

follow-up interview, rather than offering just her email address (as the question prompts) Alex shared a fascinating, unique request:

Are you willing to be contacted for a voluntary follow-up interview? If so, please provide your email address: Yes. I will provide two email addresses, my institutional one [redacted] and an old institutional one that is now personal [redacted]. I'm providing a non-institutional email address because the reason that I do not "come out" to my students (or anyone, really) is that my current institution is a "non-affirming" Christian university (i.e. you cannot be LGBTQ and in a relationship and continue to work at the university). If your email is vague, feel free to email me at my [institutional] address. If it is specific (identifying me as LGBTQ), please use the [personal] address.

I selected Alex as an interviewee not only because she was one of those rare participants who "chooses" to pass in every class (bearing in mind that according to Butler her "choice" is illusory, exacerbated particularly clearly in Alex's constrictive context), but also of course because of this exceptional institutional context that conditions her choice and its consistency. During our interview, I asked specifically about her experiences at a large, Southern Baptist university. When Alex said more, she revealed that

You should—you *cannot* be an LGBTQ person and in a relationship and be out and remain, according to the bylaws, remain on faculty or staff at [my university]. Now, what's really interesting about that is that tech—the technicality of the bylaws is that you essentially have to be [sigh, laugh]... So, technically at [my university], the only way that they can actually take action to, like, fire you, if tech—if they can prove that you are sexually active. So orientation, uh, is not

enough to, like, mmm get you fired, but being in a relationship potentially could be—particularly if you are very open about your kind of sexual behaviors or if you are—so it’s a—just a very tricky place to work because, uh... and students are offered a protection that faculty and staff are not, so I—and being a graduate student and an instructor at—is such a strange—for so many reasons—in-
intersection of identities.

Clearly, evinced in the many pauses and stammers, Alex has trouble even capturing her situation with words, I believe due to the chimeric, disparate nature of the intersection of her queer identity, desire for “authentic” pedagogy performances, and non-affirming place of work. Considering that context, when asked whether she comes out in her classroom, Alex answered: “Hmm. Yeah, this is a good question. So—no, I don’t because I can’t.” That is, Alex passes as straight in every class. If she were to come out... well, “It would become an issue fairly quickly if I did,” Alex goes on to explain, because her religious university is non-affirming, and even if that *weren’t* the official institutional stance, Alex describes the majority of students as “young and Christian,” that “a good number of them come from traditions that are non-affirming, and while a lot of them start to think through some of the questions about gender and sexuality while they’re at [my university], they don’t—they are not—they are *definitely* not all affirming from the get-go.”

For Alex, who finds herself interested in authentic performances of identity in her classroom and in inclusive, open, and safe pedagogies, this creates what Caughie might characterize as an *impasse*. For example, Caughie writes, “All passing is marked by the double bind that opens up a discrepancy between what one professes to be and how one is

actually positioned in a society, institution, discourse, or classroom” (105). Authenticity, as a construct complicated by both phenomenology and reception theory, underscores rhetorical tension between the real and the fake; as Caughie also notes: “We seem to be caught between denial and deception. This is our impossible position [. . .] as teachers and students in the multicultural classroom” (140). Alex assuages her paradox as much as possible through a rhetorical strategy *to prépon*, or cloaking a performance in a style that is most appropriate for context and audience. *To prépon* highlights the double-bind that Caughie theorizes and that Alex lives: she wants to perform authentically and wants to perform appropriately.

To reconcile the double-bind, Alex shares personal stories during class—without disclosing any specific identity intersections. Even when students directly ask about her sexuality... “I don’t come out very much as anything—as a Democrat, as a... you know.” This is because “I definitely want my students to feel that they get to know me and that they get to know my personality as I am expecting and asking them to be usually fairly open and vulnerable. In our writing workshop class, I don’t know how you can’t.” While Alex is personable, though, she makes the important distinction/decision actively to avoid divulging personal information or to identify political, social, or theological beliefs—preferring instead to ask her students to answer questions that she believes challenge those dominant narratives.

Alex also mentioned that, though “it very rarely comes up where I have to kind of explicitly pass,” it *has* happened. Alex generously shared specific scenes that depict her methods of passing. Encouraging her students to be open with her and to ask her questions bears implications: “if they have questions, they can ask them—serious or

silly—and so I have had multiple occasions throughout the past eight semesters when a student will explicitly ask something about my relationship status. That’s kind of a typical thing to do around here in the [laugh] in the South.”

Students have asked Alex during class whether she’s in a relationship, what her “type” of guy is, and if she ever hopes to get married. In response, said Alex, “I had to either shut down the question, which I have never done because I want them to feel that they can ask me questions, or have to find ways to pass.” When Alex’s female student asked what her type of guy was, Alex recounted that “I wanted to say, ‘... um, none? Yeah, my type of guy is the kind that is female?’” But what she actually performed instead was a deflection—a *to prépon* redirection of the student’s question with as agendered an answer as she could invent: “I just changed it and kind of said that I was typically attracted to people who were athletic, who were thoughtful, intellectual, these kind of things, and I just never said ‘male.’” Alex reflected on how she answered the query “honestly,” which calls into question the complicated and often contradictory relationships between performance(,) rhetoric, discourse, authenticity, and avowal—philosophical questions of what are the “truth” and “Truth” of sex (cf., Foucault) especially considering the potential to tell half-truths (perhaps half-*parrhēsiae*) in rhetorical performances of disclosure.

Alex then relived “the one that has thrown me the most” during the semester right before our interview—the one when her student asked if she ever hoped to be married. This conversation was particularly affective and visceral for Alex because, well... “my partner and I *do* intend to get married—and probably would have by now; we’ve been together for 2 years, well in 6 months will be 2 years [. . .] and I think that we probably

would be if we were straight, or if we were at places that were affirming, or if we could be out, or if my family was more supportive.” When Alex’s student asked that question, “that was the hardest one to answer because the answer was, like, a resounding ‘yes,’ but also trying to navigate how enthusiastically to answer that question without provoking further follow-up questions, like ‘Do you have someone you wanna marry?’” Alex spoke about this student fondly, rather than resentfully (unlike depictions from some other instructors who interpret students’ questions as more provocative and challenging, mischievous, testing), when she described her as a student with “no malicious intent,” as a “very talkative, very friendly, very kind of nosy student—all in good nature, in good fun, an incredibly friendly, cheerful student who was asking what she deemed to be only these innocent, slightly prying questions into the life of the teacher she liked.”²⁸ In this scene, Alex told her student,

“Ya know, I personally have kind of complicated feelings about marriage. [. . .] I used to think that I absolutely did not intend to get married”—which is the absolute truth: I never thought that I would be able to get married because I said, “You know, while I thought that I would never be able to get married, there have been some things that have led to me rethinking that, and so I don’t know—we’ll have to see.” And just kind of left it at that.

²⁸ It is possible that some students participate in benevolent or malevolent “queerbaiting” or, rather than a *calling* out, wherein students make assumptions about their classmates’ and/or instructors’ identities and then feel motivated to ask certain questions, make certain comments, or choose certain writing topics that “bait” queer avowal. “Baiting” did not occur frequently during my interviews (only briefly with Alex, Andrés, and Aaron), and I did not consider it until too far into my coding methods to invite further analysis, but future research should investigate this mega intriguing phenomenon.

Alex recalls feeling particularly flustered, although she doesn't get flustered easily, because these kinds of student questions emotionally forefront uncomfortable conversations she's had with non-affirming religious figures, family members, and friends. And with herself. Such feelings in that context led to Alex's telling of the "absolute truth," an intriguing assessment due to the heavy rhetorical packaging that accompanies her avowal.

Charles teaches at a very different kind of institution, so his choice to pass in every class so far hails from quite different motivators. Charles has been "out" to his friends and family for several years ("Yeah, so, I am out, for all intents and purposes"); however, he continued, "I do not verbally come out [in the classroom], and that has a lot to do with—I don't consider myself an object lesson for my students—at this point, anyway." Charles talked about self- and others' tokenization of his lived experiences as a gay man and how he considered his identity too personal to disclose at this time, especially as a young, new instructor: "Yeah, I think it is pent up with that—not feeling completely secure in who I am as a teacher, and students—I don't know if it's a fear of students' questioning, like, 'Oh, you're a gay man, and that means you have less knowledge than me' kind of thing. I don't think that that's it. I just think it's more of I'm dealing with trying to define who I am as a teacher, and so I don't want to also have to justify who I am to students." While Alex, who clearly dearly wishes that she could share more about who she is, passes for protection, Charles passes due to his refusal to be criticized, fetishized, or tokenized in his own classroom.

Charles is not alone: in concert with other participants in my study, his resistance to essentialist productions and readings of his sexual identity evokes Kate Adams and

Kim Emery's "Classroom Coming Out Stories: Practical Strategies of Disclosure." In their article, Adams and Emery argue that one consequence of coming out is that "you will be 'the' lesbian instructor, and every [...] preconception, [...] every stereotype and misconception, will get stapled to you" (32). Kopelson has observed that *many* instructors spanning an assortment of disciplines caution us that "to come out in the classroom, more often than not, is to become *the representative* of an essentialized, preconceived, and wholly dominating queer identity" ("Dis/Integrating" 21). Kopelson draws from Butler's *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* to remind us that while, for some, coming out can be refreshing, even liberating, for others coming out can grow "exhausting" because, as Charles *et al.* anticipate, "[w]hatever you say will be read back as an overt or subtle manifestation of your essential homosexuality" (93).

Butler proceeds to argue, moreover, that all repetitive identity performances, like coming out, risk renormalization of an otherwise disruptive and potentially highly political genre—the coming out narrative (93). As Robert McRuer has argued in "Boys' Own Stories and New Spellings of My Name: Coming Out and Other Myths of Queer Positionality" although coming out narratives document, archive, and memorialize queer experience, they have also posed limitations to queer activism because of their scripts that assimilate to (hetero)normative narrative forms. McRuer writes, "This act [of coming out] provided lesbian and gay men with positions that could serve as starting points for the radical political action the early gay liberationists believed was necessary to reconfigure the systems of capitalism and patriarchy responsible for gay and lesbian oppression" (33); however, according to McRuer, coming out narratives are less radical today because they are at once historical and prolific. Have contemporary queers

forgotten that coming out has been a threshold from which to launch meaningful political action? If so, then as a consequence the “collective rallying cry ‘Out of the Closets, into the Streets’ quickly became the demand that individuals simply ‘Come out of the closet’” (35). For McRuer, queer archived texts like coming out narratives help to depoliticize queer activism’s efficacy. Kopelson deduces similar risks in her audit of coming out in the writing classroom, as “from a queer or performative perspective,” it “may be counterproductive because it is to write ourselves into existing identity categories and all the narratives that surround and support them” (“Dis/Integrating” 21).

Charles also brings a new concept to the conversation: instructors’ differing definitions of what it means for them to “pass” or to “come out.” As with listening versus hearing, by way of comparison, rhetorical acts of disclosure and deception can be passive or active. That is, some instructors might consider avoiding the topic or changing the subject as rhetorical acts that qualify adequately for passing, while others may (only) consider careful deception, dodging a question altogether, or (more actively) telling a lie as “legitimate” passing. Just like gender and sexuality, performances of coming out and passing lie and rely on a spectrum or range of possibilities.

For instance, like many other research participants, Charles troubled his own conception of passing as straight when he said,

I think in some ways I do embody, like, gayness [laughs], and so I feel like it’s writ on me. A lot of people tell me that they don’t realize that I’m gay before I come out to them, but then I think, “Okay, but you have a nose piercing, you have floral tattoos.” [laughs] Stuff like that. “People constantly tell you that you dress, well,” and [. . .] well, these things are associated with homosexuality, these things,

so it's like, "Well maybe students just know that," and I tend to—for lack of knowing what to draw on for classroom examples—I pull on stuff that I'm studying currently, and since I do a lot with queer scholarship, I find myself pulling examples from trans theory and queer theory and stuff into my classes in a way that serves as your lesson more so than—it's a very subtle lesson because I'm not focusing on the fact that it's queer, that the examples are queer.

On the one hand, Charles doesn't make a direct statement about his sexuality, so he perhaps "passes" or in essence does not come out. At the same time, he doesn't hide his sexuality either: "But it's happening within that, and so I feel like it's like a—what is that—covert, like."

Such passing is similar to Leah's, who (at the time of our interview) had only taught one class since recently beginning to identify as bisexual. "I taught a summer class last year," she said, "And I taught—so it was American Lit, it was a five-week class, and it did not even occur to me to do that [to come out in her classroom]." Leah continues:

In a way I felt both incredibly oblivious and silly. And then also, though, it makes me question how much I tell my students about any of my identities. And I don't know if I do that very much, and I think that usually I would certainly not shy away from conversations about who I am or what I'm about, and I'm sure that I let on to them, right, a whole lot more than I think I'm letting on, right?

For Charles and Leah, because it doesn't come up or because they're not ready to "get into all of that" or both, passing is not quite strategic or intentional, or at least not as strategic or intentional as some other research participants' performances. They simply

exist in their classrooms as teachers who may or may not be obviously queer. They are ambiguous, which I highlight further in the following section.

Unlike Alex, Charles, and Leah, who have *never* come out to individual students or collective classes and who have even at times expended a great deal of emotional and discursal effort to *conceal* nonheteronormative sexual and gender identity, Marcus only passes *often*. However, he allows himself the rare exception to come out—when asked directly about his sexuality. Like Alex, Marcus teaches at a Christian university—Roman Catholic and Jesuit—and that impacts his decisions in a plethora of ways. Marcus passes because of the politics (“You don’t bring *that* into the classroom.”) while paradoxically also wanting to come out in order to challenge and extend his students’ often conservative worldviews (“I want it to be a place where students can kind of wrestle with issues, especially in a Catholic context. So many of the students did grow up learning that homosexuality is a sin, and I guess I usually think, ‘What politics is that?’”) and also to offer a space where people feel safe to perform marginalized identity more or less “authentically” (“People are welcome to bring in their identities for sure.”), queer students in particular (“I have students, who have various sexual identities or whatever, come out and say that in the classroom.”).

Again, for the most part, Marcus does not come out to students—and never to all of them at one time as a class announcement. While this suggests that Marcus passes, he reflects on how his performances of gender and sexuality as a writing instructor contrast with those performances from his position as a writing student during high school and college, when he “definitely passed” with a “self-conscious, self-aware identity protection management.” To sum it up, today as a professor Marcus is “not trying to do

‘not being gay.’ [. . .] I’m *trying* to pass” (my emphasis). And, while he doesn’t *bring* it up himself, if it were to *come* up organically Marcus says that he would not deny his gay identity; he doesn’t necessarily mind his students knowing.

“That said,” he counters, “I *have* come out to *several* students, in office hours, in the hallway, etc., and so I’m—what do I want to say? I don’t want to say 100% sure, but I think most of my students, especially if they’re in our department because their/they’re majors or minors, know that I am a gay man.” For Marcus, “it’s not fully resolved how unnaturally to live out my identity in the classroom,” but in one-on-one contexts (as opposed to classrooms at large) he has shared about his gay identity with students because “it’s not a secret either, but it is kind of complicated.”

Marcus’s primarily-passing-but-sometimes-coming-out primes us for the next section, *and/or*. Other participants *also* just don’t bring it up, so while there’s no explicit coming out, there’s also no explicit passing. And sometimes instructors will both come out and pass at different moments. Toward the end of her monograph, Caughie finally addresses coming out. She writes, “Coming out is only the latest in a series of metaphors of the disclosure of the self. Getting personal, breaking silence, speaking up, coming out—these are the moral imperatives of our postmodern age” (246). Though once again Caughie theorizes on a phenomenological, performative level, we might isolate individual *performances* of passing and coming out as significant discursive sites, pedagogical tools, and rhetorical *technê*. In a culture of avowal populated by mo(ve)ments like #MeToo, celebrity coming out narratives, public corporate scandal, prolific opportunities for Internet-mediated self-publishing, and more, it is essential to consider the politics of coming out and/or passing for pedagogical spaces (especially

discursive and communicative ones like writing classrooms), as they often both reflect and foreshadow catalysts, trends, and consequences of avowal on our (inter)national stages of rhetorical performances and identity performativity. But what happens when one person passes *and* comes out—or chooses neither? We find out in these last sections.

AND/OR

When I asked my research participants whether or not they come out to students in their writing classrooms, I specifically focused on sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression. Of my 95 respondents, 3.2% strive to pass as straight or cisgender in every class and 23.2% come out to students in every class. The most common response to my question was, unequivocally, “sort of.” That is, 16.8% have never made a deliberate choice either way, 32.6% have come out to students in some classes and passed in others, and 24.2% are strategically ambiguous.

My coded interview dataset also revealed that individual instructors most often choose *neither* to pass *nor* to come out. Perhaps Mary summarized it best when she operates litotes to say, “I don’t make a statement in the class, but I also don’t *not* make a statement, you know what I’m saying?” Or Aaron’s articulation similarly echoed many participants’ positions when he responded only semi-affirmatively to the question too: “So [yes] if ‘coming out of the closet’ means that I make no effort at nondisclosure because I don’t actively come out very often.” While some of my participants, like Mary and Aaron, often actively opt out of either performance because they find the subject of their sexuality and gender irrelevant (at best) or else sexually irreverent, many of my

participants expressed that... it just doesn't come up, and so their "avoidance" of the topic is more passive.

Some instructors refuse to tether themselves to a consistent choice regarding either passing or coming out, depending on different situational contexts and targeted outcomes, but the point is that they *choose* to come out, pass, or (in this section) both/neither, and again these are either rhetorical choices with pedagogical consequences or pedagogical choices with rhetorical consequences.

Consider Charles, whose story we've already explored in part. Recall that he decides not to come out in every class he teaches and that he has never come out to an individual student; however, his passing is almost half-hearted, in that he realizes other discursal agents—clothing, course material, voice, etc.—indirectly "out" him. And he lets them. For Charles, it's actually a "covert" performance of coming out. He interprets his physical person as one that at times can (and does) inevitably "embody gayness" through its expression of various gay male *tropoi* that are visually "writ on" his cismale body—facial piercings, flowery tattoos, dressing well—and others that he voices verbally—his vocal intonation, classroom examples about LGBTQ culture, and lessons on queer theory. Though Charles characterizes his performances of identity as "covert," he also recognizes them as disruptive to his performance of otherwise straight and cis masculinity. These discursal agents "destabilize things." But are they intentional, purposeful, rhetorical? Strategic? No: Charles also clearly stated during our interview that he is not quite ready to come out to students and that he has no desire to be the "object lesson" for his students that many queer writing instructors he's talked with "consider themselves needing to be [that object lesson] politically."

Aaron reflects on instructor discourses too, though he is less interested in passing as straight. He assesses his own appearance, vocalics, clothing, etc. and concludes that it's more or less difficult to "guess" someone's identity based on discursive markers. For instance,

I don't think it's hard to figure that [gay sexual orientation] out for me, right, like if I tried to pass I wouldn't pass very well. [laughs] Right? So I think that affects how often I get the question. I think most often people just make the assumption. Right? So I don't. I don't have to do anything active except for just be in the world as me, and people just sort of make assumptions about what that means, which I'm fine with. [. . .] Sometimes I'm surprised that they don't—that they somehow didn't get the memo.

While Charles' neutral performances *are* more ambiguous, and Aaron's are less so, *neither* of them are necessarily *strategic* and performative. They are, as Caughie would say, passing *for* their subjectivity, not passing *as* straight. Kate, for example, who has come out to individual students when the situation has called for it during office hour conferences, *doesn't* come out to students collectively during class. Like Charles and Aaron and others, she also focuses on her clothing, appearance, classroom content, and other discourses as "outing agents." However, *unlike* Charles *et al.*, she *purposefully* employs these discursal agents to "try to just keep it ambiguous" because "Well, I don't want my students to think that they can assume things about me or anyone else." Of course, even though Kate would prefer to keep her students guessing, and even if Kate performs identity ambiguously in order to complicate their guessing game, the risk of student assumption is always at large.

As we can determine from these examples, sometimes the decision neither to come out nor to pass is purely discursual, coincidental, accidental or unintentional; at other times, instructors will *primarily* pass, *but also* decide to come out in response to *kairós* or “the opportune time,” or else what Elliott has called a “golden moment,” or a conditional that invites a reaction; still at other times, instructors display motivated, planned, purposeful, and rhetorical ambiguity, a *mêtis technê* or “cunning rhetoric.” In order to explore these latter two curious phenomena further, I will first discuss the *golden moment* and afterward analyze experiences from participants who choose neither to come out nor to pass, but rather to perform *strategic ambiguity*.

GOLDEN MOMENT

Mary Elliott, as I hint earlier, offers us the term “golden moment” in our field’s most seminal paper on the subject. In her oft cited “Coming Out in the Classroom” she defines this golden moment as her preferred opportunity to come out “spontaneously” to students. “Such moments occur during class discussions and thus provide a relevant context for self-disclosure,” she writes (704-05). “Though brief,” she continues, “(and thus all too easy to defer until their enabling contexts have passed), such moments can produce the same effects as more deliberate and pre-meditated coming-out acts” (705). While coming out spontaneously to a writing classroom can produce the same or similar effects as a more deliberate decision, as Elliott observes, the *difference* is that element of premeditation—or lack thereof. Writing instructors in this section (Lupé, Cash, Mary, Andrés, and Meghan) rely on these golden moments for motivation to proffer a queer performative pedagogy. As in prior sections of this chapter, I will first have my interview

participants introduce themselves to you before theorizing their coming out experiences in response to their writing classrooms' "golden moments."

Lupé: "I've been doing that [teaching English as a new language exclusively to international students] for—this is my fourth semester, so second year. [. . .] So I am nonbinary. I [was] assigned female at birth, am nonbinary. I have long identified as bisexual, but I think things got a little mucky when [laughs] gender came into play, so I like... just say 'queer.' Like, that's just super queer. Anyone who's interested—that's basically it [both laugh]. I am also a child of Mexican immigrants; I'm first generation [American], my parents are documented status, so we're good in that regard, but, you know, I grew up with being undocumented for a bit. I'm one of three kids. My brother is gay also, like an out gay man, so I've had a lot of gay role models in that regard. Yeah I think that pretty much covers that." Lupé uses "they/them/their" pronouns.

Cash: "Yeah, so I'm only 24. I'm a Master's student at [a Christian university], so last semester was my first semester teaching a writing course at a university. I taught the previous year (because this is my second year of my Master's) at a private high school in [Texas]. [. . .] Yes, so I'm not completely 'out' as a trans man to everyone, like on social media, so obviously people who knew me pre-transitioning know, but to my significant other's parents, they just think I am a man, and so right now, eventually I would like to identify just as a trans man and be very open about that, but I think that will come with me feeling more comfortable in my own body. I'm 24, and, I'm white, trying to think of other intersections... oh, my sexual identity: I identify as queer or pansexual, I guess."

Mary: "I'm Caucasian, so that's probably the easiest one, and I'm female, or present as female, and what are the others? And I'm—as far as sexuality, I've sort of not

really felt comfortable with any of the sexuality distinctions. I've had relationships with women; I've had relationships with men; I've had no relationships; so [both laugh] you know, so I don't... but I've never felt particularly comfortable identifying myself one way or the other, so."

Andrés: "I'm a graduate teaching assistant here at [a large, public Ph.D-granting university in the southern Midwest]. I have been teaching English as a Foreign Language back in Colombia for twelve years, and I started teaching English composition, which is writing, you know, reading and writing." (I share much more background for Andrés in the next chapter on intersectionality.)

Meghan: "Mhm, okay, so I am a lesbian. I use—I identify as—'lesbian.' I use that pretty interchangeably with 'gay' and 'queer,' kind of depending on the context, but meaning that I exclusively am romantically and sexually involved with women. I am cisgender, a cisgender woman, fairly femme-presenting, and as for intersections of identity, I am white. I am 28 years old. Educated: I have a Bachelor of Arts, a Master of Fine Arts, and [laughs] 4/5 of a Ph.D. [at a large, public, Midwest university.]. And I'd say economically privileged—middle, upper middle-class background. Able-bodied. That's it."

Let us begin with Lupé, for whom "it's been on and off." That is, "there are certain times I'll do it, and there are certain times I won't, and it's really context-specific [laugh] in that I get them all to try to figure out why that is." Lupé has often taught international students, but when they first began teaching, their students were domestic.

So when [sigh] my first semester here when I was teaching domestic students, I made a point of (on my PowerPoint), like I would always put Mx. [redacted last

name] like “M-X,” right, not like “Ms.” or “Mr.” Right? And I, on the first day of class, kind of explained that. I just, like very passing, just said, “Oh, I don’t really like Ms. or Mr. or any of that; I don’t really identify either way.”

Lupé recalls how some students simply forgot, and other students simply refused to use the title “Mx.,” opting for “professor” or “Ms.” instead. In another semester, it wasn’t until after the 2016 presidential election that (like Beau) Lupé chose to come out to students: “That was the semester that Trump got elected and, well, I had to have a conversation with them about that, and I mentioned again that I was a queer, nonbinary person, and that whole day was mostly me bringing it up and them never mentioning it.”

With international students, Lupé has experienced different reactions, mostly due to language.

A couple times, a student has said something that was kind of weird about sexuality, and I’ve said, “Oh,” you know, “I am, like…” I say bisexual because, again, I don’t wanna, like… there was this time that one of my colleagues was doing a paper on queerness as well, and he came in talking about queerness, and asked for their participation, and they were really confused about the word “queer,” and so when these conversations have come up, I would say “bisexual,” right? And they were really one-on-one. I didn’t make a class announcement like I did the first semester, and that’s how it’s been thus far, and I’ve thought about maybe doing something more vague this semester, but it just… it never feels natural, you know? It feels like it’s an unnatural segue to bring it up, you know? So that’s been my experiences.

Lupé's comments are evocative of Cynthia Nelson's argument in her *Sexual Identities in English Language Education: Classroom Conversations* that there are extra risks associated with coming out (and passing too, arguably) to English language learners who are already grappling with language proficiency—avoiding coming out might “shield students from the potential frustration of having reactions that they could not adequately express in the second language” (107).

And then there are instructors like Cash, a trans man who, recall from earlier, has wrestled with the discursive tension of his preferred name and his birth name that appears in institutional genres. Cash explains that his students ask him personal questions and that he's “really open with them. They're just—they're really great about it.” Cash chose to tell a joke about the discrepancy. He told his students, “The only thing that concerns you guys is when my voice cracks in class.”

Cash has been so open because he finds the alternative, liminality, uncomfortable: “For me the—I don't know—the ambiguity of this was more unsettling than just gettin' it out there.”

So I legally changed everything over Christmas break, and so whenever I went back into the Spring semester, [my university] still hadn't changed my name and gender marker in their system soon enough, so I had to come out again because my name as the instructor was still my birth name... and this time was a lot better because I just pass now as a man, and so most of my students kinda did the strange, little “cocking their head to the side” where they were trying to figure out... if... I don't know—it was just obvious that they were a little bit confused because I just looked like a dude to them [both laugh].

Particularly noteworthy is Cash's self-described openness with students about his homosexuality; but what does that mean if in actuality he is not "coming out" and "opening up" with his trans identity but "staying in" and "closing off" by passing as a cis man? Trans identity complicates concepts of performative openness and authenticity: transitioning a body's biological sex so that it maps more perfectly onto gender identity and expression in one way signals a deep effort at performing identity authentically; however, such gender expression also signals a deep secrecy and concealment of a "former self." Trans identity also complicates the passing/coming out binary by dismantling it even further (beyond destabilizing the myth that there are only two options: coming out of the closet, or staying inside it) by adding dimensions of gender identity and expression alongside axes of sexual orientation and by contributing generously to the notion that coming out is a continual process—especially considering people who are in transition, people who experience a "death" of one self and the "birth" of potentially multiple others.

Cash's assessment of his classroom as this often uncomfortable, liminal space is akin to Mary's; she began our interview, for instance, by reminding us that "[t]eaching is not always a friendly thing to be doing" and that one of our jobs is to stay on topic. "So I think it's not that I get up in front of the class and say, 'Oh,' you know, 'I'm your teacher, and I'm pansexual'—I teach writing classes, right, so it doesn't really fit in with the writing class," Mary said. In other litotic words, "I don't really think my personal life is the subject matter of the classroom; however, it is the subject matter of interpersonal relationships [laughs]. So I guess I sort of think of it that way, like: I don't not. I don't

necessarily not do it in classes, but I also don't actively do it because I just wouldn't do it anyway, you know?"

While Mary has taught classes on sexuality and writing (and whereas "in those classes, I mean, most everybody in the class comes out at one time or another—and, I would think, including myself—but that's not the usual class that I teach"), she also cites several reasons for why she does not come out in any of her other writing classes: that students get distracted by teachers sharing about their personal lives in general,

and definitely sharing their sexuality, you know [. . .] I don't—I just don't—I don't share any of those things. [. . .] They may think about that anyway, but you definitely don't want them thinking about that. [. . .] It would just become a distraction for students, which I think is my way of saying I don't want them to think about me having sex all the time.

This is similar to Aaron, who also in the past has come out and now chooses to pass—in part because he considers his sexual orientation an inappropriate and too-sexually-saturated subject for his students to be thinking about. He said that coming out "always changes the relationship" with students because...

queer or not, there's a way in which disclosure of sexuality and sexual practices in the classroom creates an intimacy that wasn't there before, and I'm not sure whether that's good or bad, because whether I'm explicit about sex or not, that admission, or that avowal, or that confession carries sexual meaning with it, right? They're thinking about sex. They're thinking about how *I* have sex. I don't know how I feel about that. I don't know if I want that kind of intimacy with my students. I think I have really good relationships with my students, but I don't

think that they need to know everything about my life at the time. I think there are healthy boundaries to be had there. And there's been a ton written on that, right, and I've read it all. [Laughs] And I still don't know what I think about it.

Mary's and Aaron's assessment that their personal (read: "sexual") life, is inappropriate for the writing classroom underscores the significance of this study's application to composition pedagogies in particular. As Kopelson has argued in "Rhetoric on the Edge of Cunning," and as I have already elaborated in the beginning of this chapter, the writing classroom offers a unique context in which to come out because of writing courses' perceived neutrality and, therefore, because of students' interpretation of any disruption of that neutrality as a threat to political sanctuary (and their subsequent resistance).²⁹ Indeed, "to teach composition is to encounter resistance on multiple levels," according to Kopelson (16). Rooted in both enthusiasm for ostensibly their last writing class (haha) and resentment at their obligation to complete a writing class at all, student resistance has "evolved from a rudimentary resistance to the writing course per se into resistance of the writing course as 'inappropriately' politicized" exacerbated by the "'imposition' of race, class, gender, sexuality," etc. on their otherwise "'neutral' course of study" (16-17).

Such a performance in an otherwise "neutral" space risks ostentation due to a conflation of sexual orientation with deviant sexuality, with scandal, and with an

²⁹ Kopelson's depictions of early 2000s composition classrooms in "Rhetoric on the Edge of Cunning" (2003) and "Dis/Integrating the Gay/Queer Binary" (2002) remain relevant. Morris Young's (2015) *Keywords in Writing Studies* essay ("Identity") posits that, the college classroom has come to reflect transformations in our national population and therefore to invite more students into the Ivory Tower doors (with spikes in student diversity from various intersections of identity, including race, class, gender, age, ability, sex, sexuality, ethnicity, nationality, military status, etc.), and that therefore one of the most important exercises of the term *identity* has been a pedagogical one, for our compositions classrooms have continued to form contact zones (cf., Pratt) rife with competing politics replete with student—and instructor—resistances.

inappropriate sexualization of the curricular (Chapkis 15). As Edward Ingebretsen has demonstrated, “coming out” is an “opt in”—to the specular, the spectacle, the spectacular, and its spectators (student interlocutors) may well observe their instructors “becoming not just the text, but the sex-text of the classroom” (Kopelson, “Dis/Integrating” 21). In other words, when teachers discuss sexuality, for instance when they come out in their classrooms as queer, they risk hypersexualization and therefore hyperscrutiny, -censorship, and -regulation. Students interpret their teachers’ performances of queerness, including coming out and extending potentially to any revelation about their personal lives, as metonymic of an unsolicited “woke” pedagogy; therefore, they resist, or at least instructors will anticipate their resistance.

The risk of constant disclosure is even more precarious for writing instructors like Andrés, who often teaches classes on topics ranging from gender studies to queer theory and LGBTQ studies. As Mary said, almost everyone has the opportunity to come out in these classes, and Andrés offers no exception. “In a way, I am coming out to my students because of the topics of my syllabus and my class, but at the same time I am not, so in a way I am framing my discussions in academic terms, but at the same time I am putting something personal in the classroom.” This is so very evocative of the “cloaked half-truth,” the *parrhēsia* that is actually *to prépon*, a half-truth rhetoric of avowal cloaked in propriety, which reminds us that (just like gender and sexuality themselves) binaried, essentialist, and positivist constructions of “Truth” are utopic—nowhere.

Similar to Mary, Andrés typically does not disclose his sexuality so explicitly, however, and only has done so when students have directly asked him about his sexual orientation:

There is only one time when this student asked me in front of everybody if I was gay, and I was... it was uncomfortable because I had never done that before and also because that's myself being on the spotlight, and because we're used to hiding that part of our sexuality for such a long time, it became uncomfortable when people ask, "Are you gay? Are you bi? Are you straight?" (But they don't ask you if you are straight because they assume people are straight.) But he asked me, and I was like, "Yeah, I am gay."

As in Aaron's experience, Andrés interprets this exchange as one riddled with power: "there are some other students that feel entitled to challenge my sexuality in front of everyone." Aaron's and Andrés' experiences are similar to Meghan's, but hers seem exacerbated due to her intersectional identity: they're all gay, but Aaron (white) and Andrés (Latino) are older cismen, and Meghan is a younger white woman, so their experiences of sexism and ageism in their respective classrooms of course differ, even (and especially) when examined through the lens of homophobia. Meghan has come out to entire classes (albeit rarely). She recollects moments during office hours and conferences that she has come out to individual students, especially those who are LGBTQ-identified in some way, and she has also chosen in some instances to pass as straight, and she owes the inconsistency to the complexity of coming out consequences. She said,

Mhm. Yeah, I'd say—I've been thinking about it a lot in past experiences in different classes since I knew we were going to be talking about it, and it's been really complicated for me and something I've kind of struggled with, so I would say that I have no, one answer that can cover all of my classes or even all my

classes that I've taught recently. It's very, contextual, I guess, for me. But I will say I never come out on the first day of class when I'm introducing myself.

Like others, Meghan “inadvertently” comes out to students when she strives to create a queer-inclusive and safe pedagogy for students by discussing her dissertation research about queer activism, offering examples of LGBTQ organizations during class discussions, and visibly displaying subtle signifiers such as the rainbow sticker on her classroom computer or wearing a rainbow bracelet during Pride Week on her campus.

Similarly, Aaron described how “sometimes I withhold it,” and that “it depends on the power dynamics in the given conversation.” Aaron then launched into a story about a student who once asked about his “wife,” even though “I remember thinking at the time that there was no... it wasn't relevant to the conversation we were having.”

This student, as Aaron interprets the exchange (one of many throughout the semester from this same student), was “fishing” and “challenging” his authority publicly in front of the other students in the class, testing the degree to which Aaron might divulge personal information—specifically debatably damning information that might compromise his authenticity, authority, and respectability for others in the class—depending on how he responded. Incidentally, his response was to “sidestep.” The student “was looking for a way to be dismissive, and so I chose not to give that to him at that time.” This is because, rather than capitulating to coercion, when it feels like a confession, Aaron feels a degree of ownership over his coming out narrative and with whom he chooses to share it—disclosure on his own terms. During our interview, for instance, he simulated a hypothetical response to his student: “That doesn't belong to you. It's mine.” One example of exercising command over his coming out decisions is

treating avowal as a valuable operative, most often during a kairotic opportunity, or what Mary Elliott might call a “golden” moment:

I think I kind of only do it when I think it’s useful in terms of opening a conversation or teaching something or challenging in a small, identifiable, real way. ‘Cause it’s one thing to talk to students about cultural production and hegemony. And it’s another to show them in small moments when they’re talking to me, and generally I get along well with most students. I’ve very, very rarely had students like that one student who’s sort of challenging and I had a hard time with him all semester [laughs], but by and large I tend to have really good relationships with my students, so I sort of count on that and sort of leverage it in those moments.

Those *golden* moments, as Elliott would say. Coming back to coming out and returning, here at the end of this subsection, to Elliott, let us highlight her distinction between responding to a golden moment “spontaneously” and a “deliberate” or “premeditated” decision. While some feel uncomfortable coming out until the external motivation of responding to the golden moment, one drawback is the aftermath. Elliott writes, for instance, “For me, the effects include a crashing heart and a sense of having stepped into a vacuum that provides no easy way back into my own body, let alone the classroom” (705). This is why some writing instructors prefer to map out their coming out with a strategic plan beforehand—a strategic plan of ambiguity.

STRATEGIC AMBIGUITY

Aaron has proven to be a particularly intriguing, anomalous research participant in that I have excerpted passages from his interview transcription to highlight *every* section—processes and contexts, coming out, passing, and/or, the “golden moment,” *and* now strategic ambiguity. Though at first this may seem counterintuitive to the discrete performative categories I have drawn, that’s okay: Aaron’s ever-evolving decisions reflect the queer nature of queer performativity that indeed resists discrete, definitive categories and binary logic. That is all to say that, even if Aaron currently (or at least at the time of our interview) chooses to avoid direct, explicit rhetorics or performances of coming out, he still maintains that “obviously I’m disclosing it all the time. I walk around with striped, green socks [both laugh]. It’s not actually saying anything, but it is.”

This is ambiguous, even though it’s not really *strategic*. In this instance. But at other times, Aaron is quite strategic, even going so far as to name these instances as “teachable moments.” So let us continue by returning once again to Aaron, who does not come out, but also does not *not* come out; he extends this ambiguity with the express goal of teaching. Indeed,

It’s only to create a teachable moment like, “You [addressing a hypothetical student] can’t just make those kinds of assumptions, and certainly you shouldn’t be that comfortable making those assumptions about people who are sitting across the desk from you. You don’t know. You don’t know that about me,” which is I think most often the way that the coming out happens—when I encounter a moment when I’m like, “You don’t know that about me.” And I think those assumptions are dangerous and counterproductive. So most often in order to I

guess facilitate a moment where students' comfort in their own worldviews is challenged a little bit. Or not even worldviews, but, comfort in the heteronormativity they just sort of walk around in.

Assuming that individual instructors are not outed against their will, they bear the privilege of choice, however illusory. Therefore, one might not actively, explicitly come out, but rather obliquely come out by choosing not to put effort into passing performances—and therefore allowing student audiences to make assumptions regarding their sexuality and gender and, furthermore, to reflect about constructions of identities in general. Specific subcategories of performative coming out surfaced in my coded interviews, and they include: curricular examples of the instructor's research, citations of current events, queer reading/writing assignments, and various verbal and nonverbal discourses (such as clothing, vocal inflection, vocabularies, and/or other performances).

And this is all critical because of what it yields from a rhetorical standpoint and from a performative pedagogy perspective: while *ambivalence* (often related to topicality) refers to instructors' inattention or nonchalance concerning coming out, *strategic ambiguity* refers to an instructor's *pedagogically purposeful* performance of ambiguity. In contrast to the rhetorical aims of Gayatri Spivak's famed *strategic essentialism*, Kopelson's "strategic ambiguity" rather constructs "*productively indeterminate* teacher-identities that exceed, confuse—queer, if you will—our always-already-read queerness/difference itself" (565, original emphasis).

Therefore, strategic ambiguity marks any time an instructor proffers a political goal of teaching/resisting through a purposeful performance.³⁰ Most of my participants find themselves interested in this tactic of “keeping their audiences guessing,” for such ambiguity makes room for a teachable moment.

In other words, they participate in an activity that Jack Halberstam might call a “queer art of failure”—a failure to conform to be read (by their students) in a way that supports the oppressive, dominant, binary-narrative logic of gay/straight or cis/trans. Their ambition? Well, many of my research participants have shared that, with their performances of strategic ambiguity, they intend to expose and critique a particularly

³⁰ Kopelson has also discussed academic neutrality, a related but quite different teaching tool. *Academic neutrality* anticipates student resistance to politicized pedagogies (particularly when, as she claims in her abstract for “Rhetoric on the Edge of Cunning” that “[i]n today’s classroom and larger cultural climate, overtly politicized ‘critical’ composition pedagogies may only exacerbate student resistance to issues and identities of difference, especially if the teacher is marked or read as different her/himself”) and tries to calm the proverbial waters through an apolitical performance of objectivity. *Strategic ambiguity*, on the other hand, toggles back and forth between plural, indeterminate subjectivities in order to keep students guessing.

To elaborate, “one possible praxis for better negotiating student resistance is the performance of the very neutrality that students expect of teachers” and “[t]he performance of neutrality I am advocating is a deliberate, reflective, self-conscious masquerade that serves an overarching and more insurgent political agenda than does humanist individualism. It is never a stance that believes in or celebrates its own legitimacy but, rather, feigns itself, *perverts* itself, in the service of other—disturbing and disruptive—goals”—such as the delegitimation and destabilization of students’ binary-identity-based presumptions (“Cunning” 116, 123). Conversely, strategic ambiguity involves oscillating performances of “productively confusing, *indeterminate* modes of subjectivity (“Ambiguity and Erasure” 567). While different approaches themselves, *together* neutrality and ambiguity approach similar aims: resisting heterosexism and homophobia, and working against identity-based assumptions, in the writing classroom.

In sum, whereas academic neutrality operates *invisibly*, strategic ambiguity operates *visibly* but *indeterminately*. Neutrality heads off *resistance to* disruption; ambiguity teaches *through* disruption. In other words, neutrality’s method is “you can’t see me” and ambiguity’s method is “you see what you want to see.” (And that’s what phenomenology is.) However, I believe that Kopelson rather advocates for ambiguity over neutrality, as (incidentally) do *most* of my research participants (except for some who pass, like Alex), because while *both* ambiguity and neutrality have “prevented them [students] from discerning and resisting the political agenda that I do have, the axe that I *am* grinding” (“Ambiguity and Erasure” 656, original emphasis)... *ambiguity* may prove far more effective than *either* visibility or invisibility/neutrality because it doesn’t lead to erasure or being the token (656). Therefore, I will focus on strategic ambiguity (rather than academic neutrality) since most of my interview participants do.

insidious breed of essentialism that's embedded in heteronormativity and to encourage students to think critically about audience, identity, rhetoric, and culture.

In short, most instructors choose to express their gender and sexuality ambiguously in their writing classrooms so that they can impart a lesson—a subtle, subconscious, and even subversive lesson—about queer rhetorical performativity. For example, it is worth repeating that Martin hopes his majority of Catholic students (who grow up internalizing heteronormativity, homophobia, and transphobia) can safely and critically “wrestle” with their primary Discourses (cf., Gee). Many instructors feel that one way to offer opportunities to “wrestle with issues” is to put on an ambiguous gender or sexuality performance; if students have to guess, then they may begin to question binary logics embedded in inherited rhetorics of (hetero)normativity.

Some of my participants revealed that they achieve such an ambiguity not through explicit acts of avowal but rather through a particular brand of coming out that is performative—coded or cloaked, that is, through both verbal and nonverbal discourses that carry double entendres of queerness. But to what end? The following narratives accentuate the adroit rhetorical savviness that instructors of communication, rhetoric, writing, and language leverage so that in spite of, or perhaps *only because* of, their queer identity, they can disrupt normative constraints that have been placed on their bodies and voices and, stealthily, employ those very same constraints instead to their advantage. To investigate strategic ambiguity even further so that we can measure its pedagogical utility for (queer) writing and rhetoric studies, I will acquaint you with Kate and Amanda before turning to their purposefully indeterminate performances of queer teacherly identity.

Kate: “Yeah, so I identify as a white, cis, Appalachian, queer woman. And I describe my gender and sexuality as both ‘queer,’ which practically just means ‘pansexual,’ but I’m still working that out.” Also, at the time of this interview, Kate (age 22 and a first-year instructor of composition as a M.A. teaching assistant) taught at a large, public, Midwest Ph.D.-granting university.

Amanda: “So I may have to think about math [both laugh]. I’ve been teaching since 2007, so that’s like 11 years now. [. . .] I currently teach at [a large, public Ph.D.-granting university in the northern Midwest as a full-time, tenured graduate and undergraduate assistant professor]. I identify as a panromantic, demisexual who is also gender vague, but I feel like few people know what any of those mean [both laugh], so at various points I identify myself as being queer, or I would describe myself as being asexual or pansexual or bisexual. [. . .] I think ‘queer’ is accurate, but I don’t know if any other descriptions are necessarily accurate, but they help people get the gist of what I mean. I think the gender identity stuff is a bit more nebulous, and sometimes I just wanna say that my gender is autism, and then that helps [both laugh] people understand a little bit more, or sometimes a little bit less, because things are really interconnected for me. I think sometimes it’s really hard to figure out where, identity-wise, queerness begins and disability ends. So in terms of those intersecting identity markers, I think that that’s a really big one. I’m also white, I come from a working-class background, and now that I’m faculty it’s [sigh and stammer] it’s interesting being situated in this newer class background.”

Most critically, and as highlighted earlier, Kate is aware of such ambiguity with her performances, and she indeed attempts to emphasize it: “Yeah. Yeah, and I try not to

come out as straight either, so I try to just keep it ambiguous” because (as I quote a few pages back) “Well, I don’t want my students to think that they can assume things about me or anyone else.”

For Kate, it’s a matter of “forcing your students to not know about you, or to not make assumptions about you because what they perceived as your gender or sexual identity, and so I kind of justify not coming *out* because it has been so in flux, and so shifting while I’ve been teaching.” Kate specifically summons the words “in flux” and “shifting,” which evoke a premeditated brand of *mêtis* rhetorics during her performance pedagogy. In turn, such a performance evokes Kopelson’s “Rhetoric on the Edge of Cunning,” in which she explores *mêtis* as a “cunning” rhetoric.³¹ As Kopelson (and others, including Dolmage in “Metis, *Mêtis*, *Mestiza*, Medusa: Rhetorical Bodies across Rhetorical Traditions” and Anzaldúa in *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*) remind us, a *mêtis technê* requires savvy rhetorical foresight into both audience analysis

³¹ In Hesiod’s account, *Mêtis*, a Greek Titan (daughter of Oceanus, the ever-shifting tide), famously challenged the Olympian Zeus to a shapeshifting contest. *Mêtis*, one of Zeus’s myriad lovers, resented that he often transformed into various fauna to seduce (arguably: rape) female mortals, and so *Mêtis* reasoned that as an accomplished shapeshifter herself, she could do the same. Zeus accepted her challenge. (A prophecy foretold *Mêtis*’s powerful children; Zeus thought that by conquering her, he would avoid generational coup.) During their contest, Zeus shifted into a heifer, *Mêtis* into a gadfly, and then he into a frog to swallow her; however, having anticipated this outcome all along, *Mêtis* capitalized on this opportunity to impregnate Zeus with her child, Athena, goddess of wisdom and war (not only ironically fulfilling the “dodged” prophecy, but also incidentally reproducing another incestuous cycle echoing Cronus’ attempted swallowing of Zeus in Greek cosmology; indeed—absurdly—*Mêtis* helped Zeus evade and defeat Cronus by draughting a regurgitating potion, positioning her cunning as both his indispensable aid and ultimately his bane). For *Mêtis*, it was never about winning a shapeshifting contest, but about procreation and exacting revenge; similarly, for some instructors, it is not about students (in)correctly pinning down their identity, but about dismantling oppressive, binary logics. As Kopelson puts it, “The performance of neutrality ... feigns one purpose in the pursuit of an eventual and seemingly opposed goal” (“Cunning” 130). *Mêtis*, which translates from the Greek into “wisdom,” “skill,” and “craft” not only offers us insight into the potency of a performance pedagogy’s cunning, kairotic *technê*, but also offers her body and its performances (of gender, of reproduction, of female penetration, of disruption) as both rhetorical and queer. A body that performs *mêtis* rhetorics, then, is one that resists, sometimes vengefully, its own silencing and normativity.

and kairotic opportunity, skills that Kate applies to her classroom teaching.³² As Kopelson writes, “this ancient concept may prove an ideal rhetorical framework within which to consider the pedagogical performance of neutrality” (131). Confirming this, Kate reflected:

To teach, I dress very masculinely, so I have never worn a skirt or a dress—maybe once—which is not my normal style. I wear men’s—sometimes explicitly men’s—but usually masculine clothes. I only use gender neutral pronouns when I talk about partners to my classes, so I’ll say “I was dating someone—they, x, y, z,” as an example. I tell my students to use gender neutral pronouns for people if they don’t know their pronouns. I’m not explicitly “out” as gay. Some of my students know—So if my students come out to me, I would come out to them as well, which has happened before in a private conference. Also, some of my students—I think they just figure it out. I have come out to individual students, but in front of the class I have not come out explicitly.

Kate’s experiences again highlight the potential for nonhuman discursive agents to function as outing actants. These seem rather fateful in that not only are they quite ubiquitous and consequential to the writing pedagogy, but they are also supremely indifferent to the outcome; instead, it is up to the instructor’s decisions in either controlling or reacting to them that determine their visibility and impact. Sometimes

³² Of course, one might capitalize on attention to foresight, or what Jim Ridolfo and Dánielle Nicole DeVoss name “rhetorical velocity.” “We propose that the field needs an even greater lexicon to explain the sort of rhetorical moves made by increasingly complex strategies of delivery,” write Ridolfo and DeVoss, “a conscious rhetorical concern for distance, travel, speed, and time, pertaining specifically to theorizing instances of strategic appropriation by a third party... it’s composing for strategic recomposition” (n.p.). In other words, strategic ambiguity invites instructors and students of writing, especially in convergence with emerging modalities and media, to (re)consider rhetorical canons of invention, arrangement, style, memory, and *pronuncio* (“delivery”) as more or less velocious.

instructors will ignore them; other times, they will combat them; still at other times, they will embrace them during ambiguous performances like Kate's so that they provide lessons in language, rhetoric, writing, and culture.

As with Kate's, Amanda's priority is always language and the ways that linguistic constructions of identities (and vice versa) bear both discursive and material consequences for her pedagogy, and that is why she will most often strategically tender an ambiguous performance of her queer identity. As Nelson has argued, of course, "Language teachers might reframe such a question in a way that highlights issues of language, discourse, culture, or communication," especially for students who already question or grapple with adequate language to define themselves and their friends and family members, their identities and communities, and specifically in the context of LGBTQ identities, "to humanize queer folks" (94). It highly depends on context and opportunity for Amanda, but her strategies of coming out have involved constructively critiquing the language that her students have offered in presentations about asexual and trans people by saying something to the class at large like, "This is how I got into this body of research, and even though I might identify in this way, these are some of the things that I've learned." One specific moment comes to Amanda's mind:

A student—a queer student—in one of my classes was doing a project on Tumblr and was really denigrating asexuals—just being like, "They don't belong as part of the alphabet," like, "If you're asexual, you can't be queer." And it was a moment in part because, yes, this is my identity, but also because I know a lot about these conversations to be able to actually talk with the student, but also use it as an example to talk with the class about what the consequences of that

particular term are, what it means to identify as asexual, that asexual people might or might not be queer in the same way that gay people might or might not be queer... so thinking “what does ‘queer’ mean” as a practice and a concept.

Finally, when I asked Amanda if she comes out in her classroom, she informed me that “the answer is ‘sometimes.’” Amanda is autistic, and she works with what she calls “the filter issue.” She considers context, exigence, and *kairós* as she *strategically* works with when and how to come out. “I try to be really strategic about it,” said Amanda. “I don’t think I ever enter into the classroom situation thinking I’m going to do this. I get to know who students are first, and in large part because—again—the way that I do want it to be strategic, and I think that for a few different reasons.” Those reasons involve politically and pedagogically motivated strategic ambiguity.

Though I illuminate strategic ambiguity with merely three accounts, I hope adequately to have impressed upon their impact. To argue for the likely higher frequency of strategic ambiguity than this relatively brief dataset might suggest, I will share simply that Aaron’s, Kate’s, and Amanda’s interviews most articulately explored the subtheme, though that’s not to say that in other, smaller snippets throughout my coded research data as well as in uncoded conversations I’ve had with colleagues, more instructors do not sometimes prefer strategic ambiguity. This is also not to suggest that gendered and sexual identities are the only vehicles that inspire instructors to extend such a strategically ambiguous performative pedagogy: others cite sites such as politics, religion, ability, and a constellation of other identity intersections as avenues for queering binary positionality as teachable moments. I remind you, reader, that these choices to come out, pass, neither, both, are not *new* choices, but certainly *still* choices (rhetorical or pedagogical) motivated

by various outcomes (pedagogical or rhetorical). They are choices that respond to politics that permeate our writing contexts.

CODA

By way of summary, I wish now to evoke Meghan's interview transcription one last time. Meghan said, "I feel like I kind of come out in a lot of subtle ways, or at least come out in that these are my investments, but I kind of tend to depersonalize it by not saying, 'Oh hi, I'm [name], I'm your instructor, and I'm gay.'" So I never really come out as a whole to the whole class." Meghan said that she does not feel comfortable disclosing *any* personal information about her life. This is first because of her theorization of queer activism and second because of her experiences of pervasive sexism in her classroom. Initially, though, like McRuer, Meghan reflects on her role as a queer activist and the multifarious repercussions of coming out:

Sometimes I do get mad about society [laughs] in that me saying that I'm gay would probably be read as a personal disclosure where, say, maybe one of my straight friends who teaches happens to mention her husband off-hand on the first day of class, that's not really read as such a personal disclosure that she's implying that she's straight. So I feel kind of torn about that, too, because I'm like, "Do I—is it more of a queer activist move to come out and be like "I'm disrupting this space!" or is it maybe more to just refuse to play into the structure that makes coming out have to be this huge occasion every time you say it. So coming out in the classroom is very complicated for me [laughs].

Almost all of my research participants reflected on the power dynamics that saturate their classrooms, to which I will return and expand in the next chapter on intersectionality. As for strategy, though, the fourth most frequently brought-up concept in my interviews is “politics,” which codifies a moment when a research participant reflects on an intentional, strategic, political goal with hir decision/choice to pass or to come out. We might deduce that *all* queer teaching is political (or just that all teaching is political). Merely surviving in the world as a queer person is political.

As Diego reminds us, “*existing* as a queer person in and of itself is a political act; *surviving* day-to-day is enough.” For whatever exigency—survival, political expression, social compulsion—and to whatever rhetorical degree—subconscious, strategic, inconsistent—we are passing, coming out, or doing neither or both in our writing classrooms.

Queer theory reminds us that the ways in which we perform sexualities and genders are often political: the performative choices we make as teachers of writing—choices about who reads us as queer and about what kind of queer we offer as text—volley back an evaluation of (or refusal to be evaluated by) our own queerness, which is often disruptive.

It is in these disruptive slippages, between a performance of the “authentic” self and our audience’s interpretations of our embodied performances (as more-or-less authentic) that afford us opportunities to “wake up” and critically assess the status quo. After all, only during moments of disruption (pain, bathroom urges, embarrassment, hunger, puberty, airplanes flying over, silence, a “glitch” in the Matrix) do we notice our bodies (and others’ bodies) interacting with their composing environments. A disruption

will break up the flashback, the daydream, the reading of a dissertation. In other words, we don't realize we're watching a performance until we realize we're watching a performance. Or, as Ben McCorkle pens it, "I can sit at my desk writing, and as long as things go as expected for me, my experience of my body is subjective, phenomenal, embodied. [. . .] The second I turn the sheet of paper over and get a paper cut, however, I am temporarily removed from the embodied state, and my experience of my own body is objective" ("Whose Body" 176). Of course, one should distinguish our discomfort as queer, minoritized instructors from *students'* discomfort in encountering the Other, disruptive discomfort that can inform our performative pedagogies. As Caughie reminds us, "Passing is an appropriate figure for the anxiety of having no secure position" (12). Much like the texts we create (inanimate though they may be), teachers and students as subjects feel the performative pressures of the (un)becoming process in the writing classroom—constantly, disruptively.

For queer people, though, our bodies as they exist in hetero- and cisnormative culture, are always-and-already both disrupted and disruptive. What further mediates and therefore distinguishes our various performative modalities of disruption in the writing classroom, of course, are the additional layers of identity that intersect with our sex, gender, and sexuality—those identity intersections of disability, race, class, age, generation, geographic location, and others—all of which I explore in the next chapter.

VIGNETTE III

Every summer I teach creative memoir to “at-risk” elementary school students with a nonprofit community writing center. We publish anthologies for a program called Building a Rainbow. Once, on day one at one of our satellite sites, the director shook my hand and spied the subtle sparkle in my nail polish.

“Oh, are you wearing makeup?” she asked. “Are you... homosexual?” I was confused because it was 2017, but I looked down at my fingernails and then back up at her stricken face and said yes. She asked me either to remove it or to remove myself before the kids saw.

“It’s a shame because your boss said you were really good at working with kids’ writing,” she told me as I was leaving. “I am,” I said. “I’m really good at it.”

I also adjunct as a public speaking teacher at a Catholic Jesuit high school during some summer semesters. My students once asked me why my nails are always so shiny. I lied about the glossy topcoat and told them instead that I just... take good care of them. They asked me if I was gay. They asked me that. I told them no.

In 2019, three gay teachers were fired from Catholic high schools in Indianapolis because they violated their contract by getting married. (It was sacrilegious, and a breach of contract.) In 2019, I asked my partner to marry me, and he said yes.

I teach at a Catholic college in Indy. I have worn nail polish.

CHAPTER THREE

MEET ME AT THE INTERSECTION OF QUEER AND—

All of our stories are very interesting. Mine is particularly interesting, even to me as I've lived it, because I do live and work at the intersections of a lot of different parts of my identity that do not always flow seamlessly together. [. . .] We can't just kind of leave all of these intersections of our identities at the door when we walk into the academic space.

—Alex (research participant)

I have found Kimberlé Crenshaw's foundational concept of intersectionality inextricable from my “Do you come out in the writing classroom?” and “Why (not)?” questions.³³ Therefore, this chapter invites a more intensive and intentional investigation

³³ Scholars of critical race/identity theory, scholars of rhetoric and culture, scholars of critical pedagogy, of postmodernity, of performativity—the list goes on—find themselves indebted to law professor Kimberlé Crenshaw, who most famously operationalized the term “intersectionality” in her celebrated and prolifically cited 1989 paper “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics.” In response to an impoverished treatment of race and gender as mutually exclusive, single-axis modes of critique, Crenshaw arrives at a Black feminist framework that she names intersectionality. “I argue that Black women are sometimes excluded from feminist theory and antiracist policy discourse,” argues Crenshaw, “because both are predicated on a discrete set of experiences that often does not accurately reflect the *interaction* of race and gender” (140, my emphasis). Since its inception, other rhetoric and composition scholars have extended Crenshaw's framework with additional axes of identity, such as (dis)ability (cf., Truame) and, of most import to this study, sexuality (cf., Hammonds). Indeed, we've come as a culture to recognize more and more identity intersections as ripe sites for critical identity studies, including: economic class, social status, age, generation, religion, military status, veteran status, citizenship, nationality, ethnicity, neurology, social behavior, habitat, political ideology, physical appearance, spirituality, reproductive status, and occupation, to name but a few, and of course (most pertinent to my study) sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and biological sex.

into how intersectionality informs and influences performative pedagogies. More specifically, this chapter explores my research participants' *awareness* of their identity intersectionality and how they perceive its impact on their writing classroom coming out contexts.³⁴

I found patterns in my data about intersectional conditions, such as visible and invisible aspects of teachers' and students' bodies and minds, internal and external political and religious stakeholders, institutional and geographical contexts, and other intersections of identity and situation that impact the rhetorical dynamics of writing classroom performances. Conditions that often intimidate writing instructors to the point of passing, for instance, include: conservative environments associated with region and religion; insecurity rooted in age and experience; and pervasive misogyny and racism that discipline queer femme bodies and queer bodies of color in overlapping ways. Conversely, other conditions often invigorate writing instructors to perform queerness explicitly, or ambiguously, or more or less fearlessly—even “fiercely,” as Seth Davis might write.³⁵ These invigorating conditions include: the inherent liminality of trans

³⁴ I find my analysis extra complicated by reception theory, for instructors are often aware not only of their own intersectionality but also of their *students'* intersections, *and* of their *students'* *awareness* of intersecting identities, visible or not. More awareness makes room for more instructor agency to pursue one of many goals in our writing classrooms: political activism, language education, and/or “authentic” presentation, among others.

³⁵ Seth Davis's dissertation (which earned the 2019 CCCC Lavender Award), titled *Fierce: Black Queer Literacies of Survival*, explores the intersections of gender, sex, race, sexual orientation, and more. The dissertation specifically focuses on “how Black and queer people have made interventions through language and performance to survive larger racist and homophobic forces” and argues, for instance, that “Black queer people practice what I call ‘fierce literacies’—that is, a type of oppositional consciousness that allows Black queer people to riff off of static ideas of language and literacy to both communicate with and create community amongst friends.” We can learn from intersectional research like Davis's and like this study, which through their meaning-making seek to bring together a symphony of diverse bodies, voices, perspectives, epistemologies, ontologies, and performances of identity together and to examine them at their dialogic intersection(s), unleashing new insights into our writing pedagogies.

identity and opportunities to respond as a teacher-activist to current events (e.g., “bathroom bills,” Charlottesville, and the trans military ban).

For example, some instructors, like Beau as an Appalachian male and Andrés as a Latino, experience unique, strict constructions of and expectations for their performances of masculine gender, which are informed by geography, religion, and ethnicity. For instructors like Alex, Robert, Marcus, and Cash, Christian upbringing and religion-affiliated institutions have often required suppression of their deviant, queer identities. For instructors like Cash and Lupé, whose institutions reside in the United States’s “deep south,” contemporary politics related to gender and sex legally constrain not just their civic activities but also their curricular ones. For instructors like Meghan and Marcus, perceptions of their authority suffer a “1-2 punch” when they layer queerness on top of (respectively) oppressed gender and race. With these additional intersections in mind, it is no wonder that many instructors avoid coming out to students as queer folk. They fear the jeopardization of their teacherly authority, as well as their physical, mental, social, and emotional safety, especially considering that their bodies have often already endured debilitating racism and sexism. But before we peer through an intersectional lens to examine my interview transcriptions, let us first briefly review the literature germane to our conversation.

We can celebrate much rhetoric and composition scholarship that’s focused on identity, and even on intersectional identity.³⁶ However, we can also recognize that we

³⁶ For a comprehensive, efficient review of the term “identity” and its history in our field, please read Morris Young’s essay published in the 2015 collection *Keywords in Writing Studies*, but here and now, I will offer just the briefest survey on identity *intersectionality* in composition studies. Arguably, we inherit the first intensive, intentional integration of intersectionality into composition studies from Marilyn S.

need much more rhetoric and composition scholarship specifically on intersectionality and classroom disclosure, which is where my study intervenes. This dissertation focuses on how writing instructors navigate intersectional matrices of power in their classrooms through discursive performances of (often queer) disclosure. Also, we can harvest important, unique insights from a queer perspective that studies coming out as a particular genre of classroom disclosure, but *only* when that queer perspective is intersectional because, similar to how white light refracts prismatically through crystal, intersectionality can refract our otherwise monolithic understandings of identity performativity.

In other words, as Shereen Inayatulla argues, our “analyses of queer teacher identity can afford to be more deliberately resistant to discussions of queerness as separate from race in order to reexamine, problematize, and value our pedagogical performances as a dynamic, ever-evolving process” (n.p.). Inayatulla, a “closetized

Sternglass in 1997. Her *Time to Know Them* offers a longitudinal study of writing and learning at the college level and casts intersectionality, specifically “the intersection of race, gender, class, and age” as a “new angle” to study our work as composition professors (64). Sternglass cites sites of “cultural and personal identity” as tethered to “questions of the desirability of assimilating into the dominant culture” in our teaching of writing (70). Another notable work, *Standing in the Intersection: Feminist Voices, Feminist Practices in Communication Studies*, investigates decades of labor accomplished by feminists, particularly women of color and their allies who have approached performative pedagogies related to rhetoric, style, space, audience, institutional critique, and community activism. In this edited collection, Karma R. Chavez, Cindy L. Griffin, and Marsha Houston compile a history of “the myriad ways rhetorical and communication theories and feminist intersectional approaches impact one another” (forward). Finally, the annual CCCC Feminist Workshop (founded in 1991 by Gesa Kirsch and Patricia Sullivan), presented a session in 2017 called “Intersectionality within Writing Programs and Practices.” Together, Cristina Ramirez, Nicole Gonzales Howell, Tara Wood, Ersula Ore, and Karriann Soto comprised two featured panels, “Intersectional Feminist Practices and Ways of Knowing” and “Intersectional Feminism and Social Justice.” They explored intersectional feminisms, diversity inclusivity, and their impact on our teaching of writing, writing program administration, and rhetorical practices as social-justice-oriented meaning making. It is not until very recently in our field, through this study and the literature it cites, that “intersectionality” has itself significantly intersected with “classroom coming out” in our scholarly conversations, but to learn more about intersectionality in the field in general, I invite you to peruse a Works Cited page that Cristina D. Ramírez (University of Arizona) compiled and shared at the 2017 CCCC:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B8_eIKPyKMBy3pMTmJJY3dFdWJwOVZxWkhDOGZndzINMktR/view.

queerbrown” instructor, brings nuance to our theoretical perspective by canvassing intersectional performative writing pedagogies and reminds us that although “knowing how we are read eludes us to varying degrees and for some, it may be unknowable,” we can always create more knowledge that brings these bodies—queer, intersectional bodies and also bodies of intersectional research—together so that we may always refine our profession. Furthermore, Inayatulla’s work, like my own, asks that we remember how “the onus of examining shared tropes and discourses of a queer, racialized teacher-subject should not fall only upon those of us marked ‘of color’” (n.p.). Because closetization can occur to bodies that aren’t necessarily queer—bodies, for instance, that bear any of the range of at-first-illegible identities—an intersectional approach is, frankly, indispensable.

My findings, for instance, teach us that postsecondary writing instructors and their students find themselves increasingly, richly *aware* of how intersectional identity impacts teaching performativity, and are therefore hungry for scholarship that will help us ascertain, theorize, and ultimately utilize such awareness as we advance our profession. As we invite peer-refereed composition and rhetoric research, as we train graduate teaching assistants during writing pedagogy courses, as we develop and administer writing program ecologies, we can learn much from queer intersectional understandings of positionality, ethos, and authority.

Moreover, Mel Michelle Lewis argues in “Pedagogy and the Sista’ Professor: Teaching Black Queer Feminist Studies” that “the subject matter through the sharing of embodied knowledge at the nexus of race, gender, and sexuality is critical” not only to a “feminist intersectional analysis” but also to “a framework that appreciates these intersectionalities as a part of the performance of pedagogy” (36–39). Akin to

Crenshaw's conception of the framework, Lewis continues to assess the queerbrown instructor as "an act of 'excess'"—that is, to borrow her example, when a Black lesbian comes out in her writing classroom, it is "a performative act that explodes the nexus of 'that which is Black' *and* 'that which is queer'" (36). Of course, *this* study is particularly fretted and freighted with how queer sexual orientations and genders intersect with additional identities, something that my research participants discussed organically and at-length during our interviews.

It is no wonder that my queer interviewees often also think about a variety of their intersections because, as Catherine Fox notes in "From Transaction to Transformation: (En)Countering White Heteronormativity in 'Safe Spaces,'" the conditions that promote racism, classism, sexism, ableism, and other breeds of prejudice most likely allow homophobia, transphobia, and heterosexism to develop as well, which is why we must call attention to the complex intersectionality of race, class, gender, and ability with queerness. Indeed, as Fox argues, "heterosexism and homophobia are always inflected with race and gender" (498). Similarly, Eric Darnell Pritchard reminds us of as much in his *Fashioning Lives: Black Queers and the Politics of Literacy*. Much of Pritchard's important book (which in 2018 earned an honorable mention for the Winifred Bryan Horner Outstanding Book Award and won the Lavender Rhetorics Award for Excellence in Queer Scholarship from CCCC, the Advancement of Knowledge Award from CCCC, and the Outstanding Book Award from the Conference on Community Writing) discusses young QPOC (queer people of color) in school.

Pritchard also flags important limitations to existing queer rhetorical studies and queer composition studies, much of which has been conducted with *white* participants to

investigate how factors like race, religion, and gender vastly impact when and to whom queer people may come out. He writes,

Another area of LGBTQ studies in LCR [Literacy, Composition, and Rhetoric] concerns questions of LGBTQ identity formation and affirmation in student writing, particularly issues of “coming out” and other forms of sexual and gender identity disclosure. Many of the earlier works concerns how students and teachers navigated coming out in writing assignments and classrooms. While we must observe the importance of these works, we must also remember that issues affecting LGBTQ students and teachers are as wrapped up in queer sexuality and gender as they are with race, class, disability, citizenship, colonialism, and other factors. The issues that emerge from this [coming out in academia] scholarship need to be continually troubled along those additional lines. (45)

Furthermore, as David Eng, Judith Halberstam, and José Esteban Muñoz insist in *What's Queer About Queer Studies Now?* we need to remain “ever vigilant to the fact that sexuality is intersectional, not extraneous to other modes of difference” in order to avoid oppressive, binaried essentialism (1). Actually, argues Patricia Hill Collins in agreement with Crenshaw, binary paradigms based on “race-only or gender-only conceptual frameworks” are incomplete and even unjust (*Fighting Words: Black Women and the Search for Justice* 205). And at least as problematic as binary logic is our occasional ignorance of identity intersections’ complex interworkings, according to David Wallace, who in “Alternative Rhetoric and Morality: Writing from the Margins” and other writings defends that interpreting intersectional identity within matrices of power is crucial for composition theory and pedagogy because such practice richly textures our

understandings of rhetorical agency. To extend all of these arguments further still, I offer even more intersections such as those of neurotypicality and ableism, ageism and ephebiphobia, and (beyond these figurative *topoi*) literally the places—the geographic locations—where classroom performances occur.

This brief review of literature reveals that existing studies in our field, trailblazing and rich though they may be, could still benefit from more research. At this point, my study intervenes: in addition to focusing on race and gender, my study uniquely focuses on agents of time, space, place, and the body as they intersect with queer coming out narratives in our writing classrooms, and my research methods positioned me adequately to do so. For example, I designed a survey instrument (see Appendix 1) to invite diverse writing instructors all over the country to participate in my study, and I learned from interviewing select research participants and coding our semi-structured conversations that they are most frequently interested in the following identity intersections: level of teaching experience, age, and generation; race and racial privilege; institution type, affiliation, and geographic location; sex and (cis)gender; and (dis)ability. Therefore, while at times I reprise interview excerpts from our “returning cast” of research participants, this chapter seeks to understand those same moments differently—this time through intersecting lenses. In order to arrange my findings and make sense of them, I must first attend to each of these sub-themes categorically, which at first glance seems counterintuitive to the whole point of intersectionality, for as Inayatulla says, we must “think simultaneously and inseparably about sexuality, race, gender, class, ability, age, size, citizenship, ‘pedigree,’ and the like” (n.p.). However, whenever possible I also of course highlight the various junctions at which these identities inevitably intersect.

TIME: AGE, GENERATION, AND LEVEL OF TEACHING EXPERIENCE

To begin, my interviews revealed that a significant ratio of LGBTQ-identified writing instructors hesitate to come out to their students because they perceive their age or level of teaching experience as a blow to their authority. This intersection has intrigued me from the very start of my research, not to mention teaching career as a teaching queer, when (during *my* first semester of graduate work—and every semester since) I read “Some Notes of a Homosexual Teaching Assistant in His First Semester of Ph.D. Work” published anonymously by Anon. in *College English* in 1974. Closeted instructors like Anon. (and me) not only reflect on their age and level of teaching experience as GTAs but also invite us to reflect on the generational dimension of kairotic context as well. For example, Anon. published “Some Notes” in 1974, just one year after “homosexuality” was removed from the *DSM* and at a time when gay sex was still a federal crime in the United States; many of us can and do ponder generation, history, and era as significant contextual conditions that impact our teaching and research activity. As Andrés said during our interview, “I need to understand my gayness in the past to understand my gayness in the present because I am here now talking about being gay and queer studies, but I wouldn’t be here if something like the Gay Rights Movement didn’t happen. [. . .] I am here discussing and talking about that thanks to those people that died and marched at that time.”

I learned, for instance, how some teachers predict that coming out *as that practice intersects with* looking, sounding, or acting verdant might not only exacerbate their own insecurities and internalized homophobia/transphobia, but also offer their students

potential ammunition to challenge their teacherly authority in writing classrooms. Conversely, professors who enjoy validation and confidence as a result of sometimes decades of “tested by fire” experience and even of a visibly “veteran” teacher’s body that *looks* and *sounds* older might finally feel ready to divulge (potentially) damaging personal information because of the redemptive salve of their sagacity, experience, and ethos. This is not to suggest that younger teachers never enjoy rewards of their youth, nor that older teachers never recognize the consequences of their aging. It is also true that additional identities, such as neurology and gender, further inflect intersectional power related to age and generation.

Consider, for example, Aaron: he is a white, 40-year-old cis male who has been teaching writing for over a decade. We might assess Aaron’s contemporary experiences in sharp contrast to his past, especially when he says, “It’s a different identity, right, that I get to carry around now that I’m older. That I get to be like, ‘I am an authority because I’m a man, and in a 40-year-old body,’ and I just get to say shit.” Aaron also reminisces that “even ten years ago things were different, and I think probably more necessary, and I think maybe I’ve changed over ten years, or maybe the culture’s changed a little over ten years—I haven’t decided which.” It is further notable that Aaron has also considered his generational situatedness—characterizing coming out as “compulsory” during Prop 8 and at the height of the AIDS Crisis, for instance—though of course he may *also* have felt more liberated than others to come out while teaching in a state as relatively inclusive and politically progressive as California.

Discussing Aaron’s white race, able body, male sex, middle age, politically liberal location, and masculine cisgender—basically, discussing his privileged intersections,

albeit in conjunction with his marginalized queer sexuality—brings us dangerously close to the risk of misappropriating Crenshaw’s framework through “intersectional erasure.”³⁷

So let us move on to instructors who offer an antithetical experience.

For example, Aaron compares himself to his colleague Elizabeth, who was also in his first-ever graduate teaching cohort: “I can’t imagine what that was like for her,” said Aaron after he recalled “the difference between our ages” (Aaron was 27, and Elizabeth was 19) and how that “makes things very different.” Reminiscent of other interviews that I have already highlighted, like those of Charles (“Since I’ve only taught for a year...”) and Alex (“Eventually I will.”), We can theorize how Aaron’s age (and indeed additional intersections like gender) impacts decisions concerning classroom coming out. Meghan invites further theorizing with her own recount:

When I came out, to myself and to, you know, “the public,” or whatever that is—family, friends, *et cetera*—I was not [out] at the time because it was the summer, but, I was fairly curious and nervous about how this new identity, would affect

³⁷ On her original paper’s 28th anniversary, privy to both its popularity and its consequently occasional misuse through abstraction, Crenshaw herself refocused her original concept: “Some people look to intersectionality as a grand theory of everything, but that’s not my intention. [. . .] Intersectionality can get used as a blanket term to mean, ‘Well, it’s complicated’” (Columbia Law School interview, 2017). However, according to its creator, a more faithful interpretation of intersectionality is as “a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it interlocks and intersects. It’s not simply that there’s a race problem here, a gender problem here, and a class or LBGTQ problem there. Many times that framework erases what happens to people who are subject to all of these things” at once. Particularly in a “Trump era,” Crenshaw continues, we experience “intersectional erasure,” which is what happens when the framework is misappropriated to support an analysis of the intersection of maleness and whiteness, for example, rather than identities that (*actually*) experience systemic, dominant oppression at least partially. For Crenshaw, the driving metaphor should not emphasize the intersections of various “roads” or “streets” themselves; rather, the *build-up* of “traffic” (power) that occurs at those intersections should inform our analyses. And of course, as Ann duCille creatively extends this conceit, “one of the dangers of standing at an intersection [. . .] is the likelihood of being run over by oncoming traffic” (“The Occult of True Black Womanhood” 593). “In this way,” James Bliss elaborates further still, “we court the danger of looking and speaking in several directions at once, without the confidence that one can tell one intersection from another, requiring the will to gamble with (at least) the coherence of subjectivity (“Queer Negativity, Black Feminist Theorizing, and Reproduction without Futurity” 91).

my teaching, and the answer was that obviously it's complicated, but it wasn't all that different from the stuff that I'd already experienced just by being a woman in the classroom. So, yeah I started teaching when I was 23, so that's really young, obviously, and I experienced a lot of the things that I still experience today, but even to a higher degree because I looked even younger. I *was* even younger. I was a new teacher, and I was really nervous all the time, and had a lot of that projected onto me, like, "Oh, she doesn't know what she's doing," all this stuff.

Gender, age, and level of experience all intersect here for Meghan, and in this case they convince her to stay in the closet. While Aaron (again, a white, cis, older male) felt that coming out was "compulsory," Meghan (as a young, young-*looking*, "not femme" woman) rather evokes Adrienne Rich's "compulsory *heterosexuality*" or of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's *Epistemology of the Closet*. Here, the twinning of marginalized gender in concert with marginalized age in the context of the college writing classroom "fans the flames," as it were, for queer instructors' desire to pass as straight, cisgender, and therefore at all competent. Similarly, Charles locates his perception of competence, self-security and classroom authority in his age and amount of teaching experience:

I think it is pent up with that—not feeling completely secure in who I am as a teacher, and students. I don't know if it's a fear of students' questioning, like an "Oh, you're a gay man, and that means you have less knowledge than me" kind of thing. I don't think that that's it. I just think it's more of "I'm dealing with trying to define who I am as a teacher, and so I don't want to also have to justify who I am to students."

Let us remember, though, that Charles's current choice is not permanent, but a process; not predicated by binary logic, but rather by a gradation of contextual factors, which highlights the complex, evolutionary tint of generational, experiential, and age-related identity intersections. In short, coming out is a process, and this concept of process or gradient is echoed in the account of Amanda who, like Aaron, can demonstrate a marked shift *over time*:

I did not really come out as a graduate student when I taught in large part because, as I mentioned, I did this first with disability before thinking about how I identify as queer and how and when to disclose that, and my earliest teaching evaluations said things like, "I am mildly insulted that someone with a communication disorder would teach us how to communicate" or like, "Why do I have an autistic instructor? This is unfair." Right? So there was a period of time where I tried not even to disclose my disability, and instead of disclosing my disability, I would just disclose practical things.

For Amanda and for others it is not just age/generation/experience in isolation but how those identities *interact and overlap* with *additional* intersections such as gender and disability that enrich our analysis. For example, former critique of, objection to, and discipline for her body with invisible disabilities that she has disclosed have all conditioned Amanda to pass when it comes to queer sexuality, an intersection that I will theorize more thoroughly later. In terms of Amanda's age and experience, though, it is clear that as a graduate student Amanda did not feel as comfortable coming out, but

being a faculty member—like having a tenure-track position—gave me a bit more authority, and I noticed it right off the bat at my institution. From the very first

semester I started teaching here, people were calling me professor—and they *knew* I was a professor, whereas somehow they knew I wasn't a grad student. They were paying attention to my profile—my faculty profile—which I was not expecting, in part because I look like I could be a grad student, but there's this weird level of respect that I felt like I had not earned that suddenly I had in my new role, and I think it gave me a bit more security and comfort to think through things.

Revisiting this passage from Amanda's interview, this time with an intersectional approach, helps us trace new meaning. For example, in the previous chapter we learned about processes of coming out and also about Elliot's "golden moment," affording us just one way to understand the role of time in the context of classroom coming out. We can confidently conclude, for instance, that kairotic opportunities motivate instructors to make different decisions at different moments in time; but here, by attending to the intersections of queerness with age and generation and experience, we can learn more.

Consider, for example, how the quick, individual moments of Amanda's queer disclosures, or lack thereof, come together to tell a larger narrative during the slower stretch of *chronos*-time. During the formation of these coming out constellations, we see that it is not really *time* itself that should interest us, but the power embedded into the fabric of time: the confidence and wisdom that accompany Amanda's extended experience and the authority and license that accompany her advanced university status ultimately remind us that it is not one identity in isolation, but a complex chorus of identities, each with its own combination of affordances and constraints, that inform a writing instructor on when, whether, and how to come out or not. Time, in its many

forms, operates disruptively and discursively and, therefore, highly rhetorically due to its invisible impact on context and power.

Another expression of the intersection of queerness with age is Margaret Price and Stephanie L. Kerschbaum's "Queer and Crip Time," or the argument that time functions differently for bodies laced with queer sexuality and gender and/or with disabilities than it does for bodies that are less/not queer/disabled. From a queer or crip perspective, time is "unpredictable; it speeds up and slows down, jumps, bends and twists," and this is all not to mention the extra time (and labor) required for navigating discriminatory medical/health rhetorics, forever healing, and coping with extra physical and emotional trauma (33). In relation, Hailee M. Gibbons extends both Rich's compulsory heterosexuality and Robert McRuer's compulsory able-bodiedness in "Compulsory Youthfulness: Intersections of Ableism and Ageism in 'Successful Aging' Discourses" in order to explain how ableism and ageism intersect to (re)produce and maintain "normalcy" in neoliberal capitalist spaces, like US colleges and universities. "In this society," Gibbons writes, "there is no place for human beings whose powers are declining" (137). Similarly, Rick Wysocki analyzes age and aging as rhetorical constructions—they are, "to some degree, constructed and negotiated through the linguistic articulation of the body" (1). In other words, aging is a series of rich, rhetorical performances.

However, Wysocki and Gibbons warn us that, though tempting due to their many, many parallels with each other *and* with queerness, we must be wary of conflating age and disability. In Gibbons' words, "to redefine ageism as ableism prevents scholars from exploring how ageism and ableism *intersect*" (4, my emphasis). Consider, for instance,

how Anon., Aaron, Meghan, Charles, and Amanda's *professional* experiences also echo the age- and generation-related *social* experiences of many queer people. Vanessa D. Fabbre offers a list of some of these intersectional experiences in her "Gender Transitions in Later Life: The Significance of Time in Queer Aging": when a trans person might decide to transition, let alone come out; age of consent and sexual maturity; generational queer ancestry, mentorship, and activism/apathy; and constructions of beauty. Or, in the case of this study, whether and when it is the right time to come out in your writing classroom. When *is* the right time? Well, as we've seen in this section... it depends on the intersectional context and is further impacted by implication of identities such as gender, geography, and race, which I explore more in the upcoming sections.

In sum, thinking intersectionally offers otherwise untraceable insights into the multivalent processes of coming out as not only disruptive and discursive, but also recursive and as influenced by not only moment (sometimes Elliot's "golden moment," or else a rather darker moment of keeping the closet door closed), but also era (when do we live, how old are/were we then, and how does that matter). Without an intersectional approach, our analysis of coming out in the classroom has been good though limited, and so this study celebrates a more generative investigation into age, generation, and experience-level as intraconnected identities that *season* a queer experience.

ETHNICITY: RACE AND RACIAL PRIVILEGE

The rich ensemble of race and gender is the original nexus of critique for the creator of intersectionality, Kimberlé Crenshaw. Crenshaw conceived her intersectionality framework in order to theorize double disenfranchisement in the courts:

“If someone is trying to think about how to explain to the courts why they should not dismiss a case made by black women, just because the employer did hire blacks who were men and women who were white,” she argues, “well, that’s what the tool was designed to do” (Columbia Law School interview, 2017). What originally inspired Crenshaw is one particular intersection: “black” and “woman.” Of course, this study is also highly interested in the ways that race and gender intersect with each other and with additional vectors of identity.

The twin power dynamic of race and gender has also interested scholars like Pritchard (cited earlier) who occupies the intersection of African American, feminist, and LGBTQ identities as they cohabitate with literacy, composition, and rhetorical studies and who summons a study of Black Queer Literacy—understanding, for example, how racial rhetoric related to gender development impacts the material and discursive realities of LGBTQ-identified black lives. “We must examine,” Pritchard urges, “the role of reading and writing in coming out and sexual disclosures, specifically the shifting meanings of coming out across a diversity of LGBTQ experiences” (45). A grand antecedent to Pritchard’s work, E. Patrick Johnson’s “‘Quare’ Studies, or (Almost) Everything I Know About Queer Studies I Learned from My Grandmother” posits that “Queer studies is the study of white queers” (4).³⁸ We should extend Johnson’s observation beyond race—for queer studies has often only been the study of white, able-

³⁸ “Quare,” Johnson clarifies in his article, is the word “queer” uttered literally and literarily in an embodied, sometimes playful, “thick, black, southern dialect”—in fact, his grandmother’s, as the title suggests (2). Quare Studies, then, helps us locate intersections of race, class, geography, ability, etc., as an intersectional “theory of the flesh” (3). Also, it is noteworthy that even a decade after this article was published (in 2010), it is still the case today that queer studies in rhetoric and composition, with a few exceptions that I’ve cited in this study, still comes from a predominantly White perspective, including of course my own work. Future scholarship should strive for evermore intersectional authorship.

bodied, cisgender men and women who are gay. What squandered potential! After all, “Although queer studies has the potential to transform the way scholars theorize sexuality in conjunction with other identity formations, the paucity of attention given to race and class in queer studies represents a significant theoretical gap,” writes Johnson, and “Most current formulations of queer theory either ignore the categories of race and class altogether or theorize their effects in discursive rather than material terms” (1).

Beyond systemic oppression, my queer interviewees of color also focused on cultural constructions of gender within their ethnic communities and reflected on the material consequences of performing a queer gender, such as a gay masculinity. As Andrés indicates, many Black and Latinx masculinities demand a machismo that offers neither room nor tolerance for queerness. To learn more, let us indulge in a lengthy passage about Andrés’s racial, (trans)national, and ethnic intersections. I’ve taken the liberty to embolden moments of particular significance:

I came out when I was 16 years old. **Back in Colombia, it was very, very difficult because Latin America is usually a very, um... like, men have to be macho, so if you don’t behave in masculine ways, then you are—you are a sissy, or that’s what they—the-the words they use, or you are not well seen, or you are the-the embarrass-embarrass—the embarrassment of the family,** or—and I was the type of child since I was, like, 5 that I was not that masculine. I am not—I don’t act—I-I-I-I think that [sigh] well, in my case, I think I have my feminine ways of, uh, my gestures, I suppose, but at the same time maybe my voice, but I am not—uh, people can perceive me as gay, but people can perceive me as straight, and I used to worry about that before not now, but then my mom

asked me if I was gay because I had those behaviors that sh—and she was suspicious and worried about me, and I said, “Yes, I am,” and that was when I was 16 years old. **It was very difficult because m-most of my family turned their back**, so they just left, and they—they walked away. They didn’t—they didn’t wanna know about me. I was in high school, and the only person I-I found a lot of support was my grandmother, so I went to live with her, and, um, then after coming out, it was—it was much more comfortable. I felt I was tr—true to myself, and when I was 20 years old, I went to th—I went to the capital of Colombia to study English and French as a second language. Um, and uh, then when I was—I—**when I went to the capital (and I was born in a small city, so it was very conservative and—and very religious, Catholic, so) when I moved out and I went to the capital, that was a different story for me. Being gay in the capital of Colombia with 8 million people is totally acceptable.** So... but still I have to play the role of a straight guy, so I—when I was 24 years old, I—I had a wife for 8 years, and we were—we were supposed to have children and all that, and then we couldn’t... that was very difficult to... the lie was very difficult to maintain, so we broke up, and um, after a year of being single, I met a guy, and I was with him for four years, [. . .] **And, uh, then I decided to come to the United States, and then—well, I have been coming to the United States since 2005, but I-I-I have been living here for two years and a half, so coming—coming here was also my second coming out because here I can be who I am, and uh, people respect that, especially when you’re in academia.**

This is a long excerpt, but it is fruitful: notice how, like in the last section, Andrés complicates his coming out narrative and textures his intersectional understanding of identity and agency with nods to time, age, and generation. In this case, by discussing generational time, Andrés highlights the contradictory relationship between what Judith Halberstam calls “queer time” and “heteronormative reproductive time.”

In *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*, Halberstam recognizes in the aptly titled first chapter, “Queer Temporalities and Postmodern Geographies,” that queers often deliberately distort capitalist, heteronormative constructions of place and time, and that such postmodern, postcolonial misappropriation is “at least in part, in opposition to the institutions of family, heterosexuality, and reproduction” (1). In other words, when we “leave the temporal frame of bourgeois reproduction and family, of longevity, risk/safety, and inheritance” queers can leave behind a crippling, disabled hegemony and instead enable and embrace queer place-making, movements, moments, and counterpublics (6).³⁹ In many ways, my

³⁹ Halberstam’s argument is super compatible with an intersectional framework because a “materialist analysis of time/space” helps satisfy a “simultaneous desire to uncover the processes of heteronormativity, racism, and sexism” (8). Halberstam’s argument is also compatible with other queer theorists’ and queer composition scholars’ futurities of place and time. We might, for instance, recall Gust Yep’s “The Violence of Heteronormativity,” in which he proposes methods of collective queer world-making; José Esteban Muñoz’s *Cruising Utopia*, in which he critiques our focus on the present politics and urges us instead to excavate queer histories and compositions that will guide us in imagining a queer future (anterior); Sarah Schulman’s *The Gentrification of the Mind: Witness to a Lost Imagination*, in which she discusses the consequences of AIDS on the imaginations, rapport, and political attitudes of queer people; Gloria Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands/La Frontera*, in which she advocates for the connection of subaltern voices through hybridizing writing genres in our mothertongues; David Harvey’s *The Condition of Postmodernity*, in which he exposes and deconstructs time and space as social fabrication that (re)produce normativity and austere require our naturalization to and internalization of them as logical formulas that produce values and logics; and Michael Warner’s *Publics and Counterpublics*, in which he interrogates contemporary and future implications of government zoning projects that sought to contain the queers in New York City. These works not only interrogate histories to expose the purposeful violence of sequestering and/or forgetting of queers, but also help construct a futuristic look into community building, political efficacy, and (as Halberstam might articulate) living *In a Queer Time and Place*. My research participants confirm these theories in the contexts of their classrooms, which often function as cultural microcosms inf(lect)ed

study participants' avowed experiences show that queer teachers of writing may choose to opt in or out of hegemonic time/place by staying in the closet, coming out of it, or queering the closet altogether (a "revolving door" model, as Inayatulla offers) with a recursive medley of discursive choices at various times and in different spaces.

For example, Andrés reflects on his queer identity over time, both inside and outside the classroom. He focuses at some points on the intersection of race, but particularly through historic and geographic situational constraints. In the large, coded passage from earlier, Andrés recalls ages 5, 16, 20, 24, and 32 years old and the medley of coming out decisions, both personally and pedagogically, that he has made over that span. In addition to age, Andrés also discusses how his understandings of gender performativity have been greatly influenced by his cultural, familial, and ethnic identity intersections: for example, from a young age he interpreted gender disruption extremely pejoratively. Even now, he struggles (check out the more frequent stutters surrounding particularly the family descriptions).

Andrés and I discussed how he struggles in these moments because his race and ethnicity often (in)form strict, cultural understandings, conventions, expectations, rules, rewards, and consequences for the utterances and performances of gender; and considering that sexual orientation and sexuality are bound so much up in identification, interaction, and intra-action with one's own and others' sex and gendered bodies, often

by capitalism and White heteropatriarchy: Just existing inside and performing through a queer, intersectional body within this context is political work. Ultimately, Halberstam encourages us to consider "a life unscripted by the conventions of family, inheritance, and child rearing" or, in other words, "queer subcultures produce alternative temporalities by allowing their participants to believe that their futures can be imagined according to logics that lie outside of those paradigmatic markers of life experience—namely, birth, marriage, reproduction, and death" (2).

we can recognize more or less compatibility of the layering of a particular ethnic identity onto a particular sexual one—and vice versa. Kevin Kumashiro reminds us in *Troubling Intersections of Race and Sexuality: Queer Students of Color and Anti-Oppressive Education* that “in Hispanic and African American cultures, homosexuality is thought of as damaging to cultural values (family, marriage, children, and commitment to the community)” and therefore impact “attitudes toward marriage, religion, and use of a second language” (115-16). Andrés reminds us that all of these attitudes in turn impact his coming out process, in particular in a US writing classroom context, rendering it typically more trying for international QPOC than for white, U.S. queers.

Moreover, and inextricable sometimes from race and ethnicity, Andrés focuses on geographic location and how living in rural towns versus urban cities or else living in Colombia versus the United States has impacted his embodied comfort and self-actualization. Even though I label discrete sections in this chapter that focus on age and geography, I find it unethical to the point of impossible to pasteurize these identity intersections from one another and from race/ethnicity because, as an intersectional framework reveals, it is not so much their cohabitation as their *combination* that has created such agential constraint for Andrés and for other QPOC, like Marcus, who must also decide to come out or pass in their writing classrooms.

Though not international, Marcus magnifies our racial intersectional lens even further. He extrapolates his personal experiences to suggest that queer instructors of color might avoid coming out in their classrooms because they already grapple with issues of authority based on race. As Marcus said, “the race thing comes up in terms of issues of authority. I feel like just about every semester, I have at least one—at *least* one student—

who kind of openly questions whether I belong in front of the classroom, if that makes sense.” It does: Marcus describes how students have asked questions not to learn, but to investigate their suspicions about his expertise. This kind of student...

asks questions that are not just for their benefit or for the benefit of the students, but are really questions to kind of test, you know, “does he really know what he’s talking about? Let me see if I can throw him a reference—like a literary reference or term that he won’t know.” So there is definitely always at least one student like that, so I am kind of aware of those racial dynamics, and I know that they’re racial because I have talked to mentors and talked to colleagues in kind of comparing my experience with those of other identities, whether they’re white or straight or whatever, and they had different [experiences] while being on the tenure track.

Therefore, Marcus only cautiously and rarely comes out to students, often only in passing and almost never to entire classrooms because of the threat of *double-doubt* (blackqueer). He revealed that “the feeling of having to prove that I’m an expert or authority in classrooms—that I deserve my title—I do think maybe affects the degree to which I do come out in the classroom because there’s already that one marker that I can’t pause, right?”

A blackqueer instructor often anticipates/experiences a resistance amplified by intersections of visible race with sexuality. In other words, visibly non-white instructors teaching mostly white students (and vice versa, perhaps) is a cause for pause: they might pass in order to avoid *further* invitation for student resistance. Because “I can’t pause [...] that one marker” of identity (visible black race), Marcus continues, it “erases or erodes my authority. And then there’s another identity, right, that I *can* to some degree

obscure. And I don't know if I always think about it consciously, but yeah, it's definitely something that affects how I present myself as a gay person.”

I want to linger here with Marcus's recollections by analyzing them through an intersectional approach. Resistance to instruction (especially writing instruction, as we explored in the previous chapter) amplifies when instructors are *clearly* somehow different from the students that they teach, and multiple, intersectional differences matter. As does Karen Kopelson, Shirley Wilson Logan, Uriel Quesada, and other scholars, Lavinda Dhingra Shankar argues that this is especially exacerbated in Marcus's exact situation: a mostly white classroom with a queer instructor of color. “Yet the ‘outsider’ who ‘teaches what she is not’ can have a problematic relationship to power and authority, especially in the undergraduate English classroom,” writes Shankar (195). “The power dynamics may seem even more threatening to some eighteen-year-olds when the only colored person in the classroom also assumes the position of authority and informs them of the uglier parts of their cultural history, which they would rather not own (up to),” she continues; “In my experience, often the ‘white’ (especially male) students either feel guilty and become silenced, or become defensive and/or (mildly) aggressive when the discussion centers around slavery or colonization” (198). But even if the pedagogy doesn't focus on systemic oppression, as Shankar suggests here, instructors still risk their students interpreting their difference as agendized, regardless. Teaching (as) what you are and what you aren't is the crux of this article, an “identity dilemma” as Shankar calls it, is always-and-already bound up in a performance of critical pedagogy.

Extending this conversation even further, in her edited collection *Pedagogy: The Question of Impersonation* Jane Gallop theorizes the pedagogical modality of

impersonation. Much like Caughie's notion of *passing*, Gallop likens impersonation to ventriloquism or drag or (as it turns out) teaching, in that impersonation/pedagogy is a professional performance, both comical and serious, of a subject whose sole aim is reproduction—of transferable writing skills, for example (9). Gallop's collection also features Indira Karamcheti's "Caliban in the Classroom" which troubles the "traditional" (and flawed) opposition of personal as authentic / impersonation as false performance (138). Indeed, "the personal is a mask" and vice versa (146). Karamcheti argues that instructors can perform race and sex/gender/sexuality in order to disrupt audiences' expectations of racial and gendered tropes. The slippage between the real and the assumed (re)produces postmodern understandings of identity as configured, constructed. Thus, in Cheryl L. Johnson's essay also included in Gallop's collection, "academic signification employs a series of masks" (129). During our interview, Andrés also brought up the trope of the mask. "I prefer to use 'the mask [metaphor],'" he extrapolates from his own experience, "because we all have to put it on. [. . .] We behave in heterosexual ways in the classroom in front of our professors and to get a job. But then there are certain places when we take them off, and it's safe because we are with people that understand our struggle." And for others, like Marcus, sometimes that mask reveals one identity like race even as it conceals another like queerness. One difference, made possible by intersectional awareness, here is *choice*: Marcus cannot choose to pass as anything but a black man, though he can and does choose to pass as not gay.

Another insight that my interviews have illustrated is that when the visibly different instructor also happens to be queer, questions of agency and power are already more complexly and readily on their minds and therefore impact their choices concerning

multidimensional otherness and vulnerability. Difference *must* always be on the mind of the visibly different (read: minority, Other) instructor, but queer instructors who aren't always visibly/vocally different may enjoy the privilege of nonchalance. Therefore, since some simply can't be read as queer and some instructors are necessarily so very visibly queer, some queer instructors get (to some degree at least) to choose whether or not their students perceive them as different. My interviews support these theories written in, by, and about our field—that when students notice that their instructor's being is different from their own, such disruption can help them feel (to some degree at least) permitted to dismiss authority, invited to reconfigure their own worldviews, spooked into defending themselves against a liberal agenda, perhaps simply angered or disgusted, or a combination of these. And, although my interviews support these theories from the queer angle, they suggest that a resistance to *any kind* of identity difference is deeply rooted in *generalized xenophobia, especially* in this chapter, the whole purpose of which is to illuminate and complicate that queer angle with an intersectional analysis.

While my queer interviewees of color reflected on social constructs of gender and authority, and on the potential for double discipline through that intersection of race with gender and/or sexuality, my queer interviewees who are *white* acknowledged their privileged dodging of those constraints. Josh, for example, can recall only “like, one or two times” that he experienced transphobia as a writing instructor, and he recognizes that this relative infrequency is related to his visibly male body and white identity: “I think it also has a lot to do with the white privilege I have as a professor, too,” he said. “I’m able to share this side of my identity *because I have other forms of power*” (my emphasis); “it’s different,” Josh continues, for professors with additional identity intersections.

Similarly, Meghan realizes that even though she contends with ubiquitous misogyny and ageism as a young, female professor... “I do still have a lot of privilege as a white person in the classroom, and as a white woman, and as a ciswoman.” Meghan also appreciates that

One of those [privileges] is that I have a choice whether to disclose certain things or not. People of color don’t have the same choice whether to disclose some aspects of their identity. Transpeople or nonconforming people don’t always have the same choice about disclosure in terms of what is read onto the body, so by virtue of being a white, cisgender woman, I have a lot of privilege in that way, where I can sort of—I don’t know if I would call it “passing,” but I can walk into a space and not have, like, a million things necessarily projected onto me and onto my body as a body that is considered pretty normative.

Meghan shares several reflections regarding various, intersectional outing agents, such as visible race, a visible physical disability, or an audible accent. Kaila Adia Story reflects on this intersection of race and gender in her candidly titled “Fear of a Black Femme: The Existential Conundrum of Embodying a Black Femme Identity while Being a Professor of Black, Queer, and Feminist Studies” published in the 2017 *Journal of Lesbian Studies* that she has “always been mistaken for someone else” in academic spaces and usually someone she is not, or not intentionally projecting” (407). This is problematic especially when the audience relies on damaging stereotypes because it imagines whitewashed, colonized, domesticated, or incompetent subjects that make themselves feel less disturbed by difference. Story interprets interpersonal communications she has experienced in these academic spaces, highlighting the double-impassé that (in)visibly intersectional bodies

know: “I didn’t know if it was my blackness, my feminine presentation and aesthetic, and/or my embodied youth that prevented this faculty member [etc.] from seeing me [. . .] due to her own subjective vision of who she thought I was” (408).⁴⁰ An intersectional lens, Story posits, would suggest that often it is none of these identities individually but their *combination* that matters; in other words, writes Story, “While my blackness in many queer and nonqueer spaces has made me extremely hypervisible, it has been the combination of my racialized difference and my performance of intentional femininity through my chosen Black femme identity that seems to deem who I truly am, invisible” (408). What is even more debilitating, though not necessarily novel, is that queer femmes of color and anyone who feels othered must not only field multiple acts of discrimination, but on top of that also spend extra time, energy, and labor navigating gendered, racialized, etc., projections onto their paradoxically-at-once hypervisible and invisible bodies. Story argues that the clarifying antidote (to the injustice of being mistaken) *has* to be intersectionally enriched pedagogies. Thus,

I *make* them face my authentic Black femme and professorial self. The self I have worked so hard to become. By merging the three radical academic fields of Women’s and Gender Studies, Pan African Studies, and LGBTQ Studies as an intersectional and pedagogical practice, I feel that I have encouraged students to be more innovative, creative, flexible and adaptable in their learning of the course and in their learning about me. (417, my emphasis)

⁴⁰ While this study focuses exclusively on relationships between students and instructors in postsecondary writing classrooms, Story also traces relevant, narrative experiences she’s had with colleagues in addition to students, highlighting exigencies for future coming out research to address.

Furthermore, while Inayatulla has been asked if she is “out” to her writing students as a queer person, she has never been asked if she is “out” to her students as brown because “queerness is apparently less obvious than the brownness of my skin” (n.p.). Without as much (or any) ambiguity, Inayatulla is afforded “no real *opportunity* to ‘come out as brown. [. . .] That is, I have only ever and never not been brown” (n.p., my emphasis).

The highly sophisticated rhetorical savvy of “being read as [x]” in the classroom when queers come out, don’t, and perform neither/both is not unlike linguistic practices of code-meshing and code-switching. Beau specifically mentions such a practice:

I think it [my teacherly authority] does shift—maybe in certain ways—and it’s probably because of my performance as a teacher. [. . .] I’ve never said “yas” in class, or maybe I have a couple times [both laugh], but I tend to code-switch [. . .] a lot, because I lived 26 years of my life as a straight male (like, of course, you know, a country-music, gun-totin’, Southern male—so, an Appalachian male). So I think that I can code-switch in that sense.

Other People’s English: Code-meshing, Code-switching, and African American Literacy by Vershawn Ashanti Young and Rusty Barrett traces various definitions and applications of code-meshing and -switching across a variety of fields—linguistics, education, and rhetoric and composition, to name a few—and remind us that code-switching involves the “use of one language variety in school and another language variety at home” (or in other non-school social and rhetorical situations). Code-switchers, whose home discourse differs from dominant discourses of power, know when, how, and

where to toggle back-and-forth between appropriate linguistic codes based on a sophisticated understanding of various audiences and situations. For example, as Harriet Malinowitz writes, “when lesbian and gay people enter the officially sanctioned headquarters of literacy training—i.e., the school—they are implicitly asked to check the literacy they have acquired in the lesbian/gay community at the door,” and therefore “it is enormously difficult for scholars and writers in development to insert a discourse from a domain in which they are supported and their experiences articulated into a domain in which their lives are simply not discussed, and in which they must always anticipate opposition should they initiate that discussion” (“Constructing and Constraining” 46). I borrow the concept of code-switching from critical studies on race and language because such a framework helps me to ponder ways that queer people can also participate in a kind of code-switching through rituals of gender and sexuality performance that they can and sometimes do toggle according to situation and audience.

The major difference between code-switching and code-meshing, according to Young and Barrett, is that code-switching is about the compulsion to conform for fear of a range of socio-cultural disciplines; *code-meshing*, conversely, involves reclamatory rhetorics of empowerment: code-meshers choose to experiment with language in order to showcase identity. Though they do not always use these specific terms, my research participants indicate their deep recognition and typically successful application of code-switching and -meshing performances of identity that they know to access due to their intersectional situations—geography, race, etc. For example, Andrés highlighted his different decisions based on different audiences when he said, “When I explain to my professors the reasons why I want to do research in queer theory and gender studies, I

come out to them. With my students it's different. [. . .] I have to be careful about both my sexual preferences, my identity as gay, and as a Latino. [. . .] So my coming out to my students is an implicit coming out; with my professors, it's very explicit." It has been particularly interesting to trace such recognition from my queer participants of color because an intersectional understanding of code-switching and -meshing has helped me to analyze moments like this from Andrés, and from Marcus, who said: "I am kind of aware of those racial dynamics, and I know that they're racial because I have talked to mentors and talked to colleagues in kind of comparing my experience with those of other identities, whether they're white or straight or whatever, and they had different dynamic issues you can control."

Reviewing my research participants' awareness of their racially queer intersectional identities unlocks new understandings about identity politics, discursive realities, and materialities. Chiefly, after analyzing this subsection's interview transcription passages, we've learned that teachers of writing regularly, substantially consider their visible and invisible identities as overlapping and multivalent. Anticipated consequences inform them how best to curate and (re)present their composed identities in their composing environments for their audiences (students), which impacts most obviously their performance choices (i.e., coming out, passing, and performing ambiguously), as well as often their understandings of rhetoric, writing, and pedagogy.

As Aaron's time in California and Andrés's transnational experiences have hinted, another critical identity intersection for both students and teachers involves geographic location, which we'll discuss next.

PLACE: INSTITUTIONAL TYPE, AFFILIATION, AND GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION

The nexus of institutional context also influences some queer writing instructors' coming out pedagogies. Some research participants mentioned specific classes (such as an LGBTQ-related literature, writing, or rhetoric course or, even more broadly, an identity-based course), or at least isolated course content (one-off micro lessons or lecture examples) as exigency to come out, not only for themselves but also sometimes for their students. At an even more telescopic vantage point, we might also consider the type of institution—for instance, its affiliation or geographic location—as literal *topoi* to mine in order to, unlike any other study before this one, learn how place influences queer performativity in composition classrooms for better and for worse.

We have already discussed at length in the previous chapter, for example, how Alex's massively Southern Baptist university in the deep south polices its employees' same-sex expression, which correlates fully with her decision to pass at all times—for now. In contrast, Robert did not feel comfortable coming out as a professor at his *past* place of work, but *now* he feels “so proud of my university” (a large, public institution in the Midwest). When he taught, during his previous post, at a Roman Catholic SLAC (small, liberal arts college) in the same city, he said that he was always “operating within the university's value system. Iiiiiiiiiiii did not do that [come out] at the Roman Catholic university that I taught at.” For others, like Marcus, it is *because* of the Christian environment that they *do* come out; they see their own queer sexuality (disruptive to oppressive, hegemonic, heteronormative discourses that pervade the community) as opportunities to share with students about diversity inclusivity. Marcus teaches on a Catholic (Jesuit) “urban campus” at a SLAC/PWI (Predominantly White Institution) in

New England. According to Marcus, 80-85% of incoming first-year students identify as Catholic, many of whom also identify as middle-class and upper-class. “I think that should paint a pretty good picture of the institutional context in which I work,” said Marcus, “and—in talking to some other colleagues at school—I think that does make somewhat of a difference.”

Similarly, Cash describes himself as “obviously queer”: “My identity is so visible right now”—that is, while in female-to-male (FTM) transition—”so how do I articulate that? How do I move from here and still teach these students, particularly in Texas when the Bathroom Bill was still being tossed around, right after Trump was elected and all of these things, right?” Cash further reflected:

They [students] are young individuals who oftentimes don’t know what they think about things. [They’re] distanced from their parents, and also I have the fundamental understanding that being a transgender teacher in Texas oftentimes means that you are the first trans person they’ve ever met, and you may also be the last that they know, and so whatever experience you leave them with is the only one that they get, and so kinda navigating [. . .] what feels personal and taking it in stride, I guess, is something that I’ve kind of learned to do.

Cash nominates himself as an embodied lesson for students in need, which clashes with some other writing instructors who resist being what Kopelson has called the classroom’s “sex text” (recall, for instance, Charles, who said “I’m not the object lesson for my students”). Cash’s adjustment to an expected script of the cisbody, particularly in his geographic context, extends the opportunity to revisit Halberstam’s *In a Queer Time and Place*. Halberstam argues that while performing “queer renderings of postmodern

geography, the notion of a body-centered identity gives way to a model that locates sexual subjectivities within and between embodiment, place, and practice” (5). Cash reflects, for example, on how performing queer adjustments to heteronormative embodied scripts requires and reconfigures his, and his students’, perceptions and performances of identity, authority, ethos, power, and culture in their writing classroom—for better and for worse.

Alex and Cash illuminate intersections of institution, but what about the regions in which their institutions are located? Some of my interview participants, like Beau, focused specifically on how rural/urban divides matter.⁴¹ It matters whether a writing teacher instructs in a rural area or at a metropolitan city college, especially when a

⁴¹ Andrés and others have already brought up location as it intersects with their LGBTQ identities, and Alex, Robert, Cash, and Beau focus even more on their respective institutions’ locations and affiliations. Their assessments evoke John D’Emilio’s suggestion that it is only through the rise of capitalism and metropolitanism that queer identity could subsequently materialize in the ways that we recognize it now. Though careful not to erase the reality of historical and rural queers, D’Emilio argues in “Capitalism and Gay Identity” that after a capitalist system configures metropolitan spaces, productive modalities alternative to agricultural production (which rely on multiple members of a nuclear, heterosexual family “pitching in”) may flourish. That is, there was “no ‘social space’ in the colonial system of production that allowed men and women to be gay. Survival was structured around participation in a nuclear family. There were certain homosexual acts—sodomy among men, ‘lewdness’ among women—in which individuals engaged, but family was so pervasive that colonial society lacked even the category of homosexual or lesbian to describe a person” (240-41). However, like in Andrés’s case (in a capital city for instance), individuals no longer need to marry and produce children to survive, which renders successful performances of homosociality (and, therefore, homosexuality) economically possible—and therefore *at all* possible. In sum, “Only when individuals began to make their living through wage labor, instead of as parts of an interdependent family unit, was it possible for homosexual desire to coalesce into a personal identity” (242). D’Emilio’s conclusion is that in a capitalist economy, gay male subcultures could not only exist for the first time, but they could also become increasingly visible, especially in larger cities (239). Mary L. Gray also writes about the centrality of the “traditional,” reproductive family as an economic unit in her ethnography *Out in the Country: Youth, Media, and Queer Visibility in Rural America*. Gray argues that urban queers are capable of configuring queer, alternative versions of family, but it’s mega difficult specifically because of their rurality. “Rural communities’ material dependencies on structures of familiarity and the value placed on conformity as a sign of solidarity intensify the visibility of compulsory heterosexuality’s hegemonic sexual and gender norms,” writes Gray (138). As Sherrie Gradin, who teaches queer rhetoric and composition at Ohio University and Directs the Appalachian Writing Project, writes in her queer rurality essay cited above, “Often, being able to stay with family means keeping one’s queerness as invisible as possible, or at least unable to be ‘read’ by hetero family and community members” (or students, as my study participants reveal) (n.p.).

particular region tends to map cultural competency, political ideology, ethnic identity, and biological sex onto and around masculine and feminine performances of gender. And it matters that we study rural rhetorics in contrast to and in concert with urban rhetorics. As Halberstam posits, “The division between urban and rural or urban and small town has had a major impact on the ways in which queer community has been formed and perceived in the United States” (15). Furthermore, although Sherrie Gradin celebrates in “Can You See Me Now?: Rural Queer Archives and a Call to Action” that scholars of rhetoric and composition have been publishing about queer matters for a while, she also points out a lacuna in rural queer composition scholarship: “It has not been until fairly recently, however, that scholars have begun to examine issues surrounding rural queers” (n.p.). In sum, the field needs more studies that explore rural queer issues of (in)visibility, haunting trauma, isolation and solidarity, affluence and access, safety and daring that are textured differently by various levels of population concentration.

An Appalachian male like Beau, for example (who taught at a university situated *in* rural Appalachia and studies the intersection of queer performative rhetorics and rural geographies), has felt uncomfortable performing queer sexuality and/or feminine gender expression in public rural spaces. “I definitely did not [come out in my writing classroom],” Beau recalls. “I never said ‘my partner,’ I never said ‘my boyfriend,’ I said—I probably even said ‘my roommate’ or something like that—which is so, like, [imitates gunshot noise; mock-finger-gun-to-temple gesture].” Beau continued the interview by reflecting on tensions he feels between a desire to offer political resistance in a place in need of it (“especially given the political shit-show climate that’s there”) and fear for his safety.

In retrospect, Beau concludes that he wishes he could go back in time to make a different set of choices than passing as straight—than passing up the opportunity to teach a queer rhetoric course in an area that needed it. Beau, who has taught at three other universities since the gig in rural Appalachia, now bills himself as a resident queer archivist writing scholar at his current institution in the Midwest (tenure-track WPA and assistant professor of English). His department has “asked me to teach a queer archival project with the comp courses there, and I’m excited to do that, but it’s also a whole ’nother political climate there. So. Yeah. But I would say absolutely geo-political climate and geographical climate has a lot to do with it.” Thickening his queer time-and-place experience, however, Beau has most recently accepted a tenure-track position in an Appalachian postsecondary institution, and he revealed that he might *now* feel more comfortable because of his additional identity intersections, namely race, sex/gender, and in particular increased experience, mixed with his assessment of the general progression of social issues, like more protections for queer people that didn’t exist for him a decade ago in the same location.

In short, mapping geographic location and type of institution onto the queer body of the instructor—and vice versa—helps us to process coming out processes with a richer, more contextualized, intersectional framework, and this is true now more perhaps than ever, as my research participants illuminate the intimate relationship between location and legislation, identifying political exigencies as yet another intersection to consider.

Of course, it would be woefully short-sighted to locate people’s bodies within their political and geographic landscapes without also seriously considering the sexes and

genders of those bodies, especially queer ones, so those are the intersections we focus on next.

EMBODIMENT: SEX AND (CIS)GENDER

Obviously, this whole study on queer identity highlights gender, so this will be my shortest section. Queer sexuality borrows both ‘q’s and cues from sex and gender. Therefore, we might cite some genders as sites of power, such as cisgender identity and cisgender expression, particularly *cisman* identity paired with butch expression. We might by extension also recognize others as sites of power disenfranchisement, such as cisfemale sex and ciswoman gender; transgender, two-spirit, and nonbinary identity; genderqueer and genderfuck expression; etc. To explore these superficial observations further, let us dissect Meghan and Josh’s reflections about gender.

Meghan acknowledges not only her privilege related to cisgender, class, and race, but also her burden of female/woman identification as it intersects with her queerness, age, teaching experience, and ostensibly mismatched gender expression as only “fairly” femme. Therefore, Meghan feels comfortable coming out to individual students at times, but experiences discomfort at the idea of coming out to a classroom as a whole. Her reflection is worth quoting at length and, as you read, notice that Meghan’s experiences support what Kopelson, Shankar, and others have theorized: being different from students upsets their expectations of the writing curriculum as neutral and therefore aggravates their suspicions that their teacher’s political agenda has been infused unethically into their education.

One thing that really impacts my whole experience in teaching, including coming out, is just the experience in sexism, which is enormous and pervasive in classes I've taught as a woman, especially as a fairly young woman who's often read as younger than I am, and part of that might have to do with being fairly femme in my presentation and things like that, which is a little better now than it was when I started. When I started teaching I was only 23, so it's gotten a little bit better now, and students read me as sort of consistently a little bit older than them [laughs], but I'd say that the experience of being a woman in the classroom and the experience of sexism in the classroom is so prevalent and so heavy that it often makes teaching really hard for me in general, and I often don't wanna add coming out to that mix because I already feel very vulnerable on every level, from dealing with many microaggressions of mostly white, straight, male students not believing that I'm supposed to be there, questioning my expertise, thinking I'm unprofessional, or thinking I'm that "angry feminist" putting my own bias onto the material and not acknowledging the other perspective, or just like little microaggressions of "how old are you? How long have you been doing this?" [. . .] So I've experienced everything in that range, usually only from men—mostly white, straight men. That makes it an environment that is never fully comfortable for me and is always a little bit hostile and vulnerable, so that's why I'm like, "Okay, I don't trust many of these students with this information. I don't trust them with something that's personal about me and my life." I might trust individual students who I talk to one-on-one, but the class as a whole I don't trust to have a personal relationship with.

Notice also that Meghan discusses her intersectionality not necessarily all at once but almost in layers. That is, Meghan seems chronically hyperaware of her age-and-gender combo *before* factoring in her sexuality, which means that her awareness of intersectionality affords her a rich, queer practice of toggling back and forth among multiple ways of seeing her world, her classroom, and ultimately her pedagogy. She said, for example, that being a young woman has impacted her “*whole* experience in teaching, *including* coming out”—queerness as a later thought. Also, note that Meghan doesn’t want to “*add* coming out *to the mix*”—again, queerness retroactively—because before even considering that intersection, she “*already*” feels vulnerable.

The queer toggling practice that Meghan employs to enrich her teaching is not lost on Josh, who is a trans gay man. For him, “coming out as trans isn’t coming out as gay.” Josh distinguishes gender from sexual orientation and considers them disparate to himself and to his students: “I don’t know why,” he said, “but I kind of feel like me being trans is not people’s business unless I want it to be, whereas, I feel a lot more comfortable being out as gay and performing a kind of gayness visibly and verbally [. . .], which is true for a lot of trans people.”

Josh and Meghan offer us a glimpse into the intricacy of intersectionality, for even within one intersection (e.g., *queer*) there are multiple *sub*intersections (sex, sexual orientation, sexuality, gender identity, and gender expression), let alone their inter- and intraconnections with even more axes of identity. To summarize this brief section, then, we should remember that there are different ways of being queer, sometimes even within one body and sometimes at different times for that same body. Our final (inter)section,

disability, deals even more directly with bodies and embodiment in order to further foster our understanding.

EMBODIMENT: (DIS)ABILITY

Adrienne Rich's famous "compulsory heterosexuality" posits that the system of heteronormativity produces queerness. Robert McRuer reappropriates Rich's term in his 2006 book *Crip Theory* to explore the arguably congruent ideological critique that normativity also produces disability and enlists "compulsory able-bodiedness" as an agent of neoliberal capitalism. That is, a matrix of neoliberal market values has both imagined and composed "normal" sexual and embodied identities, which may justify why one might choose to pass—as heterosexual, as cisgender, and as "fully" able (or "flexible" as McRuer calls it)—because of the stigma and the disciplinary consequences associated with deviant, "abnormal" identities.

Also, Stephanie L. Kerschbaum, Laura T. Eisenman, James M. Jones most recently edited *Negotiating Disability: Disclosure in Higher Education*, a collection of postsecondary instructors' experiences with disability disclosure. They argue in their introduction that sometimes it is not able-bodiedness but actually disability disclosure that is compulsory, especially when people with disabilities need to receive political and pedagogical accommodations. In their conclusion, they argue that "[d]isclosure itself is a political act" and "that can create opportunities for social action and change" (361-62). However, while coming out (as disabled or as queer or as any Other) can create these opportunities and change, such a performance in the writing classroom can also be risky.

These risks matter, as Brenda Jo Brueggemann and Debra A. Modellmog remind is in “On (almost) Passing” (Brueggemann) and “Coming-out Pedagogy” (co-authored). Especially for (queer) writing instructors with disabilities, the coming out performance is often necessary: “Our identities pose risks,” they say—“that the academic might explode into the personal; that our students might project their fears and desires onto us as they become more aware of their own performances of identity; that the class might become a series of comings out and coming undone as the students confront (the possibility of) their own disabilities, their own queer desires” (312). In short, coming out with a disability and coming out as queer bear fascinating, useful congress with one another, as some of my research participants know.

For example, Amanda discusses the overlap of queerness and disability (an intersection often called “crip”). In her words, for instance, “in terms of those intersecting identity markers [disability and sexual orientation], I think that that’s a really big one.” Amanda reflected on the myriad congruent experiences of people who do not identify as straight/cisgender and people who do not identify as fully able-bodied, but who feel compelled through social disciplines to do so, or at least to pass as such.⁴²

For example, she believes that autistic people often talk about normally having to “pass as neurotypical.” However, Amanda continues, she feels an additional, simultaneous compulsion to “pass as cisgender and straight.” Note Amanda’s language

⁴² Though also each unique, the list of shared experiences between often invisible, embodied identities includes: social and familial isolation (and sometimes subsequently youth homelessness), higher rates of violence and hate crimes, discrimination and prejudice rooted in stigma and stereotype, assessments of often invisible identity as fake and/or exploitative, erasure or else tokenized representation in media and history, politicized bodies, and a development of stylized discourse, of reclamatory rhetorics, and of communal pride.

here: her belief that “I *have* to pass” weighs laden with the language of compulsory able-bodied heterosexuality; even more subtly and succinctly, Amanda specifically articulates “pass as” not just in terms of sexuality (which is common among many of my research participants), but also in terms of ability. My data, only after considering intersectionality, highlight a significant parallel between *passing/coming out as fully able-bodied* and *passing/coming out as straight/cis*—they are both highly performative. Also, and not unlike many of our understandings of the teaching of rhetoric/writing, they are each highly sophisticated and highly intentional rhetorical processes—invented, arranged, decorated, memorized, and delivered by savvy rhetors/performers and then peer-reviewed by their audiences. Though each underrepresented identity experience is unique, performances of passing as straight, cisgender, and able-bodied are so similar that they all evoke the same language that Caughie troubles in her book.

Recall Pamela Caughie’s distinction between passing *for* and passing *as*, which we investigated in the previous chapter. Caughie argues that we are *all* always-already passing—that is, you pass *for* the constructed subject that you are; this is “authenticity.” Conversely passing *as* implies something *inauthentic*—performing *as* something that you are not. Recall also Brueggemann and Moddelmog’s compatible argument in “Coming-Out Pedagogy,” which they write from their disability-theoretical perspective. “We are always already passing,” they write, “even when we are not attempting to pass *as* something” (312-13, my emphasis). In other words, everyone’s bodies are always performing, but disabled and queer bodies often attempt especially nuanced performances in order to pass *as* normal.

Indeed, the similarity between disabled and queer bodies' passing practices is so compatible that some scholars, such as Jay Dolmage in *Disability Rhetoric*, Margaret Price in *Mad at School*, Robert McRuer in *Crip Theory*, and Melanie Yergeau in *Authoring Autism: On Rhetoric and Neurological Queerness*, argue that disabled bodies are queer bodies because, regardless of gender identity and sexual orientation which might further queer these bodies, they are inherently nonnormative. Indeed, Elise Dixon argues in "Healing Backward: Queer Approaches to Address Sexual Assault" that bodies that are pregnant, like hers at the time of her writing, are temporarily both queer and disabled, and Stacey Waite writes in *Teaching Queer* that even though we can link pregnant bodies to procreation, "the way I want to understand *queer* in this particular context is as a kind of deviant mark, an excess, a bodily expression that exists outside a normative construction of the body. In this sense, we can imagine the pregnant body marked with *queerness*" (24). And in Yergeau's third chapter of *Authoring Autism*, "Invitation," she likens disclosing autism identity to queer coming out narrative genres in that they are "both imperiled and politically generative" (140).

Yergeau, Waite, Dixon, Caughie, Brueggemann, Modellmog, and Amanda all remind us that all identity expressions are intersecting performances of subjectivity that we communicate, negotiate, and (re)mediate through our language-ridden and -ridding bodies. Additionally, not only can identities be intersectional, but indeed they can intersect: that is, the performance of one identity is interpreted/intersected by audiences with different identities.

Amanda identifies her sexuality at times as bisexual, pansexual, or asexual, so for her the most accurate term is "queer." For Amanda, gender identity feels even more

nebulous. But I felt that Amanda began to most comfortably identify when she said, “my gender is autism, and then that helps [both laugh] people understand a little bit more, or sometimes a little bit less, because I see—things are really interconnected for me.” In other words, “I think sometimes it’s really hard to figure out where, identity-wise, queerness begins and disability ends.”

Josh also recognizes the various compatible intersections among queer and disabled identities. In addition to teaching about writing and identity in the classroom, Josh researches these parallels in rhetorical and political strategy between the Gay Liberation Movement and the Disability Rights Movement. His work and his past/current experiences as a queer person with a disability have informed his performative pedagogy, often inspiring a decision to come out, even if not always explicitly: “And I’ll often share with students, like, ‘I’m doing this stuff with my research, but because I also have a disability, these are things I need as a student-writer or needed as a student-writer that I want to give you all.’”

I have examined the intersection of queer and disability already in part (recall the discussion of crip and queer time in the “age” section and the conversation of in/visible identity in the “race” section), bringing us “full circle.” Speaking of circles, I have discovered through my analysis that intersectionality does not work like Discrete geometry so much as its Euclidian counterpart: we can draw inferences, shapes, patterns, and vectors through combinations and relationships among contextual details, and we can call attention to power dynamics that would otherwise remain illegible and therefore insidious. In short, thanks especially to its many parallels to queer identity, attention to intersections of disability offers us more nuanced, critical understandings of coming out

processes, contexts, debilitations, and opportunities, especially as we consider teaching performances in classroom situations. So, now that we've applied our intersectional analysis to the interview transcriptions, let us finally appreciate some conclusions.

CONCLUSIONS

An intersectional approach is the best way to study performative composition pedagogies, as I hope to have adequately expressed in this chapter. Studies similar to mine have rarely considered intersectionality, so even though they have made important contributions to the conversation, this chapter extends those conversations by theorizing the critical lacuna and subsequently offering new insights. However, that my own report falls short is inevitable because there is always more work to be done, and there are always more diverse perspectives to consider, especially since Morris Young has argued as recently as 2015 that the U.S. college composition classroom has enjoyed spikes in intersectional diversity, which invite more (and more kinds of) students and teachers into the Ivory Tower.

In retrospect, the common denominator of each interview conducted for this study is *The Closet* itself—coming out of it, going back inside it or, as Inayatulla metaphorizes, treating its door like a revolving one that invites a medley of inconsistent choices in response to intersecting contexts and audiences. It is possible to come out for the first time and also for the millionth time—at the same time—and every semester. Or to be in the closet and outside of it simultaneously. Or to be out at one time and in at another time. Each queer person has experienced *The Closet*, but then again each closet has been uniquely furnished; as this chapter argues, an intersectional analysis helps distinguish

each person's closet and the various textiles, costumes, accessories, luggage, keepsakes, secrets, skeletons, and wanted-but-unwanted junk that occupy it.

My interviews revealed that no one coming out narrative is quite like any other, nor indeed is anyone ever on the same “page” or even “chapter,” highlighting how a wealth of diverse perspectives and experiences, like part the project of queer theory, rejects essentialism by refusing to rely on empirical, RAD-driven, positivist constructs of “normalcy” interpreted from aggregate data. Therefore, even though we may discover patterns in the coming out narrative genre, there is no such fiction as a “normal” coming out experience. Indeed, it would have been harmfully myopic and reductive to pretend that any one intersection of identity is either static or mutually exclusive; perhaps the most dangerous consequence of such a mistake is that we forget how normativity is an exclusionary social construction and that normativity, reciprocally, reproduces discursive and ultimately material social inequity in spaces embedded with social power, like the Academy and its writing classrooms.

Thus, an intersectional approach has been indispensable for my study of writing instructors' classroom coming out narratives—because, for all of my participants, a cluster of identity axes including ability, age, race, locale, class, religion, family, and gender complement and compete with one another. An intersectional approach underscores how identities are assigned discursive meaning and used to maintain or challenge oppressive social order. This chapter's application of intersectionality to classroom coming out narratives invites us to explore how privilege sometimes silently intersects with patterns of homophobia and transphobia and in turn how those phobias sometimes silently intersect with sexism and racism, ageism and disability, social

privilege and religious ideology. More specifically, in this chapter my research participants cited contextual power, such as structures and strictures of their institutions and identities and, in particular, the intersections of these with their queer identities, as catalysts for coming out or for passing—or for neither or both.

I close this chapter with a call for more intersectional research, because projects like mine and those it cites help guide us toward a “more desirable future” (Halberstam 152). Not unlike the widespread cultural aesthetic of Afrofuturism or Aaron Williamson’s reclamatory transformation from “Hearing Loss” to “Deaf Gain,” we might consider an intersectional queer futurity by continuing to frame queerness more positively—not as a deficit, but as an affordance. For example, through the productive disruption of queer ontology and performativity in our writing classrooms and beyond, we can consider how Halberstam’s anti-deficit interpretation of queerness in *In a Queer Time and Place* transforms the “perceived menace of homosexual life” into “strange temporalities, imaginative life schedules, and eccentric economic practices” that “detach queerness from sexual identity” (1).⁴³

In sum, but certainly not in totality, we can trace certain patterns from this analysis of my dataset: some intersectional identity conditions (anticipated consequences and political motivations) that typically embolden queer-identified teachers to come out include: performing in an older body with more teaching experience and more established

⁴³ Michel Foucault has more than once pursued the separation of queerness from sexual identification. For example, in “Friendship as a Way of Life,” he imagines a queer modality of life in which queer people from diverse cultures, social classes, professions, and ages need no names for who they are or how they be. “To be ‘gay,’” he writes, “is not to identify with the psychological traits and the visible masks of the homosexual but to try to define and develop a way of life” (n.p.). In such a “way of life,” we can resist debilitating interpretations and materials of productive time (neoliberal capital and industrial reproduction), family time (material inheritance and biological reproduction) and austere time (political outcomes and cultural reproduction) and instead consider a desirable future independent of oppressive identity labels.

university status. Some conditions typically intimidate some teachers to the point of passing, while other conditions typically motivate other teachers to perform queerness explicitly and/or ambiguously. And all of these findings support an exigency for our research to attend more to contextual identity intersectionality, not only specifically in our discussions of coming out in the classroom, but also more generally as a whole field.

Due to the various, intersectional, contextual conditions (whether they invigorate or intimidate) my research participants make choices regarding their teaching performances. Thinking rhetorically, most of their choices anticipate a particular response from their audience (primarily students). Something *always* changes as a result of myriad methods of passing, coming out, performing ambiguously, or opting out. But what changes? That is what we find out in the next chapter.

VIGNETTE IV

One of my first-semester students approaches me in the hallway after a composition class in 2015. I'm still hastily packing my battered brown bag, and other students buzz boisterous around us, away from us, so it's like a movie.

She comes out to me, one-on-one, in that hallway. She tells me that she didn't know what she was, but she knew she wasn't straight because she likes women. She tells me she had never told anyone because she's afraid of what her friends might think, of what her Catholic family might do. She's afraid of being disowned by both support groups, but she's torn because she also feels not seen.

She also tells me that mine is the best class she's ever taken. She tells me that because I had come out as gay to the class and because I make the room feel like a safe and fun place for her, so she feels like she can say this out loud about herself for the first time. She tells me that I make her feel like queer people can do anything—for instance: grow up, become a teacher, and help people love themselves. My heart.

I had shown in class that day a constellation of video essays, student examples to prepare us for a new unit on multimodal composing. One of the essays argues that queer women suffer the consequences of little-to-no visibility in academia—in textbooks, in classrooms, in stories, in histories, in writing, in examples that we show our students.

On the first day of school, before class started, even before I went through the roster to learn her name, MJ and I had talked about how our glasses frames were the exact same.

CHAPTER FOUR
PERCEIVED REACTIONS

I don't know how much [my coming out] changes my writing students at first, but if the student is doing a writing project related to LGBTQ issues, it does seem like when they enter the classroom and make a presentation on it, are sharing with it... I don't know, they do seem to be more confident to share. It's hard to say. I mean it's really hard to say, but I don't know that "me coming out to them" ... I don't know if they already have that confidence, but I can say that my intention in coming out to them is to kind of make it so that when they share their work in the class, they at least have the authority figure in the class as a sympathetic audience, you know?

—Marcus (research participant)

Marcus's reflection introduces many of this chapter's topics, which orbit the main concept of perceived student reactions to instructor identity performances. For example, amid all of the lovely folds of performativity in his writing classroom, Marcus shares a few of his own perceptions. But notice how uncertain he sounds.

I think Marcus sounds uncertain because our perceptions are unreliable; despite our intentions, we cannot control our students' reactions or even know definitely what they mean. "It's hard to say," as Marcus puts it, or as reflected in Judith Butler's argument in *Bodies That Matter*, "[discursive productions] continue to signify in spite of their authors, and sometimes against their authors' most precious intentions" (241).⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Butler's theory of performativity posits that the subject is powerless (and/or that power is subjectless), and that ideological power scripts all performances in advance of their utterance, enactment, and doing. Indeed, Butler's own writing exemplifies her observation. In successive editions of *Gender Trouble* she

Kopelson extends Butler's argument to the writing classroom: "Our acts, utterances, pedagogies, and selves may indeed signify in spite of, and even against, our intentions," she writes ("Dis/Integrating" 33). It stands to reason, then, that they "signify well beyond our wildest anticipations" so that "we are not in control of how the texts of our selves are finally read and received" (33). Because teaching performances begin to signify "before we can even hand students the syllabus" and because they "continue to signify in spite of their authors' most precious intentions" even after the class is over, "[t]he teacher's performance is never in full possession of itself," so "[d]ifferent students' readings of any given text will vary considerably, even wildly" (Kopelson, "Cunning" 119; Butler, *Psychic Life* 241; Ellsworth 164, 159). There are many texts in the composition classroom, of course, but the "text" of interest in this chapter is that of the teacher-subject's performing body, which students read after reception.

Reception theory, which the field of rhetoric and composition borrows from literary studies, similarly reminds us that reception is actualized by the audience.⁴⁵ Identity performances involve so many subjective layers of communication, which makes them so highly interpretable/imperturbable and enables multiple possible receptions of a text. For literature or any other performance to occur, the reader is as vital as the author.

accepts in the preface that "the life of the text has exceeded my intentions, and this is surely in part because of the changing context of its reception" (vii). Therefore, Butler acknowledges that she can neither control nor even own her own work: in a 2007 interview with the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Intersex Association's magazine *Bang Bang*, for example, Butler said "I must say, I feel the reception of my work is none of my business."

⁴⁵ Reception theory is a permutation of Reader-Response literary criticism, popular in the 1970s and 1980s. In response to Romanticists' preoccupation with the author and New Critics' exclusive and acontextual concern with the text more or less *prima facie*, reader response theory pivots to the *reader*, suggesting that literary texts do not exist on vacuous bookshelves; rather, they are processes of signification co-materialized not only in the performances of their writing, but also in the performances of their reading.

Reception theory reminds us that, like all communications, all identity performances are co-composed by the rhetor, the audience, and even nonhuman agents. In other words, “the negotiation of classroom identity involves an interaction of all parties, sometimes with competing agendas,” according to Jacqueline Jones Royster and Rebecca Greenberg Taylor (“Constructing Teaching Identity in the Basic Writing Classroom” 28).

Theories of performativity and reception help us understand why Marcus struggles to know how his students will interpret his performances of identity, despite his intentions, which are haphazard at best. When we disclose, and even when we attempt to pass, our gendered bodies or words are *out* in the world, and we can have no idea about how they’re being read. Nevertheless, I learned that many of my research participants feel motivated to make one performative pedagogy decision over another because they’re aiming for a particular student reaction, however subject to fate.

For example, some instructors recall their students resisting their authority after a moment of disclosure; other instructors observe that their authority increases after coming out; instructors who attempt to pass feel like they can’t fully connect with their students; instructors who feel that they are successfully passing enjoy more confidence and self-possession; some instructors come out and then sense a deeper level of rapport with their students; and still other instructors come out, and their students drop the class as a result. This brief list of findings demonstrates that we can conjure up an intended meaning, chuck it over to our audience, and hope that they do what we wanted them to do with it. Sometimes our identity performances *do* feel successful, and sometimes they feel unsuccessful. In reality, they are always somewhere in between. It is in this disruption of the binary that we can discover the pleasure and possibility unlocked by queer

performativity. Also, it is noteworthy that writing instructors don't even need to come out as queer or trans or gay in order to reap the harvest of classroom "confessions." *Any* classroom disclosure is a universal teaching tool that all teachers of writing can consider using, including straight and cisgender teachers.⁴⁶

In short, some instructors perceive reactions (desired, anticipated, or not) to their identity performances, and if we analyze their perceptions closely, we can better understand our work. I draw again from a familiar dataset for this final analysis chapter, but we focus this time on the following ideas: first, instructors' perceptions of change to student rapport; next, instructors' observation that, as Kopelson puts it, "political goals are scripted onto some of our body-texts" by students who think they know their teacher is "other" in some way ("Cunning" 119); third, instructors' perceptions of change in their students' writing; and finally, instructors' reflections about their own authenticity. Now—let's begin with the first section, rapport.

RAPPORT

Many of my research participants associate post-coming out with increased rapport. They feel that because they shared an intimate personal detail, they can develop

⁴⁶ Disclosure is not for everybody in every moment, and neither is passing. As David Bleich gravely reminds us, "we who use and value individual self-disclosure have also reported that it may endanger the classroom, the department, and the workplace-at-large" (46). This is why Lad Tobin advocates in "Self-Disclosure as a Strategic Teaching Tool: What I Do—and Don't—Tell My Students" for strategic uses of classroom self-disclosure focused on pedagogical application. "In defending *strategic* rather than *all* uses of the personal," he writes, "I am also acknowledging the role of differing applications and interpretations of pedagogical self-disclosure" (200). However, Tobin quickly qualifies that "just as we can't make a blanket statement about the value of, say, multiple choice exams or peer discussion groups [. . .] we also can't extrapolate a general assessment of pedagogical self-disclosure based on any particular example" (200). Therefore, although I would never colonize another's queer body by suggesting how that other person perform their identity, I think that it's safe for me at least to suggest that we avoid "throwing caution to the wind"—in the form of glitter, I suppose—by haphazardly coming out without considering outcomes.

stronger connections with their students and deepen levels of comfort with one another in the ecologies of their writing classrooms. In these ecologies, the increased rapport invites spikes in trust, sympathy, empathy, and appreciation, all of which enrich writing education, according to participants. They noticed that after they come out, their students think more critically about rhetoric and identity.

Participants often believe that their students respond positively to self-disclosure as a vulnerabilizing, relatable expression of trust, as well as an invitation to reciprocate. Students often accept this invitation, sometimes identically by coming out as queer-identified themselves or at least more generically by sharing some other hidden truth. For example, both Diego and Josh come out to all of their students on Day 1 of each writing course. They both reflected that it's difficult for them to measure change, since there's not much of a "before" to compare with the "after." Nevertheless, Diego decided "I think it's time well spent. I've noticed that folks are a little less reticent. That they're more—not eager—but willing, to just say what they think." Many teachers of undergraduate writing struggle with "getting students to talk" during classroom discussion, a learning activity that arguably dominates our pedagogy.⁴⁷

Stacey Waite substantiates Diego's observation when in *Teaching Queer* she argues that "[t]hinking queerly about participation" in her writing classrooms has helped her to shift her understandings of teaching, discussion, silence, and classroom activity (72-73, 84). One discussion topic that all teachers of writing can use is identity

⁴⁷ For an excellent literature review on the rise of classroom discussion in writing pedagogy and student resistance to sharing in class, please read John Wesley White's "Resistance to Classroom Participation: Minority Students, Academic Discourse, Cultural Conflicts, and Issues of Representation in Whole Class Discussions," published in the 2011 *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education*.

disclosure, according to Jonathan Alexander and Michelle Gibson. In “Queer Composition(s): Queer Theory in the Writing Classroom” they advocate for bringing queer subjectivity into our classrooms, arguing that “[d]iscussions about the multitude of identities we all bring to the classroom easily give way to discussions about audience and purpose, and discussions about our performances of different identities in different contexts easily lead into discussions about dealing with contradictions in writing, about organization, and about how readers ‘read’ us when they encounter our writing” (8-9). As Alexander and Gibson argue here and David Bleich contends, “every member of a classroom has an identity, a history, and a positionality; therefore, habitual and scholarly reference to it becomes part of the process of presenting opinions, interpretations, and reports of other things” (48). In sum, classroom disclosure can be a powerful asset for a teacher of writing. Overall, for example, Diego evaluates coming out as a “profound tool” that helps him connect with his students.

While Diego comes out in every class, Mary’s identity performances highly depend on what kind of class she is teaching. She only comes out to large groups of students in queer-themed writing courses, and after her explicit moments of disclosure she notices that her classroom rapport increases. Her students “(Especially students that are LGBTQ, right?) seem to develop a closer bond with me,” she recalls. Beau also recognizes the opportunity to connect specifically with his LGBT students, whom he notices will talk with him more post-disclosure.

Cash, whose Master of Art’s thesis focuses on student rapport, also reflected on the subject. He recalls a series of scenes from an introductory writing class he taught. Early in the semester, before he’d come out as trans, he shared an autoethnography by a

woman being catcalled. When he asked his summer class of 15 white, cisgender students to discuss the short article... “my students shut down” because “they were not comfortable summarizing” what they’d read about “a woman recalling her experience of catcalling and what that meant to her.” Cash recalls that his students just refused to share. “We sat there for fifteen, twenty minutes, and a couple of people would say one or two things, but it was just agonizing silence,” said Cash. Some of the students snickered. “It was just a mess,” and “I was like, ‘That was gross.’”

Fast-forward: same class, weeks later. “I started asking my students questions about them outside of being students,” said Cash who was searching for a way to reach them:

I would start classes asking about their weekend or if somebody had anything cool to share, right? Like trying to in some way humanize them and myself because it was just very taut: the relationship that we had felt very distanced. They were afraid. They were scared, beginning freshmen; I was a scared, beginning teacher, and I was trying to do anything that I could to bridge that gap to where they didn’t just see me as superior, [. . .] to see me as a person that was just trying to help them get better at writing, at school, navigating everything.

For weeks, Cash slowly disclosed personal details to students and asked for the same in return. Even though there was no explicit coming out as gay or trans, the queer-themed activities, assignments, and examples that he brought into the classroom functioned like smaller fragments of a larger disclosure. This smaller-fragments process of disclosures is similar to what David Bleich describes in “Collaboration and the Pedagogy of Disclosure” as a “gradual buildup of trust and understanding” between instructors and

students (44). Bleich believes that when we are in academic places, sharing with others about who we are, is “not simply a matter of ‘opening up’ or ‘expressing’ ourselves” but rather a collaborative process, and of course “each site of collaboration is different” (44).

Basically, all teachers and all students perform identity in writing classrooms, and those performances are collaborative processes. However, each collaborative performance of identity in our writing classrooms is unique. My research participants and I have therefore noticed many similarities, as well as deep divides, between our beliefs about and approaches to queer performative pedagogies. Some instructors, or perhaps all of us, are still experimenting with our limitless options—which brings us back to Cash.

“So later on in the semester I tried one more time,” he said. This time, Cash had his students watch a TED Talk on gender neutral bathrooms and write a rhetorical analysis paper about it. “In the course of the two months between these two assignments” (the catcalling discussion and the gender neutral bathroom paper), Cash’s students felt more confident and comfortable discussing and writing about challenging identity topics. In addition, “I had a couple of students ask me to write letters of recommendation and all of these other things, and so we were developing this kind of rapport, and I was freeingly, pleasantly surprised whenever they turned in this rhetorical analysis paper.”

Even though some students “were pretty comfortable to remain in their own bubble,” Cash observed an overall change. Most of his students that semester “really just ‘got it’” in that “they understood how multifaceted identity can be and how people in minority groups struggle and how these authors [of the catcalling article and bathroom TED talk] were establishing their ethos with a predominately heteronormative audience. It’s incredible to see how they shifted in thinking about things within just those two and a

half months.” Invigorated by the increased rapport earned by waxing smaller disclosures, Cash has with more frequency come out to later classes as trans. Ever since, Cash has noticed that students more frequently come out to him in their own writing and ask him for letters of recommendation.

As I’ve demonstrated not only with my literature review but also through my research participants’ anecdotal evidence, many teachers of writing use self-disclosure in their classrooms as a teaching tool to try and facilitate connections between themselves and their students. Any performance of disclosure or passing bears rhetorical effect, which instructors may try to leverage. Doug Cloud points out that there are many pedagogical and even narrative parallels between coming out as queer and coming out as an atheist, or as any marginalized subject (167). And, in a way, all speech acts are a coming out or disclosure. “Coming out,” as Cloud argues, “is more than a phrase,” and it is more than a phase (165). Rather, it is a more complicated, social-discursive practice that shapes the production, distribution, and consumption of texts (Fairclough 78). Therefore, instructors like Diego, Mary, Josh, Beau, and Cash come out to students in front of collective classes because they recognize self-disclosure as a teaching tool that they have often correlated with an increase in the level of rapport they share with their students.

Rather than whole-classroom coming out, though, some instructors rely on one-on-one conversations. Meghan, for instance, reflected that she’s developed a more personal relationship with the students to whom she’s come out individually:

The relationship has changed after that. I notice that they feel more comfortable maybe disclosing things to me, either in class or out of class. I’ve noticed that the

students maybe feel—I don't know if this is a direct correlation or not, but I think that once they have a comfort level, then they feel more comfortable bringing up queer-related topics in class or talking about it when they are having class discussion because they know that I am kind of “there” with them, like they know that I've got their back, and this is an okay class environment to talk about that stuff.

Like Meghan, Marcus comes out mostly to individual students, and this is usually in response to *them* approaching *him* to discuss queer identity. There's a rumor / institutional literacy that he's *the* token queer faculty member of the department, and so sometimes a student will seek Marcus out in order to come out or to get help writing about a queer topic. “I've had students come to me who are gay themselves, kind of looking for mentorship,” said Marcus. “I may not have had them in a class before, but they'll say, ‘Oh yeah, someone said that you're someone I could talk to,’ you know—that type of thing.” We could theorize about the difference between coming out and being called out, but either way Marcus chooses to disclose gay sexual orientation to his students in these moments, especially because of the kind of campus where he works. At a Catholic institution, Marcus realizes, students are making themselves extremely vulnerable in these moments. “They don't know me, right?” It's important to Marcus “that they know that, at least on my end, they have a sympathetic audience, not a hostile one.” He always makes sure to tell students they can come talk to him, and they do because of apparently increased rapport between the two. Sometimes, they even come out to him, which brings us to the subcategory “reciprocal coming out.”

Reciprocal coming out: Marcus sometimes reciprocates when his students come out to him. Sometimes it happens the other way around, though. In any case, I call this “reciprocal coming out,” a subcategory code that I borrow from Meghan’s interview: “I do sometimes have individual students, mostly students who are themselves queer-identified in some way, who come to me because of picking up on those small signals, and then sometimes they come out to me, and I sort of ‘reciprocal-come out’ in return,” she said.

(Reciprocal) coming out does not have to come from a *queer* student, either. Students can come out by sharing a number of other unknown identities, phenomena, and events. Even though Alex does not come out in her classrooms as a lesbian, she is “authentic and transparent” about some of her core values and beliefs, so “my classroom still has the feel or the environment of being a place where authenticity and vulnerability and diversity are not tolerated but celebrated.” Students have therefore shared “a lot of very vulnerable things with me,” related to struggles with their sexuality, family members who have come out, conflicts between sexuality and theology, and experiences of surviving sexual violence. All of these reciprocal coming out moments are evidence for Alex that “I do have a good bit of emotional rapport with students.”

For Meghan and Marcus, reciprocal coming out often occurs in more intimate, private rhetorical situations, such as with students who linger after dismissal, during one-on-one conversations in hallways outside the classroom, and during office hours. For Cash, some students come out to him in their writing. Cash reflected, for example, on the year directly preceding his GTAship. Even though he was still teaching at a small high

school in Texas, Cash's experiences are nonetheless applicable to this study, specifically by way of more general implications surrounding writing pedagogy and student rapport.

Cash recalls that he was teaching in a high school where "having a transgender teacher is something that doesn't happen to everybody." This was actually the subject of one of his writing student's college application essays. According to Cash, "She was talking about how some students were okay with it [learning from a trans teacher of writing], and some weren't, and a lot of the parents weren't okay with it, and all of these things, but how she was really proud of her school for backing me and that she was really proud of me for being really nice to people who were not so nice to me." Cash recalls increased student rapport, which he believes invited his student to reciprocate by coming out to him. "This student in her essay came out to me as queer. And she said, 'Thank you.' She was like, 'Because of you I feel like I can be my full self.' And that was super cool. Like it... I don't know, it made all of the weird, shitty things, what parents do and say, totally worth it."

Several students have also come out to Amanda and even to the whole writing classroom, and she believes that it is only because she had come out to them first. She said, "I don't think that that would have happened if I hadn't come out in that class.... Classrooms can be such unsafe spaces, and it's not that me coming out or disclosing of necessity makes the classroom safer, but I think it does create a model for students to think about how to strategize how they do this and who they might seek out to have conversations." Amanda brings in metaphors of strategy and model here. Amanda's metaphors support Cloud's argument about seeking to leverage potential rhetorical effects of identity performances in writing classrooms.

Kate is another instructor who thinks strategically and practically about coming out. In the first 3 weeks that Kate taught writing at the college level, she invited students to “get-to-know-you” conferences. During these conferences, Kate had 5 students come out to her in response to her own disclosure. Kate remembers that, while some of them came out “in ways that were just ‘I’m here and I’m queer and I’m out, and I’m super happy about it,’ one student in particular just moved here from a really rural area, and they were just now starting to come out, and we were the same age because they were a nontraditional student.” There in her office, the student talked about how coming out to her family was a big struggle for everyone and that it was causing academic problems. Kate developed an empathic mentoring relationship with this student and with other students to whom she has come out. She feels this way about all students, and even “with other students that I’ve come out to, they haven’t necessarily come out to me as queer, but I feel like we have a good rapport.”

Let’s revisit one more scene, that rather aggressive student of Andrés from the previous chapter, who on day one interrupted and interrogated Andrés about his sexuality in front of the entire class. This student, reflects Andrés, challenged him to “come out” to everyone. After coming out to the whole class and moving on with the planned lesson, Andrés talked with that student after the class period ended. “I asked him, ‘Why was it necessary for you to know if I was gay?’ and the answer took me aback. “The student said, ‘Well, for me—because I’m gay too and it was important for me to know if my teacher or my professor is gay because I can connect with him better than if he was not.’” This student ultimately just needed a safe space to come out himself, Andrés said, and “although I felt that I was on the spot at the moment when he asked me because I would

have liked him to ask me personally, not in front of the class,” ultimately Andrés is glad that his coming out could extend the feeling of safety to his student. Afterward, Andrés noticed that “his writing specifically—he, his work was better because of the rapport that we had as gay, like both recognizing or acknowledging that we’re both gay.”

Diego, Mary, Cash, Meghan, Marcus, Alex, Kate, and Andrés have reminded us that it is still such a risk to come out specifically as queer or to unsuccessfully pass as “normal.” By way of comparison, a teacher might “come out” in the classroom as a vegan or a Republican or with a religion, hobby, or hobby, or as a *Harry Potter* fan, and all of these disclosures could be productive rapport-builders in writing classrooms, so what is it about *queer* disclosure in our writing classrooms that is especially interesting?

Being queer is, and has been, unique and therefore extra affective, and this is because, legal or not, being queer is still not allowed; it is still dangerous to be known as queer. It is still potentially embarrassing, scary, bold to come out or to have our closet door wrenched open by someone else, and that is not lost on student- and colleague audiences in our writing programs. Based on my data, I argue that when teachers of writing decide to come out as something taboo and political when they didn’t have to, it is particularly vulnerabilizing, and so they communicate a degree of trust in their audience, and trust is important for consenting relationships, and consenting relationships are important for writing. And they’re just important. In sum, whether teachers of writing explicitly come out or not, their actions are always read, and while instructors believe increased rapport is sometimes a byproduct of coming out, they also often fear that their students ascribe political agendas onto queer teaching subjects, and that is the site of the

next section.

POLITICS

As discussed at length in chapter 2, almost all of my interviewees have perceived students reading a political agenda onto their spoken and unspoken classroom performances and onto their teaching bodies, especially their queer ones. Some instructors choose to pass or decide to disclose very rarely in order to avoid such political mapping. Other writing instructors come out, loudly or subtly, in spite of and sometimes because of its anticipated politic (whether or not those anticipations are satisfied).

Take Aaron for example, since he has come out to whole writing classrooms and believes there's been a "remarkable" change afterward. He fears "silencing students because they're reading a political agenda onto me, which I'm sure they're doing anyway, but it [coming out] sort of reinforces or sort of refines the political agenda I guess that they're reading onto me, and then what are they not saying that I don't get to have that teachable moment with?"

Based on his perception of past experiences, Aaron predicts the reaction his students may have, that for better and for worse they will read his queer body as politically biased. Whether he's right or not, his rhetorical savviness in conjunction with the privilege of choice help Aaron to strategize the moments he does and doesn't disclose. For others, like Meghan, passing sometimes doesn't feel like an option; instead it can "feel very vulnerable... kind of on every level" during opportunities to come out.

Recall from chapter 2 that Meghan experiences microaggressions, mostly from white, straight, cismale students who question her expertise and professionalism. Before

Meghan has even a chance to come out as anything, “they’ve already read me as a fairly young, femme woman, and they’ve already made up their mind about who I am.”

Meghan’s students label her as an “angry feminist” who’s “putting my own sort of bias onto the material and not acknowledging the other perspective.” For lots of professors, moments of coming out as LGBTQ-identified can help build classroom rapport; for others, these moments are cause for pause, especially for students who expect/desire an academically neutral writing room, instructor, program, curriculum, and pedagogy.

Remember that Meghan has come out as a lesbian to individual students, but she comes out in a different kind of way to the collective. Almost the complete antithesis to Kopelson’s concept of academic neutrality, “I always make it clear from the first day, I’m gonna teach a really critically-oriented social justice pedagogy,” Megan said. While Kopelson writes that she has, through ambiguous performances, “prevented [students] from discerning and resisting the political agenda that I do have, the axe that I *am* grinding,” Meghan sharpens the blade right in front of them, so to speak. “And some students are kind of like, ‘all in,’ and then some I get pretty consistent resistance from.” In other words, “I feel like my classes tend to be—I don’t know, they tend to get kind of divided in terms of ‘who’s on board and who’s not.’” In the context of these politics, Meghan will sometimes come out to various students during conferences. At that point, Meghan can’t know if there’s any change because she believes her students treat her sexual orientation less like a disclosure and more like a “footnote,” as Meghan put it, which at this moment they finally vet as true.

Amanda also weighs both positive and negative implications of her coming out performances. “I think it does humanize or solidify the conversation in some ways,” she

said during our interview. “But I also think one of my fears in doing so is always that in saying, ‘This is how I identify,’ suddenly, ‘Oh, we can’t respond against what the teacher is suggesting’” due to an exercise of politically reading their instructor’s queer/crip body, their mind, and (consequently) their pedagogy.

Amanda’s and Meghan’s concerns evoke Candace Spigelman’s “What Role Virtue,” which is concerned in large part with our writing students’ “ability to discern the instructor’s mission and to compose in accordance with that perception” (322). Because “Students (correctly) infer that there is a ‘correct’ answer or viewpoint in classes focused on diversity, difference, and multiculturalism” they might feel obligated, and thus “limit genuine discursive negotiation” or engagement with and writing about identity-related themes (326). In accordance with Spigelman, Amanda observes that “[w]ith queerness more specifically, some of the negative things have been either in course evals or the anonymous reflections that students might write.” One example that comes to Amanda’s mind is a student’s anonymous midterm reflection that “You’re way too liberal.” For Amanda, this “seems like a shot at being queer” because Amanda believes her students correlate queerness and liberalism. “Actually, this is kind of a bit of a dismaying response that I’ve gotten more frequently from students,” said Amanda. She continues with a rather generous reading of her students’ intentions:

It comes from a really good place, but more or less like, ‘I don’t know how to talk about gender and sexuality because I’m straight and I’m cisgender,’ so almost like a refusal or an unwillingness to talk about it because of an acute concern of not wanting to misrepresent other people. So it comes from a deep place of empathy and caring, but then in realizing they have this instructor who identifies as queer,

it I think suddenly also raises the stakes for them in some ways. They're deeply uncomfortable with talking about it because they're afraid they might hurt someone's feelings or do something wrong.

So, whether or not our students are writing about it in their course evaluations, my research participants realize that they often develop more or less accurate opinions about us. My research participants and others have also sensed risks in teaching queer: if you're too ambiguous, Kopelson argues, you risk either an "a regressive lapse into invisibility" or a "retreat to safety," each of which "deprives students of opportunities for encounters with the 'other' and for the understanding and transformation that these encounters might yield" ("Cunning" 139). In her article, Kopelson cites many others including Cheryl Johnson, Shirley Wilson Logan, and Homa Hoodfar, who "have all described pedagogical situations in which student engagement with issues of difference decreases dramatically when the teacher is perceived as too close to the subject matter at hand" (126). Any time a student notices that their instructor is "other" or "different" from a majority of the class, their presence alone is, as Logan puts it, "read as a signal that now oral and written expressions of ideas may need to be suppressed lest they offend the person who will evaluate them" ("When and Where I Enter": Race, Gender, and Composition Studies" 50). In other words, as Johnson writes in "Disinfecting Dialogues," her white students often worry about insulting their teacher, a black woman, by disagreeing politically, unfairly failing the class as a result of identity-based bias, and ultimately offer "language which is so neutral, so bland, that it disinfect discussion" (132).

This is why, after a large sigh, Amanda reflected on how some students feel so

intimidated that they retreat from critical engagement with rhetoric, culture, and writing altogether, the opposite of her pedagogical goal with coming out in the first place. This is reminiscent of Aaron's fears that when he comes out, he is inevitably "silencing students because they're reading a political agenda onto me." In short, coming out might increase classroom rapport, and it might disrupt it with politics. But here's the thing: coming out *is* political. It always is, and it has to be. Many of my research participants and I believe that classroom coming out is more *politicized* than political, due to the cultural myth of The Gay Agenda. The (non)fictional drama of The Homosexual Agenda has long plagued the queer community. Its rhetoric relies on harmful stereotypes, and it's only through the maintenance of such prejudice that heteropatriarchy can flourish and remain dominant.

To be clear, there is an Agenda, and it certainly is progressive. Though it's not to corrupt the youth with our "lifestyle," or infect people with HIV, The Agenda is to engage in the democratic system, not to be targeted for hate crimes, to remember and reclaim histories and perhaps even to pursue your career as a teacher of writing, even if you are a queer.

Student withdrawal: Unfortunately, though, some students believe in and fear The Gay Agenda so much that when they learn their teacher is a liberal queer, they withdraw from the writing class. Some interviewees remember students dropping their writing classes after learning the instructor is LGBTQ-identified. Andrés, for instance, can recall a particularly aggressive experience with one of his students, who interrupted a lesson. "I have had students who're very open-minded, very welcoming, super respectful," said Andrés, "but," in contrast, he continued,

There are some other students that feel entitled to challenge my sexuality in front of everyone and say, “I’m not going to write a paper about gay or transgender people because of my religion, because I think you’re sick, because I think they need psychological treatments,” and I have met those [students], and they don’t write papers. I have had students who drop my class because they say, “I cannot put up with this.”

Andrés discusses multiple students who, sometimes in front of the whole class, refuse to discuss course content or participate in assignments. Others have even dropped the section solely because of an adverse reaction to queer content or queer positionality. At most times, this is in response to his pedagogical coming out performances. Andrés has noticed that when he finally comes out explicitly as gay, it’s a kind of final straw that he believes exacerbates students’ paranoia of an agenda.

Similarly, Cash came out in one of his classes, and the students responded with refusal. “We can all laugh about it and move on,” Cash had imagined, but in his recollection, “They all just kind of looked at me like I was this strange and exotic zoo animal [laughs ...] and they were just kind of like, ‘Woah, I’m not entirely sure what to do with this.’ Nobody said or did anything that was overtly negative in that initial coming out. I did have two students later drop the class and tell me it was because they were uncomfortable with my identity.”

Whether students drop the class entirely like they have in Andrés and Cash’s cases, “get on board” as Meghan describes, or do anything in between, many may project a queer agenda onto the body of the instructor that comes out. Coming out is always political, and teaching is always political. But what does it mean to teach *by* coming out?

How can we teach composition through a queer writing pedagogy? How do our identity performances influence our students' writing? We investigate these questions in the following section.

STUDENT WRITING

My research participants often also interpret how their classroom identity performances have impacted their students' writing. During my interview with Robert, for example, our conversation shifted to writing assignments. "There is one thing that I worry about with my coming out," he said. Once they've learned about his queer identity, Robert sometimes feels suspicious that his students will then choose to write about certain (queer) topics to mollify, flatter, and satisfy their (queer) professor—to, as he put it, "polish the apple."

On the one hand, Robert can celebrate students' rhetorically savvy audience analysis skills; on the other, Robert interprets this change as a "danger." "I fear that some students might 'artificially' focus on LGBTQ+ issues," he reflects, in order to achieve a higher grade. Once students begin to piece together a medley of personal disclosures, ranging in content and gravity, they feel ready to interpret their teacher's political agenda, and they can use this data mining to make informed writing choices—"shift in thinking" in Cash's summer classroom, watch with trepidation as Meghan twirls around her razor-sharp axe, or polish Jeffrey's apple on their queer teacher's desk.

We can draw parallels between Robert's "polishing the apple" metaphor and Spigelman's primary personal example from "What Role Virtue." Her student David composed an essay that originally advocated for racial and ethnic segregation, but peer

review exercises, instructor feedback, and two revisions transformed the paper into a celebration of diversity. During a followup interview six months after he completed her writing course, David revealed that “pragmatism motivated his revision” and that “[a]lthough he insists repeatedly that the two drafts are not expressions of totally opposite viewpoints, he admits that his second draft was written to please me” (334). According to Spigelman, students believe that writing assessment should be much more concerned objectively with form than subjectively with content, “and that ultimately the most direct route to a high grade is to agree with the teacher” (334). Spigelman raises important questions about the propriety and nature of writing instructors’ role (“Do I help David to write a *better* paper about the advantages of a segregated society?”) as responders to student writing (330).

In the end, much like Meghan’s outlook from earlier, and in contrast to Kopelson’s strategic ambiguity, Spigelman therefore advocates that “we must state more clearly our own values, that we must not be intimidated by accusations that we are representing an ideology” (336). While we can celebrate students’ adroit, rhetorically rich understanding of writing as a performance and operation of tropes like audience, *ethos*, and virtue, we might also ask—at what cost? Writing students “are always conscious of our power” so more often than we’d care to think they may be “telling us what they know we want to hear” (337).

We can also celebrate the potential for striking less transactional, superficially meritocratic relationships with students. Recall that Beau, Mary, and Andrés notice overall increased rapport for many of their students, especially those who identify as LGBTQ themselves. Diego describes how coming out is “time well spent” because it gets

all of his students to discuss more openly during classroom activities. And Robert and Cash even notice growth in many of their students' writing and rhetorical knowledge. For example, remember how Cash disclosed more and more each day, slowly building rapport. By their second assignment, he noticed spikes in his students' writing with stronger command of rhetorical analysis specifically related to identity, ethos, and heteronormativity. For Marcus, though, the impact of coming out on his writing pedagogy is still a bit cloudy, as revealed by this chapter's epigraph:

I don't know how much [coming out] changes my writing students at first, but if the student is doing a writing project related to LGBTQ issues, it does seem like when they enter the classroom and make a presentation on it, are sharing with it... I don't know, they do seem to be more confident to share. It's hard to say. I mean it's really hard to say, but I don't know that "me coming out to them" ... I don't know if they already have that confidence, but I can say that my intention in coming out to them is to kind of make it so that when they share their work in the class, they at least have the authority figure in the class as a sympathetic audience, you know?

Marcus's words invite us to reapply queer performativity to writing pedagogy, as we did in the opening paragraphs of this chapter. Notice how Marcus believes his coming out increases his students' confidence, felt sense of authority, and audience awareness and that all of these, in his opinion, improve their work. Let us take an even closer look at Marcus's words. Some hedging language (e.g., "I don't know, but...") shows up here, joining in chorus the hundreds of other caveats across my interviews, as many participants mentioned that they can't ever know if any given identity performance has

been “successful” because there’s no way to actually know how students have interpreted it. This concept is crystalized in Meghan’s representative statement: “I don’t know, there might be something else going on in their minds, but I’m not sure. And there’s a lot of classes that I haven’t come out to at all, so I don’t know.”

But Marcus here perceives change, even if he is also skeptical of his own observations. Perhaps coming out, at least for some people, can work as a sneaky placebo. By theorizing its impact and weighing its pros and cons, some instructors predict that coming out will be a useful rhetorical technique, and so they focus on positive outcomes of coming out. Perhaps coming out helps some instructors feel more confident for a variety of glass-half-full reasons, one of them a feeling of unapologetic authenticity.

AUTHENTICITY

While this chapter has so far focused on instructors’ perceptions of their students’ reactions to their identity performances, many of my research participants also turned inward to reflect on self-perceptions. Toward the end of each interview, I asked my research participants about authenticity because I am intrigued by the concept in so many ways: What does it mean to be an authentic person? What is authentic about identity performances? What is the relationship between authenticity and writing, especially considering the writing trope of “voice?”⁴⁸

Some of my participants and I talked at length about how an identity performance’s degree of authenticity relies not solely on the performer but also on the

⁴⁸ I struggled in my research to find scholarship that defines authenticity in our field, but I did find that most often the term has been taken up in writing studies to trace Peter Elbow’s metaphor of “authentic voice.”

audience. In this context the performer is the teacher of writing, and the audience of students is more or less willing to accept their performance as “true.” In order to describe their feelings of authenticity, my interviewees used many metaphors, such as fullness, trust, openness, and genuineness. They also brought up writing lessons about authentic voice and discussed their relationships with students.

The interviewee who discussed her struggle with authenticity the most was Alex, who imagines a future when she will finally be able to come out to her writing students. Before that time, though, she has some thinking to do. “I haven’t fully thought through the implications of what [coming out] would mean pedagogically or ethically either,” she said. “What potential benefits are there to coming out to your students? What are the potential consequences or considerations or drawbacks? What are the ethical boundaries of that?”

Robert was also particularly interested in authenticity. When I asked him why he comes out in his writing classrooms and how he decides to do so, he wrote in all capital letters, “AUTHENTICITY – being who and what I am honestly and openly is an ETHICAL imperative.”⁴⁹ This was item number one in a list of reasons for coming out. If Robert’s language sounds familiar, it is probably because it’s remarkably similar to Louie Crew’s 1974 call in his special issue of *College English* on *The Homosexual Imagination*: “Coming out is not strictly a matter of conscience,” he argues. “It is an academic responsibility.” An antithesis to Adrienne Rich’s compulsory heterosexuality and the

⁴⁹ Robert wrote some of his reflections down before our interview and shared his writing with me afterward.

necessity to pass, Robert summons something that sounds more like compulsory disclosure of queer identity.

Similarly, even though Andrés realizes that “I am putting myself at risk,” he also feels that “I *need* to come out. I need to embrace my gayness. I need to tell people I am gay” because he feels any other alternative is “not true to myself” and how can he teach if he is not being his true self, he wonders. Conversely, it is exactly this sense of responsibility that makes coming out feel *inauthentic* to Diego, who has felt “some kind of urgency, some kind of exigence” to come out to his writing students. However, because coming out has at times felt like a duty to Diego, the obligatory nature of his performance has felt “disingenuous” and “insincere.” While other instructors like Alex feel that *passing* is inauthentic, Diego here views obligatory coming out a superficial, reductive method of talking about his identity.

Cash also reflected on authenticity. He remembers when a student came out as queer to him in an essay. Another form of reciprocal coming out, this student writes about being her “full self” in her essay, and that she was inspired by her teacher (Cash) who came out and was being his “full self,” or his authentic self.

Returning to Alex, you’ll remember from chapter 2 that she also uses the “full self” metaphor when discussing authenticity. “There is this part of me that feels that not being out in the classroom is kind of not being fully authentic in ways that I wish I could be,” she said. Alex laments that she is “generally sick of not being fully out” because she feels it’s disingenuous, but she has to pass because of the rules at her Southern Baptist University.

Alex does not disclose everything in the classroom, but she does feel that she is “authentic and transparent enough” because she shares personal stories and beliefs. Many of the examples she brings into the writing class come from her research areas: religious, social movement, and civil rights rhetoric. Therefore, “I am asking students to think about and engage and write about issues in ways that of course bring to the forefront their values and beliefs.” When they select their writing topics, for instance, Alex believes it reveals so much about their identities. And then Alex often asks her students to write about the “deeply personal.”

“I ask students to do a lot of honest, vulnerable self-assessment and self-sharing in the classroom. [. . .] I am frequently frustrated that I cannot be out because I feel like I’m asking a lot of my students to be very vulnerable.” Alex realizes that her sexual orientation is just one part of her identity, but “it *is* part of my identity, and it’s an important one, and so there’s a part of me that wishes that I could be a little bit more open and vulnerable about that in the classroom. I wish that that could be a little bit fuller by them knowing a little bit more about my sexual identity and my relationship with my partner, which is such a significant part of my life.”

Alex plans to come out in future institutions, but for now she feels comfortable sharing less risky anecdotes and being transparent with her students about her values and beliefs. She therefore participates in some kind of “authentic” truth-telling, but we could also argue that Alex performs just one version of the truth—the straight version that, for her, isn’t “fully” authentic. As Elizabeth Ellsworth writes in *Teaching Positions*, “Performative pedagogy makes claims not to Truth and validity, but to viability and efficacy in relation to a particular audience and intention within a particular situation. It

strives not for Truth, but political and social response-ability, credibility, and usefulness-in-context, and in relation to its particular ‘audience’ of students” (162). For example, Alex said, “I don’t wanna come out and be like, ‘I am a Democrat who’s pro-gun control and who’s gay.’ But I also don’t wanna be disingenuous with my students, so like, I did not pretend to be totally fine the day after the Parkland Shooting.” But Alex revealed to me that she desperately desires to be her “full self” and, for her, part of being her full self means disclosing her queer status, which is not an option at the moment.

Mary and Amanda also discuss authenticity as fragmented, but rather than splitting authenticity into the binary logic of coming out as truthful and passing as deceitful, they complicate authenticity as a constructed, nuanced, and performative spectrum, not a wholesale subject position. As Amanda put it, “There are problems with that whole (in)authenticity framework, and even problems with the passing performance framework, in that they’re not direct oppositions.”

For Amanda, authenticity flits from context to context, from moment to moment. While instructors might *think* they’re being authentic, it is only ever the case that one is “being authentic to some component” of the self, “but maybe not all components and in that way I’m putting on a performance of some kind.” This parallels Alex’s idea of identities as “parts” of the “full” teacher and Ellsworth’s idea that “Performative pedagogy’s only life... is in relation to its context and moment (160). Similarly, Mary argues that “it’s very difficult to be... who you are as a college professor. Fully. Because there is this whole performative aspect to college teaching.” In other words, teaching (and writing) is just a series of performances, and for Mary and others, there’s always a degree

of inauthenticity with all performances, even disclosures, *because* they are inherently performative.

Writing instructors can and do sometimes script and rehearse their lessons, adjusting and tinkering with the version of the “authentic” self that they wish to present that day. Just because an instructor is not lying does not mean that they are being authentic, Amanda concludes, especially considering that serendipitous, extemporaneous, performative moments occur in our writing and in our writing classrooms all of the time.

CONCLUSION

Our writing spaces are bursting with human and nonhuman agents, all of which know their scripts and stage directions for appropriate performances of speaking, writing, listening, looking, lessons, behaviors, genders, sexualities, power. In other words, we know that we *should* use the jargon that authenticates our desired identity performances.

But when we go off script, break the fourth wall, ignore the blueprints, or rifle through the costumes in our closets, the ripple effect inevitably invites agents in the ecology of our writing classroom to react. My research participants have observed some of these reactions in their classrooms. In review, many of them can recall helpful boosts in classroom and student rapport after they have come out, even though students also always assign a range of politics to the truth-telling body of their instructor, regardless. Also, instructors can make educated guesses about how to express identity “successfully,” but students will react ultimately unpredictably, sometimes even with resistance. Finally, my interview questions invited research participants to explain their

philosophies on the teaching of writing by working through what it means to be “authentic” in writing contexts.

We also discussed at length in this chapter how, even though “authenticity” is not a zero-sum game, we sometimes dupe ourselves into thinking that it is, or even that it can be. However, essentialistic understandings of authenticity/inauthenticity necessitate failure because they dream up a goal, to be a “fully” authentic self, which is impossible. We will inevitably fail, and once we get comfortable with its inevitability, we can reimagine this failure. Halberstam has. In her book *The Queer Art of Failure*, the title speaks for itself, and the contents elaborate to explain that this art “turns on the impossible, the improbable, the unlikely, and the unremarkable. It quietly loses, and in losing it imagines other goals for life, for love, for art, and for being” (88). For Judith Butler, the failure of “the mimetic function [. . .] can be productive” because we’ll be free to explore all kinds of ways of being, knowing, and meaning-making that will be valued in “what will count as the world” (*Bodies that Matter* 19). As Elizabeth Ellsworth puts it, “representation is never totalizing—it never gives a complete, exact picture of what is being represented, it always fails to reproduce the real exactly. Therefore, representation also produces ruptures and gaps, making a full, complete, or adequate understanding of the world impossible” (160). In short, we will forever fail to pass perfectly for the subject that we want our audiences to see, but that is good.

Therefore, as my research participants (sans Robert, maybe) have reminded us, being “fully” authentic is fictional, so we should embrace failure as a queer art. Reception theory tells us that identity performances are inherently indeterminate. Queer theory invites us to disrupt heteronormativity and even to fail at it. By greeting queer failure, we

might learn to focus on and sometimes even rejoice in the slippages of identity performativity and in our collaborative processes of composition.

We could even go so far as to begin rethinking the use of disclosure in our writing classrooms; a consistent critique that queer postmodernists have theorized is that disruptive identity performances are bittersweet because by threatening dominant ideology, they also risk its reification. By coming out, attempting to pass, or “choosing” any in-between identity performance, you risk reinscripting yourself into the place you’ve already been scripted. You speak yourself into a place where your being has already been spoken (for).

To elaborate, we can turn to *Wrong-Doing, Truth-Telling*, in which Michel Foucault defines disclosure as avowal. He writes that “[a]vowal incites or reinforces a power relation that exerts itself on the one who avows. This is why all avowals are ‘costly’” (17). A queer disclosure or avowal is “a verbal act through which the subject affirms who he is, binds himself to this truth, places himself in a relationship of dependence with regard to another, and modifies at the same time his relationship to himself” (17). However, we might reconceive of coming out and passing in our writing classrooms. Rather than always a “costly” deficit, passing and disclosure can be a generative teaching technique. My data, for instance, challenge our existing knowledge: they strongly support that although there is a range of potentially dangerous exceptions, classroom disclosure can often be safe, reclamatory, and even healing or rewarding, not just regressive and risky.

This is all to argue that as teachers and students of writing, as WPAs and rhetoric and composition scholars, as queers, and as anyone, really, we can learn to accept that

slippages will inevitably happen in our performances. However, instead of always trying to ignore them or mop them up, or cage and silence them, or bracket and categorize them, we can sometimes celebrate serendipitous slippages, leaking, and the excess. Like all teaching tools, queer identity performances in the classroom are both a science and a gamble in that they are a rhetoric. We can and do adjust the intensity of our peacock wattage or our closet camouflage based on sometimes years of queer trial and error. Rhetoric is always future-oriented and anticipatory. It is language crafted with intention, so if we closely study passing and disclosure by theorizing queer performativity in the classroom, we can significantly enrich our teaching, administrative labor, and writing scholarship in the field of rhetoric and composition. Many of us in this field, queer-identified or not, can recall moments when we decided to share something personal with students, with colleagues, with readers. And even if we decided not to share, sometimes our bodies spoke regardless. In either case, Stacey Waite encourages

the figure of the teacher to consider their queerness, whether the queerness is linked to gender-specific instantiation or not. The body is queered by all sorts of non-normative markers, and those markers become perhaps more visible as the body stands as a spectacle on the stage for the eyes of other bodies: the body queered by disability, the body queered by race, the body queered by beauty, the body queered by pregnancy, and so on. (*Teaching Queer* 24)

What if we all made it a regular practice to be mindful about and even to reflect on or journal about the “failures” and “successes” of our performances of identity? “We should,” as Lad Tobin suggests, “decide as teachers whether, when, and how to reveal something personal to our students in the same way that we decide as essayists whether,

when, and how to reveal something personal to our readers” as rhetorical work (198).
And what if we encouraged our students to do the same?

We could even focus on particular moments of passing and disclosure in our writing classrooms and during other writing-related labor. If you accept my research findings, then maybe you will appreciate the following activity that sunsets/moonlights this chapter: close your eyes to think about who you are and how you choose to express that, and how you choose to express that differently to different audiences, and why?

Think to yourself: Are you a mother? Are you married? What’s your political affiliation? Do you participate in a certain religion? Are you a Harry Potter fan? What is your race, your ethnicity, your citizenship, your nationality? Do you identify as someone with a disability? Do you identify as a trans person? A man or a woman? Are you queer, gay, bisexual? Now think about this: are some of your identity intersections visible or legible to your students? Are some of them invisible? Maybe either, depending on the day? Which ones do you talk about in class? Which ones do you ignore—or hide? Why do you do that?

Think about every time you have been asked, or you have asked your students and colleagues, to “go around the room and share your name and what you’re studying” or some other interesting personal “fact” about yourself and think about how, in these moments, as we listen and as we answer, as we fidget and let our minds wander, as we sweat and our hearts beat, as we sit there we are all simultaneously passing and coming out, always.

When you are ready, you can “open your eyes” and flip/scroll/listen to the final chapter, our (refreshingly brief) conclusion, in which I review our major findings, offer some final thoughts, and suggest ideas for further research.

VIGNETTE V

When I was 6, I would line up my Hot Wheels cars on the brick hearth in our living room. My very favorite—a sparkly purple 1986 Corvette Stingray. I lined it up on along with all the rest. Straight. Perfect. Straight. Perfect. Straight is Perfect.

On my 6th birthday, I unwrapped the 'vette. This happened in the same week that my sister Jenny asked me why I act, walk, and talk like a little girl instead of a little boy. She didn't mean to be mean, but I still I sat on my mom and dad's bed and cried and cried and my mom and dad said there's nothing wrong with me.

When I was 6, my mom and I would sit at the kitchen table and watch the leaves outside change colors like people sometimes do. I began to notice that I was different or didn't line up. My mom sometimes talks about it at family parties, or when we play those "do you remember when" games after watching home videos. My mom sometimes talks about it—not about the gay thing, but about the "me lining up my Hot Wheels on the living room hearth" thing. About how I never raced or wrecked them. I just lined them up. Lined them up. Lined them up straight.

When I was in 6th grade, my English teacher Mr. Mann one day simpered at me and in front of the entire class belched out loud that I walk around "like a little ballerina boy," and everyone laughed. In retrospect, I think he might have been a gay guy, actually—the telltale "gay lisp" and the refined, bourgeois decadance of the personal stories he'd share with us—or maybe he was just an effeminite straight bully. Psychological projection can be sad when you catch other people doing it. I wrote an essay in his class that won an award. It was about my favorite toy growing up, my purple Corvette, and how it felt nice to line it up with the others—to be able to control anything so easily. To be able to control anything. To be able to control.

When I was 16, I was still quarantined by the ugly limbs that jut out from a teenage body like an odd, gaudy coat rack, and I sat bracket-straightjacket on my mom and dad's bed and cried and cried and told them that I thought I was gay. My mom and dad sent me to reparative therapy, and for the next four years my closet door was a revolving one, and I've been going back in and coming back out to them ever since.

When I was 26, I started working on my dissertation. In a lot of ways, as in this moment, I'm still lining up little cars, word by word.

CHAPTER FIVE

OUT/COMES

What are the risks of having a dissertation topic on a homosexual theme in literature approved and made public?

—Anon., 1974

How do we address the needs of teachers who are “out of the closet” without disregarding the needs of those whose institutions, whose communities, whose families, whose innermost fears keep them “in the closet”?

—Paul Puccio, 1994 Conference on College Composition and Communication

Outcomes imply closure; coming out is an opening.

—William Banks, 2017 Conference on College Composition and Communication

Opening here at the “close” of my project, I realize that coming out does not necessarily lead to out/comes and that disclosure does not necessarily lead to “diss”closure. Nevertheless, we’ve studied how LGBTQ-identified postsecondary writing instructors perform identity in their classrooms, how intersectionality influences their performances, and how perceptions of these performances influence the teaching of writing. Therefore, we’re now ready to harvest implications for further thought, limitations for critical consideration, and solicitations for future scholarship.

IMPLICATIONS

My work reveals three major implications. The first implication is a confirmation that teachers of writing are still performing identity in deeply intersectional and

contextually contingent ways. The second implication is a reminder that queer cunning is a powerful, productive rhetoric. The third implication is that queer research methods matter because they reveal new ways to discover knowledge in our field.

Findings: Let's begin with this dissertation's primary goal, an update to the field's composition classroom coming out conversation. I've found that through the decades teachers of writing have done more or less of the same. That is, though higher education has seen more trans visibility, more protections for queer people, and more diversity in its constituents, writing instructors still express identity in their classrooms with myriad performances: some come out on day one, some come out at the "golden moment," some attempt to pass, and many flex rhetorical cunning. But all of us—queer-identified or not—we are all always performing our identities, which is always deeply intersectional and contextual. As William Shakespeare reminds us, "All the world's a stage, / And all the men and women merely players; / They have their exits and their entrances; / And one man in his time plays many parts, / His acts being seven ages. At first the infant..." (*As You Like It* 2.7.139-66), or as RuPaul once said, "We're all born naked, and the rest is Drag" (*O*).

We are all always sharing, withholding, customizing, and packaging personal information for our students. We are all always passing or coming out or something in between—as pregnant or not, as tired or autistic or a cancer survivor, and yes sometimes as queer. We are all always cruising our classrooms, in a way, sometimes more surreptitiously and other times more brazenly, in that we flirt with constraints, dip our toes into the water, or don't, and balance our own (queer) desires with what we predicate

our audiences' desires to be. And we are all always reading, composing, decomposing, uncomposing, recomposing who we are.

Even though we cannot know what our various audiences desire or how they will read us, we can always at least attempt to make performative teaching decisions that will maintain, disrupt, or transform those often oppressive desires, and there are, obviously as my interview participants have demonstrated, many rewards and disciplines for a wide variety of performances.

Cunning: I wouldn't want to paint queers with broad strokes, but I have learned from my interviews that queer-identified people are often extremely rhetorically savvy likely *because* they are queer. They are cunning.

My data support at least partially that LGBTQ-identified instructors can draw from vast expertise to navigate the complexities of performativity. This is because they've been in training from the moment they discovered, likely at a young age, that they are (different). The closet and all of its theatrical contents—costumes, choreography, lines, and props—help characters stay committed to their roles (straight and cis people) at least before coming out or being outed.

As Harriet Malinowitz writes in *Textual Orientations*, “Because lesbians and gay men must constantly assess the consequences of being out and negotiate the terms of disclosure, often necessitating elaborate monitoring of what is said and even thought (‘internalized homophobia’), a particular complication is woven into their processes of construing and constructing knowledge” and “[e]ven for those who are most out, acts of making meaning involve constant confrontations with many of the premises and mandates of the dominant culture” (24). While a marginalized identity puts them at a

disadvantage, queer people can benefit from advanced epistemological and rhetorical practices, learned earlier than school, which helps them as writers, rhetors, and rhetoricians. It seems that the people who are oppressed are perhaps the best and most cunning at rhetorical work—they've had to be in order to survive.

After a robust review of the term, Jay Dolmage concludes that *mêtis* is a “cunning, adaptive, embodied intelligence” (5), and Kopelson calls it a potentially “ideal framework” for us to view queer performativity through a rhetorical lens (131). My research participants have demonstrated that their queer positionality lends useful insights into their understandings of performativity, rhetoric, and composition, ultimately heightening the quality of our craft.

Queer (and) methods: A number of my meaning-making and -measuring methods with which I've conducted my queer study are in some ways queer themselves.⁵⁰ That is, the ways that I solicited, conducted, transcribed, coded, and analyzed with my survey and interview instruments were affective, embodied, and disruptive. For example, it was important to me that I personally conducted and transcribed my interviews.

⁵⁰ At the 2017 CCCC, one session “Re/Orienting Writing Studies: Queer Methods to Change the Field” explored “the need for and current work on queer and queered methods and methodologies in rhetoric and writing studies” (n.p.). Trixie Smith, Matthew Cox, and Hillery Glasby drew from Jack Halberstam’s *Queer Art of Failure* to fuse queer rhetorics of intentionality, forgetting, and failing into research methods. For these panelists, failure does not comprise deficiency, but the alternative. That is, refusal to adhere to restrictive demarcations of “success” in research helps (re)shape—and, in many ways, disrupt—what we know about inquiry, data collection, consent, and time in empirical research on queer subjects. Collectively, they argued that we should purposely fail to be commodified, co-opted, closeted by positivism and heteronormative modalities of qualitative research. Similarly, in “Queering the Interview,” Travis Kong, Dan Mahoney, and Ken Plummer observe that since the Gay/Queer Liberation Movement “[w]e are now in the midst of emerging forms of experience that are paralleled by shifting styles of interviewing and analysis” and since “Queer theory works toward deconstructing discourses, and, to the extent that interviewing is discursive, this means deconstructing the interview” with a “refusal to abide orthodox methodology” (92, 96). This is all to say that we can embrace and explore the messiness and slippages inherent in all research and in all queer subjectivity, each which amplify the other in a project that involves queer qualitative research methods and methodologies.

Instead of saving time and energy by funding a transcription service or software, I chose to transcribe and hand-code my data personally. These embodied methods are important to me because as Sharan Merriam writes in *Qualitative Research*, “Rather than hiring someone, transcribing your own interviews is another means of generating insights and hunches about what is going on in your data” (174). This happened.

Physically and emotionally, it mattered to me that I listened to my interviews again and again, with headphones in my ears, rewinding and replaying, adjusting the volume and decibels-per-minute, slowing the recordings down, speeding them up, etc. My body and this body of my work have interacted—physically, emotionally, and even sexually. Reminiscing about my body as it researched reminds me in turn of a presentation at the 2018 Rhetoric Society of America Conference. In “Sylvia Rivera's Listening Body,” Timothy Olesiak drew from Lisbeth Lipari’s “pleasures of embodied listening.” An affective practice of queer listening not only “takes seriously the power that bodies have to make sounds that reach out of the body to touch queer people and queer people’s ability to feel them” but also can be pleasant—even pleasurable (n.p.). When Lipari describes the “vocalic body” that “touches me as I listen” during interview transcriptions and listening to poetry recordings, she calls to mind Jonathan Alexander and Jacqueline Rhodes’ “Queer Rhetoric and the Pleasures of the Archive.” In their rethinking of rhetoric through a queer perspective, they at one point reimagine speaking and listening as queer, embodied, pleasurable composing. Please indulge the following excerpt at length; perhaps even read aloud with your own tongue:

in the tongue we find a robust metonym of our struggle, our critique, our possibility. The queer tongue, long denied its utterances, long disciplined by

legislation and normalization, long in the making of critique and the construction of queer identities, of queer particularities, of queer taste. The tongue contains our histories, and our possibilities. We have variously been tongue tied and twisted. We have bitten our tongues, but also gestured tongue-in-cheek through camp, spoken in the tongues of innuendo and insinuation, longed for a mother tongue, a tongue untied, and found just as often the tongue bath, the deep-throated kissing that articulates the desires of the body in its annunciation of alternatives to your lives, your limited languages. We are these tongues, so many tongues, speaking, depressed, suppressed, repressed, but still expressed in the plays of power that twist and bite, but also lick and delight. We reserve our right to be mouthy, to spit, to eat fire, to do things that we are not supposed to do with our mouths and tongues. Our tongues know the death of silences, the dead in the silences, but also the living loving taste of pleasures in the dark and the light. We crash your party, take our seats at your table, never hesitating to critique your setting, your taste, and daring you to expand your palate/palette, if you'd only let us. We'll do so anyway, licking our lips with delight, for the tongue is speech in the body and the body in speech, the smack of desire in the licking of those lips, inviting, teasing, denying, connecting, kissing—but not always the Judas' kiss you offer, but sometimes—sometimes—the kiss of recognition in difference, of delight in what you don't know. O taste and see how good, how very very good this difference is, this tongue can be. (n.p.)

In short, I was doing science, and while researching I was also feeling. At times I smiled or frowned as I reflected on my own life story in concert with these people's stories. I

cried, laughed, and it hurt and it felt good and bad, and I felt angry at some times, and hopeful at others. In so many ways, I wrote my dissertation, but engaging in queer embodied methods reminded me that the texts we write also (sometimes literally loudly) write us back. Conducting my research and composing my dissertation has changed me—into a better scholar, a better teacher, a person with a doctorate, and a person who now holds these stories from my interviews close.

That queer methods matter is not only an implication of my work, but also one of its most significant ethical conundrums, which I explore in the following section on potential limitations.

LIMITATIONS

Like with all of our work, my research is rich because of who I am, and my research is limited because of who I am. As a gay cisman and an assistant professor of writing, among a ton of additional identity intersections, I am and am not among the population that I am studying. Reflecting on my etic (from the “outsider” perspective of the observer) and emic (from the “insider” perspective of the subject) researcher status has helped me discover three potential limitations of this study arising from my own positionality as an interviewer, transcriber, and researcher.

Interviewing: To begin, my etic/emic researcher positionality helped me develop rapport with my research participants. However, as more than one of my interviewees pointed out, they all came out to me, but I didn’t necessarily come out to them. Sometimes I did, but these moments were inconsistent and unplanned. Was it important for my research participants to know that I am queer too? Of course (not).

Even if my participants quite reasonably assumed I was queer myself, I sometimes did not confirm that assumption, and this tension in my researcher disclosure methods probably significantly altered my findings and analysis. A more ethical and perhaps differently limiting approach would have involved a hearted and proactive meta-reflection about my own practices of disclosure and how that will have inevitably influenced the nature of my interviews. According to Theresa Lillis “the dynamic interplay between emic and etic [can be] used as a productive heuristic in terms of the research process” (372). In “Ethnography as Method, Methodology, and ‘Deep Theorizing’: Closing the Gap Between Text and Context in Academic Writing Research,” Lillis reveals that “the researcher must work at making the strange familiar and the familiar made strange—and in terms of analysis—the blending of distinct lenses and categories of description” (372). Therefore, just as the notion of queerness favors spectrums over binaries and prefers blending over boxes, we might model this same anti-essentialism sentiment as qualitative researchers. Rather than choosing one position over the other, that is, a researcher can gambol in the messy, epic tension between emic and etic.

This realization is true not only for queer-identified researchers, but also for all qualitative researchers—of all identities researching all identities. Should we disclose or withhold emic information about ourselves? If the writeup of my study has made anything abundantly clear, it’s that the answer to this question depends on context. In short, we already know our researcher positionality will inevitably impact the quality of the qualitative data that we gather and analyze. My study reminds us to revisit and reconsider context and emic disclosure.

Transcribing: A second limitation to my research involves my transcription methods. As I said, I transcribed my interviews myself, which means that I made rhetorical choices about how to represent my interviewees' voices through the vehicles of grammar and punctuation. Was that a pause? Was it a "comma," a "dash," or a "period" pause? Does it matter? Of course (not).

In "Ethnography and the Problem of the 'Other'" Patricia Sullivan asks us a larger question: In general, "How can we adequately transcribe and represent the lived experiences of others—inscribe an other's reality—in a text that is marked through and through by our own discursive presence?" (97). Similarly, in "Queering the Interview," Travis Kong, Dan Mahoney, and Ken Plummer ask who is being "re-presented" in your research? (97). With these questions in mind, I wrestled—am still wrestling—with accurate and ethical representation versus clarity when it comes to transcribing, verbatim or "clean."

Ultimately, I used "clean" transcriptions, even though the word itself troubles me. Especially for queer bodies and their tongues, which are no strangers to unethical research method(ologie)s, and which have so often been silenced, scrubbed, dubbed over vocally, all because their bodies are dirty with HIV and sexual sin, the word "clean" quickly evokes more sinister and scary synonyms like "sanitize" or even "sterilize." As Harriet Malinowitz reminds us, "Lesbians and gay men have been metaphors—and of course the emphasis has shifted in different time periods—for sin, sickness, criminality, bourgeois decadence, and the demise of the family" ("Constructing and Construing" 39). I did not want to participate in such a historic project, so I was cautious when spelling out

words and morphemes to account accurately for dialect and accent; I tried only to omit moments, like stammers and thought-restarts, that might confuse my readers.

Even though I am also a queer person, and that bears some authority in making these decisions, the presence of my other, often privileged, identity intersections (able-bodied, cismale, white, Catholic, etc.) disrupts and inflects that authority with questions of ethical representation of the Other. Therefore, that I failed to fully accurately represent my research participants is definite. Indeed, it is a fiction from the start to imagine that any of us can ever perfectly represent the voice of the Other, or even our own voices. This is true of all steps in the research process, including your interpretation of my writing. As Elliot Misher reminds us in *Research Interviewing: Context and Narrative*, “We do not find stories; we make stories.” In fact,

We retell our respondents’ accounts through our analytic redescriptions. We, too, are storytellers and through our concepts and methods—our research strategies, data samples, transcription procedures, specifications of narrative units and structures, and interpretive perspectives—we construct the story and its meaning. In this sense the story is always coauthored, either directly in the process of an interviewer eliciting an account or indirectly through our representing and thus transforming others’ texts and discourses. (117 – 118)

Qualitative researchers should always remind themselves the subjectivities and politics of language (and) representation mean that a perfectly accurate transcription can never exist. We should therefore equip ourselves with an awareness of various methods, as well as the various affordances and constraints associated with each of them.

Que(e)rying: The questions I asked research participants, both in the survey and in the interviews, were also limited, even though I refined my research and interview questions between the pilot study and the study proper, and even though I sought guidance from my university's Office of Institutional Effectiveness. If I could conduct this study again, I would likely ask slightly different questions both in my survey instrument and during my interviews, and I would distribute them differently.

For instance, I designed my survey instrument expressly to invite more diverse people to participate in my study. Despite my best efforts and collaborations, however, there is room for improvement. I could and should have thought to share the survey to more than just the CCCC Queer Caucus and the WPA-L, for instance. I imagined that those channels would be more than adequate, but in actuality they can only reflect the demography of our field, which reflects that of higher education in general. According to a 2019 report by the Writing Program Administration Graduate Organization (WPA-GO)'s Labor Taskforce "Report on Graduate Student Instructor Labor Conditions in Writing Programs," the future of our field is over 75% white, over 90% cisgender, and over 50% straight and able-bodied. It is unacceptable for me to blame diversity percentages alone, however. For example, I could and should have approached more caucuses and special interest groups, as well as English Chairs and WPAs at HBCUs (Historically Black Colleges and Universities), HSIs (Hispanic Serving Institutions), two-year colleges, and vocational programs. I also could and should have made sure to include questions about disability identity and military/veteran status in the survey. All in all, I feel like I could have designed my study to better include intersectional, diverse identities, especially in terms of race, ability, and generation, considering that these

identity intersections were the least represented, yet among the most integral, in chapter 3.

As for the interviews, I think that I could have asked more directly and pointedly about how participants' performative practices change over time, about what they thought about the impact of intersectional identities, and about perception versus reality, post-disclosure. I also regret choosing audiorecording over videorecording, especially since both queer identity and coming out narratives are such visceral, embodied practices. As Nan Amilla Boyd and Horacio N. Roque Ramirez write in *Bodies of Evidence: The Practice of Queer Oral History*, "physical presence of sexual or gendered bodies affects the oral history," and "the body, and how and what it remembers, should be central to all oral history work" (13, 18). I was reminded very quickly during my interviews that queer performative rhetorics, and performances of passing and coming out are often (arguably mostly) highly nonverbal and multimodal, and I wonder how much richer my dataset would be had I also analyzed my interviews accordingly.

This is all not to suggest that my study was bad; it was great! But of course there is always room for revision in the work that we do. The limitations of my study related to my queer positionality, transcription methods, and qualitative questions obviously invite further research. Therefore, in the final section, I solicit my readers to consider not only these potential limitations, but also to continue my exploration into new contexts.

SOLICITATIONS

This dissertation focuses on U.S. postsecondary writing programs and specifically on their classrooms. I have demonstrated how historic and still unexhausted the coming

out conversation is in these spaces. However, we can think beyond these spaces, and as Doug Cloud reminds us in “Rewriting a Discursive Practice: Atheist Adaptation of Coming Out Discourse,” we can think even beyond queer disclosure. We might transfer our understandings and apply them to many more situations, including other disciplines, corporate spaces, high schools, elementary schools, vocational programs, temples, mosques, churches, non-academic spaces of labor and social interaction, and family spaces—all in various countries and decades, just to name a few.

For example, Matthew Cox has published much about coming out, but unique among other scholarship I cite, his application isn’t necessarily to our pedagogies. In “Working Closets: Mapping Queer Professional Discourses and Why Professional Communication Studies Need Queer Rhetorics,” Cox discusses rhetorical situations both before and beyond our classrooms, specifically the “working closets” of corporate (and) digital spaces. We should also focus on professional athletics, popular culture, politics, and social media. Though coming out discourses have been attendant to our existing understandings of confessional rhetorics and apologia, the late 2010s have ushered in a zeitgeist of telling moments and divisive politics surrounding sex, identity, and consent, all propelled by both a come-out and a call-out culture saturated with and amplified by self-publishing on Web 2.0 and social media.

We should also ask about our students. They obviously are coming out, passing, and everything in between in their classrooms from elementary school through doctoral programs. Also, this study investigates what their instructors *think* they think, but what do they *actually* think when their instructor discloses something personal, discloses almost no personal details, or fails to pass in some way?

In summary, just as I have contributed to the conversation on coming out in the classroom with a chronological update and an intersectional bent, other researchers in our field should open up our publications to even more interventions and investigations.

OPENING

Again, opening here at the “close” of my project, I ask: What is at stake if we do not continue this work? One consequence, I argue, is apathy. Another is forgetting. Neither of these are that far from death itself—if not of our bodies and of our voices, then certainly of our histories and our political efficacy—and we have certainly not yet achieved a world fully safe and inclusive for queers.

What is our duty as administrators, researchers, and teachers of writing, then? It is crucial that together we take deliberate action to remember the presence of queer stories and identities, to theorize them, and to avoid a privileged apathy toward queer histories by constantly interrogating the intersections between composition and rhetoric with sexuality—especially when our safety and the safety of our students are at stake.

I’ll end with an echo:

In 2014, Paul Puccio and Anon. initially inspired me to ask—and begin to answer—the questions in this dissertation. My remaining questions are actually pretty similar to those that Paul and Anon. have asked before me: what will come (out) to be the most important aspects of queer writing pedagogies during our *next* 20 years? How do we imagine a future (anterior) in which there is no (need for a) closet, yet still avoid erasure

of critical histories and literacies of closets? What might our que(e)ries look (sound, feel, taste) like in, let's say, 2034?

VIGNETTE VI

I'm an assistant professor at a Catholic university, and (I think) I am the only openly gay faculty member in the College of Arts and Sciences. In my first semester on the job, I was invited to give a campus-wide lecture called "Queering the Conversation." It was on October 11 (National Coming Out Day), no less. I didn't know that my debut at my new job would involve posters of my face, splashed with the word "queer" and plastered around campus to advertise the event. (I wasn't grumpy about it. I just was like woah.)

Shortly after, an alt-right fundamentalist Christian group called Church Militant featured yours truly in a smear-the-queer piece of investigative journalism called "The Marxist Queering of a Catholic University" (a five-part series). My colleagues and some friends circulated the article on social media, condemning its libel with the best of intentions, but inadvertently advertising it, counterintuitively contributing to its virality. There is a difference between people coming out and calling out people.

This year, I was asked to facilitate another coming-out workshop (on October 11 again). I accepted the invitation. There will probably be posters.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Survey

Dear writing professors,

I am writing to invite you to participate in a research study by completing a survey about whether or not LGBTQ-identified writing professors “come out” to their students or not (or neither). The following information is offered to help you make an informed decision about whether or not to participate.

If you choose to participate in the study, you will kindly be asked to take an online survey that will require approximately 5 minutes of your time. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary, so you can choose not to participate or to stop participating at any point before you finish. Also, the survey is completely anonymous, and no identifying information will be collected from you. The data ascertained from the survey will be written up for a doctoral dissertation and perhaps presented at a conference where identity will be kept strictly confidential. This project has been approved by the University of Louisville Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (Phone: 502-852-5188).

If you choose to participate, please follow the link below.

[LINK]

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Michael Baumann

Doctoral candidate

University of Louisville

Informed Consent

If you are an LGBTQ-identified writing professor teaching in an American college or university, you are invited to participate in this research study. The following information is provided in order to help you to make an informed decision whether or not to participate.

The purpose of this study is to learn whether or not postsecondary writing instructors “come out” as not straight and/or not cisgender to their students, why they do (not) disclose, and impacts on their pedagogies and learning environments. If you consent to participate in this study, you will be asked to take an online survey that will require approximately 5 minutes of your time.

Your participation in this study is voluntary, so you are free to decide not to participate in this study or to stop completing the survey at any point before you finish. The survey is completely anonymous and no identifying information will be collected from you. The data ascertained from the survey will be written up for a doctoral dissertation and perhaps presented at a conference where identity will be kept strictly confidential.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please select “Yes, I consent,” and begin the survey. If you have questions, please do not hesitate to contact any the investigators:

Dr. Andrea R. Olinger (primary investigator)

andrea.olinger@louisville.edu

(502) 852-3051

Michael A. Baumann (co-investigator)

michael.baumann.2@louisville.edu

(317) 450-7972

This project has been approved by the University of Louisville Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (Phone: 502-852-5188).

- Yes, I consent to take the survey
- No, I do not consent to take the survey

Survey questions

How do you currently identify your gender? (Choose all that apply)

- cisgender man
- cisgender woman
- nonbinary/nonconforming/genderqueer
- transgender man

- transgender woman
- two spirit
- Or: how would you describe yourself? _____

How do you currently identify your biological sex? (Choose all that apply)

- male
- female
- intersex
- Or: how would you describe yourself? _____

How do you currently identify your sexual orientation? (Choose all that apply)

- queer
- bisexual
- lesbian
- gay male
- straight/heterosexual
- questioning
- asexual
- pansexual
- ecosexual
- Or: how would you describe yourself? _____

Do you “come out” to students in your classroom? That is, do you explicitly disclose your sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression to your students? (Please select the answer that best describes your “coming out” practices in the classroom.)

- I “come out” to students in every class.
- I have “come out” to students in some classes.
- I strive to “pass” as straight or cisgender in my classes.
- I neither “come out” nor “pass” because I prefer to express strategic ambiguity.
- I have never made a deliberate choice to “come out” or “pass” in my classes because sexual orientation and gender identity have not come up.

What writing/composition classes do you teach or have you taught in the past? (Choose all that apply)

- first-year writing/composition
- intermediate writing/composition
- advanced writing/composition
- themed writing/composition courses
- creative writing
- writing about literature
- Other: _____

At what type of institution do you teach? (Choose all that apply)

- private institution
- public institution

- 4-year college or university
- 2-year institution
- MA-granting institution
- PhD-granting institution
- HIS (Hispanic-Serving Institution)
- HBCU (Historically Black College/University)
- PWI (Primarily White Institution)
- SLAC (Small, Liberal Arts College/University)

Does your institution have any additional affiliation, such as that to a religious denomination? _____

In which state do you teach primarily? (dropdown menu; also include “US territory” and “US bases overseas”)

What is your teaching status at your institution(s)?

- MA graduate teaching assistant
- PhD graduate teaching assistant
- adjunct faculty or part time lecturer
- assistant professor
- tenured professor

How many years have you taught postsecondary writing? (dropdown menu beginning with 1 and ending with “over 40”)

What is your age? (dropdown menu beginning with 18 and ending with “over 63”)

How do you identify your ethnicity? (Choose all that apply)

- White or Caucasian
- Hispanic or Latinx
- Black or African American
- Native American, American Indian, Alaska Native
- Asian
- Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
- Or: how would you describe yourself? _____

Are you willing to be contacted for a voluntary follow-up interview? If so, please provide your email address: _____

Appendix 2: Informed Consent Form

Subject Informed Consent Document: “Coming Out” in the College Writing

Classroom: A Study on Queer University Writing Teachers

Investigator(s) Name and Address

Dr. Andrea R. Olinger

Department of English
2211 S. Brook St.
Louisville, KY 40292
andrea.olinger@louisville.edu

Michael A. Baumann (co-investigator)
Department of English
2211 S. Brook St.
Louisville, KY 40292
michael.baumann.2@louisville.edu

Site(s) where study is to be conducted: University of Louisville

Phone number for subjects to call for questions: (502) 852-6060 (Michael A. Baumann's office)

Introduction and Background Information: You are invited to participate in a research study. The study is being conducted by Dr. Andrea Olinger and Michael A. Baumann. The study is sponsored by the Department of English at the University of Louisville and will take place in classrooms and offices of the Belknap campus of the University of Louisville. Approximately 5-10 subjects will be invited to participate.

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to learn about the impact of teachers' acts of "coming out" as queer, gay, lesbian, bisexual, or trans* on the teaching of writing.

Procedures: In this study, you will be asked to participate in one audio-recorded interview (approximately one hour) with the co-investigator about how you identify, about your practices of "coming out" or "passing" in the writing classroom, and about your classroom environment.

I may also invite you to participate in the project after the interviews have been completed by giving me feedback on my analysis of the interview data. You may decline to answer any questions that make you uncomfortable, and you can withdraw from the research at any time.

Potential Risks: Potential risks include your potential discomfort or mild trauma associated with answering personal questions about your teaching experiences and about your identification with a nonheterosexual orientation or with transgender identity or expression. You could also be recognized by people in publications or presentations, even if your identity is protected by pseudonyms for both the interview participants and the institution at which participants teach. There may also be unforeseen risks.

Benefits: The possible benefits of this study include better understandings of and introspective insights into your own teaching experiences, philosophy, and practices. You will also benefit from the opportunity to contribute to meaningful scholarship that will increase local, regional, and national knowledge about best writing teaching practices and

pedagogies, so even if the information collected may not benefit you directly, it may be helpful to others.

Compensation: You will not be compensated for your time, inconvenience, or expenses while you are in this study.

Confidentiality: Total privacy cannot be guaranteed. I will protect your privacy to the extent permitted by law, and I will use pseudonyms for both the interview participants and the institutions at which participants teach.

While unlikely, the following may look at the study data and records:

- Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP)
- The University of Louisville Institutional Review Board and Human Subjects Protection Program Office

Security: Your information will be kept private by the following methods: I will store the interview recordings and transcripts on a password-protected personal computer, and I will secure any identifying data (recordings, interview transcripts, etc.) in a locked, private office in order to maximize privacy. I will employ pseudonyms for both the institution and the interview participants when I draw from the data for research writing.

These security measures apply even if you decide to leave the study at any point and for any reason.

Voluntary Participation: Taking part in this study is fully voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to be in this study you may stop taking part at any time, which includes refusal to answer any individual question(s) during the interview, should you deem any question(s) irrelevant or inappropriate. You will not be penalized in any way should you decide not to participate in this study at any time or for any reason. Finally, you will be informed of any changes that may affect your decision to continue in the study.

Contact Persons: If you have any questions, concerns, or complaints about the research study, please contact:

Michael A. Baumann (co-investigator)

Department of English

2211 S. Brook St.

Louisville, KY 40292

michael.baumann.2@louisville.edu

(502) 852-6060 (Michael A. Baumann's office)

Research Subject's Rights: If you have any questions or complaints regarding your rights as a research subject, about the study staff, or about the study in any way, you may:

- call the Human Subjects Protection Program Office at (502) 852-5188;
- discuss any questions about your rights as a research subject, in private, with a member of the Institutional Review Board (IRB);
- call this number if you have other questions about the research, and you cannot reach the study doctor, or want to talk to someone else.

The IRB is an independent committee made up of people from the University of Louisville community, staff of the institutions, as well as people from the community not connected with these institutions. The IRB has approved the participation of human subjects in this research study.

Concerns and Complaints: If you have concerns or complaints about the research or research staff and you do not wish to give your name, you may call the toll free number 1-877-852-1167. This is a 24 hour hot line answered by people who do not work at the University of Louisville.

Acknowledgment and Signatures: This informed consent document is not a contract. This document tells you what will happen during the study if you choose to take part. Your signature indicates that this study has been explained to you, that your questions have been answered, and that you agree to take part in the study. You are not giving up any legal rights to which you are entitled by signing this informed consent document. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep for your records.

Subject Name (Please Print)

Signature of Subject

Date Signed

Printed Name of Legally
Authorized Representative (if applicable)

Signature of Legally Authorized
Representative

Date Signed

Authority of Legally Authorized Representative to act on behalf of Subject

*Authority to act on behalf of another includes, but is not limited to parent, guardian, or durable power of attorney for health care.

Printed Name of Person Explaining
Consent Form (if other than the Investigator)

Signature of Person Explaining
Consent Form

Date Signed

Printed Name of Investigator

Signature of Investigator

Date Signed

List of Investigators:

Dr. Andrea R. Olinger

andrea.olinger@louisville.edu

(502) 852-3051

Michael A. Baumann (co-investigator)

michael.baumann.2@louisville.edu

(859) 640-5903

Appendix 3: Interview questions⁵¹

1. How long have you been teaching? Do you mind describing the classes and at which institutions you've taught?
2. How do you describe your sexual orientation and gender identity? Could you also please provide as many additional identity intersections as you feel comfortable, such as those related to race, age, university status, and any others you might supply?
3. Of course, "coming out" is an ongoing process with multiple audiences, but with that said: are you "out of the closet"? If so, at what time did you first "come out"?
4. Do you "come out" in the classroom by disclosing your sexuality and/or gender identity and/or gender expression to your students? If so, how do you "come out"?
5. Why do you "come out" (or: Why not)? How do you decide whether/when to "come out" in a classroom?

⁵¹ I struggled with the questions' wording because I was concerned about potential trauma sometimes imbricated with talking about sexuality. Michael Q. Patton's "Qualitative interviewing" proved helpful here. After listing six main types of questions (Experience and behavior, Opinions and values, Feeling, Knowledge, Sensory, Background and demographic), he writes, "Keeping these distinctions in mind can be particularly helpful in planning an interview, designing the inquiry strategy, focusing on priorities for inquiry, and ordering the questions in some sequence" (351). Also, "Questions about the present tend to be easier for respondents than questions about the past. Future-oriented question involve considerable speculation" (353).

Patton informs us that beginning with something less controversial and working with what people already know can help the researcher to establish rapport and trust; additionally, scaffolding the conversation transition from grounded to hypothetical can facilitate interview clarity. For example, rather than "jumping right in" with extremely direct, personal questions about sexual orientation and gender identity/expression and "coming out" stories, I wanted to "warm up" with more familiar and "neutral" questions.

Finally, Patton argues that background information can be useful for the interviewer, but for the interviewee... Boring at best and uncomfortable or even traumatic at worst (355). Comfort and clarity are important to consider, especially for an identities-based study.

6. If you come out, do you notice differences in your students before and after? Do you notice differences in your classroom environment before and after? If so, can you describe those? I'm particularly interested in your reflections about your authority and your classroom's rapport.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Michael Baumann
Department of Communication
Marian University, Indianapolis
3200 Cold Spring rd. | Indianapolis, in 46222

mbaumann@marian.edu
michaelalbertbaumann.com
(317) 450-7972

EDUCATION

University of Louisville, Louisville KY (2019)

PH.D., Rhetoric & Composition

Dissertation: “Do LGBTQ-Identified, Postsecondary Writing Instructors Come Out in Their Classrooms?” Director: Dr. Karen Kopelson

Ohio University, Athens OH (2015)

M.A., Rhetoric & Composition

Thesis: “Avoiding Apathy: Remembering and Theorizing Histories of Queers,” Advisor: Dr. Sherrie Gradin

Marian University, Indianapolis IN (2013)

B.A., English and Communication (*summa cum laude*)

concentration: writing

RESEARCH

Baumann, Michael, and Darolyn Jones. “Unschooling in Community Literacy Outreach: Merging School and Community Teaching Practices.” *Journal of Teaching Writing*, 2019. (forthcoming)

Baumann, Michael. “Timing Matters: Focus on Achievable Tasks.” *Explanation Points!: Publishing in Rhetoric and Composition*, edited by John Gallagher and Dànielle Nicole DeVoss, 2019.

Co-author: “On Multimodality: A Multivocal Manifesto.” *Bridging the Gap: Multimodality in Theory and Practice*, 2019. Ed. Santosh Khadka and Jennifer Lee. (With Sara P. Alvarez, Michelle Day, Khirsten L. Echols, Layne M. P. Gordon, Ashanka Kumari, Laura Sceniak Matravers, Jessica Newman, Amy McCleese Nichols, Caitlin E.

Ray, Jon Udelson, Rick Wysocki, and Dànielle Nicole DeVoss)

Co-author: "On Multimodal Composing." *Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy* 21(2). 2017. (With Sara P. Alvarez, Michelle Day, Khirsten L. Echols, Layne M. P. Gordon, Ashanka Kumari, Laura Sceniak Matravers, Jessica Newman, Amy McCleese Nichols, Caitlin E. Ray, Jon Udelson, Rick Wysocki, and Dànielle Nicole DeVoss)

Under review

Co-author: "Assessing the Mess of Assessment: Navigating the multiple stakes in portfolio placement." *Writing Program Administration Journal*. (With Michelle Day, Jamila Kareem, and Ann Elizabeth Willey)

In process

Co-author: "Enablers and Incentives to Promote Research Participation by Osteopathic Medical Students." (With Jonathan Lowery, Sarah Zahl, Holly Skillman-Dougherty, Guang Xu, and Zachary Beck)

Creative writing

Baumann, Michael. "Circle." *I Remember: Indianapolis Youth Write about Their Lives*. Vol. 4. Ed. Michael Baumann and Darolyn Jones. Indianapolis: INwords, 2016.

Baumann, Michael. "Trust." *I Remember: Indianapolis Youth Write about Their Lives*. Vol. 2. Ed. Mark Latta, et al. Indianapolis: INwords, 2014.

Baumann, Michael. "I Know." *I Remember: Indianapolis Youth Write about Their Lives*. Ed. Mark Latta, et al. Indianapolis: INwords, 2013.

Baumann, Michael. Various poems and nonfiction essays. *Fioretti* (Marian University, Indianapolis literary journal), 2011-2013.

Conference presentations

"From *Topos* to *Eremos*: Wild Writing Classrooms as Commonplaces / Coming out Places," Conference on College Composition and Communication, Milwaukee WI, Mar. 2020. (accepted)

"Commonplaces in Creative Writing and Composition: Reimagining Sites of Craft, Pedagogy, Identity, and Community," Conference on College Composition and Communication, Milwaukee WI, Mar. 2020.

"Creative as Critical: Performance(s) in Rhetoric, Composition, and Creative Writing Studies," Conference on College Composition and Communication, Pittsburgh PN, Mar. 2019.

"Coming Out Pedagogies for the Writing Classroom," Thomas R. Watson Conference,

Louisville KY, Oct. 2018.

“Unschooling and Equity Teaching Practices and Community Literacy: #blacklivesmatter,” International Conference on Literacy, Culture, and Language Education, Bloomington IN, Oct. 2018.

“The Use of Self-Disclosure in our Writing Classrooms,” Indiana Teachers of Writing, Indianapolis IN, Sept. 2018.

“Libera/story: Circular and Narrative Power of Failures and Successes in Cultural Rhetorics,” Rhetoric Society of America, Minneapolis MN, May 2018.

“Multimodal Pedagogies for Young Creative Writers,” Indiana Teachers of Writing, Indianapolis IN, Sept. 2017.

“My OI’, Queer, Kentucky Home: Teaching, Theorizing, and Cultivating Queer Archives,” Conference on College Composition and Communication, Portland OR, Mar. 2017.

“On Multimobile, Multimodal Composing,” University of Louisville: Thomas R. Watson Conference, Louisville KY, Oct. 2016.

“The Gay Agenda and Other Poems: Queer Embodied Affect and the Cultural Rhetorics of Identity,” Cultural Rhetorics Conference, East Lansing MI, Oct. 2016.

“#BlackLivesMatter, and so Do Authentic Writing Prompts,” Indiana Teachers of Writing, Indianapolis IN, Sept. 2016.

“Avoiding Apathy: Taking Action by Remembering Queer Histories,” Conference on College Composition and Communication, Houston TX, Apr. 2016.

“Multimodal Writing Pedagogy for Urban or Inner City Students,” Midwest Popular Culture Association: Urban Studies, Cincinnati OH, Oct. 2015.

“Self-Publishing Students’ Work from the Writing Classroom: How to, Why, and Outcomes,” Indiana Teachers of Writing, Indianapolis IN, Sept. 2015.

“Multimodality in FYC: Resistance, Limitations, Agency,” Indiana Teachers of Writing, Indianapolis IN, Sept. 2014.

“The Limitations of Queer Spaces in the Writing Classroom,” University of Dayton: Space and Place, Dayton OH, Feb. 2014.

“Agency and the Social Construction of Monstrosity in Literature and Popular Culture,” University of Akron: Monstrosity and Deviance, Akron OH, Nov. 2013.

“Creating Assessment Standards for Experiential Learning,” Assessment Institute, Indianapolis IN, Nov. 2012.

Professional research features

“Digital Visual Aids” workshop, Indy Proclaim! Speech and Debate club, Indianapolis IN, Aug. 2019.

“Creative writing” workshop, Indy Proclaim! Speech and Debate club, Indianapolis IN, Aug. 2019.

“Marian University: The Marxist Queering of a Catholic University” (Parts I and III), *Church Militant* / Michael Hillborn, Dec. 2018. (With Pride, I reclaim this QueerSmear journalism as a research feature.)

“What I’m Working On,” English Graduate Organization at the University of Louisville, Mar. 2018.

“What I’m Working On,” English Graduate Organization at the University of Louisville, Feb. 2017.

Featured alumnus for a special issue on teachers. *Marian University Magazine*, Indianapolis IN, Feb. 2017.

My Shakespearean sonnet “Tired” was selected for the Sonnets on a Sunday poetry contest and performed by the Louisville Commonwealth Theatre Players for the 400th Anniversary of William Shakespeare’s First Folio tour in Louisville, KY, Nov. 2016.

“Voice of the Performing Arts: Indianapolis Youth Poetry,” FM 88.7 *WICR*, Indianapolis IN, Sept. 2016.

“What I’m Working On,” English Graduate Organization at the University of Louisville, Jan. 2016.

“Some Notes of a Gay Teaching Assistant in His Last Semester of Master’s Work,” Ohio University: Chestnut Reading Series, Athens OH, Apr. 2015.

“Rhetorical Criticism: The Gay Agenda,” Marian University’s Speakers for Change Series, Indianapolis IN, Mar. 2013.

TEACHING

Marian University Department of Communication

Assistant professor + Assistant Director of Forensics (2018 – now)

COM/ENG 367: *Writing and New Media*

COM/ENG 326: *Digital Journalism*

COM/ENG 324: *Digital Storytelling*

COM/THE 235: *Oral Interpretation of Literature*

COM 225: *Strategic Writing for Communication*

COM 203: *Forensics*

COM 190: *New Media and Digital Culture*

COM 101: *Introduction to Public Speaking*

Part-time lecturer + Assistant forensics coach (2016 – 2018)

COM/ENG 367: *Writing for New Media*

COM/THE 235: *Oral Interpretation of Literature*

Indiana Writers Center

Writing faculty (2015 – now)

Multimodal Composing: Writing Video Essays

Writing and Performance of the Spoken Word: Race, Identity, Activism

Flash (Non)fiction

From the Page to the Stage: Slam Poetry and the Spoken Word

Self-Publishing: Working with Publishers

Brebeuf Jesuit Preparatory School

Summer faculty (2016 – 2018)

Computer Science 6010: *Digital Citizenship*

Speech & Drama 0091: *Basic Speech*

University of Louisville Department of English

Graduate teaching assistant (Aug. 2015 – 2018)

Assistant Director of Composition (2016 - 2018)

ENGL 306: *Business Writing*

ENGL 102-DE: *Intermediate College Writing* (online)

ENGL 102: *Intermediate College Writing*

ENGL 101-DE: *Introduction to College Writing* (online)

ENGL 101: *Introduction to College Writing*

Ohio University Department of English
Graduate teaching associate (2013 – 2015)

ENG 1510: *Writing & Rhetoric I*

TUTORING

Marian University Speaking Center
Co-founder + Undergraduate tutor (2011 – 2013)

Marian University Writing Center
Undergraduate tutor (2010 – 2013)

SERVICE

Marian University
Writing Program Administration Committee (2018 – now)
Faculty co-Advisor: MU Alliance (2019 – now)

University of Louisville
Assistant Director of Composition (2016 – 2018)
Co-President: English Graduate Organization (2016 – 2018)
PH.D. Mentor: Peer Mentor Program (2016 – 2017)
PH.D. Liaison: English Graduate Organization (2015 – 2017)

Ohio University
Volunteer Coach: Ohio University Speech and Debate (2013 – 2015)

Westfield High School
Volunteer Coach: Speech Team (2013)

Indiana Forensics Association
Chair: Impromptu Speaking Committee (2017, 2019)
Chair: Scholarly Essay Committee (2020)

University engagements
Guest lecture: “Queer-Inclusive Pedagogies,” Marian University Klipsch Educator’s College, Indianapolis IN, Nov. 2018.

Faculty Friday Night: “Harry Potter Night”
with Dr. Sabrina Straub, Indianapolis IN, Oct. 2019

Guest lecture: “Poetry through the Ages: from Bards to Bars”
St. Joseph’s College of Marian University, Indianapolis (Humanities), Indianapolis IN,

Oct. 2019.

Workshop facilitator: “Scholars for Change: Coming out Narratives”
Marian University 21st Century Scholars, Indianapolis IN, Oct. 2019.

Faculty/Alumni panelist: “Adulging”
Marian University 21st Century Scholars, Indianapolis IN, Apr. 2019.

Faculty panelist: “Higher Ed and Student Affairs”
Marian University Exchange, Indianapolis IN, Nov. 2018.

Host: “My Marian, My Voice” campus debate in partnership with the Marian University
Speech and Debate program, Department of History and Social Sciences, and 21st
Century Scholars, Indianapolis IN, Oct. 2018.

Marian University Speaking Studio speaker series feature: “Queering the Conversation,”
Indianapolis IN, Oct. 2018.

Guest lecture: “Effective Presentation Strategies,” Marian University Leighton School of
Nursing, Indianapolis IN, Oct. 2018.

Guest lecture: “Attribution in the Digital Humanities,” Marian University Department of
English, Indianapolis IN, Oct. 2017.

Guest lecture: “Slam Poetry 101,” Marian University Department of Communication,
Indianapolis IN, Oct. 2017.

Featured faculty: “Digital Media Assignments: Faculty Share Lessons Learned about
Teaching with Technology,” University of Louisville, Delphi Center for Teaching and
Learning, Louisville KY, Jan. 2017.

Guest lecture: “Copyleft, remix, attribution in the Digital Humanities,” Marian University
Department of English, Indianapolis IN, Nov. 2016.

Guest lecture: “Programming the Oral Interpretation of Literature,” Marian University
Department of Communication, Indianapolis IN, Oct. 2016.

Alumni poetry reading: Marian University Department of English,
Indianapolis IN, May 2016.

Guest performance poet: “Harlem Nights: A Night of Diversity,” Ball State University
Ethnic Theatre Alliance, Muncie IN, Feb. 2016.

Guest lecture: “How to Write a (Slam) Poem,” Ball State University Ethnic Theatre
Alliance, Muncie IN, Feb. 2016.

Guest lecture: “How to Graduate School,” Marian University Department of Communication, Indianapolis IN, Oct. 2015.

Alumni panelist: “How to Apply for Graduate School,” Ohio University Chapter of Sigma Tau Delta (STD), Athens OH, Oct. 2013.

Departmental workshops

GTA Orientation: “Establishing Teacher Authority and Identity in Your First Week,” University of Louisville, Louisville KY, Aug. 2017.

Department Orientation: “Methods for Incorporating Data into Syllabi,” University of Louisville, Louisville KY, Aug. 2017.

Department Orientation: “General Education Assessment and the Composition Classroom,” University of Louisville, Louisville KY, Aug. 2017.

Department Orientation: “Creating Digital Assignments Assignment Sheets,” University of Louisville, Louisville KY, Aug. 2017.

“Creating an Online Teaching Portfolio,” University of Louisville, Louisville KY, Mar. 2017.

“How to Teach Online Composition Courses,” University of Louisville, Louisville KY, Feb. 2017.

“Community Engagement: who, why, how?” University of Louisville, Louisville KY, Nov. 2016.

Department Orientation: “Instituting Yourself as an Instructor in Your First Week,” University of Louisville: Louisville KY, Aug. 2016.

Department Orientation: “Student Learning Outcomes,” University of Louisville: Louisville KY, Aug. 2016.

Digital Initiatives Orientation: “Online Teaching Resources: *The Everyday Writer* and *Cardinal Compositions*,” University of Louisville: Louisville KY, Aug. 2016.

GTA Orientation: “Designing and Sequencing Assignments,” University of Louisville: Louisville KY, Aug. 2016.

“Preparing for Conferences,” University of Louisville: Louisville KY, Feb. 2016.

“Embracing the Short Form: Designing Visual Arguments for Research and Pedagogy,”
University of Louisville: Louisville KY, Feb. 2016.

Safe Zone Training: I organized several training sessions to maximize colleagues’ queer
and allied sensitivity training for our classrooms. Nov. 2015 and 2016.

“Undergraduate Ethnography and Primary Research Methods,” Ohio
University: Athens OH, Apr. 2015.

TA Orientation: “How to Engage Students in Class Discussion” Ohio
University: Athens OH, Aug. 2014.

Article review

“Designing More Just Social Futures or Remixing the Radical Present? Reading LGBTQ
Youths’ Multimodal Counterstorytelling as Activist Practice,” *English Teaching:
Practice and Critique*, 2016.

Conference panel chair

“Inclusive ESL Pedagogies and Practices in First-Year Composition,” Conference on
College Composition and Communication, Portland OR, Mar. 2017.

“Promises and Problems of Literacy: (Im)mobility in the 21st Century University,”
University of Louisville: Thomas R. Watson Conference, Louisville KY, Oct. 2016.

“Minor Professionalization: How Minority Rhetoric and Composition Professionals
Navigate Mobility, Intersectionality, and Embodiment,” University of Louisville:
Thomas R. Watson Conference, Louisville KY, Oct. 2016.

EDITING / PROFESSIONAL WRITING

Editing experience

Poetry editor: *North Meridian Review* (Interdisciplinary Peer-Reviewed Periodical, 2019 –
now)

Head editor: INwords Publications (2012 – now)
Indiana Writers Center nonprofit imprint press

Editor: *Cardinal Compositions* (2016)
Undergraduate literary journal and academic anthology

Copy editor: *Quarter After Eight* (2013 – 2015)
Ohio University literary journal

Submissions reader: *New Ohio Review* (2013 – 2015)
Ohio University literary journal

Editor-in-Chief: *The Knight Times* (2010 – 2012)
Marian University student newspaper

Edited collections

Baumann, Michael, and Darolyn Jones, eds. *I Remember: Indianapolis Youth Write about Their Lives*. Vol. 5. Indianapolis: INwords, 2017.

Baumann, Michael, and Darolyn Jones, eds. *Indianapolis Youth Write about Their Lives*. Vol. 4. Indianapolis: INwords, 2016.

Baumann, Michael, and Darolyn Jones, eds. *Indianapolis Youth Write about Their Lives*. Vol. 3. Indianapolis: INwords, 2015.

Shoup, Barbara, Michael Baumann, and Andrea Boucher, eds. *Life Dances: Stories from the Indianapolis JCC and the Arthur and Sara Reuben Senior and Community Resource Center*. Indianapolis: INwords, 2014.

Latta, Mark, Darolyn Jones, and Michael Baumann, eds. *Indianapolis Youth Write about Their Lives*. Vol. 2. Indianapolis: INwords, 2014.

Latta, Mark, and Michael Baumann, eds. *Indianapolis Youth Write about Their Lives*. Indianapolis: INwords, 2013.

Book design + Layout + Copy editing

Devon, Lisa. *Sophomore Slip*. Edited by Michael Baumann. 2020. (forthcoming)

Massey, Chantel. *Bursting at the Seams*. Edited by Michael Baumann. 2017.

Jones, Darolyn, ed. *Where Mercy and Truth Meet: Women of Wheeler Speak*. Indianapolis: INwords, 2015.

Dando, Barb, et al., eds. *Make the Rafters Ring!: Remembering Camp Hagan*. Indianapolis: Brown Acorn Press, 2015.

Shoup, Barbara, et al., eds. *Best of Flying Island, 2014*. Indianapolis: INwords, 2015.

Jones, Darolyn, and Liz Whiteacre, eds. *Monday Coffee and Other Stories of Mothering Children with Special Needs*. Indianapolis: INwords, 2013.

Latta, Mark, et al., eds. *I Remember: Creative Writing by Indianapolis Youth*. Indianapolis: INwords, 2012.

AWARDS AND HONORS

University of Louisville Department of English

English Department Pedagogy Fellow Certificate (2018)

Barbara Plattus Award for Excellence in Graduate Teaching (2017)

English Department Celebration of Student Writing:

My students' work won first place in the "digital showcase" category (2017)

Louisville Literary Arts scholarship for creative writing (2016)

English Graduate Organization Outstanding PH.D. Student Award (nominated, 2016)

Graduate Teaching Assistantship

Ohio University Department of English

Outstanding M.A. Essay Award (nominated, 2016)

Teaching Associate of the Year (nominated, 2015)

Teaching Associate of the Year (nominated, 2014)

Graduate Teaching Assistantship

Public Communication, Speaking, and Debate League

National champion (Graduate slam poetry, 2015)

State champion (Ohio, Graduate slam poetry, 2015)

National finalist (Graduate research paper, fifth place, 2015)

State finalist (Ohio, Graduate research paper, third place, 2015)

National Forensics Association

National semifinalist (Rhetorical criticism, 2013)

National quarterfinalist (Rhetorical criticism, 2012)

Indiana Forensics Association

First place: state rhetorical criticism paper, 2013

State champion (Rhetorical criticism, 2013)

State champion (Dramatic duo interpretation, 2013)

State champion (Program of oral interpretation, 2013)

State champion (Program of oral interpretation, 2012)

State champion (Persuasive speaking, 2011)

State champion (Dramatic interpretation, 2011)

State champion (Prose interpretation, 2011)

State champion (Dramatic interpretation, 2010)

Marian University College of Liberal Arts (RIP)

Outstanding Graduate in English (2013)

Outstanding Graduate in Communication (2013)

Dean's Leadership Award, College of Liberal Arts (2013)

Thoreau Award for Best Nonfiction Essay (2013)

PUBLIC PERFORMANCES

INKY, Louisville KY, May 2020.

Featured poet and invited workshop instructor

“Poetry Slam @4C19,” Wisconsin Center, Milwaukee, WI, Mar. 2020.

Slam host

“Dignity,” Brebeuf Jesuit Preparatory School, Indianapolis IN, Sept. 2019.

Featured spoken word artist

“Iconoclast at the Indianapolis Poetry Slam,” Irvington Theatre, Indianapolis IN, Apr. 2019.

Invited celebrity judge—certified regional qualifying slam

“Poetry Slam @4C19,” David L. Lawrence Convention Center, Pittsburgh, PA, Mar. 2019.

Featured slam poet

“River City Revue,” The Bardstown Bar, Louisville KY, Sept. 2018.

Featured slam poet

“Indianapolis Poetry Orgy,” IndyReads Bookstore, Indianapolis IN, Sept. 2018.

Featured slam poet

“VOCAB,” White Rabbit Cabaret, Indianapolis IN, Sept. 2018.

Featured slam poet

“*The Indianapolis Poetry Slam*,” Irving Theater, Indianapolis IN, Aug. 2018.

Featured slam poet

“Poetry on the Fringe,” Indy Eleven Theater, Indianapolis IN, Feb—Dec. 2018 (22 shows).

Executive Producer, slam host, featured slam poet

“VOCAB,” White Rabbit Cabaret, Indianapolis IN, Apr. 2018.

Featured slam poet

“The Round Poetry,” Rebecca Heuhls, Indianapolis IN, Mar. 2018.

Featured slam poet

“Pull Up a Chair: A Storytelling Variety Show,” Theatre on the Square Indianapolis, IN, Mar. 2018.

Featured slam poet

“Chantel Massey Book Release Party,” IndyReads Bookstore, Indianapolis, IN, Feb. 2018.

Featured slam poet

“Sonnets and Slow Jams,” White Rabbit Cabaret, Indianapolis, IN, Feb. 2018.

Featured slam poet

“*The Indianapolis Poetry Slam*,” Coal Yard Coffee, Indianapolis IN, Jan. 2018.

Featured slam poet

“IndyFringe’s Holiday Hangover Party and Catalyst Season Teaser,” Basille Theatre, Indianapolis IN, Jan. 2018.

Featured slam poet

“Word.,” Rabble Coffeehouse, Indianapolis IN, Aug. 2017.

“Greatest Hits Anniversary” featured slam poet

“River City Revue,” The Bardstown Bar, Louisville KY, Aug. 2017.

“Greatest Hits Anniversary” featured slam poet

“#AdnawPoem,” Chantel Massey poetry discussion, Indianapolis IN, July 2017.

Featured slam poet

“Story Slam,” IndyReads Bookstore, Indianapolis IN, July 2017.

Creator, host, and featured slam poet

“Word.,” Rabble Coffeehouse, Indianapolis IN, June 2017.

Featured slam poet

Open mic at Laurel Thirst, Portland OR, Mar. 2017

“River City Revue,” The Bardstown Bar, Louisville KY, Feb. 2017.

Featured slam poet

“River City Revue,” The Bardstown Bar, Louisville KY, Jan. 2017.

Opening slam poet

“Write,” Chantel Massey poetry event, Indianapolis IN, Nov. 2016.

Featured slam poet

Poems for the People: IndyFringe, Phoenix Underground Theater, Indianapolis IN, Aug. 2016.

Cast member

“VOCAB,” Casba, Indianapolis IN, July 2016.
Featured slam poet

“Story Slam,” IndyReads Bookstore, Indianapolis IN, July 2016.
Creator, host, and featured slam poet

“Violence Free is the Way to BE” 317 Motorcyclists charity event, Martin Luther
King Memorial Park, Indianapolis IN, July 2016.
Featured slam poet

“Poems for the People,” Irving Theater, Indianapolis IN, June 2016.
Featured slam poet

“Quake: A Queer Speakeasy,” The Thirsty Scholar, Indianapolis IN, May 2016.
Featured slam poet

“Where Mercy and Truth Meet,” IndyReads, Indianapolis IN, Nov. 2015.
Book release and prose reading

“Poems for the People,” Garfield Coffeehouse, Indianapolis IN, Nov. 2015.
Featured slam poet

“Story Slam,” IndyReads Bookstore, Indianapolis IN, July 2015.
Creator, host, and featured slam poet

“Violence Free is the Way to BE” 317 Motorcyclists charity event, Martin Luther
King Memorial Park, Indianapolis IN, July 2015.
Featured spoken word artist

Kafe Kuumba Open Mic (the longest-running open mic in Indiana), July 2015.
Featured spoken word artist

“Fourth Friday at the Coal Yard,” Coal Yard Coffee, Indianapolis IN, June 2015.
Featured slam poet

“Sometimes Y!” IndyFringe Theater, Indianapolis IN, May 2015.
Guest open mic feature and slam grand champion

“Story Slam,” IndyReads Bookstore, Indianapolis IN, July 2014.
Creator, host, and featured slam poet

“Spoken Word Wednesday,” IndyFringe Theater, Indianapolis IN, July 2014.
Slam poet champion

“Spoken Word Wednesday,” IndyFringe Theater, Indianapolis IN, June 2014.
Slam poet champion

“Monday Coffee: A Literary Reading with the Conference on College Composition and Communication,” IndyReads Bookstore, Indianapolis IN, Mar. 2014.

“Open Doors Poetry,” Donkey Coffee, Athens OH, Sept. 2013.
Guest open mic bday feature

IUPUI Student Reading Series, IndyReads Bookstore, Indianapolis IN, Dec. 2012.

Featured slam poet

IUPUI Student Reading Series, IndyReads Bookstore, Indianapolis IN, Nov. 2012.

Featured slam poet

“Funness Slam,” Irving Theatre, Indianapolis IN, Aug. 2012.
Slam champion first runner-up

GRADUATE COURSEWORK

External Institutes and Workshops

Rhetoric Society of American Biennial Conference Institute: Research Network Forum (2018)

Dr. J. Blake Scott

Thomas R. Watson Symposium on “Making Future Matters” (2017)

Various notable keynote speakers

Rhetoric Society of American Summer Institute: Recognizing Non-Western Rhetorical Traditions (2017)

Drs. Arabella Lyon and LuMing Mao.

Rhetoric Society of American Summer Institute: Queer Archival Immersion (2017)

Drs. Charles Morris III and K.J. Rawson, et al.

University of Louisville Delphi Center for Teaching and Learning (2017)

Delphi U: Online Pedagogy Institute

Digital Media and Composition Institute (DMAC) at The Ohio State University (2016)

Drs. Cynthia Selfe and Scott DeWitt, et al.

Thomas R. Watson Symposium on “Mobility in Composition” (2016)

Various notable keynote speakers

Digital Composition Colloquium at The University of Louisville (2015)

Dr. Cynthia Selfe

University of Louisville (2015 – 2017)

Methods in Composition, Dr. Andrea Olinger

Key Works in Writing Studies, Dr. Mary P. Sheridan
Mobility Work in Composition Studies, Dr. Bruce Horner
Creative Writing workshop, Dr. Paul Griner
Teaching Literature: Theory and Practice, Dr. Beth Boehm
The Rhetoric of Social Movements, Dr. Stephen Schneider
Studies in Genre: Film, Dr. Bronwyn Williams
Multimodal Composing, Dr. Dànielle Nicole DeVoss
Rhetoric of Health and Medicine, Dr. Karen Kopelson
Teaching College Composition, Dr. Brenda Brueggemann

Ohio University (2013 – 2015)

History and Theories of Composition, Dr. Mara Holt
Foucault and Ranci re, Dr. Raymie McKerrow
American Literature: Experimental Modernism, 1865-1918, Dr. Marilyn Atlas
Rhetorical Traditions and Theories, Dr. Sherrie Gradin
Nonfiction workshop: The Essayification of Everything, Dr. Eric LeMay
New Media Composition, Dr. Albert Rouzie
Queer Rhetoric and Composition, Dr. Sherrie Gradin
Professional Issues in Teaching College English, Dr. Albert Rouzie
Teaching College English, Dr. Albert Rouzie
Introduction to English Studies, Dr. Janice Holm

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

Marian University

Marian University Alumni Association
Marian University Speech and Debate Alumni Organization

State

Volunteer: Indiana Youth Group
Indiana Forensics Association
Indiana Teachers of Writing

City

Indianapolis City Team: Rustbelt Regional Poetry Slam (2016, 2019)
Louisville Literary Arts

National/Disciplinary

National Council of Teachers of English
Pi Kappa Delta National Speech & Debate Association
Conference on College Composition and Communication
 Queer Caucus
 Social Justice Action Committee
 Creative Writing Special Interest Group