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“Moments matter more and more in their proliferation and we choose moments that matter for various reasons: political, pedagogical, personal. Moments chosen matter for they are about throwing onto the scales more moments that may tear the fabric to make lives more livable and greater freedoms to be enjoyed. Perhaps.” - Adam Greteman

“Why are there only eleven?” I thought as I stared out at about half of my Comp I class at Texas Christian University. It was the first day of school in the fall semester of 2017, and I had never taught college students before. Half of my class went to the wrong room because TCU decided to change my assigned room number the day before classes started. Similarly to this mishap, TCU’s IT department also refused to change my name from my birth name to my preferred name in their system. It wasn’t my legal name, they said. While this may seem harmless, their lack of action and understanding forced me to come out to my freshman students on the first day of class.

I stared out at their scared faces, pointing to the whiteboard where D2L was projected. I directed their attention to the top right hand side of the screen.

“As you can see, the name at the top of this screen doesn’t match the name on the syllabus... that is because I am transgender and I am transitioning here at TCU. And all that means for you guys is that when my voice cracks, because second puberty sucks, we can all laugh and move on with our class.” Saying these rehearsed words out loud, and in front of a

Sara Kelm 11/28/2017 12:09 PM

Comment [1]: Great opener. Perhaps lead us to the answer more narratively with something like, “Turns out” or “after some investigation...”

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Comment [2]: I like the ambiguity here – this could imply they’re scared of college in general or of you in particular

Sara Kelm 11/28/2017 12:11 PM

Comment [3]: So, this was a planned moment? Will you talk more about the “rehearsing” that went into this – even briefly?

bunch of 18 year olds, was one of the scariest moments of my life. I tried to keep my voice even and my hands from shaking. So many things could have gone wrong, but most of the students just looked surprised and we moved on very quickly to the contents of the syllabus. I then assigned their “Written History Letter,” which is essentially them telling me a little bit about themselves, and at the end I asked them to write what they expect from this course and what they are excited about. I had one student drop my course after writing this letter, and he was very plain about my being transgender as the reason behind why he was dropping the class. I respect his right to protect his own comfort, but it stings to know that I was never given a chance to teach or show him that transgender people are just like everyone else.

What I have just described above is my first moment as a college teacher. It is moments like this that Greteman writes about in his article, “Assembling Transgender Moments.” Throughout this article, Greteman asserts that collecting “moments” of transgender experience helps offer a form of criticism that can assist in acknowledging and providing future protection for the continuing and emerging “vulnerabilities faced by transgender individuals by focusing on moments past and present in order to construct a future” (Greteman 39). Building off of Reinciere and Sedwick’s critical use of “moments” Greteman uses “moments” as a tool to inquire into not only the violence and marginalization of translives, but the resilience, creativity, and humanity that occurs in translives built from these trans moments. Looking at trans specific "moments" can be used as a tool to connect Hienz’s rhetorical demonstration of representing trans narratives through the metaphor of a “journey without end” so that cisgender individuals can relate to trans stories. Building on this concept, Salamon argues against Butler’s discourse on gender and centers on an ethical demand for relating to non-normative genders rather than transcending or crossing sexual difference, whereas Butler exposes ideologies to deconstruct the

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Comment [4]: Of the letter? The class?

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Comment [5]: Great quote – it’s a bit confusing, though – are the vulnerabilities caused by “focusing on moments past and present” or is the future protection caused by this focus?

Sara Kelm 11/28/2017 12:14 PM

Comment [6]: For what? Analysis? Self-representation?

binary further. Salamon's principal claim is that the transgender body is, in fact, normative, in that the gap between the felt gender versus the inhabited gender is experienced by every human being, in spite of gender identification. Through looking at the bodily ego by psychoanalytic theories posited by Irgaray, Freud, Silverman, Lacan, Anzieu, and Schilder, Salamon illustrates how body image and identity are a part of the imaginary for all people.

Although theoretically reinforcing the notion that the experience of gender is not all that different from transgender individuals and cisgender individuals is not to diminish the stigma and oppression that trans people face in society, instead, I believe, it bridges the gap, much like Heinz's rhetorical analysis of trans journeys that can create a common understanding.

Eventually, this mutual understanding can create allies and equality. But before either of these can happen, trans lives must be written about, talked about, and analyzed in popular culture. With many scholars and theorists leaning toward the notion that the trans experience is not such a foreign concept, linking this to writing as a process of identity building illustrates the goal of my entire project.

In the book *Naming What We Know* (2015), Adler-Kassner and Wardle collect short essays from a variety of scholars in the field of composition studies. One specific chapter of this collection is thematically centered around writing as a process that enacts and creates identities and ideologies. By exploring first the concept of writing and its connection to literacy, Scott argues that there is no "general literacy." In fact, he observes literacy as a by product of social constructions in which the necessary negotiation of ideologies and identities are formed through certain "vocabularies, genres, and language conventions" (Scott 49). This learned form of literacy that people adapt in order to fit in and navigate between different social groups directly shapes the way people write. Scott states that, "writers are not separate from their writing and

Sara Kelm 11/28/2017 12:15 PM

Comment [7]: I got a little confused here about the difference between Butler and Salamon

Sara Kelm 11/28/2017 12:15 PM

Comment [8]: This explanation is very clear!

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Comment [9]: Which gap?

Sara Kelm 11/28/2017 12:16 PM

Comment [10]: What in particular?

they don't just quickly and seamlessly adapt to new situations. Rather, writers are socialized, changed, through their writing in new environments, and these changes can have deep implications" (Scott 49). These "deep implications" involve writing, speaking, and reading as ideological activities in which we internalize and therefore begin to understand, communicate, and view the world through this learned discourse. In this way, literacy and its connection to writing facilitate the creation and continuation of ideologies that, over time, become a natural part of living and enacting personhood within certain sociological spheres¹. Since the formation of identities are closely, if not exclusively, connected with ideology, Roozen asserts that writing is therefore a means to develop a certain identity through the construct of learned ideologies through social literacy. He states that,

Through writing, writers come to develop and perform identities in relation to the interests, beliefs, and values of the communities they engage with, understanding the possibilities for selfhood available in those communities. The act of writing, then, is not so much about using a particular set of skills as it is about becoming a particular kind of person, about developing a sense of who we are. (Roozen 51)

This quote is particularly interesting to me, because it reinforces this notion that the act of teaching writing is an act of facilitating identity formation within your **student body**. While I am not under the impression that **teaching a first-year composition class solidifies the identities of the 18 year old students**, I do believe that we often supply the necessary tools of inquiry in order to begin this process.

¹ "There is no general literacy: literacy is always in some way involved in the negotiation of identities and ideologies in specific social situations. Vocabularies, genres, and language conventions are a part of what creates and distinguishes social groups, and this learning to write is always ongoing, situational, and involving cultural and ideological immersion... Writers are not separate from their writing and they don't just quickly and seamlessly adapt to new situations. Rather, writers are socialized, changed, through their writing in new environments, and these changes can have deep implications" (Scott 49).

Sara Kelm 11/28/2017 12:18 PM

Comment [11]: Student body, like collection of students? Or the actual body of a student?

Sara Kelm 11/28/2017 12:18 PM

Comment [12]: Teaching the class solidifies the identities? I'm a bit confused by this – who is doing the action in this sentence?

Much has been written on the “position of the teacher,” or how a teacher is read by their students, what they embody as an instructor, and how that impacts their role as a facilitator of knowledge. In recent studies, women, gay, lesbian, and racial minorities have been at the focal point of this research. While those demographics are important and beneficial to our understanding of how identity can impact pedagogy, transgender instructors have been overlooked and under studied in this area. I will explore how being a transgender instructor impacts our role of facilitating knowledge to students. In conducting this inquiry, I hope to gain insight into pedagogical or personal ways to alleviate some of the distress that comes with being read as a gender “deviant” by my students, while simultaneously capitalizing on using my role as a teacher as a social platform. By collecting personal stories from others and combining them with my own, I hope to position the importance of this study in relation to queer composition pedagogical theory.

At 24 years old, I am still using literacy and writing as a method to understand and form my own identity. Almost two years ago, I watched a BuzzFeed video that helped me understand that I am transgender. By viewing and listening to the way that transmen were talking about their lived experience, this moment in my life became the first moment where I read and heard about people like me. When I say that this moment allowed me to “understand” that I am transgender, I do not mean that this moment was the first time I had ever felt this way about my identity. In all actually, watching this video merely gave me the vocabulary and experiential literacy to be able to articulate accurately how I have felt for my entire life. While the subject of my identity is still being researched and formed, the process of constructing this section of my thesis allows me to explore my own “coming out” story as a teacher and how that impacts students. Smith discusses “coming out” in personal writing as a “revelation of self” and a construction of identity (Smith

Sara Kelm 11/28/2017 12:20 PM

Comment [13]: Nice summary. This brings everything together well – perhaps connect to embodiment too?

Sara Kelm 11/28/2017 12:21 PM

Comment [14]: Good connection back to moments – will you continue coming back to this idea?

73). She emphasizes that personal narratives function similarly to drag in that it is “a dramatization of self that is aware of (it)self as **drama**” (Smith 76). While writing about my personal narrative can be seen as drag, Kopelson argues against Caughie’s notion that any act of writing is inherently about establishing a stable position temporarily, which is then termed as an act of “passing.” However, Kopelson asserts that writing is “incomplete passing” that relies on the exposure of the “something else before its **enactment**” (Kopelson 457). Using this **metaphor** to discuss students’ writing can be more useful for understanding subjectivity and positionality in writing because it does not erase past subject positions so much as it documents the changes and transitions the students make throughout the writing process. In this way, my body as a transitioning transgender instructor feels almost like a queer palimpsest for writing theory. As my students witness my transition from female to male, they also transition in their own writing and identities as **well**.

A poignant example of how my identity, I believe, played a role in my students’ own writing and perspective occurred over the span of two assignments. On October 20th, 2017 I assigned my students an article to read called, “A Female’s Perspective on Catcalling.” The purpose of this reading was to get my students to understand the functionality of using descriptive outlines² while also attempting to branch out into social activism and creating socially aware citizens by simply introducing this topic. When the time came for my class to engage with this article by discussing how each paragraph functioned, they were silent. I noticed that while my students were reading the article, many of the young men would occasionally scoff or chuckle. The whole class sat in silence for five minutes before a young woman spoke up.

“The introduction acknowledges previous work on the topic of catcalling and highlights

² A writing tool for rhetorical analysis that dissects what each paragraph in an essay “says” and what each paragraph “does” (how it rhetorically functions).

Sara Kelm 11/28/2017 12:22 PM

Comment [15]: FASCINATING. I've never heard this before, but I love it.

Sara Kelm 11/28/2017 12:23 PM

Comment [16]: I really like this, but I'm not sure I completely understand it – could you explain it a little further?

Sara Kelm 11/28/2017 12:23 PM

Comment [17]: Which one?

Sara Kelm 11/28/2017 12:24 PM

Comment [18]: OOH. I like this.

the negative racial implications of many viral videos about catcalling. It functions to demonstrate where this author positions her own take on catcalling.”

“Good!”

I typed what she had said in a google doc template for descriptive outlines.

“Who wants to do the next paragraph?”

Another five minutes of pure silence...

“Seriously. No one has anything to say at all about how this paragraph functions within the essay?”

I felt anxious and upset. With 15 of my 20 students being white men, I was slowly becoming infuriated. It was a privilege that each and every one of them possessed to not be engaged. To not have to think about catcalling.

“Okay. Does everyone understand the functionality of descriptive outlines?”

They nodded their heads and I broke them up into pairs to exchange essays and perform descriptive outlines of each others’ writing. I felt as though this lesson had failed. How could I introduce anything political, social, or cultural if they couldn’t even engage with a very mild article discussing catcalling? I thought about forgoing anymore “controversial” material, but instead decided I would give it one more try.

On November 4th, 2017, I assigned a rhetorical analysis essay concerning how each author established ethos in their arguments. The texts I assigned were Ivan Coyote’s TedTalk and an article titled, “Black Faces in White Spaces: Prejudice in Smalltown America.” In between the catcalling assignment and the rhetorical analysis assignment, I had used two class periods where the students worked on their drafts and I was there if they needed to ask any questions. During these class periods, casual conversations would arise and I got to know my

students and they got to know me on a more personal level. After this, I started to begin class with asking my students non-academic related questions where they would share a little about their lives, if they wanted to. I had one student approach me during a drafting session and ask me if I could write a letter to him about what I believed it took to be successful. He said that he was required to ask one of his professors and one of his peers. It felt like I was slowly becoming less of this grade overlord dictator to a human being; simply a guide and facilitator of knowledge.

When my students handed in their rhetorical analysis paper on November 11th, I was worried that I would have a repeat of the catcalling incident. Before downloading my student's papers to make electronic comments, I re-read the prompt:

Compare and contrast the ways the authors in "Ivan Coyote TedTalk" and "Black Faces in White Spaces" establish their ethos through their essays. How does each author appeal to his or her audience rhetorically? How does the ethos of each author inform their interpretation of a particular public space? What kinds of evidence does each author use to make his or her argument?

Much like the catcalling assignment, this analysis was concerning public space. Who has privilege in public spaces and who doesn't? If public space is truly "public," then why are people discussing these discrepancies? These are some of the tiny seeds I had hoped to plant into the minds of my students in order to get them to think outside of themselves and their own privilege or lack thereof. I was particularly nervous about including the TedTalk about gender neutral bathrooms both because Texas almost passed a "bathroom bill" and because all of my student know that I am transgender. I was afraid that some of them might use this assignment as an opportunity to let me know how they "really" felt about me and my identity, or that they would use it as an opportunity to try and get on my "good side" by hyperbolizing the situation.

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Comment [19]: Man, I am loving how you're describing this situation and unfolding the narrative. This is excellent work.

However, as I began reading their responses, I was pleasantly surprised. Each student engaged with the material and a vast majority even got pronouns correct when talking about Coyote. They deftly analyzed his ethos and most responded well to the fact that Coyote engages with all members of the audience on gender neutral bathrooms because he makes his argument about everyone instead of just focusing on transgender people. A sample response from one student reads:

Rhetorically, Coyote appeals to his audience by allowing the audience to step into his life. Coyote explains how, as a trans person, he struggles to do normal things people do daily, such as use the restroom in a public place. He presents the issues trans people encounter by recounting personal experiences. The audience can relate to and be more invested in such an imperative subject when the subject matter has a human face. For example, Coyote recounts a conversation he had with a little girl who is also dealing with gender identity issues in her environment. Telling the little girl's story about her hardships makes the audience realize that gender-neutral bathrooms are important to the younger generation as well (Coyote). However, Coyote includes humorous statements during his serious talk that lighten the mood when discussing sorrowing experiences. The audience laughs but also understands the seriousness of the matter when Coyote states, "They've been a problem for me since as far back as I can remember, first when I was just a little baby tomboy and then later as a masculine-appearing, predominantly estrogen-based organism" (Coyote). Coyote's positive approach to the horror he has experienced in public bathrooms allows the audience to remain open-minded to the subject.

Additionally, Coyote's ethos toward gender-neutral bathrooms shows that implementing gender-neutral bathrooms may be the most ethical way to solve the problems trans people are having when trying to use public restrooms. Having such bathrooms available will allow trans people to use the restroom in peace and confidence knowing that their uniqueness is not an issue but rather something that makes them who they truly are. Even more, Coyote addresses other concerns such as women with body image issues or even people with anxiety issues who can also benefit from single stall facilities (Coyote). The audience is then exposed to further problems in today's society which they could possibly relate to. In efforts to make the argument that gender-neutral bathrooms are essential, Coyote reveals personal evidence. Coyote expresses his own hardships in public restrooms, a little girl's struggle in school, and also includes examples of current issues encompassing all genders and ages. Coyote surely proves that gender-neutral bathrooms are needed through his intense and detailed personal stories that traverse further than just transgender people and come to encompass a larger, and more inclusive audience.

While this is just one example of many, this student performed an analysis with understanding. From the silent class discussion about catcalling to the rich and engaging discussion of gender neutral bathrooms, I watched as many of my students stepped out of their comfort zones to take part in a topic that would have otherwise not concerned them. It is my hope that having me as a teacher may have opened their eyes further to this issue. When watching the TedTalk, maybe many of them understood, on some level, that I could have possibly experienced many of the same things Coyote discussed with his audience. And with the steadily growing rapport between my students and myself, maybe some of them have begun to care about issues outside of

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Comment [20]: I wonder if this also has to do with a public discussion versus the "private" nature of a reading response. They didn't have to speak up among their peers – BUT do you have experiences from class indicate they would have the discussion differently now?

themselves. Even if some of my students were just writing and saying what they thought I wanted to hear, for that brief moment their writing stemmed from a process of becoming. My own becoming as a transgender writing instructor and their own becoming as writers, students, and people.

In looking further at the growth between the catcalling assignment and the rhetorical analysis assignment, Shahani writes about “a performative understanding of failure as a moment of pedagogy” (Shahani 186). In her argument, she builds on what Sedgwick calls “reparative thinking” where failure is the catalyst to beginning the process of “fixing” or reparation (Shahani 187). By analyzing her students’ responses to the two novels, *Boys Don’t Cry* and *Girls, Visions, and Everything*, Shahani finds that her students enjoy *Boys Don’t Cry* because they have the ability to sympathize with the main character in ways that don’t force them to reconceptualize their perspective on citizenship, whereas in *Girls, Visions, and Everything*, her students failed to enjoy it because they cannot sympathize or identify with the main character because the narrative resists the privatization of citizenship. From this, Shahani argues that we should explore how knowledge functions and where it ends, instead of following a pedagogy that consists of only positive and inclusive representation. She states that her students’ failure to enjoy this novel, “enable inquiries into the limits of intelligibility both in and out of the classroom” (Shahani 205). From this, Shahani ultimately argues that failures like this in the classroom can be more productive than many successes because they allow students to move toward a point where they can re-conceptualize their ideas of citizenship. In a similar way, I believe my students’ failure with the catcalling article allowed them the awkward space to re-think their own positionality and come to understand the precarity of citizenship for minority groups of people based on gender, sexuality, race, and class. Their growth in perspective from the catcalling exercise to the

Sara Kelm 11/28/2017 12:28 PM
Comment [21]: How so?

Sara Kelm 11/28/2017 12:29 PM
Comment [22]: Does Shahani look at the growth? Or do you, by way of Shahani?

Sara Kelm 11/28/2017 12:30 PM
Comment [23]: Ooh, interesting. Maybe talk about how “failure” in this case is on the part of the students, not the instructor – shifting responsibility

analysis of the TedTalk exemplifies what Shahani argues by demonstrating that they have, indeed, reconceptualized their understanding of citizenship and the human quality that makes it possible.

For many of my students, I may be the first and only transgender person that they will ever meet. For many of my students, my class may be one of the only writing courses that they will ever take. In “Written Through the Body: Disruptions and ‘Personal’ Writing,” Banks argues for the importance of embodied writing or practices of writing that consider the awareness of one’s bodies and oftentimes the bodies of others as the writer is making and understanding the theoretical implications of their own embodiment and its meaning. Throughout the article, Banks demonstrates how personal experience acts as a “making of meaning of one’s world” (Banks 33). To illustrate what this approach looks like in a classroom, Banks recounts an assignment he gives to his writing students where he asks them to write “coming out” stories to show how making students write what they do not know can emphasize the importance of using and understanding embodied writing. While I do not make my students write “coming out” stories, I did “come out” to my students on the first day of class. From my first moment as a college instructor and their first moment as a TCU student of writing, we have all experienced or witnessed how embodiment can impact the way you teach writing and the way you experience writing. Although the relationship between myself and my students had a rocky beginning, none of them have ever misgendered me, and for that, I will be forever grateful.

Author’s Note: In this essay, I am trying to explore how being a queer embodied teacher impacts embodied writing and teaching. I think that I did a decent job in looking at composition theory and how it applies to my own personal experience and where there is research and scholarship

missing. I am looking to adapt this essay as a portion to my master's thesis which is broadly about transgender literacies; exploring the question of how we, as transgender individuals write about ourselves and how that impacts the way our identities are read and perceived by others. I guess any helpful comments towards clarity and my main goal/ where I could cut for just this class's purposes etc... sorry, I know I went way over guys, but this is going to be adapted for my thesis, so length was a goal of mine for that purpose.

Aryn, I think this is awesome – the narrative in the middle is the strongest part for me. It reads so beautifully, and it's both reflective and explanatory. I think I would say you have a lot of different threads that you don't necessarily bring together – you lose track of the embodiment thread and the “moments” threads at various moments. Also, I'm interested in hearing how you've seen your students grow not only as people but also as writers, since I thought that sentence regarding “transitioning” (both you and them) was really compelling. Overall, I think this is a really strong project, and I want to read more!

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