

Article

The Grammar of Social Justice: Gender Non-Binary Pronouns and the Writing Centre

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Abstract

This paper discusses our writing centre's outreach to trans and gender non-conforming students on our campus and the subsequent responses to this. Specifically, our writing centre embarked on an outreach campaign through promotional materials and sponsored events. During and following the 2016 U.S. presidential election, we found our outreach posters repeatedly defaced. We present a case study of this situation, beginning with background information about our campus and a review of events. In order to think through the potential for a transformative response to these events, we explore the history and reasoning behind the use of gender non-binary pronouns; Michel Foucault's theory of discourse and power; and José Esteban Muñoz's theory of disidentification. Lastly, we present what we have done since late 2016 and what we recommend as further steps towards a transformative response.

Keywords: gender neutral pronouns, gender non-binary, writing centre, social justice, rhetoric of respect

Introduction

During and after the 2016 U.S. presidential election, a series of physically and epistemically violent events unfolded both on and near our university campus. White supremacist propaganda appeared on campus. Local mosques were attacked (Hahn, 2016; Day & Lindblom, 2017). A nearby university was temporarily closed due to threats of a mass shooting in response to a racial justice event ("Evergreen State College caller threatened," 2017). It is significant to note that these events were

simultaneously *physical* and *epistemic*. We do not see these events as simple acts of aggression but as happening alongside rhetorics of violence and dehumanization: rhetorics which manifest not only in these actions but also in the broader political climate of the U.S.

Our project is driven by two central questions: What is the role of the writing centre in fostering a “rhetoric of respect?” How might the writing centre help to construct a transformative response that not only responds to individual events but also aims to change underlying logics that make these events possible? In *Rhetoric of Respect*, Tiffany Rousculp (2014) discusses the need to develop what she calls a “rhetoric of respect,” or a “recognition of multiple views, approaches, abilities, and...limitations” (p. 25) as an integral component of writing centre pedagogy. In this paper, we are interested in how Rousculp’s rhetoric of respect provides a framework for our writing centre’s response to recent events. This is to say that the “recognition of multiple views, approaches, and abilities” that Rousculp describes is connected to how the writing centre can take part in a rhetoric of respect on campus at large. We are further interested, then, in reflecting on how the writing centre presents and organizes its presence in the fabric of the campus community. As an interstitial space between the faculty, students, and administration, writing centres are perhaps awkwardly titled as “centres” given our amorphous positionality. However, we argue that this interstitial and often marginal space of the writing centre is not a detriment but a zone of potentiality and transformation. This echoes Bawarshi and Pelkowski’s (1999) call for writing centres to serve as “contact zones.” Writing centre pedagogy, through its engagements with multiple views, approaches, and abilities, to borrow from Rousculp’s formulation, is positioned to engage with violent rhetorics on a level that does not simply react to them but rather can make space for and participate in what we are calling a *transformative response*.

We aim to present our proposed transformative responses with an understanding of the differential political climates of the U.S. and Canada. While we primarily present the situation unfolding on and around our campus in the context of the political climate in the U.S., we do not see these dynamics as being limited to the U.S. Indeed, many of the rhetorics at work in the U.S. have also manifested elsewhere in the West. We see our work as being relevant not only to our current situated context within the U.S but also across North America more generally.

This project began with our writing centre’s outreach to minoritized students on campus through promotional materials and sponsored events and the physically-epistemically violent responses to this. We will present background information on our campus and a case study of our centre’s outreach campaign and subsequent actions. In order to think through the potential for a

transformative response, we will explore and contextualize in depth the components of this case study, including the history and reasoning behind the use of gender non-binary pronouns and the ways in which we see this work as being suggestive of the pervasiveness of violent rhetorics on our campus and beyond. Further, we will contextualize the case study using Michel Foucault's theory of discourse and power and José Esteban Muñoz's theory of disidentification in order to make clear the high stakes of our response, which has repercussions beyond the outreach campaign we discuss. Lastly, we will present what we have done so far and what we recommend as further steps towards a transformative response in order to effect a rhetoric of respect in opposition to the prevailing rhetorics of violence.

As Culture Shifts, So Does Writing Centre Praxis: A Case Study

The University of Washington Bothell (UW Bothell) is located about 15 km. northeast of the U.S. city of Seattle. UW Bothell has a student population of approximately 5,500 students, 90% of whom come from Washington State ("Fast Facts," 2017). It is primarily a commuter campus. The campus has sought to distinguish itself by its commitment to underserved students: of the students who enter in their first year of university (as opposed to students who transfer later in their university career), 70% are classified as coming from "diverse backgrounds" and 49% are first in their families to earn a 4-year university degree ("Fast Facts," 2017). The UW Bothell mission statement affirms the institution's intention to "[b]uild an inclusive and supportive community of learning and incorporate multicultural content and diverse perspectives on ethnic and racial groups, gender, sexual orientation, social class, and special needs" ("UWB Vision & Core Values," 2002). UW Bothell Writing and Communication Center (WaCC) is a generalist peer tutoring centre staffed primarily by student peer consultants drawn from our undergraduate and Masters-level students (UW Bothell does not offer Ph.D. programs). Two permanent staff members—a director and a manager—oversee the recruiting, hiring, training, and evaluation of the peer consultant staff, including lead peer consultants who are instrumental to the running of the centre.

Sharp worked in the WaCC from 2013 until he left to pursue a doctorate in 2016. In 2015, while working as a lead consultant, Sharp began to revise the WaCC's marketing materials, both to revamp the aesthetic of the WaCC's public image and to rethink the centre's place in the university community. As with other writing centres, the WaCC grapples with being misunderstood and misrepresented, with students often under the impression that the WaCC functions as a "fix-it shop." Instead, we seek to position the WaCC as a de-centered site of communication and expression,

reaching the diverse student population both inside the WaCC and across our entire campus. Part of this marketing revision included facilitating queer zine workshops, hosting open mic events on campus, and reconceptualizing our promotional materials with the goal of increasing the visibility and inclusivity of minoritized gender identities (see Figure 1). This revision includes a new welcome statement that students see as they first enter the WaCC featuring a multilingual greeting as well as a series of posters using gender non-binary pronouns.

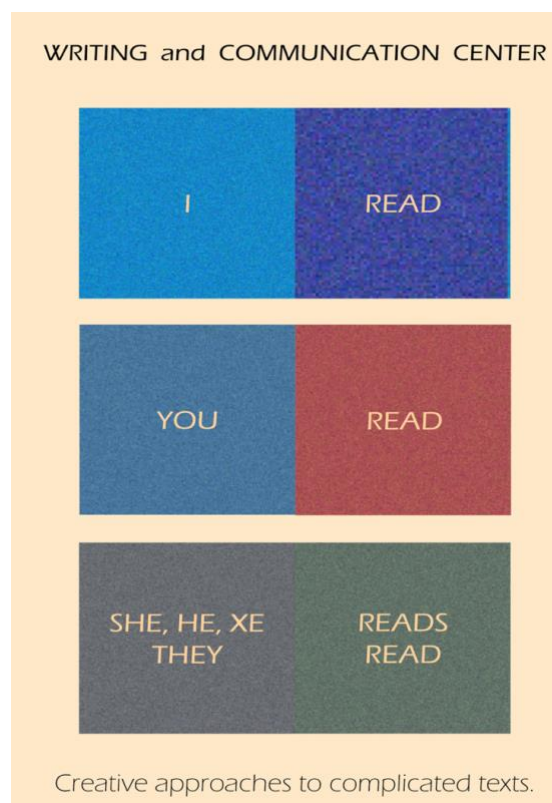


Figure 1. One of the series of gender non-binary inclusive posters created by Sharp.

The inclusive language on the centre's promotional materials are not intended to be read as singular and discrete instances of inclusivity—which would instead simply be a tokenization of inclusivity itself—but instead as part of a larger centre-wide move towards inclusion. We offer the revised promotional materials alongside new options for including pronouns on our staff's name tags and biographies which appear on a wall in the WaCC and on the centre website, as well as at the above-mentioned workshops and events.

Rosenberg grappled with her role as centre director as both serving and contesting elements of dominant discourse within the university. Looking for opportunities to trouble the assimilationist project prescribed to writing centres, she worked with her staff to construct the centre as overlapping “contact zones” (Pratt as discussed by Bawarshi & Pelkowski, 1999) where students can frame their education as a liberatory project and not one of exclusively skill acquisition and credentialing. Put in slightly different terms, Rosenberg views her work as exploring the role of the writing centre at the intersection of language and power.

Within this frame, Rosenberg considered the posters that Sharp designed and disseminated as a small but meaningful step in demonstrating not only our commitment to inclusivity, but to our understanding of language as mutable, and expressing as well as creating power relations. However, Rosenberg did not consider this work radical. Indeed, the American Dialect Society (2015) chose the singular “they” as word of the year in 2015, the same year that the *Washington Post* included singular “they” in its style guide. Gender non-binary pronouns—or at least the repurposed “they”—had gone mainstream.

For the first year that the posters hung on the walls of UW Bothell’s classroom buildings, they garnered little attention. However, in October 2016 a professor brought a copy of one of the posters to Rosenberg’s office. Someone had crossed out the gender non-binary pronouns on the poster. Significantly, this was not the only source of anonymous hostile communication on campus. During this same time frame, one of our peer consultants found white supremacist propaganda on campus, prompting the university’s chancellor to send a message to campus stating that “we will not tolerate speech that intends to isolate, demean, or threaten individuals or groups based on their race, religion, sexual identity, gender, or any other identity that is part of our campus’ diverse tapestry” (Wolf Yeigh, personal communication).

Although posters for various organizations have been defaced previously at UW Bothell, the volume and the virulence of these anonymous attacks across campus has intensified over the past year. We read these attacks alongside the contentious 2016 U.S. presidential election and the bullying rhetorical tactics modeled by Donald Trump in the time leading up to and following his election.

We struggled—and continue to struggle—with our response to the ongoing defacement of our gender non-binary posters. To date, we have addressed this issue on three overlapping fronts. First, we responded with a renewed commitment to messaging our use of non-binary pronouns on the walls of campus buildings. We replaced the defaced posters. When people defaced that round of posters, we had the next batch laminated, making the work of defacement more difficult. Rosenberg

initiated a series of conversations in the writing centre about how to respond. Following these conversations, our lead peer consultant created a new poster which we put up around campus (see Figure 2). The peer consultant chose a gender non-specific name, AJ, as the subject of the declarative sentences and made a more direct claim than we did with the initial poster, stating that our writing centre “respects all gender pronouns.” Within a couple of weeks, anonymous individual(s) defaced these posters as well.

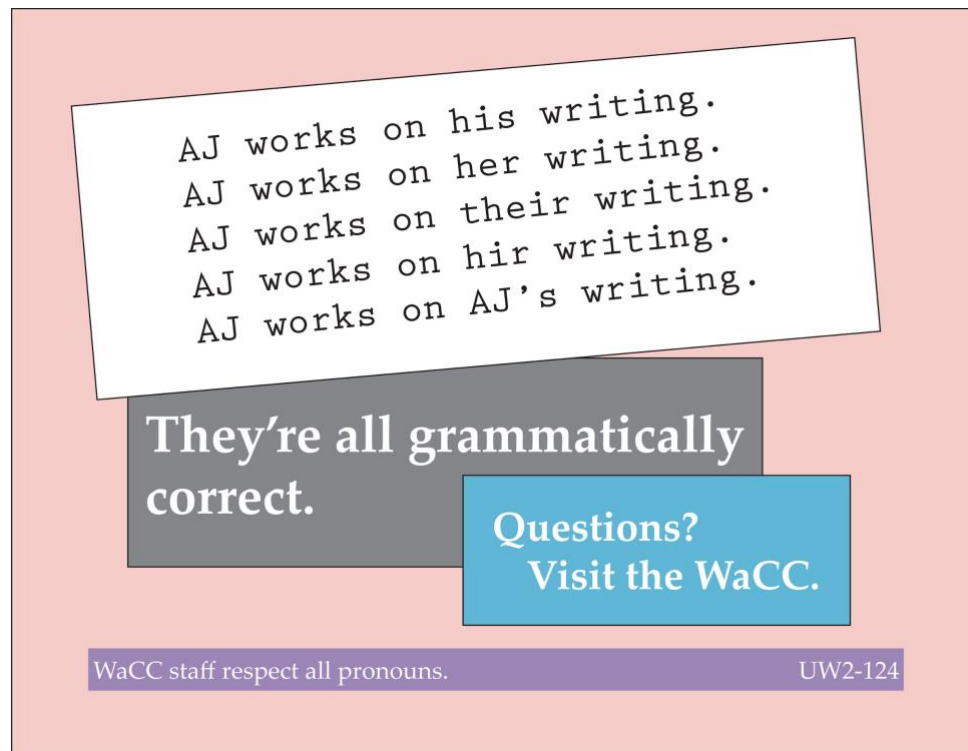


Figure 2. This poster, created by a lead consultant at the WaCC, was placed around campus following the defacements on the original poster.

Rosenberg asked the writing centre staff if we should leave the vandalized posters up and invite members of the campus community to share their views with us, either by writing their responses anonymously or by coming and talking with us directly. One of our peer consultants strongly opposed this approach. They reiterated their critique in email, writing that:

engaging people who commit vandalism and other forms of violence in dialogue legitimizes those acts as forms of discourse, rather than treating them as unacceptable behaviors in civil

society. When we legitimize such behaviors, we are implicitly inviting a perpetuation and escalation of violence. Transphobia, like homophobia or racism, seeks any avenue it can find to assert its legitimacy as a discursive norm, and it always leads to violence in the end. (Colin Davis, personal communication)

They suggested that we look for alternate avenues for dialogue.

Based on this feedback, Rosenberg reached out to the university's Social Justice Organizers (SJOs). Comprised of students working under the Student Affairs umbrella, SJOs organize and host events to increase equity and just communication across campus. One of their signature events is a "Dine and Dialogue" series, where SJOs provide lunch and facilitate conversations on diversity-related topics. Past events have focused on Muslim student experiences, bisexuality, and other topics. The SJOs agreed to co-host a Dine and Dialogue event, which we named "Processing Pronouns." Co-led by two SJOs and two peer consultants from our writing centre, the Dine and Dialogue shared our writing centre's experience with non-binary pronouns and invited questions from participants. The peer consultant who cautioned against engaging with the anonymous poster defacers took the lead in the question and answer portion of the event.

In addition, Rosenberg spoke with faculty and staff groups to share our experience and ask for suggestions. These groups included the campus Diversity Council, the Gender, Women and Sexuality Studies Curricular Area Working Group, and the Composition Steering Committee. Through these conversations, Rosenberg learned that other posters had been defaced across campus. Following these conversations, Rosenberg reported the vandalized posters to Campus Security and the university's newly formed Bias Incident Team.

Towards a Transformative Response: Reflections on Identity and Discourse

In opposition to a potential reading of the poster defacement as a routine and insignificant happening on a college campus, we believe that these erasures are indicative of the broader sociopolitical climate in which they appear. Just as we see the patriarchy apologist parroting "boys will be boys" in response to misogynist violence, we see the potential reduction of these events to a common and ignorable occurrence to be a sweeping under the rug of what is actually a significant signal of the violent rhetorics at work in contemporary U.S. politics and on university campuses. In order to fully

respond to the events surrounding our writing centre's work on inclusivity and gender non-binary pronouns, we must consider not only the individual acts (which otherwise could be reduced to mere vandalism or trolling) but also think of them in relation to the political climate in which they are manifesting. These events have unfolded alongside the election of Donald Trump and the subsequent increase in racist, homophobic, and transphobic assaults across the U.S. (Potok, 2017); the posting of white supremacist promotional materials on the UW Bothell campus; attacks on local mosques in the City of Bothell area; the spectacularization of recent events at the Evergreen State College (Hartocollis, 2017); and the online threats directed to our colleagues at UW Tacoma after the far-right publication *Breitbart News* wrote an article on their writing centre's anti-racist statement (McCarty, 2017; "UWT Is Right," 2017). As we reflect on these happenings, we ask ourselves: What do these actions reveal beyond a mere material damage to a piece of paper? How might we orient a response to these otherwise mundane acts of student vandalism as an entry point to address broader concerns of diversity, inclusion, and a rhetoric of respect on our campus?

Our reflection on the origins of these violent rhetorics and of our potential transformative response to them will first engage with the concept and reasoning behind gender non-binary pronouns. We aim in this discussion to delineate the epistemological and ontological stakes of gender non-binary pronouns, which will highlight the significance we attribute to our centre's work. Then, we will think through what we are calling a transformative response by way of Michel Foucault's discussion of discourse and power and José Esteban Muñoz's theory of disidentification. Since we seek to not merely respond to these events but use them as a transformative moment, Foucault's and Muñoz's theories provide a helpful scaffold for how to transformatively respond to violence in language in a way that does not diminish the significance of what is being responded to. Lastly, we will concretize these concerns, thinking more specifically about our next steps and how to engage the campus community from multiple vectors.

Gender Non-Binary Pronouns

"The grammar of social justice" that we mention in the title can refer more generally to a set of discursive practices in use across a variety of intersectional groups, movements, activisms, and trains of thought. Here, however, our interest focuses specifically on what are called gender-neutral, gender-inclusive, or non-binary pronouns. The traditional gendered pronouns in English—*he* and *she*—function metonymically, placing a stable gender identity in the place of a singular subject, an alignment which assumes a stable identity on the one hand and a stable signifier of identity on the

other. This is to say that those subjects whose identities do not align so neatly with the binary construction of masculine/feminine are either reduced to an identity not their own or are erased from language entirely. In other words, to apply a binary pronoun to a non-binary individual is to choose an identity *for them* by virtue of the implications embedded in the use of binary pronouns. To refer to a gender non-binary person using the pronoun *he* or *she* is to replace metonymically and grammatically the identity of the individual with the assumptions, cultural norms, and gendered expectations that inflect the pronoun. What might at first glance appear to be a minor slippage—what harm could two or three letters do?—is, in fact, an epistemological and ontological violence. The stakes of grammar usage are never limited to specificity and adherence to linguistic norms. At stake is the agency of the subject whose identity (as a non-binary person), self-knowledge (as someone who can know themselves on their own terms), and very being (as someone who is intelligible in language) are called into question. If language is not simply a system of words and syntactical expectations but rather a reciprocal system of how we make sense of the world *and* how others make sense of us, then the exclusive use of binary pronouns is a significant concern demanding our pedagogical and theoretical attention.

Non-binary pronouns offer an alternative to the bind of binary logic in traditional English pronouns. They have proliferated in number and variety over the past few decades (they, xe, ze, ne, ey, among others); however, most if not all remain widely unknown (except, as noted earlier, the singular *they*), viewed as foreign to English or as artificial constructs (as if language itself is naturalized!). Despite the perceived foreignness or artificiality of non-binary pronouns, gender neutrality has been a notable concern in popular discourse for some time. While once *he* was considered to be an acceptable stand-in for a general subject, alternatives have since proliferated: a general *she*, *s/he*, and *one* all appear frequently. A similar logic drives the need for non-binary pronouns: just as *he* cannot function in the place of a general subject, neither can the seemingly neutral *s/he*. A gap remains that binary pronouns cannot fill.

It is within this gap that non-binary pronouns appear. A few already maintain a place in popular discourse, though are often not recognized as such. Both *one* and the singular *they* are common. *One* functions quite well in general (though awkward when referring to a specific person in conversation) and in fact remains hidden in plain sight in other common words: *everyone*, *someone*, *anyone*, *no one*, *none*. Grammar purists' distaste for the singular *they* as a non-binary pronoun appears strange when we consider how frequently it enters common discourse when the gender of a singular subject is unknown: "Did the delivery person drop off the package?" "No, I haven't seen them yet."

In a final gesture towards “the *grammar* of social justice,” it is significant to note our insistence on terming these pronouns not as *gender-neutral* (as is the common usage) but rather as *gender non-binary pronouns*. If we take seriously the notion that a pronoun such as *he* cannot function as a neutral and all-inclusive signifier for all humans (just as *man* cannot stand in for all humans regardless of gender), we must also engage more broadly the problematic of *neutrality* in grammar and language. As has been established, *any* pronoun, regardless of intent on the part of the speaker who uses it, carries with it cultural baggage that cannot be split off from the pronoun itself. Or, to put it another way: there is no neutral pronoun. The issue here is not an attempt to establish an all-inclusive neutral pronoun that is universally acceptable; the issue is instead to reorient our thinking outside of the binarism of traditional English pronouns and towards a gender non-binary grammar.

Discourse, Power, and Transformative Responses

Given the stakes of the use of gender non-binary pronouns and the role of the writing centre in fostering a culture of respect, we find it useful to think through more clearly how we might craft a *transformative response*. In order to fully think through what this transformative response might look like, we will draw upon Michel Foucault’s work on discourse and power as well as Jose Esteban Muñoz’s theory of disidentification. In *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1*, Foucault (1990) asks us to move outside of the traditional binarism associated with discourse:

We must make allowance for the complex and unstable processes whereby discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling-block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy. *Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it.* (p. 101, emphasis ours)

Foucault disrupts the assumption of a unidirectional top-down relationship in which the powerful use discourse to reinforce their status. To think of discourse and power in this unidirectional way ignores the role of language in propping up power relations. To return to the previous example of the assumed neutrality of *he* and *man* as stand-ins for the entirety of the human race, this common understanding assumes that cisheteropatriarchy is already in place *before* and *outside of* any linguistic support. Instead, Foucault asks us to think about how the very discourse of cisheteropatriarchy—in this example, the universalizing of masculine identity through a generic but

masculine pronoun—not only extends from the powerful as an effect of their power but also *props up* and *makes possible* the very power relations they seem to emanate from. Language is not simply a neutral set of signifiers and signifieds but is intimately linked with our understanding of the world and how we are understood by the world. We cannot think of power outside of the discourse that makes it possible; or, to put it another way, language makes the world sensible to us in particular ways, and power relations are not outside of this dynamic.

As it relates to our transformative response to the happenings on our campus, this discussion about the reciprocal relationship between power and discourse allows us to prepare a response that matches the stakes of the situation. We see this connection unfolding along the lines of Foucault's thinking: these happenings on our campus are not only manifestations of the broader rhetorics of violence at work in U.S. politics and culture; these happenings prop up and make possible those very rhetorics of violence.

What is the way forward, then? We propose that the writing centre's transformative response should operate *alongside* the minoritized subjects who are most at risk on our campus. This proposition aligns with our desire to utilize the response as a transformative moment, which we see as operating simultaneously on the level of the institution *and* on the level of the individuals who make up the campus community. This is to say that our transformative response is framed around a dual gesture: working within the institution while also not erasing the needs and presence of minoritized subjects on campus who are most at danger within rhetorics of violence and dehumanization. Muñoz's theory of disidentification lays out a framework for this. For Muñoz, identity often operates along an assimilationist/anti-assimilationist binary in which those in power are always in a position of supremacy. Whether a minoritarian subject is assimilated or refuses to assimilate, the system of power maintains its structure. This framework is parallel to how Foucault sees unidirectional top-down misunderstandings of power operating. Instead of capitulating to this bind, however, Muñoz (1999) suggests there is a third way:

Disidentification is the third mode of dealing with dominant ideology, one that neither opts to assimilate within such a structure nor strictly opposes it; rather, disidentification is a strategy that works on and against dominant ideology. Instead of bucking under the pressure of dominant ideology (identification, assimilation) or attempting to break free of its inescapable sphere (counteridentification, utopianism), this "working on and against" is *a strategy that tries*

to transform a culture logic from within, always laboring to enact permanent structure change
(p. 12, emphasis ours)

To summarize, minoritized subjects who are not included within dominant discourse and culture do not simply have to choose between assimilation/identification and anti-assimilation/counteridentification. Instead, they can *disidentify*. Muñoz (1999) clarifies: “to disidentify is to read oneself and one’s own life narrative in a moment, object, or subject that is not culturally coded to ‘connect’ with the disidentifying subject” (p. 12). Rather than simply surviving within modes of discourse and cultural paradigms that are violent or dehumanizing, minoritized subjects in this framework can simultaneously survive and *transform* the dominant ideology in which they are surviving.

In the contemporary sociopolitical climate of the U.S., the dominant ideology is one of cisheteropatriarchal white supremacy. People of color are killed by the police with few repercussions; trans people of color are murdered at an alarmingly disproportionate rate with no signs of abatement; communities of colour continue to suffer from political marginalization and neglect; hate crimes against LGBT people have increased precipitously in many areas; neo-Nazi symbolism and public demonstration has become more pronounced; and Islamophobic and anti-Semitic acts of violence—symbolic and physical—have increased (Potok, 2017). While these have been perpetually present in the U.S., their sharp increase coinciding with the 2016 election should not be written off as mere coincidence. The dominant ideology of the U.S. is cisheteropatriarchal white supremacy, and we understand discourse as being not only something that emanates from power but that also props up and makes possible the systems of power within which we exist. Therefore, we can draw a clear line between the discursive manifestations of these rhetorics of violence and the dominant ideology that they emanate from and that they make possible.

The significance of Muñoz’s theory of disidentification becomes clear here. For trans and queer people, LGB individuals, people of colour, women, religious minorities, and the many intersections across and within these identities, assimilation and anti-assimilation are not actionable responses to the dominant ideology. To assimilate is to become responsible for the system’s perpetuation. To anti-assimilate is to open up room for the system to protect itself from what it can formulate as an attack by a foreign body. If neither assimilation or anti-assimilation is actionable in response to these happenings, then disidentification becomes a guiding light for our transformative response. In order

to operate alongside minoritized subjects on our campus, the writing centre must acknowledge the necessary role disidentification plays in their lives and experiences.

Our response must not only engage with the university as an institution but must also question how we are making spaces for agency for minoritized subjects possible on our campus. We see this agency as necessarily tied to the ability to disidentify: to not simply accede to or ignore what is happening, but for those most at risk on our campus to be able to fully take part in our campus community and transform that community so it is more liveable for them. How, then, can our response make disidentification possible? How can our investment in a rhetoric of respect facilitate this work? And, most actively, how can our response work *with* minoritarian individuals on campus in order to *transform* the campus culture? We see this as pointing further toward a need for the writing centre to entrench itself in the fabric of the campus community in order to transform it from *within*. This is not to say that the university is itself responsible for these violent rhetorics. Rather, this is to argue that these violent rhetorics are manifestations of the broader sociopolitical climate of the U.S., and are present in the campus community. In order to address these problems, we must reorient the work of the writing centre as being part of a network of alliances across campus who are (1) working from within the campus community in order to transform it and (2) attentive to the agency of those students most at risk within the rhetorics of violence and dehumanization we are working against. For minoritized students, disidentification becomes a way to identify with objects—the university, the classroom, education, texts, words, experiences, and so on—in ways that are not pre-scripted as assimilationist or anti-assimilationist. Our goal is not to simply become a reactionary organization that responds to the crossing-out of words on posters. Instead, we aim to make space for disidentification: to make space for minoritized subjects to act agentively in spaces and in experiences that are often hostile. In this way, we see our writing centre's transformative response, rooted in disidentification, as fulfilling Rousculp's notion of a rhetoric of respect. We see Rousculp's rhetoric of respect as a framework for our work so far and for our next steps. Rousculp's notion insists on a pedagogy of meeting students not only where they are, but "who, what, and where" (p. 54) they are: we must engage with minoritized students on their disidentificatory terrain.

Conclusion: Next Steps

Our desire to dig so deeply into these events is predicated on the idea that we could not simply respond by continuing to conduct outreach in the same way. Responding to the defacement of inclusive outreach posters by simply putting up new posters that will inevitably be defaced once

again is, we feel, a limited and therefore insufficient response. Instead, we are opening up to a transformative response. We see our other outreach work—hosting queer zine workshops, facilitating the production and dissemination of these zines across campus, alliance building across the institution—as being directed towards transformation. These are, we hope, examples of making space for disidentification for minoritized subjects on our campus, allowing them to make new, transformative relations to the campus community they are part of but are often excluded from by way of violent rhetorics. Moving forward, we are invested in problematizing the idea that grammar and language are neutral resources, especially through work with our peer consultant staff on gender non-binary pronouns in revised training programs. We further are invested in collaborative work to craft a diversity statement that concretizes and publicizes our commitments. These are necessarily related to ongoing conversations with other groups on campus about inter-related social justice issues. If anything, we have encountered a silver lining: increased collaboration and communication across campus around multi-faceted social justice issues.

This work is ongoing. Most recently, WaCC peer consultants created a new student group called “Activism Through Language (ATL).” Previously, interested peer consultants did all of their activism-related work through the WaCC (calling themselves “WaCCtivists”). However, Rosenberg did not want to be in the position of disciplining or restricting them if they chose to take action that university staff could not directly support. Now with a separate structure, the WaCC can collaborate with ATL on projects with shared agendas, giving the students have a more autonomous group structure. Currently, the WaCC and ATL are co-sponsoring open mic nights and advocacy workshops on our campus. ATL manifests our goal of operating alongside minoritized students. Rather than limit our project to institutional programs, the WaCC, alongside the ATL, is beginning to reach further into the campus community. ATL resists a top-down model which limits action within the confines of institutional regulations and expectations.

We believe that, even with all of the work and theorizing explored in this paper, our response is only the beginning. Perhaps our most significant takeaway from this experience is that change cannot be immediately instituted from the top to the bottom. The transformational response we envision slowly comes to being as we generate new alliances across campus, generate new ideas for outreach, and discover additional ways to advocate for the most vulnerable among us. We believe, finally, that our work here is not a one-size-fits-all program for university betterment. Instead, we hope that others will take up the task of rethinking the role of their writing centre, their writing pedagogy, or

their university administration, and of making space for the transformative power of disidentification.

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