

A Prison Story: Public Rhetoric, Community Writing, and the Politics of Gender¹

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This article enacts the transgenre resources of the personal academic essay to examine the politics of gender and questions of privilege across academic and public spheres. The author interweaves prose, poetry, criticism, and argument to interrogate the practice of transcultural citizenship and the transdisciplinary project of Writing Across Communities.

DESPAIR

Crumpled newspaper, the bags he carries, the
clothes he wears.

Stiff as an old woman's knees, shambling
through security,
scanning the boarding gate. A trembling
animal in a crate,
caged, frightened, he searches for the exit.

There are no quaint messages to send, no
Christmas newsletters,
no charming receptions, no cut-glass bowls,
no yellow paper napkins,
no proper etiquette, only this brittle young
man on my arm,
silent, the thread of spittle is a pearl on his lip.

Figuring Identities and Taking Action:

The tension between strategic and practical gender needs within a critical literacy program

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This article presents data from a 10-month case study of a critical literacy writing group for parenting and pregnant young adults. The author focuses on the efficacy of the program to foster the critical literacy skills of two participants. Drawing on field notes and written artifacts and using case study and discourse analysis, the author suggests that, although they redefined their figured identities in the program, the two women's ability to take action in their lives—their selves-in-practice—was contingent on other factors beyond the influence of the Program, such as familial and significant others' influences, which were definitive and integral to who the participants were. Thus, how the participants figured or positioned themselves inside and outside of the program was fluid and sometimes contradictory and greatly influenced by the symmetry between competing figured worlds, in which they participated and the strategic and practical gender needs that informed their positional identities in their day-to-day lives.

Participant success in critical literacy programs, including the one presented in this article, can often appear ambiguous, especially when participant goals are different than program goals. In this article,

Transforming Failures into Threshold Moments: Supporting Faculty through the Challenges of Service-Learning

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This article makes two arguments. First, the article argues that threshold concepts provide a useful lens for thinking about how faculty learn service-learning pedagogy. Second, the article illustrates how particular kinds of support can help faculty learn the pedagogy's threshold concepts by helping them make sense of the challenges they face in teaching through service-learning. The author uses autoethnography to trace her thinking throughout a yearlong fellows program, during which she developed and taught a new service-learning writing curriculum. She describes how the fellows program helped her to turn several challenges into threshold experiences that resulted in key shifts in thinking.

Recent Rhetoric and Composition scholars have called for more discussion of the failures and challenges of service-learning (see Cushman and Grabill; Rumsey and Nihiser; and Rousculp). My recent experiences developing and teaching a new service-learning curriculum for a place-based writing course involved many such failures and challenges. In this article, I seek to bring these disappointing moments to light and show how