scale beginning in 1966 when, for the first time since the nineteenth century, English faculty began to participate in shaping the theory and practice of writing assessment; for this reason, the chapter also functions as a history of assessment within English as a discipline. The last two chapters are a recursive analysis and an afterword entitled “Lagniappe”: Elliott discloses that this last chapter was an afterthought, the result of a new investment in public discussion after the effects of September 11 began to chill public discourse. And it’s a crucial chapter, for only here does Elliott explicitly state what he sees as at stake in knowing this history.

What Elliott wants the reader to take from *On a Scale* is that although the history of writing assessment is fraught with the types of exclusionary effects that those of us critical of high-stakes testing might expect, we should note how easy it is to presume that we are measuring actual ability rather than a discrete literate performance. This is what researchers were doing, after all, and “If we do not look deeply into the methodology of complex individuals,” Elliott writes, “we stand to let similar injustices pass unexamined” (353). For me, one of the more telling ruptures that helps tell this story is that the drive to establish inter-reader reliability not only repeatedly excluded alternative readings, but also overt misreadings. When expert readers were submitting their rankings of the writing specimens for the Hillegas scale, for instance, ten of the original eighty-three evaluations were discarded, because the readers did not correctly follow written instructions. That means twelve percent of the sample was set aside simply because it complicated the measurement process. Reader expertise is not questioned in Elliott’s account, which, I would argue, is the point: the generosity extended to fellow professionals is not available to students, soldiers, and immigrants who are under examination. Yet, how many of them have failed a written examination for not following instructions? And what did that cost them? *On a Scale* demonstrates how easy it is, in the thick of assessment, to forget to ask such questions.

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What role does—or should—identity play in the writing classroom? Recent composition and rhetoric scholarship addressing these questions has largely focused on demonstrating the interrelationships between identity and writing. This work has argued, for instance, that writing teachers need to acknowledge the personal investment and risks that are an integral part of writing and speaking with others. In *Sexuality and the Politics of Ethos*, Zan Meyer Gonçalves takes these questions a step further as she asks how teachers can invite students to
more self-consciously and critically construct their ethos in their speaking and writing.

*Sexuality and the Politics of Ethos* is a careful examination of the reciprocal relationship between individuals’ self-awareness and their performances of identity as they display who they are and how they are situated alongside various audiences. The book’s central theme is effectively summarized midway through the first chapter as Gonçalves writes, “If we are able to recognize, through self-reflection, how our differing identities are shaping the way we see others and perform our ‘selves,’ we are more likely to make conscious choices about how and for whom and for what purpose we are performing our ethos” (14). Because these identity performances constitute a primary method by which individuals reach out to others and build relationships with them, such displays of ethos also constitute a vital tool in an ongoing struggle against discriminatory discourses and practices.

As Gonçalves works with gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (GLBT) students at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst’s Stonewall Center Speaker’s Bureau, she begins to understand how students, in presentations to (primarily heterosexual) audiences across the university, construct desirable selves, resist hegemonic notions of GLBT identity and transform heterosexist discourses. Realizing the power of these self-conscious rhetorical performances, Gonçalves then works to cultivate such performances of identity through her writing pedagogy.

The book’s five chapters can be divided into three main sections. In chapter 1, Gonçalves describes a theoretical frame based upon identity as performance, “getting specific,” and intersectionality. In chapters 2 and 3, Gonçalves examines Speaker’s Bureau presentations to uncover how students both resist and transform prevalent discourses as they claim particular identities. In chapters 4 and 5 she turns a critical eye on her own composition classes, describing assignment sequences and course rationales that suggest how the kind of rhetorical work that students perform during the Speaker’s Bureau might be sponsored within the writing classroom.

Gonçalves’ theoretical approach can perhaps be best described in terms of an invitation to difference. While identity politics has called attention to marginalized groups of people and worked to build critical masses of like-minded individuals in order to mobilize political action, it is still hobbled by some difficult challenges. Most notable is the way that identity politics tends to frame individual identities as fixed by one’s group membership. To address the limitations presented by this singular view of identity, Gonçalves promotes instead what she calls “coalition politics.” Coalition politics focuses not on membership in a defined identity group, but on galvanizing diverse individuals around issues. The result is an emphasis on rhetorical strategies that reinforce connections while at the same time openly acknowledging and valuing differences among the individuals involved. Gonçalves builds a compelling case for the importance of
teaching students to attend critically to their identity performances as she uses Judith Butler to show the broader terrain of hegemonic discourses constraining speakers’ identity formations, Shane Phelan’s notion of “getting specific” to ask individuals to speak for themselves rather than for entire groups of people, and literature on intersectionality and “embodied” language to foreground the need for deep self-awareness in order to position oneself effectively among others.

Turning to students’ performances of identity in the Speaker’s Bureau and in her classroom, Gonçalves shows several ways that they seek to build bridges with different audiences—the central rhetorical goal she identifies for students in this study. She notes that students crafted their Speaker’s Bureau presentations and classroom projects to practice a kind of invitational rhetoric, asking their audiences to become allies on GLBT issues. A second activity that Gonçalves highlights is that of how students resist dominant constructions of GLBT identity. In one example, a Bureau presenter, David, says to his audience, “I think you’re all education majors? I’ve found education majors like labels a lot, so I’ll label myself gay. . . . I don’t like to say bisexual because right now I’m dating a guy and I’m very much in love with him. But I’m very conscious I’m attracted to women too” (44). Gonçalves’ analysis of David’s presentation notes that statements like David’s challenge traditional conceptions of being gay by positing alternative definitions for the label. In David’s case, he claims the label “gay,” but resists it at the same time because of his awareness that a traditional definition of “gay” often fails to acknowledge bisexuality. David is, through this comment, performing what Gonçalves refers to as counter-hegemonic or “outlaw” truths (cf. Butler).

Yet, even as David’s performance shows him resisting traditional meanings behind labels that describe GLBT identity, at the same time he is also ascribing potentially problematic notions of identity onto his audience as he describes them as “education majors” and “people who like labels.” How might David’s own characterization of his audience here potentially challenge his own attempts to claim a complicated status for his own identity? Despite Gonçalves’s clear awareness that identities are multiple and contested, audiences were not always so framed in her analyses. For example, the Speaker’s Bureau encouraged students to “tell vignettes that connect with particular audiences (attend to age, ethnicity, and the like, and use vignettes that focus on what it was like to be that age or on how your own ethnicity/race intersects with your sexual identity)” (36). Indeed, attending to one’s audience is important advice, and student speakers acknowledged the value of being able to assess their audience. But just as individual speakers experience identity as complicated, fraught, and difficult, so too, do their audiences.

The most valuable discussion of audience in the context of Speaker’s Bureau work came in chapter 3 as Gonçalves discusses how two students, Vincente and Moe, used private audiences as an opportunity to work through the complexities of their identity. In their public performances, however, both students chose to present less complicated versions of themselves, often leaving out or
ignoring elements of their identities that complicated the one they were constructing for their presentation. Most striking about this observation is the way that Vincente and Moe, in their simplified identity presentations, were responding to what they saw as audience constructions of themselves. They perform ethos that they think their audience will be likely to accept, understand, or respond favorably to, which raises another question: How and in what ways do these students become aware of who they are in relation to their audiences?

One way that Vincente and Moe, as well as the other Speaker’s Bureau presenters, have come to understand audience constructions of GLBT identity is, as Gonçalves notes, through their immersion in heterosexist discourses. “Gay students,” she writes, “have the experience of crafting and performing multiple identities in ways students who are positioned by the dominant discourses as central rather than marginal simply do not” (60). Despite this acknowledgement, I found myself wishing Gonçalves had chosen to address in more depth the ways that GLBT Speaker’s Bureau presenters cultivated their awareness of audience and those with whom they were interacting.

Whatever my quibbles about Gonçalves’ audience analyses, however, the attention to audience she demonstrates in her pedagogy is remarkably rich and varied. Gonçalves provides her students with a wide range of different audiences with whom to engage, from published authors to classmates to Gonçalves herself. And with all of these audiences, she teaches her students to listen to those they want to persuade. Writers do not simply create identities for themselves when they compose; after all, they are also creating their audiences. As Gonçalves writes, “We use ethos to create roles for our audiences, inviting audience members to become who we want them to be rather than castigating them for who they are or are not” (125). Here, she explicitly links her “coalition politics” to the kinds of rhetorical work she teaches her students to do.

The biggest strength of this book is in Gonçalves’ commitment to pedagogy—she situates her research as a resource that deeply informs her teaching. Pedagogy is at the forefront of nearly every chapter, even those focused on analyzing Speaker’s Bureau presentations. Whatever this book lacks in analytic depth is more than made up for in Gonçalves’ articulation of her teaching philosophy, pedagogical goals, curricula, and assignments, all of which are grounded by a rich conceptual model of identity performance and ethos, and supported by empirical research on actual students performing ethos outside of a classroom context. I would strongly recommend this text for writing program administrators who hope to share with graduate student teachers examples of research that enacts a sustained connection with teaching practice. Moreover, the book’s final two chapters are exemplary as potential models for teacher training and for sharing assignments with others because Gonçalves does much more than describe her teaching; she situates that teaching in a well-articulated and coherent theory. I was especially impressed with how clearly Gonçalves breaks down the components of her classroom—and the Speaker’s Bureau—that encourage students to meet her pedagogical goals.

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