“Identity is a river – a process.” – Gloria Anzaldúa, “Too Queer the Writer”

“It is impossible to distinguish precisely how multiple identities affect one’s life. I have seen how much social capital affects one’s academic trajectory and, in turn, I understand how different my options and choices would have been had I known more about the politics of higher education if only I had had more social capital... Had I understood the importance of networking, it is unlikely I would have spent so much time being an “outsider” in environments that “tolerated” my “diversity,” but were not good career and personal matches. Probably, I would have worked in places more conducive to my coming out about my sexuality, and, perhaps, I would not have had to choose between keeping my job and staying closeted” (243). Susan E. Borrego, “Hate is Not a Family Value” from Resilience: Queer Professors from the Working Class

The original questions posed¹ in my concentration exam proposal in large part strike me as my future dissertation questions. How can an exam answer questions of sexual identity and professional identity if little currently exists in Rhetoric & Composition addressing them? Instead, in this exam space, and in this literature review, I will have to step back (away from and mostly outside of Rhetoric & Composition) into the larger spaces of English Studies, Liberal Arts & Humanities, Philosophy, and the Academy as a whole to draw on questions of queer theory, sexual identity, professionalism, professional identity, and the intersections of these. To look at my topic area(s) as a cultural rhetorician within Rhetoric and Composition means to look at it first in all these other places because culture is comprehensive, complex, and inter-connected.

And so this is where I begin, from the basic question: what is the relationship between professionalization and LGBTQ/queer identity? These underlying layers and aspects must first be

¹ My original topic(s), Issue(s), and questions addressed as approved by my Guidance Committee were: 1) In what ways does the field of Rhetoric & Composition view or define the concepts/terms “queer,” “gay,” “lesbian,” and “sexuality”/“sexual identity”? 2) How do LGBTQ persons, specifically Rhetoric & Composition scholars as a subset of the academy, see themselves in their professional lives? As professionalized beings? 3) To what extent do they (LGBTQ Rhetoric & Composition scholars as a subset of the academy) see their sexual identities and professional identities as related/linked? And 4) What concepts/methods/tools will be most helpful to a person researching how LGBTQ Rhetoric & Composition professionals see identity and professional self?
investigated and addressed. For this literature review, this guiding question fans out into supporting questions: first, what do I mean by the terms “professional” and “professionalize”?

What is LGBT and what is queer? How are these communities and identities defined and understood? Second, what are the underlying theoretical understandings (of concepts like community, hegemony, power, etc.) that guide my research into questions of identity, embodiment, narrative, and discursivity? Third, what insights can be found into how identity/identities are constructed and co-existent? Fourth, what are the existing experiences and understandings of being LGBTq in the academy? And finally, what methods and methodological approaches should shape and guide me as I push forward with the previous four questions (or layers) to march toward tackling those original “dissertation quality” questions? Together, these five “layers” form a palimpsest, a shifting, changing arrangement of stories, ideas, and concepts that are in constant flux. But these layers never full erase one another – each layer is still visible (even if only a trace) below the others; each story and idea built upon the last.

**Layer I: Defining Terms and Boundaries**

In order to discuss the intersections and implications of professional and LGBTq identities, it is crucial to first discuss and give definition to these concepts themselves. Of course definitions will always shift, be argued over, and exist in multiple, but for my own studies definition(s) will give scope and set boundaries, even with that understanding that these can only be a snapshot in time.

**Definition One: What is Professional/Professionalism? Blurring Boundaries**

What do I mean when I say professional? It’s crucial to establish, for my research, my own definition of the term “professional.” The Oxford English Dictionary defines the adjectival use as: “relating to or belonging to a profession,” or “engaged in an activity as a paid occupation rather than as an amateur,” or “worthy of or appropriate to a professional person; competent.” In its noun form, the OED says it means: “a professional person,” or “a person having impressive

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2 The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines a *palimpsest* (from the Greek *palimpsestos* – scraped again, descended from the Sanskrit *psati* – “chew”) as a “writing material (as a parchment or tablet) used one or more times after earlier writing has been erased” or “something having usually diverse layers or aspects apparent beneath the surface.”
competence in a particular activity.” The Merriam-Webster dictionary dates the term from 1606 and defines it as: “of, relating to, or characteristic of a profession,” or “engaged in one of the learned professions,” or “characterized by or conforming to the technical or ethical standards of a profession/exhibiting a courteous, conscientious, and generally businesslike manner in the workplace.” (Note that MW defines a “profession” as: “a calling requiring specialized knowledge and often long and intensive academic preparation,” or “a principal calling, vocation, or employment/the whole body of persons engaged in a calling.”). Focusing in on our own field, I use the term professional to encompass all aspects of an academic’s (whether faculty or graduate student or otherwise) work, including teaching, professional development and training, administrative duties, and even professionally oriented socialization.

I also believe we have to look beyond dictionary definitions, though they are a starting place, and ask what it is culturally about the term “professional” that sets it apart from the terms “employee” or “worker”? I maintain that the term professional has often been associated with upward social and financial mobility (access and privilege) and, as such, is most often seen and understood (in an historic and modern American context) to be male, white, heteronormative, and middle-to-upper class. Though the later parts of the 20th and beginnings of the 21st Centuries have seen great advancements in the professions for women, persons of color, and LGBTq persons, the poverty rate has remained largely unchanged and many, myself included, would maintain that it is only through “adopting professional ways of being and acting” (again in these normative “traditions”) have subaltern groups and persons been included (or, assimilated).

Michael Warner writes in *Publics and Counterpublics* about the gendered nature of the workplace and the professional as male. He notes that Western tradition has a long-standing way of seeing masculinity as a way of occupying public space and femininity as “language of private feeling.” LGBTq people must exist often in professional spaces using the largely private languages/forms that Warner lays out (nonofficial, personal, concealed, circulated orally, known to initiates, etc.) versus the public forms (official, impersonal, in physical view of others, circulated in print, known widely, etc.). He points to Hannah Arendt, who wrote: “the personal is political” (61). Warner asserts that when people address a public, they engage in a struggle (whether
organized/calculated or disorganized) over the very conditions that form the relationship between individual and public (or individual as part of public).

So how then does one become a professional? Michelle Eble and Lynée Gaillet have recently compiled and edited the multi-essay work *Stories of Mentoring: Theory & Praxis*. Its pieces focus on stories of mentoring as central to one’s entrance into our field as a community of practice (often in the relationship of graduate student and pre-tenured or non-tenured faculty to tenured faculty). In her introduction, Eble asserts that the most generative mentor/mentee relationships are built on “mutual benefit and respect.” These mentor/mentee relationships are more complicated than just coaches or guides or advisors or parental figures (and very high stakes for the field). The collection also makes intentional efforts to share experiences that span across positive, negative, and otherwise in mentor relationships.

But what methods (known or unbeknownst) do mentors and mentees employ? For Lave and Wenger, learning itself is not simply the acquiring of structure, but instead is access to participatory roles in “expert performances” (17). The movement from inexperience to experienced (or professional) status is the migration from marginal “outsider” status inward toward “old-timer” status in a group or community of practice. These moves require mentors and models. These moves also necessitate “increased access to performance” (22). The way they believe this access occurs is through legitimate peripheral participation (or LPP) which looks at the ways individuals become a part of communities of practice (not just through apprenticeship and mentorship but through participation in myriad roles). In this way, learning becomes about ways of being in a social world, not just “coming to know about” the world. LPP contrasts with Vygotsky’s idea of the “zone of proximal development” (or ZPD) as the distance between a person’s independent/unsupervised developmental level and the potential development they could/would gain under supervised guidance or collaboration (or mentorship). In this way, the ZPD tries to measure/determine potential/embryonic ability/functionality (Vygotsky uses the metaphor of “buds” or “flowers” versus “fruits”). ZPD assumes a level of initial or “up-front” investment that will ultimately reap benefits and fully formed professionals. I would argue that it also takes pressure of LGBTq people to be fully responsible for their own assimilation and
success in institutional spaces (something I can speak to in my own experiences in the professional world – feeling like I have to represent “all gay men everywhere, or, for example, all LGBTq people who have ever been technical writers”). Applying Vygotsky and Lave and Wenger to LGBTq professional (and personal) experience gets at whether LGBTq persons can one be “professionally queer.” How do queer persons “know the ropes” and figure out survival tactics for being gay/queer? Many, myself included, would assert that queer resists professional, and yet professional resists queer. So clearly there is much reconciling and tenuous “professionalizing” to be done.

But what do professional positions themselves look like, especially within the academy? It’s difficult at best to define a moving target. Some, such as Jablonski in “Seeing Technical Communication from a Career Perspective: The Implications of Career Theory for Technical Communication theory, Practice, and Curriculum Design” have noted the ways that jobs as social artifacts, are radically and quickly shifting. Jablonski though does trouble the current popular idea of the “boundaryless career” and instead asserts that “life paths” may be a better way to think about professionalization. The very idea of a career is, like sexuality, in a time of critical flux. Within the academy, though the higher education and tenure system may seem stable, globalization and the migration from industrial to information age continues to rework not only the ideas of profession and professional themselves but also our understandings of workplace, career, and skill. Andrew Ross in his 2009 volume Nice Work if You Can Get It: Life and Labor in Precarious Times writes that no longer can workplaces of all types “insulate their people from the transnational traffic of information, iconography, and money” (3). He goes on to say that in the case of higher education in the US especially among academic professionals – younger adjuncts and graduate teachers are now being “deprofessionalized” in ways that are forming an “embryonic labor movement that may yet transform the workplace, regardless of whether it can arouse larger numbers of the securely tenured from their apathy” (8). He goes on to say that “the concomitant demystification of academe and its genteel cult of disinterestedness has cleared the way for a more accurate assessment of its work life—an advance in consciousness that will bear more fruit as higher education moves further along the road of industrial restructuring” (8).
This focus on the future (and further) destabilization of the academy as it pursues or is subsumed further into global economic models is something that traditional academic circles continue to resist. And yet globalization, economic restructuring, and for-profit education are continuing to queer the very idea of the academic professions. Additionally, the continuing presence (coming out) of LGBTq academics, staff, and students as they push, not just for neoliberal superficial acceptance, but for tangible representation, power sharing, partnership benefits, same sex spousal hires, and so on, also parallel and encourage the continuing disruption/queering of the academy’s very structure and not just in scholarly content. The move toward a globalized, multi-national university seems both queer as well as another reinscribing of corporate ideals of professionalization and hegemony.

**Definition Two: What is LGBTq? Queering Definition/Defying Definition**

If there is vagueness and emergent disruption and shift within definitions of professional, professionalization, and profession, then there is equal or greater contention and struggle within defining queer and LGBT as concepts and as communities (and as individual identity marker). The key points of debate here are: What is queer? And what are lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender/sexual? Are these essentialized identities “real”? Are they useful? How can there be real community from a group that is so diverse? And, what is queer theory and how can it serve (if at all) the LGBTq individual and community(ies)?

For many in the community, queer cannot ever be an identity, instead it can only disrupt identity, and it is the polar opposite to established categories such as gay or lesbian. Others adopt the label queer to indicate alternative sexual identities or disrupted normative sexual identities. In “Queer Visibility in Commodity Culture” Rosemary Hennessy warns about the ways that queer visibility is increasingly tied to the relentless expansion of capital. Increased visibility in a commodity culture she says is limited progress because LGBTq persons become welcome/visible as consumers but not as social and political subjects. Hennesssey draws heavily

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3 Generally in this exam I use the term “LGBTq” as shorthand for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered/transsexual, and queer. “Queer” is left lowercase as has been the practice of many self-identified queer academics and activists as queer is mean to disrupt definition and convention as a label. As such, it is also at time used to mean “LGBT” as well. Some would argue with my practice on this, but as yet there are no truly universal conventions within the community and are not likely to be.
in her piece on Judith Butler to acknowledge the ways that discourses set limits on the ways we see sexuality and gender. She adopts Butler (and Foucault’s) premise that identity is an issue of discursive constitution/representation. But she also tries to articulate and negotiate the relationship between discursive constitution and material constitution (discourses mediate these things – like labor, wealth, health care, food, etc. – but are not “simply discursive” she says). I do however believe that materiality is also rhetorical, in this sense I part ways with Hennessy. Systems of power and wealth distribution also are discourses themselves. Hennessy discusses the ways that “gay friendly” companies and merchandisers still participate in patriarchal systems and structures that oppress people of color and promote misogyny. Hennessy is saying that capitalism is, in some ways, the great assimilator and equalizer. Minorities who have access to money have greater opportunities to be “accepted.” Hennessy fundamentally challenges the idea that one can participate in capitalism and be truly queer in any way.

Similarly, Victoria Brownworth in “The Culture of Self-Loathing” takes on lesbian and gay assimilationists who advocate for LGBTq persons to “act straight” and not “offend straight culture” in order to gain wider acceptance. But, Brownworth points out that the acceptance of assimilation culture within the LGBTq community is the validation of homophobia and self-loathing. She warns against the literature of assimilation in our community (for example Paglia, Bawer, Sullivan, etc.). Following these assimilationists we would simply place homophobia into our own agenda—we must avoid saying: “straight is the best way.” What separates queer and straight people, says Brownworth, is not sex but sensibility. In fact, sex is the way we are perhaps most like straight people. To Brownworth, our very existence and survival is at stake if we listen to lesbian and gay assimilationists. It is through our radical queerness that we remain visible and demand our place in the social order. The relationship between professional “assimilation” and gay assimilation, I believe, is strong.

In Fear of a Queer Planet, Michael Warner maintains that anyone who comes to a true queer self-understanding does so by way of seeing their stigmatization as connected to gender, the family, notions of individual freedom and nationalism, consumption and desire, racial fantasy, deep cultural norms, and so on. Being queer, he says is about fighting these issues at all
times—and always with repercussions. To live in society is to live in heterosexuality and heterosexuality is always already within all mental categories. Warner in this work too quotes Hannah Arendt: “queer politics opposes society itself” (xxvii). Warner points out that “churches, kinship, traditional residence—have been less available for queers” (xvii) and I would also assert other kinds of fraternity, professional, and group bonding have also been less available (and at times unavailable) too. Through Arendt, Warner gets at an important point: the queering of society is no less than an attempt to topple society itself. In the same way, queering professionalism and the presence of queers in professions also means radical, if not always fast moving, change and alteration for professionalism. Warner understands that as queer subjects we are always marginalized and our attempts to find place “inside the margins.” We must attempt to be both outside of and within the hierarchies that seek to exclude us at all times.

Moving into queer theory itself for definition, in their piece “What Does Queer Theory Teach Us About X,” Berlant and Warner talk about queer theory as something that cannot be defined. They explain that queer theory and practice exist in multiple localities and we must resist the temptation to make one or a handful of theorists (think Butler, Sedgwick, Foucault, etc.) into metonyms for queer theory. They emphasize that sensibilities and commentary are what make LGBT and queer culture(s) unique: “cultures of reception; the relations of the explicit and implicit, or the acknowledges and the disavowed; the use and abuse of biography for life; the costs of closure and the pleasure of unruly subplots; vernacular idioms and private knowledge; voicing strategies; gossip; elision and euphemism; jokes; identification and other readerly relations to texts and discourse” (many of these very things, interestingly, are almost unfailingly synonymous with “unprofessional behavior”) (349). Noreen Giffney in her 2009 Introduction to The Ashgate Research Companion, also writes that queer theory cannot be assimilated into a single discourse and that queerness cannot really define an identity but can only disturb one (2). Further, queer is something in oppositional relation to normativity and identity can’t be assigned into categories to be occupied and owned but must instead be seen as territory that is navigated and revised from moment-to-moment (7). I too, believe queer will always be unprofessional – by definition. But I nor Giffney are saying necessarily that lesbian,
gay, bisexual, and transgendered/sexual persons cannot be or become fulfilled professionals who are accepted and advanced by professional communities (this is a “strategic professionalism” on par with Spivak’s “strategic essentialism”).

Stephen O. Murray however in his piece “Five Reasons I Don’t Take ‘Queer Theory’ Seriously” steps completely outside of the framework of queer theory and LGBT studies calling them ineffective at best. He feels that being openly LGBTq as brought about neither enough societal change nor has it brought about the end or destabilization of “hierarchies of domination.” Additionally, he feels that many in the LGBTq community continue to align themselves with those who repress “less respectable” forms of gender and sexuality. Murray’s well-made point here is that it is misogyny that is most often the culprit in these societal spaces. He writes: “...almost always the sexually-penetrated biologically-male partner has been treated like a female wife, concubine, or prostitute by the older, more powerful, more conventionally masculine ‘partner.’” Human category boundaries are “fuzzy” says Murray and “playing with” such boundaries over history has done, in his mind, remarkably little to destabilize enduring hierarchies. Murray is especially critical of queer theory’s focus on textual representations of LGBTq persons and longs for a day when people will be focused on “how people involved in homosexuality live their lives.”

Personally, I believe Murray sets up a false dichotomy (as do many others) between textual discourse analysis and LGBTq lives as embodied rhetorical spaces. This also sets Murray at odds with scholars such as Cindy Patton who says in “Tremble, Hetero Swine!”: “The crucial battle now for ‘minorities’ and resistant subalterns is not achieving democratic representation but wrestling control over the discourses concerning identity construction” (173). Though a great many LGBTq persons (in and outside the academy) would agree with him in demanding a dismantling of a misogynistic culture and of hierarchies of domination and a greater focus on LGBTq lived lives, I also think Murray overestimates a (perceived) chasm between theory and praxis. Queer theory may seem inaccessible and out of the mainstream, but I believe it raises important phenomenological and genealogical issues that “trickle down” (or “trickle over to”) scholars and researchers doing more pragmatic study, research, and teaching.
Ultimately, both professional and queer may be so difficult to define because they are in flux and because that is really more often easily identifiable culturally are concepts of “unprofessional” and heteronormative (what is “normal”). Most attitudes about what is “professional” or “normal” may mirror the words of Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart in the 1964 obscenity case of Jacobellis v. Ohio (speaking of the term pornography being difficult to define): "I know it when I see it."

Layer II: Theoretical Underpinnings/Interweavings (Meta Structures)

I move next to the underlying theoretical understandings (of concepts like community, hegemony, power, etc.) that guide my research into questions of identity, embodiment, narrative, and discursivity? The underpinnings of power and social and cultural forces must be accounted for, I believe, first when looking at identity construction. In "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Towards an Investigation)” Louis Althusser lays out his concepts of ISA and RSA. An ISA (or ideological state apparatus) consists of state structures that appear to be good for people (and may or may not be). Examples of these are organized religious bodies, the family, schools, the legal apparatus, trade unions, media, and other components of culture. ISA’s have ideological power, though overt power backs them up (laws, etc.) An RSA (or repressive state apparatus) are a culture’s spaces of performative power (such as jails, forms of punishment, the military, police, the courts, and so on). RSA’s have overt power but ideology backs these up. Althusser believes that even though we may have an awareness of the ideology we still must exist within it—it is always with us and it is always already too late to get outside of it or beyond it. So for example if you are suspicious of capitalist structures, ISA’s will comfort you, helping you believe that perhaps though fraught with contradictions, at least one has one’s church, family, and so on to make life bearable and tolerable – or, for LGBTq persons perhaps, their career or profession. Further, Althusser develops the idea of being interpellated into ideology. He believes humans are called into these ideologies by those persons or things in power (RSA’s and ISA’s). Althusser believes we participate in the law because we get pleasure from acceding to power. I would go further to suggest that the ISA is associated most often with the “public/professional/working world” and that the RSA has historically been often associated
with crime/delinquency, social failure, and so on, the very perceptions and understandings which coincidentally LGBTq persons have been fighting against for so long.

Of course these conversations about institutional and social apparatuses must be situated and understood in historiographic context. Benedict Anderson, a political scientist, in *Imagined Communities* emphasizes this historical situating in cultural discourses and shifts in consciousness over time. He believes one way to do this by focusing not on industrialization, but on print and linguistic culture and points out that the rise of nationalism (and imperialism) can be greatly framed in tandem with the rise of literacy. Anderson asks: does one culture have the right to impose its cultural values upon another? The rise of nationalism changes forever our concept of time – as simultaneity arises, we see that all communities are, in fact, imagined ones. Senses of national allegiance and unity are also imagined. We can’t escape nationalism (though nationalism doesn’t always have to be a bad thing to Anderson) and we also cannot escape imagined communities. In fact, all we have are our imagined communities. Consequently, LGBTq persons too imagine themselves in and into communities. I believe these communities exist in many ways and many forms and in varying degrees of strength/cohesiveness. I also believe these communities exist in ways that intersect both areas of sexual identity and professional identity, though the challenge will be to identify these (or, more importantly, to allow them to be identified by their participants).

If the real control for our identities and our futures as LGBTq persons is not, as Cindy Patton says, over-representation (in the political sense) but instead over discourses then the question is begged: where is the line between physical representation and discursive representation? Michel deCerteau in *The Practice of Everyday Life* paints a picture of the texts that bodies write across actions and space and time... stories that have “neither author nor spectator, shaped out of fragments of trajectories and alterations of spaces: in relation to representations...” (93). The acts of walking through the city (and indeed our lives’ actions as a whole) are “a spatial acting-out of the place (just as the speech act is the acoustic acting-out of language)” (98). In this way deCerteau calls walking “a space of enunciation” (98). Further, I believe that all actions (living, being, working, professionalizing) are also spaces of enunciation.
Seeing the importance of textual and linguistic/discursive structure, a foundational figure in LGBT Studies and queer theory, Judith Butler asks: “Is our vulnerability to language a consequence of our being constituted within its terms?” (2). This constitution (or interpellation she says invoking Althusser) sustains the body by giving it social definition. Put another way, she says a certain kind of surviving takes place in language – or “linguistic survival.” Language can either sustain the body or threaten one’s feelings of existence – such as, she offers, in the case of hate speech. She further explores the relationship between language and agency for the power of speech to act upon rhetorically she says is always tied to structures of power. “The interpellative name” she says, “may arrive without a speaker—on bureaucratic forms, the census, adoption papers, employment applications. Who utters such words? The bureaucratic and disciplinary diffusion of sovereign power produces a terrain of discursive power that operates without a subject, but that constitutes the subject in the course of its operation. This does not mean that there are no individuals who write and distribute the forms. It means only that they are not the originators of the discourse they convey and that their intentions, however strong are not finally what control the meaning of that discourse” (34). I think this is a crucial observation and one that must trickle down into our thinking about LGBTq persons operating in institutional and professional spaces. As we seek to make change and open up institutions and workplaces to queer identities—indeed to queer them, we must be aware of the interpellative structures that are entrenched “subjectless” and yet all-powerful. I believe, like Butler, that the forces of oppression and domination are often not only invisible but also faceless and nameless. Where this leaves LGBTq persons (and especially professionals) who are anxious to work for change and re-situate themselves as professionals who are also openly LGBTq remains to be pursued and fully seen.

Eve Sedgwick believes that cultural ‘knowledge’ about sexuality and the categories of homosexual and heterosexual (and the discourses surrounding them) keep people out of power and thus uphold an ideological and ontological closet. Sedgwick advocates that we move beyond binaries/maxims about sexuality. Her own maxims are that: people are different from one another, sexuality is not co-extensive with gender, gay and lesbian identities can’t be grouped together, nor can they be separated, problematic assumptions/essentialisms are made about
nature/nurture debates. Sedgwick believes that a “Great Paradigm Shift” might actually obscure current ‘knowledge’ about sexuality (resulting in essentializing—a ‘what we know today’ manner of thinking). Sedgwick argues that the closet is important to everyone (gay or not)—it is not a single speech act, nor an isolated phenomenon (instead it is a sort of “open secret”). For Sedgwick, secrets become eroticized—a secret becomes the secret (for her here, secrets of sexuality). The idea of an ideological closet has power that moves from theoretical to real for LGBTq persons in the workplace. Sedgwick’s ideas of secrets (the closet) becoming eroticized I think also extends into both how secrets of sexuality are hidden within the workplace and how all forms of personal/private identity also become secrets within the professional sphere. Various essentializations get made within the work world as well (what is professional behavior, what is managerial behavior, what is unprofessional behavior, etc.) and the powerful combination(s) of personal/private/sexual identity interwoven with workplace identity also challenge binaries and essentialist ideas.

But in the face of this traditional work/professional=public and sex/sexuality=private binary, some such as Davin Grindstaff maintain that sexual identity is actually “essentially a public matter, for the very reason that it resides in discourse. The ways we must master/attain fluency in heteronormative discourse and discursive regimes, he asserts, is still our most enduring oppressor. Moreover, the public discourse on sexuality is never merely descriptive; it remains forever normatively and thus rhetorically charged” (5). The body is more than simply an incidence of one’s sexuality, it is also a responsive collective entity that interacts with others. The queer body is not just one that identifies, it’s also a desiring body—and to Grindstaff the function of desiring is the queer body’s most important aspect. Gazing upon other queer bodies and discussing one’s body with others are more vital than simply self-identifying as queer. To Grindstaff, “identity” and “secrecy” must be reinvented and redefined as desire, because, as he says: “Desire is the most powerful form of resistance” (20). Of course Grindstaff’s ideas here are an interesting rebuttal to those LGBTq persons who say “sexuality is private” and “there’s no need to talk about my sexual identity in public or in the workplace.” He makes a particularly strong appeal to LGBTq persons to operate outside of heteronormative discourses that suppress
“secrets” and foster shame. Queer identity and desire must not only be public but must also always be desirous—even in all its lustful, uncomfortable, messy sexual-ness. For many though, if not most, LGBTq persons, “mastery of heteronormative discourses” remains the tool with which they equate professional success (the ability to “pass” as adequately “straight acting” or heteronormative—in essences to: “act professional”).

Theoretically, this work that I have undertaken must be seen as rooted in cultural studies and specifically cultural rhetorics. One of the earliest and most important of the modern cultural theorists, Stuart Hall, says that cultural studies are a discursive formation that has no simple origins – it came out of the preexisting work of others in other fields and places. It is an “open-ended” project but not a meta-discourse. The tension between a refusal to close the field off and a need to have the field stand for something is, he says, the “dialogic approach to theory” (99). He notes that he desires to return cultural studies away from the “clean air of meaning and textuality and theory to something nasty down below” (100). Dangers are not places you run away from, he says, but “places you run towards” (107). He emphasizes finally that theory is not the “will to truth” but instead is a “set of contested, localized, conjunctural knowledges, which have to be debated in a dialogical way” and must be a practice that “understands the need for intellectual modesty” (108-09). He warns explicitly against the rapid subsuming of our work into institutions and established academic spaces. We must not have the hubris to assume we have it all “figured out” in cultural studies. Instead cultural studies must always remain messy, dirty, localized, and contested. I believe that a cultural studies lens on this examination of LGBTq and professional identities means that we must remain open-ended, avoid the search for “truths,” and always self-examine the places theoretically that we are “moving towards” in our studies. We must continue to struggle in ways that continue to open our work and our field(s).

**Layer III: Identity Construction**

Deconstructing and documenting a “how to” of identity, if even possible, would be a larger undertaking than would fill multiple volumes over years of work, let alone to try to put into this exam space. Instead, in this section, I seek to lay out the thoughts and ideas around identity
put forward by those struggling to understand their sexual and/or professional/scholarly selves (and all of the racial, ethnic, gender, class, ability, etc. implications co-existent with these).

In *Borderlands: La Frontera*, Anzaldúa identities as existing in borderlands (both literal and cultural) often work to keep minorities silenced or confused. She seeks to reclaim negative experiences and attempts at silencing in order to strengthen and build on new, complicated, queered identities. She writes: “Because the future depends on the breaking down of paradigms, it depends on the straddling of two or more cultures. By creating a new mythos—that is, a change in the way we perceive reality, the way we see ourselves, and the ways we behave—la Mestiza creates a new consciousness” (102). Mark Bundy, an Ojibwa identified man, writing about Anzaldúa’s work says that queers, inhabiting these multiple/overlapping spaces and borderlands, must embrace our exotic natures. Language and texts too can all be exotic he says, as can silences and the unknowable histories of our future. He asks where the silenced and invisible queer body travels... (143). Bundy picks up too though on the fractured and marginalized status of queer persons when he says we queer persons as exiles see other exiles everywhere and those of us who posses, because of our queer subject positions, empathetic sensory awareness are “excruciatingly alive to the world” (144). In this way, fractured queer subjects dwelling between and among multiple worlds posses unique understandings and abilities because of and through their historic repression(s). Bundy points to the ways that Anzaldúa positions language as a primal material to build bridges between cultures and between borders, and toward freedom from oppressive categories and essentialisms. It is again through discourse, texts, narrative, and language that queer subjects navigate fractured and complex lives.

Another Native scholar, Malea Powell, in her 2008 piece “Dreaming Charles Eastman: Cultural Memory, Autobiography, and Geography in Indigenous Rhetorical Histories,” writes:

Just because Eastman’s writings have been made into objects by a story told about them in imperial discourse doesn't mean that we can't, that I can't, tell different stories about them, with them, through them—and the fact of empire doesn't relieve me of my human obligation to their continued existence. We are obligated not just to our ancestors out of whose lives we “make” that history but also to the places and spaces, and the lived things therein, who remember them and—through them—remember us. My obligation to the land, my obligation to Eastman, they are both a part of the same tradition that requests only that I carry the past into the lived present in a respectful and honorable way” (121-22).
This quote gets to the center of her essay: that we must “mean effectively.” We must write back, think back, and take back in the telling of the stories and histories in the face of the archiving and inscribing of empire and hegemony. In her third story, Powell tells of a graduate student in her American cultural rhetorics seminar who asks us to seek the stories within histories—“the possibility of a shared understanding of story that erupts in various histories” (123). It’s not, Powell goes on to say, that her student’s words tell us “something we didn’t know; in fact, it’s precisely the opposite. His story speaks what we feed, shapes it into a critical question that we could use to bring those feelings to bear in a way that might ‘make theory’” (123). Like Anzaldúa and Bundy, Powell says we must, through stories, historiographies, and narratives reclaim, rename (and redefine), and theorize our own lived experiences and those of our people.

Victor Villanueva in Bootstraps, does this very exploring of his own story as a Puerto-Rican American and the stories of others of color within the academy. He looks into the ways that hegemony both holds minorities down/back and the ways that it creates opportunities (but also complicates the ways this can play out in things like “tokenism,” for example). Villanueva makes strong connections between hegemony and rhetoric. He points out that rhetoric/language is a principle means (if not the only means) by which change can occur (in any setting or culture). He turns to Gramsci’s idea that domination is only possible by consent and that the acceptance of worldviews and grand narratives allow us to continue to be oppressed in dominant society. Domination by consent has strong ties to the closet for LGBTq persons – especially as they interact with institutions and professional spaces. In fact, the act of coming out of the closet is one of the strongest breakages of domination by consent. The power to name and define ourselves is what Villanueva argues for here. We must engage in new conversations (“new consensus” as Villanueva calls it) and push at old boundaries and definitions. “Hegemony is rhetorical” Villanueva says (128) as he points out (via Freire) that to change the world we must change language as well. In a broad, overarching way, my work will have to address changing attitudes about LGBTq people and where they fit in professional spaces (not just how others feel about us, but how we feel about our spaces). Language (definitions, terms, use, discrepancies, omissions) is the key way that LGBTq people explore and explain their relationship to larger
institutions and spaces. Villanueva’s ideas of language as power will come up again-and-again in my work. Villanueva, Powell, Mike Rose and others are crucial in the field because they have become a part of the Rhetoric & Composition canon and yet have also changed the ways professionalism is viewed in our field. The ways both have become a part of the canon and yet pushed back at the canon simultaneously are analogous to ways that queerness can operate both within and against professionalization. They ask us to see lived experience, place and space, narrativizing, and historiography as theory in their own right.

Layer IV: LGBTq Identity and Scholar/Teacher

Though Jonathan Alexander’s 2008 book Literacy, Sexuality, Pedagogy: Theory and Practice for Composition Studies is focused mainly on how sexuality interacts with the composition classroom and literacy studies, there are moments that are important for understanding sexual identity and the Rhetoric & Composition scholar/teacher. In the chapter “discursive sexualities” his characterization of sexuality as “sexual literacy” – something both discursive and performative is important to draw the connections between the language used surrounding sexuality and the identities people feel and create—how people enact discursive understandings of sexual identity and conversely how sexual identity comes to be written and codified. He writes that sexuality– with race, gender, and religion must be acknowledged as crucial in forming Western contemporary senses of literacy (5). I would extend this thought to identity as well and the interplay between literacy and identity (rhetorical embodiment).

Gloria Anzaldúa in “Too Queer the Writer” asserts that, as a scholar and writer, naming herself is a survival tactic and that while others may name us to box us in, we name ourselves to ensure we are not erased. She talks about the ways that spaces of queer theory have been largely occupied by Anglo/Europeans who “write up” queer persons of color and recolonize and reinscribe dominant observations about subaltern queer persons. This also limits the ways we think about queer. She admits that to name without fragmenting and excluding is a struggle. Queer readers she says want to not only interact but they also want to add to the text. Both reading and writing are about identity in the sense that one either empathizes and identifies or disidentifies. Anzaldúa says that when she writes about ideas she tries to flesh them out and
embody them rather than abstracting them further. The rainbow, a symbol of the LGBTQ community, is originally a Native American conception of a bridge—a mechanism by which different people and cultures and life forces can communicate with one another. For Anzaldúa, we must open up beyond the very dominant white tropes of “lesbian experience” or “gay experience” to, quite literally, become queerer in what counts as queer. She discusses the ways that she cannot separate out parts of her identity to the detriment of others and how she sees the reader of her texts as becoming more and more important, on equal footing with the author. It is an intimate relationship where the audience’s ability or willingness to connect are of utmost importance. This gets at some of the very questions I might be tempted to ask in dissertation research (“do you consider yourself more lesbian or black? More middle class or more female?”) but most avoid and look past. Identity and the ways identity plays out in writing and reading—in the construction of meaning-making practices and meaning itself—must be seen as irrevocably intertwined and layered.

In “Queering the Profession, or Just Professionalizing Queers?” in Tilting the Tower Sarah Chinn, identifying as a lesbian and feminist in the academy and in a professional space, seeks to resist professionalization due to its ways of silencing (and the ways it asks us as LGBTQ people to self-silence). She maintains that lesbians (and indirectly all LGBTQ people and minorities) must remain angry, activist, erotic/sexual, and full of drive/passion and unwilling to compromise when it comes to professionalization. Chinn points out that there is still “professional behavior” that we are expected to adhere to and will have to adhere to in order to maintain some level of access to professional realms but these continue to reflect the dominant discourses in society (male, white, heterosexual, middle/upper class, etc.). Chinn also says that traditionally/normatively, to be a professional is not just being a worker (or an amateur) but to be “polished.” This echoes Lave & Wenger’s model of LPP too (moving from unpolished to polished) and also matches up within the initial definition of professional established at the beginning of this review: “impressive competence in a particular activity.” Chinn writes: “The stakes of queer affiliation cannot be separated from those of institutional affiliation” (249). As a white male who is also gay, there is conflict here for me. In many ways professionalizing has seemed very normal and very
accessible to me, but as a gay man I have had to many times work extra hard to avoid the pitfalls of having my sexuality become a liability (in the eyes of others). Perhaps more than any other singular work in this exam, Chinn begins to look at the actual interaction between professionalization and queer. “To be professional is to be manipulated,” she says (246).

Turning back to our own field of Rhetoric & Composition, in her 2002 piece for College English titled “Dis/Integrating the Gay/Queer Binary: ‘Reconstructed Identity Politics’ for a Performative Pedagogy” Karen Kopelson interrogates what she calls the “gay/queer dichotomy” between scholar teachers in our field who utilize identity-based pedagogies and those who advocate queer and performative pedagogies. She proposes “a tentative theoretical (re)solution that dis/integrates” this binary. Kopelson draws largely on Butler’s understanding of performativity (as “disruptive narratives of difference”) and how it can inform and fit into composition studies. Kopelson critiques composition’s often-assumed idea of a “real” and “stable” gay identity. She challenges this identity-based teaching and advocates a view of performativity in student writing that troubles (and queers) sexual and gender identity. Her main task is to overcome the “rift” between essentialist and queered approaches primarily through advocating for a disintegration of the rift itself (if this is even possible she says). She calls for us to exercise Foucault’s “new displacement” to turn off the things that contribute to the construction of rifts and binaries. Kopelson mentions how both students and instructors can doubly benefit from being out in the classroom by providing difference for those who could not otherwise imagine it while also building self-esteem in those who are different. These ways of being out those can be dangerous of they foster only essentialist categories (thus playing back into heteronormative understandings of society and sexuality). Identity, rather than a set thing we must “find” is instead a moment-to-moment performance that we have a greater level of control over than we often allow ourselves.

Other LGBTq scholars, such as Will Roscoe and Andrea Lehrermeier (writing under an alias), tell their own stories of negotiating sexual identity in their fields. Lehrermeier talks of her life from small tomboy on a rural Northeast Minnesota farm to tenured out-lesbian faculty. Her

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4 She cites Britzman here, someone I will read moving into my dissertation work.
story is one of hardship and sadness (bullying, sexual abuse, failed marriage, etc.) but also triumph over obstacles (getting her PhD, attending a prestigious private university, coming out to her parents, etc.). All in all, she is careful to emphasize that there are no tidy endings to messy lives and lived experiences. Senses of fractured identity arise again as she discusses the ways she felt like in order to become successful she would have to actually become someone else. Roscoe draws on Anzaldúa, saying he believes in a “gay affinity for borders – a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge. A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants” (3). Roscoe writes: “Ultimately, I believe the gay affinity for borders derives from the fundamental experience of being outsiders. Gay men and lesbians are participant-observers in heterosexual culture, whether in the field or at home. They survive by being sensitive to all borders—whether social conventions or rules of discourse” (204).

Layer V: The “Where to?” of Methodologies of Professional and Sexual Identity

Where do these discussions lead us? After looking into questions of definition, larger theoretical underpinnings, ideas of identity construction, and experiences of LGBTq scholar/teachers the next stage seems to be thinking about methodological approaches and lenses to shape my future work. I turn now to a few works that I feel give this initial footing.5

Grounded in Philosophy, Sara Ahmed, in Queer Phenomenology, asks: “What difference does it make ‘what’ we are oriented toward?” (1). In doing so, she seeks to understand the intersections of queer studies and phenomenology. What is the spatiality of sexual orientation? Specifically, she asks how bodies “acquire orientations” toward (and away from) each other. For me, her work is a framework to pose potential case study or interview questions of LGBTq scholars. It will be important to ask them how they see their own orientations, not just sexually but professionally and in other personal ways as well, and also to ask them what are the things they believe affect those orientations. Ahmed draws on (in addition to phenomenology) queer

5 While my methodology section in this particular literature review is lighter than the other sections, there are many more methodological works I have read or plan to read in preparation for dissertation work – including works I have read and annotated for core coursework (such as AL870: Research Methodologies and in my Core Exam itself in May 2009).
studies, feminist theory, critical race theory, Marxism, and psychoanalysis as well in this volume. The things that affect our orientation(s) and that we orient toward must be within what Ahmed calls our “bodily horizon” (which seems somewhat like “available means” to me, but not exactly). Ahmed uses the metaphor of the table (as a space that awaits orientation toward it – the writing table awaits the writer for example) to show how objects take on the orientations of their associated bodies. It is Ahmed’s belief that moments of disorientation (cf. disidentifying, queering, troubling, disrupting, etc.) are key as we gather around the “queer table” and that, as our orientations guide us toward the future (a queer future), help this table become a support for those of us who are queer. Ahmed however believes that, though tenuous, disorienting moments do move queer bodies toward each other and toward support systems.

Robert Connors in “Dreams and Play: Historical Method and Methodology” asserts that we must start from our own prejudiced hypotheses and then play in the archives. He discusses the ways our research must address both internal and external criticisms and must be built to withstand critiques that are proportionate to our claims. There are no new methods he says, just old ones that we must “wield with more control and more self-awareness” (35). Our motives in writing our histories remain, he says, to define ourselves in a particular place and time. We come to our research question knowing the things or populations we want to look into but not always knowing the conclusions or ideas we’ll be drawn to. We must play in the data and research. It’s a key moment when Connors says: “even as the index cards mount up, even as the legal pad fills with hastily scrawled connections and insights, the shape of the final thesis-and-support often cannot be seen until the organizing and actual composing begin” (28).

One of the most formative pieces methodologically that I read in preparation for this exam was Patti Lather and Chris Smithies’ Troubling the Angels: Women Living with HIV/AIDS as it tells many stories about and relating to women dealing with HIV/AIDS in their lives. The authors see their work as being about both service and learning and as not only “giving voice” to others’ stories but to also help act as “filters” for those stories. Interestingly, the authors never name their book’s format/style. I would describe it as a meta-narrative and a split notebook. Chapters are variously broken up with transcriptions of interviews, advocacy group materials,
letters and email correspondence, and commentary by the authors. The authors describe their format as both backward and forward looking and as weaving together and embedding “method, the politics of interpretation, data, [and] analysis” (xvi). They admit that the work’s format does challenge ideas of “easy reading.” They write: “While this book is not so much planned confusion as it might at first appear, it is, at some level about what we see as a breakdown of clear interpretation and confidence of the ability/warrant to tell such stories in uncomplicated, non-messy ways” (xvi). Lather and Smithies state that their primary goal in the work is not to look for patterns and differences among cases but to instead construct a more interactive/involved instance of researchers and subjects. They want to avoid the outdated and modernist view of researchers as disembodied and “objective knowers.” In fact, they write: “We are very much in the book, but we have tried to put it together in such a way that our stories are situated among many voices where, accumulating layerings of meanings as the book proceeds” (xv-xvi).

In “Alliances and Coalitions: Nonidentity Politics” Shane Phelan self-identifies as a lesbian (as opposed to a Lesbian). Writing in the 1990’s, she seeks to examine what kinds of alliances and working relationships are required for lesbians (and, I think consequently for others in the LGBTq community) in a postmodern/poststructural landscape. She critiques “interest-group pluralism” as being a contributor to the fractured pieces of self we often see and feel (e.g. “am I more black or more lesbian? Am I more gay or more working class? Which parts of me matter more?”). She notes that if we could get past such interest-group pluralism, what opens up are the questions: “Who are we? What do we have in common? What might justice be among diverse people?” (701). The poststructuralist and postmodern landscape, says Phelan, mean that lesbians (and others) will need to form and work within coalitions and alliances with others (nonlesbians). We will have to live in and with the tension of knowing that we all as humans share “needs, desires, hopes, and fears” but do not share “every important thing, or agree on the nature of those we do share” (700). We must avoid buying into metanarratives or an ideological whole (appealing to dominant groups to accept us as a part of their metanarrative). In this way we can fight against our own and others’ oppression and silencing without needing, as Phelan says, “grand theory” to connect us or overarch us. This is a crucial moment to step
back and say, as an LGBTq community, that we don’t have to find the magical things that “connect us” or bind us together. It is, instead our diversity and our humanness that connect us.

Janna Marie Jackson writes about her dissertation research on gay and lesbian educators in “Reclaiming Queerness: Self, Identity, and the Research Process” and how she dealt with questions of self in research (or “mesearch” as she calls it) and the controversial nature of her work (LGBTq topic areas). She focuses on the tools and takeaways from these experiences such as the shared experiences between researcher and researched, ways to avoid reading ones own experiences onto the experiences of others, and the importance of topic interest in sustaining prolonged research. As a lesbian and former high school teacher, Jackson notes that many people do research in areas in which they are invested. She also discusses some of the ways people in the academy pushed back against her doing LGBTq work and how it made her feel fractured in terms of identity. She discusses “cultural congruity” with her participants (being from an LGBTq background like them) and “active listening” (attempts on her part to acknowledge her own investment and the ways that might interfere with he stories of others). Jackson discusses the ways she closeted herself in her own work, taking the subtitles with the words gay and lesbian off or her CV, and so on. She ends up getting a job in academia with her non-altered CV and for that she is glad. But I think this is a moment of importance for anyone doing LGBTq work as a graduate student. How you will talk about and integrate your own subjectivity as an LGBTq person are of vital importance and will affect how those you research see you as well and the level to which they will open up to you and share with you in confidence. I also think the idea of “active listening” (which she draws from Gordon’s 2003 work Teacher Effectiveness Training) as a way to combat over-involvement to the detriment of one’s project is an important tool – one I would like to read about further (perhaps in Gordon’s original).

Another formative piece for me is Michelle Gibson, Martha Marinara, and Deborah Meem’s "Bi, Butch, and Bar Dyke: Pedagogical Performances of Class, Gender, and Sexuality” from College English in 2000. These three self-identified queer Rhetoric & Composition faculty discuss power structures in the academy and state that these encourage certain strong characteristics and discourage complexity. They see themselves not only as members of a sexual minority
community but also complicate essentialist categories by pointing to intricate differences within their identities. They wish to: "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" (466/67). With this work we’ve come full circle in this literature review to a discussion of the academy (as a "professional" space) neutralizing or “corralling” sexual identity and sexual identity’s struggle to (as Powell would say) “talk and write back” to the academy. Gibson, Marinara, and Meem must be put into conversation with scholars like Lynne Weber (see conclusion that follows) who ask us to focus more on commonalities in experience versus difference.

Concluding: The Current “Surface”/a Snapshot in Time

“There are so very many worlds, hay muchos mundos, which we inhabit, move between, flee from, or run toward.” – Mark W. Bundy, ""Know Me Unbroken’: Peeling Back the Silenced Rind of the Queer Mouth”

“Can madness appear in writing? Can writing be a kind of madness if madness is the negation of all order? Writing that communicates (and that becomes a commodity) gets as close to madness as it can without ever entering into it for fear of ceasing to communicate” (85). Screwball Asses

In her piece "A Conceptual Framework for Understanding Race, Class, Gender, and Sexuality” Lynne Weber argues that current scholarship and college instruction that address issues of race, class, gender, and sexuality fall short by providing a wealth of perspective and exposure to human difference while avoiding the commonalities across these experiences. She then lays out six common characteristics (which she calls themes) in new race, class, gender, and sexuality scholarship: contextual, socially constructed, systems of power relationships, social structural (macro) and social psychological (micro), simultaneously expressed, and the interdependence of knowledge and activism. Gender identity(ies), for Weber, depends upon the simultaneous locations of the power hierarchies of race, class, gender, and sexuality. These hierarchies are power relationships. Weber says we must always inquire as to where the socially sanctioned power lies in any given situation and what groups gain and what groups lose. She notes that we must not confuse personal and social power since individuals can be powerful
because of their knowledge and personality traits. Such personal power can be attained though in spite of lack of socially sanctioned power. Weber notes that placing these issues into our work/scholarship and before our students can help show them there are no “pure oppressors” or “purely oppressed.” I think Weber has an important point here, it’s crucial that we not ask others and ourselves to position identity as a binary: “Please rank you identity categories in importance” or a messy “clearly all of these categories are intertwined and hopeless to ever understand,” we can instead frame identity categories and complex relationships according to context, social constructedness, power relationships, macro vs. micro concerns, simultaneity, and the relationship between knowledge and activism.

One of the most important things going forward in my research is to avoid only seeing in binaries (professional vs. unprofessional; heteronormative vs. queer; professional vs. queer; etc.). Seeing professionalization and queer identity as a palimpsest means resisting labeling questions and issues as either “seen” or “unseen,” visible or invisible. The real picture has always been, and will remain much more convoluted and complex than that... and finding patterns and understandings within the narratives and constructions will mean battling elusiveness, messiness, and drawing simple lines and conclusions. Applying a cultural rhetorics lens to the rhetorics of professionalization and rhetorics of sexual identity means acknowledging the complexities, but also looking for the patterns through the narratives and assemblages. Queer certainly can seem couched in messiness and confusion because of its resistance and subversive nature, but we must continue to look for the messages traced and faded within the palimpsest.

Of course a palimpsest also necessarily implies production and reproduction, new layers are always being added and new understandings are being made by the melding of past, present, and future aspects and identities. Layers from feminist studies, postmodernism, debates within queer theory, and many other places continue to inform where we find ourselves and where we may go. I am beginning a larger journey in my research to collect, archive, ground, and put into conversation with one another these stories of professional and queer belonging and non-belonging and futurity’s role. These are spaces of assemblage and fracture.


