A Rhetoric of Straddling:

Community Writing Centers, Antiracism, and the University

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Introduction

> "Let us demand of ourselves and encourage one another to do more than mouth our commitments: to make our actions match our words; to transform our classrooms, our departments, and our institutions as well as our communities; and to learn from one another as allies who possess the courage to effect change"
>
> --Condon and Young "Epilogue" (230)

The field of composition and rhetoric has theorized a rich and nuanced understanding of language differences. In the effort to create a space in the field for students' language practices, discussions of Students' Right to their Own Language (SRTOL) (Committee on CCCC Language Statement), home languages, code-meshing (Young), multiliteracies (The New London Group), multimodalities (Selfe), and translingualism (Horner et al) have offered theories to change conceptions of writing by working from within the white racial habitus of the university. Asao Inoue argues that a white racial habitus is "a dominant set of durable and flexible dispositions to read and write in English." Notably, this disposition privileges one kind of dominant discursive practice - what we generically refer to as academic discourse - "even though it is not static nor unified, but varies by discipline, class, location, and instructor" (Inoue "Afterward"). The white racial habitus of the university offers a homogenized conception of writing that insists the social context of writing exists somewhere outside of the individual, rather than negotiated as a set of relationships informed by histories of race, gender, sex, and class. It asserts that the rational "knowing" self be valued over the emotional, "uncontrolled" self, despite the usefulness of attending to the affective position of the individual in relationship to the sponsors or subjects of literate acts (Inoue "Afterward"). Said more simply, the

emphasis on monologic standards of English persists in structuring our dispositions to writing. As long as these standards predominate, they also shape the constitutive practices of our pedagogies as we monitor, encourage, or constrain the way writers use and access marginalized language traditions. Despite four decades of work since the call in SRTOL to respect students' languaging traditions, we still find ourselves complicit in maintaining the values of a white racial habitus on a cool, rationally minded, coherent individual writing in a language still deemed "neutral" by the universities where we work.

Writing center studies are at a critical juncture for taking action about the complicity of our work in relation to our field's discussion of language rights and how to implement antiracist activism in our centers. We need to interrogate anew the spaces we are already working in to see what models for anti-racist practice and pedagogy are untapped. A turn to community writing centers and community literacy work gives us not only an opportunity to reassess the ways we privilege particular discourses but also provides examples of approaches that support the languaging traditions of all writers.

If writing centers want to become the nexus for antiracist activism, practice, and pedagogy in the university, we argue that we should be looking to community writing centers and community writing assistance programs. Given that an academic writing center is financially, administratively, and pedagogically beholden to the institution, a community writing center has more latitude by its very nature of working with members of the community on non-academic projects. Servicing the needs of a public population affords the opportunity for putting antiracism activism into practice and provides an opportunity for the community to teach the university the languaging practices of a diverse community. A community writing center MAY straddle this gap between the two spaces for literacy practices, and as we will discuss, Peck et al, Goldblatt, Rousculp, and others have provided models that those in writing center studies would do well to reconsider. Without over-romanticizing community literacy work, we contend that the field should be mindful that community literacy work may just as easily be troubled by institutional and faculty agendas and theorizing community work without consulting the community itself (Peck et al 219).

We are also mindful that students play a significant role in the day-to-day practice of community literacy work. Twenty-five years ago, Marilyn Cooper argued that writing center tutors' everyday work with student writers and ongoing education in tutor training provides the opportunity to transform, if not put in check, the homogenizing language practices and values of writing in the university. Her argument seems particularly prescient as more universities invest in community literacy center work and the field comes to terms with the experience of more students moving out of the university and into nonacademic and community spaces. We argue that writing center studies and writing studies more broadly should give more credence to students' work in community spaces serving diverse languaging traditions in face-to-face writing assistance. As students listen to, learn from, and write with (Deans) community members, they "also become agents of change in writing pedagogy" (Cooper 103). As students and community members negotiate language traditions, motives for writing, and genres, they are not only writing with community members, they are "creating useful knowledge about writing" that can offer new models for change in the university (103). While community literacy programs are widely staffed by both undergraduate and graduate students, Cooper's argument is especially important for considering how graduate students might leverage their experience in community literacy work to transform the dispositions of a white racial habitus as they move into professional roles.

To explore the possibility for graduate students' experience in community sites to be leveraged into developing new models of writing in the university, we turn to a model of community literacy work developed by graduate students and writing center sponsors in collaboration with community leaders: the University of Wisconsin - Madison's Community Writing Assistance (CWA) program . We discuss the CWA program to theorize a rhetoric of straddling. In CWA, community writing assistants mediated the dispositions of university writing practices while serving the compositional needs of a writing public. We call this a rhetoric of straddling. Rhetoric of straddling attends to the emergent practices assistants developed in face to face writing assistance by privileging community members own languaging traditions and motives for writing. Much of the literature on community literacy work reflects what we are calling a rhetoric of straddling by theorizing community members as experts and by considering the

problem of university practices being imported into nonacademic sites. Less often discussed is how community writing assistants' work can be employed in transforming writing pedagogy more broadly, particularly in the university. While we acknowledge that community writers, the site, and the writing assistant all engage in a rhetoric of straddling by negotiating community and university or institutional languaging traditions, we focus on the undertheorized experience of graduate students in their role as community writing assistants.

It has proven difficult for writing studies and writing centers to transform writing in the university and to be steadfast in doing the long-term work of antiracism. While this paper focuses on the specific experience of one community writing assistant, our hope is that theorizing that experience will open a venue for further exploring how community literacy practices that the field already engages in could help us to transform the dispositions to writing in the university. Viewed through an antiracist lens, we suggest that a rhetoric of straddling helps understand the time a writing assistant spends in community spaces as a model for reshaping the strategic "dispositions" persisting in writing centers, pedagogies, and curricula (Inoue "Afterward"). A rhetoric of straddling foregrounds the work of reshaping our dispositions to writing with an eye to "future matters" by spending time in non-academic spaces, attending to community motives for composing, working to listen to the languaging traditions of the community, and asking uncomfortable questions about assistants' own expertise as they serve community members. Community writing assistants' experiences provide the time and emergent practices needed to integrate an antiracist perspective in writing center studies and in composition pedagogy.

We begin by examining the literature on writing centers and community literacy centers to highlight models of antiracist pedagogy. We turn to Mathieau's discussion of strategic and tactical literacy projects to theorize a rhetoric of straddling based on the experience of community writing assistants. In our case study, we focus on Michael's experience working in University of Wisconsin's Community Writing Assistance program to discuss how the space of literacy work matters, how motives for literacy work matter, and how we can attend to the strengths of home languaging traditions. In our discussion, we argue that the transformation of an assistant's own assumptions about literacy work provide the ethical pedagogical practices that can usefully be employed in doing the long

term work of antiracism in the university. We end by reiterating the importance of finding new models of antiracist pedagogy, like that of Madison's Community Writing Assistance program, that can be brought out of community literacy work and into the university.

A Consideration of Where We Stand

In the field of writing center studies, dominated by white scholars, directors, coordinators, and tutors with "good intentions," we are very much aware that our ideologies, pedagogies, and practices reinforce a dominant form of English, for both native and multilingual speakers. Though our professional organization, the International Writing Centers Association (IWCA), has been working consciously, albeit at glacial speed, to be more inclusive, this effort gained traction with Villanueva's keynote address at the 2005 IWCA conference, calling on writing centers to engage in anti-racism practices, including among other suggestions hiring a diverse staff and becoming a place on campus for anti-racism activism.

Greenfield and Rowan note that Villanueva's keynote met with a flurry of activity in the conference hallways and later in the WCenter listserv. A couple weeks later that flurry of activity disappeared "into a form of rhetorical silence that exposed the writing center community's (in)ability to sustain critical and difficult conversations about race" (Greenfield and Rowan 2). Neisha-Anne Green revitalized that call in 2017 in her own IWCA keynote:

I look at all my underrepresented brothas and sistas in the room today, and I say to you, let's add our cultural expressions and values systems to this 'safe space,' this 'brave space,' this white-as-hell-space. Let's add some color. Let's bring some real swag and paint the walls, the conferences, and the journals with our Englishes . . . Let's truly make these spaces inclusive of our experiences and learning. (Moving Beyond 28)

We return to Villanueva and Green to take up that activity and to consider the ways we might "sustain critical and difficult conversations about race."

Given the difficulty of writing centers to effect structural change from their often marginal position in the university and their role in servicing the academic discourse of the university, we find hope in the new lineage of writing center scholarship evidenced in work like Greenfield's and Rowan's collection, Writing Centers and the New Racism, as well as the work of the IWCA's Antiracism Activism SIG to develop an ongoing annotated bibliography tracing work useful for developing racial justice in our writing centers (see Godbee, et al). This work has provided the impetus for us to finally unpack our assumptions that ". . . writing centers are race neutral and benign spaces; and that the literacy education offered by the university and the writing center contributed to leveling the playing field . . ." (Grimm "Retheorizing" 76). While Grimm offers a critical vantage point for interrogating the whiteness of writing center spaces and writing center scholarship, Green's call six years later reminds us that writing centers remain problematically anchored to the white racial habitus of the university and that writing centers alone are not sufficient to change the university's dispositions of writing.

However, recent work on community writing centers has provided useful models for implementing antiracism in our practices, one that helps bring some of the work of community literacy more explicitly into our considerations of how to rethink and redesign the physical, discursive, and relational spaces of our writing centers. In A Rhetoric of Respect: Recognizing Change at a Community Writing Center, Tiffany Rousculp maps out the development of The Salt Lake City Community College Community Writing Center (SLCCCWA). The collaboration between the community members and SLCCCWA "created a hybrid space, one that sustainably merged community and academic discourses and generated new understandings of rhetoric, expertise, changes, and institution" (23). Rousculp's own theorization of doing community work from a rhetoric of respect and positioning ourselves in "A different type of relationship, one that is grounded in perception of worth, in esteem for another - as well as for their self" (24-25) reflects earlier work on community literacy. Rousculp's emphasis on the relational perception of the Other as central to respect synthesizes an ethical model for rethinking the relational space of writing centers and community writing centers seen in the community literacy work of Peck et al and Goldblatt. Their discussions of viewing the community member as an expert defines an ethical position for writing assistants in community literacy spaces.

Though understanding community members as experts has by now become commonplace, that position is anchored to developing a model of community work "that comes from neighborhoods and draws on the university without being controlled by its demands" (Goldblatt 284; emphasis added). By working from the community's needs and conceptions of literacy, "students encounter partners engaging in substantial work rather than clients receiving aid" (Goldblatt 294; emphasis added). In making this distinction, Goldblatt not only identifies the community as experts, but argues that writing assistants' recognition of this expertise is central to shaping the goals, values, and practices of community literacy projects. Peck et al similarly argue that from this position of viewing community members as "engaging in substantial work," community members come to see "[themselves] as an expert with a lot to say and a right to say it" (220).

In what follows, we suggest that University of Wisconsin's CWA program draws from both writing center and community literacy center practices, extending the reach of writing center praxis into the community. CWA's focus on individual community writing offers the possibility of being in community spaces and learning from community members as assistants "write with" individuals, drawing on university resources but not beholden to the institutional values shaping writing center work. In Peck et al's "Community Literacy," they envision a model of community literacy ". . . that works for social change and which arises from an intercultural conversation that creates bridges and allows for productive working relationships among people of difference" (201). However, Paula Mathieu takes a different approach to community literacy in Tactics of Hope that is useful for 1) focusing the field's attention on the sites where institutional practices and community desires meet, the spaces where face-to-face writing assistance occurs; and 2) compels the field to acknowledge and interrogate writing assistants' situated placement in community literacy spaces. Mathieu notes that "little scholarship raises critical questions about the value of creating institutionalized service projects" (97). "What," she asks "would happen to our theorizing and principles . . . if we listened to the community more?" (99). While we do not mean to elide the differences of community literacy work and service learning, both illustrate a shared concern about the tension between a "top down" institutionalization of university and community collaborations and the goal of "[listening] to the community more."

Mathieu troubles the assumption that institutionalizing community literacy work supports the goals of developing community relationships, noting that "When extending university work into the community, existing academic measures are often applied . . . even though the space of the interaction is no longer defined or controlled by the university" (16). To address this concern, Mathieu takes up de Certeau's theory of strategies and tactics, contrasting the strategy driven goals of institutionalized community literacy work with the tactical goals of working with the community's literacy needs and desires. Strategies have their "place" in providing much needed resources and means of validating our work; Mathieau points out, while not "evil on its face," the strategic approach "is risky and not necessarily beneficial, especially when universities institutionalize well-intentioned but top down relationships" (98). By contrast, an attention to tactical use of these resources by community members helps those in writing center studies to understand the work in more complex and situated terms. Mathieu notes that tactical projects "view the community as a source of expertise, foreground specific community needs, involves students in work that has specific rhetorical exigencies, and acknowledges their own limitations" (110). Approaching community literacy instruction through the lens of strategies and tactics refigures the relationship between the top down approach of framing community literacy in the terms of institutionalized goals and recognizing the need to shape writing assistance to the goals of projects conceived by community members.

In theorizing a rhetoric of straddling, we build on Mathieu's argument by focusing on the community writing assistants' position in community spaces. We argue that a consideration of community writing assistants' position as both representatives of the university and in service to community members' writing practices provides a rich site for theorizing antiracist practices. We also acknowledge that community literacy work throws into stark relief the ways that community partnerships can troublingly conceptualize the work of writing assistants as bringing community members and literate practices into line with the hegemonic conceptions of writing taught in classrooms, structurally supported in disciplines, inculcated in writers, and reinforced in writing centers. By traveling into community spaces, community writing assistants run the risk that they carry their training in the dispositions of a university's white racial habitus into sites of writing assistance.

Each of these troubling dispositions reflect a racial determination about both an individual writing and the writing itself by imagining the community member "as being in need of a specific revision" and "[requiring] them to transgress their current identities rather than to pay attention to [the community writing assistant's] own" (Rousculp 90). If writing center studies considers what community literacy instruction has to teach about antiracist rhetoric and pedagogy, the field can build on its position in both the institution and the community. CWA, in straddling the strategic institutional dispositions of writing and the tactical position of community members' own desires, motives, and projects, offers a model of approaching writing assistance from an antiracist perspective by taking writing assistants out of university spaces and dwelling in non-academic and community spaces that compel us to both revisit and answer Mathieu's questions about "what values are we institutionalizing" and, as Diab et al argue in "A Multi-dimensional Pedagogy for Racial Justice in Writing Centers," to make this interrogation an ongoing, processual and reiterative, ethical approach to doing the long term work of antiracism and social justice. We argue that a rhetoric of straddling, in focusing our attention on the liminal space community writing assistants occupy within the community and the university, provides the lens for how writing assistants might develop "a specific revision" to the dispositions of a white racial habitus as they "transgress" and "learn to pay attention" to their identities and assumptions about writing and bring that experiential knowledge back to the university.

Space Matters

In the spring of 2009, Michael was invited to work in the Community Writing Assistance (CWA) program (now named Madison Writing Assistance), a branch of the university's writing center. As a community writing assistant, Michael staffed a table at Madison's Goodman South library for 2.5 hour shifts twice a week, on Tuesday and Thursday evening, offering services modeled on the tutor-student relationships practiced in the writing center. Once he arrived, he collected the materials stored in the backroom and set up a satellite writing center, setting out signs announcing the session and a sign-up sheet. After every session, he would fill out a report on what he worked on with community members, what their goal and purpose was, how far they got, and what

the community member would work on for their next visit, if there would be one.

The site where the program was first implemented suggest race may have been a guiding premise in the need for the program. At the time, the program was hosted in a library space in a racially diverse section of the city, where a substantial number of Asian Americans and the majority of the city's African American and LatinX citizens lived. By and large the community had limited access to the university and were generally underserved by the resources available just down the road. Beyond serving a diverse population, the library was and is positioned strategically in relation to a number of community service organizations helping the community negotiate education, legal concerns, child development, and health support. The two-block radius around the library houses a Planned Parenthood office; a community college branch; a Neighborhood Law Clinic; a Women, Infants, & Children Program office, offering bilingual support for the community; and the Dane County Parent Council, offering Early Head Start, Head Start, childcare, and in-home childcare services. In short, the CWA program was one of a number of resources clustered in a central block in Southside Madison. However, we take the time to note the relationship of CWA with these other resources to illustrate CWA's ethos within a larger ecology of community services. In Mathieu's and de Certeau's terms, these are strategically positioned "proper places." Each of these other resources benefit from an ethos defined by the institutional aegis offered by the resource's "proper" name, the resources' reputation for providing services within the community, and having a fixed physical location, a place-ness. Like Goodman South library, these are all visible and familiar sites habituated into the everyday life of the community. By contrast, CWA's ethos stems from its liminal position borrowing the already established ethos of both the library and the university. CWA relies on the "place" of the library for the service to gain a presence within the community and the repute of the university to sanction its services.

The nature of the service relies on straddling and adapting the community service ethos and fixed location of the library and employing the publicly recognized reputation of the university and strategic practices of writing centers, like fixed hours, face-to-face assistance, handouts on specific writing practices, and assistants trained in being

responsive to the varied languaging traditions and compositional needs of the community. As the mission statement suggests, CWA benefits from a "top-light" institutional presence. Tasked only with "[providing] free, one–to–one writing support for community members" in "many kinds of writing" ranging from resumes to poetry (University of Wisconsin Writing Center), CWA assistants were positioned to be respectful of community members' needs, while adapting writing assistance to community members' own compositional goals.

The ambiguous ethos and fixed location of CWA reminds us that the way spaces of literacy work are constituted matters. We do not mean solely in defining the needs communities identify as exigencies, though this is of course critically important; we also mean how borrowing the ethos of the university and library provides the opportunity of being in and learning to dwell in nonacademic and community spaces without being constrained by the strategic goals of the university. Space matters because we need to be in that space, with the people living in that space to get busy, be there, and learn to do the work of antiracism to avoid running slipshod over community members' motives for writing with our own hopes for liberatory outcomes. Routinely doing literacy work in community spaces stipulates a way of being in the world - not to try on a rhetoric for the day, to tour in antiracism, or to reappropriate the space and the work. Rather, space matters because being there and learning to be responsive to the needs of community members is critical to doing more than "get excited, talk about it for a while," "use it," "cite it," as Octavio Pimentel implores of allies. Space matters because it is central to integrating this work in "all facets of life, including teaching, researching, and living" (Pimentel "Manifesto"). The ambiguous place-ness of CWA and the top light institutional sponsorship of CWA provides an inroad for graduate students serving as assistants to doing the difficult work of putting their own agendas and expertise in check by recognizing the person assistants work with is an expert, and, likely, more an expert than the writing assistant for understanding community members' motives, desires, skills, language use, and habits of communicating. At the very least, CWA provides a way to cultivate new habits of being in space, for assistants to experiment with their own assumptions, and to suspend these assumptions to listen to the community member who has come for assistance. In the process, assistants have the opportunity to learn from the emergent practices born of their work with a variety of languaging traditions, motives, and

compositional goals. Given that the field is still dominated by white members, writing center professionals could all benefit from being in non-academic and community spaces, experimenting with new roles and working on writing tasks often not dealt with in university spaces.

If the field looks at community literacy work as being in service to community members finding a place to stand in discourse, to illuminating where the field is and where the field wants to be, to developing new pedagogies from what is learned in community spaces as writing assistants straddle strategic and tactical positions, scholars' focus can be on bringing discussion and inquiry (Peck et al) into praxis, turning a place to stand into a resource for change in the university. This comes with the recognition that departing from familiar sites of literacy work, like writing centers and the classroom, will bring risks, ask much of literacy users, but also, may shift the field's understanding of the work done in literacy instruction - both in the community and the academy.

Motives Matter

In Michael's own training he had read extensively on the colonizing function of standard languages. He had come to look at language as importantly socially situated, and that valuing dialect and varieties of world Englishes were critical to learners' sense of agency (Street; Canagarajah; Smitherman). Michael's "expertise," he felt, called him to listen to students' language uses, for where the resources of their home languages might be silenced or written over, and he had come to understand this language negotiation as an identity negotiation: in assimilating to the discursive norms of one group (the university), the history of the student's own group risked being left behind (Grimm "Retheorizing"; Villanueva "Memoria"). As Michael began working as an assistant in CWA he had, perhaps naively, assumed that he would work with different kinds of literacy traditions. However, the more he thought about his work in community writing occasions, the more it became clear that his sponsorship seemed tied to community members' desire to participate in, not resist or question, dominant literacy practices. While not dealing with academic literacies, learners quite regularly brought in writing tied to institutional genres. Over and over again, Michael sat, listened to, and learned to write with community members as they came face to face over a troubling negotiation in straddling the tactical uses of individual language and literate practices and the strategic discourses of institutions.

One day, a recently immigrated elderly Brazilian man came to the library for assistance in filling out a credit card application, a process that affords little opportunity to discuss his motives for doing so. As Michael and the man navigated the application's institutional discourse, and realized the man's language traditions troubled his facility with the rhetoric of the form itself, Michael's role seemed relegated to finding ways to help the man understand what kinds of information the form asked of him. What, might be asked, is anti-racist in this pedagogical moment, where translating and silencing the man's language traditions seems the preeminent work of that session?

Taken from the standpoint of a rhetorical conception of literacy, though, this moment - where the form does not readily allow for the discussion of race and language, and in fact presumes a normative version of white discourse and privilege as race neutral - might suggest something different: a meeting place of the man's tactical motives for participating in normative forms of economic exchange and the institutional strategy wrangling that desire into, literally, an acceptable form. Here was a chance to participate in the socioeconomic life of the nation by developing an identification with dominant literacies, "whereby a specialized activity makes one a participant in some social or economic class" (Burke 27-28). Duffy notes: "to see literacy as rhetorical is to consider the influence of a particular rhetoric on what writers choose to say, the genres they elect to write in, the words and phrases they use to communicate their messages, and the audience they imagine while writing" (227). To take seriously a rhetorical conception of literacy, as Duffy discusses it, the genres brought to community writing assistance need to be consider as not simply silencing users, but as a means to realize community members' motives. They may invoke a learner's choice to suspend home literacies in favor of adapting dominant literacy genres, not to become indentured to the system of late capitalist credit and debt, but to facilitate a way of participating in the modern economy, and in this instance, the country the man has chosen as a destination for his immigration.

As writing assistants work with these genres, they need then to consider not only the ways that the credit card application itself does not take away users' ability to, as Duffy notes, choose the genre, words and phrases, but also whether and how the genres they encounter recast their

assumptions. In this instance, a credit card application generates new ways of participating in and defining one's place within the socio-economic realities of the nation. To narrowly conceptualize writing assistants' work as helping a community member fill out a form misses the critical moment where both community member and assistant work together to negotiate language differences, not to silence the community member, but to tactically appropriate discursive forms to find a place to stand in the discourse of the nation.

Like many of the community members that came to CWA, this man disappeared from the scene after our session. We do not presume to know what came of this session, nor do we want to suggest that what came of this session is the lesson we should take away from considering this brief snapshot of a moment. Rather, the field needs to ask how working with the genres community members bring to community literacy programs provides the opportunity for demystifying the varied uses of official discourse and putting the control over the use of that discourse in the hands of the users, rather than relegating the use of the form to the bureaucratized world of institutions. Doing so provides the field with the impetus to consider, not only the various ways that individual language and literacy traditions butt up against institutions use of dominant discourse to maintain a strategic position, but also the ways motives shaping a writer's decisions to take up and work with a genre provides us with new understandings of how strategic discourses might be tactically taken up for unexpected ends.

Languaging Traditions Matter

As the previous example suggests, attending to the genres students are asked to work with in CWA situates them in a critical position straddling the institutional context where those genres might do work and individuals' desires to take up those genres. Working from an anti-racist pedagogy necessitates doing the work of coming to understand motive as a central fact of discourse. Though, it also raises another critical component of antiracist pedagogy that a rhetoric of straddling helps to illuminate, but which bears further consideration: whether community members' and assistants' negotiation of language traditions constrains or facilitates the possibility for community members to develop their own agency in deciding to draw on their experience, expertise, and language traditions as they write with/in/to discourse communities from which

they may have been historically marginalized. To address the question of how writing assistants value community members' languaging traditions, identifying writing assistants' position within a rhetoric of straddling illuminates the possibility for writing assistants to suspend their own expertise as they learn to write with community members by listening to how community members wish to be heard. In this section, we address another example from CWA where Michael works with a client looking for a way to speak back to medical institutions about her traumatic medical history. Central to her desires was to maintain her own languaging practices employing narrative and pathetic appeals in genres that traditionally silence personal testimony.

Christie (a pseudonym), an elderly white woman, whose languaging traditions reflect a familiarity with and use of Standard Edited American English, was struggling with writing a troubled and troubling, decades long medical history rife with physical pain and emotional violence suffered under the care of a number of doctors. As in the previous example, Christie's case raises the question of what is antiracist about a white woman steeped in a white middle-class languaging tradition trying to give shape to her felt experience. Quite a bit of scholarship about home languages justifiably tends to focus on the languaging traditions of second language learners, minority languages, and English dialects . However, Christie's struggle to write her narrative illustrates something that feminist scholarship has long made clear: that home language traditions oftentimes serve as both the means for developing a mode of argumentation and simultaneously the rationale for disregarding writers as subjective, unfocused, or too emotional. Greenfield argues that the presumption that home languages should be translated into the public language of standard English "[elides] recognition of (historically racialized) home languages as significant factors" (57) in developing writers' agency. Her argument can be usefully applied to the ways that a white racial habitus silences a host of home languaging traditions, whether they be stratified by race, class, gender, or region. In Christie's case, her struggle being heard hinged on the fact that her use of narrative pathetic appeals simply went unrecognized in the highly technical and scientific language traditions of medical institutions. At the same time, though, she had learned quite a bit about surgery, the body, and medical language, as well as the nuances of navigating systems of insurance, so by the time that Michael began working with her she easily displayed her expertise in both medical discourse and the affective experience of

medicine. She readily and frequently moved back and forth between discussions of stints, the vascular system, anatomy, and surgical technologies, and the frustration, pain, and humiliation that left her feeling like there was no room for a discussion of how she felt. Nonetheless, she clearly felt like "an expert with a lot to say and a right to say it" (Peck et al 220).

She had been coming to CWA for help with writing her medical narrative for some time when Michael began working closely with her every week for a little more than a year and a half. However, as she worked over her narrative and considered Michael's inquiry about her purpose in telling her history, she continued to struggle with finding a fitting approach to frame her narrative. Having been accustomed to talking about her experience for years, the oral digressions she used in her oft told narrative reflected, on the one hand, the rich accumulations of reasoned considerations about her surgical experiences and not being heard by medical institutions, but on the other hand, given the capaciousness of the narrative, also troubled choosing an obvious way to organize her thoughts on the page, identifying the salient pieces for different audiences, and finding a voice that could both encapsulate the pathos of her felt experience and speak to the logocentric discourse of the medical agencies that had, she felt, simply treated her as a thing to be fixed by subsequent surgeries.

As Michael and Christie labored over finding the fitting form for writing her narrative, they discussed who she wanted to hear her story and what she felt was her purpose. She had several audiences in mind, each of which she saw the narrative of her felt experiences as a central facet of her argumentation. For Christie, the often pathetic appeals served not simply as harrowing examples, but as logical, reasoned, deliberation about the experience. She found the narrative to be so powerful and alarming that she felt that others with similar experiences would benefit from her testimony, and that her narrative could give medical providers cause to reconsider how they treat patients. That is, faced with the difficulty, physical violence, and emotional violence of her experience, she felt that the medical institution would benefit from her "talking back" to them. Nonetheless, her habits of talking about her experience provided useful ways of reshaping her narrative to fit into several rhetorical occasions: an op-ed piece, a letter to the medical association and the hospitals, and finally, a public narrative that others might identify with

and find the encouragement to pursue ways to articulate their own experience. Guided by Christie's responses in their sessions, Michael alternated between directive and non-directive approaches. Michael listened closely to the narrative and the way she spoke about her experience; asked questions about what she hoped to accomplish; moved between transcribing her narrative and suggesting revisions for her approval when he felt confused as an audience member; and discussed the affordances of the primary genres she chose as they collaboratively shaped her writing to fit within those genres.

At the heart of this was learning to listen to the ways audiences were crossed through in Christie's narrative and to give credence to her own agency in identifying which pieces of the narrative could suitably mesh with the range of genre traditions they had considered. Regardless of which genre she chose to use, her concern was consistent: find the place to stand needed for her audience to recognize and listen to her experience, while not sacrificing the impact she felt her use of pathos and narrative could have on audiences. Without negotiating the textured/troubled relationship between the language practices and discursive forms of the home traditions and public genres, she would, as she said, remain unheard outside of the cadre of committed writing assistants she worked with at the library.

Michael and Christie's collaborative relationship straddling the strategic silencing of her discourse and her own tactical desire to be heard revealed the way that the dispositions of writing in a white racial habitus call writing center professionals to understand how interrogating the emphasis on a cool, rationally minded, coherent individual as the core of writing pedagogy requires writers to foreclose numerous aspects of their identities and embodied experience - whether this is racially construed or considered from a more intersectional position accounting for language traditions shaped by class, sex, and gender. An attention to antiracist pedagogy necessitates a consideration of instances where writers' languaging traditions are strategically marginalized in explicitly racial occasions as well as those occasions where race may play a less explicit role. Antiracist pedagogies acknowledge that the very habitus marginalizing racialized language and literacy dialects and traditions affects language traditions of all kinds. By partitioning off language varieties, we foreclose the possibility of writers finding a way into discourse that reflects their languaging traditions. Models of community

literacy work, like CWA, provide the opportunity for graduate students to not only learn with and from working face-to-face with community members but also to bring these lessons about the work of languaging into writing centers and writing studies more generally.

Conclusion

The rise of multiculturalism in the 90's offered a rich promise to effect a structural change in our ideas about writing. Writing studies discussion of contact zones, borderlands, and community offered theories to address the barriers students face in negotiating their racialized and gendered linguistic and cultural traditions with the languaging traditions of the university. This was all done without fundamentally changing the strategic dispositions of writing that structure and reinforce a white racial habitus of writing in the university. As Pimental suggests, we studied difference, we wrote about difference, we cited difference.

Twenty one years after the seminal "Community Literacy," Higgins, Long, and Flower wrote of the belief that community literacy work is "an affirmation of the social knowledge and rhetorical expertise of people in the urban community in which we worked, and as an assertion that literacy should be defined not merely as a receptive skill of reading but a public act of writing and taking social action" (9). This is a belief, an affirmation of the community members' knowledge base and rhetorical expertise, coupled with an assertion that the nature of the work we do with community writing plays a critical role in shaping writing as a public, social act and action. It may well be the point where community literacy work and the rhetoric of straddling undergirding a CWA program most clearly provide an ethical position for transforming the dispositions of writing that structure language work in the university. By spending time in non-academic and community spaces working with communities that do not have access to the resources of the universities, by learning to listen to what motivates writers' choices, and by learning to build on the resources of writers' languaging traditions, we have the experiences and "really useful knowledge" about writing needed to develop more inclusive conceptions of languaging in our universities. In taking an antiracist position, we call attention to those sites where we not only study and learn with community members, enriching our understanding of difference and responding to the call to put the presumptions of our expertise in check, but also where we do the work

needed to bring difference into the very concerns of our writing pedagogy.

During Inoue's address at the 2019 Conference on College Composition and Communication, he reminded white allies: "You can be a problem even when you try not to be. Sit and lament in your discomfort and its sources. Search. If our goal is a more socially just world, we don't need more good people. We need good changes, good structures, good work that makes good changes, structures, and people." We do not mean to oversell the work and hopes of programs like Madison's CWA where community writing assistants straddle the strategies of institutions and tactical desires and motivations of the community; nor do we mean to dismiss the lessons gleaned from Peck et al and Goldblatt's work developing new models for community partnerships in community literacy centers or the possibility of writing centers to play a role in critiquing institutionalized racism (Cooper; Condon; Diab, et al) and working from within writing centers' place in the institution to frame explicitly antiracist positions (Inoue). We are not proposing that a consideration of the spaces where we might already be doing the work of antiracism is an escape from the "iron cage" of "white language supremacy" (Inoue "How"). We are, however, suggesting that spending time in non-academic and community spaces, supported by but not beholden to university strategies; learning to listen to community members' tactical work with and in language; integrating explicitly antiracist practices in designing new literacy spaces, be they community or university spaces; and working from the position of a rhetoric of straddling to learn new approaches to understanding language differences that can be carried forward by graduate students as future stewards tasked with reshaping the discussions, research, and work in our discipline are all a start to developing "good changes, good structures, good work that makes good changes, structures, and people."

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