ECWCA

Rhetoric in the New Millennium

It's 2015: fifteen, 15 years into the new Millennium. Which makes me wonder, how long, exactly, can we continue to refer to it as the "New" Millennium? I googled it and could not find a suitable answer, so I'm going to take a wild guess and say that we're good for at least another 85 years or so.

At any rate, the New Millennium has brought with it new challenges for writing centers. While we may, at times, still sit in front of a computer and type out our manuscripts, it's not the ONLY way to compose, and in today's culture, it may not be the best way to grab your audience's attention. Instructors are asking students to tweet for class, create multimodal projects such as videos, podcasts, Prezis, pop-up books . . . you name it and students are being asked to compose it.

Personally, I think this is a great thing. Students are writing, yes writing, more than they ever did in the last millennium. True, it's not necessarily what many of us consider strong academic writing, but it is writing, and these new forms of communication are what students are being required to do in their future careers. As writing centers, it's up to us to help students negoitate these digital environments and provide as much support as possible.

For these reasons and more, the editorial team will be revamping both the newsletter and the website in the upcoming months. The newsletter, in this form, will cease to exist, but instead will become a major part of the web site. There will be other announcements in the upcoming months as plans become more concrete and we move forward in this exciting phase of ECWCA history.

Dianna Baldwin
Editor

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Millennium Rhetoric and the New Racism: Literacy, Technology, and Race

"Oh my God, Karen, you can't just ask people why they're white."
-- Gretchen, *Mean Girls*

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When I see the term Millennium Rhetoric, I first think about computer literacy and digital composition. If not provoked to think deeper, I might even assume Millennium Rhetoric is just a synonym for digital composition. The bias in that assumption, however, alerts me to some of the social forces that shape rhetoric in the new millennium, revealing a racialized access to computer literacy that deeply informs how I interact with Millennium Rhetorics.

I'm not sure if I count as a "digital native" or not, but I know I am identified as white. And being white in the U.S. means I benefit from a set of structural advantages commonly called "white privilege." As a social system, white privilege introduces a hierarchy that distributes or withholds certain benefits based on racial/racist categories. In the book Class-ified: How to Stop Hiding Your Privilege and Use It for Social Change, the authors describe privilege as "getting an unfair special advantage because you are part of a group" (8). They go on to describe the differences between privilege and discrimination, writing:

> Discrimination erases individual identity. It says that everyone in the group is the same and so deserves to be treated the same, regardless of how cruel or inhumane that treatment is.
> Privilege erases group identity. It says that everyone in the group is a unique and special individual, and that it's their uniqueness that entitles them to preferential treatment.
> Dealing with discrimination requires reclaiming individual identity. Understanding privilege, on the other hand, requires figuring out all the ways that we're not unique individuals. (8-9)

Privilege and discrimination are intimately linked and work always in tandem; one cannot exist without the other. In re-viewing my own experiences with computer technologies, I can see why I might view "Millennium Rhetoric" and "digital composition" as interchangeable terms. I can also begin to figure ways in which I have benefited from white privilege, in which I am not a unique individual.

I was born in 1984, when the IBM PC was beginning to dominate the home computer world, knocking out competitors like Commodore. My father worked in computer technologies, debugging software systems used by courts. I remember him bringing home a computer in 1989 for the family to use. We loaded it with games; I used its World Book Encyclopedia for homework. The computer ran DOS and we saved everything on floppy disks – 5 ¼ inch floppies with the hole in the center.
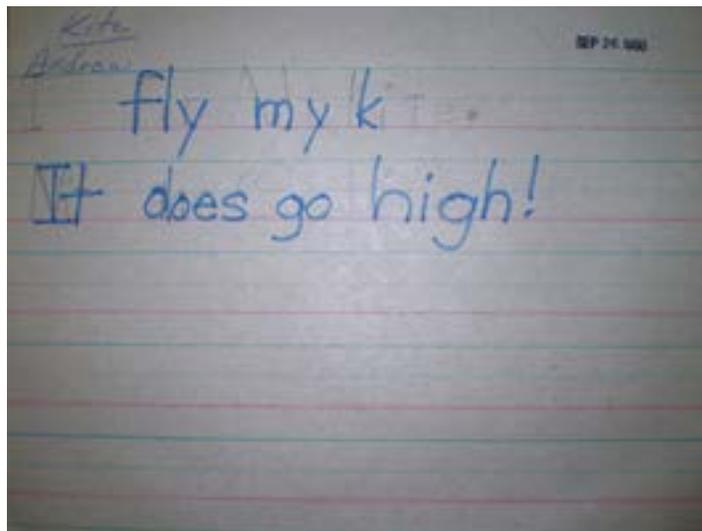

Figure 1: My story with teacher's corrections.

When I was in first grade, I received my first computer education in school. None of the classrooms were equipped with computers, but the school had converted a small space into a special computer lab for the students to use. I'd never seen so many computers in one place before! The lab came complete with a team of adult volunteers who hovered nervously over us, protecting the computers from our delinquent hands.

Although we wanted to play Oregon Trail, my classmates and I were assigned to write short (very short)

stories that we gave to our teacher to print out. The printer paper was continuously fed, like some kind of scroll; pages had to be torn by hand along perforated lines. Even so young, seeing my words typed and printed out instead of messily handwritten made an impact. There was something weightier about them, more serious, more lasting. The process of typing and printing imbued those stories with a degree of legitimacy, although I certainly could not have named it at the time. It gave me confidence in my words, in my self-expression. Years later, I would learn the school had saved these documents in our permanent files. See Fig. 1 and Fig. 2.
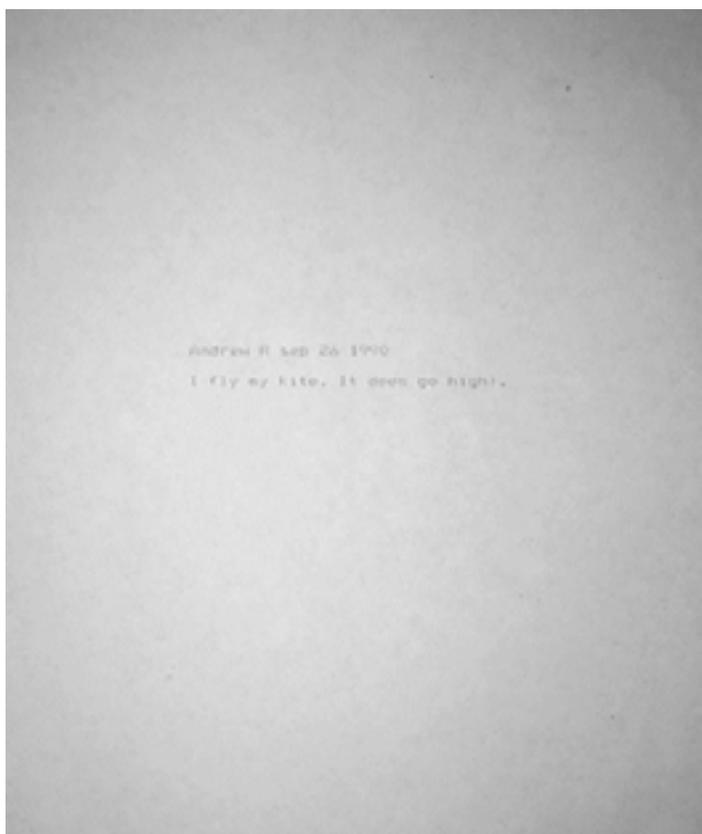
Figure 2: My story typed and printed.

Computers became increasingly ubiquitous in my schoolwork, although the path to ubiquity was not always tidy. For instance, I was required to take a typing class in sixth grade, and the typing class used electric typewriters instead of computers. This was 1996, and training on analog equipment already felt somewhat anachronistic. It turned out my class was the last to use those electric typewriters, and the school got rid of them at the end of the year. Typing

classes were modified into computer application classes, moving the next class of students one step closer to being digital natives.

As Y2K approached, computers became part of our drafting process for writing: we brainstormed directly onto the blank page of the screen, revised along with spell check. We replaced 3 ½ inch floppy disks with re-writable CDs, and eventually flash drives. By my high school graduation in 2002, we thought little of having computers in our classrooms: we checked email in between assignments, and took digital photographs in art class. At home, computers became sources of entertainment (music, video games) and socialization (instant messenger, social media). They even helped initiate many of us into pubescent sexuality through broadband pornography. Computers became tools for intimacy. Having grown up with them, I cannot help but be shaped by them. They are tied deeply into not only how I express myself, but how I know myself in the world.

I was lucky. Lucky to have parents who were able to afford a home computer, and teach me to use it with familiarity. Luckier still to have attended school in a district with enough money to invest in technologies. Public school funding in Ohio is tied to property taxes, so affluent neighborhoods fund affluent schools; impoverished neighborhoods fund impoverished schools. The inequality can be startling, and because neighborhoods remain unofficially but largely segregated, this inequality is often correlated along racial lines. My own affluent suburban high school, for example, had a student body that was over 90% white, with an all-white faculty. So saying I was "lucky" doesn't quite cut it, because I didn't simply benefit from some kind of blind luck. I benefited from a structural bias that carries forward historical inequalities based on race; I benefited from white privilege.

As I re-view my own literacy narrative, I can see that my own technologically literate practices and skills stem not necessarily from my own special talents, but in part from a history of racial segregation. Having access to emerging technologies at home and in school was in part the result of an accumulation of wealth and social capital within my family and school

district, itself the result of historically unequal and racial distribution.

Now it is 2015, I'm 31, and working as a writing tutor. I work at the downtown satellite of a two-year former tech school. The students I see are almost exclusively non-traditional, and most are older than I am. The student body is overwhelmingly African-American. Many are extremely poor and come from significantly disadvantaged backgrounds. The returning students have been out of school for years, and for many, their previous experiences with school systems have been less than positive. College courses present a plethora of challenges for these students, and their often troubled relationships with computer literacy is a difficult obstacle to overcome. It impacts their academic work across the curriculum, especially when those literate practices are assumed and taken for granted.

For instance, students entering the college are required to take a placement test. The test is entirely computerized, and students are left alone to take it. The test assumes a basic level of computer literacy. Because my writing center is located next to the testing room, I know that some students enter college with little to no experience using a computer. They come to us with the occasional question: some do not understand how to move from page to page, a few have never used a mouse before. The assumption of computer literacy sets some students up for failure before they have even entered a classroom.

As they move through classes, students with low computer literacy will fail to meet many unspoken assumptions held by their professors. It is not unusual on my campus to work with students who are encountering MS Word or Power Point for the first time. This past semester we saw an uptick in students who had never heard of "copy and paste." Rarely a week goes by that we don't see at least one student who has lost a paper due to not fully remembering how to save their document. Some have trouble remembering the difference between Word and the internet; many have never sent an email before. Right-clicking is an unknown phenomenon. We see many students who do not know the shift key makes capital letters: they turn caps lock on and off for every individual capital letter they need. Typing is a slow, laborious process.

These kinds of skills – literate practices in the new millennium – are rarely if ever discussed explicitly in the college classroom. Instructors generally assume students enter their classroom already possessing these skills. When the students struggle, those same assumptions confound the instructors' abilities to recognize what is happening – why papers appear late, disorganized on the page, or lost. For example, we often see older students who hit Enter near the end of every line, rather than letting Word continue their sentence automatically down the page. This appears nonsensical until one remembers they learned to type on typewriters, where line breaks had to be added manually. They apply a logic in attempting to transfer the skills they already have, even though it sometimes appears illegible to their instructors. Students are judged not on the literacies they possess, but on those they lack. Even as they try to acquire computer literacy, a fifteen week semester is hardly long enough to catch up to assumptions of fluency a lifetime in the making.

The work in this writing center forces me to re-evaluate what literacy practices I take for granted in the new millennium, at a time when computer literacy is regularly assumed and even expected, as when I first assumed Millennium Rhetoric was synonymous with digital composition. I often share my electric typewriter story with students. It is a point of familiarity for many, a way to open conversation about how we come to know technology, to learn about their own relationships to computers, and to acknowledge the often complicated and frustrating processes of change and adaptation that accompanies acquiring new technology skills.

As a student of rhetoric who grew up with access to computers, I am fascinated by the kinds of multimodal digital compositions that Millennium Rhetoric offers (such as hyperlinking, wikis, embedded video, audio/visual design, etc). But the tutor in me, who

works regularly with adult students who lack basic computer literacy, is reminded that no singular or monolithic Millennium Rhetoric exists. Despite the potentially democratizing effects of technology like open-source software and the internet, Millennium Rhetoric is still subject to old patterns of privilege and oppression.

A painful relationship between literacy and race reaches far back into the history of the United States. White settlers used a language of laws and property that was unfamiliar to indigenous peoples; slaveowners kept slaves from learning to read or write. In the twentieth century, indigenous children were forced into schools that taught only English and punished the use of native languages; literacy tests were used in the Jim Crow South to block African-Americans from voting. In this new millennium, we see calls for "English-only" legislation, and regulations against teachers who speak an "accented" English.

Like more traditional literacy before it, digital texts and composition remain accessible to some more than others, and that access is regulated along all too familiar forms of social inequality and stratification. White privilege played a role in granting me the cultural and technological capital of computer literacy. And for many of my students, racism plays a role in denying them access to those same literate practices.

My experience as a tutor teaches me that Millennium Rhetoric is still deeply marred by inequality, an inequality that often connects literacy, technology, and race. As someone who works in Rhet/Comp, my commitment to social justice stems from a recognition of these facts. My concern is that computer literacy has the potential to become a tool for racist social stratification. My hope is that Millennium Rhetorics can expand to include activist rhetorics powerful enough to challenge racial inequality and engender a new, more equitable story.

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NOTES

It is important to note that white privilege is one identity-based hierarchy among many, and that other hierarchical systems of privilege and discrimination are simultaneous, overlapping, and slippery. My focus on racism and white privilege here stems not out of a belief that race is any more fundamental than other categories of identity, but from the rhetorical constraints of essay-writing. It is also important to note that focusing on narratives of privilege is deeply problematic insofar as it places such stories in a privileged position, continuing – rather than disrupting – their privileged status.

For more about white privilege and writing centers, see the chapter "Everyday Racism" in The Everyday Writing Center: A Community of Practice by Anne E. Geller, Michele Eodice, Frankie Condon, Meg Carroll, and Elizabeth H. Boquet.

For a more in-depth look at racism and writing centers, see "Readings for Racial Justice" by Beth Godbee, Bobbi Olson, and the SIG Collective, available on the IWCA webpage < http://writingcenters.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/Readings-for-Racial-Justice-IWCA-SIG-Antiracism-Annotated-Bibliography-2014.pdf>

Exciting Things Are Coming to ECWCA Website

From Behind the Screen: Best Practices for Online Tutoring

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Just as the mediums in which we compose have shifted throughout the millennium, the modes of evaluating student work have likewise shifted. This shift is reflected in our own experience as Graduate Assistants in our institution's Writing Center. We recently reached out to students whose needs cannot be met through traditional face-to-face tutoring and because of this inability to meet via face-to-face, our online tutoring numbers have nearly tripled over the past two years. To remain effective, our Writing Center has had to equip tutors with the practical skills needed to work effectively in a digital environment. In particular, tutors are being trained to work in email and BlackBoard Collaborate appointments that involve screen-sharing, web-cam technology, "chat" functions, and embedding comments directly into assignments. While these tutoring alternatives offer benefits to both the student and tutor, they call for practices different from those used in the traditional face-to-face tutoring session. Fortunately with change comes growth. The increase in online tutoring allows for more students to use our academic support services.

When working in a digital environment, it is easy to forget that the paper in front of you belongs to a potentially hesitant student. As Diana Scrocco warns in How Do You Think You Did? Involving Tutors in Self-Assessment and Peer-Assessment During OWL Training, it is of paramount concern to remember that as tutors we work with "writers, not texts," (9). This has proved a powerful mantra in training our own tutors to work beyond the screen. During the initial shift tutors did not know where to begin their online tutoring processes. Through a review of relevant literature, both scholarly and from Writing Center blogs, we decided on six important facets of tutoring to create a "Best Practices for Online Tutoring" guide. This guide prepares tutors to embrace online tutoring in a particularly effective manner through shifting mediums, building rapport, fostering collaboration, offering positive feedback, modeling writing strategies, and in-session writing.

When shifting tutoring mediums to the online platform, the most apparent difference is that there is no longer the face-to-face interaction which naturally generates a conversation between two parties. Online tutoring presents a unique atmosphere with barriers to "delivery" where the tutor might focus too intensely on the "transmission of the tutorial" and not enough on the "performative" aspects of the session (Summers 11). To overcome these barriers, tutors must imagine the appointment as a dialogue. While the student is not in the tutor's immediate presence, this does not mean that they do not need the same explanations that are available in a face-to-face appointment. Tutors must work vigilantly to balance tutor and student roles in an "exclusively textual collaborative relationship" by navigating the process of getting to know the writer through only text (Scrocco 9). While it is necessary to ensure that equivalent thoroughness is carried out in both online and face-to-face appointments, it is of equal importance to establish a relationship with the writer whereby they can trust the weight of the tutor's insights. Certainly the student's work should remain their own, yet tutors should foster a collaborative tutoring environment to enhance the student's online experience. This collaboration was essential in our Writing Center when we hosted a series of online brainstorming appointments for first year writers. The writers needed to feel comfortable enough to express their problems and the tutors had to be prepared to work online without a completed text. For example, many students presented outlines where the tutor could comment on the argumentative flow; in turn, the student could either justify their idea or revise the argument – all of which was completed via email. While initially the situation was unfamiliar, both parties quickly learned how to work together online.

After confronting some of the risks associated with the shift in medium, tutors should naturally begin to build rapport with the student. It is recommended that tutors start the session with learner autonomy

in mind. Christine Rosalia comments on this saying, "students' words are their own and not to be appropriated; that the role of a tutor is to be respectful of a peer's writing… the end goal of peer tutoring is not to 'fix' a peer's essay, but to promote learner autonomy with attention to affect and camaraderie" (28). There can often be a misinterpretation of both roles and comments in online tutoring sessions caused by one or both parties using the screen as a mask. Clients often react passively or defensively to tutor comments and do not accurately receive the tutor's counsel; tutors either inappropriately dominate the session or tutor passively which hinders the expression of their message. To avoid this, both parties should remain respectful throughout the online tutoring process by understanding their role as either a tutor or a writer in an online collaborative environment.

Rather than feeling that the tutor is superior or condescending, the student should "see a smiling, helpful, understanding person" waiting eagerly to collaborate with them (Turrentine and MacDonald 6). This persona can be easily constructed on part of the tutor by a quick introductory email letting the student know they are not only qualified and trustworthy, but genuinely happy to help. Despite the barrier of the digital interface, the tutor is still a peer to the student and should take time to form a relationship where both parties are comfortable in their established roles. Many of our tutors use motivational speech throughout email appointments to empower writers who may be more reserved. This repertoire includes phrases like "Wow! You've really grown as a writer!" or "Your ability to craft a thesis has improved." Motivational speech is one of many tactics that can be used to build an online collaboration.

Without a shared physical space to collaborate in, the text itself becomes the "shared space" through which both the tutor and student review and respond to an assignment (Tarsa). A positive tutor-student relationship will build confidence in digital collaboration where the shared space is not only the shared text, but as Christopher Syrnyk comments, the "writing and personhood have become a truly collaborative gesture: the medium is the person." Posing questions

to students such as "how do you feel about this part of your paper?" instead of "how does this work in the text?" puts the emphasis on the person, reverting back to our mantra: we work with writers, not texts. When tutors use language that empowers the student writer collaboration will come naturally.

In the online medium language can seem unintentionally harsh, but frequent positive feedback and conversational language can create an optimism that softens this tone. For example, a tutor may be directive but this comes across as short or patronizing to the student. Or perhaps the tutor uses a bit of humor about an issue but in turn hits a nerve with the student. To prevent this from happening, tutors should, "strive to soften the tone of written responses or add emoticons or phrases such as … 'we're halfway there'" (Turrentine and MacDonald 8). In employing conversational language, the student writer may be more willing trust the tutor. Clients may collaborate with this tutor for repeat online sessions because the tutor's language is friendly instead of patronizing. Additionally, tutors who point out "strengths that are repeatable and transferrable" offer the student something to revisit in the future as a means of strengthening their writing (Shapiro 5). Being able to work collaboratively is an invaluable tool for tutors to instill in students that will surely translate to their academic and professional lives.

Offering students tools they can use to better their overall writing is the key to successful tutoring, whether online or face-to-face. In an online environment, it is often simpler to tell the student what to change throughout their paper instead of offering them the "how" or "why" behind suggestions. While telling may be easier teaching, this is not how writers gain lasting skills. Modeling is one method to offer students examples and explanations that will help them in future work. As Turrentine and MacDonald tell us, "The goal of the Writing Center is to teach you to do these things for yourself so that you can become a better, more confident writer" (6).

More confident writers are willing to take control of their writing and apply their tutor's suggestions.

When students practice a modeled skill in their session they are approaching learner autonomy. However, simply telling them what to change teaches students nothing aside from the myth that their tutor possesses knowledge the student cannot obtain. The real improvement comes from not just the process of explaining the issue, but the process that the student inherits to better their own writing capabilities (Shapiro 3). Online tutors may be tempted to copyedit rather than explain complex writing issues. In these times tutors can model correct writing strategies for the students to employ in their own writing. Although this scaffolding technique requires practice on part of the tutor, the client walks away from the session as a more effective writer.

Modeling and scaffolding alike can be practiced through in-session writing, particularly through synchronous online tutoring. This is another basic practice that translates well from face-to-face sessions to the online environment. When tutoring in either scenario, tutors must be aware of the power roles that develop within the relatively short session. All too often tutors concentrate their energies on directive instruction that places the student in a less active role. Here the student may take notes or nod their head, occasionally asking a question, but never fully engaging in the session. In-session writing is an effective way to relinquish superiority and even the playing field so the student may control the direction of the session.

Sarah Summers, a Writing Center researcher, recalls a session where she would make a suggestion and allow for the student to take time to edit the shared document. She was able to visually observe the students writing process as he wrote and revised (12). This occurrence captures the authentic trust being fostered in the shared space where the student feels at ease composing in front of the tutor. The tutor, in turn, can monitor and take note of the student's writing process and habits. The tutor is given an opportunity to grow through this experience by not only coaching revision, but actually becoming a part of the student's writing process – a phenomenon that while possible in face-to-face sessions, is perhaps uniquely unadulterated in this synchronous online space.

In moving forward with our Online Writing Center pedagogy and training, we reflect back on previous experiences that have led to successful tutoring strategies. Originally, a lack of pedagogical knowledge led tutors to be hesitant towards online tutoring and to resist shifting mediums. Training tutors to build rapport, foster collaboration, offer appropriate feedback, model writing techniques, and encourage in-session writing, has eliminated most of this tension in our Writing Center. To accurately integrate Online Writing Instruction into the Writing Center we must continue to translate pre-established tutoring practices to the online forum, while always searching for new innovations that can reveal strategies not yet conceived in traditional tutoring pedagogy.

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Coming Soon: Keep an Eye on

ECWCA.org

What's "Good for Business" May Not Be Good for Writing Centers: Merging the Marketing Domain with the Education Domain in the 21st Century

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In the twenty-first century, wherein corporate models of education are common, it is important for educators to be mindful of the ways that corporatization may be inappropriate for learning communities, including our writing centers. My concern began in 2011: At a public university in Ohio, the president first used business rhetoric in his addresses to the campus community. He started to refer to students as "customers" and wanted to "shift [the university's] focus to a corporate model of stewardship" (Jacobs, 2011). He neglected to define "stewardship" in this context; however, his position became clearer the following term, when his administration proposed a uniform policy for all student-staff members, including those from the writing center. At that time, the dress code for student-employees was business-casual. The proposed policy caused confusion and debate among community members, who felt it was inappropriate for students to suddenly don light blue polo shirts, name tags, and khaki pants (Gamble, 2012). Tutoring staff at the writing center in particular felt that business-casual attire was more professional, and many of the tutors felt a changed dress code would hinder the relationship they developed with students. Others felt that it directly clashed with the pedagogical mission of the center, which depended on students seeing their tutors as peers, not as employees at a company (Gamble, 2012).

According to the literature about conflating the business and education domains, these anxieties are common. Martha Lucchesi (2008) at Catholic University at Santos, Brazil, states that as universities conform to "objectives lined-up with mercantile orientation" and "abdicate [their] function of training and educating [...] in favor of organizing production," education misplaces its "collective sense and ability of creativity, initiative, genuine innovation, and critical thinking," which hinders students in their ability to collaborate. Collaboration is problematically challenged in writing centers where commodification takes place. In the twenty-first century, concerns about student satisfaction are being addressed in a variety of ways, and the writing center aids in the university's ability to retain students. However, retention has to involve more than just holding onto students' tuition dollars; it has to mean insuring students' educational welfare.

That said, in what ways can the use of business discourse, i.e. referring to students as customers, negatively influence the mission of the writing center and affect its ability to meet students' needs? To assess the impact business rhetoric has had on education, I have used Critical Discourse Analysis and Discursive Social Psychology to interpret language data from official documents released from the president of the university in Ohio and writing center materials. Regarding my use of CDA, I will consult Lemke (1998) to develop an understanding of and a template for uncovering the business domain, in order to identify business terminology and ideology in educational spaces. Because "one of the most basic functions of language is to create interpersonal relationships between speakers and addressees through the way in

which text is worded," (Lemke, 1998, pp 33) I believe that looking closely at how the president officially addresses the campus community can offer a glimpse into how a specialized speech can influence the normalization of future policy through the guise of building rapport.

Additionally, I will use Halliday's (1978) concepts of meaning potential and actuality to measure the discrepancy between the administration's words and actions, as it is useful to understand how the university president's use of business terminology is an attempt to transition and convert theory into practice: "What is, the actual sentences and words that constitute our direct experience of language, derives its significance from what could be" (Halliday, 1978, pp 28, his emphasis). From Discursive Social Psychology (DSP), I will consult Potter (2013) and Wetherell & Potter (1987). According to Potter (2013, pp 105), "discourse is the primary currency for action, understanding, and intersubjectivity." The first speech in which the president begins using business discourse is particularly interesting in terms of DSP because of his use of Extreme Case Formulation (EFC) (Wetherell & Potter, 1987, pp 47). Even when he is not discussing education as a "business transaction," he still uses ECF when he introduces his speech: "The future of the world is in the hands of institutions of learning, including and perhaps most of all, universities" (Jacobs, 2011). Through language, the president expresses that there is a lot at stake with what he is proposing; the statement posits that all of the future relies on universities. In addition, it is assumed that the audience agrees with the statement, the ECF being the reality.

Lemke (1998) claims that when people speak or write, they are taking a stance. These stances inform not only relationships and behaviors but also status in society—economic, political, et cetera. I am interested in how these dynamics function within the contexts of talking about writing centers and their mission. According to Blommaert and Bulcean (2000, pp. 449), discourse is made powerful because it highlights power: It is not enough to lay bare the social dimensions of language use. These dimensions are   the

object of moral and political evaluation and analyzing them should have effects in   society: empowering the powerless, giving voices to the voiceless, exposing power abuse, and mobilizing people to remedy social wrongs.

Thus, when the president refers to students as customers while simultaneously positioning them as having the ability to "change the future," he is purposefully articulating an ideology that students benefit from having power and voice as consumers without articulating in specific terms how that occurs (Jacobs, 2011). That is because he is not referring to a future that belongs to them but to the carrying-out of someone else's (the president's? the institution's?) plans.

Given the objectives of the business domain, there are educators and researchers who find it problematic that the same objectives are used within educational domains. According to Miller (2005), this use of business discourse serves a purpose in shifting the focus away from the Whitmanesque perspective of "the common good" that is the individual's learning through exploration, and toward "[seeing] the common good as synonymous with the corporate good. Under this rubric, schooling is useful only as it benefits economic prosperity." The student's personal growth may be an unintentional side effect, but it is by no means the main goal of educational settings that perpetuate the equating of the "common good" with "corporate good." During a short period of time, I witnessed this shift in rhetoric take place and how such jargon attempted to change the mission of the writing center.

The writing center is a microcosmic example of how this overlap of domains is harmful to education as a whole, because writing centers are an interesting site where business ideology can be more easily measured, given the constraints of the space. Pedagogically, writing centers, according to Wulff, et al, (2011), "create a collaborative space that empowers all university students[,] a joint learning experience that benefits both writers and tutors." A specific side-by-side comparison of each domain's discourse highlights the dif-

ferences in aims and goals between the two domains. Within the business domain, according to Dën Hartog and Vurburg (1998), who are writing to instruct international business leaders how to use "corporate charisma" to be successful, management processes and attitudes are seen as the key to successful implementation of a unilateral nicht pluralistischen [non-pluralist] idea of corporate vision…. A strong force of unification is needed in such a context. The understanding and acceptance of [this] vision and the result in increased identification and commitment at the level of the   individual manager can act as "global glue." (pp 358)

The Dën Hartog and Vurburg piece is a popular work in business studies. This idea of "global glue" and the context surrounding it contradicts the particular mission of the writing center at the university in question, which states the following (emphasis mine):

> We believe in non-directive tutorial styles that provide the opportunity for writers to maintain ownership of their own papers; writing consultants serve as an audience instead of as editors or proofreaders.

> We believe in the importance of being responsive to the individual needs of a student at whatever level s/he may be as a writer.

> We believe that writers develop writing skills best when they are in a supportive environment surrounded by other writers who seek to encourage clear expression of ideas.

These beliefs, listed on the Writing Center's website and on their promotional materials, align well with traditional writing center discourse and its expectations, particularly as outlined in Irene Clark's (1990) scholarship, that writing centers serve to empower students through self-motivated, "non-directive" process. Tutors serve as guides—not managers—who encourage personal development through collaboration. The emphasis on maintaining a supportive, collaborative environment runs contrary to the marketing language of maintaining a "unilateral non-plu-

ralist idea of corporate vision" (Dën Hartog & Vurburg, 1998). A "unilateral non-pluralist" approach is decidedly uncollaborative.

Interestingly, the university president also refers to "global glue" within the context of his presentation, drawing a connection between the two domains. Parts of his speech attempt to create hybridity with the domains, with ECF (Wetherall & Potter, 1987) serving as a way to relate to his audience and normalize his ideas. For instance, toward the start of the speech, titled "Creating and Sustaining a Culture of Entrepreneurship at Our University," he states, "Our work insures that our children and grandchildren will have an opportunity to participate in the American Dream and to live lives of prosperity, fulfillment, good health, and full societal participation" (Jacobs, 2011). By making this statement, he assumes there is a common discursive bond between himself and his audience: He uses the inclusive "our" to describe the work that is to be done; he discusses the American Dream in similarly inclusive terms, assuming the belief is universally-accepted. The next paragraph of the speech positions the speaker as authority:

> Universities are being asked to assume an unprecedented posture of stewardship toward their customer's interests, which may include not only students and their parents, but also prospective employers in their regions and their communities. Stewardship of customer interest is the 21st century role of the university (Jacobs, 2011).

Alongside his use of the ambiguous term "stewardship," this is also the first instance of the term "customer." He uses it as an umbrella term to describe students, parents, and the students' future employers. It is an intriguing linguistic move: What transactions are supposed to take place between students and future employers if both are customers? In the following sentence, the president states, "Increasingly, universities are being asked to provide meaning, to provide coherence and cohesion, to form the societal glue in the form of mores, norms and expectations." Therein is the "global glue" (or "societal glue") reference to Dën Hartog and Vurburg (1998). While he does not provide a source for this metaphor, the refer-

ence is obvious to those with a business background, as Dën Hartog and Vurburg's (1998) text is respected in the business domain. Ultimately, whose ideological principles are being pitched during this speech are not from the educational domain.

With regards to writing centers in particular and whether a business model complete with business values can be successfully applied, Clark (1990) provides a context for the type of discursive practices one should expect at a typical writing center. She first explains what it means to engage in "collaborative learning," since the term has certain implications for a democratic learning process: "A close examination [of collaborative learning] reveals that, by definition, true collaboration can occur only when collaborators are part of the same discourse community." Therefore, collaboration, in the purest sense of the word, relies on the ability of participants to engage with one another using the same discourse. It is contingent on commonality, and the relationship between student and tutor, according to Clark, has to assume that the student is a learner. Thus, Clark's approach is not a top-down model, while the business model is.

These trends in education threaten to erode the single most important relationship we develop in our profession: the complex one between tutor and student. For as many as twenty years, perhaps more, corporate discourse has invaded academe, correlating with many other trends—the decline of public funding from states, the administrative bloat, the rising price of tuition, and the general neoliberal saturation of market-speak into academic life. In the long run, if this trend continues, we will see students be less prepared to be citizens and more prepared to serve the corporate machine, their individuality stripped. With regards to writing center pedagogy, there must not be a discrepancy between what is stated in mission statements and actual practice. At the university in question, in 2011, the administration sought to have the writing center tutors wear uniforms and name badges; it also wanted the directors to change the mission statement to include lines about customer service.

The staff rebelled, stating that such a change would undermine the pedagogical aims of the center, which included maintaining peer-to-peer relationships with students through supportive interactions. In the end, the center won; there were no polo shirts and name tags, and the tutors did not have to start referring to their students as customers. These events serve as a snapshot to show that what's "good for business" may not be good for educational settings such as writing centers. Once it becomes acceptable to tell instructors, tutors, and other educators that they are obligated to treat students like customers, the instructors will either eschew rigor in favor of making "satisfaction guaranteed" or work defensively lest they be undermined by disappointed customers. Tell students that they are consumers, and they will become consumers, and ultimately, research is showing that customer-oriented education is less valued. A 2014 study conducted by the Center for Analysis of Postsecondary Education and Employment found that employers "are less likely to call back job applicants with business degrees from online, for-profit colleges than those with degrees from nonselective public universities." Specifically, the study found that resumes listing bachelor's degrees in business from online, for-profit institutions prompted fewer callbacks: employers were 22 per cent less likely to respond to these resumes than to those listing business degrees from non-selective public universities.

Given emerging statistics, it may prove to be a mistake for not-for-profit university administrations to establish for-profit models as ideal when, ironically, students are not able to see a return on their educational investment. Students cannot win under this model.

Nevertheless, in the twenty-first century, we will continue to witness these intersections take place. Going forward, we can ask ourselves if there are ways to make these intersections work more in the writing center's favor. Taking business rhetoric and giving it a sincere educational spin might be the only way to legitimize its use in the writing center, without completely altering the nature and function of such spaces. Students who believe that they are mere customers are selling themselves short, as are the faculty and administrators who apply business discourse to

the education domain. Students are not customers to be served—they are far more valuable.

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Assessment in Action: Strategies to Increase Writing Center Usage

William J. Allard
Shawnee State University

Over the past year, the Writing Center at Shawnee State University—a mid-size institution with roughly 4,400 students in the Appalachian region of southern Ohio—has experienced several drastic shifts. Along with hiring more tutors, undergoing a change in directorship, and expanding its presence on campus, the Shawnee State University Writing Center (SSU WC) also endured a laborious move to its new home in the university library. Though extensive and often stressful (especially since many of the modifications were implemented at the same time), the rebranding of the Writing Center at Shawnee State has proven highly beneficial. During the Fall semester of 2014, the SSU WC saw a 99% increase in its student usage over the entirety of the previous year, being only one consultation short of reaching the 100% mark (Scott). This dramatic incline in usage is the result of not just one, but many factors; most important among those mechanisms is inquiry-based assessment.

It all began in a dimly-lit basement. My home Writing Center, once being housed in the underbelly of its institution's administrative wing, was not an easy place to find. Studious writers—wishing only to get help with their assignments—found themselves navigating a stretch of halls rarely tread by undergrads. Once they found the Center, the tutors on duty would be asked if the students had found the right place. It was apparent, even before extensive evaluative efforts, that a change in location was necessary. The obvious solution for our WC, being housed at a singular institution without satellite campuses to which we could expand our facilities, was to establish a more conveniently located base of operations in the university library. In this type of arrangement, writing centers benefit from having a larger pool of student writers who are more likely to seek assistance due to proximity, while libraries benefit from constant encouragement from tutors for students to utilize the available resources provided by the library;

although there may be some growing pains associated with close collaboration between writing centers and libraries, the benefits outweigh the detriments (Giglio & Strickland, 144-145).

Indeed, collaborative efforts between university writing centers and libraries are becoming more commonplace and these arrangements can be more favorable to both organizations and the students who utilize them than when the two act as separate bodies within the walls of the institution. For these reasons, the former Director of the SSU Writing Center worked with administration officials in order to solidify the Center's move. However, through assessment, we determined that this change in scenery was not the only measure necessary for the Writing Center at SSU to flourish.

Throughout the Spring semester 2014, before our relocation to the university library, I was also taking a course on Writing Center Pedagogy so that I could learn to be the best tutor I could be. To lay out the framework of the term paper for the class, the instructor asked his students to find a problem within the Writing Center and propose a solution; he asked us to assess. Brian Huot has written at length about the true nature of assessment as a process of inquiry and research, one in which we may gain greater understanding of students' writing and the methods being utilized in higher education to teach them to write (149). Naturally, assessment is more than just evaluating and reporting on one's own performance, nor is it simply a set of methodologies to collect evaluative data; it is a holistic process that incorporates inquiry and research as vital components toward improving that performance. With this in mind, I began to lay the foundations for my term paper by taking note of an odd condition within our WC that struck me during my work as a tutor. Through my time conducting and observing consultations, I realized that our Center served only a small portion of the greater population enrolled at my university, which according to the most current available data was roughly ~20% of the total student body for the academic year 2013-2014 (867 tutoring sessions ÷ 4,400 enrolled students) (Scott; Dept. of Communications). Comparing

these data to those from a writing center of another nearby institution, I found that our Center's usage rates were well below those of our neighbor, differing by a factor of over 10% (5,500 tutoring sessions ÷ 17,770 enrolled students) (Bringhurst; Office of Communications). To that end, I asked: why? What might our Center be able to do to bring in more students? Following these questions, a fellow tutor and classmate and I devised an informal survey which we then distributed among writing center users and students in a number of composition-based courses (some of whom had never visited the Writing Center). After interpreting the flood of data we received from both the survey and our post-session evaluations from previous semesters, we were able to identify several areas for improvement; chief among them: location, knowledge, time, staffing, and incentive.

With the first issue (location) already in the process of resolution, we set about determining methods toward which we might address the other concerns of our students. The most glaring problem—student writers' knowledge of the Writing Center—was multifaceted. Students were often either unaware that the university offered writing assistance through the Center, or if they were aware, they were uninformed or misinformed about the kind of help writing tutors can offer. This is an issue with which many writing centers have had to contend: the old monikers "fix-it shop" and "remedy center" are still very relevant to the conversation about the role of writing centers. In an attempt to resolve this problem, the SSU WC set about expanding its presence on campus in the forms of advertisement and outreach. Over the course of the Summer semester, while moving into new surroundings and keeping the doors open for business (acting with a single dedicated tutor on staff), the former Director and the new Interim Director, began to implement these mechanisms.

In terms of advertisement, the center developed a new logo which they hung across campus—on every path well-known to students—emblazoned on eye-catching fliers with the new location. In terms of outreach, the Interim Director began to contact faculty members and library administrators in order to set up a more extensive orientation program. Along with continuing to invite developmental English and first-year composition instructors to bring their classes in for short tours of the Center, we also endeavored to include writing center orientations (to be presented by peer tutors) in classrooms where library officials were introducing their systems to many new freshmen. We knew, even in the planning stages, that this level of exposure was almost guaranteed to bring in a new and larger wave of writers eager to receive our help during the Fall. Due to this anticipation, near the close of the Spring term, we set about addressing two more crucial problems that concerned writing center users and non-users alike.

The first of these major concerns, which our assessment helped us to understand, was staffing. In any institution for higher education, the difference between students fully understanding the material of a course and becoming irrevocably lost is how well they are able to communicate with their instructors. Many professors at my institution are lucky in that class sizes are relatively small in comparison to larger universities, allowing them closer interactions with students during instruction. However, even with this advantageous position, some students require more of the one-on-one approach than can be given; this is where the function of the writing center takes over. But, without an adequate number of tutors on staff or convenient hours of operation, the center's ability to accommodate student writers suffers. Again, our assessment led us to a better understanding our second major problem: time. Interpreting the data we received from respondents to our informal survey and post-session evaluations, we found that many writers commented on the skeleton crew keeping the doors open and the majority of replies cited a lack of time to visit during our Center's working hours. Many students called for us to hire more tutors, expand our service hours, and to offer tutoring appointments. Taking both our results and the expected increase in traffic into consideration, we set about applying these changes. First, we nearly doubled our staff (ensuring that each new tutor was properly trained for the position with in-depth readings and required observations before conducting sessions). Next, we increased

the Center's weekday hours of operation and added a short shift on Sunday evenings to convenience those students with other responsibilities such as work and family matters during the week. And finally, we gave student writers the option of visiting for a walk-in consultation or to arrange a tutoring session via appointment. Although these changes would prove to be seminal in regard to our Center's success in the Fall of 2014, there was one more issue which needed to be addressed in order to achieve the impressive increase in usage we documented.

Perhaps the most confounding problem that plagues any voluntary student enrichment program, like the writing center, is incentive. The advantages of tutoring services, both to the greater institution and the individual student, are well documented. Writing center visitors are likely to have as much as ~23% higher rates of retention in comparison to institutionally expected frequencies (Bell & Frost, 22). But despite these figures, many students seemed to lack the motivation necessary to seek outside help with their writing assignments. In researching this issue, I found a possible solution: expanding student outreach by hosting live events. One type of event—writing workshops—are a common feature of many writing labs across the US. The Director of one university writing center in Japan was even able to effectively utilize group workshops as a platform to gain more participation from student writers, thereby boosting the center's usage (McKinley 299). However, workshops alone may only excite those students who are already active participants in their own academic and learning processes. Therefore, we believed it would be best to offer two other types of live events in cooperation with the university library. The first was a marathon reading to celebrate the National Day on Writing, which allowed student, faculty, and staff writers to come into the library and read from their own works or to read their favorite works by other authors. The second was an early Long Night Against Procrastination, wherein students who had either fallen behind in their courses (or those who merely needed a little more time to study) could come into the writing center and receive any help they might need to catch up in their writing assignments.

At both of these events, we worked with the library to offer snacks and refreshments to any and all comers, further elevating incentive. All of these events combined proved to increase the level of student engagement with our Center tremendously.

When I began working as a peer tutor in the Writing Center at Shawnee State, I wasn't sure what to expect; I only knew I wanted to help other students become better writers. I certainly didn't expect to be pouring over mountains of data in an attempt to help our center realize its potential. But in the confines of that dreary administrative basement, my fellow tutors, the writing center directors, and I adhered to Neal Lerner's simple truth, "if we cannot assess how well we are doing whatever it is we are supposed to be doing, we are surely doomed" (199). Furthermore, it was the mechanism of our assessment—utilizing critical inquiry about a serious problem within our Center as a basis for researching and devising solutions to that problem—that allowed us to bring about such a dramatic increase in our student usage rate. It is through assessment that we, as writing tutors and writing center administrators, are better able to understand our role within the process of learning writing. In approaching assessment through the lens of inquiry, we allow ourselves the opportunity to determine answers to the various questions (or problems) we encounter: even allowing us to see beyond the scope of the one-on- one tutoring conference. Critical inquiry and supporting research is a necessary facet to assessing our effectiveness, no matter the aim of the analysis. Although the actual strategies we implemented as being most effective for our Center may only be viable for institutions facing similar problems in similar conditions, the mechanism by which we determined those strategies can be applied to any initiative for writing center assessment. The solutions we were able to glean from our own assessment (in regard to student usage) and the efficacy of their implementation at the Shawnee State University Writing Center is only one example of the power of inquiry-based assessment.

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It Aches to Discuss Race: Two Black Women an Ocean Apart
(A Writing Center Consultation)

Wonderful Faison
Michigan State University

Note: The Client in this consultation signed a consent form allowing me to use her words

This is not a story about grammar, punctuation, or sentence structure. It is neither a story about how comfortable Writing Center spaces often are for clients, nor is it a story of the optimism consultants can have about helping clients improve their writing. This is a story about the pain a consultant may feel and how uncomfortable the Writing Center space can become whenever dealing with race or racism in client writing. Victor Villanueva argues, "writing centers, like the institutions in which they are situated, are not neutral sites of discourse and practice" (1). As a scholar, I am interested in undoing this situatedness and uncovering the different bodies and identities that seek help with writing and work in the Writing Center. As a researcher, I champion researching the intersections or constellations of race, racism, gender, class and sexuality in the Writing Center. Yet, as a Black lesbian woman, dealing with these intersections are a painful experience. What exacerbates the situation is an overall lack of tools, theories, and pedagogies to deal with these different identities, particularly race, when they arise in client writing.

Recently, I had a consultation with a Nigerian female student (given the pseudonym Salima) working on a learning memoir. Her memoir was about how she came to understand her race: Black. **While any conversation about race can be uncomfortable depending on the context in which race is being used, along with the fact that race is socially constructed in different ways across countries and cultures, Blackness has a global feel to it.** The Struggle ain't just real in the U.S., The Struggle real across the African Diaspora-- or so I thought. Salima seemed to differ with me about The Struggle. In fact, she didn't think The Struggle mattered for her as a Nigerian. She would say things like *"I don't know why race matters any way"* and *"I learned in a class that race is just a social construct, so it doesn't matter. We are all the same."*

There were so many things I wanted to say, such as

"this 'we are all the same' propaganda be the same rhetoric Whiteness wants all "minorities" to believe: that 'we are all the same' and 'everybody' gets a fair shot.' This the same ol' routine Whiteness be spitin' on the daily as a way to erase difference – as a way to pretend difference don't exist. And if difference don't exist, neither do we."

Instead, what I said was, "yes, race is a social construct, and therefore race shouldn't matter, but these constructs were made for the purposes of restricting certain people deemed undesirable. The very existence of social constructs prove how much they matter." Having to explain this made me angry. I wanted to know, *don't Black people everywhere get the whole race and racism thing*? I went home that night frustrated and conflicted. I could not explain why I was having such a visceral reaction to her lack of racial awareness, but **why should I expect for someone from another country to be more racially aware than people in the United States? I was at a loss. I had no clue if what I did say and what I did do was what I should have said and what I should have done**.

The following day at work, I checked my appointments and saw that Salima had scheduled with me again. I spread out on the table in exasperation and sighed, "Oh God." This was an appointment I did not want to have, in part, because I had no idea what I was going to do in this consultation. Victor Vilanueva noted, "[w]e also fail to prepare tutors to recognize, question, and challenge the assumptions that students may be making based on the tutors' race. When tutors do encounter explicit racism in student writing, they may feel under prepared or ill-equipped to address that racism" (130). This growing apprehension caused me to reflect on our first session together and what made me so uncomfortable. I realized it was I who did not give Salima a chance to **tell her story. It was I who refused to understand her positionality or her intersecting identities. The only way to find out why "race didn't matter to her" was to ask her**.

During the consultation, she told me that "in Nigeria

everyone is Black. Of course, there are white people, but everyone is basically Black. **When I came to this country it was strange to me to hear that girls didn't want to be Dark-Skinned. In Nigeria, everyone wants to be darker. I used to wish I was darker myself**." Salima also told me how confused she was when people asked her why she lived around Black people, causing her to think "what kind of question is this? In Nigeria, all you live around is Black people." It was at this moment, I began to understand her story and how I could use her cultural experience as a tool to talk with her more about the social construction of race.

I mentioned to her that she seemed to be showing how race is differently constructed in Nigeria than it is in the U.S. At times, she insinuated that if people in the United States knew she was Nigerian and not Black, maybe she wouldn't face the same type of racial issues as Blacks in the U.S. Again, I was furious. I wanted to say, "**when it comes to race, this country don't do no separation of nationality for no Black folk. You Black in America-- and that's a problem.**" Instead I said, "in America, where you come from does not matter as much as how dark your skin is, and unfortunately, the longer you live in this country, the more you will see this and be affected by it."

When she asked, "what do you mean?" I told her, "you are more likely to be arrested, more like to be sexually assaulted, more likely to have to show your I.D., more likely to get a job paying less than your white counterparts, even if you have the same experience and qualifications. The list goes on." When she left the consultation that night, I felt Salima had a better understanding of race and race issues, and how they present in the U.S. compared to how these issues present in parts of Nigeria.

Salima and I had one final meeting about her learning memoir. It was in this meeting that I asked her if she would come back and do an interview with me about her experience in this consultation. I wanted her to come back because her racial experience as a person from Nigeria, though different, is just as valuable as my racial experience as a Black person living in

America. I also asked Salima to return because when I reflected on my emotions during the three times we met, I realized that I was not angry about Salima's views on race. I was angry with myself for ever having bought into notions of sameness and equality amongst races in the U.S. I was angry that though she and I were from two different continents an ocean apart, we still were affected by and indoctrinated into White notions, ideologies, and practices of race, sameness, and equality.

In the interview I had with Salima, she said she made appointments with me in order to *"get your thoughts on race… I am not from here, so I thought if I spoke to another Black person maybe I could understand more."* While it is problematic to assume that getting one Black persons thoughts on race in the U.S. is the same as getting all Black people's thoughts on race in the U.S., it does show a desire to learn and understand how race is differently constructed in Nigeria than in the United States. Through this consultation, I learned many things about myself: (1) I do not have enough training to deal with issues of race in consultations; (2) I need to be more culturally sensitive (if I had not assumed that being Black in the U.S. is the same as being Black everywhere, maybe this consultation would have gone better), and (3) **I need to find better ways to channel my emotions – whatever they be – and use them as a way to be conducive to consultations. Emotions happen in the Writing Center. To deny these emotions can impact a consultation is a logical and pedagogical flaw**.

As a consultant, one way we "make better writers"

is not by fixing grammar, sentence structure, and punctuation issues, but by challenging clients to question their thinking, and thereby, their writing. This consultant ideology of challenging clients' beliefs is no different than the ideology of many teachers. However, dealing with issues of race in consultations as well as writing are not as easy to "fix" as grammar, sentence structure, and punctuation issues. **There are theories and pedagogies about how we should have conversations with clients in consultations and discuss the content of their papers, but there are few theories and pedagogies providing guidelines on how to deal with race/racism and how it presents in clients' writing. It is time for people within the Writing Center to begin researching how to confront issues of race that may arise in clients' writing**.

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Exciting Things Are Coming to ECWCA Website

Meet the Editorial Team

Dianna Baldwin

I am Dianna Baldwin, and I came to be the Associate Director of the Writing Center at MSU in 2008 while still completing my dissertation at Middle Tennessee State University. I studied 19th century British Literature and completed my Masters thesis on none other than Charles Dickens, but by the time I was completing that degree, I knew I wanted to shift the focus for my PhD to writing. And not just traditional "text" writing, but high-tech writing. The kind of writing that requires more than a word processor or a pen and paper to accomplish.

This makes The Writing Center a perfect place. It is a playground for me. I get to experiment with all forms of digital writing and composing and get paid to do so. I explore video games and virtual worlds in the writing process; I investigate how comics create meaning in different ways and how students can use this medium for their own rhetorical purposes; I research how things like tablets can be used in the writing process as a means of creation and not just consumption; and best of all, I am privileged to work with students each and every day of my life . . . how wonderful is that?

So if I were asked "who are you", I would reply that I am a digital (though not native) rhetorician who is at The Writing Center at MSU to play, explore, teach, be taught, and create a space where others feel free and encouraged to do the same.

You can email Dianna at baldw145 (at) msu (dot) edu.

Wonderful Faison

I am a first year PhD student and am interested in race in the Writing Center. As a space that is historically undervalued, as a researcher, I am interested in the many valuable pedagogies, and teachings that occur in writing center spaces. However, Writing Center spaces are not all sugarplumbs and gumdrops. Issues of race, gender, class, sexuality, and at times, an overall lack of cultural awareness exist and persist in Writing Center spaces. Through the short time I have been a consultant – 2 years – I have noticed the frustration many consultants and Writing Center directors face when confronting these issues when they arise in Writing Center spaces.

As a trained rhetorican and consultant, I believe in clients having their own voice in writing. By own voice, I suggest that my job as a tutor is to help clients write what they want, the way they want, to the audience they want. Audiences will always vary, so I stress that clients always learn and know to whom they are speaking and why they have chosen to speak to their particular audience, in the manner in which they are speaking. I am comfortable working with clients who are trying to adapt their ideas and voice to fit not only academic audiences, but community and other public audiences outside of the academy. I love working with clients who are considered marginal or at risk, but understand or want to come to understand the power of their words, and the power of their writing to convey those words/ideas to their intended audience. I am adept at guiding clients in generating ideas, as well as assisting them in adapting one or more than one idea to several different audiences, through different modes, such as PowerPoint.

Ezekiel Choffel
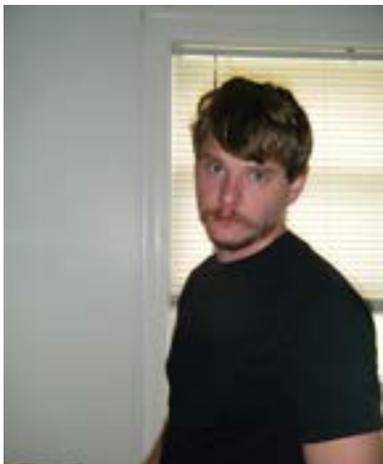
My name is Ezekiel Choffel and I am a second year Master's student in the Writing, Rhetoric, and American Cultures program at Michigan State University. I am interested in developing new ways of understanding Writing Center theory in a contemporary context. I seek to move beyond the Northian model of Writing Center theories and applications.

My current Writing Center work focuses on ways of melding contemporary theories of rhetoric with WC work. This, so far, has taken the form of practicing different ways of consulting with a specific focus on the types of lenses I use to understand WC work. I am extremely interested in ways to bring Decolonial theory into Writing Center spaces as a way to decenter our expectations of our clients. I work towards meeting students where they are at and providing the types of help they need.

Laura Gonzales

My name is Laura Gonzales, and I'm a PhD student in the Department of Writing, Rhetoric, and American Cultures at Michigan State University. I research linguistic diversity in digital spaces, focusing on the assets that multilingual learners bring into classrooms and work spaces. My interest in writing center work stems from my experiences teaching and learning from writers who speak English as a second (or third, fourth, etc.) language.

Lauren Straley

I am an Undergraduate Junior at Michigan State University pursuing an English major with a concentration in Creative Writing, a minor in Women's Studies, and an LGBTQ Sexuality specialization. I specialize in feminist theory and write about societal constructions that work to standardize oppression in Western culture. I am also interested in the institutions and practices that shape women's identity and the way that identity works to govern action. As a second year writing center consultant, I have been exposed to many experiences and differences that can occur within the center ranging from personal differences such as race, culture, language, and sexuality to differences in the writing process such as grammar corrections versus content expansion, editing versus collaboration, and other dissonances that can occur in an appointment. Communication and listening are crucial tools to my consulting philosophy because the most valuable experiences are the ones where we actively observe and engage in collaborative communication. I am interested in fleshing out clients' creative processes and their relationship with their personal creation. Every client allows me to grow as a consultant and as a scholar, and I am excited to continue to pursue my passion for literature and writing.

Jordan Stokes

I am Jordan Stokes, an under-graduate student at Michigan State University with a Professional Writing major in the Digital and Technical track and a specialization in Digital Humanities. I am an intern for the Writing Center at MSU, where I work on the ECWCA committee.

My role in the committee is to collaborate and work together amongst the committee members in order to deliver the e-newsletter. I am also taking part in working on our website, which is powered by Wordpress. Through these roles, I hope to learn more about writing center theory and practice as I prepare to become a writing center consultant.

Strategizing is something that I enjoy doing. After I graduate I hope to have a media and marketing position working, collaborating, and strategizing with a team. I want to use the various digital tools available online to rhetorically analyze content in order to deliver new content to a company's audience accordingly. I'm digitally inclined, and I like creating digital visuals. Visuals are an important method of communication. I'm particularly interested in incorporating my use of digital humanist tools into the communication strategies I am able to produce in the media and marketing field after I earn my BA of Arts in Professional Writing.