COLLABORATING ACCOUNTABLY:

INTERPERSONAL ANTIRACIST ACTIVISM AS A

SITE FOR FEMINIST INVITATIONAL RHETORIC

AND WRITING CENTER PEDAGOGY

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Abstract: This dissertation applies participatory action research and feminist ethnographic methods to study The Conversation Workshops, which teaches strategies for interpersonal antiracist activism using concepts from invitational rhetoric and writing center pedagogy. The Conversation Workshops are a grassroots project created by the researcher and three collaborators for the Oklahoma City community and piloted, with the support of our writing center, at a university. Data was collected from this pilot to examine the process of collaboratively developing, implementing, and reflecting upon the workshop using the methods of autoethnography (AE) and institutional ethnography (IE), which are combined to produce a critical auto-/institutional ethnography (AIE). Foss and Griffin's concept of feminist invitational rhetoric is central to the workshop curriculum and informs the analysis, and, in addition to the writing center scholarship that undergirded the workshop curriculum, including that of Denny, Condon, Eodice, and Rousculp, the analysis and resulting implications draw upon and contribute to interdisciplinary conversations about collaboration and public pedagogies (Rousculp; Cushman; Grobman; Jackson), critical research methods (Pillow; McKinnon; Patel; Powell and Takayoshi), and pedagogies of antiracism (Ahmed; Green; Martinez; Condon and Young; Carrillo Rowe; Ore; Kristensen; Richardson), decolonization (Tuck and Yang; Grande; Powell; Dutta; Jackson), and whiteness (Applebaum; Lensmire; Bell; Potter). The findings that emerge from the AIE produce an approach called accountable collaboration, which introduces an approach to collaboration rooted in equitable valuation, critical reflexivity, relational equity, and reciprocal trust. With a view to accountable collaboration, this study proposes a vision of collaboration that resists assumptions and invites partnership, one which is based on an invitational model that treats participants more like collaborators than passive audiences. The enactment of these principles with intentionality and a view to inequity can help us reshape and rebuild not only the ways that we work with one another but also the ways that we model accountable collaboration for collaborators and students.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: BUILDING THE CONVERSATION WORKSHOPS

During the Summer of 2016, following the publicized deaths of Black[1] men at the hands

of police officers, namely the fatal shootings of Philando Castile, Alton Sterling, and, in Tulsa,

Oklahoma, Terence Crutcher, sisters Lauren and Leah Palmer of Oklahoma City sought healing

and community. Friends reached out to them, needing to mourn, and the Palmer sisters[2] and their

family responded by offering their home as a gathering place for the heavy-hearted. They made a

plan "to create a safe space for people of all contexts and experiences to grieve, to acknowledge

systematic injustices, to practice healthy conversations with members of other groups" (The

Conversation OKC Statement). This meeting turned into a productive series called "The

Conversation OKC," which sparked intellectual and emotional conversation and reflection. I

attended one of these sessions, along with Kate Strum, who attended all three. Kate and I knew

Leah from our time together at the OSU Writing Center. Just over a month after the series ended

and mere hours after the 2016 election, Kate reached out to Leah, Lauren, Jean (another writing

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[1] Throughout this dissertation, I capitalize Black because, as journalism professor Lori Tharps explained in the *New York Times*, "When speaking of a culture, ethnicity or group of people, the name should be capitalized. Black with a capital B refers to people of the African diaspora. Lowercase black is simply a color" ([Tharps](#)). While this logic would suggest that white should also be capitalized for consistency, I have chosen not to capitalize it in order to resist reifying its position of power. That is not to suggest that whiteness is not political or racialized; it is both.

[2] In this dissertation I use TCW team members' real names with their consent because all of our names are publicly associated with TCW, a public-facing non-profit, and as a team, we believe in transparency and accountability, which extends to this research process.

center friend and colleague), and myself with the broad goal of addressing the denial of systemic racism through listening and responding. We were all in[3]. Despite family challenges, emotional overload, and hectic schedules, we met that week to get to work.

After a couple of hours of discussion in an Oklahoma City coffee shop, we decided that we wanted to do more than initiate conversations; we wanted to provide communities with tools for really listening to each other and responding thoughtfully. Thinking of concerns she heard from several (mostly white) folks during The Conversation OKC, Leah reminded us of some attendees who were worried about the responses of their loved ones to their advocacy. While most of the folks at The Conversation believed in or had participated in Black Lives Matter protests or activities, they faced concern, resistance, and sometimes anger from loved ones and colleagues who either didn't understand or didn't empathize with the need for the protests or believed Black Lives Matter to be violent or overzealous. Many of the attendees seemed very motivated to address this fear and misplaced anger, but most felt unequipped to have productive conversations about racial justice with people they cared about, and many had tried with disastrous results.

All five of us have been educators at some point in time, so we put on our teaching hats and began developing an instructional workshop to foster antiracist community-building. Having participated in graduate studies in the English department at Oklahoma State, Leah, Kate, Jean, and I all had some experience with writing center theory and pedagogy and composition pedagogy. Feminist rhetoric was a particular focus of my doctoral studies as well as Jean's, though her

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[3] In this chapter and throughout this dissertation, I negotiate my voice with the voice of The Conversation Workshop team with two strategies:

1) I use "TCW" (which is plural), "the team," or "the workshop team" to indicate that the issue was a point of discussion in our meetings around which we developed consensus through explicit discussion.

2) In contrast, I often use "we" to indicate moments when I recall a feeling of consensus or mutuality in our meetings or correspondence but which I cannot point to a particular piece of data or documented moment because I don't have detailed transcripts for all of our early meetings. This collective "we" is often subjective and emphasizes my own felt sense of mutuality as a part of the process.

The team members have read these write ups to ensure that my use of "TCW" and "we" does not misrepresent their experience of our collaboration. I recognize that this approach is limiting and flawed, but I hope that my transparency about these decisions affirms the reader's sense of the role of "we" throughout the text.

specialization is Indigenous Literatures. Even in the first meeting, we began talking about rhetorical and pedagogical approaches to our workshop, but Lauren, who earned a Bachelor's in Music Performance and has spent time teaching music reminded us to slow down and think of the workshop experience not only as an opportunity to educate but also to help heal communities. We decided on a workshop model that emphasized community, hoping to enact a grassroots approach to education and advocacy. We called this model The Conversation Workshops, or TCW (which is plural, after "Workshops"), because of its roots in The Conversation OKC and our emphasis on strategies for intentional dialogue. This dissertation examines the process of developing TCW and the Conversation Workshops Pilot (CWP), its iteration as a pilot study in a university setting, through the lenses of autoethnography and institutional ethnography in order to critique our collaborative practices and develop a framework that collaborators can use to work toward accountability to the communities in which they work and the philosophies by which they operate. This study of CWP and our collaborative process works to recognize, acknowledge, and critically examine how the collaboration is impacted by oppressive systems and to uncover tools for fostering collaborative relationships that work to address and resist those systems.

With these goals in mind, our workshop model recruits participants through facilitators who provide information about the event to members of their own communities and extend invitations to those they feel are interested and ready. While we've observed educational workshops that advertise to communities by extending broad invitations, we knew we wanted to engage with existing, self-sustaining groups that could offer support and accountability to their members and transform communities from within. We also felt that TCW would work best with participants who are ready to begin doing the tough interpersonal work of addressing racism, so a broad invitation seemed like a significant risk. TCW seek partnerships with many different kinds of communities, including educators, church groups, social organizations, and parent groups, all of which are integral to the way that Oklahoma culture and attitudes have been and continue to be socially constructed.

At the beginning of February 2017, The Conversation Workshop curriculum was still developing, and, based on Jean's suggestion, we were planning to rely on Rogerian argument as a way to teach productive discussion across ideological difference. The Rogerian approach didn't feel entirely consistent with those goals for the workshop, but, as discussed in Chapter II, it wasn't until a I attended an event in which Dr. Andrea Lunsford discussed the ways that invitational rhetoric facilitated listening, encouraged yielding, and embraced non-coercion in order to foster mutual understanding that an alternative approach was revealed. Agreeing that this feminist approach was well-suited to our workshops, TCW team came to adopt invitational rhetoric as a central component of our workshop model and the developing curriculum. We hoped that this approach would provide language and structure for responding to local needs and attitudes in such a way that participants would feel respected and accounted for.

Team Composition

TCW collaborators' educational experiences and community backgrounds were important factors in the development of the workshop, and despite the fact that the team composition was not static, our interests would make a lasting mark. In March of 2017, Jean informed us that she would be unable to continue with TCW because finishing her dissertation and conducting her job search had become all-consuming. She was excited about the shift to invitational rhetoric, and she was very disappointed to have to bow out, but we all wished each other well. Then we became a team of four. The Palmer sisters, two mixed-race Black women, were born and raised in the Oklahoma City area. They both have deep ties to religious communities and arts communities that have fostered their entrepreneurial spirits. The two have collaborated on musical projects and started small businesses, and they have been deeply committed to improving OKC since graduating from a regional, Christian university, Lauren with an interdisciplinary Bachelor's degree in anthropology and music and Leah with a B.A. in English. Leah also earned a Master's in Literature from Oklahoma State, and, like Jean, her emphasis was Indigenous Literatures. Kate, a white woman from New York City by way of

Maine and Michigan, moved to Oklahoma in 2012 to pursue her MFA in Fiction at Oklahoma State, and she also took courses on Indigenous Literatures. I am a white woman from a small town in north Texas, and I moved to Stillwater, OK in 2013 to pursue a PhD in English with an emphasis on feminist rhetoric. During my second semester, I joined Kate as an Assistant Director in the Writing Center, and Leah worked on community engagement projects in the Writing Center. We also spent time consulting with writers and training and mentoring new consultants, which directly impacted our ideas about the interpersonal, collaborative nature of knowledge-making.

Informing the Workshops

The Conversation OKC events hosted by the Palmer sisters provided a wealth of information about the needs and goals of social-justice minded locals, and this experience helped to shape our approach to the workshop's content. Because Leah and Lauren grew up in Oklahoma City, we relied a great deal on their knowledge of the area and the communities, but by the time our collaboration began, Kate and I had also spent time getting to know the communities. Kate had gotten involved in multiple community organizations since moving to the City after graduating in 2015, while I divided my time between Stillwater, Oklahoma and Wichita Falls, Texas throughout my doctoral studies.

This knowledge of the community, which is discussed in depth in Chapter V, led us to include histories of systemic racism and a feminist invitational rhetorical model in the curriculum (Foss and Griffin). We also incorporate concepts from McIntosh's popular "Invisible Knapsack" essay and several guided exercises for reflection and discussion. The primary tool offered by TCW, is the invitational model, which, according to our TCW materials:

"views conversation as an invitation to the audience (Partner B) to enter your (Partner A's) world and see it as you do in order to generate understanding among those with different perspectives. If Partner B accepts, this approach fosters a relationship rooted in equality, immanent value, and self-determination. In order to achieve this goal, both Partners must be

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on board with the process, understand each other's goals for the conversation, and be willing

to listen."

This description of invitational discussion relies on Foss and Griffin's "Beyond Persuasion: A Proposal for an Invitational Rhetoric." In their article, Foss and Griffin characterize invitational rhetoric as offering "an invitation to understanding" and relying on "the offering of perspectives and the creation of the external conditions of safety, value, and freedom" (2).

The invitational approach has been critiqued by Lozano-Reich and Cloud as ineffective for addressing problems of political, economic, or social inequity, and they advocate an "uncivil tongue" for addressing issues of racism and inequality (220-1). We agree that "an uncivil tongue" is also essential for a multifaceted approach to making change, but TCW offer an additional strategy that responds to particular situations. This invitational model will only be effective in situations where both parties recognize each other's immanent value and self-determination (thus their right to accept or reject any invitation, assumption, or conclusion). This practice can be transformative for communities that are in desperate need of trust, mutual respect, and transparency, in part by fostering self- awareness and offering strategies for responding to our racist programming actively with a mind toward justice and equity.

My TCW collaborators are not scholars of rhetoric, but our instructional strategies draw heavily from three of our collaborative experiences as leaders in a university writing center and the reading and training in rhetoric we received there. Because TCW's curriculum provides resources for those who want to hone their skills in practicing listening, patience, accountability, and confident leadership, many of the tools we hope participants develop are very similar to a writing center director's hopes for their writing consultants. Thus the workshop draws upon pedagogical moves often incorporated into writing center training: we use tools for reflexivity, conversation modeling, and an invitational discussion guide, all of which can inform the process of intentional conversation.

The process of engaging in invitational conversations is very much like the peer-to-peer pedagogy that occurs within a writing center consultation, as discussed in Chapter II. This was not necessarily a deliberate goal, but as we discussed the curriculum, we began to discover and build upon the parallels.

The support of a university writing center in implementing the workshop further affirms the relationship between TCW curriculum and rhetoric and writing center pedagogy. In the spring of 2017, I already had a dissertation project in progress, but I wanted to be able to do more with TCW, so I spoke with our Writing Center Director, Dr. Anna Sicari, who agreed that the project was consistent with the mission of the Writing Center, which facilitates "open participation" and works to "celebrate diversity and growth by providing an environment in which differences are respected and students are encouraged to explore diverse voices" (*OSU Writing Center*). With the support of Dr. Sicari and my then-adviser, Dr. Lynn Lewis, I began the fall semester with a new prospectus and an IRB Proposal for the CWP. The pilot was a series of eight workshops co-hosted by the Writing Center and a co-organizer who recruited participants from their own group or office. I was able to collect data from five workshops between September 2017 and February 2018, and participants included faculty, graduate students, staff, and some undergraduates all from various disciplines.

Introducing the Workshops

The curriculum for TCW has gone through several iterations and revisions. Originally, we hoped to host a three-part series in which the same group of participants meets for about two hours once a week, but we tried this model and found it nearly impossible to maintain with groups that do not already meet very regularly. After failing to secure a second meeting with our first workshop group, we decided to revise the model to be a single four-hour event. This meant significant cuts from our original plan, but we maintained our initial enthusiasm and began to see how a one-day model would make our workshops more accessible to other populations we hadn't considered. While we

have continued to revise the workshop curriculum since we reshaped it to fit into a one-day event, the overall structure has remained constant.

In addition to supplemental resources and curricular materials for the workshops, the primary resource is a workbook, which we have called the participant packet, and this guides the workshop experience by providing information about the workshop's goals and stance, important background information, and spaces for reflection and processing. Since the pilot series ended, we have made many changes to the packet, so we are currently using packet revision four, but, in this document, I will primarily refer to the second revision of the packet, which is the version we used for most of the pilot series at Oklahoma State.

CWP Curriculum and Materials

The four-hour workshop is composed of three parts, which the packet outlines. The packet cover, shown in Figure 1.1, summarizes each of the three sections, which focus on the key words used to distinguish them: "Intentionality," "Dialogue," and "Community."

Figure 1.1 Packet Cover, Section Summaries

The summary of the Intentionality section asks participants to "Consider the ways you are affected by systems of racism each day," Dialogue invites them to "Explore this guide for talking about systems of racism with those you love, using intentional dialogue," and Community urges them to "Be accountable and encouraged on your interpersonal activism journey." TCW's Key Terms section, an excerpt from which is shown in Figure 1.2, describes this concept:

> Interpersonal activism occurs when you speak up for what you believe is right in day-to-day interactions with people you know. Being a good interpersonal activist, as with all kinds of activism, demands honest self-reflection and critical awareness of context. The Conversation Workshops techniques offer examples of interpersonal activism. Unlike attending a one-day march or protest, which is also a valuable way to engage, interpersonal activism demands long-term commitment to learning and everyday persistence. (42)

INTERPERSONAL ACTIVISM	Interpersonal activism occurs when you speak up for what you believe is right in day-to-day interactions with people you know. Being a good interpersonal activist, as with all kinds of activism, demands honest self-reflection and critical awareness of context. The Conversation Workshops techniques offer examples of interpersonal activism. Unlike attending a one-day march or protest, which is also a valuable way to engage, interpersonal activism demands long-term commitment to learning and everyday persistence.
INTERSECTIONALITY	Intersectionality is a term made popular by feminist theorist & civil rights advocate Kimberlé Crenshaw who articulated that multiple identities intersect dynamically to construct a whole person. These aspects of identity, which can include gender, race, social class, ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, illness, and others, are inextricably linked with one another, and they inform how the individual exists in the world and how multiple systems of power and oppression interact with and constrain the individual. Intersectionality centers the voices of those who have been most marginalized, and is essential if we want to work against systems of oppression.
INVITATIONAL RHETORIC	Invitational rhetoric views conversation as an invitation to enter another's world & see it as they do in order to generate understanding among those with different perspectives. This approach fosters relationships rooted in equality, acknowledgment of each person's immanent value, and each person's ability to determine their own understanding.

Figure 1.2 Key Terms - Defining "Interpersonal Activism", Packet Excerpt

The three sections work together to establish the need for interpersonal activism and to lay the groundwork for how to engage in it. The contents move from internal reflection to external analysis to teach strategies that prepare participants to have difficult conversations about racism across ideological difference. Because CWP is written for extra-curricular communities, the historical and cultural contexts are diverse, complex, and unpredictable. For this reason, CWP calls in its audience by drawing attention to shared emotional experiences in order to build relational equity and build upon collective experiences. This reflects our desire to demonstrate the value of cultural logics that resist hierarchical organization and that are rooted in collectivity and community.

The workshop procedures and curriculum are described in depth in Chapter III, and the workshop packet provides an overview of each section:

1. Intentionality – The workshop begins with the goal of establishing a thoughtful and intentional frame of mind to prepare you to have difficult conversations. We'll ask you to think about why you're here and what your goals are for the workshops. The most important and most challenging task of this section will be acknowledging implicit biases

and coming to terms with your own relationship to systems of racism, which are informed by a complex history of institutional racism.

2. Dialogue – The second part of the workshop offers a step-by-step tool for engaging in an open dialogue with someone you disagree with. Throughout this section, you will learn strategies for having these difficult conversations using the Invitational model—where one conversation partner invites another to consider his or her point of view. We will begin by looking at an example of an invitational conversation that confronts racist thinking within a relationship built on trust and mutual respect. We will then take a look at the model that this conversation was based on in order to learn how to foster this challenging, intentional, dialogue.

3. Community – The final part of the workshop provides an opportunity for you to practice an Invitational Conversation so you can be prepared to bring it into your community. We will begin thinking about what effects this could have within your community and your relationships, and we'll consider what kinds of complications may arise with this approach. In addition to addressing some ways of managing problems that may occur, we'll also discuss some of the limitations of the invitational model and what strategies might work when this method of the conversation isn't appropriate.

In addition to the main sections of the packet which guide the workshop activities, the packet contains supplementary materials in the Appendix including a list of Key Terms. A few terms that are relevant to the workshop and to this study are worth discussing. Pictured in Figure 1.2 is a description of "intersectionality," which is a contentious term. This is how TCW intends to use the term:

Intersectionality is a term made popular by feminist theorist & civil rights advocate Kimberlé Crenshaw who articulated that multiple identities intersect dynamically to construct a whole person. These aspects of identity, which can include gender, race, social class, ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, illness, and others, are inextricably

linked with one another, and they inform how the individual exists in the world and how

multiple systems of power and oppression interact with and constrain the individual. We

believe an intersectional approach to feminism, which centers the voices of those who have

been most marginalized, is essential if we want to work against the patriarchal systems of

power that perpetuate racism, misogyny, ableism, homophobia, transphobia, fatphobia, and

rape culture.

In order to understand and apply the concept of intersectionality, it is also crucial to name and

identify the systems of power that enforce the intersecting oppressions, and the primary structure that

TCW seeks to identify and resist is white supremacy, which sustains white privilege and fragility.

These terms are also defined in the Key Terms, as shown in Figure 1.3.

WHITE FRAGILITY	The clammy, uncomfortable, embarrassed, guilty, or avoidant feelings that arise in white people due to conversations about race or confrontations about racism. The privilege to avoid, bully, or restrict knowledge will silence any potentially productive discussion. White fragility may be a response to the fear that equity (or advancement) for people of color is a threat to white prosperity, power, and survival.
WHITE PRIVILEGE	A term for societal privileges that benefit people identified as white, beyond what is commonly experienced by non-white people under the same social, political, or economic circumstances. As defined By Peggy McIntosh: "a package of unearned assets that I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was 'meant' to remain oblivious."
WHITE SUPREMACY	"White supremacy" refers to the systems of power that perpetuate the assumption that white identity is both more prevalent and more valuable than other identities. White supremacy treats whiteness as the norm and the ideal, something to be protected and preserved at almost any cost. These systems work together in ways that are systemic & local, visible & disguised, social, political, and economic. White supremacy perpetuates social and political domination by white people by systemically and systematically devaluing people of color and their systems of value.

Figure 1.3 Key Terms - Defining "White" Terms, Packet Excerpt

The packet describes white supremacy as

the systems of power that perpetuate the assumption that white identity is both more

prevalent and more valuable than other identities. White supremacy treats whiteness as the

norm and the ideal, something to be protected and preserved at almost any cost. These

systems work together in ways that are systemic & local, visible & disguised, social, political, and economic. White supremacy perpetuates social and political domination by white people by systemically and systematically devaluing people of color and their systems of value.

In part, we provided this definition in order to clarify that we did not mean white supremacy to indicate only the organized and explicit hate groups that we call white supremacists, but the structures that reinforce and sustain the hatred, oppression, and exploitation of people of color. Our discussions also indicate that white privilege is manifested by white supremacy, and that rather than discussing white privilege as an individual problem, addressing the problem requires awareness of the ways that they are linked. TCW describes white privilege as the "societal privileges that benefit people identified as white, beyond what is commonly experienced by non-white people under the same social, political, or economic circumstances. As defined by Peggy McIntosh: 'a package of unearned assets that I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was 'meant' to remain oblivious'" (McIntosh 123). White fragility is another important point of discussion in TCW because it has a direct impact on our ability to have meaningful and intentional conversations about racism. The concept has been defined and explored in great depth by Robin DiAngelo in an article and a *New York Times* bestseller of the same title, and many antiracist scholars and pedagogues have also taken up the term. TCW's Key Terms describe white fragility rather simply as

> The clammy, uncomfortable, embarrassed, guilty, or avoidant feelings that arise in white people due to conversations about race or confrontations about racism. The privilege to avoid, bully, or restrict knowledge will silence any potentially productive discussion. White fragility may be a response to the fear that equity (or advancement) for people of color is a threat to white prosperity, power, and survival.

The descriptions of terms that are provided in the packet are not introduced as definitions, and they are rooted in our negotiations and understandings as a team rather than adapted from the extensive

scholarship that offers definitions, counter-definitions, and complications of these terms. Each entry in the key terms is the result of extensive conversation, revision, and editing amongst our team members with an eye toward a broad audience and a desire to steer clear of overly philosophical or academic language, which is consistent with our approach to the workshops and our understanding of an invitational approach.

Philosophies and Problematics

The use of invitational rhetoric as a central element of the workshop situates this project squarely in rhetorical study, but this project also draws upon and contributes to scholarship on community-engaged pedagogy and collaborative composing. More than twenty years ago, in "The Rhetorician as an Agent of Social Change" Ellen Cushman wrote that outside of our classrooms, rhetoricians could "empower people in our communities, establish networks of reciprocity with them, and create solidarity with them" (7). Citing Malea Powell and Paulo Freire (as well as Herzberg and Halloran), Cushman claims that "social change can take place in daily interactions when the regular flow of events is objectified, reflected upon, and altered," and rhetoricians can learn from, participate in, and influence these interactions as forms of activism (12-13). Cushman illustrates how rhetoricians can engage in activism through sharing literacy resources in non-academic communities. Since the publication of Cushman's essay, many rhetoricians have embraced this idea and demonstrated their commitment to community-based activism and public pedagogy in their scholarship, and that work has increasingly moved toward inter- and cross-disciplinary methodologies and approaches in the interest of inclusive coalition-building and multivalent action research. Anti-oppressive pedagogue and researcher Kevin Kumashiro asserts the need for interdisciplinarity and critical reflexivity in the research process, claiming,

Anti-oppressive research involves disrupting our resistance to critiques of our own practices. Research should not be done in ways that merely repeat the researcher's desire to affirm their

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identity as an anti-oppressive educator. I concede that it is often difficult for researchers to

acknowledge their own complicity with other forms of oppression, especially when they are

trying to challenge multiple forms of oppression. Yet, since educational practices cannot help

but be limited, they also cannot help but be problematic, which means that complicity is

always and necessarily in play. (Kumashiro 63)

More recently, critical Indigenous theorist and education researcher Sandy Grande affirms and

conceptualizes this need for collective or coalitional action from a perspective of decolonization and

refusal of the settler academy:

We must commit to reciprocity--the kind that is primarily about being answerable to those

communities we claim as our own and those we claim to serve. It is about being answerable

to each other and our work. One of the many things lost to the pressures of the publish-or-

perish, quantity-over-quality neoliberal regime is the loss of good critique. We have come to

confuse support with sycophantic praise and critical evaluation with personal injury. Through

the ethic of reciprocity, we need to remind ourselves that accountability to the collective

requires a commitment to engage, extend, trouble, speak back to, and intensify our words and

deeds. (Grande 61)

This ethnographic project about TCW emerges from a "commitment to reciprocity" as theorized by

Grande. As rhetoricians and researchers, our job is to analyze and interrogate. This often does not

seem to make room for love or passion or personal investment. But if a researcher is committed to

reciprocity, they must hold themselves accountable to the collective and be answerable for and to

their work. This piece is my attempt to analyze, interrogate, and critique my collaborative work on the

antiracist activist project that I have poured myself into for the last two years, and to do so without

devaluing the investments that I and my teammates and loved ones have made in this project. This

tension between my love for the project and my obligation to question it feels like a conflict of

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interest, but it is, in fact, out of love that I offer this critique. My hope is that transparency and a stance of curiosity and hope will help me not only maintain but enhance the integrity of our project by facilitating reflection upon how we not only teach invitational rhetoric but enact it in our collaboration. In order to acknowledge the limitations and nuances of our approach to the curriculum and to our collaborative process, this dissertation engages critically with a collection of data that illuminates the team's process of developing the curriculum and negotiating our roles as activists, allies/accomplices, collaborators, creators, educators, leaders, students, and researchers.

Situating and Problematizing the Curriculum

The analysis that follows emphasizes and interrogates the collaborative processes of developing and implementing TCW's curriculum. While elements of the workshops' contents emerge as relevant to the research questions (discussed below), problematizing the curriculum itself is not the priority of this project, although one could (and perhaps one will) write a book on all of the ways that the curriculum fails or could be improved. Seeking to hold myself accountable, I will clarify some of the limitations and problems I have sought to resolve or reckon with.

Throughout the development of TCW, I have pondered the challenges and limitations of using invitational rhetoric for antiracist activism. Following Foss and Griffin, the participant packet claims that part of the purpose of our adapted invitational model is to foster relationships "rooted in equality, immanent value, and self-determination" (The Conversation Workshop packet, 26). This does not suggest that using the model requires that a relationship has already achieved these goals. But Lozano-Reich and Cloud argue that invitational rhetoric is not appropriate for addressing injustices where there are power imbalances. Foss and Griffin's theory of invitational rhetoric suggests that the goals of feminist invitational rhetoric should not be to change the listener but rather to invite participants into understanding and to foster relationships rooted in feminist principles (5). The model applied in TCW amends that description to account for the fact that, ultimately, the

primary goal of the project is change, but the workshops have grown from the philosophy that the change we (the workshop team) hope for will grow from the development of relationships based on equality, immanent value, and self-determination. Not seeking to displace or discount more confrontational models, TCW's team agrees that "an uncivil tongue" is also essential for making change, but we seek to offer an additional strategy that responds to particular situations and goals. We discussed these concerns as a team, and we concluded that we can celebrate this strategy because we clearly convey that we recognize the limitations, and we emphasize that this model is merely one approach to confronting some manifestations of racism.

Recognizing that the invitational model we propose demands a significant amount of emotional and intellectual labor, our hope is that this model has the potential to make accomplices out of well-intentioned "allies," by-standers, and even unintentional racists, and to build bridges and heal interpersonal wounds that will foster the growth of coalitions by calling in to activism those who have been naive or ambivalent. TCW's goal of fostering accomplice-ship emerged as we began to develop the curriculum, and is reflected in some of the think pieces included on our resources list, like Rose Hackman's "'We Need Co-Conspirators, Not Allies': How White Americans Can Fight Racism" and Indigenous Action's "Accomplices Not Allies: Abolishing The Ally Industrial Complex." This approach is affirmed by the notion of accomplices that Neisha-Anne Green and Aja Martinez have written and spoken about. Green explains that she'll "know you're an accomplice when

    1. You can acknowledge your privilege—confession is good for the soul… and the movement;

    2. You can take a back seat and let the voices of the marginalized be heard loud and clear;

    3. You have stopped expecting others to educate you on these issues—that's lazy and annoying;

    4. You don't have to give yourself a title. Titles are overrated. If you have to say that you're against oppression, then chances are you're probably really not. If you have to announce that

you're an accomplice, then I already don't trust you. All I really wanna see is that WERK.

(Green 31-2)

Martinez's characterization explains that, "whereas allies are viewed as those who identify as helpers to the oppressed, accomplices are those who will bear the risk of consequences," and she challenges that would-be accomplices "move beyond the fallacious notion that our comfort should be central and guaranteed" ("The Responsibility" 231). This call to folks with privilege to take responsibility for engaging in antiracist advocacy, research, and practice is constantly affirmed by the discourse that shapes the culture and scholarship in composition and rhetoric. Conversations occurring on the WPA Listserv in 2018 and 2019 have sparked controversy, birthed new (and sometimes polarizing) communities, and affirmed the need for continuing education around advocacy and inclusion in our discipline. Tense conversations in threads about Dr. Vershawn Young's CFP for CCCC 2019, a request for example rubrics for assessing writing assignments, and an invitation to join Heterodox Rhetoric & Composition, for scholars who "value viewpoint diversity, open inquiry, and constructive disagreement" have incited skepticism and distrust within the discourse community and challenged contributors' ability to engage in difficult conversations, particularly those about race, gender, and equity with generosity and respect (Loewe; LaFrance; Goldstein).

TCW's approach to accomplice-ship and embrace of discomfort as a part of the process generates practices that can be transformative for communities in need of trust, mutual respect, and transparency, in part because it emphasizes that all of us are informed by systems of racism and implicit bias and it approaches antiracism as a process of constant learning and unlearning. If participants acting as Partner A in our conversation scenarios, recognize their own implicit biases and the difficulty of escaping the emotional or psychological responses informed by systemic racism, they will be able to engage intentionally and empathetically with their invited partner or Partner B. This intentional approach may not be able to deprogram racism, but it can be transformative by fostering

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self-awareness and offering strategies for responding to our racist programming actively with a mind toward justice, equity, and accomplice-ship.

In addition to teaching participants to acknowledge implicit bias and understand systems of oppression, TCW teaches strategies that prepare participants to have difficult conversations about racism across ideological difference, as described in depth in Chapter III. Readers familiar with Ratcliffe's concept of rhetorical listening may notice some similarities with our workshop's emphasis on listening as an antiracist principle, particularly with the tactic of "listening pedagogically" (Ratcliffe 146-63). Ratcliffe's tactics, while resonant with those we incorporate into the workshop, work toward building social and cultural understanding in the listener. These are important goals for TCW, but the conversational strategies our workshop presents focus on directly addressing racist or problematic ideas and philosophies while building relational equity. While it is clear that Ratcliffe's tactics are relevant within and outside of the classroom, TCW's antiracist strategies can be incorporated into classroom pedagogies, but they are responding to exigencies that emerge from elsewhere: from relationships in communities, workplaces, families, places of worship, etc.

These relationships exist in unpredictable dynamics of power which inherently affect the nature of the conversation. Our strategies provide tools for our audiences to interpret and adapt to these power dynamics while leveraging relational equity and enacting critical accountability. Concerns of the dynamic nature of power and positionality are relevant to the classroom, too, and, as Ersula Ore argues, "versatile modes of expressing pedagogical care need to be recognized within the historical and cultural contexts in which they are situated" (13-14). Because TCW are written for extra-curricular communities, the historical and cultural contexts are diverse, complex, and unpredictable. For this reason, TCW calls in its audience by drawing attention to shared emotional experiences in order to build relational equity and build upon collective experiences. This reflects our desire to demonstrate the value of cultural logics that resist hierarchical organization and are rooted in collectivity and community.

Project Outline

The interpersonal and reflective nature of TCW's curriculum fosters reflection on the researcher's and founders' identities, embodiment, and personal experiences. Consistent with the goals of TCW, this ethnographic inquiry seeks to critically examine the role of racial identity and experience in TCW's antiracist activist pedagogy. In feminist and critical studies, researchers aim to situate themselves in their research both for transparency and to subvert the expectation of idealized objective research. The autoethnographic process helped me remain accountable as a researcher whose larger project is not the research itself but rather developing tools to dismantle systems of power. As a white woman and feminist scholar in the privileged position of researcher, engaged in decolonial, antiracist work, I employ autoethnography to situate myself in a critical, reflexive process, and I augment this with strategies derived from institutional ethnography to examine the social contexts and dynamics of power at work in our organization. This combination of methodological approaches, both of which find a niche in writing and rhetorical studies, allows me to frame and interweave my integral objects of inquiry: TCW's organizational texts and practices, my experiences in TCW, and TCW's engagement with institutions and communities. This project contends with the following research questions:

- How does The Conversation Workshop model transition from a community setting to a university setting?

- How does embodiment influence the ways that group leaders plan for and conduct the workshop?

- What motivates participants to engage in the workshop?

- How will participants implement strategies from the workshop in their communities?

- These questions inform and intersect with a larger question: (How) Can feminist invitational rhetoric and writing center pedagogy allow us to enact more socially and racially just and responsive communities at a predominantly white institution (PWI)?

I collected data from various sites throughout the process of developing and implementing the workshops. My collaborators permitted me to use our process documents, including meeting notes, emails and other correspondence, planning documents, and finished materials for my research process. For five of the workshops in the pilot series, I was able to collect field notes with the help of a volunteer research assistant, and following the workshops, I collected survey responses from participants and had several participants volunteer to participate in focus groups to discuss the experience. During the pilot, the co-creators and I also engaged in a collaborative interview process to discuss the development of the curriculum. The data collection and analysis has produced findings that contribute to scholarship on collaborative composing, writing center studies, public pedagogies, and antiracist, decolonial, and feminist rhetorics.

Chapter II seeks to honor the people who have helped to shape and make way for this research through their work and mentorship. This review of literature and resources discussed the works that directly informed the content of TCW, those that helped us shape our pedagogy and philosophies, and those that offered methods and lenses for analysis.

Chapter III outlines the methodological framework for the blended ethnographic project, clarifying how autoethnography and institutional ethnography can incorporate strategies for resistance. I also describe the methods of data collection and analysis, problematizing the research process by acknowledging the potentially violent effects of my novice researcher status.

Chapter IV is an autoethnographic examination of the embodied and interpersonal experiences of TCW's co-creators through the process of collaboratively developing the curriculum. An analysis of the group and individual interviews, the meeting notes and correspondence, and my reflections on the

process provides insight regarding the inconsistencies between our workshop philosophy and our collaborative practices. These idiosyncrasies reveal problematic behavior from which the need for a process of accountable collaboration emerges.

Chapter V builds upon Chapter IV's autoethnography by incorporating an analytical lens of institutional ethnography to examine data pertaining to audience. Focusing primarily on data from interviews with co-creators, meeting notes, workshop materials, focus groups, and surveys, this chapter addresses a problematic: the co-creators' differing conceptions of our audience and the tension between those conceptions and our actual audience/participants. With a view to accountable collaboration, this chapter proposes a vision of collaboration that resists assumptions and invites partnership, one which is based on an invitational model that treats participants more like collaborators than passive audiences

Chapter VI delineates principles for understanding and implementing the concept of accountable collaboration and its attendant notion of the collaborator/participant. Breaking each concept down into key stances, connections are made to existing theories that support these principles in combination or independently, including those of writing center pedagogies, which have directly informed TCW and are reflected in the emergent concepts. Accountable collaboration introduces an approach to collaboration rooted in equitable valuation, critical reflexivity, relational equity, and reciprocal trust, and the enactment of these principles with intentionality and a view to inequity can help us reshape and rebuild not only the ways that we work with one another but also the ways that we model accountable collaboration for collaborators and students.

In the interest of holding myself accountable throughout this work, I have sought to enact an intentional citational politics by focusing my attention on the work of writers and scholars who are Black, Indigenous, or People of Color (BIPoC) and feminists and critical theorists whose work emphasizes intersectionality. Undoubtedly, there are flaws in this process, and this project is

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guaranteed to have excluded some relevant work by BIPoC and by white folks. Because this is a dissertation, I have not been quite brave enough to adopt the citation policy that Sara Ahmed describes in *Living a Feminist Life,* of not citing any white men, but I have attempted to cite "work that lays out other paths, paths we call desire lines, created by not following the official paths laid out by disciplines" (15). Because citation can be, as Ahmed says, "feminist memory" and "feminist bricks: they are the materials through which, from which, we create our dwellings," this dissertation is built upon, not only the foundation of feminist rhetorical studies on which my graduate study was based, but also on the relationships and mentorships that have enabled me to understand, develop, question, and challenge the rhetorical and institutional traditions in which that study is rooted.

Also rooted in feminist principles are the values of access and transparency. I have made additional choices that may seem unconventional throughout this document that are meant to make the text accessible to readers with diverse needs. When including images from the workbook or the data, I also describe or quote the relevant aspects of the image in the written text. This may feel redundant for some readers, but providing these details in the written text ensures that those who are unable to view or decipher the content of the images are able to access it through the text. Additionally, I have included the images rather than relying solely on the descriptions because they provide additional context for the smaller pieces of data that I've highlighted and serves to contribute to the spirit of transparency and reflexivity that I have strived toward in this project. In many cases, the design and context of the images provides additional insight regarding the labor and values of the workshop team. I have also provided hyperlinks within the text so that interested readers may easily access relevant information online if they are inclined. While this is dissertation was not written as a web text, the hyperlink feature is intended to acknowledge and account for how contemporary readers often engage with texts, and it demonstrates the value of context for understanding social justice research. With these critical textual features, I offer the present study with a view toward hope and accountability.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW: A SINCERE THANK YOU LETTER

This chapter recounts the journey through the literature and research that made this dissertation project possible, and that journey depended upon a great deal of guidance. At times throughout this story, the lines between scholarship, mentorship, and friendship are blurred, which reflects not only the personal nature of this research project and the ways that feminist research is often grounded in the personal and is inextricable from our lives, but it also illustrates the ways that our relationships move us, persuade us, and inform us, a principle upon which The Conversation Workshop (TCW) is based. I have had so many feminist and antiracist friends, mentors, and scholarly heroes that it is impossible to include all of the people and works who have guided me in this journey, but I hope that this review of literature functions as a sort of thank you letter to those whose work (as scholars, mentors, and friends) have had the most direct impacts on this research.

I still have several handouts from my first writing center conference, at least the ones that pertain to doing antiracist work in the writing center. I attended the 2012 IWCA Collaborative in St. Louis to co-lead a workshop titled "Be Our Guest: A Hospitable Approach to Facing Class in the Writing Center" with my dear friend Ashley. As a working class student who was the first in my family to attend graduate school, I was still navigating what that meant in the writing center of a medium-sized, liberal arts PWI, and inclusion and accessibility felt very important to me. I

had been paying attention to the impacts of oppressive structures, particularly sexism and heteropatriarchy, since taking Mrs. Hite's journalism courses in middle and high school and Mrs. Roger's English courses. During my undergraduate studies in English education, I learned about culturally responsive pedagogy from Dr. Julie Gates and feminist theory and criticism from Dr. Linda Kornasky, but it wasn't until working and researching as a Master's student in my second writing center that I began to see how my interests in social justice and budding expertise in literacy could be put to direct, actionable use in a higher education setting.

The Collaborative, the theme of which was "Writing Center Activism: From Ideals to Strategies," was co-chaired by my mentor and Writing Center Director, Dr. Kristen Garrison, with Dr. Laura Greenfield, whose co-edited collection, *Writing Centers and the New Racism: A Call for Sustainable Dialogue and Change*, was the 2012 winner of the IWCA Best Book Award. This conference, as the theme intended, illustrated the potential for doing activist work in writing centers and universities, and it was there that I began to see a role for myself in academia.

The first concurrent session I attended was a Round Robin titled "Beyond Activism with 'Good Intentions': Exploring Community Collaborations from a Social Justice-Centered Perspective" led by Moira Ozias, Casey Reid, and Jennifer Johnson. The knowledge and perspective I gained in that session and throughout the Collaborative continues to inform my understanding of writing center scholarship, leadership, and outreach, and events and connections made at that conference informed my decision to enroll in a PhD program which would support my interest in writing center research and outreach.

As described in the previous chapter, the Oklahoma State Writing Center, where I had the opportunity to serve as a graduate student Assistant Director for a total of three years, is where I met Kate, Leah, and Jean, all of whom contributed to The Conversation Workshop project and whose backgrounds and interests I described briefly along with Lauren's. We did not set out to

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draw so heavily upon our experiences in writing centers as we crafted TCW, which teaches

participants to acknowledge implicit biases and understand systems of oppression as well as

practice strategies for having difficult conversations about racism across ideological difference.

The following sections pull together the resources and experiences that TCW draws upon for

content, that inform our pedagogical approach, that shaped my research methodologies, that

transformed my analysis of the data, and that enriched my understanding of the implications of

the findings.

The Content of The Conversation Workshop

Our team approached the development of TCW with a great sense of urgency, and while

we knew this workshop couldn't address all of the problems we observed, from the beginning we

were confident that our experiences as students, teachers, organizers, and creators would

contribute something meaningful to our community through this collaboration. In the first

chapter, I described how TCW emerged from The Conversation OKC, Leah and Lauren's project,

the purpose of which was "to create a safe space for people of all contexts and experiences to

grieve, to acknowledge systematic injustices, to practice healthy conversations with members of

other groups" (The Conversation OKC Statement). These goals contributed to our thinking about

the development of the workshops that Kate invited us all to work on.

Kate's message was written just after Trump's election, and much of it was shaped by

concerns over folks who voted for Trump, though TCW does not maintain that focus because we

acknowledge that the problems of racism and intolerance are much larger and more sustained

than one man's presidency. Kate attributes the staggering numbers of white people who voted for

Trump to "white fear," saying in her message that, "Addressing [white fear] requires engaging

with those people, whether in argument or listening and responding. I'm writing because I feel

desperate to do more of that." Throughout the process of developing TCW, we have challenged

ourselves to do that and so much more. We have all held ourselves accountable for doing more of that, not only talking to more people about why Trump's words and policies are especially harmful to people of color, but also talking about racism and oppression more broadly. The workshop provides a method for expanding this call beyond our goals for ourselves, and it offers a way to call upon others to do this effectively and actively.

During our first meeting, we established that we wanted to create a workshop and we discussed what content was needed to scaffold participants toward the goal of addressing racism through conversation with those they care about. Between our meetings, Jean created an outline based on the initial discussion from which we were able to build and revise. This draft began with a discussion of the historical patterns of racism that have shaped our contexts, which we planned to approach drawing upon strategies and information used in Michelle Alexander's *The New Jim Crow* and Ava DuVernay's documentary *13th*, which begins with reverse chronology to illustrate how the current mass incarceration of people of color and the prison-industrial complex are the legacies of slavery, not only metaphorically, but directly because of the phrasing of the Thirteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which prohibited slavery except as punishment for a crime. We hoped that by using this method to provide TCW participants with contexts for racism, we would also give them strategies for talking to others about how current racial inequities are deeply entrenched in our racist history. While we did retain this approach to the history, over time the way we used the history section shifted and evolved. We created a timeline that we use as an appendix, which informs a few different sections for reflection and discussion. The next unit in the outline is the implicit bias exercise, which has retained the shape that was initially introduced by Leah and which is discussed in the previous chapter.

White Privilege and McIntosh

The next proposed segment in the workshop outline breaks down the concept of white privilege and draws upon McIntosh's landmark essay, "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack," which describes how white people benefit socially, legally, and economically from the ways that race is constructed and enforced. McIntosh describes white privilege as "an invisible package of unearned assets which I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was 'meant' to remain oblivious. White privilege is like an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions" (1–2). This essay has been recirculated in various formats by McIntosh and others, and our workshop segment re-mediates some of the content and reaffirms its goals. As we discussed how to incorporate McIntosh, Kate, who jokingly refers to her as Peggy, consistently advocated for her work's role in our curriculum, but I felt hesitant to spend much workshop time on this source, which I worried was overdone and too narrow for our intended, diverse audience. In particular, I knew that we would have participants from diverse racial backgrounds, but I anticipated that most of them would be familiar with the concept of white privilege and perhaps even with McIntosh's essay. I worried that by spending too much time talking about white privilege, we would send the wrong message about the goals of our workshop, which I hoped would quickly move past the need to recognize privilege and into the realm of resisting the larger systems of racism and oppression that have generated privilege.

Later, during the Conversation Workshop Pilot (CWP), my friend, committee member, and two-time CWP participant, Erin, affirmed my concerns by suggesting that I take a look at a couple of sources. In "McIntosh as Synecdoche: How Teacher Education's Focus on White Privilege Undermines Antiracism," Lensmire, et al. argue that teacher education has relied too heavily upon McIntosh's essay to do diversity or antiracist work, and that this approach limits the potential for understanding and collective action by treating confession of privilege as an end in itself. Lensmire's work revealed the role of critical whiteness studies in this project, which

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provided additional resources for understanding the role of the concept of white privilege in antiracist pedagogy.

Critical race and whiteness educational theorist Zeus Leonardo explains that because white privilege is constituted and upheld by white supremacy and its processes of domination, "a critical pedagogy of white racial supremacy revolves less around the issue of unearned advantages, or the *state* of being dominant, and more around direct processes that secure domination and the privileges associated with it" in order to confront the root of the problem (137). By distinguishing domination, an active process, from dominance, a state of being, Leonardo describes the ways that whites benefit from and are complicit in white supremacy, and thus how they can be held responsible for understanding and actively resisting structural oppression (137-9). Extending this, Barbara Applebaum proposes a pedagogical response to students' resistance to white privilege, suggesting that educators consider an approach to responsibility she derived from Young's Social Connection Model and Butler's articulation of responsibility to convey to students how, even though they did not create the system, their privilege signifies how they benefit from and are complicit in white supremacy, suggesting that they should take some responsibility for it (616-18).

Ultimately, these critical whiteness scholars suggest that an emphasis on white privilege places undue influence on the individual experience of whiteness and it inheres neither critical awareness of structural oppression nor personal or social responsibility for white supremacist systems. This project further describes and problematizes TCW's use of McIntosh's essay in Chapters I and V of this dissertation, and it is noted that this scholarship influenced our decision to situate the McIntosh section between a discussion of identifying the root causes of moments of racial tension participants have witnessed or experienced and a section in which we brainstorm the manifestations of white supremacy that we've observed.

Earlier in the process, another component of the initial plan, a dialogic model based on Rogerian argumentation, underwent significant revision based on my research interests. Before TCW became a research site, the workshop plan followed the McIntosh discussion with an introduction to a Rogerian model for dialogue, and this section was broken into activities that promote active listening and those that focus on negotiation. Jean, who suggested the model, had regularly taught Rogerian argument in composition courses, and Leah and I, who had also taught composition, were both quite familiar with it, so we initially agreed. Jean shared a couple of excerpts from text books that she had used to teach the model. Wood and Miller's *Perspectives on Argument* compared Rogerian argument to "traditional argument," emphasizing that Rogerian argument relies on empathy, affirming the opponent's *ethos* and working from common ground toward compromise or cooperation (282-86). Upon reflection, however, this model began to feel problematic for our goal of fostering meaningful discussions that foster antiracist consciousness. I felt hesitant to embrace a model that emphasized compromise as a goal. While seeking common ground is a worthwhile goal in many situations, I felt that this situation, in which participants were seeking ways to move others toward antiracist understanding, emphasis should be placed on self-determination rather than compromise or negotiation.

As we were still developing the curriculum, I attended a workshop at the University of Oklahoma, after receiving an invitation from Dr. Lewis, the Director of First Year Composition at Oklahoma State and my supervisor. Along with the other Assistant Directors of Composition and Dr. Lewis, I went to the workshop and lunch sponsored by Bedford/St. Martin's at OU on Friday, February 24, 2017. Dr. Andrea Lunsford attended lunch and then gave a workshop on "'Rhetorical Analysis at This Moment in Time,' providing strategies, activities, and opportunities for you and your colleagues to help students analyze the arguments they're reading and seeing in the media, and to produce effective writing from that analysis" (Bratcher). Dr. Lunsford discussed

ways to deploy social media and engage with current events before lauding the benefits of teaching invitational rhetoric. I had read about feminist invitational rhetoric before that afternoon, but I had not considered it as a model for first year composition, in part because it had not been a central element in the textbooks or resources assigned to the courses I had taught. Hearing Lunsford talk about the ways that invitational rhetoric facilitated listening, encouraged yielding, and embraced non-coercion in order to foster mutual understanding sparked my imagination.

Although the lecture was not focused on invitational rhetoric entirely, I began to consider how invitational rhetoric could also inform my approach to pedagogy, which would enable me to view engagement with students in a way that was more consistent with my feminist values of self-determination and immanent value. An invitational approach to pedagogy asks instructors to acknowledge students' beliefs and experiences as valid and as factors in classroom learning, and this is a strategy that I have tried to enact as a teacher and as a mentor to new teachers. I also immediately felt IR's resonance with our approach to the workshops. I started researching that evening and found articles and book chapters, a few of which I brought to TCW team at our meeting the following Sunday. Agreeing that a model that emphasized the immanent value of all parties and their right to self-determination would fit well with our approach to interpersonal activism, TCW team came to adopt invitational rhetoric as a central component of our workshop model and the developing curriculum.

Foss and Griffin's alternative rhetorical approach resists the coercive principles of traditional rhetorical models in favor of an emphasis on fostering "relationships rooted in equity, immanent value, and self-determination" (5). This "invitation to understanding" is characterized "by the openness with which rhetors are able to approach their audiences" (5-6), and this occurs because of the shaping of external conditions that promote safety, value, and freedom for all participants (10). As a team, we reviewed and discussed Foss and Griffin's original article, "Beyond Persuasion: A Proposal for an Invitational Rhetoric," along with a couple of descriptive

summaries and critiques. We talked through the concept and our concerns. I had some worries that, like Lozano-Reich and Cloud suggest, the approach would be too forgiving of harmful or problematic ideas. Arguing that IR is not appropriate for addressing injustices where there are power imbalances, their critique asserts that, "it is irresponsible to displace more confrontational models for social change in favor of a politics of civility that has been proven to leave those already disempowered in a continued state of conformity, punishment, and/or silence" (224). Arguing for an "uncivil tongue," Lozano-Reich and Cloud point out that invitational rhetoric equates persuasion with violence, positing itself as an ethically superior communicative form because it resists the violence of coercion (27-8), but Foss and Griffin acknowledge that invitational rhetoric is not well-suited to all situations. In my initial reading of IR, I did not understand it as promoting a politics of civility, but this critique left me concerned and unsure. I shared these concerns with my team when I introduced IR as a potential model. We agreed that the emphasis on fostering equitable relationships was well-aligned with our approach, and that Foss and Griffin's article did not suggest that IR was a more ethical or all-encompassing form of rhetoric than others, as some critiques suggest (Bone, Griffin, and Scholz 439-41). We felt as though taking responsibility for discussing a broad range of alternatives to IR for contexts in which it would not be a good fit would help to alleviate some of our concerns and to ensure that the workshop was well-rounded and useful.

After deciding to model the dialogues section after IR, I drafted and revised (and revised and revised) a flowchart that adapted the concept laid out by Foss and Griffin to our purposes: having meaningful conversations in which we call in our loved ones, inviting them to share in our antiracist goals. In "calling in," I'm referring to an intentional practice recently celebrated in intersectional feminist solidarity work which is distinguished from, but not a proposed replacement for, calling out. Some characterize the approaches as different based on their publicness, describing calling out as a public act intending to draw collective attention to

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behaviors or language that is problematic in order to establish community boundaries, and calling in as a private act that focuses on the growth and understanding of the individual who perpetuated an oppressive idea in order to strengthen a collective (Burns; Ahmad; Ferguson; Grieve). While the nature of the behavior is a relevant characteristic, the aspect which most resonates with TCW's invitational model is the central purpose of calling in, which is to foster strong, accountable communities. Providing a disclaimer that this approach should be used with "people who we want to be in community with, people who we have reason to trust or with whom we have common ground. It's not a fuckery free-for-all for those with privilege to demand we put their hurt feelings first regardless of the harm they cause," Ngoc Loan Trần explains that sometimes calling out is necessary and that anger is valid, but collaborative solidarity work often demands compassion and commitment. Ferguson acknowledges the emotional capacity required for calling in and clarifies that because of the emotional and mental energy that people of color and other marginalized folks expend to educate those with privilege about oppressive attitudes and behaviors, white people or accomplices with privilege are often in a position to call in with less risk of exhaustion and further harm. This is where the model for invitational dialogue comes in. Figure 2.1 shows the flowchart in its middle stages, a later version of which is shown in Chapter III.
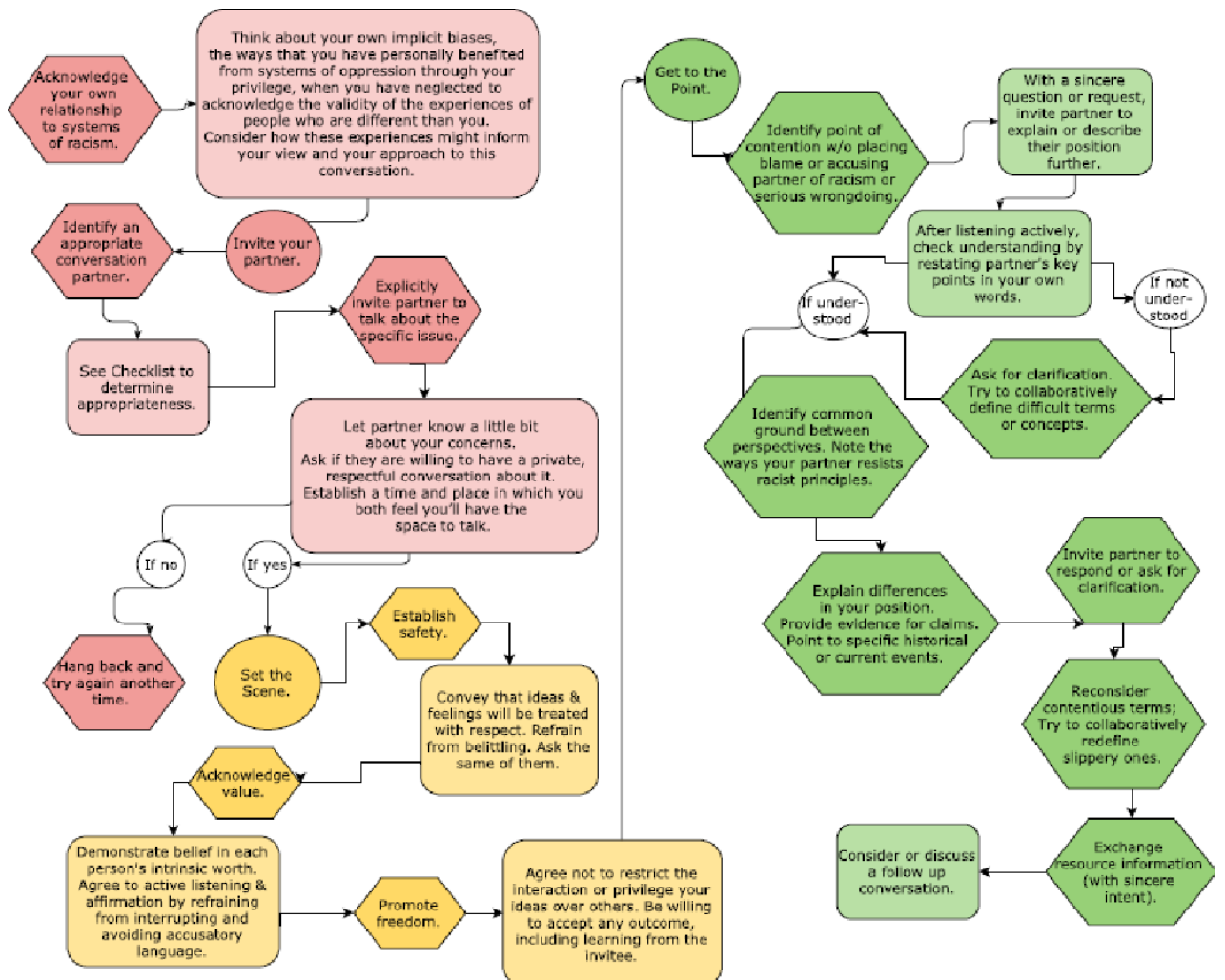
Figure 2.1 Draft of Invitational Flowchart, in Color

The colors in the flowchart indicate the stages of the process. The six stages were later outlined for easier discussion and accelerated understanding.

In the original outline, the introduction to Rogerian argumentation was followed by role playing, which we planned to model and then have participants act out their own scenes using the principles we established. After switching to IR, we decided to use models to teach the concepts of IR, and we drafted two scenes based on the structure of the flowchart. In the revised version of the workshop, those comprised the Dialogues section, which is followed by the Community

section, in which participants share and discuss their own situations in which IR might help them address problematic or racist ideas, and they take a few minutes to practice starting those conversations. Interestingly, as we began to plan how to structure parts two and three of the workshop, we were reminded of our experiences with writing center orientation and training, and we began to draw upon those experiences more deliberately.

Underlying Principles of BIPoC Feminisms

In addition to the formal influences on the workshop's content, TCW team also drew upon our experiences as students and educators to inform our approach. As I mentioned in Chapter I, Kate, Leah, and Jean had all formally studied Indigenous literatures in graduate school. Lauren had recently taken up researching Native American experience and history as well in order to recover ancestral knowledge, and I had been reading more on Indigenous rhetorics and current events to stay informed for solidarity and feminist coalition-building. Our emphasis on story-telling as a way to build community, foster kinship, and ground conversation in the local, emerged naturally in our conversations. Although we didn't draw explicitly from scholarship to inform this approach, resonances with Jackson's work on storytelling as a mode of theorizing, resisting, community-building, and pedagogy in Indigenous communities emerge ("Resisting"). Our ways of thinking about the pre-existing communities with whom we hoped to work is illuminated by scholar of Indigenous history and literature, Lisa Brooks' call to Native scholars in which she theorizes Harjo's concept of "thinking in skin" as intellectual work that participates in the world materially, and that "acknowledges its embeddedness in experience, which cultivates and expresses an intimate relationship in the world in which it thinks" (242). This can include storytelling, theorizing, analysis, protest, and more, none of which are mutually exclusive. In particular, Lauren embraced caretaking as her role, and she advocated for the need to incorporate participants' whole selves in the knowledge making process. Describing her approach to incorporating "Local Native Knowledge" in the classroom, Joyce Rain Anderson explains that

"Like other indigenous ways of knowing, these activities connect and educate the mind, heart, body, and spirit" (166). Lauren guided the rest of the team in working toward similar goals, hoping that, like Anderson, we could work toward "connecting the whole" (167).

Our desire to move toward holistic learning and healing was also rooted in Black feminist and womanist theory, and we would frequently gesture to bell hooks and Patricia Hill Collins in our meetings. These works informed our approach to developing the workshop, but we did not explicitly incorporate their writing into the workshop's content. In *Teaching to Transgress*, hooks advocates for an "engaged pedagogy" that "emphasizes well-being," and requires teachers, who are characterized as like healers, to "be actively committed to the process of self-actualization that promotes their own well-being" (15). I didn't realize the extent to which these goals could generate tensions with my indoctrination as a scholar, which hooks explains encourages compartmentalization, objectivity, and emphasis on the mind (16-17). Similarly, Black feminist and sociologist Jennifer L. Richardson highlights the importance of healing for collective action and political resistance as she describes her use of healing circles as pedagogy, arguing that,

> in order to produce true social transformation and strive for a radical notion of collective
> freedom, we must pay attention not only to our political/ideological positions, but also to
> our individual and collective practices of self-care and healing—practices that are
> themselves deeply political. Pedagogies and praxis in the Black feminist tradition that are
> accountable to oppressed communities must take a serious look at healing, balance, and
> self-care as powerful forms of resistance to hegemonic cultures and structures. (282)

Along similar lines, considering how to work toward a "Beloved Community" following Martin Luther King, Jr.'s notion, Patricia Hill Collins explains that "Communities negotiate power across differences. What makes a community a 'beloved' community is that people within it are committed to working through the differences in power in ways that make communities fair

for everyone" (148). And like Collins, hooks, and Richardson, the TCW team brought with us backgrounds in critical pedagogy informed by the traditions of Freire and Giroux, both rooted in the idea that critical learning is a social process which can be used to uncover systems of power and oppression in order to work toward a more equitable society. In our early conversations about the workshops, these thinkers emerged as important to our approach, but because we did not anticipate that scholars would be our primary audience, we planned to limit the citations and scholarly justifications in the content in order to maintain an accessible, conversational tone.

Writing Center Pedagogy in TCW

Also underlying our approach but not explicitly cited in the content was a wealth of writing center scholarship and experiences of tutor training and pedagogy. At a coffee shop during one of our early meetings, as we developed strategies for teaching IR in the workshops, I felt a little giddy when I realized that our plan to model an invitational conversation in a "fishbowl" format was almost precisely how we taught session formats in writing center training. Kate laughed at my announcement, but I continued thinking about the parallels between the work that we were doing in TCW and writing center pedagogy. Similar to what we ask of writing center consultants, we sought to teach participants a non-coercive/non-directive approach to having patient, equitable, one-with-one conversations about difficult, personal (because writing is always personal) topics. Both kinds of conversations seek to foster learning through active listening and critical thinking, and there is a rich history of writing center scholarship that works to acknowledge and resist inequity and oppression and provides examples of writing centers doing that work.

I think that Geller, et al.'s *The Everyday Writing Center: A Community of Practice* (*TEWC*) was the first whole book that I read on writing center practice, as suggested by Dr. Kristen Garrison, who began directing the writing center in which I worked as a Master's student.

Of course, I'd been assigned articles and book excerpts as a part of my training as an

undergraduate peer tutor, but it was during the same year that I attended my first writing center

conference that I began to read this scholarship as not just technical guidance but as theories of

practice. So in thinking about the role of writing center scholarship in shaping TCW, I return to it

to help me envision the role of workshop participants as compared with writing tutors. In the

following excerpt from *TEWC*, the authors discuss their tutors' identities as writers, and that

parallels TCW's approach to our workshop participants' identities as activists:

> Fostering writerly [activist] identity is not our ultimate goal; it is how those identities
>
> participate in a writing center [antiracist] community of practice that is most important.
>
> We turn again to Wenger to help us explain. He tells us that a community of practice
>
> must be engaged in activities that are meaningful and must have ways of 'talking
>
> about…shared historical and social resources… that can sustain mutual engagement in
>
> action,' that participants' competence must be recognized, and that there must be 'a way
>
> of talking about how learning changes who we are and creates personal histories of
>
> becoming in the context of our communities' (4-5). (Geller et al. 82-3)

Fostering recognition of the fact that, because our learning informs who we are, most of the tutors

and writers who move through the writing center have been shaped by systemic racism, *TEWC*

asserts that, because writing centers are spaces that people seek to learn and develop insight, "If

we have communities of practice that are diverse in the places where meaning is negotiated, […]

then we have, at least potentially, a set of conditions in which anti-racism work might

productively begin" (Geller et al. 92).

Writing center scholarship has continued to develop and theorize the ways that centers

can do antiracist work, and, while much of this work focuses on tutor development and training,

this work played a significant role in TCW's development. Greenfield and Rowan's collection

and their chapter on "the Twelve-week Approach" emphasize that meaningful engagement in antiracism requires ongoing conversations rather than treatment as a passing topic, a notion which is also embedded in the IR model taught by TCW (130). Grimm's *Good Intentions*, likewise, asserts that not only must we talk about race and racism regularly, but antiracist writing center work demands that we reconsider the ways that our practices and training are informed by and may maintain systems of oppression and white supremacy. Scholarly work that outlines particular training practices that can guide tutors in thinking about race and racism as it pertains to language (Suhr-Sytsma and Brown; Young; Villanueva), embodiment (Martinez; Godbee, Ozias, Tang), and responsibility (Blazer; Diab, et al.) continue to inform this work as well.

Another foundational writing center text affirms this approach, calling the writing center a site for the "mediation of differences" (Grimm 46). Nancy Grimm writes, "[W]riting center workers must be prepared to offer more compelling and more socially just visions of literacy to counteract the simplistic understandings that lend themselves to social ranking rather than communication" (46). While striving toward more socially just futures is central to the mission of many writing centers, even more common is the emphasis on writerly agency and the idea that students coming to see themselves as writers is an indicator that they are also more fully articulating themselves and their identities. In *Facing the Center: Toward an Identity Politics of One-to-One Mentoring*, Harry Denny takes this idea further, explaining that in writing centers, he

> came to realize identity wasn't merely about self-discovery; [he] also began to understand
> its rhetorical dimensions, that how identity was invoked (its presentation) mattered and
> that, when well-executed, could make social change happen, maybe not monumental
> change, but local shifts or micro-successes, that might culminate in a tipping point. (7-8)

Like Denny with writing center sessions, TCW approaches invitational discussions about race and racism as potential sites of local shifts toward antiracism.

While many writing center scholars have questioned and reconsidered the emphasis on the "non-directive" approach upon which many foundational writing center texts rely (Denton 179), it remains a staple of writing center training, although it is likely to be introduced with more nuance and qualification. Non-directiveness is less a rule for writing center practice than a habit, and this habit illuminates another parallel: writing centers as "non-directive" and IR as "non-coercive." TCW selected IR in part because the familiar relationships at the root of our mission would not be improved by appeals to authority or coercion. Affirming this pattern, Valentine's recent study of the concept of listening in writing center scholarship and training materials demonstrates the many ways that listening can occur and the different purposes it can work toward, including building interpersonal relationships through respect and empathy, which is also central to TCW's approach (99-101). Similarly, writing center trainings frequently emphasize that tutors are the writers' peers, particularly in that they do not evaluate the writing, which is believed to make the writing center a judgment-free zone, although that peerness has been challenged (Godbee, "A (Re)Cognition of Peerness"). While the relationships in question in TCW are often not between peers, Godbee's discussion highlights some disparities between tutors and writers: "Situated in a recognizable room with work they know and perhaps enjoy, tutors are in a position of power. Writers, on the other hand, enter a new and often strange setting with difficult work ahead" (14). Similarly, while power differences between conversation partners in question for TCW may vary greatly, it is likely that, like tutors with writing, workshop participants will be more prepared and familiar talking about race than will their invited partners, and in both cases, recognizing and making transparent this disparity works to de-mystify the subject and to enter a challenging conversation in a friendlier, more patient, and less contentious way.

Researching the Conversation Workshop Pilot

As I began to realize the significant connection between the work of TCW and the writing center, I wanted to continue writing and thinking about the parallels and the potential. I

was already working on a dissertation project, but in the Spring of 2017, as I was struggling to balance my interest and investment in TCW with my formal dissertation project, my dear friend Rachel posed a transformative question: "Why don't you just research the workshops?" Almost immediately, I felt that was the thing I needed to do, and, thanks to the enthusiastic support and research expertise of our new writing center director, Dr. Anna Sicari, and Dr. Lewis's approval, by the Fall of 2017, my new dissertation project and the Conversation Workshop Pilot were both up and running, as is described in detail in Chapter I.

This rapid revolution would not have been possible had it not been for my prior experience with qualitative research, which I owe to Dr. Becky Damron, my former writing center director, mentor, teacher, and friend. Having met Dr. Damron at the IWCA Collaborative in 2012, I chose my university in part because she was an enthusiastic writing center director and scholar. Along with Kate Strum, I served as an Assistant Director of the writing center under Dr. Damron, and I also had opportunities to be her Research Assistant, collecting qualitative data, and to conduct my own research project for her course on Writing Center Theory and Research. In combination with my other coursework, these experiences taught me about grounded theory research, particularly in writing center settings, autoethnography, and particular methods including interviewing and qualitative coding.

My affinity for feminist research methods may have predetermined my interest in grounded theory research, which Charmaz describes as

> a set of flexible analytic guidelines that enable researchers to focus their data collection and to build inductive middle-range theories through successive levels of data analysis and conceptual development. A major strength of grounded theory methods is that they provide tools for analyzing processes, which hold much potential for studying social justice issues. (507-8)

Building upon the foundational work of Glaser and Strauss and Corbin and Strauss on grounded theory, feminist sociologist Kathy Charmaz pushes grounded theory beyond its positivist origins and proposes a constructivist approach that reshapes it toward social justice research. This constructivist approach, consistent with feminist research methods, emphasizes the importance of situating the researcher in the research and "fosters integrating subjective experience with social conditions in our analyses" (Charmaz 510).

This feminist, constructivist grounded theory approach resonated with the scholarship on writing center research methods and autoethnography with which I was familiar. In particular, I recalled using Joyce Magnotto Neff's "Capturing Complexity: Using Grounded Theory to Study Writing Centers" on a research project for Dr. Damron in order to develop a coding process that was aligned with the data I had collected. Babcock and Thonus's *Researching the Writing Center* also provided guidance for shaping the research design and offered insights regarding the ethical concerns surrounding types of data that circulated through and are available in and around writing centers and what collection techniques might best fit the context.

While writing center scholars helped to shape my initial approach to the research design, I knew that I would need to broaden my methodological scope to account for the aspects of my research that pertained to race, whiteness, and antiracism. One of the first and most influential texts that provided me with insight related to research in and against systems of oppression was Leigh Patel's *Decolonizing Educational Research: From Ownership to Answerability*, which frames research as a dynamic "relational force," taking shape with its sociopolitical, economic, and cultural contexts (48-51), reminds us that researchers are entangled in those contexts (55), and suggests useful series of questions for researchers who seek answerability for their research (57-65).

For methodological insight, I first turned to research on autoethnography (AE), and Jennifer Potter's "The Whiteness of Silence: A Critical Autoethnographic Tale of a Strategic Rhetoric" not only deployed Ellis and Bochner's foundational work on how critical AE tell evocative stories that reveal layers of consciousness and connect "the personal to the cultural" (Ellis and Bochner, "Autoethnography, Personal Narrative," 739), but also provided a valuable model for using AE as a critical lens for understanding whiteness. Brett Lunceford's article on rhetorical AE affirmed my feelings about the relevance of the method in feminist rhetoric, and Ellis and Bochner's "Analyzing Autoethnography: An Autopsy" challenged me to push the limits of my comfort with scholarly writing. In a special issue of *Cultural Studies/Critical Methodologies*, I found support from two articles on AE as a decolonizing method, both of which informed my analytical process, though if I had come across them earlier in my process, my research design may have been affected (Chawla and Atay; Dutta).

Another strand of ethnographic research was crucial to my data analysis, although it is intended to inform research design as well. Early in my writing process but after I had completed data collection, during a writing check-in with Abby, my friend and fellow feminist rhetoric dissertator, who was conducting an institutional ethnography, I realized that I had all of the makings of an institutional ethnography (IE). I had set out to do an extensive AE, but my data covered almost every aspect of TCW. While I cannot properly claim that my research is IE, Dorothy Smith's foundational theorizing of the method had a significant approach to how I organized, analyzed, and reflected upon the data for Chapter V. Smith describes IE as

> designed to create an alternative to the objectified subject of knowledge of established social scientific discourse. The latter conforms to and is integrated with what I have come to call the 'ruling relations' – that extraordinary yet ordinary complex of relations that are textually mediated, that connect us across space and time and organize our everyday lives

– the corporations, government bureaucracies, academic and professional discourses,

mass media, and the complex of relations that interconnect them. (11)

Composition and writing center scholars have taken up IE as a framework to interrogate

problematic structures and concepts in their workspaces and advocated for others to do so

(LaFrance; LaFrance and Nicolas; Miley). Further, Nancy Taber's work on combining AE and IE

demonstrates the value that the interplay between these two methods can contribute to an

ethnographic project:

> Autoethnography is appropriate for use in IE, as 'autoethnography is defined as a form of
>
> self-narrative that places the self within a social context' (Reed-Danahay, 1997b: 9), and
>
> IE explores the social from the point of view of the self's every day. Writing an
>
> autoethnographical narrative is not enough to fit into an institutional ethnographic
>
> process. The narrative must be explored in relation to institutional practices. (15)

Taber initially resorts to AE as a supplement when she is denied access to the subjects she wanted

to interview, but she finds that combining AE and narrative into her IE offered insight into IE as

"a relational research process" (19). Alternately, I began with a process of AE and supplemented

with IE, finding that the relational element made possible a more critical perspective, particularly

since my attempt to work toward a decolonial AE as a white woman researcher would be

constrained by my privilege and settler status.

Analyzing with a Decolonial Lens

As I analyzed and attempted to write up the findings, I turned to sources that reflect the

interdisciplinary nature of this project. Foundational texts in anti-oppression and decolonial

scholarship provided terms relevant to my analysis. In particular, Tuck and Yang, as well as

Grande and Patel, offered contemporary frameworks in which to situate my research as related to

theories of decolonizing in education. Tuck and Yang help to situate the works of Fanon and

Freire in terms of how to locate our approach to antiracist pedagogy, asserting

> Freire situates the work of liberation in the minds of the oppressed, an abstract category
>
> of dehumanized worker vis-a-vis a similarly abstract category of oppressor. This is a
>
> sharp right turn away from Fanon's work, which always positioned the work of liberation
>
> in the particularities of colonization, in the specific structural and interpersonal categories
>
> of Native and settler. ("Decolonization" 19-20)

My education in pedagogy emphasized Freire's foundational work, so critiques of applications of

his philosophies which "encouraged educators to use 'colonization' as a metaphor for oppression"

prompted me to consider the ways that my reliance on these philosophies may have contributed to

an abstract approach to anti-oppressive pedagogy and to understanding colonization and

decolonization. Decolonial theorist Walter Mignolo explains that, "Colonization of languages,

memory, and space implies that conflicting concepts, values, and actions directed toward

language, memory, and space begin to coexist, although social and political power is not equally

distributed" (256). And Indigenous rhetorics scholar Malea Powell reminds us of the continued

realities of colonization, explaining that, "because the processes of colonization have continued

unremitted in Indian country for over 500 years, it is difficult to describe American Indians as

either "postcolonial" or "neocolonial" peoples. The occupying force has not been, nor will it ever

be, withdrawn" (Powell 399). While colonization does impact ways of thinking, communicating,

and other abstract processes, decolonization, according to Sandy Grande, "begin[s] and end[s]

with land and its return" (52). Considering this characterization, neither TCW nor this study can

claim they are decolonial projects because their focus is not land. But this reflexive project does

rely upon decolonial theory in that it seeks to acknowledge and resist the structure of settler

colonialism as well as its "co-constitutive logics" (Grande 53).

45

Drawing upon decolonial methodologies, this study works from Chawla and Atay's approach to autoethnography, which describes the value of decolonial critique:

> Decolonial frameworks focus on hybrid experiences, practices, and identities, as well as on the ideologies, performances, and practices that actively question, critique, and challenge colonization. At the same time, such practices also focus upon the colonizers. On one hand, decolonization entails a process whereby the colonized critique and challenge Western ideologies and power structures, on the other hand, it addresses the colonizer, who must strive to achieve a degree of self-reflection, which illuminates the negative impact of colonization and how she has gained from it. (5-6)

This decolonial approach combined with an attention to the ways our process adapted the philosophies of feminist invitational rhetoric directly informed my data coding process and my reflections as I sought to engage in reflexive, accountable collaboration.

Considering Implications

As I considered the value of my findings and worked to understand how those findings related to relevant scholarship, feminist rhetoric, my scholarly home, provided valuable supplementation and resonance. Early in the analytical process, Aimee Carrillo Rowe's work on transracial feminist alliance productively intersects with my AE analysis in Chapter IV, which problematizes TCW's collaborative process and transracial alliance. Rowe asserts that, "The presence of transracial alliances often anchors a process of transformation that goes beyond the intellectual understandings of power and privilege and moves into the realm of embodied knowing" (44). This affirms TCW's process of discovering how to collaborate in such a way that works toward equitable valuation of embodied knowledge, particularly across racial difference, as discussed in Chapter VI.

Krista Ratcliffe's oft-cited *Rhetorical Listening* provides a foundation from which to build in discussing TCW's approach to antiracist interpersonal activism, particularly in the tactic of "listening pedagogically" (Ratcliffe 146-63). Ratcliffe's tactics resonate with those we incorporate into the workshop, which work toward building social and cultural understanding in the listener, and TCW's strategies seek to extend these by focusing on directly addressing racist or problematic ideas and philosophies while building relational equity. Ratcliffe's assertion that rhetorical listening "applies not just to the discourses of others but also to the discourses of one's self" is reflected not only in TCW's approach but also in my reflexive, AE process. This process, while primarily shaped by critical and decolonial approaches to ethnography, also draws upon my investment in Royster and Kirsch's *Feminist Rhetorical Practices*, which provides multiple innovative frameworks for "tacking in" and "tacking out" through strategic contemplation. Echoing Krista Ratcliffe's *Rhetorical Listening*, Royster and Kirsch suggest that by "attending to the subtle, intuitive, not-so-obvious parts of research" a scholar can draw from visceral and embodied experiences (85), while enacting an understanding of rhetoric as a "multivariant and polylogical" "social practice" (90). Although this study doesn't apply Royster and Kirsch's tools for inquiry methodically, it does seek to respond to their call to scholars of feminist rhetoric to engage in inquiry that "engender[s] and ethos of humility, respect, and care" through reflexive methods and tools for accountability (21).

The emphasis on reflexivity and collaboration also inherently resonates with scholarship on public and community-engaged pedagogy, like Rousculp's *Rhetoric of Respect*, which offers relevant notes on trust. Rousculp explains that trust, which I discuss in Chapter VI, is integral to a rhetoric of respect and to critical pedagogies. Drawing upon Drew's notion of "students-as-travelers" and "Freire's, Shor's, and Rose's recognition of the entire lives of learners," Rousculp approaches collaborators as fellow travelers, "in temporary relationships with one another in a strange environment" that keeps them from feeling settled but in which they must "be with one

another in [their] work, to learn from one another, to collaborate" (80). This productive approach to self-reflection resonates with other scholarship on public pedagogy, particularly work like Ellen Cushman's "The Rhetorician as an Agent of Social Change," which establishes a framework for rhetoric scholars doing participatory action research. This landmark essay demonstrates how rhetoricians can learn from, participate in, and influence public rhetorical acts as forms of activism, to "disrupt the status quo," (12-13) and the piece also problematizes the nature of academic scholarship in the humanities and social sciences, asserting that the patterns of gap-finding, critiquing, and claiming scholarly territory demand examination and that scholars "take social responsibility for the people from and with whom we come to understand a topic" (10-11). In *Tactics of Hope*, Paula Mathieu offers insight regarding what practitioners can expect from these kinds of partnerships, and it's with this kind of hope, which she explains "requires the ability to recognize the radical insufficiency of any actions, be honest in assessing their limitations, imagine better ways to act and learn, and despite the real limitations, engage creative acts of work and play with an eye toward a better not-yet future," that TCW persists and that I offer this analysis and critique (134). Mathieu also describes tactical, extra-institutional work as "limited by, yet given life and specificity by, spatial and temporal demands and a self-reflexive nature," which aligns with this analysis of TCW and with approaches to transrhetorical and decolonial rhetorical analysis.

In *Rhetoric Review*'s 2017 multi-authored Symposium on "Race, Rhetoric, and Resentment," Rachel Jackson, a rhetoric scholar and a citizen of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma, also cites Ratcliffe as she defines transrhetorical analysis and explains the relevance and impact of place, culture, history, and geography on rhetoric, interpretation, and analysis. She asserts:

> Historically unresolved and largely unspoken cultural traumas and racial memories have
> the rhetorical capacity to confound justice and reconciliation efforts. The critical

awareness required for social action, by which I mean positive social change enacted

through public democratic means, demands close attention to political and cultural

landscapes of local spaces where social action occurs. (Carstarphen, et al. 293-4)

Her analysis also takes place in and focuses on events and rhetorics in Oklahoma, which has

resonance for the present study, not only because of shared history, but also because my analysis

affirmed my deeply felt connections to Jackson's claim that, "Because local cultures and histories

shape the nuances of racism as it arises in locations, the work of resisting racism and constructing

antiracist alternatives for communities ultimately begins at home" (Carstarphen, et al. 294).

Jackson illustrates the ways that students' responses to a racist incident at OU demonstrate the

need for engaging nuance and "local multiplicity" in order to understand how "white racism

perpetuates among us all" (299). This notion is also central to García's claim that "mindfulness of

difference" is integral to the process of becoming "decolonial agents" ("Unmaking" 48-51).

"Mindfulness of difference" and awareness of the nuances of experiences of oppression are goals

that inform TCW's practice, and my critique of TCW's collaborative practices intends to reveal

how contributors to antiracist and decolonial projects might provide more intentional models for

these processes.

Developing critical perspective and intentionality has been central to this research

process, and I have been continually challenged in this work to ensure that I do not perpetuate the

centering of whiteness, which my positionality and the contexts of this study make constant work

of. Carmen Kynard illustrates the importance of this as she outlines the concept of "race-radical

literacies" in a 2018 CCCC's Symposium edited by Thomas Miller. Her piece, titled "Stayin

Woke: Race-Radical Literacies in the Makings of a Higher Education," provides this description:

Race-radical literacies and intellectual work nest with an assumption that you are

working toward liberation such that your sole audience isn't whiteness, white teachers,

white standards, white economies, but marginalized communities. This is very different

from a Western individualist paradigm where literacy is explained in words like *voice*,

identity, *agency*, and other such tired, played-out tropes. Race-radical indicates those

young black folk who changed institutions with the very discourses and ways of being

that were never welcomed there. (In Miller, 523)

This challenge has directly informed my approach to the project and what I believe to be its most

significant finding. Neisha-Anne Green's 2017 IWCA Keynote and Aja Martinez's 2018

NCPTW Keynote (the published essay versions of which are cited as Green "Moving beyond

Alright" and Martinez "The Responsibility") both make explicit calls for both writing center and

writing studies scholars and practitioners to engage in accomplice-ship, to take more

responsibility than wearing a safety pin, to reject white folks' comfort as a priority. My hope is

that TCW takes a step toward answering their call. It seeks to model the willingness to risk

privilege and resources in the service of antiracism and to provide rhetorical tools for doing so

and for holding communities accountable. This study, in particular, works toward developing

accomplice-ship in a strategic and accountable way by studying and learning from the lived

experience of transracial, antiracist collaboration.

As the introduction to this chapter indicates, this journey through the research that

informs this dissertation project offers only a glimpse of the resources that had the most direct

impacts on the outcome. Many mentors, friends, texts, and resources have also had great

influence over my approach to research and pedagogy more broadly and my daily practice.

Although I can't possibly include them all here, I do hope to honor them with this project and to

demonstrate some of the ways in which our relations and interpersonal interactions (and activism)

can impact the world and spaces we inhabit.

CHAPTER III

METHODS: THE VIOLENCE OF NOVICE

This dissertation weaves strategies from multiple methodologies, primarily autoethnography (AE) and institutional ethnography (IE), to explore the makings of The Conversation Workshop (TCW, described in Chapter I), asking the following questions throughout the process:

- (How) Can feminist invitational rhetoric and writing center pedagogy allow us to enact more socially and racially just and responsive communities at PWIs?
- How does embodiment influence the ways that group leaders plan for and conduct the workshop?
- How does The Conversation Workshop model transition from a community setting to a university setting?

This chapter details the process as I attempted to shift TCW from a community-focused project to a university-based research site, and it explores the complications and implications that emerged from negotiating these distinct purposes.

Feminist methodologies are shaped by questions about dynamics of power, agency, equity, and access, but for the novice researcher who is still interrogating her shifting positionality, observing these problems within her own research practices can be challenging and disconcerting. In designing and conducting my dissertation research, I sought to develop an

ethnographic research project that enacted a feminist methodology. Drawing upon Leigh Patel and Royster and Kirsch, I embarked upon a year-long process of collecting data from The Conversation Workshop (TCW), an educational, antiracist project which began as a community workshop led by a team of four in Oklahoma City (including myself), but was then adapted for implementation through a university writing center as the Conversation Workshops Pilot (CWP). TCW, which is described in chapter one, teaches strategies for interpersonal antiracist activism that draw upon writing center pedagogy and an adapted model of Foss & Griffin's invitational rhetoric. Drawing from a discussion of my methods and our intervention (TCW), I suggest that my positionality as a white woman researcher may have had covertly violent effects on our collaborative team and our participants, despite my attempts to enact methods that reciprocate research benefits and empower participants.

This chapter presents a selection of data collected in 2017-2018 from an IRB-approved (Protocol #AS1744) (See Appendices A-D), qualitative study of a pilot version of TCW conducted with the support of a writing center at a public, land-grant, PWI. I documented, investigated, and reflected upon the process of developing and adapting TCW's curriculum. Team meeting notes, in-progress documents, interviews with TCW co-creators, field notes, survey and focus group data, and my reflections provide insight regarding the experience of the research process. While the data reveals my desire to resist the inherently violent effect of my institutional position and my role as a researcher, it also demonstrates several ways in which my novice status puts the research and my collaborators and participants at risk. The safeguards and support provided by my chair and PI and the IRB office and my research on feminist and decolonial methodologies led to perceived confidence in my trustworthiness as a researcher. This was also complicated by the power and privilege associated with my identity as a white woman and friend to participant/collaborators. Negotiating the boundaries between collaborators, participants, and friends influenced powerful shifts in our dynamic regarding trust, agency, and autonomy.

Recognizing the dynamic relationship between personal distance and participants' consent reveals the challenging nuances of performing the ethical, reflexive researcher.

Consent is a dynamic feature of the research process, and vigilant awareness of personal distance between the researcher and data is vital for ethical research practices. Here, I reflect on the potential violence of the research process of a novice researcher, even when grounded in decolonial feminist research methods and supported by experienced researchers. This chapter demonstrates that researchers must negotiate factors of personal distance, shifting participant consent, and ethical tensions with the need for transparency and disclosure. Full disclosure of the planned and realized methods of this study reveals the potential violence of the friendly novice researcher and provides insight regarding the essential roles in research of vigilant attention to a researcher's shifting positionality and continual, transparent opportunities for negotiating consent.

In an interview, one collaborator explained, "I want to make sure that everyone is honored and I trust you to do that, but I think that that's felt like a challenge." This chapter explores how my attempts to allow the guiding principles of invitational rhetoric to inform my research methods obscured the flaws in my nascent methodology. A few key findings reveal the violent tensions that emerged as a result: Flaws in the research design affect our project's narrative; my failure to recognize the impact of my institutional position and my role as a researcher dissolves trust in our collaboration; my tendency to treat TCW collaborators as participants in my study rather than teammates resulted in powerful shifts in our dynamic regarding trust, agency, and autonomy. This study of the potential violence of the novice researcher provides insight regarding the essential roles in research of vigilant attention to a researcher's shifting positionality and continual, transparent opportunities for negotiating consent and consensus.

Starting TCW

        The Palmer sisters (Leah and Lauren) started The Conversation OKC in the summer of 2016 following the fatal shootings of Black men by police officers. They advertised to friends and family via social media that they would hold the first session in their parents' home, and the goal would be to grieve, share, and heal together. The attendance was beyond their expectations, and so they moved into community spaces for the next two. I was able to attend one of the sessions, and Kate, who lived in Oklahoma City, was able to attend all three. In the last session, which occurred in September, Leah and Lauren called for support and ideas, inviting others to collaborate and contribute labor. The morning after the November 2016 election, Kate invited us to answer that call. She sent a Facebook message to Leah, Lauren, me, and our friend Jean asking who would be interested and able to start working on something new, a follow up to The Conversation OKC.

        Kate explains why she is writing, saying, "I am writing to you four, because of course Leah and Lauren you have been so instrumental and inspirational in mobilizing dialogue on race in OKC, and Jean and Hillary, you are also inspiring in your thinking, organizing, dialoguing and action." Kate, Leah, Jean, and I met as graduate students in the English Department at Oklahoma State University, and we met and had developed trust through our collaborative leadership roles in the OSU Writing Center. Kate, Jean, and I had met Lauren through our relationships with Leah and had gotten to know her through attending The Conversation OKC.

        While Kate was not yet sure what goals she had in mind for our collaboration, she hypothesizes that she is,

> thinking about something smaller where we can build skills for talking to not just Trump voters in particular, but right now it's easiest to summarize that demographic that way. For some this is reaching out to family. I am incredibly fortunate that this is not the case

for me, but I know lots of people that I do need to reach out to. The question is how to do this effectively.

All of us were in. We met the following Sunday in Oklahoma City to begin planning. In our first meeting the five of us began to establish ideas about our mission, a structure, and a curriculum for addressing racism by developing strategies for calling in loved ones and acquaintances, which was a need that was heard over and over again in The Conversation OKC. We met several times and worked independently for the first three months on what we began calling The Conversation Workshops (TCW). In February Jean informed us that she wouldn't be able to continue working on the project because she had to focus on her dissertation and her job search and would have to plan on moving away soon. We understood and appreciated her concerns, and the four of us kept working.

Deciding to Research TCW

In the spring of 2017, the team finished our first draft of the curriculum and the participant packet. We had come to see the model for invitational conversations, based on Foss and Griffin's feminist invitational rhetoric as described in chapters one and two, as the center of the workshop, and we hoped that this philosophy which honors self-determination and immanent value would fulfill its potential to invite those who would see themselves as neutral into the antiracist fold. We composed several interactive activities, a visual overview of racism in the U.S., prompts for reflection, an outline and scripts of the invitational model, and a list of key terms and resources. Once we felt we had a workable draft, Kate began coordinating with a friend to schedule our first workshop with a group of eight in March. We facilitated this workshop with a plan to revise based on feedback and our own ideas about what was needed. The workshop went well, although we saw many ways to improve and received an earful of feedback. Around that time, I attended Cs in Portland, where, with the help of my friend Rachel, I realized the potential for TCW as a site of research for my dissertation, as described in Chapter II. In our follow up

meeting after the first workshop, I share my idea for focusing on TCW for my dissertation research, and the group is initially very excited, but at that point, the plans were very abstract.

We took the ideas and concerns from our first workshop and drafted a revision plan, which we started working on immediately and planned to finish during a three-day writing retreat in June. We revised our curriculum and our concept during that retreat, and Leah and Lauren informed Kate and I that they were starting a new business, an event space and wedding venue in downtown Oklahoma City called Holloway House, which would come to impact the way we collaborated in very significant, material ways. While I had already shared the idea for researching TCW, the plan for doing so began to materialize at the retreat. We discussed the resources the writing center could offer including consultant volunteers who could help us create materials, act out scenarios, take notes, and facilitate workshops. We talked about recruiting diverse groups of students, staff, and faculty, and we believed it would be possible to plan and implement ten to twelve workshops with twelve to twenty participants each, especially if all four members of TCW team did not need to attend every session because we would have volunteer facilitators. We also talked about how great it would be that my assistantship would be devoted to making the CWP work. I would be able to produce and revise curricular documents, schedule and organize volunteers for workshops, conduct additional research to support our project, and create additional resources during my Writing Center hours. I became very excited to bring the pilot to OSU and to seek support and input from my colleagues in the writing center. We made significant progress on our revisions of the curriculum and packet during that retreat, and we made a plan to complete our revision before the fall semester began so that we could begin the pilot immediately.

Adapting an (Auto-/Institutional) Ethnographic Method

Following the retreat, I drafted a prospectus and an IRB proposal under the direction of my new adviser and dissertation chair, Dr. Anna Sicari. My commitment to feminist research

methods meant that I knew I would need to enact a research method that not only acknowledged my subjective position but also examined it. And because this was a participatory action research project, an autoethnographic component was appropriate for structuring this inquiry. Rhetoric scholar Brett Lunceford establishes that, while rhetoricians have not yet embraced it, AE's intentional application and analysis of emotional experience and rhetoric helps situate this method comfortably in rhetorical studies, which has a dynamic relationship with emotions in theory and research (Lunceford 8-11)

In feminist and critical studies, researchers must situate themselves in their research, in part to deconstruct the expectation and pretense of the notion of researcher objectivity. Potter claims that, "Autoethnographic projects related to identity and power offer an excellent opportunity for critical theorists to move beyond discussing the forces of power in the sociopolitical landscape—they give us the tools to dismantle the very system that has created the power structure" (Potter 1436). The AE process helped me remain accountable as a researcher whose larger project is one that is adjacent to the research, that of the research site, which seeks to resist systems of oppression. As the data collection drew to a close, I began to realize that seeking accountability would require that my critical lens shift to include a look at the ways that our organization was shaped by broader systems, which led me to incorporate analytical tools from institutional ethnography (IE). While ethical tensions emerge from the demands of research and the project of resisting, this multivalent ethnographic research process helps to make my process of negotiating these tensions legible, and to the extent that this is possible, transparent.

Leigh Patel, author of *Decolonizing Educational Research: From Ownership to Answerability*, asserts that, "From a view of education as a system, the practices of researchers, teachers, and policymakers have fluid interaction with the centuries-long processes that foment the privileged and the oppressed, the colonizers and the colonized, the vaulted and the marginalized" (15). Like TCW, AE works from the perspective that experiencing,

acknowledging, and interrogating our emotions is critical for developing understanding of self and socio-cultural constructs and for resisting systems of oppression. Working with AE at the center has the potential to resist exclusionary and hegemonic research methods in favor of intentionally inclusive, reflexive praxis.

> In other words, postcolonialism and autoethnography are inherently self-reflexive practices; both are local practices that necessitate a centering of both the subject–object within a local and historical context. We believe that addressing autoethnography from a postcolonial lens pushes ahead the genre and method's agenda of carving out spaces to articulate a plethora of cultural experiences specifically rooted in colonial histories.
>
> (Chawla and Atay 4)

As a white woman and feminist scholar in the privileged position of researcher, intending to engage in decolonial, antiracist work, it has been crucial to emphasize meaningful reflexivity in my research process. Feminist educational researcher Wanda Pillow explains that a reflexive focus, "requires the researcher to be critically conscious through personal accounting of how the researcher's self-location (across for example, gender, race, class, sexuality, ethnicity, nationality), position, and interests influence all stages of the research process" (178). Feminist and critical researchers frequently draw upon reflexivity to demonstrate validity and ethics in research. Pillow urges researchers to enact "reflexivities of discomfort," and "to be rigorously self-aware -- rigorously reflective about the workings of power," striving to understand while also recognizing and allowing the discomfort that emerges from the impossibility of knowing or articulating the self (188, 192). To engage in reflexivity of discomfort, this research process intentionally shifts the gaze, first employing AE to situate myself in a critical, reflexive process, then augmenting this process with strategies derived from IE to examine the social contexts and dynamics of power at work in our organization.

Autoethnography is appropriate for use in IE [institutional ethnography], as 'autoethnography is defined as a form of self-narrative that places the self within a social context' (Reed-Danahay, 1997b: 9), and IE explores the social from the point of view of the self's every day. Writing an autoethnographical narrative is not enough to fit into an institutional ethnographic process. The narrative must be explored in relation to institutional practices. (Taber, "Institutional Ethnography, Autoethnography," 15)

While AE is often framed as a component of IE, it is less frequently discussed in the reverse. IE supplements my autoethnographic approach by incorporating a research view that begins from the everyday and aims to examine practices and policies in institutional or organizational contexts. Developed by sociologist Dorothy Smith, IE emphasizes the connections between local and personal experiences to institutional "ruling relations," which she describes as "that internally coordinated complex of administrative, managerial, professional, and discursive organization that regulates, organizes, governs, and otherwise controls our societies. It is not yet monolithic, but it is pervasive and pervasively interconnected" (Smith, p. 49).

Also like TCW, IE accounts for shifting dynamics of power by accounting for their relational nature. Taber, who argues for the legitimacy of combining AE and IE methods, explains that "ruling relations are not just about who has the power to make regulations; they are about how people implicated in a system or institution perceive certain concepts and thoughts," a view that is central to TCW's approach to interpersonal activism (*Ruling Relations, Warring*, 44). LaFrance and Nicolas assert IE's relevance to writing studies, and by extension, to rhetorical studies:

Because IE provides a framework within which individual experience, local practice, and institutional discourse are viewed as mutually constitutive, shifting the ethnographer's gaze from the 'site' (the writing center, the classroom, the writing program) to the ways people in or at a site co-create the very space under investigation, we believe that IE, as a

methodology, has the potential to extend important conversations in writing studies, especially about how the hierarchical structure of the academy impacts our work and how the work of writing studies gets carried out. (131)

This combination of methodological approaches, which I am calling auto-/institutional ethnography (AIE), both of which find a niche and a home in writing and rhetorical studies but which are rarely discussed together, allows me to frame and interweave my integral objects of inquiry: TCW's organizational texts and practices, my experiences in TCW, and TCW's engagement with institutions and communities.

Research Questions and Concerns

Initially, my IRB proposal only accounted for collecting external, empirical data from focus groups and writing samples taken from volunteers who had participated in the CWP at OSU, because I knew that audio recording the workshops would likely compromise participants' feelings of safety and might make them feel self-conscious about sharing. I submitted the IRB with the initial plan, but just days before our first workshop, I spoke with Anna about my concerns over not being able to use data from the workshops, and she encouraged me to include the collection of field notes. And that same week, I happened to talk with an ideal volunteer note-taker who attended a meeting of a feminist student group for which I gave a presentation over my proposed research project. She was a former student of mine who was in the teacher-education program and had some informal experience taking field notes as well as a CITI certification for conducting research. Most importantly, she was very eager to help and to attend workshops. I hastily revised my IRB proposal because, upon reviewing my research questions, I felt that I needed to document the workshops themselves (See Appendices A and C). According to my initial prospectus, my research questions include the following:

- (How) Can feminist invitational rhetoric and writing center pedagogy allow us to enact more socially and racially just and responsive communities at a PWI?
- How does The Conversation Workshop model transition from a community setting to a university setting?
- How does embodiment influence the ways that group leaders plan for and conduct the workshop?
- What motivates participants to engage in the workshop?
- How will participants implement strategies from the workshop in their communities?

As this transition from community project to a university program ensued, I felt that a scholarly investigation of the transition of the curriculum as well as the desire for and implementation of these strategies by participants in a university setting would be informative. I sought to draw from feminist rhetorical research approaches developed by Royster and Kirsch, combined with a grounded theory methodology consistent with these approaches, in order to document, investigate, and reflect on the process of developing and adapting TCW curriculum in order to address the transition of the model and the factor of embodiment. I initially conceived of the project as focusing on the process of the Conversation Workshop Pilot (CWP), but I neglected to account for how central the development of TCW curriculum was to that process, and at the time of writing my prospectus and IRB proposal, I didn't fully realize how important documenting the process of developing and revising the curriculum would be to the larger project, so I also submitted an IRB Modification to include the collection of interview data as well as the use of our collaborative materials for building the workshops (Appendix B).

Collecting TCW/CWP Data

As a co-creator of all of the workshop materials, I asked my collaborators for permission to use our process documents, including meeting notes, emails and other correspondence, planning documents, and finished materials for my research process. They all agreed, simply

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asking me to consider carefully what I chose to disclose. Almost all of our work is saved in a shared Google Folder, which is divided into sub-folders based on project stages and types of information. Much of the material was organized and recorded by me for research purposes. Meeting minutes are collected in a single document first, and then separated and titled by date and meeting topic. Development materials are organized by curriculum version and are organized in a hyperlinked Google Sheet that identifies primary author(s) and deadlines. I also transferred relevant correspondence to a folder titled "Emails and Correspondence," within which documents are organized by date and topic. Early meetings, however, were often not documented in great detail, and many of the notes that were handwritten have since been lost. I did try to recreate notes from these meetings, but because of the failures of human memory, I have tended to generalize what these meetings accomplished rather than falsely recall details.

Bringing CWP to OSU

Version 2 of TCW curriculum was not completed in time for the start of the fall semester, but at the beginning of the semester, I scheduled our first workshop with writing center and English department colleagues for mid-September, which propelled our progress. We completed version 2 just before our first workshop, and the workshop was well-attended. Our field note-taker, my research assistant, took notes on what the participants said but forgot to take notes on what the facilitators said, but I was able to supplement with notes I took by hand. She sent me a Word document with her notes, and I transferred them to my preferred format and supplemented them shortly after the session. Subsequent sessions followed a similar pattern of her sending me typed notes that I transferred and supplemented.

After the first session, I discovered that some participants preferred to be identified by their real names and titles in writer ups of the study, so I made changes to the consent forms in order to make space for participants to not only select how to be identified in the write ups, rather than informing them that they would be given pseudonyms, but I also made space for them to

write in demographic descriptions of themselves that I would then adapt for the write ups. This required an additional IRB Modification request, which is provided in Appendix D. This means that throughout this dissertation, unless indicated in an endnote that the name provided is a pseudonym, participants are referred to by their first names based on their preferences as indicated on the consent forms; their descriptions are also taken from the consent forms. In our first session, as in the rest, it was very difficult to fit everything into our less-than-four-hour timeslot, but the conversation was rich and engaging, and we received valuable feedback and insights.

CWP Workshop Procedures

The four-hour workshop is composed of three parts, which the packet outlines. The packet cover summarizes each of the three sections, which focus on the key words used to distinguish them: "Intentionality," "Dialogue," and "Community." The three sections work together to establish the need for interpersonal activism and to lay the groundwork for how to engage in it. The contents move from internal reflection to external analysis. The entire session used the workshop packet as a guide, and it is divided into three sections with breaks for refreshments and chatting between each. The table of contents of an early iteration of the packet, shown in Figure 3.1 illustrates the outline of the workshop. To begin, the facilitators offer a brief introduction of the workshops, and, during the pilot sessions, I provided an overview of the research protocol, noting that a field note-taker was present and that they would have control over whether and how their contributions were mentioned in write-ups. I also pointed out consent forms and indicated that we would revisit them closer to the end of the workshop. In all of the workshops, a facilitator leads the room in introductions, asking participants to share their names and hometowns, explaining that we hope participants will think about the ways that where and how they grew up may have informed their understanding of race. After providing an overview of

the workshop, we set the tone and expectations by sharing a few statements that are included in

the packet.

Figure 3.1 Table of Contents, Packet Excerpt

The overview is followed by an invitation to help us foster a "Brave Space," which is

defined in our Key Terms:

A Brave Space accepts difference and controversy with civility, encourages members to take responsibility for the ways their words and actions may affect others, insists that members treat one another with respect, honoring their right to personhood and choice and avoiding personal attacks.

We also use the term Safe Space, but we recognize its controversial status. The meaning we intend is an environment where one is encouraged to pose questions, admit disbelief, and process their short sightedness and shortcomings, without the threat of discrimination and harassment.

This request is closely followed by what we have called our "Burden Statement," which we included in order to acknowledge and resist the undue burden to educate, to share, and to relive trauma that people of color may feel when talking about race in interracial groups. The statement asserts:

The Conversation Workshops focus on self-work. We welcome you to reflect, both individually and as a group. There will be opportunities to share, but we hope the bulk of what you do today is internal. No individual should be asked to represent their race or expose their personal burdens or trauma. If you're seeking to hear the stories of those not like you, we have resources and opportunities available.

We included this statement in part because, although we commented on this stance in our early workshop sessions, we received feedback from participants expressing concern that the workshops weren't diverse enough or that there weren't enough people of color to offer their stories and perspectives. We wanted to clarify that our workshop welcomes the stories and wisdom of participants, especially that of people of color, but that it does not demand or rely on participants to share their experiences of racism or to relive trauma for the benefit or education of others, particularly white people at a PWI. We wanted to explicitly encourage people who sought

that kind of education to look to resources that are made available to the public, like literature,

films, podcasts, and educational websites, especially those for which the contributors were

appropriately compensated, rather than expecting or requesting unpaid emotional labor of their

friends, colleagues, or new acquaintances in the workshop or in their daily lives.

The final statement we call upon before moving into the first section is the "Audience

Statement," which we drafted very early on in our planning process, and which has been revised

very little since the beginning of our collaboration. It reads,

> The Conversation Workshops are for those who want to hone their skills in practicing
>
> listening, patience, accountability, and confident leadership while communicating truth
>
> and fostering an attitude of justice. The methods presented and practiced in the
>
> workshops are intended for use within pre-existing relationships built on trust and respect
>
> in hopes that this spirit of change will emanate throughout communities.
>
> The Conversation Workshops are for a son reaching out to his parents; a woman
>
> dialoguing with her partner; the friend having honest discussion with another friend; the
>
> congregant exploring truth with a faith leader; among others.

Chapter V will explore the audience statement more comprehensively. It's worth noting that this

statement appears on our website, and it was used in our materials to promote the workshops and

invite participants because we felt that it provided a clear sense of our purpose and would provide

potential participants with insight regarding whether our workshop was a good fit for them. This

combination of statements was intended to establish our purpose, perspective, and approach for

the workshops.

Intentionality

Inside the packet, the section divider for part one describes the goals of the

"Intentionality" section:

The workshop begins with the goal of establishing a thoughtful and intentional frame of

mind to prepare you to have difficult conversations. We'll ask you to think about why

you're here and what your goals are for the workshops. The most important and most

challenging task of this section will be acknowledging implicit biases and coming to

terms with your own relationship to systems of racism, which are informed by a complex

history of institutional racism. It's true, coming to terms with the ways racism continues

to inform the way we think and operate in the world is especially difficult, but it's an

essential step for moving toward intentionality in challenging this racism in ourselves, in

our communities, and in society at large.

The bottom of the page notes that "Some vocabulary may be new to you. You can find more

information on bolded phrases in the Key Terms section starting on page 42. If you see an

unfamiliar phrase that's not in bold, feel free to look it up or ask your facilitator" (9).

As a way into the first section, participants are asked to write down some thoughts about

what brought them here. They're encouraged to include concrete and abstract motivations, and a

few participants are asked to share what they've written. The first guided activity focuses on

implicit bias, prompting participants to consider then discuss their immediate imagined responses

to a list of identifying ten nouns as related to racial and gender identity and stereotypes. Before

what we called a "quick draw" exercise, Lauren draws attention to a statement on the previous

page.

This training will require self-examination, which should cause latent biases and feelings

of embarrassment or fear to surface. Your discomfort is a natural and healthy part of the

process, and close attention to these experiences may lead to personal growth and may

improve your ability to empathize with those with whom you engage.

The results of the exercise often prompt discussions of the ways the media, our interpersonal relationships, and our upbringing inform our biases and impulses. We also talk about the ways that many of us corrected ourselves upon recognizing a negative racialized association and the process of learning to do that.

Following this discussion is the "Backpack Exercise," in which a facilitator guides us through a reflection by reading the following passage (often with additional description):

Imagine you carry a backpack with you everywhere you go—to work, to school, at home, in your place of worship, at the grocery store, at your child's school, and even while you sleep. In it, you carry your past experiences as well as your family's history. You carry the way you look, your socioeconomic status, and the status of your ancestors. Finally, you carry what others might say about you just on one glance: their biased assumption of who you are.

What items are in your backpack? What feels light? What feels heavy?

After the reflective exercise, participants can review a visual on historical events pertaining to racism (shown in Figure 3.2) prior to writing down their responses to the three questions posed in the reflection. In most workshops, participants were not asked to share their answers to these questions immediately, but rather to keep them in mind throughout the next exercise.

THIS IS OUR AMERICAN STORY.

SLAVERY IN AMERICA 1501 - 1865

INDIAN REMOVAL ACT, 1830

SEGREGATION 1849-1954

WOUNDED KNEE DEC. 1890

OKLAHOMA LEGISLATURE BANS PERSONAL AND PUBLIC INTEGRATION. 1897-1950

JIM CROW 1890-1965

BROWN V. BOARD OF EDUCATION (BUSING) 1954-1980

WAR ON DRUGS 1971-PRESENT

FORTY BILLION

Between 1790-1860, white Americans reaped the benefits of as much as $40 billion in unpaid black labor. [2]

12.5 MILLION AFRICANS WERE SHIPPED TO THE US BETWEEN 1525-1866. ABOUT 10 MILLION OF THOSE SURVIVED PASSAGE. [7]

46,000 NATIVE AMERICANS

In order to open up 25 million acres of land to white settlers, the US government spent 28 years and more than 40 million dollars, which was used for warfare with various Southern Plains tribes. This effort resulted in forceably removing 46,000 Native people. [3]

DESPITE EFFORTS FROM NATIVE LOBBYISTS AND PETITIONS, PRESIDENT ANDREW JACKSON PASSED LEGISLATION TO BEGIN NEGOTIATIONS AIMED AT RE-MOVING NATIVES FROM THEIR HOMELANDS.

200 NATIVE AMERICANS KILLED AND WOUNDED, INCLUDING WOMEN AND CHILDREN.

THE OKLAHOMA LAND RUN BROUGHT THOUSANDS OF SETTLERS TO SO CALLED "UNCLAIMED LANDS."

GREENWOOD TULSA

MAY 31, 1921, 300 BLACKS WERE KILLED IN THE GREENWOOD MASSACRE, ALSO KNOWN AS THE TULSA RACE RIOTS. OVER 35 CITY BLOCKS OF THRIVING BLACK-OWNED BUSINESS WERE BURNED TO THE GROUND. SECOND HAND ACCOUNTS SAY A NON-VIOLENT ENCOUNTER BETWEEN A YOUNG BLACK MAN AND A WHITE WOMAN IN AN ELEVATOR WAS THE INCITING INCIDENT. [4]

2.5 % OF BLACK MALES ARE IMPRISONED

As of December 2016, there were 466,600 black male prisoners out of 19,320,910 in the US population, about 2.5 percent. There were 390,900 white male prisoners out of 97,725,000 in us population, about .004%. [5]

THERE'S A DISPROPORTIONATE NUMBER OF INCARCERATED BLACK MEN COMPARED TO THEIR POPULATION. THIS HAS BEEN ARGUED AS EVIDENCE FOR A NEW ITERATION OF OLD JIM CROW LAWS.
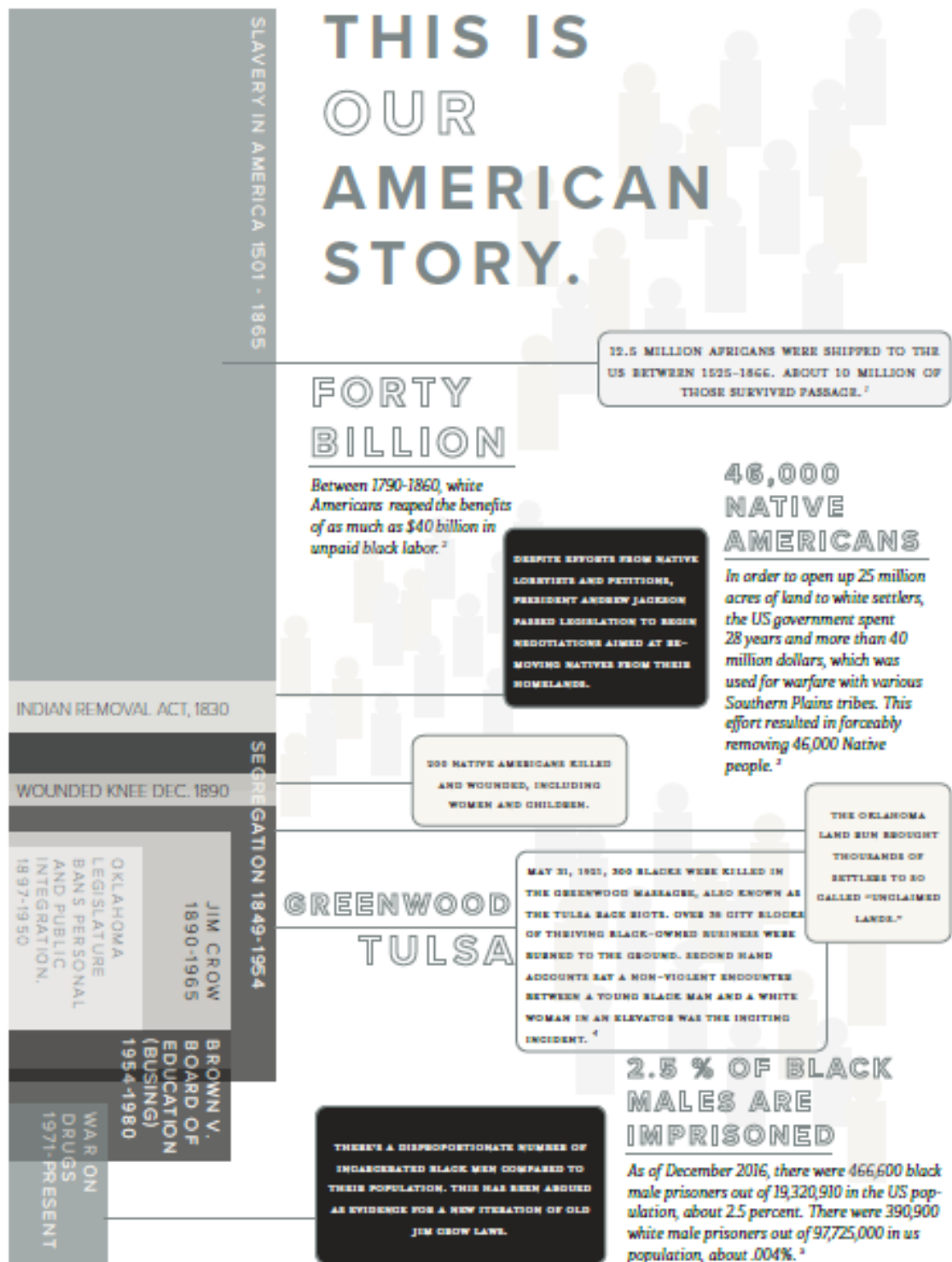
Figure 3.2 "Our American Story", Packet Excerpt

The next portion, called "What's at the Root?" is guided by a story from Leah in which she gives a vivid description of an experience of being followed home in her suburban neighborhood by a police officer following the summer of 2016. She tells of her impulse to call the police, telling the dispatcher that she is a Black woman, and given all the recent new stories, that she is afraid. The dispatcher assures her that she was right to call and that the officer's behavior is not normal, and shortly thereafter, the officer in the car behind her makes an abrupt U-turn. Upon finishing her story, Leah asks participants to "Recall three race-related incidents that have affected you deeply, either recent or historic. How did you feel? What do you think is at the root?" At one workshop that Leah was unable to attend, I told a different story to lead this exercise, which is described and reflected upon in Chapter V.

Following the "What's at the Root?" discussion, Kate leads a discussion of McIntosh's "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack," which, according to our packet, shown in Figure 3.3, "lays out what has become foundational work for the study and understanding of white privilege as it exists in the underlying daily, and seemingly innocuous systems that exist in the United States."

Figure 3.3 McIntosh Section, Packet Excerpt

Kate begins the discussion by asking participants what they think of when they hear the phrase

"white privilege," and we then read McIntosh's definition, which describes it as a "package of

unearned assets that I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was 'meant' to remain

oblivious" (Cited in Packet 2.7, 16). Looking at a small selection (six of forty-six) of the ways

that McIntosh uses to describe the experience of white privilege, Kate asks if any of the items on

the list resonate with participants or if they might like to add any of their own. The discussion

ends with a reading of the excerpt on page 17, which asserts,

> If these things are true, this is not such a free country; one's life is not what one makes it;
>
> many doors open for certain people through no virtues of their own. These perceptions
>
> mean also that my moral condition is not what I had been led to believe. The appearance

of being a good citizen rather than a troublemaker comes in large part from having all sorts of doors open automatically because of my color.

While many of our segments conclude with a large group discussion, Kate, who was the main advocate for keeping this segment when we discussed limiting it or removing it, suggested that ending this segment with an assertive quote would affirm our commitment to recognizing and resisting white privilege.

The particular quote above also helps to convey the unambiguous relationship between white privilege and white supremacy, the topic of the following segment, which asks, "What are some of the ways that you have observed white supremacy manifest?" (19) This provides a definition of white supremacy, which is also listed in the Key Terms:

'White supremacy' refers to the systems of power that perpetuate the assumption that white identity is both more prevalent and more valuable than other identities. White supremacy treats whiteness as the norm and the ideal, something to be protected and preserved at almost any cost. These systems work together in ways that are systemic & local, visible & disguised, social, political, & economic. White supremacy perpetuates social and political domination by white people by systemically and systematically devaluing people of color and their systems of value.

The small group discussion on what white supremacy looks like provides shared objects of inquiry to which we may refer in the second section. To conclude section one, we check in with participants by asking how they're feeling and what concerns or questions they have before we take a short break.

Dialogues

The second section we call "Dialogues" because the focus is the adapted model of invitational dialogue. The cover page describes the stance and content of the section, saying:

> We believe that one-on-one conversations can be a meaningful catalyst for social change. Thus, the second part of the workshop offers a step-by-step tool for engaging in an open dialogue with someone you disagree with. Throughout this section, you will learn strategies for having these difficult conversations using the Invitational model—where one conversation partner invites another to consider his or her point of view. It's a simple concept, but it can be difficult to pull off in the moment, so we'll give you handles for the method!

> We will begin by looking at an example of an invitational conversation that confronts racist thinking within a relationship built on trust and mutual respect. We will then take a look at the model that this conversation was based on in order to learn how to foster this challenging, intentional, dialogue.

With little introduction, we begin this section with a scene, written by TCW team members, that models an invitational conversation. In the first scene, Shelby, a young white mom, invites David, her father and a small business owner, to talk with her about her concerns that he may have passed over a Black applicant for a job based on a difficult experience with a previous employee who was Black. Their conversation covers stereotypes about Blackness, discrimination in hiring, and the concept of exceptionalism. This concept emerges when David insists that Jade, his granddaughter, whom Shelby adopted from Ethiopia, would not be likely to experience that kind of discrimination even though she is Black, because she is "different," "smart, curious, and happy," (Dialogue 1). Shelby responds, explaining that,

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And what's so sad and terrifying to me as a mother is that there will be plenty of people who see Jade the same way you saw the applicant in the stack, as either good or bad. But thinking like that is really harmful. It creates excuses for disregarding people who aren't what we think of as 'a good Black person' and they can become targets of hate and violence. They are treated like a problem.

David says that he'll think about what she's said, and that he's never talked about this kind of thing before. Their conversation concludes with a promise to watch a film together and to keep talking about racial issues.

In early workshops, these scenes were acted out live by volunteers from the writing center who were compensated for their time. On some occasions, Kate, Leah, Lauren, or I would take up one or more of the roles. During the fall semester, the writing center administrators were very kind to allow consultants to use their writing center time to help me make videos to use so that we would not have to rely on volunteers for each workshop. We showed the videos once, but determined that it was more effective and less distracting to listen to the audio of the videos rather than watching them. After the pilot, we revised the scenes and produced them in an intentional audio format to be used in future workshops.

After watching (or listening) to the scenes, the participants are provided with a description of the Invitational Discussion Model, shown in Figure 3.4, which reads,

In the invitational discussion model there is a "Partner A" and a "Partner B." A initiates the conversation, and Partner B chooses whether to engage. This style provides an opportunity for partners with differing viewpoints to examine each other's viewpoints in order to generate valuable understanding. Throughout the conversation each partner makes an active decision to continue to listen and try to understand. This approach fosters relationships rooted in equality, immanent value, and self-determination.

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The description is adapted from Foss and Griffin's "Beyond Persuasion: A Proposal for an Invitational Rhetoric," which outlines a feminist invitational rhetoric that resists the coercive tactics and purposes of more traditional rhetorical strategies in favor of a set of feminist principles: equality, immanent value, and self-determination (Foss and Griffin 3-4).

LISTEN AND TALK

In the invitational discussion model there is a "Partner A" and a "Partner B." A initiates the conversation, and Partner B chooses whether to engage. This style provides an opportunity for partners with differing viewpoints to examine each other's viewpoints in order to generate valuable understanding. Throughout the conversation each partner makes an active decision to continue to listen and try to understand. This approach fosters relationships rooted in equality, **immanent value**, and **self-determination**.

STEP ONE: IDENTIFY AN APPROPRIATE CONVERSATION PARTNER
STEP TWO: ENGAGE YOUR PARTNER

Figure 3.4 Introduction to Invitational Model, Packet Excerpt

The next task is to establish appropriate context for the model by identifying a conversation partner and answering "Who Should You Engage?" (26). The packet provides participants with what we've called a "checklist," shown in Figure 3.5, but what is more adequately approached as a list of goals, which identify the conditions which would support an effective invitational discussion that will generate understanding and which "fosters a relationship rooted in equality, immanent value, and self-determination" (26). The ideal conditions are categorized as having "relational equity," fostering "mutual respect," and being "willing to yield," each of which is further enumerated in a list of specific behaviors or measures that work toward those conditions, shown below. In the workshops, I led a discussion of these conditions before asking participants to jot down names of people with whom or descriptions of incidents about which they might have an invitational conversation.

WHO SHOULD YOU ENGAGE?

Invitational discussion views conversation as an invitation to the "Partner B" to enter your world and see it as you do. Ideally, this will generate understanding between those with different perspectives. If Partner B accepts the invitation, this approach fosters a relationship rooted in equality, immanent value, and self-determination. In order to achieve this goal, both Partners must be on board with the process, understanding each other's goals for the conversation, and willing to listen. This checklist will help you start on the right foot.

YOU HAVE RELATIONAL EQUITY.

☐ YOU KNOW Potential Partner B outside of this incident.

☐ YOU CAN NAME at least a few things you like about this person.

☐ YOU CARE about your relationship with this person.

YOU FOSTER MUTUAL RESPECT.

☐ YOU ACKNOWLEDGE that, despite differences, you and this person have equal and immanent value.

☐ YOU HAVE WITNESSED Potential Partner B say or do something racially insensitive, and you refuse to treat them like they are a dead end.

☐ YOU RESPECT this person and can expect that this person feels most of these things about you.

YOU ARE WILLING TO YIELD.

☐ YOU RESPECT this person's choice to accept or decline your invitation to the conversation.

☐ YOU ARE WILLING, able, and even interested in listening to this person discuss their point of view.

☐ YOU ACKNOWLEDGE that this person's life experiences, values, and beliefs are likely to be different from your own.

Figure 3.5 "Who Should You Engage?", Packet Excerpt

The next segment, called "How Should You Engage?" outlines the parts of an invitational

discussion, which we created as a tool for participants to confidently approach conversations that

they knew would be difficult. Also divided into three categories, this section outlines the

behaviors that comprise an invitational discussion, as shown in Figure 3.6, emphasizing the

attitudes that benefit the approach: "Be Self-aware," "Be Open," and "Be Generous" (27). Foss

and Griffin do not provide such a formulaic delineation of invitational rhetoric, but we wanted

participants to feel as though they had handles for approaching these conversations, so we used

the principles of invitational rhetoric to create a model for how we thought dialogue using this

approach would look. This list of six behaviors or steps is actually a simplified version of a

flowchart that I created to walk participants through the process. We agreed that the flowchart is

useful, but it must be made accessible in the amount of time afforded for this section.

HOW SHOULD YOU ENGAGE?

Use this step-by-step exercise as a guide to complete an invitational discussion. Of course, all conversations should flow naturally, but it's important that you keep an end-goal in mind.

A more exhaustive flow chart of these steps can be found on pages 28-29.

BE SELF AWARE.

1. **PREPARE FOR THE CONVERSATION** by acknowledging your relationship to systems of oppression, doing preliminary research, and ensuring that your appropriate conversation partner understands and agrees to the topic of conversation.

2. **SET THE SCENE** by establishing a safe, respectful environment, acknowledging each partner's intrinsic value, and promoting freedom from coercion.

BE OPEN.

3. **IDENTIFY THE TROUBLING INCIDENT** or idea clearly, briefly explaining why it concerns you and ask Partner B to share more or explain. Listen actively and sympathetically (as much as possible).

4. **CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING**, taking the time to identify common ground and to clarify any confusing aspects or concepts.

BE GENEROUS.

5. **OFFER YOUR PERSPECTIVES** by openly telling what you currently know or understand using whatever evidence feels appropriate: anecdotal, historical, research-driven.

6. **ALLOW PARTNER B TO RESPOND**, ask for clarification before considering whether to follow up or discuss additional resources.

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Figure 3.6 "How Should You Engage?", Packet Excerpt

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As shown in Figure 3.7, this flowchart appears immediately after "How Should You Engage?" and is color coded to illustrate how the sections of the flowchart correspond to the six numbered items in the list. The cream colored items outline how to "Prepare for the conversation by acknowledging your relationship to systems of oppression, doing preliminary research, and ensuring that your appropriate conversation partner understands and agrees to the topic of conversation." The dark gray describe how to "Set the scene by establishing a safe, respectful environment, acknowledging each partner's intrinsic value, and promoting freedom from coercion." The light gray guides the process of "Identify[ing] the troubling incident or idea clearly, briefly explaining why it concerns you and ask Partner B to share more or explain. Listen actively and sympathetically (as much as possible)."
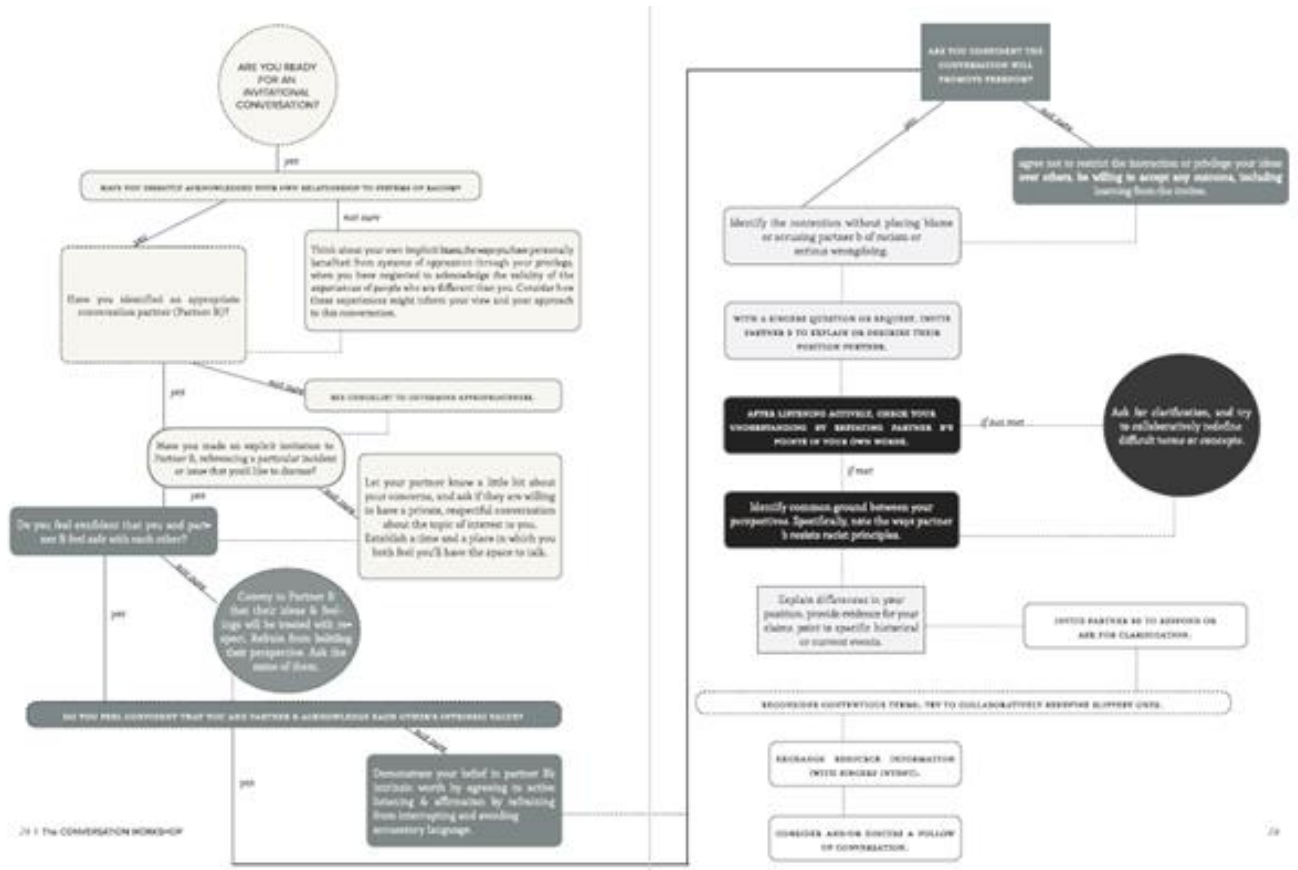
Figure 3.7 Revised Invitational Flowchart, Packet Excerpt

The black section lays out how to "Check for understanding, taking the time to identify common ground and to clarify any confusing aspects or concepts." The very light gray restates the step of "Offer[ing] your perspectives by openly telling what you currently know or understand using whatever evidence feels appropriate: anecdotal, historical, research-driven." The white segments conclude the chart by breaking down the last item in the list: "Allow Partner B to respond, ask for clarification before considering whether to follow up or discuss additional resources." The flowchart is not a central feature in the curriculum, but it is a supplement to the discussion of the flow of an invitational discussion.

Following the description of the invitational model, participants observe a second scene, this time between Shelby and Claire, the mother of Jade's soccer teammate. Claire is a Black woman, and she and Shelby regularly talk at their children's practices and games. In this scene, Claire wants to talk to Shelby about comments she recently made regarding her desire to raise Jade as "a true Black woman," her description of which Claire felt to be rooted in essentialist stereotypes. Their conversation begins with mutual acknowledgement and gratitude, but Claire gets to the point quickly, expressing her concern about the "clichés" Shelby used in their previous conversation. Shelby clarifies where her ideas about Black identity came from, and Claire responds by introducing the concept of "essentialism," which she characterizes as, "a belief that things or even people have an almost scientific set of characteristics that are unwavering and the same in every case. For instance, I could essentialize an apple with the belief that all apples are red, crunchy, and sweet. But, you and I both know that there are so many varieties" (Dialogue 2). She then explains how essentialism is intertwined with anti-Blackness and violence. Throughout the conversation, Claire affirms Shelby's desire to be a good mother and to learn, while also questioning what's behind her process and decision making. Following this scene, as a large group, the participants discuss how they saw the invitational model play out in the two scenes and their responses and observations more generally. Part two then concludes with a prompt; just

before the second break, participants are asked to reflect on a particular scenario that they would like to learn to respond to using the invitational model, and they are informed that their scenario will need to be shared with a partner.

Community

The cover page of the "Community" section describes its purpose:

> The final part of the workshop provides an opportunity for you to practice an Invitational Conversation so you can be prepared to bring it into your community. We will begin thinking about what effects this could have within your community and your relationships, and we'll consider what kinds of complications may arise with this approach. In addition to addressing some ways of managing problems that may occur, we'll also discuss some of the limitations of the invitational model and what strategies might work when this method of the conversation isn't appropriate.

Following the break, I revisit the research protocol and the consent forms and mention the focus groups, which participants sign up for there, and surveys, which will be sent via email. This section is also punctuated by a statement about pre-existing communities, which establishes the stance that TCW are meant to foster partnerships within communities. The packet asserts,

> We recognize there are pre-existing communities in our society, and we seek to reach those audiences in their physical and ideological spaces, in order to best equip workshop participants with conversation strategies that are relevant and familiar within their immediate communities. We acknowledge that the ideologies and spaces that participants occupy will influence the tone and strategies that emerge from each workshop. Though we do not represent or claim affiliation with any one community, we are committed to entering these existing spaces as a means of best executing our mission.

After participants have an opportunity to ask questions, we move into the next activity, which asks participants to consider how the invitational model will work in their relationships and communities. Participants pair up and take turns describing the scenarios they have in mind for an invitational discussion. For each person's scenario, they ask each other questions and discuss potential problems to determine whether it's a good fit and what groundwork may need to be laid in order to establish effective conditions. They are then encouraged to use the flowchart as a tool to help them plan to address potential problems. Following this activity, we check in by asking how participants felt about their conversations, what problems they encountered, and how they envision this working in their relationships and communities.

That discussion often leads naturally into the next segment, which addresses the limitations of the invitational model, asking "Are there incidents where the invitational model would not be an appropriate response to an incident? What other approaches might you take?" (34). The last step before the conclusion is to collaboratively brainstorm ways to hold each other and our communities accountable for these practices and for antiracist work. This segment was often short-changed during the pilot because prior discussions extended beyond their allotted time, but participants were often able to share a few ideas before our closing, during which we encouraged participants to plan a follow up meeting or conversation on their own to continue making plans for accountability and collaboration.

First Participant Group

Like most English departments at predominantly white institutions (PWIs) in the U.S., Oklahoma State's is primarily staffed by white faculty and graduate students, and the Writing Center is staffed by graduate students from English Department and undergraduate students from diverse majors as well as a handful of graduate students from other disciplines. Prior to circulating the sign-up sheet for the workshop, I assumed that the participants would reflect that

dynamic, and that there may be a few graduate students of color in attendance, but that most of the participants would be white students and instructors. Over half of the thirteen participants who signed up and attended that first session were students of color, and of the entire group, only three were not graduate students in English, and only two were men. This demographic was our first look as a group at the population we might be working with at OSU, and we took it to be indicative of a pattern. The curriculum worked very well in this dynamic, and participants were willing to share about their experiences, their families, and the challenges they'd encountered in addressing racist ideas and attitudes. This led us to feel confident that we were asking the right questions and spending time on the most important things. We planned to make only slight revisions between this workshop and our next.

Additional Participant Groups

Shortly after the first workshop, TCW team facilitated a workshop for twelve diversity workers from across campus, a session which was organized by myself and Dr. Elmore-Sanders, the Director of the Office of Multicultural Affairs. I was unable to collect field notes from this workshop session because I had not sent out IRB information to Dr. Elmore-Sanders with enough advance notice. But we learned a lot from the session, and we had one more workshop already scheduled for November. For this session, co-organizer Anna, a faculty member, brought together participants from her social circle, most of whom were humanities and library faculty.

I hoped to recruit a variety of groups, including more students, for the remainder of workshops. But as my list of potential co-organizers grew, my teammates reminded me of our limitations, explaining that they would not be able to come to campus more than six more times. They also insisted that we establish a new deadline for finishing the workshops, since our Thanksgiving deadline wasn't going to work. We agreed that we would initially select three dates with two timeslots each and invite four or five potential co-organizers to sign up for one of those

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dates. If two organizations chose the same date, we would try to do two in one day at different timeslots.

We had previously been in touch with potential co-organizers from several groups, and the following are those who took the next step to schedule a workshop: The director of OMA, who scheduled another session for a different group of diversity workers; Erin, who attended a November workshop, also scheduled a separate one for faculty in her school in Education; Amber in Academic Services for Student-Athletes (ASSA), who tried to help schedule a session for tutors and facilitators at ASSA, but was preparing take several weeks off for family leave; and an Associate Dean of the Honors College (and former English Department Chair), who agreed to help recruit honors students. All of these co-organizers were colleagues or mentors with whom I had already developed relationships. I hoped to reach beyond this list in order to work with leaders of more diverse groups and to eliminate some of the inherent biases of conducting research through snowball recruitment methods. I was fortunate to have a range of contacts at the university working with various types of groups on campus who felt that their groups would want or benefit from the workshops. And there were a few more potential co-organizers with whom I had been in contact who were also interested but unsure about the time commitment, including leaders from student government, Greek life, and International Students and Scholars. But as the list grew, TCW team reminded me of our time constraints, and I agreed to hold off on pursuing those co-organizers and instead to work with those who were the most enthusiastic about participating.

Ultimately, we were able to schedule and lead four workshops in the fall and two in the spring. Table 3.1 provides details about each of the workshops. As the table below indicates (with a C), two of the workshops that I organized were cancelled. Both cancellations occurred a day prior to the session because four or five participants were signed up, but when a participant or two cancelled, we had more facilitators than participants, and we thought the imbalance would make

for a less productive session, and we wanted to use our time wisely. The workshops themselves

followed a relatively consistent pattern, although we did make internal adjustments from session

to session regarding how much time we spent on each sub-section and who led which discussion.

Table 3.1 CWP Workshop Groups

Code	Affiliation	Co-Organizer	Date	Time	#	TCW*	Notes
WC	English/WC Grad students & Instructors	HC	9/18/17	1-4 PM	13	4	Imen, Court, B
C1	English/WC	HC	10/13/17	2-5:30 PM	C	0	0
DM1	Diversity/OMA Staff	ES	11/8/17	9AM-12:30 PM	14	4	0
HPL	Friends of A (Hist, Phil, Library)	A	11/17/17	12:30-4:30 PM	8	K, H	B
DM2	Diversity/OMA Staff & Students	ES	11/28/17	12-3:30 PM	10	H, Le, La	H, La
Ed	STLES(Edu) Fac & Grad Students	D	2/1/18	9AM-12:30PM	8	4	H, B, Erin
C2	ASSA Staff/Tutors	HC	2/7/18	1-4:30 PM	C	0	0
HS	Honors Students	F	2/7/18	5-8:30 PM	3	4	B, H

*The "TCW" column indicates which of the four TCW teammates were present to facilitate the

workshop.

Collecting Interview Data

At a meeting following our first workshop, I began to realize that my research process did

not very deliberately include my collaborators. I had sought their permission to record our

meetings and to use our drafts of documents, and they were very open to it. But my notes could

not be comprehensive or inclusive. So during a meeting, I asked if they would all be willing and

interested in participating in individual and team interviews about the workshops and our

collaborative process. They were all very enthusiastic and thought that this could be helpful to our

process. I began working on an IRB Revision and talking with Anna about conducting the interviews. Using my phone and a hand-held recorder borrowed from the library, I audio recorded the semi-structured interviews, each lasting about one hour. I then transcribed them by hand, and deleted the audio files from both sites. Table 3.2 indicates the relevant details for each of the interviews.

Table 3.2 Collaborator Interview Details

Date	Interviewee	Length	Location	Interviewer
10/12/17	Leah	1:00:42	HH	H
10/12/17	Lauren	0:54:12	HH	H
10/29/17	Kate	0:43:28	Hillary's	H
11/14/17	Hillary	0:53:48	HH	Le, La
11/14/17	Group	1:11:02	HH	H

The interviews addressed several aspects of the participants' attitudes about TCW and CWP, including goals, intended audience, personal experience and ideologies, embodiment, individual roles, challenges, and rewards (Appendix E). My collaborators also interviewed me, adapting the interview schedule I used to ask me questions. After transcribing three of our interviews, I used those transcripts to compile a list of questions for a group interview of about two hours, which I also recorded and transcribed (Appendix F). Because the workshop team member's identities are public and easily searchable, these interviews were not anonymized.

Surveys and Focus Groups

The last stage of data collection comprised of the focus groups and surveys, which enable a shift in the standpoint and a consideration of how the participants experience and respond to our attempts to reach them. Even before TCW became a research site, the team wanted to collect participant feedback via surveys, and the survey questions from our original survey directly

informed the study's survey questions. Illustrated in Appendix G, the survey asked participants to share their expectations and motivations prior to the workshop, their ideas about what worked well and what could be improved, and their thoughts about the workshop's structure and participant makeup. A hyperlink to the anonymous survey form hosted by TCW's website was sent to participants via email three to six days after their workshop session. These links were provided with the following message in the body of the email:

> Thanks so much for attending the Conversation Workshop Pilot on [Session Date]! Your participation and thoughtful engagement mean so much to our team. We would greatly appreciate it if you'd take the time to complete this anonymous survey about your experience:
>
> [URL to Survey]
>
> Your contribution will help us improve and shape the workshop for the future.

The survey responses were reported as email forms which were sent to our organization's email, and I entered them into a Google Sheet as they were received. TCW Team regularly reviewed the survey data to help us make decisions about revisions and workshop framing, and I referred to them prior to focus group meetings so that I would have reference points if participants brought up their responses.

Some workshop participants from each session also signed up for focus groups, which I scheduled by emailing those who had signed up using a Doodle Poll for available dates and times. I tried to schedule groups of three to five participants for the hour-and-a-half focus group sessions. Because most of the participants were staff or faculty, I gave options for times after 5 PM, but they selected times during their Monday-Friday, 8:00-5:00 work schedules, and we held the meetings on campus, mostly in a meeting room near the writing center. Table 3.3 provides a

schedule of the focus groups, using the abbreviations from the workshop sessions to indicate which session participants attended.

Table 3.3 CWP Focus Group Details

Date	Participants	Total	Time	Location
Mon. 11/6/17	WC (4)	4	2:30 PM	Lib 109G
Thurs. 12/7/17	DM1 (2), DM2 (1), HPL (1)	4	1:00 PM	SU 456 B
Mon. 12/11/17	DM1 (2), DM2 (2)	4	1:00 PM	SU 456 B
Tues. 2/6/18	DM2 (1), HPL (1)	2	1:30 PM	SU 456 B
Mon. 3/5/18	HPL (2), ED (1)	2	1:30 PM	SU 456 A

I asked all of the groups questions that I provided them with the Consent Form prior to the session (Appendix H). The first version of the IRB Consent Form indicated that participants would be asked to attend two focus group sessions and provide written feedback. Ultimately, it was very difficult to arrange initial focus group meetings, and the transcripts of the first five focus group sessions provided more than enough data for analysis. So after the first focus group, I decided, with my adviser, to merge the questions from focus groups one and two and to meet with the focus group participants only once. The IRB office approved my modification request (Appendix D), and the focus group sessions generated rich conversation responding to the following questions:

- Describe what were you thinking or feeling pre-workshop.
- Why did you want to participate in The Conversation Workshop Pilot (CWP)?
- Have you participated in other social justice efforts or activities?

- Do you feel prepared, after attending the CWP, to engage in conversations about acknowledging implicit bias & systemic racism? Why or why not?

- What is the most significant idea or strategy you've taken away from CWP? Why?

- How was CWP different from what you expected it to be?

- What do you feel you'd like to know more about in order to better engage in the conversation? What are the barriers to knowing?

- How have you applied your learning since the workshop?

I audio recorded each session using both a handheld audio recorder that I borrowed from the library and the default voice memo app on my phone. I transcribed the audio by hand within 10 days after the focus group occurred, and I used participants' consent forms to determine how to code the participants in the data. All of the audio files were deleted within 14 days of the focus group.

Reviewing and Organizing the Data

As is typical in reflexive, qualitative research, much of the analysis of the data took place during its collection. I recorded, transcribed, and prepared almost all of the data by hand, and the notes that were taken by my research assistant, I transferred and supplemented. This hands-on process allowed for intimate knowledge of the data, and my coding and reflection memos enabled me to intellectually and emotionally process what I experienced and recorded. In addition to coding based on my initial reviews, I was also able to search the data for keywords using a basic search of the Google folder. All of my data was collected and organized in the large, shared folder, which meant that I could use the Google Drive search feature to electronically limit my searches for iterations of key terms based on initial themes and terms from my research questions. This search function allowed me to make connections among various pieces of data that I could not have made from memory.

Data Coding and Analysis

Consistent with grounded theory and AE research, my initial data analysis became a part of the data itself. Throughout the process of collecting data on our collaboration, I sifted through the data I was collecting, and I wrote coding memos that report on themes across documents and notes. I shared many of these memos that were relevant to our progress with my collaborators in the early stages. I also wrote second-level coding memos in which I reflected on my observations and experiences as I reviewed the data and continued our collaboration. No data was excluded from this process, but the research questions that I focused on in my first wave of analysis were "(How) Can feminist invitational rhetoric and writing center pedagogy allow us to enact more socially and racially just and responsive communities at PWIs?"; "How does embodiment influence the ways that group leaders plan for and conduct the workshop?"; and "How does The Conversation Workshop model transition from a community setting to a university setting?" These questions offered direction but not strict guidelines as I reviewed and coded the data. The data sets that most informed this process, which is the focus of Chapter IV, were the individual and group interviews with the four project creators, emails, meeting notes, drafts of the curriculum, and my own reflections on issues related to TCW. From the broader research questions and my first level of coding, several key questions emerged: How do issues of ownership and power affect the collaborative process of composing TCW's antiracist activist curriculum? How does the project team, two women of color and two white women, attend to the effects of their embodiment and their institutional relationships on the collaborative project?

As described in Chapter II, I realized the potential insight that could emerge from employing IE as an analytical lens after I had begun collecting data, so after reviewing literature on IE and consulting with mentors familiar with the method, I determined that the data I had already collected could provide adequate information to support an IE analysis. Additionally, the questions I was asking were aligned with those of institutional ethnography, and I needed a

framework that could help me shape an understanding of the collaboration with participants and understand the particular shape and constraints of our whole project without demanding additional research work of the co-creators, who were already stretched thin (like a collaborative autoethnography would).

While data and documents were collected from many sites, the IE segment, which comprises Chapter V, began from these initial research questions: "What motivates participants to engage in the workshop?"; "How will participants implement strategies from the workshop in their communities?"; and "How does The Conversation Workshop model transition from a community setting to a university setting?" As such, this chapter identifies a relevant problematic and responds to key questions regarding standpoint, ruling relations, and embodied and material practices, all key concepts from Smith's IE methodology, which are described in Chapter V. This analysis focuses primarily on interviews with co-creators, meeting notes, workshop materials, focus groups, and surveys, and the problematic that emerges upon the first level of coding considers how our collaborative process negotiates co-creators' differing conceptions of our audience and the tensions between those conceptions and our actual audiences or participants.

Meeting notes and interviews illustrate how conceptions of audience are shaped by our ruling relations, particularly experiences of identity, race, privilege, and ideology, and our relationships to Oklahoma institutions such as religion, family, and higher education. Meeting notes and workshop materials demonstrate how our workshop practices attempt to identify and attend to our particular audience(s), and the focus group and survey data shift the standpoint to consider how participants understand, experience, and respond to these attempts. The last level of analysis seeks to incorporate the findings from the AE phase, prompting me to consider, with reflexivity, how the workshop process has applied the principles of feminist invitational rhetoric, sought to enact accountable collaboration, and worked toward antiracist and decolonial goals.

My blended method of auto-/institutional ethnography (AIE) allowed me to work toward an accountable research method without a predetermined outcome. Like Taber, "I let my research analysis take me to unintended and significant places. In the spirit of IE, what was previously invisible to me became visible, enabling me to make unanticipated connections between everyday practices, texts, and institutional ruling relations" ("Institutional Ethnography, Autoethnography," 17). All of the connections that are analyzed by design in IE are critical to understanding rhetorical circulation as it relates to systems of power and organization. Unlike Taber's description of her blended application of IE and AE, my AIE method draws upon AE first to discover the inner workings of a collaboration and then turns to IE as a way to consider how that collaboration iterates itself in the community and engages participants.

My initial review of data had significant implications for our collaborative process. It was through writing coding memos that I discovered the problems associated with my role as a researcher and a teaching assistant, indicated in this excerpt of an early memo:

> To add to all of this, there's the problem of my role as a researcher. Because I need data to complete my project, and my collection of data now depends on their unpaid labor, I can't help but feel like I'm exploiting them. They entered into this arrangement knowing that it would demand work of them, and they recognize (as demonstrated by their comments in multiple interviews) that this research has the potential to benefit our project, in terms of its ability to improve the curriculum, offer a safe testing ground, and increase exposure and interest as well as credibility. All of these benefits may even be measurable. But that doesn't change the fact that by agreeing to let me research this process, and to alter the trajectory and timeline of the workshops for that purpose, they have become vulnerable to my needs as a researcher and PhD student who needs to complete this project within a limited time in order to finish her dissertation and get a job. Until recently, I have failed to see the significance of this vulnerability, and I have not

been as transparent and communicative as necessary about issue related to my timeline

and my research goals. ([Role as Researcher/TA - Labor dilemma](#))

In writing coding memos, I also made initial observations about the ways that Kate and I, the

white women and later additions to the group, occupied conversational and intellectual space

during our team meetings, resulting in a group dynamic that did not reflect our philosophy or the

conversational method we heralded, as discussed in detail in Chapter IV.

Complicating the Research Process

Seeking Research Assistance

As CWP developed and I struggled to organize workshops around the schedules of my

Oklahoma City-dwelling collaborators, I began meeting with a few of the women who attended

the first workshop and were graduate students working in the writing center based on a prior

conversation about working with writing center volunteers. We met in early October to discuss

their feedback and ideas about how the first workshop went, and I invited them to begin

collaborating with TCW team and shadowing us for the next workshop so that they could help

facilitate future workshops, in order to lighten the workload on our team and reduce the amount

of travel they would have to do. Four women agreed and were excited to begin, although they did

not feel prepared. I collected their schedules and set up a couple of future meetings to begin

training them.

I mentioned the writing center volunteers at our next TCW meeting, and the team did not

seem to question or be concerned about my notes. But at the following meeting by phone, they

asked questions about my meetings with the volunteers, and they seemed surprised and

concerned. They asked that we plan to train rather than have them come to our meetings and

workshops. The team also wanted a clearer picture of who the volunteers were. They were

concerned that if we let the volunteers have too much say in how the workshops progressed, we

would end up doing a pilot at OSU that looks totally different than our vision. TCW team asked to be involved in determining dates for future workshops so that they could be there rather than relying on volunteers from the writing center, and I agreed not to set up any workshops without them.

Scheduling our next workshop, however, was a challenge. I was coordinating with four different OSU staff and faculty members who were trying to wrangle their departments or organizations into providing TCW team with a few dates to choose from, but Leah, Lauren, and Kate were also having difficulty finding time in their schedules to make the trip to Stillwater, and I was waiting three to four days, and sometimes up to two weeks for responses by email. At the beginning of the semester, I planned to have six to eight workshops before the Thanksgiving break. It was almost November, and we had only successfully scheduled and held one, but we did have two scheduled for mid-November, so I was pleased that I would be half-way to my goal.

Negotiating Research Autonomy

At the beginning of November, I told the team that I'd like to recruit participants more aggressively by sending more emails and reaching out to a few more folks face-to-face. They said that would be alright, but when I asked them for dates, they were only able to offer very limited options. I asked them if we could go ahead and start training the writing center volunteers so that I could continue to do workshops, but they began to question the whole premise of relying on volunteers. Lauren explained that the idea of using volunteers that have not really been trained by our whole team makes her uneasy. She felt like TCW team did not fully agree to letting in these volunteers, and they didn't know that I felt differently. I felt blindsided by this discussion, and I suppose they felt blindsided by my approach to the volunteers. During this conversation, Leah and Lauren insisted that we should not train volunteers until we have a training protocol in place, and that won't happen until we complete the pilot and finish working out the kinks. They were concerned that if we train volunteers separately before we finish revising the curriculum, that two

different versions of the curriculum will begin operating and growing separately. I insisted that I wouldn't let that happen, but I didn't realize at the time, that by trying to say I would make sure that it remained under control, I was talking about my control. And at that point, my control did not feel like the group's control. I was very disappointed that we wouldn't be able to use all of the resources that were available to us and to do more workshops at OSU.

While I knew that I could complete my research project with fewer workshops, after our first workshop with the English Department, I felt like we had something valuable and meaningful to offer the OSU community, and I wanted to do as many workshops as possible while the pilot was in progress in order to make changes on campus. The university was working to manage and recover from a series of social media incidents in which students posted racist comments on Instagram and Snapchat. Minority student groups were divided about how the university was handling these students, and many students (publicly and in meetings) were expressing that they felt unwelcome on campus. While I wanted to use CWP as a way to respond to these students' concerns, I felt that the best way to harness the workshops' potential was to reach out to faculty teaching general education classes and bring workshops to them, not necessarily for my research, but for the campus community. But trying to convince my team to open up their schedules for additional workshops reminded me that what we were doing was not only emotional and intellectual labor, but that it was also materially and physically constrained by the fact that they all lived and worked in Oklahoma City and had professional commitments to paid employment while TCW was entirely unpaid work with the exception of my GA stipend.

Compensation and Commitment

I was very frustrated by the fact that I could not offer more to the OSU community, when I had taken this project on as a job responsibility. As a graduate assistant, I was appointed to twenty hours a week in the writing center, and almost all of that time was supposed to be spent on the CWP. Since my dissertation research was on TCW, that meant that I was being paid a stipend

and tuition waiver to spend what I believed should be forty hours per week on the implementation and research of these workshops. And I wanted to ensure that TCW and the campus community were getting as much out of my labor as possible. But because my collaborators could not spend an equal amount of time on the project, I was limited in how much I could do for CWP without operating outside of our collaboration and their consent. I wrote about this problem in a reflection in December:

> I then became aware that for the writing center and the university to benefit from The Conversation Workshops while providing financial compensation only to me, that meant that I was directly benefiting from the labor of my team, as was the university, while my teammates, two of whom are entrepreneurial, self-employed Black women, continued to labor for TCW without compensation. Because my teammates were no longer employed by or affiliated with the university, we could not see a way for the university or the writing center to pay my teammates for their labor, most of which had been enacted prior to my entering into an agreement with Anna, the writing center director and my dissertation advisor. The writing center's solution for this was to train folks who were already employed by the writing center to step in as facilitators, artists, and volunteers who would receive writing center time for their efforts. We started this process, and several members of the writing center staff received more than a few hours for helping with related projects. But when it became clear that TCW team did not want to open up the curriculum to the influences of volunteers whom they didn't really know, the problem of fair and equal compensation returned. (Role as Researcher/TA - Labor dilemma)

In the reflection, I detail my concerns related to my compensation through the Writing Center:

> This is especially concerning now that I'm hoping to continue to do racial justice work in the writing center for the next year and a half. I'm so grateful for this opportunity, and I

believe that I can do some good with it, but a few things concern me regarding this arrangement:

1. My teammates and I have contributed equally to this project, and for me to receive time and compensation for my efforts while they do not seems unfair.

2. I'm concerned that it may also be representative of larger problems in academia with the ways that white folks are often highly compensated and recognized for doing work on race while people of color are not equally compensated, recognized, or supported for this and other academic and emotional labor.

3. As it relates to our particular project, I see the potential for a couple of different ways this problem could manifest:

    a. Because I am compensated for this work while my teammates are not, I am able to devote additional, unequal time to the project while my teammates feel as if they are losing control or a voice in the project. (This has already seemed to occur on some level.)

    b. Out of fear of neglecting the needs and desires of my teammates, I do not spend enough additional time on the project, and the workshop as well as the writing center fail to see meaningful results because of it. Also, the valuable resources offered by the writing center will have been squandered by my lack of effort. (As a person who deals with anxiety and feelings of inadequacy, I feel like this has already occurred to some extent as well.) (Role as Researcher/TA - Labor dilemma)

Before I began to fully realize these concerns, I knew that I had failed to be as transparent as I needed to be with my collaborators. Problems related to this had begun to build, and they became clear in a meeting immediately following our second workshop, during which we encountered more resistance and confusion than we had in our first. After the workshop, we talked through

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some of the problems we noticed, and we also addressed problems related to the research. My teammates had begun to feel like the project was out of their control, and they asked me to begin including them on all of my email correspondence for the project.

Leah and Lauren also asked that anything I send out to potential participants use our branding package. I had been getting design support from the writing center's PR assistant, but we had a TCW branding package created by a volunteer graphic designer. I didn't have the programs or tools needed to implement the branding, and I also did not have the practice to do this well in a timely manner. The only member of our team with these tools and skills was Leah, who did not have extra time to do this work. But she agreed that everything I sent out needed to be consistent with our branding, which meant that I would need to wait for Leah to design and format everything in order to organize workshops, recruit volunteers and participants, and follow up with attendees. Thus our collaborative structure imposed another way in which the equitable distribution of labor would be impeded. The burden of labor and travel on my teammates, all of whom worked and were involved in organizing in the Oklahoma City community, an hour away from Stillwater, meant that we had to place clearer boundaries on what we could do as a team at OSU. These limitations imposed a new cap on recruiting co-organizers for workshops in order to not overextend ourselves and to curb my tendency to overreach as pilot coordinator and researcher.

Limitations of the Method

Acknowledging our limitations as leaders and my limitations as a researcher, I undertook this reflexive research method to account for Patel's claim that, "We should, in fact, expect that colonialism will be pervasively experienced, wrought upon, and tightly protected, almost regardless of what our ethical stances on oppression might be" (15). CWP and our collaborative process seeks to recognize, acknowledge, and critically examine our differential relationships to oppressive systems and to develop tools for building relationships in order to collectively address

those systems, but we cannot do that unless our research process and the strategies we teach are reflexive and responsive to contexts. This reflexivity results in an evolving research process and a shifting focus. Initial research questions for this project spanned topics pertaining to the development and adaptation of the workshops to participants' interests and motivations to the potential impact workshops might have on their communities. As data about the development of the workshops began to provide insight regarding the influences of co-creators' embodiment, power, and privilege, those elements warranted closer examination, and one sub-question, "How does embodiment influence the ways that group leaders plan for and conduct the workshop?" came to guide much of the inquiry, and the lenses of autoethnography and institutional ethnography helped to re-shape these questions.

While AIE structures my inquiry of the CWP to systematically incorporate an examination of dynamics of power, it does not necessarily account for the many systems of power that are external to the CWP. Because my study was conducted at and supported by a PWI, and most of the workshop participants were faculty, staff, and graduate students, my AIE did not intentionally include diverse perspectives from outside of this dynamic. This meant that, while I could consider and even account for various and shifting power dynamics, we were only directly interacting within a narrow range of power dynamics that are particular to a PWI. In particular, the team and our participants were diverse, but most have or were pursuing graduate degrees at a research university. The workshop did not originate in an institution of higher education, but it was cultivated there, and it felt like a natural locus for the work we sought to do. I still have concerns that by conducting this study in a research university, out of conveniences and a desire for the feedback of experts, TCW has evolved in a direction that resists accessibility and does not account for the experiences and needs of a broader audience. This antiracist workshop pilot project did not directly engage with or include the voices and perspectives of those who are most sorely affected by systems of racism and oppression. As a team, however, we continued to work

from the perspective that we needed to recruit those who move with privilege to resist racism, and

rather than exploiting the emotional and intellectual labor of those who have long cultivated

strategies for resisting racism, we offered participants the opportunity to learn from resources that

are available to the public (like art, film, documentaries, books, and podcasts). Both the workshop

and the AIE method do foster reflexive engagement with one's personal relationship to systems

of power, consideration of ways of resisting or interrupting inequitable systems, and

accountability for pursuing that work.

AIE is especially fitting for critical, antiracist, and decolonizing work because of its

deliberate self-reflection and affordance of personal accountability. Most (if not all) researchers

operate with some power and privilege, and while it is imperative for all researchers to account

for that through ethical methods, it is especially critical for those who undertake action research

and seek to resist or dismantle oppressive systems to interrogate their own position within those

systems. AIE offers a methodological resolution that is well-suited for critical, rhetorical inquiry

that is reflexive and holds researchers and practitioners accountable for the ways that we engage

with systems of power.

CHAPTER IV

AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHY: COLLABORATION AND COLONIZATION IN AN

INVITATIONAL ANTIRACIST PROJECT

We must commit to reciprocity--*the kind that is primarily about being answerable to*

those communities we claim as our own and those we claim to serve. It is about being

answerable to each other and our work. One of the many things lost to the pressures of

the publish-or-perish, quantity-over-quality neoliberal regime is the loss of good critique.

We have come to confuse support with sycophantic praise and critical evaluation with

personal injury. Through the ethic of reciprocity, we need to remind ourselves that

accountability to the collective requires a commitment to engage, extend, trouble, speak

back to, and intensify our words and deeds. (Grande 61)

This autoethnographic chapter emerges from a desire to reflect on "commitment to

reciprocity," as theorized by Critical Indigenous theorist and education researcher Sandy Grande,

by considering how we, in our collective work, are answerable or accountable to the communities

we belong to and "those we claim to serve." As rhetoricians and researchers, our job is to analyze

and interrogate. This often does not seem to make room for love or passion or personal

investment. But if a researcher is committed to reciprocity, they must hold themselves

accountable to the collective and be answerable to their work. This piece is my attempt to

analyze, interrogate, and critique my collaborative work on the antiracist activist project called

The Conversation Workshops (TCW), described in detail in Chapters I and III, which I have poured myself into for the last two years, and to do so without devaluing the investments that my teammates, loved ones, and I have made in this project. This tension between my love for the project and my obligation to question it feels like a conflict of interest, but it is, in fact, out of love that I offer this critique. My hope is that transparency and a stance of curiosity and hope will help me not only maintain but enhance the integrity of our project.

As described in the introduction, TCW is a project led by four friends: two mixed-race Black women (Leah and Lauren), and two white women (Kate and me). The workshop focuses on providing a conversational strategy for interpersonal activism based on feminist invitational rhetoric, which TCW treats as productive for both transracial and intraracial accountability and antiracist community building. In *Power Lines*, Aimee Carrillo Rowe explains that

> The presence of transracial alliances often anchors a process of transformation that goes beyond the intellectual understandings of power and privilege and moves into the realm of embodied knowing. What is at stake in such intimate forms of knowing is twofold: power is remade within such relations, and transracial belonging becomes a vehicle for walking a healing path of awareness. (Carrillo Rowe 44)

This study of TCW illustrates that process and complicates it. Because the workshop's purpose is to build antiracist alliances, and the project emerged from a transracial alliance, this autoethnographic project originated out of my desire to reflexively consider how the embodied experiences and racial identities of TCW team members influenced our collaborative composing process. But my analytical process draws upon grounded theory and critical autoethnography, which emphasize narrative and ethnographic data as a primary site for illuminating and generating theory (Charmaz; Potter; Chawla and Atay). The data that emerged from the process of developing the curriculum highlighted significant tensions around the idea of settler colonialism and the ways that our collaborative processes should to be held accountable for that and for resisting those historicized patterns. As I processed the data, I was drawn to theories of

decolonizing, and reading Patel, Tuck and Yang, and Grande helped to shape my approach to the data and to shift my focus toward the ways that decolonial theory could inform our collaborative, transracial composing process. This chapter is the result of that analysis, and dwelling in moments in which we as collaborators struggled to enact the antiracist and decolonial values upon which we based our workshop and our alliance, reveals the need for a more accountable collaborative practice.

Cushman's landmark essay "The Rhetorician as an Agent of Social Change" establishes a framework for rhetoric scholars who engage in participatory action research, claiming that "social change can take place in daily interactions when the regular flow of events is objectified, reflected upon, and altered," and rhetoricians can learn from, participate in, and influence these interactions as forms of activism, to "disrupt the status quo" (12-13). Since the publication of Cushman's essay, many rhetoricians have embraced this idea and demonstrated their commitment to community-based activism and public pedagogy in their scholarship. The April 2016 Conference on College Composition and Communication Statement on Community-Engaged Projects in Rhetoric and Composition (CEPRC) demonstrates the field's sustained investment in scholarship rooted in community engagement, and many of the projects referenced in the statement undertake racial justice (Conference).

This chapter extends that conversation by using an autoethnographic method to study the collaborative process of developing TCW and to consider the impacts of collaborators' embodiment, racial identities, and worldviews on our approaches to the project. To learn from the limitations and nuances of our collaborative approach, I critically analyze a collection of data drawn from our collaborative documents and conversations that demonstrates our process of developing the curriculum and negotiating our roles as activists, allies/accomplices, collaborators, creators, educators, leaders, students, and researchers.

Following in the tradition Cushman fostered, I present findings from my participatory action research on TCW, the analysis of which draws upon interviews with the project creators

regarding our racialized, gendered, embodied engagements with the curriculum, the participants, and one another as well as our meeting notes, planning materials and correspondence, and my memos and reflections. The workshop model relies on a feminist invitational rhetorical strategy, which resists the coercive purposes of more traditional rhetorical strategies in favor of a set of feminist principles: equality, immanent value, and self-determination (Foss and Griffin 3-4). This concept emerges in the interviews as we consider how we use feminist invitational rhetoric reflexively. In striving for reflexivity, which is discussed further in chapter five, I mean to include three conceptual practices: 1) reflexive research practices, rooted in grounded theory, which seeks to make space in the research process for reshaping the process based on the findings of the research; 2) self-reflexivity, which attends to the ways that my own and our practices are shaped by our experiences; 3) ethical reflexivity, which works toward consistency between ethical stance and action; this is as critical move to "make an effort, humbly so, to narrow the distance between what we say and what we do as much as possible," which Freire advocates in *Pedagogy of Indignation* (21).

We approach the project with antiracist aims, seeking to acknowledge the effects not only of our embodiment but also our relationships to each other and systems of power on the project. Although we did not approach the work with explicit decolonial aims, as we negotiated our embodied relationships to systems of power and oppression, my research prompted us to reflect upon the ways that our collaborative processes neglected to account for the impacts of settler colonialism on our practices. This realization is affirmed by Patel's claim that, "We should, in fact, expect that colonialism will be pervasively experienced, wrought upon, and tightly protected, almost regardless of what our ethical stances on oppression might be" (15). Grande explains that,

> while white supremacy, patriarchy, and neoliberalism and other technologies of
> domination may render the contours of settler colonialism more visible (and in some
> ways function as co-constitutive logics), a settler colonial framework represents a

particular set of relations, one that originates with the theft of Indigenous land and the

'remove to replace' logics that enable that theft. (52)

Neither TCW nor this study of it can claim they are decolonial projects because they do not

"begin and end with land and its return," but this reflexive project seeks to acknowledge and

resist the structure of settler colonialism as well as its "co-constitutive logics" (Grande 52-3).

Although the problems that emerged in the case of TCW primarily concern ideological space and

intellectual practices rather than physical land, it is not a stretch to observe the ways that our

collaboration, which takes place in a context where we are constantly negotiating our

relationships to the settler academy and resisting the erasure of histories of the violence and

oppression endured by Black and Indigenous people at the hands of a settler state, continues to

reproduce the structures of settler colonialism by drawing upon our experiences in the university,

which, "as an arm of the settler state," "refracts settler logics" (Grande 51). Because TCW seeks

to recognize, acknowledge, and critically examine our differential relationships to oppressive

systems and to develop tools for building relationships in order to collectively address those

systems, this project critically examines our collaborative processes to work toward a more

accountable model of collaboration.

TCW's curriculum and its underlying philosophies are described in depth in Chapters I,

II, and III. Here a brief overview provides valuable context for understanding this analysis of our

collaborative process and how it incorporates the principles upon which the workshops are built.

TCW emerged from The Conversation OKC, which originated as a series of events hosted by the

Palmer sisters in the summer of 2016, in which Kate and I participated prior to collaborating on

TCW. Immediately following the 2016 election, Kate proposed that we collaborate to extend the

work the Palmer sisters had begun by developing a resource for folks who wanted to address the

racism their communities through meaningful conversations. After developing, testing, and

revising TCW's curriculum, we implemented it through a university writing center in order to

pilot the new version, collect data for research, and receive feedback from participants. Months

after beginning work on TCW, Leah and Lauren invited Kate and I to take on designated roles in the foundation that would house TCW, and we gladly agreed. The interpersonal and reflective nature of TCW curriculum fosters reflection on the researcher's and creators' identities, embodiment, and personal experiences. Consistent with the goals of TCW, this autoethnography begins by critically examining the role of racial identity in TCW's antiracist activist pedagogy and through an autoethnographic analysis, seeks to understand and resist the impacts of settler colonialist structures.

Critical Autoethnography

Like TCW, autoethnography (AE) works from the perspective that experiencing, acknowledging, and interrogating our emotions is critical for developing understanding of self and socio-cultural constructs. As a white woman and feminist scholar in the privileged position of researcher, intending to do decolonial, antiracist work, I employ autoethnography to situate myself in a critical, reflexive process. Rhetoric scholar Brett Lunceford establishes that, while rhetoricians have not embraced it yet, autoethnography's intentional application and analysis of emotional experience and rhetoric helps situate this method comfortably in rhetorical studies, which has a dynamic relationship with emotions in theory and research (Lunceford 8-11). Additionally, Ellis and Bochner demonstrate the vast potential of critical autoethnography through their own experimentation with the method and genre, explaining the need for struggle, emotion, and vulnerability in AE:

> 'The last thing I want is for autoethnography to be tamed,' I respond. 'Autoethnography shows struggle, passion, embodied life, and the collaborative creation of sense-making in situations in which people have to cope with dire circumstances and loss of meaning. Autoethnography wants the reader to care, to feel, to empathize, and to do something, to act. It needs the researcher to be vulnerable and intimate. Intimacy is a way of being, a

mode of caring, and it shouldn't be used as a vehicle to produce distanced theorizing.

What are we giving to the people with whom we are intimate, if our higher purpose is to

use our joint experiences to produce theoretical abstractions published on the pages of

scholarly journals? (Ellis and Bochner 433)

Most importantly, autoethnography creates potential for enacting a decolonial research

practice that enables a reflexive approach to the antiracist project, not only because it subverts the

narrative of researcher objectivity by explicitly revealing the researcher's subjectivity and

relationship to the subject and data, but also because it deconstructs imperialistic frames that

privilege hegemonic concepts and structures. Describing the value of decolonial critique and its

potential to impact autoethnography, Chawla and Atay assert,

Decolonial frameworks focus on hybrid experiences, practices, and identities, as well as

on the ideologies, performances, and practices that actively question, critique, and

challenge colonization. At the same time, such practices also focus upon the colonizers.

On one hand, decolonization entails a process whereby the colonized critique and

challenge Western ideologies and power structures, on the other hand, it addresses the

colonizer, who must strive to achieve a degree of self-reflection, which illuminates the

negative impact of colonization and how she has gained from it. (5-6)

I cannot claim that my autoethnography is a decolonizing practice, because as a white researcher,

I have not been colonized, but rather have been complicit in and benefitted from colonization. But

in taking up a decolonial framework for my critically reflexive analysis, I deploy this analytic

lens to resist master narratives and to examine and voice my "complicit location within academic

structures and [my] resistive strategies" (Dutta 95). Through its plurivocal and narrative structure

and its attention to power structures, embodiment, and relational dynamics, this autoethnography

does seek to do some of "the work of decolonizing," which decolonial communications

researcher Mohan Dutta describes as, "on one hand, to mark, name, and pull apart this often-obfuscated, secularized politics of knowledge production" (94).

The autoethnographic process helped me remain accountable as a researcher whose focus is not the research as an end in itself, but the ways that research can contribute to the project of developing tools to dismantle systems of power, as discussed in the introduction to this dissertation. And sometimes ethical tensions emerge from the demands of research and the project of dismantling; this research helps to make my process of negotiating these tensions legible, and to the extent that this is possible, transparent. It also facilitates critical awareness of the tools and strategies that I and my collaborators have applied and developed unintentionally or without critique.

The data was collected with the enthusiastic consent of my collaborators, who were pleased that one of us would be documenting our process and that we might learn from critical reflection on our work. The autoethnographic data was generated through the process of developing the workshops, and it includes individual and group interviews with the four project creators, emails, meeting notes, drafts of the curriculum, and my own reflections on issues related to TCW. Several key questions guided my initial inquiry: How do issues of ownership and power affect the collaborative process of composing TCW's antiracist activist curriculum? How does the project team, two women of color and two white women, attend to the effects of their embodiment and their institutional relationships on the collaborative project?

The analytical process began with open-coding the data and writing coding memos, which I used to further develop coding schema for my analysis. My analysis is also informed by the comments and observations of the workshop team. These collaborators and friends have contributed to this project not only by co-creating the workshop's content, but also by their openness to the research process and by asserting their needs and desires for the research. In

addition to contributing additional feedback throughout the research process, Kate, Leah, and Lauren have agreed to read the write ups to ensure that my representation of them and of our collaboration seems accurate to their experience. In addition to providing a discussion of the composing process, this piece acknowledges the concerns and limitations that emerge where the theories, strategies, and embodiment intersect. Autoethnography provides an appropriate theoretical lens that has been used by feminist researchers in recent years to demonstrate attention to the situatedness of feminist research practices. This method enables an introspective critical examination of self and motive, which is essential for social justice research and activism, and it is central to the philosophies that underlie TCW curriculum.

Drawing from work on autoethnography as a feminist, decolonial method for exploring issues of race and identity (Ellis and Bochner; Chawla and Atay), here I share stories about the development of TCW, acknowledging my role in it and my concerns regarding whiteness and colonization in social justice settings. A narrative description of the development of the workshop curriculum considers how the racial identities of TCW team influence our approach to the project and how issues of ownership and power affect the collaborative process.

Our (Racialized) Roles

We start from a place of insecurity regarding representing the racial identity groups that we belong to, but we come to rely on our racial identities to establish our *ethos* and to justify our place in the group. Describing the problem of representation in our collaboration, Lauren explains: "I so badly want a voice from the Indigenous community in our little team, and it feels kind of like a no brainer considering where we live. I feel like I was not raised culturally Indigenous, and I would want someone who ate at that table to speak to their community. I'm kind of waiting for that."

Lauren's comment that she "would want someone who ate at that table to speak to their community," demonstrates the ways that we try to represent our groups and to be the means by which we reach our particular communities. For Lauren, who explains that she was not raised culturally Indigenous, educating herself about her Indigenous heritage has been one of the ways she is working to heal the intergenerational trauma of that erasure. Lauren's comment also demonstrates the emphasis our group has placed on coalition and community in our activist project. She recognizes that we cannot represent all perspectives, and if our project seeks to speak to diverse groups, we must not only listen to diverse groups but also seek out their deep and embodied knowledge to sustain our learning and collaboration. In our workshops, we insist that no person can or should have to represent their race, but in our collaboration we make it our responsibility to ensure that our groups are accounted for, addressed, and listened to. Acknowledging our limitations, however, doesn't mean that we have accounted for them or adequately valued what we do offer.

Alternatively, Kate suggests, "I don't want it to be this whole white guilt like, everyone should just do things because they feel bad because there was slavery or whatever or because they haven't done enough. But more of an empowering feeling, like I am a person of privilege and I'm white, look what I can do to help just by the nature of that." In moving from white guilt to white responsibility, Kate attempts to transform what can be an emotional burden into an asset in an attempt to make it more palatable. This attempt to reframe social justice work to appeal to white audiences' sense of responsibility, particularly, the idea of adopting one's identity as a "person of privilege" to "empower" their role as an ally is a troubling turn and one which I also heard from white participants in workshops and focus groups. TCW's curriculum does take the time to illustrate how racial privilege functions, and our workshop does convey that those with (various kinds of) privilege should take responsibility for antiracist work. But at a semantic level, this language of being "empowered" by privilege is troubling in part because it serves to stabilize

whiteness. To seek to use one's privilege for good is still to benefit from it, and this dynamic is comparable to a white savior move, which is rooted in settler colonialism. Rather than contribute to stabilizing whiteness, a decolonial approach would seek to destroy the relations of superiority that are inherent in the colonialist narrative and relations of whiteness. Following the interview in which Kate made this comment, as a team, we discussed our approach to privilege and responsibility. We agreed that racial identity and intersecting factors are likely to impact the ways and means for antiracist action, and that is likely to influence who attends our workshops and contributes to these conversations; ultimately, most of our participants are likely to have experienced significant privilege of various kinds. And for white people struggling with white guilt, it can be productive to encourage them to take responsibility and use their privilege to build up others and to help dismantle the systems from which they've benefitted. Kate's comments did prompt conversation among our team about white responsibility. We see it as the need to a) recognize the ways that white people have been complicit in systems of oppression, b) impact and hold accountable communities, institutions, and structures that are predominantly white, that are built upon and reinforce white supremacy, and c) dismantle oppressive systems and behaviors and build up inclusive and equitable practices. The particular quote from Kate gestures at affecting communities, but it skips the important step of recognizing our complicity.

Our workshop can address this in part by turning to critical race theorists, who have illuminated the notion of white responsibility in part by distinguishing it from white guilt. Applying Butler's notion of subject formation to Young's Social Connection Model of responsibility to theorize white complicity, Applebaum provides a frame for understanding antiracist responsibility: "When we begin to shift our white students' attention from an exclusive focus on causal connections to the practices that they inhabit and that constitute them as intelligible subjects, we have a better chance of getting them to understand that responsibility for complicity is rooted in the very nature of being white" (628). Kate's gesture to "white guilt" and

"white responsibility" suggests a shared belief that guilt comes from being implicated, but my concern over this excerpt is that a feeling of guilt does not mean that one has taken the time to interrogate how they are implicated or complicit in oppression and white supremacy, which Applebaum's definition of responsibility demands. Even the most well-meaning white people can neglect this step.

Lauren's quote, in a way, suggests intentional reflection on her situatedness, and it continues to inform our conversations about some of our limitations. She acknowledges that, despite her Indigenous heritage, she is not equipped to fully account for Indigenous audiences. Lauren's and Kate's interview excerpts reveal that, while our bodies may enable us to justify taking up particular rhetorical spaces, accountable collaboration and activism demands that we also consider, not only the ways that we have been complicit or implicated in oppressive systems, but also the ways that we are situated within our communities, and to which communities we belong and in which we have equity.

Space to Talk

How we see our roles and limitations informs our collaboration, but collaborators are also affected by how they view each other's roles and interactions and the material conditions in which the work happens. I'd been thinking about the impact of our material conditions when I noticed a recurring pattern that was having a negative impact in our meetings. We had been holding many of our meetings at Holloway House, Leah and Lauren's event space which is the location from which they operate two small businesses. At a recent meeting, Lauren was talking, and Kate jumped in, like she and I often do to each other, and Lauren's tone shifted. It became immediately apparent that our conversational practices influenced group dynamics. Leah, Kate, and I all spent time in graduate courses in English, particularly in three-hour seminars. In these courses, a person has to be willing to jump in or interrupt in order to have their voice heard. I cannot definitively attribute our talking patterns to that commonality. There are other factors at

play. Kate, Leah, and I all knew each other prior to collaborating because of our time in the writing center, which may enable a level of comfort in our conversations. Additionally, it seems to me that Kate and I have tended to be much more likely to interrupt others than anyone else in our meetings. I observed Kate do this several times in our face-to-face meetings before I noticed myself doing it in a phone meeting. Even after making a mental note to talk to Kate about this, I continue to step on others' words, particularly on Lauren's.

Shortly after I noticed this pattern, we had a meeting by phone in which we were figuring out how to tell our story as a group. In this already contentious meeting, I failed to catch myself interrupting Lauren. We have often been concerned about whether we've accounted for Lauren's ideas and feelings because she doesn't talk much in our meetings except when there is something about which she is passionate. Soon after the meeting, I wrote a text to Kate about the fact that Leah, Kate, and I "listen to and interrupt each other without any problems. It just feels like an enthusiastic, engaging conversation. But Lauren, who talks much less frequently, seems to shut down if interrupted (even if it's an accident)." I suggested to Kate that we both be more careful about treading on Lauren's space to talk.

Kate and I, two white women, have entered the communal, intellectual, and physical space developed by Leah and Lauren, two mixed-race Black women. Our motivations and behaviors determine whether our presence will foster collaboration and collective action or perpetuate oppressive, colonialist structures. Decolonial theorist Walter Mignolo explains that, "Colonization of languages, memory, and space implies that conflicting concepts, values, and actions directed toward language, memory, and space begin to coexist, although social and political power is not equally distributed" (256). In the case of negotiating our collective biography, Kate and I (unintentionally) attempt to assert unearned power by claiming conversational space that is not ours and by introducing strategies for reasoning and argumentation that did not originate in this communal space. In this context, we are the two white

women in a group whose purpose is to develop an antiracist curriculum, and we're talking over

women of color; this feels akin to violence, aggression, colonization. While Leah and Lauren

would not describe our collaboration as a process of colonization, there have been times when I

felt as though we were at risk of perpetuating a colonizing pattern, especially considering the

particular contexts of our collaboration.

While we were welcomed into this space, and we did not seek to alter or to exploit it, by

acting carelessly, we put our collaborative goals at risk. By introducing communicative patterns

from an educational space built upon hegemonic and colonialist values, we reinscribe those

values and devalue and marginalize our intended collaborators: "More than eradication of

previous belief systems, colonization implied, first, that whoever does not embrace the

hegemonic values is marginalized" (Mignolo 247). This is not to say that our dynamic can be

simplified to colonizer/colonized. Because of all of our complex histories, experiences, and

relationships to racism, oppression, and colonialism, we've come recognize that our power

dynamics are not straightforward or static. Kate and I were invited to enter and contribute to this

communal space that Lauren and Leah shaped prior to our arrival. We bring resources, ideas, and

labor in the spirit of collaboration and solidarity, but to remain true to that spirit, we must

vigilantly resist the hegemonic, marginalizing, or colonizing practices we might bring with us.

Re-Writing Our Story

At our second weekend writing retreat, Leah and Lauren informed Kate and I of their

plan to start a non-profit foundation which would support The Conversation and by extension

TCW. This foundation would also support other projects outside of The Conversation, and TCW

would be one branch of The Conversation, which would probably cultivate additional projects

that were not necessarily directly under TCW. This stems from the origins of The Conversation,

the series of events the Palmer sisters started during the summer of 2016, which Kate and I

participated in prior to our collaboration on TCW. While Kate and I were excited to have roles in the foundation that housed TCW, it soon became clear that we did not understand how they saw our roles in The Conversation.

Our misunderstanding came to a head during the process of revising our TCW participant packet, the primary curricular document that participants receive during the workshops. Leah, who has done all of the design work for TCW because she has the expertise and the digital tools, was completing the third major revision of the packet, and for the first time, she included an attributions page, shown in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1 Attributions Page from Packet Revision 3

On this page, Leah and Lauren are listed as "Founders," while Leah, Lauren, Kate, and I are listed as "Founding Writers," and there is also a column for "Contributors." This attributions page provides a tangible and visual representation of the tensions between how Kate and I saw our contributions and how Leah and Lauren saw them. And it sparked a very important conversation.

Kate and I received and read this iteration of the packet together by coincidence. When we reached this page with our contributions listed as "Hillary Coenen, rhetoric and content," and "Kate Strum, editing and content," we were disheartened to say the least. We composed an email to provide detailed feedback on this large document and to address our concerns about the contents of this page. One section of the email expresses our dismay, claiming that,

this packet represents The Conversation Workshops (rather than The Conversation OKC) and all four of us are founders and equal contributors to TCW. We were surprised to see it listed differently. In light of this, we would like each of us to be listed simply as "FOUNDERS" without individual attributions, but we do feel that your design/creative work merits an extra note in terms of your contribution.

In the email exchange that followed, we agreed to have an in-depth conversation about it at our next meeting. Prior to that meeting, Kate and I discussed how important it is to us that we honor the origins of The Conversation and the work that Leah and Lauren put into developing those initial sessions for their communities, but we also had some concerns about the moves toward formalizing our organization. Because Leah and Lauren have significant experience with founding a particular kind of model (a small business as a lifestyle brand), Kate and I had some initial resistance to allowing TCW to fall into that pattern that was so familiar to them. Our next meeting was by phone, and we tried to address the tensions. Kate and I agreed that TCW grew out of The Conversation, and we did not want to take credit for that or to devalue their ideas or labor. Kate explained that "Leah and Lauren started The Conversation, and we want to honor and recognize that, but to me, the packet represents The Conversation Workshop, and to me, the four of us are the founders of that." Leah responds that "Many people who know about TCW, know because of how it started, as The Conversation." She further explains, "From our perspective, TCW is the Conversation, but just with so much more to offer. When you guys came as participants, you were hearing us say, 'We need more help.' Being where we are now, it was like a response to that call. Even since our earlier conversations, I've been operating from that place." Lauren reinforces Leah's claim by elaborating:

> We want to maintain an open-handed collaboration with the people we work with. Even if we create the concepts, we don't want to hold on too tightly. But I feel the weight of stewardship for the original vision. I don't want to seem like an asshole about this. The

original vision was something that me and my sister came up with at two in the morning. It's hard for me to take this position of being insistent about what our story is, but it's happened before that my work/our work has turned into a community project, and I feel like I don't want allow my work to be used in that way.

Kate and I insisted that we do not want to take credit for founding The Conversation. And we meant it. We both respected their desire to protect the concept that emerged from their collaboration as sisters and partners, and we didn't want to encroach on that. But at the same time, we felt that we were equal contributors to shaping and implementing the workshop, and we wanted the workshop materials to reflect that, not because we felt we needed public credit, but because it felt important to us that Leah and Lauren recognized us as equal contributors rather than mere helpers.

Our desires may have been misguided in some ways. To honor the idea that The Conversation concept belongs to Leah and Lauren, and that we've been welcomed as contributors to one branch of that, we should defer to the fact that we are not fully equal contributors despite the fact that this workshop would not have become what it is without Kate's initial invitation, organization, and persistence or without my contributions of invitational rhetoric and research findings. To claim equal ownership is to claim territory that is not ours to tread on or to alter. Rather than trying to tell our own versions of this narrative, and in so doing, attempting to re-write a history that is not ours, through this process we struggled to begin to accept a version of the story in which we were not included at the center.

After this phone conversation, we seemed to be approaching mutual understanding. We agreed to address foundership again at our next face-to-face meeting, just four days later. After de-briefing over the workshop we just completed, Kate initiated the conversation by conveying how the questions about her desire for recognition left her feeling mistrusted. In our previous

meeting, Lauren mentioned that she had consulted some business mentors about the foundership issue, and Kate explained her initial and residual feelings:

> I was feeling like, those people you consulted, that those people don't know me and can't know if I'm trustworthy, but I came to realize that, especially if those people were people of color, that they'd have more awareness of the fact that historically, white people have gone through so much effort to take things from people of color. I have a willingness to yield in that acknowledgment that we recognize the ways that our experiences here are influenced by histories of exploitation and oppression.

Lauren's response is generous and telling. She reflects on our previous discussion:

> As a woman of color putting forth something like this, there's so much to protect. I feel like I've leaned heavily on the group; I don't want to do it myself. But if my name and my Blackness is lent to this, they might not even know my name, but they see that 'these two Black girls started this, and they're misrepresenting us.' It goes back to being made fun of, and I'm trying to do this justice.

These comments from Kate and Lauren marked a watershed moment in which we as a collective began to better understand the ways that our investments in the project were complicated by our racial identities. Kate was hoping to have her integrity and antiracist commitment validated from within the team, while Lauren was concerned about perceptions of her racial integrity from outside the group, in part because of her local visibility in the activist and small business communities. The fear of whitewashing and complicity in white supremacy informs both of their concerns, but because the threat is not singular, neither is the resolution.

During this meeting, we came to a solution for the attributions page. Everyone agreed to have one column for "The Conversation Founders," Leah and Lauren, and a second column for "The Conversation Workshop Creators," Hillary, Lauren, Leah, and Kate (in alphabetical order

by last name). We have yet to settle concerns over labeling roles and responsibilities, and at a meeting prior to our final pilot workshop in February, we made a plan that will make use of my research. I suggested that I would review transcripts from each of the team member interviews and compose a memo that provides a comprehensive look at what we have each said about our own and each other's roles in our collaboration. We planned to this memo to direct our conversation about developing transparent titles and exploring our visions for the future (18_02.07.18 Pre-workshop). Ultimately, the memo was informative as we reflected upon our roles prior to the public launch of our project. This component of the research also guided my analysis of our interview data. But distilling all of our work into brief descriptions of what each person contributed to our team felt incomplete. The interview data suggests that for much of our collaboration Kate has been like the chair of our organization, Leah has been the creative backbone, Lauren has anticipated the experience of participants, and I have been the researcher and questioner. While we all agreed with these claims about our roles, we also recognized that they were neither constant nor encompassing. We wanted to train ourselves to embrace our roles, but this research exercise also taught us that none of us could be just one thing to the group. It also demonstrated to the team that the research process had the potential not only to improve the workshops for participants, but also to make us more effective and reflexive collaborators.

Re-enter the Foundership Conversation

Our next several meetings were consumed by business related to the public launch of our curriculum, for which we had many deadlines and tasks. The impending deadlines for the launch included producing materials that succinctly describe our project's origins. While we had a bio that we used in the packet and on our website for months, we all recognized the need to re-write the bio to reflect our current understanding of the structure of our team. After a series of three meetings, we agreed to write our versions of a bio and to look over them all together to revise.

A few meetings later, we talked by phone to go through our bios in Google Docs. We had written them in separate documents, and I copied each of the three I had access to into one Google doc for easier reading. We started with my version, which was based on something we had previously written that was not a bio. It's first sentence is, "The creators of The Conversation Workshops are Lauren Palmer, Leah Palmer, Hillary Coenen, and Kate Strum, four women from diverse backgrounds of experience and geography who all live in Oklahoma." It then provides a description of how the project started with Leah & Lauren's work organizing the initial Conversation sessions.

Lauren explained that she "tried to tell the story in chronological order," and that in some of the bios, it feels like "there's a bit of a split in our language, and sometimes that makes it feel like there's a sense that The Conversation is dead" (18_03.30.18 Discussing Bio). I asked if we can take a look at particular language that does this. She hesitated before indicating an issue with the first sentence of my bio. Later I realized that my request for her to point to the text is a common English-teacher tactic. I wondered if it sounded to her like I was asking her to prove that her response was valid. While I wanted to know what kind of language I should avoid, a more productive inquiry would have considered the problems in my stance. If I re-read closely what was in the document, I would have seen the problems Lauren felt.

The relational dynamics in this moment are complex. In the past, Lauren has been explicit about feeling like an outsider in our collaboration because Leah, Kate, and I all have graduate degrees in English. She is sometimes self-conscious about her language, and she has expressed that outside of TCW she often feels worried about others stereotyping her as incompetent or an amateur because of her Blackness/femaleness/youth. But at that time, she and Leah had clearly conveyed their position as Founders of The Conversation and situated themselves as the leaders of the organization. I sometimes forget that my position as researcher, a

PhD student, and white woman in this space may exert power or dominance even when I do not feel powerful.

Leigh Patel, author of *Decolonizing Educational Research: From Ownership to Answerability*, asserts that, "From a view of education as a system, the practices of researchers, teachers, and policymakers have fluid interaction with the centuries-long processes that foment the privileged and the oppressed, the colonizers and the colonized, the vaulted and the marginalized" (15). It could be argued that asking a student to provide textual evidence in order to justify their perspective to argue their point (rather than validating and affirming other logics or sources of evidence) is a behavior that "foments the privileged and the oppressed," but I highlight this moment in particular because, especially outside of the classroom, in a collaborative dynamic, it would be more equitable and just to seek understanding in ways that affirm cultural logics outside of those privileged by the academy, which inherently protects and reinforces oppressive, colonialist structures. Of course, finding ways to expand cultural logics in the classroom is also imperative to the decolonial process.

Ultimately, Kate insisted that she wanted our bio to reflect Leah's and Lauren's visions, and I agreed, out of a commitment to the approach that Kate and I agreed to, which was to take a backseat. We decided to make some minor revisions to Lauren's version of the bio, which she added during our conversation. Leah mentioned that she was most inclined to use Lauren's bio because she was drawn in by what she called its "soulfulness" and story-telling quality. Figure 4.2 shows the resulting bio.

Organization Summary:

The Conversation Workshops is a creative and brave anti-racism curriculum that teaches ways of responding to the systems of racism we all experience.

Tagline:

Fostering intentional dialogue for change oriented communities

About:

The unrestful Summer of 2016 proved to be a life-changing one for communities across the U.S. During only a handful of months, several unarmed men and women of the African American community were killed by law enforcement.

After engaging social media where their friends were expressing sadness and grief, sisters, Leah and Lauren Palmer acted quickly on their notion to provide a space for friends and family to grieve, ask questions, and love their neighbors. After announcing an impromptu gathering to be held at their parents' Oklahoma City home, dozens of people showed up; hours of healthy conversation stirred; and new sparks of activism were born. This was just the beginning.

Subsequent gatherings were held, but the sisters knew that there was a need for more structure, handles for attendees, and education. As Leah and Lauren were incubating ideas to grow their initiative, Kate Strum and Hillary Coenen generously extended a hand to the sisters. After a few meetings between the four, a workshop concept was born and cultivated.

The team facilitated a pilot series hosted by the Oklahoma State University Writing Center, where research provided valuable input from faculty, staff, and students toward the development of the curriculum.

In April of 2018, the workshops were officially introduced in Oklahoma and began engaging communities.

Figure 4.2 2018 Launch Press Packet, About

Leah requested that, in addition to this bio, we all independently answer a few questions about the project that could be posted on our website in lieu of individual bios. After she showed us an example of this on another website, everyone enthusiastically agreed. We ended this meeting after nailing down some other details, and, afterward, I cried for what were probably all the wrong reasons. In part, I shed tears to lament that my teammates didn't seem to recognize or value my role in our collaboration enough to include a phrase about what I contributed, and I felt a similar concern over the lack of recognition of Kate's work, particularly her initial invitation to

collaborate. Another, more subtly felt reason for my sadness was that our collective at that moment did not feel strong enough to withstand my critique that our collaborative process of storytelling was inadequate. Simply taking one contributors' story and making minor revisions did not very effectively convey our collective truth or the value of our project. We needed a better way to story together.

Enacting Accountable Invitational Collaboration

> *The meaning of self is never individual, but a shifting set of relations that we move in and out of, often without reflection. I aim to render palpable the political conditions and effects of our belonging to gesture toward deep reflection about the selves we are creating as a function of where we place our bodies, and with whom we build our affective ties. I call this placing a* politics of relation. (Carrillo Rowe 25-26)

The distinctive feature of TCW is that it is built on relational equity, which drives our collaborative approach to interpersonal activism and encourages participants to hold each other accountable, and to prepare to have difficult, brave conversations. Our team of four has had many difficult conversations in our over two-year collaboration, but we have rarely talked about the ways that race and settler colonialism impact our collaborative dynamic. We care deeply about one another and about our project, and our focus is on the work and its potential impact. Frequently, we have been frank about selecting roles in the workshops based on our racial identities as well as our personal strengths, and we consider this an important aspect of how we present ourselves and our materials. But the narrative I've presented here tells a different story about our own approach to collaboration. While our approach to the curriculum and the materials was intentional, our approach to each other may have been less so.

Page 27 of our participant packet asks participants to prepare for an invitational conversation by acknowledging their own "relationship to systems of oppression." As a team, we

did this together, primarily considering how we function in the communities in which we operate independently, but we failed to consider how this might impact our internal dynamic until the moments recounted in this chapter. While the conversation about our project's origins sparked some ugly realizations about how I approached the project, I am grateful that it created an opportunity for our team to finally address how issues of power and oppression are operating under the surface of our collaboration. In part, this neglect occurred because, as a team, we assumed mutual understanding and agreement, operating from the perspective that, in our dynamic, the playing field was level, an assumption which fails to account for the ways our personal experiences, histories, and motivations might be shaped by systems of oppression.

We began the project with explicit discussions of our motivations, which at the time, were all rooted in serving the community and creating resources for antiracism, but when I introduced the research component, my motivations multiplied and became much more complex. While I shared my goals for the research with the team, and they were all excited for the opportunity, I neglected to fully understand how this would shift the nature of my engagement with the project, the kinds of stakes I would have in our decision-making, and the ways in which I would benefit from it, financially, professionally, academically. Our collaboration would benefit from Tiffany Rousculp's example: "Embracing our own self-interests in this work made space for the growth of a rhetoric of respect for others' purposes, interests, and priorities" (115). Here Rousculp refers to a rhetoric of respect as "discursive action" that demonstrates the perception of another's worth and recognition of differences as valuable (24-25). While Rousculp is describing discursive action, an accountable collaborative practice would also apply active and intentional listening, in some ways akin to Ratcliffe's rhetorical listening tactics, but rather than being applied to texts or concepts, it becomes a mode of collaborative engagement.

While TCW's adapted invitational model seeks to avoid coercive tactics, it does deploy active listening to promote understanding, in part to produce persuasive counterstories, a term

discussed by Martinez in "A Plea for Critical Race Theory Counterstory" as well as many other feminists of color. TCW resists assuming that invitational partners engage from opposite perspectives. But in our own interactions, we often fail to understand that the tensions that produce disagreements do not emerge from "opposite" perspectives, but rather from distinct ones. In order to understand the tensions, we must listen not only for what we will counter, but to understand positionality and power, experience and history, and ideology and perspective. Carrillo Rowe discusses the challenges of doing this work across racial difference, particularly for white feminists, asserting that,

> Recognizing that women-of-color allies may 'tell you what you don't want to hear,' for instance, may allow white women to reframe the critiques women of color share with them—to understand them not as personal attacks, but as alliance practices. That is, if women of color practice and imagine alliances as an appropriate space for critical exchange, such gestures may be read as overtures of connection, not separation. (175)

Our adaptation of the invitational model seeks understanding for the purpose of addressing power imbalances, starting with interpersonal relationships and working our way out. This means that we must be willing to listen to "what we don't want to hear," particularly if the goal is developing relationships rooted in equality, immanent value, and self-determination, which is far from the default, even in relationships rooted in shared goals. An effective and accountable collaborative composing process demands not only that we more actively seek to learn about our collaborators and their experiences and values, but also that we begin to "mark, name, and pull apart" our own in order to resist the ways that they are shaped by oppression and colonization (Dutta 94). So much of the reason that we failed to enact invitational rhetoric in our collaboration was that we entered the project assuming shared values and goals. Much was shared, but we failed to account for the ways that our histories, experiences, and stakes in the project might be shaping our approaches differently. Examination of these failures revealed that as a team, we would be able to

use the model of invitational rhetoric to call one another in after these tensions emerged. As discussed in Chapter II, "calling in" refers to the practice of identifying problematic, offensive, or harmful behaviors or language with the person(s) who perpetuated a harmful idea in order to foster accountable communities rooted in inclusivity and justice that teach with generosity rather than shame, which characterizes the practice of calling out (Burns; Tran; Ferguson). Our reflexive attention to invitational rhetoric in our collaboration led us to an intentional practice of calling one another in, both to hold ourselves accountable to the collective and to negotiate shifting dynamics within the group.

Because writing studies is invested in collaboration, we must attend to the pedagogical implications of these findings. Teaching accountable collaboration, which will be discussed at length in Chapter VI, demands that we teach strategies for self-awareness and ways to learn from and account for experiences and histories of ourselves and our collaborators. This is especially relevant to community activism and public pedagogy which are almost always collaborative, and should always include participants and communities in the composing process. As this research demonstrates, autoethnographic inquiry offers one adaptive and reflexive process that can lead to relevant, transferable self-discovery and more accountable and reciprocal collaboration. Enacting ethical collaborative practices demands that we more intentionally attune ourselves to disparate power structures that affect our interpersonal dynamics, even, or perhaps especially, when we share antiracist goals. While invitational rhetoric provides a model for calling in collaborators who fail to justly account for disparities, a proactive approach to accountable collaboration can support communities in developing frameworks for attuning to and resisting disparities of power and privilege.

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CHAPTER V

AN INSTITUTIONAL ETHNOGRAPHY:

THE AUDIENCE FOR INTERPERSONAL ANTIRACIST ACTIVISM

The analysis that emerges in this chapter suggests that approaching public rhetorics with

feminist invitational rhetoric would mean rejecting traditional notions of audience as recipients.

Many pedagogical and rhetorical approaches reject the idea of students and audiences as passive,

but invitational rhetoric takes this idea further by outlining the rhetorical goals as rooted in

communion and relationships. Because invitational rhetoric seeks "understanding as a means to

create a relationship rooted in equality, immanent value, and self-determination," the

contributions of both the "rhetor" and the "audience" constitute an invitational exchange (Foss

and Griffin 5). In our curriculum, we tended to refer to invitational conversations or dialogues,

and we referred to participants in the dialogues as "partners" rather than rhetor or speaker and

audience. While our workshop sought to emulate the spirit of invitational rhetoric, we did not

take the same approach in talking about the "audience" for our workshop. And although we asked

our workshop participants to refrain from stereotyping or assuming things about the character of

their potential conversation partners, we regularly assumed things about our workshop audience

during the planning and implementation stages. The successes and failures of our workshop have

provided valuable insights regarding approaches to audience. In particular, we learned that our

work had more to gain from approaching participants as collaborators rather than as passive

recipients. Drawing upon the concept of accountable collaboration from the previous chapter, this chapter uses institutional ethnography to analyze TCW's engagement with audience in order to outline principles for establishing an environment for accountable collaboration that rejects the hierarchical structure of speaker/audience in favor of a collaborative model.

From the outset of The Conversation Workshop (TCW), we had an audience problem. As co-creators, we each brought different ideas about who would benefit from and be interested in the workshop we were envisioning. Simultaneously, we attempted to account for the beleaguered academic, the seasoned activist, the newly-motivated mom, and the well-intentioned but naive ally. We knew that we did not have the margins to tailor the workshop to the particular types of participant we might encounter, so drawing upon invitational rhetoric, we attempted to develop a model that accounts for participants' perspectives by valuing their experiences and knowledge, making time for building connections, and listening as a reflexive practice. We did not realize that the categorizing of our potential audiences not only essentialized our participants, but it also neglected Foss and Griffin's claim that invitational rhetors "do not attempt to fit audience members into any particular roles," but rather they "celebrate the unique and individual identities of audience members" (11). Eventually we did come to realize our fault in approaching our audiences as types, and we began to resist that. But an important part of our workshop model was that we emphasize the importance of working in "pre-existing communities," which necessarily rejects a construction of our audience members or participants as individuals in isolation. They are unique, but they are also inherently interconnected.

Method

I set out to conduct an autoethnography (AE) pertaining to TCW, but the data that I collected also effectively responded to questions about TCW as an emerging institution and a dynamic and ongoing collaborative project. The questions I was asking were aligned with those

of institutional ethnography (IE). I discovered that the questions that emerged in AE provided immediate and personal contexts, but it did not help me shape an understanding of the collaboration with participants. I needed access to a framework that would help me understand the particular shape and constraints of our whole project without demanding research work of the co-creators (like a collaborative AE would).

Data for this project was collected with a view to a collaborative AE, and IE is an emergent mode of inquiry, providing a framework for data analysis, but it is not a prescriptive method, in part because it was incorporated during the late stage of data collection. As such, this chapter identifies a problematic and responds to key questions regarding standpoint, ruling relations, and embodied and material practices. While data and documents were collected from many sites, this analysis of how our collaborative process negotiated co-creators' differing conceptions of our audience and the tensions between those conceptions and our actual audiences or participants draws primarily from interviews with co-creators, meeting notes, workshop materials, focus groups, and surveys. Ultimately, this inquiry is in service of understanding audience, the Oklahoma audience, the institutional audience, the ways that they overlap and differ. Sociologist Marjorie DeVault explains that the purpose of mapping these social relations is "to show how people in one place are aligning their activities with relevances produced elsewhere, in order to illuminate the forces that shape experience at the point of entry" (294), which in the case of TCW, provides an opportunity to explore the ways that collaborators and contributors are constrained by the prevailing institutions in Oklahoma, our "ruling relations," or the "expansive, historically specific apparatus of management and control" that, in this case, perpetuates white supremacy and settler colonialism (295). These questions are in service of TCW because explicitly studying our approach to audience can help us better account for them and understand how our conceptions are limited and constrained by our ruling relations. The questions also shape considerations of how our participants themselves approach this work and

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the barriers and constraints placed upon them by their ruling relations, in this case, the oppressive power structures in Oklahoma. More broadly, reflexively considering our engagement with audience through institutional ethnography provides a model for systematically observing and accounting for positionalities through the research process and for developing structures for answerability both in research and in public rhetorics and pedagogies. The results of the analysis also emphasize the need to enact principles of accountability, acknowledging the self-determination and contributions of our audience/collaborators.

Focusing on the institutional nature of our work helps us as co-creators to identify and explore the local relationships that make our project unique, vital, and problematic. This intentional, guided critique also assisted our team in reshaping institutional relationships and the practices central to those relationships. For me, a white woman in the academy, conducting an AE and attempting to apply a decolonial lens (because I intended to do decolonial work), the lens was pointing the wrong direction, ultimately, because a decolonial AE seeks to identify and resist the effects of colonization on the colonized and oppressed. To use a decolonial lens effectively in this context, we needed to examine how our collaborative practices were informed by our experiences in hegemonic institutions. IE provides this analytical lens.

In this chapter, the lens of IE guides an analysis of the ethnographic data from the CWP that focuses on a problematic: the co-creators' differing conceptions of our audience and the tension between those conceptions and our actual audience/participants. The meeting notes and interviews with the co-creators reveal how our conceptions of audience are shaped by our ruling relations, particularly our positionalities and experiences of identity, race, and ideology, as well as how we have experienced institutions of Oklahoma such as religion, family, and higher education. Our meeting notes and workshop materials demonstrate how our practices identify and attend to our particular audience(s) through our explicit definition of audience, our discussions and exercises about privilege and identity, and our composing and revising of Shelby, a fictional

character who appears in the scenes we use to model invitational conversations. The focus group and survey data enables a shift in the standpoint and a consideration of how the participants experience and respond to our attempts to reach them.

Some participants noted that they expected and wanted more time for sharing their stories and hearing from other participants; they also identified some initial confusion about what this workshop offered them, especially since our materials focused on personal uses rather than professional, although some resolved this issue by comparing it to a religious or spiritual practice. Analysis of participants' responses highlights a disjunction of our approach to audience with our philosophy, which was shaped by invitational rhetoric. Believing that our participants would be diverse, but assuming a particular range of possibilities, we made time for discussion, but the curriculum would only allow itself to be reshaped so much by our participants' engagement. This may be viewed as a flaw in our pedagogical approach. We failed to begin with an invitational approach based on a desire to learn from, understand, and make room for diverse & various audiences. This analysis incorporates a proposal for a stance toward audience shaped by Foss and Griffin's invitational rhetoric in order to account for diverse perspectives and to build a collaborative approach to the curriculum.

Identifying the Problematic

In IE, the problematic identifies sites of negotiation, resistance, or tension in an organization for the purpose of determining how institutions attempt (or fail) to resolve or deal with competing ideologies or approaches (Smith, *Institutional Ethnography* 38-40). Feminist writing center scholar Michelle Miley describes the problematic as being grounded in the experience of the individual but focused on "the coordination of activity within the institution," (112). This project's problematic centers on the co-creators' differing conceptions of our audience and the tension between those conceptions and our actual audience or participants.

Some of the tensions emerge as a result of the research process, but others existed in part because of our varying positionalities. The problem of audience resurfaced on several occasions, and it became particularly salient as we conducted the Conversation Workshop Pilot (CWP) in a university community. TCW emerged in response to exigencies in the Oklahoma City community, and the curriculum was written with this audience at the forefront. The process of transferring this model to a peripheral university setting reveals how responsive and reflexive our attempt at an invitational curriculum can be.

As described in Chapter I, the exigence for TCW was the response to the Palmer sisters' series of events called The Conversation OKC, which were attended by their friends, family, colleagues, and community members in Oklahoma City and the surrounding area. The Palmer sisters, Leah and Lauren, are from the Oklahoma City area, and they have been very involved in various community activities for years. Discussions and issues raised during Leah and Lauren's Conversation OKC series shaped TCW's curriculum and our ideas about the needs of our prospective audience. But when we decided to conduct a pilot version of our workshops from which I would collect data for my dissertation at Oklahoma State, our audience shifted from the Oklahoma City community (and the Palmer sisters' vast social network) to the academic community of staff, faculty, and students at Oklahoma State. Leah, Kate, and I met as graduate students in the English Department and got to know each other by working in the Writing Center at OSU, but at the time of the study, I was the only co-creator of the workshops with an active role in the university. And because my research depended upon it, I was responsible for scheduling all of the workshops and recruiting participants. For each workshop, friends and mentors with connections to particular groups helped me schedule and recruit participants from various corners of the university. The participants were mostly limited to colleagues of my colleagues, which meant that many of them were already involved in diversity work and organizing on campus and that they were familiar with many of the concepts and terms that we

used in our curriculum. We did not revise the curriculum for the CWP based on the type of

audience that we anticipated in the academic setting, but throughout the pilot we did make minor

revisions based on our observations and the feedback we received from this audience despite the

fact that some co-creators insisted that our intended audience was not an academic one. This

analysis reflects our struggles over audience, and it produces alternatives to approaching our

audience in such a binary and predetermined way.

Shaping Our Conceptions of Audience

Clarifying the role of our positionalities in our collaborative composing is the lens of

ruling relations, described by feminist sociologist and ethnographer Dorothy Smith as "(a)

differentiated and specialized as specific social relations and (b) objectified in the sense of being

produced as independent of particular individuals and particularized relations" (14). The

implications of our ruling relations at work appear in materials and data throughout the process,

but the interviews with co-creators provide explicit connections and discussion about those

institutions and social relations which shaped our outlooks and assertions of audience. On more

than one occasion as we collaborated to create the curriculum, we admitted to ourselves and each

other that our individual experiences were shaping our approach to the workshop and how we

saw its audience. We hoped that we would be able to foster an experience that would be

accessible far beyond the audience we initially imagined, but composing with a specific audience

in mind helped us to move forward and to negotiate with one another.

Knowing Oklahoma(ns)

Leah and Lauren grew up near Oklahoma City, while Kate was raised in New York City,

and I am from north Texas, just south of the Oklahoma border. By the time we started

collaborating on TCW, Kate and I, who both came to Oklahoma for graduate programs in

English, had been in the Oklahoma City area for around five years, and we'd been active in

communities outside of the universities by which we had been employed. While we had both been active in the community for some time, we tended to defer to Leah and Lauren, whose intimate knowledge and passion for the community we trust and uphold. As musicians, entrepreneurs, activists, church-goers, educators, and community organizers, they represent many important facets of social life in the area, and their communities look to them to know and understand what's happening. The sisters' undergraduate experiences at a regional Baptist university undoubtedly inform their understanding of Oklahoma, and we took their experiences for granted as we were shaping our curriculum.

The ideas about audience represented in these excerpts provided us with touchpoints from the start. We referred to this idea of the young, Christian, white mom as if she were a character until she became one: Shelby. Unquestioningly, we allowed our goals for the workshop to be guided by the needs of this mom character whom Leah and Lauren described to us at the beginning of our collaboration.

> I think of those people who were involved in the very first conversation and the ones who, just listening to them, the things that they were saying where race was concerned, most of the people in the room were millennials, and they were asking questions like, 'how do I talk to my parents or my grandparents about these issues. How do I talk to people that I love and I want to maintain relationships with when I know we disagree or when I know there's going to be tension?' So I think one of the central goals for us is to give people those handles, and I think that, yeah, I'm constantly thinking of the guy who asked, 'how do I talk to my racist dad,' or the women who asked 'how do I talk to my racist husband? We're raising these young white boys, and I need to be able to have these conversations.' (Leah, Interview)

I want for this thing to penetrate pre-existing institutions that have been there forever. I'm

not ignorant enough to believe that we can overturn very deeply rooted ways of doing

life, but I am thinking there's gotta be a way that what we've created can go into the

church or the home, like family as an institution, or universities or whatever, and can sort

of shake things a little. Because, Kate, like you were talking about, those moms that

would text, email, and message us on social media, saying 'under cover of night, or in my

home, or when my husband's away, I wanna secretly meet with you.' It felt very

throwback. You know, really? We're doing this in secret? I think it's because they're not

empowered by those who're educating them in the pulpit or at school, or their husband,

their wife, their boyfriend, their mom, to face this type of stuff head on. (Lauren,

Interview)

According to comments made by Lauren (during a planning meeting on March 27th,

2017), Leah and Lauren, two mixed-race Black women, grew up in churches and schools that

were predominantly white, and as such, they were often approached as "an easy gateway to talk

about race." Lauren says when people with whom she wasn't close would come to her to "make

amends" of some kind, she learned early on to accept it "with grace," and recognize that "this is

not about me." Given this phenomenon that both women have continued to experience throughout

their adulthoods, it is no surprise that our ideas about our target audience were shaped by a

relative extension of this trend: the well-intentioned, previously complicit, hopeful ally.

Lauren explicitly names the ways that this character (and our willingness to cater to

them) is fostered by Oklahoma's educational and religious institutions with which she and Leah

are so familiar. Because many of our workshop participants were educators, and even many of

those who weren't had experience with Oklahoma public schools, discussions of the curriculum,

particularly as it pertained to Oklahoma history often came up in our workshops. Frequently,

participants offered examples and critiques of problematic and negligent approaches to the most

violent aspects of our history that they had witnessed in K-12 schools, including the celebration

of the "land run," re-enactments of which were banned in Oklahoma City public Schools in 2014

to polarized reactions (Willert "Oklahoma"; Stewart), though the practice persists across the state

(Price); the whitewashing of the Trail of Tears (Schlanger); and the erasure of the Greenwood

Massacre, which destroyed Black Wall Street (also called the "Tulsa Race Riots") (Farmer;

Willert "Lawmakers"). A less frequently discussed contributor to the whitewashing of Oklahoma

was Christian leadership, which is has an overarching influence on Oklahoma's culture and

society, and is a defining ruling relation for many contributors to TCW and CWP. The culture of

"colorblind" Christianity in Oklahoma is reinforced by larger organizations like the Southern

Baptist Convention, which Reverend and Professor Lawrence Ware critiqued in a *New York*

Times opinion piece, explaining its history of racism, exploitation, and negligence, particularly

the decision not to adopt a resolution denouncing white supremacy (Ware). Consistent with the

attitude that Ware describes is the more recent inter-denominational "Statement on Social Justice

& the Gospel," signed by at least 182 pastors or religious leaders practicing in Oklahoma in 2018

(MacArthur et al.). The statement denounces contemporary social justice efforts as dangerous and

leading to corruption.

In addition to these stark examples of how oppression is facilitated by Oklahoma's

institutions, Rachel Jackson's work illustrates how Oklahoma's history as both a site of attempted

erasure of Indigenous peoples and cultures and of active resistance and collaboration by

Indigenous organizers and leaders has cultivated a complex intersection of racial oppression and

enabled a great deal of white supremacist rhetoric to shape discourse in this region (Jackson;

Carstarphen). Leah and Lauren's comments, when considered in context, reveal the ruling

relations of our anticipated TCW audience, and they suggest that, while Oklahoma families vary

in their approaches to talking about race, many of their friends and acquaintances felt as though

they didn't have the resources or tools they needed to talk with family members about racism, and

since it was not a regular practice in their homes, they didn't know what risks they might undertake in trying.

Likeness and Difference

In addition to calling upon our proverbial Shelby, as we composed the workshop, the co-creators continually felt a need to "get our people," as the Crunk Feminist Collective calls us to do, or to reach the audiences that we represented or felt personally connected to (crunkadelic).

> I feel like we have tried to take this approach in our language, it feels accepting, or applicable to anyone. I think there's room to grow though. I mentioned my identity as a mixed-race Black woman helping to shape how I look and feel about this workshop. I think there's room for the minority in this workshop. There are nuances to the Black community, the Indigenous community, those are the two I'm most familiar with. I'm also familiar with the religious community. There's a huge need for what we're trying to do, trying to teach. (Lauren, Interview)

Lauren's assertion that there's a need for what we're presenting among communities of color reminds us that, while Shelby might be our touchpoint, she is not our only or even our ideal audience. To focus only on "Shelby" and audiences like her would be to continue to center whiteness in the conversation, but Shelby is crucial to the goals of TCW, which seeks to shift the responsibility of resisting racism onto white people by making systems of oppression more visible to those who have previously been unaware of the severity of its impacts, Lauren and Leah's initial vision of the audience was largely shaped by individuals that they know through their church and small business communities, but here Lauren reminds us that our workshop must be relevant and meaningful for people of color in order to have any positive impact. She calls upon her knowledge and experience of the communities of color to which she belongs to extrapolate our workshop's relevance to those communities at large, but she speaks very broadly

about these needs. This approach reflects a pattern that we had some difficulty shaking through the process of developing the workshop: the us/them mentality that reinforces binaries meant to affirm belonging. Here the purpose of her comment, to suggest that this workshop is for anyone who wants it, is consistent with our attitude, and the desire to ensure that our workshop accounts for and speaks to those who are "like us" is shared by each of the co-creators. As we'll discover, the problem lies in our desire to classify participants as "like us" or "unlike us," an attitude which makes it easy for us to neglect particular types of audiences whom we believe are unlike us in their ideologies, values, or principles.

Attempting to classify our audience, Kate outlines the range of stances she previously may have used to categorize people in terms of racial politics:

> Mostly I just thought there were the super hard-core racists, then the Trump voters who were like 'I'm not a racist,' and then there were people who were trying to get active and showing up to the Conversation, and then people who were already activists. Maybe I thought of like four types, but it didn't occur to me that there were people negotiating that space. That brought to light to me this group. And then I pictured like all of these moms who were in that place. Then I was like Whoa! That was this group that nobody's trying to reach. (Kate, Group Interview)

Kate helps to situate our approach to audience by demonstrating how we have tended to think of our potential participants as those who are more like us, activists or hoping to be activists, those who are "woke" or seeking wokeness. But Kate admits that Leah and Lauren's stories about the white moms have complicated her ideas about the range of positions that individuals might occupy when it comes to understanding racism. She explains that "Oklahoma and OKC are so different from anywhere" she has lived that it was a surprise to realize that there might be people

here who are just learning to see and talk about race and to ask the questions that lead to racial literacy (Group Interview).

During another interview, I begin to realize that I may have more in common with that young, white mom than I would have previously liked to admit. In this moment, I am coming to terms with some of the ways that my commitment to advocacy and accomplice-ship (defined in Chapter II with references to Green and Martinez) have applied to my professional life but have been neglected in my personal life.

It's easy for me to think about it as a scholar, but personally, it's a lot harder. So much of that is because, every time we talk about this, I envision, and every time we lead a workshop, I think about different scenarios that I either have encountered in the past or I anticipate with my grandfather, my father, my aunts, who I could just battle over and over again about stuff that hurts my heart. (Hillary, Interview)

The quote from myself complicates our notions of audience and our ideas about the young, white mom. Throughout this process, I have seen myself as a social-justice oriented academic whose professional identity is tied to being an accomplice and organizer. But this quote reveals the vulnerability of feeling unprepared to take on family situations as an antiracist accomplice. That's not to say I hadn't tried to talk to family members about race and racism, but I didn't tend to approach it with the persistence and patience that characterizes my academic approach and our workshops. As revealed by these excerpts from interviews with co-creators of the workshops, our attitudes about audience reflect a desire to reach those who are "like us," those who would identify with our antiracist stance.

Attempting to Reach Our Particular Audience

These attitudes about our audience directly informed the practices that we brought into our negotiations about the curriculum, and the texts that guided our process reflect these attitudes,

as evidenced by the workshop packet including statements, summaries and exercises; our recruitment materials; and even our meeting notes. Attention to these evolving and integral documents is rooted in Smith's approach to "texts as coordinators in sequences of action or work" (*Institutional Ethnography as Practice* 66). This approach recognizes texts as occurring in order to "make it specifically observable as an ongoing activity" (66). This analysis approaches the relevant texts using a model that Smith describes as incorporating the text by "interviewing both those involved in the work processes that bring the text into play in the sequence, *and* those who take up the text to enter it into the next phase of action" (67). In this case, "the next phase of action" is rather ambiguous and difficult to observe because the workshop sessions were relatively isolated events rather than ongoing processes; however, the engagements with the texts in each workshop did contribute to the ongoing process of their development and implementation. IE enables the visibility of that process by demonstrating how the texts engaged the participants and then how their engagement contributed to the ongoing process of the texts. Review of the meeting notes and the workshop materials demonstrates how these attitudes influenced how we defined audience in our packet, how we sought to reach diverse audiences while teaching about white privilege, and how we tried to create model dialogues with relatable characters.

Defining Audience

Our first meeting to begin planning TCW was in November of 2016. We took a brief break for the holidays, but by the end of January 2017 we had developed our Audience Statement. Since those first couple of months, this statement has read:

> The Conversation Workshops are for those who want to hone their skills in practicing
> listening, patience, accountability, and confident leadership while communicating truth
> and fostering an attitude of justice. The methods presented and practiced in The CW are

intended for use within pre-existing relationships built on trust and respect in hopes that

this spirit of change will emanate throughout communities.

The Conversation Workshops are for a son reaching out to his parents; a woman

dialoguing with her partner; the friend having honest discussion with another friend; the

congregant exploring truth with a faith leader; among others.

This description explicitly reflects our attempts to connect with those audiences with whom we

ourselves identify, and it implicitly addresses our concerns about potential participants not

understanding our purpose or how this workshop might address their needs.

This statement places emphasis on "pre-existing relationships" as the primary site for our

intervention. During the workshops, we discuss that real change is multivalent; it requires active

engagement on multiple fronts including social, political, and economic action. The strategies that

we developed respond to a particular need that was brought to our attention during sessions of

The Conversation OKC. Many attendees expressed sadness and frustration about being unable to

have meaningful, sustained conversations with friends and loved ones about racism. During these

sessions, we talked about the importance of persistence and patience. Abandoning these

relationships would just allow the rampant #AllLivesMatter attitudes to grow and spread, while

sustained conversations about racism with those who had rarely been encouraged to reckon with

the idea might prompt some important considerations and work to call in those counterparts to

contribute to and participate in antiracist community. That summer, and increasingly after the

November 2016 election, we also heard many calls to abandon or reject relationships with those

who took the wrong side. We were not eager to put ourselves in the crosshairs over whether

relationships across party lines were worth maintaining, but we questioned the stance that many

of our compatriots took that voting for Trump should be immediate grounds for dismissal from

our social circles. Perhaps this is because in Oklahoma, for many, eliminating Trump supporters

from one's social circle would mean extreme isolation and allowing problematic attitudes to remain unchallenged, or perhaps it is because, in Oklahoma, white supremacy is so rampant that even those of us who are aware of it can understand how it remains invisible to the majority. By reflecting on our experiences with Oklahomans, we began to consider that it would only be through pre-existing relationships that we could attempt to make white supremacy visible. We sought to encourage others to leverage their social capital to transform the dominant perspective in Oklahoma and foster critical recognition of systems of power including those institutions that are most revered and unquestioned.

Revising McIntosh

Early in our planning, we discussed incorporating Peggy McIntosh's "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" to introduce the notion of white privilege. Many readers will be familiar with her work, which, according to our packet, "lays out what has become foundational work for the study and understanding of white privilege as it exists in the underlying daily, and seemingly innocuous systems that exist in the United States." We considered whether introducing white privilege as if it were new to the audience might alienate some participants for whom this idea would seem elementary or to lack nuance. In part to complicate the notion of privilege and to ensure that participants of diverse backgrounds would feel included and accounted for, we incorporated a repurposed version of the backpack imagery. Shown in Figure 5.1, this section appears in the packet prior to the McIntosh discussion, and is accompanied by an exercise in which participants are asked to imagine themselves carrying a backpack.

WHAT DO YOU FEEL?

Imagine you carry a backpack with you everywhere you go—to work, to school, at home, in your place of worship, at the grocery store, at your child's school, and even while you sleep. In it, you carry your past experiences as well as your family's history. You carry the way you look, your socioeconomic status, and the status of your ancestors. Finally, you carry what others might say about you just on one glance: their biased assumption of who you are.

What items are in your backpack? What feels light? What feels heavy?

JOT DOWN YOUR THOUGHTS.

LIGHT	HEAVY

For more information on how the items in the backpack connect to historical events, see page 46.

Figure 5.1 "What Do You Feel?" Reflection, Packet Excerpt

The introduction to the activity reads,

> Imagine you carry a backpack with you everywhere you go—to work, to school, at home, in your place of worship, at the grocery store, at your child's school, and even while you sleep. In it, you carry your past experiences as well as your family's history. You carry the way you look, your socioeconomic status, and the status of your ancestors. Finally, you carry what others might say about you just on one glance: their biased assumption of who you are.

> What items in your backpack feel light? What feels heavy?

This re-figuring of the backpack was intended to demonstrate the more nuanced and intersectional ways that privilege and oppression operate in our individual lives. Although this exercise does not name or call upon McIntosh's essay, many participants recognized the metaphor and made connections to McIntosh before we explicitly referenced her in the workshop.

Initially, we planned to temper the discussion of McIntosh because we did not want the workshop to suggest that we primarily anticipated or catered to a white audience. We generated the "backpack scene" hoping to provide a visual representation of the idea that every person moves through the world with varying privileges, traumas, and oppressions. Hoping to infuse this discussion with nuance and self-reflection, we developed an exercise that prompts participants to consider their own experiences of privilege and oppression, and we introduced that before discussing white privilege. It occurred to us later that this might also be beneficial if we encountered participants who may have previously been resistant to the phrase white privilege. While we might encounter audiences that resist McIntosh's notion of white privilege for various reasons, it seemed necessary to use the concept for our particular project because TCW offers an answer to questions about how to account for privilege. TCW's strategies ask participants to risk the privileges afforded to them in interpersonal relationships, laying them on the line in favor of

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justice and developing racial literacy. While our model attempts to reframe McIntosh's canonical text to account for various systems of privilege, it does not work to move beyond more personal implications of privilege, as Lensmire's critique urges:

> Examining white privilege outside of this system may serve, as Leonardo (2004) worried, to mystify the structural nature of racialized and inequitable systems. While we certainly cannot pretend that white privilege is not a part of this system, addressing it alone and as the property of individual white people without an understanding of why it exists will not allow us to dismantle the systemic aspects of racism and reshape individual relations. Such a focus on the individual stalls racial analyses at personal levels without moving them toward structural or institutional understandings. (Lensmire et al. 421)

In order to move toward structural and institutional understandings of racism, we follow the discussion of white privilege with an exercise that focuses on iterations of white supremacy. While in many environments a discussion of white supremacy might be adequate, TCW's co-creators intuited that our Oklahoma participants might be either unfamiliar with or resistant to white privilege and that we may need to ground our discussion with definitions and examples from McIntosh for credibility and relatability.

Complicating Shelby

Also rooted in a desire to make the work seem relatable, we decided to use scenes to model what an invitational conversation would look like. We thought of our training modules in the writing center and how instructive it was to see model sessions to understand what the parts of a session looked like. The first model that we conceived of was a conversation between two friends, one of whom is Shelby, a white woman who has recently adopted a Black Ethiopian child, and the other is Claire, a Black woman who wants to express concern over how her friend has talked about the adoption. The idea for Shelby was, in part, based on descriptions Leah and

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Lauren offered of young women they knew from their non-denominational Christian church. The women they described are young and usually white with some college education. The idea of these women that Leah and Lauren knew all too well became a stand in for us to talk about levels of wokeness. When we asked if something would reach "the young stay-at-home mom," we weren't only talking about her employment status or her caretaker role. We were also talking about her whiteness and her perception of race.

As we planned and discussed the first model conversation, Kate and I expressed some concern about how accessible this conversation would be to participants, in part because we didn't find it very believable. Leah and Lauren insisted, however that this character really existed and that they had participated in similar conversations on more than one occasion and with more than one person. This insistence was recently affirmed by a widely circulated article written by an Oklahoma woman that claims that the two daughters she adopted from Zambia have only really experienced racism from "Black peers" (White). So, while none of us were mothers, we sought to incorporate a site of interpersonal activism to which many potential participants might relate: parenthood, in order to provide examples for even the most personal of conversations. To negotiate our concerns about the believability and accessibility of these models, we decided to create a second model, this time between family members, a father and a daughter. We agreed that in this scene, we would use Shelby again, but that this time she would initiate the conversation in order to demonstrate that antiracism and being an accomplice is a dynamic learning process and a moment-to-moment choice. In this scene, Shelby invites David, her father and a small business owner, to talk with her about her concerns that he may have passed over a Black applicant for a job based on a difficult experience with a previous employee who was Black.

In the workshops, we decided to share and discuss the scene between David and Shelby first because we believed that family relationships would be the most common touchpoint for

participants. We hoped that by first introducing Shelby as Partner A/the inviter, participants would more readily relate to her, and that by following that scene with one in which she is Partner B/the invited, that participants might be able to more easily identify with Partner B. The scene between Claire and Shelby is introduced after an explanation of what the invitational model is and how it can be used. While it is not intended as a joke, Shelby's character in the second scene can occasionally seem a bit like a caricature, and for a while it felt pretty reductive. I don't mean to suggest that our workshop should aim to avoid making fun of white people, but something about our ease with making fun of these women sometimes feels a bit less generous and patient than we aspire to be. This is partly because Lauren has described these women coming to her and Leah in secret or asking to meet privately because they don't want their husbands to know that they're talking and thinking about race and racism. They seek knowledge, but they don't want to rock the boat. Lauren has not said that anyone has suggested that they fear for their safety, but Oklahoma is a place that has normalized violence against women, particularly intimate partner violence. It is also a place that socializes young women to be polite to a point of sacrifice and to always defer to their husbands. (I use husbands rather than partners or spouses because much of the same culture is also deeply homophobic.) These behaviors are not only ingrained in the fabric of our institutions, but they are also explicitly taught, drawing support from evangelical interpretations of the Bible and reinforced through active shaming and silencing of those who challenge or question norms. While TCW wants to hold these young women accountable for their learning and for building up their communities, we also recognize that their circumstances place material and psychological limits on their sense of agency.

At the beginning of our planning, we discussed framing the workshops as "for women," in part because we thought women in predominantly white churches would be the perfect channel for our message, and since churches in this region often segregate learning communities by gender, age, and marital status, it seemed a natural approach. I resisted this impulse, explaining

that the framing and the language was exclusionary, but I also felt that, besides issues of exclusion, in a culture where women are taught to defer to their husbands, we need the work of men and women. In Oklahoma, institutions like churches, schools, and family subsist on the passionate and undervalued labor of women, and their attitudes and beliefs are instrumental in shaping those within the institution, in hierarchical patriarchal societies, those in the highest leadership positions in these institutions are most often men, and those structures and policies and attitudes can only truly change with the support of leadership. Our hope for reaching into those institutions led us to imagine that audience and to try to create a character that they could identify with. While we did not mean to create a stand-in for our participants, Shelby and Claire came to embody our notions of audience and our assumptions about what they knew and were capable of.

Knowing Our Audience

While this IE began from the standpoint of TCW co-creators, reflecting on our questions about audience demands that we seek additional perspectives, zooming out to, as Miley suggests, "embrace the dialogic, the multiple experiences and knowledges that may exist within an organization" (110). Our audience/participants had an opportunity to reveal the accuracy of our assumptions through the post-workshop surveys and focus group sessions, in which they discussed their experiences. These responses allowed a shift in perspective and a view from other standpoints. The participants, which included staff, faculty, graduate students, and a few undergrads, provided a sense of how they saw themselves and how they engaged with the workshop. Throughout the pilot series, Lauren would occasionally remind the team that the pilot participants, these academics, were not our target audience. I would nod in agreement. But in facilitating these workshops and collecting their feedback, I struggled to understand why academics should not be included in our target audience. Because many of my colleagues, mentors, and supporters on campus are, like me, interested in projects that promote inclusion, equity, and social justice, our workshops were primarily attended by like-minded participants.

This influenced the tone and goals of the pilot series, in part because many attended the workshop at work or school, with their peers or colleagues, and with a view to how they might use what we offered in this space. This was a time to experiment, to seek feedback, and to listen. While we hoped to learn from the pilot series, we did not adapt our approach or revise the curriculum to account for this shift in audience because we believed that the curriculum would be flexible enough to reach our various audiences.

"Confused on My Place"

Explaining the uncertainties she had prior to attending the workshop, Lisa, a graduate student and a Black Muslim woman, expresses a recurring question that participants seemed to have:

> I think I was confused on my place. Because it seems like the platform was geared more toward racism, and I know it began with racism towards Black people. I tend to not think of myself as racist, maybe a bit stereotypical, and I know I can be that way. I tend to generalize about people, but I know where it comes from. I try to correct myself on it. Going into the workshop, I was trying to figure out "where do I fall in line?" and how can I be helpful here? Why is it helpful for me to talk about being discriminated against? I just went in thinking, I'm not sure. (L FG 11.06.17)

Ultimately, like many participants, she anticipated that this workshop would focus on how not to be racist, and as a woman of color, she thought that her role in the workshop might be to help white people understand the experiences of discrimination and to be better listeners. While events like this do occur, the intent of the workshop, as Leah and Lauren frequently affirmed in our meetings, was to provide conversational tools that are useful to anyone who might find a need to address issues of racism. We intended for the workshops to provide space for the sharing of personal accounts of discrimination by people of color, but the curriculum was not build around

these stories, nor did it require participants of color to share their stories for the benefit of white people.

Making similar assumptions about the goals of the workshop, but expressing concern about a lack of racial diversity, Melisa, a staff member in student affairs explained her response to the issue:

> I think also for me, going into the conversation, I was anticipating having a more diverse group dynamic. In our particular meeting, there wasn't. I think that was I little bit of a letdown in some respect. So it kinda fell on a very small group, select individuals in the group, to kind of carry the conversation and feelings, I think. So that was a little bit difficult moving through a lot of interactions throughout the event. (Melisa FG 12.11.17)

There were workshop sessions that were homogeneous in terms of racial background, university status, area of interest, and ideology. This particular workshop, however, was attended by eleven staff members and community members, at least three of whom identified themselves as people of color. This attitude troubled our team. Our desire to conduct these workshops in pre-existing communities means that it is likely that many of the groups we will work with will be homogeneous in many ways, including racially. We thought that we had made clear during the workshop that this work is necessary even, and perhaps especially, among groups of white people. This model would need to work well even if there were no people of color in attendance (sooner than we realized). After receiving this feedback, we incorporated an explicit statement to be printed in the next revision of our packet, shown in Figure 5.2.

INTENTIONALITY

The workshop begins with the goal of establishing a thoughtful and intentional frame of mind to prepare you to have difficult conversations. We'll ask you to think about why you're here and what your goals are for the workshops. The most important and most challenging task of this section will be acknowledging **implicit biases** and coming to terms with your own relationship to systems of **racism**, which are informed by a complex history of **institutional racism**. It's true, coming to terms with the ways racism continues to inform the way we think and operate in the world is especially difficult, but it's an essential step for moving toward intentionality in challenging this **racism** in ourselves, in our communities, and in society at large.

We're here to do self-work. We hope that you'll think and share, but you are not obligated to teach someone else about your life and experience. The purpose here is to benefit your learning, not to ask you to be a teacher.

Figure 5.2 Self-Work Statement, Packet Excerpt

The statement appears in the packet at the bottom of the introduction to Part I, on page 9, says, "We're here to do self-work. We hope that you'll think and share, but you are not obligated to teach someone else about your life and experience. The purpose here is to benefit your learning, not to ask you to be a teacher." We used a version of this statement at a CWP session in which not only were all of the facilitators white, but so were all of the participants. We were not fully aware that all of the participants would be white ahead of time, but because Kate and I knew a few of the folks who signed up, we anticipated that this might be the case, so we did some additional work to prepare and revise in order to account for the fact that some participants might be hoping to learn from folks who had experienced racism or marginalization first hand. This was never an intended focus of the workshops, but because Leah and Lauren would not be able to help

facilitate the workshop due to a family obligation, and Leah would not be able to introduce the "What's at the Root?" activity, we needed to make changes, even if only for logistical reasons.

The "What's at the Root?" activity is a crucial moment toward the end of Part I in which we encourage participants to share stories or thoughts about moments that evoke racial tension, like the exercise from page 15 of the packet. In this section, we encourage participants to think both personally and globally as a way to highlight how the experiences are intertwined. We prefaced this activity with the reminder about our statement on "Intentionality," which we hoped would acknowledge the emotional and intellectual burden often placed on people of color to expose their trauma in order to reinforce the responsibility white people have for reflecting on and learning from their own experiences and observations of racial tension and to ensure that only those who were ready to share personal stories would do so. By introducing this exercise with our own personal stories, we modeled our intent for the exercise. As mentioned in Chapter III, this section was most often introduced by Leah telling her story of being followed by a police officer on her way home to a mostly white suburb. At the workshop entirely comprised of white people, which Leah was unable to co-facilitate, I told a different story to lead this exercise. I shared (a version of) this teaching moment, which occurred during my second year as a graduate instructor at OSU:

> *In Composition II, as is common, I had student athletes enroll a few days late after*
> *changing their class schedules to be more compatible with their practice schedules.*
> *During the second week of classes, two football players who are Black men walk into*
> *class together a few minutes late, and one of them is joking and talking with other*
> *students. He moves toward the back of the room to sit near a student he knows, another*
> *student athlete who is a Black woman who had also missed part of the first week of*
> *classes. After a few minutes of lecture and discussion, I ask students to group up for an*
> *activity, and the three student athletes moved to work together. I immediately walked*

over to their group and explain that, "Actually I need you all to spread out because you'll need information that we covered last week when you weren't here." All three of the students, the only (visible) people of color in the room, and the only student athletes, seem immediately deflated.

To respond to the prompt, I explain that upon seeing their hint of enthusiasm disappear in that moment, I almost immediately regretted my choice. I worried that their sense of community and belonging had been disrupted and that the potential for them to trust me had eroded. In reflecting on the root of the incident and what influenced my thinking process, I can explain and justify my choice, but, honestly, my impulse to ask the students to re-group was informed by more than their absences. Having been trained for teaching partly in a Texas high school, I was encouraged to recognize that student's convivial chatter with classmates on topics seemingly unrelated to the course material as a "disruption." Thus, I anticipated that this student who entered the room in this manner might cause distractions, and my experience and training as a teacher has taught me to minimize disruptions in the classroom. But by seeking to avoid the possibility of an anticipated disruption, I created an actual, harmful disruption for all three of these students, and perhaps for the students whose groups they reluctantly, somberly joined.

In this environment, it felt crucial to model the process of considering how our everyday practices, particularly as white people, can be informed by racism, white supremacy, and settler colonialism, rather than attributing all of the fault for racism onto larger systems, in order to convey how we are implicated in the perpetuation of these systems, even when we are actively resisting them. This acknowledgement and process of self-reflection and critique also prepares participants for talking with others who may have less awareness of how these systems have constituted our everyday practices.

In the workshops following the one in which I first told this story, we included my story as a response to the question to lead participants to share their own. My teaching story in that and the following workshops seemed to prompt more reflection and discussion about incidents in which the participants were complicit in perpetuating white supremacy or racism, as compared with the workshops in which only Leah's story was shared, which invited more discussion of times that participants had witnessed or been recipients of microaggressions or racist language or behaviors. The combination of our stories seemed to invite reflections on a range of incidents and experiences, which we found to be productive because it provided an opportunity to discuss the need to call in and to be called in to antiracism.

Following the addition of my teaching story, we also developed a more thorough and inclusive statement, which we began calling the "Burden Statement" that we included on page 5 of the packet. The statement reads:

> The Conversation Workshops focus on self-work. We welcome you to reflect, both individually and as a group. There will be opportunities to share, but we hope the bulk of what you do today is internal.
>
> No individual should be asked to represent their race or expose their personal burdens or trauma. If you're seeking to hear the stories of those not like you, we have resources and opportunities available.

As a team, we understood participants' desires to seek to learn from those who have experienced discrimination and oppression, and we hope that those who seek to be accomplices in antiracist activism will take the time and effort to do so. But we developed TCW to be a place for all participants to learn conversational strategies, not a place where people of color or those who had experienced discrimination or marginalization must relive trauma or to allow others to gain from their vulnerability.

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TCW provides a list of resources that offer more in depth understanding of the oppression that people of color experience, which we believe can help to address Melisa's concern as well as another misunderstanding about what TCW does. Another common interpretation of the purpose of the workshops are that we would discuss or model how to have civil conversations with people across racial difference. Jared[4], a participant who is a white man who works in leadership and student affairs explains why he thought this workshop would fall into that category:

> There are a lot of folks who are on campus who are trying to create spaces for people to have conversations with people who are different from them, in all sorts of ways and across all sorts of subjects and topics. So, maybe because I've been working in that this semester, when I saw this opportunity come up I just automatically put it into that box. (J FG 12.11.17)

Jared was right to suggest that this seemed to align with other events and campaigns on campus. Multiple campus events have sought to fulfill this need including series supported by Student Affairs, Residence Life, the Ethics Center, and the Office of Institutional Diversity such as Difficult Dialogues, Critical Conversations, and the Tunnel of Oppression. The role of the university in creating spaces for these conversations is critical, but our workshop sought to do something that we believed to be more challenging: provide participants with tools for identifying complicity with racism and white supremacy and developing relationships that would hold partners accountable for disrupting it.

Social Justice is My Job

Many participants suggested that social justice and antiracist advocacy is a part of their daily activities at work, but that in their personal lives, they have more difficulty asserting their

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[4] Jared is a pseudonym, per the participant's request.

positions. Brittany, a staff member for diversity programs and a Black woman, explains the distinction:

> I did approach it from the standpoint of my work, but there's not a lot of challenges when doing diversity training, especially when you come in the room as a Black woman, and it's like, 'Oh, you gonna talk about diversity?' and it's like, 'Yeah, you know,' that kinda thing. So, I really don't get challenged a lot. Sometimes when I'm personally engaging about diversity and difference, that conversation I'm not so good with, because I'm like, 'I'm right, you're wrong, I don't hear this.' Because I don't usually experience a lot of pushback. (B FG 2.6.18)

Brittany's feelings are shared by other participants who feel that showing up in the classroom or on campus or for protests is important, but not bringing their activism into their daily lives makes them "kind of like that preacher that is preaching in the pulpit but then their personal life is a mess" (B FG 2.6.18). Cristina, a white woman who works in the library, explains why she was drawn to the workshops:

> For me, I know that I had personal and professional interest in it. I think about my family members that I've tried to have conversations with and they've just ended horribly. So I wanted some sort of tool for that, as well as, as an instructional designer, we design classroom instruction and we try to incorporate critical pedagogy, which tries to facilitate a lot of conversations around systemic injustices. So we thought it'd be a really useful tool; we thought we'd get something from it at least for the classroom as well. (C FG 12.07.17)

Several focus group participants indicated that they attended the workshop because they assumed it would provide them with tools for confronting issues of race and racism at work, but they admitted that participating in the workshop reshaped their perspective and renewed their

commitment to bringing their advocacy into their personal lives and making interpersonal activism a higher priority. The only space the workshop itself provided for reflecting on participants' purpose for attending was at the very beginning, before they had significant opportunity to understand the desired outcomes of the workshop.

The participants' openness to the workshop and their willingness to rethink their own goals seems to affirm the idea that the workshop may be able to adapt to various types of audiences. It also suggests that our assumptions about academic audiences may demand some reconsideration. Participants' attitudes about the role of activism in their personal lives aligns with my own comment in the team interviews, which admits my feelings of vulnerability and under-preparedness for confronting issues of racism with family and friends. While the rest of TCW's creators did not express concern over having family or very close friends or loved ones who felt differently about issues of race and racism than they did, this was and continues to be a very real and personal issue for me. While we all have something to gain from developing these strategies for interpersonal activism, my experiences with family and my social circles from my small Texas town have meant that TCW's curriculum speaks directly to my daily life and to my weary spirit.

Spiritual Practice

TCW's curriculum was shaped with a consideration of the role of religion, and particularly Christianity, in Oklahoma culture, but we did not make explicitly religious references, and we sought to make sure that participants from any religious tradition would feel included. Rather than calling upon any particular religious practices, we hoped that the workshop

would promote holistic healing and a spirit of support and accountability. Joshua[5], a white man and professor, spoke directly about the ways that TCW addressed the weary spirit, explaining,

> We all have work to do. And one of the things that I took away from it too, I almost would compare this to like a practice, like a spiritual practice or something. Like if somebody goes to church, why do they go to church? It's not really to like learn stuff that they didn't already believe, 'Like, Ohhh? There's a God?' It's more like re-centering and being reminded of things that you know in this organized way, and then being surrounded by people who share these kind of beliefs with you. I felt like that was kind of the value of it. It wasn't like, 'Oh? You mean I'm privileged?' But it was more like, ok, how many times a day or a week do I really stop and reflect on these things as opposed to just going through my life. I should do it a lot more often, and it's really nice to do it in a structured way to kind of re-center. (J FG 2.6.18)

Joshua's insightful comment not only provides a useful comparison for describing the workshop, but it also suggests a potential framework for considering TCW's audience. In thinking of antiracism as like a religion, TCW primarily serves those who are already "in the faith," but it provides them with tools for discipleship. While the work of TCW can include conversion, and one workshop in particular invited this dynamic, the curriculum is designed to engage with participants whose broader goals are already directed toward dismantling racism.

Knowing Each Other

In this study, the IE lens did just as Miley suggested when she claimed that it "allows us to systematize embodied experience and, through that systematization, to provide maps for understanding work," thus enabling "us to act rather than react in aligning our vision[s]" (112). Throughout the pilot series, our sessions included contributors with a broad range of ideologies

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[5] Joshua is a pseudonym, per the participant's request.

and experiences, and all of our sessions generated rich conversations and valuable learning opportunities. But our curriculum did not provide an opportunity for facilitators to understand where participants were in their antiracist journey. We asked participants where they were from because we believed this might provide some insight and opportunity for reflection on their personal experiences. We asked them what brought them to TCW, which often evoked answers about personal and professional relationships and what they hoped to gain from the workshops. We asked them to privately reflect and write about their experiences of oppression and privilege, and a few shared thoughts on their responses to moments of racial tension. These discussions provided us with some sense of what participants' needs might be, and we were able to guide them toward particular resources and emphasize key points from the packet that would respond to their needs and goals. While it may not be useful to attempt to classify or score each other on a scale of racist to antiracist, more opportunities for participants to share would serve multiple purposes, including providing facilitators with a sense of where participants are in their antiracist journey, developing closeness among participants and facilitators, allowing participants to feel heard, offering shared, real-world examples to draw from in discussion. TCW does use participants' stories in these ways when possible, but several survey responses and focus group comments suggested that participants would benefit from more opportunities to share and hear additional stories. To explain what TCW could do better, a survey respondent said, "I think more role play in some way would have been useful as well. I also really liked the space of sharing and reflecting with my group at the table, and think we could have done a lot more of that, to really process feelings and thoughts in our heads that may not often get voiced in other settings" (Survey 12/4/17). Another survey response suggested that we should add "More of an opportunity to learn more about the attendees through an ice breaker or exercise to allow the attendees a change to acquaint themselves with one another" (Survey 11/19). Not having an icebreaker may seem like an obvious mistake to many, but we felt that our basic introductions would be adequate because we anticipated that, since the workshops would occur in pre-existing communities, the

participants would already know each other, and we didn't want to waste time asking more of them in the way of introductions just for our benefit. Although many of the workshops had been organized into pre-existing groups based on department, program, or workspace, it turned out that within the workshop sessions, most of the participants only casually knew each other if they knew each other at all. This trend confirmed something Leah said in our team interviews:

> People here in this region [...] are looking for attachments and human connections. And we're over not living in houses with porches, and we're over driving right into the garage door and shutting it. I think people are looking for touch points with others. When I think about OKC, I think about that spirit. Let's create as many opportunities as we possibly can to get to know each other. (Leah, Interview)

TCW's curriculum and philosophy is rooted in the desire to develop more meaningful, accountable relationships in service of dismantling racism. And examining the texts that guide and constrain these practices with the ways that contributors engage the texts works toward a reflexive consideration of TCW as an institution. Allowing this reflexivity despite, or perhaps because of, the ways that it highlights our missteps and the inconsistencies that these texts models what Wanda Pillow describes as "reflexivities of discomfort," which she describes thusly:

> A reflexivity that pushes toward an unfamiliar, towards the uncomfortable, cannot be a simple story of subjects, subjectivity, and transcendence or self-indulgent tellings. A tracing of the problematics of reflexivity calls for a positioning of reflexivity not as clarity, honesty, or humility, but as practices of confounding disruptions – at times even a failure of our language and practices. (Pillow 192)

This approach directs us toward the realization that the workshops would be improved by modeling our accountability principles through facilitating meaningful relationships among participants, and establishing connections between facilitators and participants.

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In this workshop, we imagined an audience that met our assumptions about being an Oklahoman, a woman, a Christian, and a recently "woke" white ally, but these were not the participants we encountered. Even those participants who would claim each of these identity descriptors resisted our perceptions and complicated our assumptions. The philosophy of feminist invitational rhetoric, on which our key strategies are based, is rooted in a belief in "understanding as a means to create a relationship rooted in equality, immanent value, and self-determination" (Foss and Griffin 5). If we value these principles, our invitational model should reject the traditional approach, resisting viewing audiences as novices, as classifiable types, as presenting points to refute or respond to, as needing to be persuaded, and as passive participants in communicative acts, in favor of approaching them as active participants and potential allies. This analysis demonstrates that an invitational and accountable approach to audience emphasizes their expertise, meaningful experience, valuable perspective, need to be listened to, accounted for, and understood, and their participant status. In other words, in an invitational model, participants are more like collaborators than audiences, an approach which can be applied in diverse educational settings, and which reflects the writing center's model of peer-to-peer/one-with-one pedagogy. With a view to accountable collaboration, this research process has evoked a vision of collaboration that resists assumptions and invites partnership.

CHAPTER VI

IMPLICATIONS: ACCOUNTABLE COLLABORATION AND OUR RESPONSIBLE PRAXIS

The Conversation Workshop continues to teach me accountability. In urging others to develop their knowledge of racism and oppression and to help hold their communities and their people accountable for that knowledge, I became aware of the ways that I had been failing to do so. Approaching the process of developing this workshop reflexively by examining it through this project's ethnographic lens, I discovered the ways that our collaborative practices had frequently failed to enact our antiracist philosophy by neglecting collaborators' varying relationships to power, privilege, and oppression, as revealed in Chapter IV, and the ways that we had approached audiences with minimal recognition of their potential as collaborators who bring valuable and embodied knowledge, experience, and perspective into the workshops, as discussed in Chapter V.

My training in the writing center taught me that learning and knowledge-building are collaborative and reciprocal and that I should enter into learning as a partnership with the attitude that I am there to learn something as well as to contribute my knowledge, which is intellectual, experiential, embodied, and relational. But my training as a graduate student taught me that I should (try to) see myself, write, and teach as an expert because of my training. These approaches are not inherently counter to one another since it is possible to see oneself as well as others as experts, but they are a difficult balance, and often the desire to conduct oneself as an expert can undermine a collaborative approach.

As collaborators, we approached the workshops as a teaching opportunity, and although we all resisted claiming roles as experts in antiracism, we did allow our various experiences as teachers to shape our practices. As Michelle LaFrance notes, "Teaching practices do not take shape in isolation from their material surroundings. They are the mindful actions of people who are influenced by and invested in local materialities, such as the social relations, available resources, and prevailing value systems within and across campus communities" (105). In seeking to ensure that our curriculum fit the needs that emerged in our local and material contexts, we forgot the ways that our collaborative practices and approaches had also been shaped by particular material contexts and value systems, which is to say that they had been influenced by settler colonialist and white supremacist values in ways that were often invisible to us. Ahmed illustrates this, explaining that whiteness in academia is a factor of reproduction:

> Once something has been reproduced, you do not need to intend its reproduction. You have to do more not to reproduce whiteness than not to intend to reproduce whiteness. Things tend to fall how they have tended to fall unless we try to stop things from falling that way. An intending is required given this tending, given this tendency. (Ahmed, *Living* 150)

In structures shaped by the powerful, hegemonic systems of oppression, unless participants actively seek to acknowledge and resist the oppressive aspects of our systems, we will perpetuate them. Affirming its role in resisting this oppression, Ira Shor, in his introduction to *Critical Literacy in Action* twenty years ago, claimed that, "critical literacy involves questioning received knowledge and immediate experience with the goals of challenging inequality and developing an activist citizenry" (11).

This is no less true today, when countless, quotidian incidents of microaggressions, structural inequities, blatantly racist rhetoric, and outright violence toward people of color affirm

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this need. Perhaps hitting closest to home is a recent letter of Coalition and Solidarity published by NCTE and CCCC's Black, Latinx, American Indian, Queer Caucus, Asian/Asian American Caucuses in response to the inaction of conference organizers after Laurie Gries' 2018 Watson Conference Keynote Address in which she used the "N-word" while recounting an incident from her childhood to convey the extent of her racist upbringing. The letter's authors call upon Watson organizers and attendees to speak up and to "be answerable to the students and communities that we serve" and research (citing Patel), and to do so "ethically and meaningfully" ([Black, Latinx, American Indian, Queer Caucus, Asian/Asian American Caucuses]). The authors conclude by making recommendations for how we as a discipline might work toward answerability, citing Moore, Manning, and Villanueva's revision of [NCTE's Statement on Anti-Racism to Support Teaching and Learning], urging readers to "challenge individual or systemic acts of racism and other forms of discrimination and bigotry," "to learn with and from the works and perspectives of those whose experiences are marginalized," and "not minimize or dismiss the lived experiences of those whose subjectivities you do not inhabit." The guideline that most resonated with my approach to this research was this: "Consistently identify how whiteness and the [white gaze] operate in our academic community, and recognize that those who benefit from these dynamics must speak up in solidarity, and generate friction. Understand and act on the responsibility of this privilege" (Moore, Manning, and Villanueva). This urgent suggestion establishes exigence for my analysis of the development of TCW, which yields some insight regarding how we might build answerability and accountability into our collaborative practices, which is crucial not only for projects whose focus is antiracist, decolonial, or anti-oppressive, but also for any collaborative projects that originate in oppressive systems and whose contributors seek to resist the ways that learned behaviors or strategies for collaboration might reinforce those systems, especially when contributors who have benefitted from the dynamics of whiteness and systemic privilege are involved.

My analysis of TCW's community-engaged pedagogy fosters an approach to collaboration that can inform the way that we collaborate toward antiracist and social justice-oriented goals and how we teach collaboration in classrooms, in writing centers, on our campuses, and in our communities. The notions of *accountable collaboration* and *approaching learning communities* (like participants or students) *as collaborators* resonate with current scholarship in feminist rhetoric and composition, community-engaged pedagogy, and writing center theory. From this analysis, a few principles emerged that can inform these practices. *Accountable collaboration*, which works to acknowledge and resists systems of oppression by considering and accounting for collaborators' embodied experiences, relational values, and risks and limitations, is guided by four principles: *equitable valuation, critical reflexivity, reciprocal trust,* and *relational equity*. When we incorporate accountable collaboration into our pedagogical practices, it becomes imperative to *approach learning communities as potential collaborators*, emphasizing self-determination and the value of their expertise by *clarifying goals and philosophies*, *actively listening for the needs and goals of potential collaborators*, and *reciprocating knowledge, labor, benefits, and risks in the interest of mutuality*. Feminist composition and rhetoric researchers have emphasized the significance of several of the principles that emerged in this analysis. *Critical reflexivity* (Powell and Takayoshi; Pillow; Garrett; Kirsch and Mortensen; [Yam](#))*, reciprocal trust* and *relational equity* (Cushman; Rousculp; Martinez; Green; [Baker, Dieter, and Dobbins](#)), which I discuss as principles of accountable collaboration, have been described in rhetorical study of community-engaged pedagogy and research. *Clarifying goals, justifications, and philosophies* (Rousculp; Ore; Royster and Kirsch) and *generously listening for the needs and goals of potential collaborators* (García; Ratcliffe; Inoue; Rousculp; Yam), which correspond with my segment on approaching learning communities as potential collaborators, are often cited as integral to feminist teaching and research practices. The principles of e*quitable valuation* and *reciprocating knowledge, labor, benefits, and risks in the interest of mutuality* have emerged from this analysis, and because of

their relevance to collaborative practice, they demand further attention, thus these concepts are elaborated upon below with *accountable collaboration* and *approach learning communities as potential collaborators*, respectively.

Accountable Collaboration

The concept of accountable collaboration in this chapter emerges from my critique of TCW's collaborative process in Chapter IV, and it seeks to counter default approaches to collaborating that sustain oppressive systems. Accountable collaboration acknowledges and resists systems of oppression by incorporating strategies not only for learning about collaborators and their experiences and values, but also for beginning to "mark, name, and pull apart" our own in order to resist the ways that they are shaped by oppression and colonization (Dutta 94). Four principles guide accountable collaboration: equitable valuation, critical reflexivity, reciprocal trust, and relational equity. Enacting these principles as a proactive approach to collaboration can foster equity in the process, allowing collaborators to acknowledge histories of marginalization while working to resist settler colonialism, white supremacy, hetero-patriarchy, and other forces of oppression. Drawing upon the concepts that emerged from analysis of the ethnographic data collected from the Conversation Workshops Pilot (CWP), this section describes these principles and illustrates their importance by highlighting the problems that emerged when these principles were not prioritized in CWP and by considering the successes of these principles in action.

Equitable Valuation

Equitable valuation refers to practices that articulate, value, and seek to understand all of the labor, risks, limitations, and expertise that collaborators contribute, including those that are not immediately apparent. In the context of this project, the concept emerges from the process of recognizing our failures to acknowledge and value our collaborators' experiences, knowledges, and relationships as important contributions. In collaborative projects in which a person's

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embodied experience, access to communities, cultural knowledge, and/or social capital contribute in meaningful ways to the project's movement and purpose, those contributions should be articulated so that all contributors understand and recognize the value of those contributions and the risks that may accompany them. In doing so, it becomes possible to account for inequities of resources, compensation, risks, benefits, and types of contribution (i.e. emotional labor and intellectual labor). To be clear, this principle takes for granted that those who experience more marginalization or oppression often (if not always) take greater risks in collaboration and additional labor is expected of them to allay those risks and to succeed in collaborating. Denny's *Facing the Center: Toward an Identity Politics of One-to-One Mentoring* offers several examples of this dynamic as it manifests in writing centers. He describes an incident Allia, an African American graduate student, experienced in which she "was compelled to prove her ethos in ways that white people just are never compelled to do in the same way," and he contends that her expertise in responding to the situation illustrates how she has been prepared for incidents like this by "a lifetime of doing that dance over and over and over again" (32, 36-7). Acknowledging these greater risks and contributions, equitable valuation attempts to provide tools for articulating this labor in hopes of eliminating and redistributing this labor when possible and of mitigating its potential impact on those who bear it unduly.

This notion emerges from a few problems that we discovered as TCW team members considered our own roles in TCW and as we rewrote our group's biography, described in chapter four. As Lauren lamented that our team did not include any people of Indigenous experience, she recognized that our individual experiences limited our approach to this work and indicated the value of lived and embodied experience. Likewise, when Kate conveyed the notion that TCW can teach white people to leverage their privilege through interpersonal activism, she demonstrated the need for re-distributing the labor of fostering racial literacy, particularly among white people, who often demand it of people of color.

The need for equitable valuation is exemplified by the difficult task of describing the role of Leah and Lauren's work on The Conversation OKC in launching our collaborative project. On more than one occasion, we failed to account for their organizational labor and the conceptualizing of that formative project, and we undermined the value of the social capital that their work contributed and the import to the audience of their identities as two mixed-race Black women from Oklahoma City. While Kate and I contributed to the project in significant ways, Leah and Lauren's relationships, status in their communities, and embodied experiences were crucial to the building of TCW in ways that Kate and I did not always understand. Meanwhile, as a white woman in academia, I've risked very little in doing this particular antiracist project (although some other work has involved greater risk). While some might suggest that I could come across as too radical to some more conservative or traditional members of hiring committees, that risk is minimal in comparison to the potential risk that my collaborators who are people of color might face. At this particular historical moment, when many academics in the liberal arts are embracing projects and pedagogies that promote inclusion and antiracism, I actually stand to benefit from this work, in ways that that my collaborators outside of academia may not. In particular, Leah and Lauren's small businesses rely largely on their reputations in the Oklahoma City community, and if participants or observers are unhappy with either the workshops or its promotion, they risk their ability to sustain those businesses and their livelihoods. If potential clients or collaborators perceive them as "playing the race card" or talking too much about racial inequity, they may lose clientele. Conversely, if the workshops are perceived as too whitewashed (because they are collaborating with white women) or as failing to promote a strong enough response to racism (because we are focusing on interpersonal relationships), they may risk losing relationships with potential clients or collaborators who feel that they should be more radical. In addition to the risks to their business, they are also more likely to be targeted by those who do not agree with the work. This is in part because of their identities as Black women, which is resonates with Carmen Kynard's assertion that in higher

education settings, "faculty of color experience such classroom events as routine and must do the bulk of the exhausting, debilitating, and non-value-added work of redressing students' racial wrongs, often without any support or acknowledgement from the departments, programs, schools, or fields in which they work" (7). In addition to this burden, they may also be vulnerable as targets because they are well-known in the community as entrepreneurs, artists, musicians, and organizers.

As Lauren explained in a meeting once, they also feel a greater risk in our collaboration because of the ways their work and intellectual property has been co-opted and exploited in the past by white women who claimed to want to support them. My notes from that meeting convey her concern:

> As a woman of color putting forth something like this, there's so much to protect. I feel like I've leaned heavily on the group; I don't want to do it myself. But if my name and my Blackness is lent to this, they might not even know my name, but they see that 'these two Black girls started this, and they're misrepresenting us.' It goes back to being made fun of, and I'm trying to do this justice. Some of this is my post-trauma speak, that I see my brain-children in other people's' hands. It makes me feel not valued, and not in control. But now we get to decide what this is, and people are following us. (18_02.01.18 Post-workshop)

While Leah and Lauren did feel like we had built up trust as collaborators, the past trauma she recounts may still emerge at moments when she feels vulnerable. Accounting for this in part means articulating the abuses and failures we have experienced in past collaborations, and it also means generating a plan for ensuring continued respect for our collaborators and their labor.

In practice, equitable valuation might look like a forthright discussion in which all participants consider the following questions: What do I bring to the table, not only in terms of

skill but also in my lived experience, privilege, and access to material, intellectual, and social resources? How might these contributions limit or challenge this collaborative work? How might I/we account for these contributions and their limitations in our work as collaborators? The answers to these questions would inform the development of guidelines for accountable collaborative practices that resist tendencies to reinscribe harmful, oppressive, and exploitative structures.

Critical Reflexivity

Critical reflexivity is central to the feminist research process, in that qualitative feminist research seeks to situate the researcher in the research process and account for or acknowledge the effects that the researcher has on the process (Powell and Takayoshi 414; Pillow). It also seeks to acknowledge and diminish the effects of power imbalances on the research process and to work toward providing meaningful impacts that participants desire as a potential benefit of the research process. Pillow explains that a reflexive focus, "requires the researcher to be critically conscious through personal accounting of how the researcher's self-location (across for example, gender, race, class, sexuality, ethnicity, nationality), position, and interests influence all stages of the research process" (178). Reflexive practices are often incorporated into the research process as a means of demonstrating validity and striving toward ethical research, but Pillow prompts researchers to consider enacting "reflexivities of discomfort," "to be rigorously self-aware -- rigorously reflective about the workings of power," striving to understand while also recognizing and allowing the discomfort that emerges from the impossibility of knowing or articulating the self (188, 192). This approach to reflexivity can also inform collaborative practices outside of qualitative research in that each collaborator's approach impacts the process in much the same way that a researcher's does. As conveyed in Chapter IV, critical reflexivity informs three conceptual practices: 1) reflexive research practices, rooted in grounded theory, which seeks to make space in the research process for reshaping the process based on the findings of the

research; 2) self-reflexivity, which attends to the ways that my own and our practices are shaped by our experiences; 3) ethical reflexivity, which works toward consistency between ethical stance and action; this is as critical move to "make an effort, humbly so, to narrow the distance between what we say and what we do as much as possible," which Freire advocates in *Pedagogy of Indignation* (21). Reflexivity of discomfort in attending to our practices and to power imbalances prompts collaborators to reflect and shift throughout the process.

A deliberate way to develop a more critically reflexive collaborative process would be to incorporate post-meeting and work-session reflection in a more consistent and methodical way. Whether written or discussed, this reflective component would be reviewed by collaborators as a tool for accounting for the ways that collaborators engage in the project, the demands and expectations they place on themselves and one another, and the ways that they communicate expectations. Ultimately, the goal of this process would be to question the collaborative practices and the cultural logics that inform them and to develop strategies for self-awareness like acknowledging relationships to systems of oppression. Some exercises that might be helpful in facilitating these goals could be composing racial literacy narratives, completing identity wheels, deploying the backpack activity described in TCW's part I and the Chapter III, or perhaps an adapted version of an implicit bias activity. Collaborators should also strive to understand and resist implicit biases in order to prevent them from influencing group dynamics. Articulating and documenting concerns that emerge from the exercises mentioned above as a group could offer important reference points for maintaining accountability in a collaborative process and for developing dynamic guidelines that account for collaborators' needs, personal histories, and experiences of oppression and discrimination.

Reciprocal trust and relational equity, while they can be defined distinctly, are innately wrapped up with one another. Reciprocal trust refers to a shared sense of each member's reliability and commitment to the project and to each other and the sense of mutual respect for each person's unique contribution and their autonomy. Developing reciprocal trust means resisting assumptions about collaborators' experiences, shared knowledge, perspective, and taking responsibility for one's own identity groups without seeking to represent or speak for groups with which we identify unless selected to do so. Reciprocal trust can (and should) exist in differential power dynamics, but in the case of accountable collaboration, that trust is developed partly through relational equity. Relational equity denotes a sustained investment in the relationship by all parties, and it is fostered by willingness to yield to collaborators' expertise and contributions, especially from a privileged position, and by showing up to listen and witness even when it seems peripheral to the project.

Trust and equity may seem natural to collaborative partnerships that are built on friendship or pre-existing relationships, but in any case, it is still necessary to demonstrate sustained investments in the relationships and respect for one's partners and continued belief in one another and commitment to the project. Seeking mutual understanding and renewed commitment, TCW team discussed some of the challenges to our sense trust and equity. After de-briefing over the workshop we just completed, Kate returned to the foundership conversation by conveying how the questions about her desire for recognition left her feeling mistrusted. In our previous meeting, Lauren mentioned that she had consulted some business mentors about the foundership issue, and Kate explained her reaction:

> I get it, that people are shitty, but I want to show that I'm not shitty. I'm realizing that this
> is not even really about me. I was feeling like those people you consulted, that those

people don't know me and can't know if I'm trustworthy, but I came to realize that, especially if they were people of color, that they'd have more awareness of the fact that historically, white people have gone through so much effort to take things from people of color. I have a willingness to yield in that acknowledgment that we recognize the ways that our experiences here are influenced by histories of exploitation and oppression. I hope that we can move forward from this in a positive way that both acknowledges those histories and forges a better path. (Kate, 18_02.01.18 Post-workshop)

During this conversation, though I understood Kate's sentiments and agreed with her desire to "forge a better path," I felt differently. I was sure that some of the mistakes I had made in the research process and as the organizer of CWP justified some caution on the part of my teammates. I was not sure that I had adequately demonstrated my integrity as a researcher and a collaborator, and I knew that I would have to continue to be transparent and accountable in order to do so. I acknowledge this in the meeting, saying, "I want to thank you all for continuing to trust me with this research and with your voices despite the fact that have overstepped and at times been less than transparent. I want to be worthy of that trust" (2.1.18 Post-workshop). Kate and I approached this tension differently, but we both sought to earn the trust of our collaborators and recognized its importance in our dynamic and to the success of our project. In order for TCW to work, not only did we need to put in the work, but we also needed to invest in the relationships that it was built upon.

Rousculp's *Rhetoric of Respect* offers relevant notes on trust, which she explains is integral to a rhetoric of respect and to critical pedagogies. Drawing upon Drew's notion of "students-as-travelers" and "Freire's, Shor's, and Rose's recognition of the entire lives of learners," Rousculp acknowledges that she and her collaborators are also travelers, "in temporary relationships with one another in a strange environment" that keeps them from feeling settled but in which they must "be *with* one another in [their] work, to learn from one another, to

collaborate" (80). For this collaboration to occur, they should not only enact a rhetoric of respect, but they need to develop reciprocal trust and invest in relational equity. While team-building exercises have a reputation for being cheesy and ineffective, it's difficult to build reciprocal trust and work toward relational equity without making intentional efforts to get to know collaborators. Some of the exercises described above may work toward these goals if they are treated as shared objects of inquiry, especially tasks like an identity wheel or sharing stories about what experiences or opportunities have prepared collaborators for their current project. Relational equity is also built through sharing milestones or moments of personal importance. This may not always feel necessary or entirely appropriate, but it made a significant impact on our collaborative dynamic when, at Lauren's suggestion, we started making time at the beginning of each meeting for us each to share a moment of celebration and a moment of struggle. Not only did this provide valuable insight regarding the emotions and challenges that we were all bringing with us into the meetings, but it also affirmed our personal investments in each other and our recognition that each of us remained thoroughly committed to our project.

Participants as Potential Collaborators

Considering the need for relational equity and reciprocal trust among collaborators prompted me to engage in ethical reflexivity regarding TCW's commitment to our participants. The principles of feminist invitational rhetoric and our investment in a collaborative dynamic assert the immanent value of participants and their right to self-determination, but we struggled throughout the process to continue to recognize their wholeness and potential to contribute to the workshop rather than seeing them as more passive recipients. Powell and Takayoshi discuss the necessity of reciprocal relationships between researchers and subjects in the feminist research process (416-7), and feminist pedagogies insist that students in classrooms contribute embodied knowledge and intellectual perspective to the collaborative learning environment (Ratcliffe; Fleckenstein; Royster and Kirsch). These approaches resonate with the principle for collaborative

learning that emerges from Chapter V, which is that those we typically describe as audiences should also be treated with this level of consideration.

This principle urges those who seek to develop public pedagogy to approach audiences as potential collaborators, recognizing their right to self-determination and affording them consideration as experts in their own right, as individuals with meaningful experience and valuable perspective, as presenting information to be listened to and accounted for, as needing to be understood, and as active participants in communication. In combination with the above principles for accountable collaboration, this notion has the potential to resist the oppressive and isolating effects of inequities of power by intentionally redistributing power and labor within a collective.

As discussed in detail in Chapter V, TCW encountered challenges as we attempted to shape and envision our audience, anticipating that many might be share characteristics with Shelby, the young, Christian mom character that we crafted for the model invitational scenes. There were more than a few problems with this approach. First, it was too limiting. The assumptions that accompanied our perception of this character flattened out the possible diversity of this group that we sought to reach and it failed to account for the widely varying degrees of racial literacy that a person fitting this description might have. Second, while we never intended to neglect other audiences, this approach tended to prioritize possible participants that were not necessarily the most likely to show up. We thought that these Shelbys were the most likely demographic to need and to use what we had to offer, but they weren't necessarily the most likely group to show up, particularly if participants had to register in advance or pay to participate. Third, this approach neglected the contexts of our pilot study in a large, land-grant university and our referral sampling recruitment method. This setting and my relationships at the university meant that many of our participants were folks who study or engage in diversity and inclusion projects or research, and many of them had very high levels of racial literacy. Some attended the

workshop in part to give feedback or out of their curiosity for what we were doing more than out of a genuine feeling of need for what we offered (although most of them did enter into the workshop with a sincere spirit of inquiry and willingness to engage). This combination of tensions between our oversimplified notions of our intended audience with the realities of our complex and multidimensional participants was partly accounted for by the fact that we often discussed the need to create a workshop that would work with many different kinds of audiences and in various contexts. While our workshop made some meaningful space for participants to get to know each other, we neglected to allow adequate time for us as facilitators to learn who all of the participants were and what they were seeking, a pedagogical move which would help to shape the workshop as a more collaborative space.

Having a particular character in mind was a useful tactic as we composed the workshop curriculum, even as we sought to make sure that the workshop would be inclusive and accommodating of diverse participants. The curriculum that emerged from this process had the potential to account for various audiences, but by keeping a particular audience in mind, we neglected to ensure that the workshop would benefit from the perspectives and experiences of the participants as potential collaborators. Consistent with Foss and Griffin's feminist approach to invitational rhetoric, engaging learning communities as potential collaborators emphasizes their right to self-determination and the value of their expertise through the following strategies: clarifying goals, justifications, and philosophies, generously listening for the needs and goals of potential collaborators, and, perhaps most distinctively, reciprocating knowledge, labor, benefits, and risks in the interest of mutuality. This approach to audience inheres acknowledging one's own limitations and releasing some control over the outcome, but it also makes the process more inclusive, comprehensive, and capacious.

Part of the challenge of engaging in public pedagogies is articulating how what you offer responds to a need or contributes to the public good. In order to reach potential collaborators and to begin developing collaborative relationships built on reciprocal trust, facilitators of collaborative work should state their project's goals, justifications, and philosophies clearly and accessibly so that potential collaborators may determine whether the partnership is for them and whether they feel that the investment that is asked of them will yield their desired outcome.

TCW has struggled with this, despite feeling like we made our purpose clear so that potential participants could decide if our workshop was the right fit for their needs. While most participants expressed that they were pleased with how the workshop time was spent, several indicated that the name alone led them to believe that the workshop would provide opportunities for them to have conversations with those who had different perspectives than themselves. This model is a familiar one on this university campus, where programming with names like "Critical Conversations" and "Difficult Dialogues" tend to be well-attended and talked about amongst staff and faculty. While these models are important contributions to the community, we anticipated that our model would tend to draw more participants who were already interested in antiracist work, even if it was new to them. This would likely mean that participants' perspectives would not necessarily represent a very broad range, but rather would tend to occupy more similar ideological space. The snowball recruiting tactics tended to reinforce these trends as well. Because this misunderstanding occurred more than once, we tried to anticipate this in our description and discussion of the workshops, adding information to our website and our recruiting materials after the pilot. The description of our workshop now states:

> The Conversation Workshops is a one-day training that walks participants through three
> parts: intentionality, dialogue, and community. Each part respectively is designed to help

attendees confront their own implicit biases, practice a dialogue style for engaging

difficult conversations, and engage their pre-existing communities with positive change.

Ultimately, The Conversation Workshops are a safe place for participants to respond to

systemic racism and racial bias with people they already have relationships with and

community connections to.

In addition to working to make our informational materials more straightforward, we also made

sure to read our audience statement at the beginning of the workshop in order to reiterate and

clarify what TCW offers. In some ways, this focus on clarity may be in tension with the emphasis

on reflexivity, not because these goals are at odds, but because our need to be clear stems in part

from our inability to completely adapt to the needs of the audience. Rousculp highlights that

community literacy partnerships benefit from a willingness and ability to "adapt the goals or

processes of a particular relationship" if the partner desires it (118), but because our adaptive

ability was limited to the confines of the workshop pilot, clear goals and communicated purpose

are even more central than they would be otherwise.

Listening with Generosity

Approaching participants as collaborators demands listening with generosity for the

needs and goals of potential collaborators. This task will help collaborators to develop familiarity

with the contexts, problems, and tensions that potential collaborators face and what they might

seek to gain by engaging in the collaborative project. Much rhetorical work has been devoted to

the value of listening in all kinds of particular ways, and especially relevant is García's argument

that teaching tutors to listening rhetorically to the everyday occurrences that reveal dynamics of

power and race in order to foster their becoming as "theorists of race and racism" and as

"decolonial agents" ("Unmaking" 49-51). The approach to listening that is especially relevant

here is that listening to audiences, especially participants and students, as if they are potential

collaborators fosters becoming as a collective. This may mean that the party in the position of speaker becomes vulnerable to the audience in a way that feels intimidating or unnatural, and it may mean giving up some of aspects of control. But in doing work that seeks to resist systems of oppression, it is essential that facilitators of learning, especially those who have benefited from systems of oppression and power, be willing to yield, to work on themselves, to be called in or called out, and to adjust to the needs of the collaborative community.

In order to prepare to listen openly, facilitators should resist preconceived notions about their audience, even in cases where the audience feels like a known quantity. This stance works toward rejecting an us/them binary and it reminds us that, while we are not so different from one another, neither are we all the same. This attitude can be illuminated by accounting for "differences within difference" and by rejecting the idea that apparent or visible similarities inherently reveal invisible similarities (García, *On the Cusp* 70). In García's ethnographic study of students at a university in the Lower Río Grande Valley, he calls in writing center and writing studies researchers, who, even in doing antiracist work, have neglected to account for Mexican, Mexican American, and Latinx students, writers, and practitioners. In so doing, he advocates for "mindfulness of difference," which "acknowledges that students are rhetorical agents, situated within stories of individual and community histories and memories" in order to resist the erasure or conflation of difference (185). Harry Denny highlights the importance of resisting binaries, which facilitate erasure, and of "the need to recognize the false choices of assimilation and separation that so many movements and individuals who are attached/aligned with them must negotiate" (15). Denny considers the ways that, in writing center contexts, "these very pressures of identity--and their attendant politics--are ever-present," but it's also true that in meaningful collaborative relationships, we must "contend with the dilemma of assimilating, going with the flow, or challenging the well-worn path" as we decide how to mentor and face our own positionalities (16-7).

Reciprocating Knowledge, Labor, Benefits and Risks

Active listening contributes to the collaborative project not only because it demonstrates investment in relationships, but also because it's necessary to facilitate reciprocation. Reciprocating knowledge, labor, benefits and risks in the interest of mutuality helps to ensure that no one is exploited in the collaboration. Mirroring the principles of accountable collaboration, when participants are approached as potential collaborators, the expertise of all parties should be valued, and the experience, skills, and knowledge that they contribute are reciprocated. During CWP, we did seek to learn from workshop participants, especially since so many attendees conveyed that social justice was central to their daily work, as indicated in Chapter V. Despite this, our workshop structure continued to emphasize the personal aspects of interpersonal activism, and it did little to explicitly seek out and incorporate their professional experiences. Many participants did contribute examples and discussion points that pertained to their jobs, and we tried to adapt to this to cultivate reciprocation as a part of the process.

Alternatively, our workshops continue to resist a recurring request for reciprocation that would demand it become a space for conversations about and across racial difference, an expectation that participants have expressed in our surveys, saying, "I do also think the opportunity to talk with people from different backgrounds could be really useful, as a way of creating more racially diverse groups of open discussion" (Survey 12/4/17). Because workshop participants are also, as the same respondent claimed, using the time to "really explore our own biases, hang-ups, and places of conflict," this may not feel like an especially safe or healing place for sharing for those who have been negatively affected by others' biases and hang-ups. That kind of open sharing doesn't always cultivate a space of reciprocal healing or mutual risk. In this reciprocal relationship, mutual risk should be accompanied by mutual healing (Richardson 280). In response to this set of expectations, we revised our statements about what to expect to reflect our desire to ensure that neither the workshop nor its participants would seek to benefit from the

painful stories of those who have experienced marginalization and oppression. The statement reads:

> The Conversation Workshops focus on self-work. We welcome you to reflect, both individually and as a group. There will be opportunities to share, but we hope the bulk of what you do today is internal.
>
> No individual should be asked to represent their race or expose their personal burdens or trauma. If you're seeking to hear the stories of those not like you, we have resources and opportunities available.

After receiving this feedback and revising the statement, we made sure to read this statement aloud and to explain its importance. This statement, however, reveals a potentially troubling aspect of TCW's stance toward the audience, which is that by emphasizing the self and the internal, this statement send the message that the workshop doesn't rely on or benefit from their contributions. It resists reciprocity in its implicit request for quiet.

Additional feedback from a participant who was not part of the pilot affirms this problem. About halfway through the pilot study, TCW hosted a workshop in Oklahoma City, not affiliated with the university, and we invited our friends and family. I did not collect data from this session, and my IRB proposal did not cover this workshop, but the response emerged in a conversation with my spouse, who attended the workshop. We approached this workshop primarily as an opportunity to receive the feedback and support of those closest to us, so we hoped that this session would be especially collaborative. Sometime after this session had passed, my husband, who is a white man in his late 30s, explained to me that he felt excluded in some ways from the conversation at the friends and family workshop. He mentioned that it seemed like everyone else who was there already had this shared vocabulary, and it felt like he walked in in the middle of a conversation. (He arrived early.) He had been the only man in a group of women, most of whom were women of color, and all of whom were either educators or activists or both. He said that

without an introduction to some of the lingo, and without an opportunity to convey his learning perspective, he felt like he did not have a place in the conversation. He did not express this to me because he was upset, nor did he think that we should change the workshop to make him feel more comfortable. And I do not write this out of a desire to cater to his feelings as a white man. He expressed how he felt because he wanted to see himself and people like him as a possible audience for this workshop, and we did too. He felt that he had a lot to gain from participating, and he believed in our mission. But he also suggested that the lack of time spent making the language and approach accessible to him, the person who probably had the most to learn from the workshops, was antithetical to our philosophy. By failing to help him acclimate to the conversation, we hindered the possibility of reciprocation with the person who had the most to teach us about audience.

Equitable Valuation and Reciprocation in Context

This chapter has attempted to provide strategies to address the problems that arose throughout the development of TCW and which were revealed through the analyses discussed in Chapters IV and V. These problems are likely reflective of those that occur in other justice-oriented collaborative work that emerges in sites that are affected by white supremacy and settler colonialism. Ultimately many of the principles described in this chapter reflect an approach consistent with inclusive writing center pedagogy and feminist theory. And while the work of TCW can exist independent of writing centers, the project is deeply influenced by antiracist writing center scholarship. The groundwork for TCW and this dissertation was laid in *The Everyday Writing Center* (Geller, et al.) with *Good Intentions* (Grimm) and the work of Bawarshi and Pelkowski, Villanueva, and Denny, all of which demonstrate the need for writing center practitioners to enact intentionally inclusive practices. In the early 2010s, scholars offered models and concrete strategies for doing antiracist work in writing centers and affirmed that it wasn't adequate to acknowledge and discourage racist behavior and practices but that writing centers

should take an active role in resisting racism in institutions (Suhr-Sytsma and Brown; Condon; Diab, et al; Rowan and Greenfield; Godbee, Ozias, and Kar Tang; Blazer). More recently, through critical counterstory, ethnography, and narrative, scholars have urged writing center practitioners to recognize the ways that some of our everyday practices contribute to and obscure institutional racism and to expand our approaches to equity and inclusion beyond our efforts as allies (Martinez; Green; García). TCW itself seeks to provide support for folks who aspire to be accomplices in the struggle against racism, and its foundations in writing centers reveal the deep (and perhaps unsurprising) capacity that folks trained in inclusive writing center pedagogy may have for interpersonal antiracist activism outside of and adjacent to writing centers and academic settings.

Additionally, this study of TCW proposes practices that can be enacted to foster antiracist community building through calling in and reciprocal, accountable collaboration, several of which resonate deeply with writing center pedagogy and feminist invitational rhetoric (as demonstrated in this chapter). The notion of equitable valuation in particular can inform writing center praxis by calling us in to acknowledge the ways that our interpersonal work relies upon embodied knowledge to facilitate trust and collaboration both in one-with-one sessions and in our community engaged pedagogies. Feminist scholarship on writing centers has emphasized the depth of emotional labor that is expected on writing center administrators, and equitable valuation provides a framework for understanding how that labor is also enacted by writing center occupants in various positions, including the writers who come to us for support. The questions posed to understand equitable valuation in writing center spaces can enable us to develop ways to reciprocate labor, knowledge, and risks with writers as collaborators.

While these findings are intertwined with writing center scholarship, they are interdisciplinary and extra-disciplinary, as is much of writing center work. The notion of accountable collaboration and the need to adapt feminist, inclusive pedagogical practices into our

collaborative relationships with participant publics is relevant to researchers, organizers, leaders, teachers, and collaborators of all kinds. University classrooms that acknowledge the importance and potential impact of collaboration can also incorporate the lessons of accountable collaboration. Any course which incorporates collaborative learning should also take responsibility for modeling accountable collaboration and its value for resisting the often invisible systems of oppression that shape our worlds. While accountable collaboration is not just for white people engaging in collaborative antiracist work, by introducing a framework for accounting for the contributions, risks, and limitations of collaborators within their socio-historical and institutional contexts, it resists the default approaches to collaborating that sustain oppressive systems and maintain white supremacy. This work is pertinent in writing programs and centers, where unrestrained whiteness remains the status quo in leadership.

In urging white academics to be better accomplices rather than passive, well-intentioned allies, Neisha-Anne Green and Aja Martinez call us in to a more proactive, intentional everyday practice. Citing Ahmed, Martinez affirms that in institutions where, "the slightest notion of critique from POC will be read as radical, problematic, non-collegial, a threat, 'call-out culture,' and makes everyone (white folk) uncomfortable," and she makes it clear that meaningful solidarity demands that white people be willing not only to experience discomfort (in being called out/in), but also that they be willing to cause discomfort, to disrupt the status quo (by calling out/in) ("The Responsibility" 226-228). TCW illustrates and makes space for practicing strategies for just this kind of calling in. In "calling in," I'm referring to an intentional practice recently celebrated in intersectional feminist solidarity work which is distinguished from calling out and is described in Chapter II. Perhaps the most salient moment of calling in throughout the TCW collaborative process so far emerged as our team worked to negotiate how to talk about the founding of TCW, which is elaborated upon in Chapter IV. Of course, this conversation spanned over a few meetings and in email correspondence, and it was initiated by a calling out of sorts

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when Kate and I reacted to not being named as "Founders" in the packet Leah had recently revised. After a few difficult conversations about this topic, we did begin to work toward some resolution when Lauren called us in, to be accountable for our invitational approach and to consider our collaborators' experience, expressing that,

> We need to spend time on this big stuff, but it feels hard to do that when we have all these other things. I was cool with waiting to resolve that later. But it was like a knife-in-chest feeling every time I heard that story about the four founders. I'm willing to do everything we have to do to make sure nobody feels slighted. We're teaching invitational conversation. (Lauren, 28 Jan. 2018 Meeting)

Realizing that she had been operating under a false assumption, Kate suggests that "if at any point anyone is uncomfortable with anything, I think we need to be more vocal with each other" (Kate, 28 Jan. 2018 Meeting). Lauren then acknowledges that she had been feeling unheard but that she thought that she'd been clear at our recent revising retreat, saying, "That's what I felt like the last day of our retreat was for. I was losing sleep over this. I wanted to be sure that we were united and on the same page. Maybe that's my bad for assuming that we'd just get back to this at a more 'suitable time.' There's no convenient time for conflict" (Lauren, 28 Jan. 2018 Meeting). Following Lauren's call that we enact our invitational approach in order to address this problem and overstepping of boundaries, we articulated a clear plan to write through our story independently and to come together to discuss how we saw our own roles in TCW. The challenges didn't end there, but by finally demonstrating that we could work through tension and that we could respond generously to being called in, our team was strengthened, and we discovered that we were able to hear what we don't want to hear and to accept these gestures "as overtures of connection, not separation" (Carrillo Rowe 175). In studying the collaborative practices of TCW team, I also had the opportunity to practice calling in myself and my

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collaborators, which drew attention to the ways that my pedagogical and research practice, sometimes despite my efforts, perpetuated and centered whiteness.

The histories of whiteness of academia in general and composition and rhetoric in particular demand that we address the structures that maintain whiteness as the default or status quo. People of color and folks who experience marginalization in our institutions have been doing this work, as have some white folks (Green; Martinez; Inoue; Kynard; Morrison; Zhang, et al.; Kristensen; Jackson; Ore; Diab, et al; García; Villanueva; Condon; Blazer; Clary-Lemon; Godbee), but even those who haven't made antiracism the focus of their scholarly interest have a responsibility to do their part to consider the ways that they and their institutions are ruled by systems of oppression and white supremacy, and often this begins by taking a look at our own behaviors and attitudes, which are never isolated or solitary.

Accountable collaboration provides a lens through which to consider the ways that our attitudes and behaviors are informed by structures of racism and oppression and what that may contribute to the collaborative efforts of organizing, teaching, mentoring, and administrative work. In particular, equitable valuation asks how we and our collaborators might reconsider labor distribution and valuation of contributions in order to account for the ways that our histories and experiences have shaped what we bring to collaborative work and the differential risks we take in doing so. These are crucial questions in community organizing and campus administration including diversity work, which often bring together contributors with diverse backgrounds and experiences, and though they often intend to work in solidarity, contributors who have experienced a lot of privilege may be unaware of the risks that collaborators who have experienced identity-based marginalization or oppression take in doing the work as well as the additional labor that is expected of them to educate and tolerate offensive or oppressive behavior from their intended allies. By addressing these questions on the outset of collaborative work,

developing context-based strategies for accountability that work toward intersectional solidarity becomes possible.

Calling upon collaborators, especially those who lead or facilitate groups to reciprocate knowledge, labor, benefits and risks with their communities, thus treating the groups as collaborators establishes a baseline for redistributing efforts and outcomes when there is likely to be a power imbalance. It acts as a reminder that even when authority is not evenly distributed, we can work toward equity. This is also deeply relevant in mentoring and teaching, which constitutes much of our labor in rhetoric and composition, and which are sites so rooted in white supremacy that, if unchecked, will actively maintain systems of oppression.

This chapter outlines questions for considering equitable valuation and reciprocating knowledge, labor, benefits and risks as well as the rest of the principles of accountable collaboration (*critical reflexivity, reciprocal trust,* and *relational equity*) and approaching learning communities as potential collaborators (*clarifying goals and philosophies* and *actively listening for the needs and goals of potential collaborators*). These questions are merely a beginning for working toward accountable collaboration in our work, and further consideration, practice, and reflection is needed in order to generate models for how it might look in community organizing, classrooms that focus on writing and critical thinking, writing centers, administrative work, etc. Modeling these behaviors for communities that are learning has the potential to reshape the ways that we work together and the collective power we wield toward resisting oppression and white supremacy. In order to work together for a better future, we first have to create a future in which we work together better.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: IRB Approval

Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date:	Thursday, August 24, 2017
IRB Application No	AS1744
Proposal Title:	The Conversation Workshop: A case study of an Antiracist Pedagogical Project using Invitational rhetoric
Reviewed and Processed as:	Exempt

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved   Protocol Expires: 8/23/2020

Principal
Investigator(s):

Hillary Coenen   Anna Sicari

Stillwater, OK 74078   Stillwater, OK 74078

The IRB application referenced above has been approved. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.

☐ The final versions of any printed recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are attached to this letter. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval. Protocol modifications requiring approval may include changes to the title, PI advisor, funding status or sponsor, subject population composition or size, recruitment, inclusion/exclusion criteria, research site, research procedures and consent/assent process or forms.
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of the research; and
4. Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved protocols are subject to monitoring by the IRB and that the IRB office has the authority to inspect research records associated with this protocol at any time. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact Dawnett Watkins 219 Scott Hall (phone: 405-744-5700, dawnett.watkins@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,

Hugh Crethar, Chair
Institutional Review Board

Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date: Friday, October 20, 2017   **Protocol Expires:** 8/23/2020

IRB Application No: AS1744

Proposal Title: The Conversation Workshop: A case study of an Antiracist Pedagogical Project using invitational rhetoric

Reviewed and Processed as: Exempt

Modification

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s)   **Approved**

Principal Investigator(s):

Hillary Coenen   Anna Sicari

Stillwater, OK 74078   Stillwater, OK 74078

The requested modification to this IRB protocol has been approved. Please note that the original expiration date of the protocol has not changed. The IRB office MUST be notified in writing when a project is complete. All approved projects are subject to monitoring by the IRB.

☐ The final versions of any printed recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are attached to this letter. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

The reviewer(s) had these comments:

Mod to collect field notes from The Conversation Workshop.

Signature :

Hugh Crethar, Chair, Institutional Review Board

Friday, October 20, 2017
Date

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APPENDIX C: IRB Modification B, 31 October 2017

Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date: Tuesday, October 31, 2017   **Protocol Expires:** 8/23/2020

IRB Application No: AS1744

Proposal Title: The Conversation Workshop: A case study of an Antiracist Pedagogical Project using invitational rhetoric

Reviewed and   Exempt
Processed as: **Modification**

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s)   **Approved**
   Principal
   Investigator(s):

Hillary Coenen   Anna Sicari

Stillwater, OK 74078   Stillwater, OK 74078

The requested modification to this IRB protocol has been approved. Please note that the original expiration date of the protocol has not changed. The IRB office MUST be notified in writing when a project is complete. All approved projects are subject to monitoring by the IRB.

☐ The final versions of any printed recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are attached to this letter. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

The reviewer(s) had these comments:

add a survey

Signature :

Hugh Crethar, Chair, Institutional Review Board

Tuesday, October 31, 2017
Date

APPENDIX D: IRB Modification B, 15 November 2017

College of
Arts and Sciences

Department of English
205 Morrill Hall
Stillwater, Oklahoma 74078
P 405 744 9474
F 405 744 6326

APPENDIX F: INFORMED CONSENT AGREEMENT – Focus Group
OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY

PROJECT TITLE: The Conversation Workshop: A Case Study of an Antiracist Pedagogical Project Using Invitational Rhetoric

INVESTIGATORS:
Dr. Anna Sicari, PhD in English, Director of OSU Writing Center
Hillary Coenen, PhD Candidate in English at Oklahoma State University

PURPOSE:
This study will examine the transition of The Conversation Workshop, an antiracist activist community project, into a university program and the ways that the university community responds to the program. This study will do so by addressing the following questions: How does The Conversation Workshop model transition from a community setting to a university setting? How does embodiment influence the ways that group leaders plan for and conduct the workshop? What motivates participants to engage in the workshop? How will participants implement strategies from the workshop in their communities?

Answering these questions involves collecting feedback from workshop participants like yourself. While the purpose of the workshop itself is to impact the community, not to serve research needs, research will allow for reflection on the ways the workshop model fulfills activist goals.

PROCEDURES
Prior to participating in the study, you will have attended The Conversation Workshop at OSU with other members of a university group with which you are affiliated. At this workshop, you were asked to participate in a follow up study. This study includes participation in a focus group occurring within 3-8 weeks after the workshop. Topics of conversation at the focus group session will include your feelings and expectations prior to the workshop, your motivation for attending, your prior interest in social justice, your feelings following the workshop, your learning experience, and how you've applied your learning since the workshop. This study is designed to last approximately 1.5 hours (not including the workshop, which lasts up to four hours).

RISKS OF PARTICIPATION:
There are no known risks associated with this project which are greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life.

BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION:
The primary benefit of this study is that the focus group conversation will provide an opportunity for you to build upon what you learned at The Conversation Workshop and to reflect on it within a community of learners. If you are interested, we will send you a copy of the results of the study when it is finished.

CONFIDENTIALITY:
The records of this study will be kept private. While complete confidentiality in the focus group cannot be guaranteed, all participants of the group will be asked to keep the discussion confidential. Any written results will discuss your contributions **using whatever identifying information you prefer as indicated by this form**. Research records and documents will be stored on a password protected account in Google Drive and only researchers and individuals responsible for research oversight will have access to the records.

Audio tapes will be transcribed and destroyed within 10 days of the interview.

College of
Arts and Sciences

Department of English
205 Morrill Hall
Stillwater, Oklahoma 74078
P 405 744 9474
F 405 744 6326

COMPENSATION:
No additional compensation will be provided, but Writing Center staff will count workshop participation toward their Writing Center time.

CONTACTS:
You may contact any of the researchers at the following addresses and phone numbers, should you desire to discuss your participation in the study and/or request information about the results of the study Anna Sicari, Ph.D., 205 Morrill Hall, Dept. of English Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK 74078, (405) 744-9365. If you have questions about your rights as a research volunteer, you may contact the IRB Office at 223 Scott Hall, Stillwater, OK 74078, 405-744-3377 or irb@okstate.edu

PARTICIPANT RIGHTS:
I understand that my participation is voluntary, that there is no penalty for refusal to participate, and that I am free to withdraw my consent and participation in this project at any time, without penalty.

CONSENT DOCUMENTATION:
I have been fully informed about the procedures listed here. I am aware of what I will be asked to do and of the benefits of my participation. I also understand the following statements:
I affirm that I am 18 years of age or older.

I have read and fully understand this consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy of this form will be given to me. I hereby give permission for my participation in this study.

_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant (Print)	Signature of Participant	Date

In write ups of this study, my identification preferences are as follows (Please select one):

- ☐ I wish to be identified by my first name
- ☐ I wish to remain anonymous by using a pseudonym
- ☐ Other: _____

I would like to be described with the following demographic information (Gender, race, ethnicity, age, etc):

_____

_____

I certify that I have personally explained this document before requesting that the participant sign it.

_____	_____
Signature of Researcher	Date

Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date: Wednesday, November 15, 2017   Protocol Expires: 8/23/2020

IRB Application No: AS1744

Proposal Title: The Conversation Workshop: A case study of an Antiracist Pedagogical Project using Invitational rhetoric

Reviewed and
Processed as: Exempt

                   Modification

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s)   Approved

Principal
Investigator(s):

Hillary Coenen   Anna Sicari

Stillwater, OK 74078   Stillwater, OK 74078

The requested modification to this IRB protocol has been approved. Please note that the original expiration date of the protocol has not changed. The IRB office MUST be notified in writing when a project is complete. All approved projects are subject to monitoring by the IRB.

☐   The final versions of any printed recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are attached to this letter. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

The reviewer(s) had these comments:

mod to change to a single focus group session. Move question from Focus group session 2 to session 1.

Signature :

Hugh Crethar, Chair, Institutional Review Board   Wednesday, November 15, 2017
                                                      Date

APPENDIX E: Team Interview Schedule

CWP Team Interview Schedule

Semi-structured interview with individual workshop team leaders - 60-90 minutes

Interview points:

- What experiences motivated you to work on the CW?
- What did you see as your most important goals for this curriculum? For the workshop?
- How do you envision the audience for the CW?
- What particular experiences of yours most informed your approach to developing the CW curriculum?
- What particular ideologies do you see informing the CW?
- Have you thought about embodiment as a significant part of this process?
- How might this have influenced your approach to the curriculum? To leading workshops?
- How do you see the different roles playing out in the workshop team?
- Discussions of our experiences as racialized have come up frequently during the development of the curriculum. In what ways have you felt those discussions influenced how we worked together? How the curriculum developed?
- What challenges have you faced during this process?
- What aspects have you found particularly rewarding?
- Were there questions you may have expected that you might like to address? Or are there aspects of this interview that you might like to expand on?

APPENDIX F: Group Interview Schedule

Interview Themes to Discuss as a Group

- Purpose and goals of the CW
- Hopes for the pilot
- How we envision the future of the project
- Our respective roles
    - In team dynamics
    - In leading the workshops
- Our roles and responsibilities re: issues of race
- Difficulties answering questions about embodiment
- Envisioning audience - returning to the "stay-at-home-mom"
- OKC & Oklahoma as more than setting
- Self-consciousness
- Various ideologies: healing and wellness, Christianity, liberal east-coaster
- Difficulties with time and space

APPENDIX G: Survey Questions

Survey Questions for Conversation Workshop Participants

Thank you for attending the pilot version of The Conversation Workshops. Your honest feedback is helpful in enabling us to improve the workshop. Your answers are entirely anonymous, and we will ask your permission to use your feedback not only to improve the workshop but also to be included in our research process.

Please complete the form below.

1) Briefly describe what were you thinking or feeling pre-workshop.
2) After attending the workshop, I feel prepared to engage in conversations about acknowledging implicit bias. (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree)
3) What can the CW Workshops Team can do better in future iterations of the workshop?
4) What was missing/what would you add?
5) What is the most significant idea or strategy you've taken away from the workshop pilot? Why?
6) How was the workshop different from what you expected it to be?
7) How do you feel about having the workshops with a group of people you know?
8) I felt comfortable participating in the workshop. (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree)
9) Were your feelings of comfort or discomfort productive in this setting? Why or why not?
10) Please add any additional comments/questions regarding the workshop pilot here:
11) May we use your anonymous responses to this survey (excluding the following question) for research purposes? (Yes, No)
12) Do you know a person or existing group/community that would be interested in participating in The Conversation Workshops? If so, please list names and contact info below:

APPENDIX H: Focus Group Schedule

College of

Arts and Sciences

Department of English
205 Morrill Hall
Stillwater, Oklahoma 74078
P 405 744 9474
F 405 744 6326

APPENDIX G: DATA COLLECTION MATERIALS

PROJECT TITLE: The Conversation Workshop: A Case Study of an Antiracist Pedagogical Project Using Invitational Rhetoric

QUESTIONS FOR FOCUS GROUP SESSION:

- Describe what were you thinking or feeling pre-workshop.

- Why did you want to participate in the Conversation Workshop?

- Have you participated in other social justice efforts or activities?

- Do you feel prepared, after attending the CW, to engage in conversations about acknowledging implicit bias & systemic racism? Why or why not?

- What is the most significant idea or strategy you've taken away from CW? Why?

- How was CW different from what you expected it to be?

- What do you feel you'd like to know more about in order to better engage in the conversation? What are the barriers to knowing?

- How have you applied your learning since the workshop?

VITA

Hillary Michelle Coenen

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Dissertation: COLLABORATING ACCOUNTABLY: INTERPERSONAL
ANTIRACIST ACTIVISM AS A SITE FOR FEMINIST INVITATIONAL
RHETORIC AND WRITING CENTER PEDAGOGY

Major Field: English

Biographical:

Education:

Completed the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy in English at Oklahoma
State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in May, 2019.

Completed the requirements for the Master of Arts in English at Midwestern State
University, Wichita Falls, Texas in 2012.

Completed the requirements for the Bachelor of Arts in English at Angelo State
University, San Angelo, Texas in 2009.

Experience:

Assistant Director, Writing Center, Oklahoma State University, Jan. 2014 to Aug.
2015 and Aug. 2018 to May 2019.

Assistant Director, Composition Program, Oklahoma State University, Aug. 2015
to May 2017.

GTA, English Department (Composition I & II, Technical Writing, Advanced
Composition), Oklahoma State University, Aug. 2013 to May 2017.

Professional Memberships:

College Composition and Communications, Social Justice Task Force Member
National Council of Peer-Tutors of Writing, Steering Committee
Coalition of Feminist Scholars in the History of Rhetoric
International Writing Centers Association