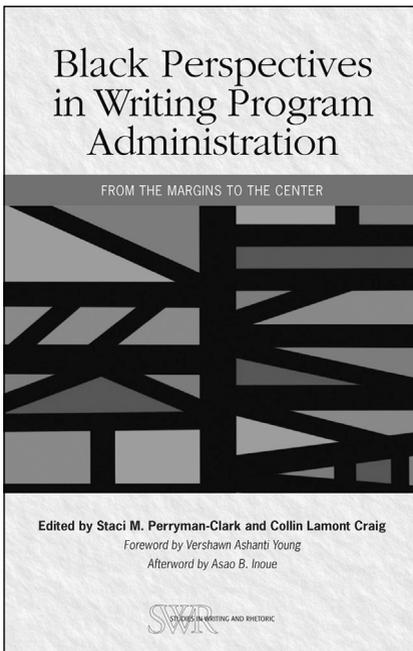




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Black Perspectives in Writing Program Administration

FROM THE MARGINS TO THE CENTER

Staci M. Perryman-Clark and Collin Lamont Craig, editors

This collection centers writing program administration (WPA) discourse as intersectional race work. Editors Perryman-Clark and Craig have made a space for WPAs of color to cultivate antiracist responses within an Afrocentric framework, to enact socially responsible approaches to program building, and to develop concrete, specific models for taking action to confront and resist racist microaggressions. This framework also positions WPAs of color to build relationships with allies and create contexts for students and faculty to imagine rhetorics that speak truth to oppressive and divisive ideologies within and beyond the academy, but especially within writing programs. Contributors provide examples of how WPA scholars can push back against the ways in which larger, cultural rhetorical projects inform our institutional practices, are coded into administrative agendas, and are reflected in programmatic objectives and interpersonal relations. As a whole, this collection works to shift the focus from race more broadly toward perspectives on blackness in writing program administration.

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Editors' Introduction

Decentering and Decentralizing Literacy Studies: An Urgent Call for Our Field

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A new decade is here, and with it persistent questions for the field of literacy studies. The field itself—through its programs, research agendas, journals, and professional associations—has been grappling with pressing societal issues and how to open new spaces for new ideas, with varying degrees of success (Toliver, Jones, Jiménez, Player, Rumenapp, & Munoz, 2019). To remain sustainable in the current times as a counternarrative (Mora, 2014) to policies and practices that perpetuate white supremacy and far-right ultranationalism, we need to *decenter* and *decentralize* our views of how we understand literacy as a global construct. This involves bringing to light efforts to retheorize it that are happening outside of traditional knowledge centers (Mora, 2016b). We need to recognize that overlooking certain regions of the world is detrimental to the literacy academic community at large, for our field cannot move forward if our frameworks for literacy are still ingrained with marginalizing views of different regions.

When we talk about decentering and decentralizing as two related ideas, we emphasize the need to move the conversation away from historically dominant groups (decenter) and geographical locales (decentralize). Decentering and decentralizing means that, for example, we need to reconsider how many ideas and theories that we rely on stem from colonial knowledge centers in the Global North and Anglo communities (the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and South Africa, to a certain extent). This necessitates rethinking our relationship with the different languages at play in terms of knowledge production—such as the dominance of English. This shift in relationship implies, revisiting McLuhan, that English is a neutral medium to share messages coming from different parts of the world, but itself needs to be situated historically and

politically (2012). This shift will entail greater awareness of how multilingual literacy scholars interact with English as part of their social and cultural capital, how they are helping reshape English (Mora, Lee, & Gaviria, 2019), and what this will mean for the academic future of literacy.

Decentering and decentralizing will require our field to pay close attention to its own complicity in the marginalization of epistemologies from the Global South in schooling and higher education contexts. We also need to interrogate our relationships with issues of race and social inclusion (Toliver et al., 2019; Willis, 2019)—how we are listening to and learning from voices of different minorities (e.g., racial, linguistic, or religious, as the articles in this issue bear witness) as they tell, retell, and reinvent their stories using their own languages. The challenge here, then, is making the peripheries the center, as part of true, sustainable (Paris & Alim, 2017) efforts toward educational justice

Decentering and decentralizing also means recognizing that we need to revisit our current methods of inquiry (Beucher, Handsfield, & Hunt, 2019)—interrogating what we mean by *data* and whose ideas make it to our research studies; disrupting traditional paradigms and research hierarchies and reconsidering how we engage with alternative and indigenous approaches to inquiry in the field. Finally, decentering and decentralizing means acknowledging that the search for equity and the search for more effective ways to help our students read and write in today's classrooms are neither contradictory nor mutually exclusive. Looking for the best ways to read and write means thinking of how to make our curricula and our society better. This will only be possible if the field recognize, as Marcelle Haddix reminds us (Literacy Research Association, 2020), the “polyphony of peripheries” that are already here, some hiding in plain sight, some intentionally overlooked, but all needed to help our field grow as a true force of change in this decade already in motion

A rich polyphony of voices is present in the articles in this issue. Lisa R. Arnold's examination of multilingual Lebanese students' descriptions of their own literacy practices both decenters and decentralizes norms of literacy scholarship. Tracing how monolingual ideologies shaped participant perspectives around translanguaging, her piece, “‘Now I Don't Use It at All. . . . It's Gone': Monolingual Ideology, Multilingual Students, and (Failed) Translingual Negotiation Strategies,” argues that dominant perspectives of literacy and language affect the adoption of transnational orientations toward writing. Arnold encourages the promotion of translanguaging in practitioners' classrooms, emphasizing how translanguaging practices might be actively nurtured in spaces of literacy learning. Such a perspective decenters the assumption that translanguaging is a “natural” practice belonging exclusively to multilingual learners.

Likewise, Emily Machado and Paul Hartman foreground translanguaging's decentering and decentralizing potentials. Drawing upon critical orientations to the elementary school writing workshop and theories of translanguaging composition, “‘I Want to Be *Pè Adedayo*': Young Children Enacting Resistance in/through Translingual Writing about Their Names” spotlights the politics of naming in schools, doing so through an examination of the writing practices of youth from

minoritized backgrounds as they wrote poetry about their own names. The study's keen analysis reveals differences in how young people use their communicative repertoires; even as some resisted mispronunciations and cultural erasure, others reinscribed dominant discourses privileging names associated with English and whiteness. This study sheds light on the complex ways in which young children represent key facets of their identities as they engage, through composing, with broader systems of power.

In "Compartmentalizing Faith: How Three First-Semester Undergraduates Manage Evangelical Identities in Academic Writing," Emily Murphy Cope examines the ways in which academic writing invites first-year college students to compartmentalize their identities as evangelicals. Drawing on social identity complexity theory, Cope uses data from student interviews as well as a corpus of academic writing to reveal the tensions between students' evangelical identities and their first-year academic writing. This article also engages the power of centering and decentering by asserting that compartmentalization prevents the development of civic discourses across lines of difference, and by providing strategies for drawing upon students' religious identities to foster cosmopolitan discourse. Also engaging writing, Jennifer Sanders, Joy Myers, Chinwe H. Ikpeze, Roya Q. Scales, Kelly N. Tracy, Karen K. Yoder, Linda Smetana, and Dana L. Grisham, in "A Curriculum Model for K–12 Writing Teacher Education," draw upon the pedagogical practices of K–12 writing teacher educators to decenter monolithic forms of writing pedagogy. Their model identifies five foundational elements of writing curriculum design, including taking a process-oriented approach, using constructivist and experiential instructional strategies, emphasizing the empowering nature of writing, acknowledging the complexities of writing assessment, and incorporating connections to K–12 contexts. These authors conclude with practical suggestions for developing, implementing, and advocating for writing methods courses in teacher preparation programs that support decentering and decentralizing approaches to writing instruction.

Our final featured article for this issue, Latrise P. Johnson and Hannah Sullivan's "Revealing the Human and the Writer: The Promise of a Humanizing Writing Pedagogy for Black Students," centers the ways in which Black students' histories, identities, and experiences might be woven into a humanizing writing pedagogy. Decentering whiteness, Johnson's ethnographic study follows one teacher's use of practitioner inquiry to reimagine her writing instruction. Ultimately, this study finds that by centering humanizing approaches to writing, educators give students the tools to "confront racism, injustice, and structural disadvantages in their lives, within communities, and around the world" (p.)

The In Dialogue section of this issue revisits the disadvantages of overlooking certain regions of the world, taking a closer look at Latin America. This region, despite being a growing hub of literacies research (see Trigos-Carrillo & Rogers, 2017, for a review), remains overlooked in the literature and in the agendas of professional associations in the field of literacy studies. The three essays that comprise this issue's In Dialogue are all framed by two converging trends: on the one hand, the growing realization that a global conversation around literacy stud-

ies that excludes such regions as Latin America neglects their multicultural and multilingual potential (Mora, 2016b) to enrich the field; and on the other hand, the changing social and political landscape of the region—as recently manifested in social movements in Mexico, Haiti, Honduras, Chile, Bolivia, Ecuador, and Colombia—as a new “reading of the world” emerges through words and actions (revisiting the ideas of Paulo Freire).

Finally, as scholars and advocates, the editors of this issue—in line with this conversation around decentering and decentralizing—cannot turn our back on recent events surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic and its differential impact on communities of color. We are in the middle of a once-in-a-lifetime event. Ignoring it as we write these lines would be impossible, for everybody’s lives (including ours and our contributing authors’) are in the middle of a new flux: We have had to relocate our teaching to our homes and other remote locations, and our interactions with students and colleagues have become a mix of synchronous and asynchronous communication laying bare educational inequalities across the world. The world will never be the same, and it will be up to us to turn this crisis into an opportunity to create new stories, open new forms of glocalized advocacy (Mora, 2016a) in text creation and interpretation, and eventually think of better ways to educate our future generations.

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