

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

On the Writing Center Periphery: (Counter)Stories from the Margin and on Marginality by Writing Center Administrators

Edited by Elizabeth Kleinfeld, Sohui Lee, and Julie Prebel

In *Peripheral Visions for Writing Centers* (2013), Jackie Grutsch McKinney points to the tendency in writing center studies to subscribe to a “grand narrative,” a common story that highlights our shared beliefs about the work we do. Grutsch McKinney argues that this grand narrative is simultaneously “beneficial and constraining”: it unites us by creating a sense of belonging within a community, but it can also be misleading as our actual experiences may not be represented in this common story. Often, the grand narrative creates a “collective tunnel vision” (5) that limits both the scope of the realities in everyday writing center work and -- as we contend in this proposed collection -- our conversations about the lived experiences of those working in writing centers. For instance, while tenure-track writing center administrators (WCAs) may not comprise the majority of those who hold WCA positions in writing centers, tenure-track faculty WCAs are more likely to be the storytellers of the writing center grand narrative: they publish more, present more conference papers, edit more journals, and participate more in organizational leadership.

In this collection, we seek to challenge the assumptions of the writing center grand narrative through key questions such as: who and what has been left out of the common stories of writing center work? What stories have yet to be told? Are there benefits to being left out of the grand narrative? What other work and experiences of writing center labor need to be explored? This collection proposes to explore these (and other) questions by focusing on counterstories from the margins: writing center work and experiences not (or not often) represented in the grand narrative.

Marginality *in* and *of* writing centers has been both bemoaned and embraced in writing center scholarship (Macauley and Mauriello 2007). For example, the marginalization of writing centers has often been tied to physical location (in basements or less visible spaces) or where centers are housed administratively (as adjunct to departments or other services). Just as significantly, WCAs may experience marginalization within their institutions because it is unclear where they fit in, often finding themselves “positioned as substrata of writing program administration, even further removed from the academic scholarship and intellectual inquiry of English

studies” (Geller and Denny 2013). The experience of being marginalized within one’s institution often has a direct connection to the marginalizing of WCAs as scholars, due to institutional policies that discourage or fail to incentivize research by employees in non-faculty or non-tenure track faculty positions, and the often limited-term appointments of WCAs to their positions (Perdue and Driscoll 2017). The consequences of marginalization in the field of writing center scholarship can be seen in a number of ways, such as WCAs shifting their research attention to the academic discipline of their faculty appointment or withdrawing from scholarly activity as a result of lack of institutional opportunity or support. WCAs might also experience marginalization because of their lived experiences within social as well as institutional structures of hegemony. In a field where white people -- and more specifically, white women -- occupy the majority of WCA positions (Valles, Babcock, and Jackson 2017) BIPOC WCAs experience intersectional forms of marginalization. Racial hierarchies and power structures within academic institutions and in writing center scholarship more broadly are additional barriers that impact the labor experiences of racially marginalized WCAs (Jackson 2018).

We invite proposals for chapter contributions to an edited collection on how marginality impacts writing centers, the people who work in them, and the scholarship generated from them. We aim for this collection to explore the different ways that writing centers and WCA positions are marginalized and the consequences, both positive and negative, of marginalization. Through this collection, we aim to provide a space for underrepresented voices to be heard in writing center studies. We invite WCAs with experiences of contingent status, marginality, and displacement to submit proposals that aim to complicate or amend extant writing center grand narratives. We encourage proposals that explore displacement and marginality through the lenses of race, sex, gender, and/or (dis)ability. We are especially interested in pieces that explore how marginalization in and of writing centers functions to maintain institutional and social structures of hegemony. In particular, we are interested in work from scholars who identify as being from populations underrepresented in current scholarship.

We are interested in research-based, theoretical, and narrative work that

- explores gaps between your experience in writing center work and the story told in writing center scholarship
- analyzes how the administrative location of your writing center has impacted or hindered your research
- critiques disciplinary practices and scholarly publishing practices that are standing in the way of more voices being heard in writing center studies

- exposes how the labor of writing center work, including research and scholarship, is unevenly experienced
- examines how a white racial frame, ableist frame, and/or patriarchal frame impacts one's ability to participate in writing center work and scholarship
- challenges entrenched beliefs about where writing centers should be housed or who should direct them
- studies how local decisions about where to house a writing center or how to structure a WCA position have larger impacts on whose voices get heard in writing center scholarship
- suggests new models for writing center administration that challenge white hegemony
- considers what it means to "belong" to the discipline of writing center studies
- proposes ways working from the margins might be potentially transformative in terms of challenging institutional structures or intervening in the grand narrative

Narrative chapters will be no more than 1,500 words; research-based and theoretical chapters will be between 5,000-6,000 words.

Timeline:

- Proposals (of up to 500 words) due January 31, 2021. Please include a brief biographical sketch of up to 50 words with your proposal.
- Contributors will be notified by March 15, 2021
- Completed submissions will be due August 1, 2021
- Feedback on drafts to authors will be provided by November 1, 2021
- Revisions will be due back to editors by January 31, 2022

To submit proposals, please visit the project website at <https://onthewritingcenterperiphery.wordpress.com/>. Please direct inquiries to Elizabeth Kleinfeld, Sohui Lee, and Julie Prebel at **wcmargins@gmail.com**.

Works Cited

Geller, Anne Ellen, and Harry Denny. "Of Ladybugs, Low Status, and Loving the Job: Writing Center Professionals Navigating Their Careers." *The Writing Center Journal* 33.1 (2013): 96-129.

Jackson, Karen Keaton. "A State of Permanent Transition: Strategies for WPA Survival in the Ever-Present Marginal Space of HBCUs." *WPAs in Transition: Navigating Educational Leadership Positions*, edited by Courtney Adams, Jacob Babb, and Brian Ray, UP of Colorado, 2018, pp. 25-36.

MacCauley, William J. and Nicholas Mauriello. *Marginal Words, Marginal Works?: Tutoring the Academy in the Work of Writing Centers*. Hampton Press, 2007.

McKinney, Jackie Grutsch. *Peripheral Visions for Writing Centers*. Utah State Press, 2013.

Perdue, Sherry Wynn, and Dana Lynn Driscoll. "Context Matters: Centering Writing Center Administrators' Institutional Status and Scholarly Identity." *The Writing Center Journal* (2017): 185-214.

Valles, Sarah Banschbach, Rebecca Day Babcock, and Karen Keaton Jackson. "Writing Center Administrators and Diversity: A Survey." *The Peer Review* 1.1 (2017).