

HOW LOVING ALLYSHIP AND CARING ACCOUNTABILITY DESIGN ACCESS AND
INCLUSION IN THE WRITING CLASSROOM

by

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This paper is being written on the ancestral, traditional, and contemporary lands of the Tohono O'odham and Pascua Yaqui Peoples, who have stewarded this land since time immemorial. Additionally, the United States was built on the backs of kidnapped and enslaved Africans and the physical and sociocultural disabling of various communities. It is our responsibility to honor the ancestral and contemporary Indigenous Peoples, 2SQTBIPOC, disabled folx, and histories, through thoughtful, meaningful action.

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Abstract

Written during COVID-19, this dissertation takes the form of a three-article exploration of different ways that the first-year writing classroom can facilitate connection through purposeful design of self and classroom structures. In considering how we can make the classroom a more accessible and inclusive space, each article explores scholars in disability studies, black feminism, and activism work, who imagine and shape their communities through love, accountable allyship, care, and solidarity. Article 1, "Love and Accountable Allyship in the Classroom: An Intervention," argues that the collapsed inner and outer spaces (home and work/education) revealed the importance of embracing a person-first pedagogy, valuing connection and humanization while being mindful of systems inside and outside the classroom. Article 2, "Rhetoric of Care: A Critical Pedagogy Framework for Solidarity in the Classroom," argues that the Rhetoric and Composition canonized frameworks for care are missing crucial elements that are preventing truly caring relationships within classrooms, like addressing white supremacy, and it concludes that forming intimacy across difference can sustain all of us. Finally, in article 3, "Designing Love and Care in the Classroom," I begin to examine how the intricacies of theory within the field of design can be applied to university structures (teaching persona, pedagogy, syllabi, course policies, course materials, curriculum, assessment) and start to reflect on how I have begun to think about rebuilding a healthier self and classroom system, specifically by simultaneously holding destruction of whiteness and space for equity. Overall, this dissertation contributes to the conversation around the re-humanization of those working within academic institutions.

Introduction

I recognize and confront the systems that have maintained my position of white privilege. I hope to respectfully engage with the ideas in a space known for its erasure of 2SQTBIPOC voices, and I hope to demonstrate listening as much as I am writing.

Evolution of Research Questions and Influences

When I wrote my original research questions for this project in June 2020, I had many decolonial theoretical teachings I was trying to respect--Indigenous, antiracist, queer theory, community literacies theory--and my goal was to figure out how to use all of these theories to imagine a just, intersectional pedagogical framework. Additionally, my original sub-research questions were studying how literacy sponsors across communities make their spaces inclusive and accessible and then how we can account for the affective labor that the sustained vulnerability requires. After having narrowed and completed this project, I can acknowledge how much of a white supremacist task that was. Trying to smash together these theories took a colonial approach to the many scholars and communities already working toward those goals, and my original anger that fueled this project led me to skip over the delicate interweavings that I needed to unravel within myself first.

After discussing these ideas with my advisor, I was informed I was drawing from too many theoretical lenses, at which point I tried to narrow my focus; this was a process that continued throughout the project. I also quickly abandoned the traditional format of the dissertation proposal and began with a land, labor, and disability acknowledgement, introducing the history of Arizona, the U.S., and our responsibilities as community-engaged workers, and I intended my project to center BIPOC voices, experiences, and methodologies to theorize kindness and bring intersectional care in the classroom. I also planned to recognize my own implication in the work. It was at this point, during the refocused discussion of humanization and dehumanization being built into our environments, that I removed the previous questions and

worked with my advisor Dr. Troutman Robbins to develop some new questions and sub-questions:

- What is the first-year classroom in the wake of a worldwide pandemic, protests, ... ?
 - Why should kindness and care in the classroom be a focus, when in some cases people cannot feed or shelter or provide for themselves and/or their families?
 - Even if students are well outside the classroom, why should instructors focus on fostering kindness and care?

These queries became the organizing factors for me during the writing process, and after a recommendation from the committee to break the project into three articles, I was able to more clearly narrow how a set of themes fit into these overarching research questions.

Something that remained stable throughout this project was my goal to demonstrate that community, in whatever ways we find it, is where we learn the most. One of the main scholars who made up my intellectual community was bell hooks, specifically through the trilogy *All about love* (2000), *Teaching community* (2003), and *Teaching critical thinking* (2010). Each dissertation article comes into conversation with aspects of one of these books as an intervention in the college classroom. Another scholarly idea I've been drawn to is Nash's (2011) characterization of identity as constantly shifting. I think what drew me to this concept throughout the past two years was the permission to abandon the intersectionality of academic white women, of intersectionality beginning as fixed, and of identity in the classroom as being unencumbered by affect. The last two books that majorly influenced the project trajectory were Piepzna-Samarasinha's (2018) *Care work* and Matias's (2016) *Feeling white*. Engaging with these four brilliant queer/femme/mother-scholar/BIPOC/disabled writers helped me establish a circle of light by which to reflect.

Why Care Matters In the Classroom

The three papers are connected by examining the overarching themes of love/allyship, care/solidarity, and love/care in the first-year writing classroom. They each respond to different facets of bell hooks, community formation, and pedagogical theory. In Article 1, entitled “Love and Accountable Allyship in the Classroom: An Intervention,” I argue that bell hooks’s vision of love can be actualized in the first-year writing classroom, in an effort to answer the question about how the first-year writing classroom can function in the wake of a worldwide pandemic, protests, environmental violence, etc. In Article 2, entitled “Rhetoric of Care: A Critical Pedagogy Framework for Solidarity in the Classroom,” I argue that a critical care pedagogy is one way that we as instructors can respond to managing attending class in a pandemic, one way that we can teach our students to respond to handling the vulnerability, and one way that allows us also to care for ourselves along the way, too. And finally, in Article 3, “Designing Love and Care in the Classroom,” I propose that we can rehumanize and purposefully design equity, love, and care throughout our classroom spaces.

Future Directions

I plan to submit these articles for publication in *Spark: A 4C4Equality Journal* and other such open access spaces. The audience for this journal specifically is both rhetoric and composition, as well as activists, teachers, and researchers, and these are listed on the website. However, I also am personally committed to making knowledge accessible to audiences outside of the paywalls surrounding much university information, making it an appropriate place for submitting all three of the following articles. *Spark* also has commitments to making their publications accessible and equitable.

This process has also demonstrated the importance of compassionate, proactive professional development. I hope I can continue to bring what I’ve learned to other spaces,

continue to listen to community voices to improve my work, and continue to navigate new spaces with care and love.

Love and Accountable Allyship in the Classroom: An Intervention

“I wonder if it is possible to teach literature in such a way that people stop killing each other?”

--Ihab Hassan (as cited in O'Reilly, 1984, p. 109)

“Yeah, and [the cop] may be a very nice man. But I haven't got the time to figure that out. All I know is, he's got a uniform and a gun and I have to relate to him that way. That's the only way to relate to him because one of us may have to die.”

--James Baldwin (Baldwin, 1973, p. 26)

Personal Positionality

This article seeks to examine culture, from the perspective of a feminist teacher, in order to articulate how the call for accountable allyship via bell hooks's vision of love can be actualized in the first-year writing classroom. With the tangibly collapsed inner and outer spaces (home and work/education), with severe global and local inequities, with collective trauma, and with my transitory status as a graduate student, I wonder, what is the purpose of teaching first-year composition? What does it mean to “[take] into account our students' multiple responsibilities, needs, and aspirations” (Denial, 2021, p. 136)? What does it mean to practice a pedagogy of kindness, “a pedagogy rooted in my feminism and my commitment to justice; a pedagogy that placed the common humanity of students, faculty, and staff at its core” (Denial, 2021, p. 134)? What does it mean to be an ally in the classroom in the context of a global pandemic? Like after other worldwide traumas (i.e. WWI and WWII), people will begin to reckon with the experiences. This article is part of the process of answering these questions.

I am writing from the position of a lower/middle-class, white, able-bodied, neurodivergent, cisgender woman with United States citizenship. As I sit in my apartment in Arizona, with access to a stable internet connection, my own laptop, and a single job that allows me to work from home (in addition to promised funding because of my status as a graduate student); with the ability to go grocery shopping because of a lower risk of infection; with no small-human or other familial caregiving obligations; and with my immediate family members able to stay home as well, I recognize and confront the systems that have maintained my position of white privilege. I also do not claim the labels of ally, accomplice, or black feminist disability theorist as described by the authors herein. Instead, I hope to respectfully engage with the ideas in a space known for its erasure of 2SQTBIPOC voices, and I hope to demonstrate listening as much as I am writing.

This cultural overview and resulting theorization is heavily focused on the United States and its unique issues.¹ We'll begin by outlining the impact of the pandemic on racial and ethnic minority communities, essential workers, disability communities, and intersectional theories, in addition to the widespread use of Twitter to disseminate delight and harm. This discussion will reveal aspects of this collective trauma and how all of this has made its way into the classroom via the permeable boundaries of Zoom calls.

¹ In a brilliant book analyzing black women's speculative fiction, Sami Schalk (2018) historicizes the metaphorical and material connections between disability and enslavement. Disability was used to keep black folk enslaved because of the medical diagnoses of lack of intelligence, lack of physical/mental health, wanting to run away, laziness, and mischievousness (p. 42). These racist beliefs were "used historically to justify the infliction of numerous acts of social, political, economic, and physical violence against African Americans including psychiatric institutionalization or imprisonment, medical experimentation, insurance policy discrimination, and exclusion from the military" (p. 43), and they quite literally "created mental and physical disability for black subjects" (p. 44). Additionally, Indigenous Peoples have been subject to many harms that include "dislocation, the loss of land rights and disruption to traditional livelihoods, resulting in violence, substance abuse and mental health issues" (Velarde, 2018, "Conclusions," para. 1).

COVID's Impact on Racial and Ethnic Minority Communities and Essential Workers

Immediately after the pandemic panic began in the U.S. in March 2020, the CDC released data about health equity and how COVID-19 has disproportionately affected racial and ethnic minority communities. They define health equity as “when all members of society enjoy a fair and just opportunity to be as healthy as possible” (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2021b, para. 1), and they recognized that racial and ethnic minority communities were once again combatting the systemic failures of healthcare: “some [social determinants of health](#) have historically prevented them from having fair opportunities for economic, physical, and emotional health” (CDC, 2021b, para. 2). The social determinants affecting racial and ethnic minority communities, specific to COVID-19, are higher “[representation] among essential workers and industries” (CDC, 2021b, para. 3), as well as the more commonly known obstacles of discrimination, barriers to healthcare access, limited job options, and crowded living (CDC, 2021b, paras. 5-10).

Another immediate change was the ubiquity of the phrase “essential worker.” Essential workers are defined by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security’s Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency as “those who conduct a range of operations and services in industries that are essential to ensure the continuity of critical functions in the United States” (CDC, 2021a, para. 1). In other words, those workers who are put at increased risk to keep capitalism secure during a global pandemic. The sheer force of the strain on our doctors, nurses, and essential workers, highlight the inadequacies in a capital-focused and ableist culture. Healthcare workers around the world risked their lives and were inundated with COVID cases/deaths, shortage of personal protective equipment, and extreme burnout & trauma, and in some cases, healthcare workers have been the targets of interpersonal violence (The Lancet, 2020, para. 1). In addition to doctors and nurses, essential workers include “custodial staff and orderlies in hospitals, but also teachers and child-care workers, grocery clerks and supermarket

workers, delivery people, factory and farm workers, and restaurant staff” (The Lancet, 2020, para. 2). A 2020 report from the Labor Center and Center for Employment Equity at the University of Massachusetts communicated survey data about essential workers in the state. The report began by stating that “Only a few months ago low wage workers in the U.S. were largely treated as disposable, the victims of their own choices and societal neglect” (Hammonds et al., 2020, para. 1); but throughout the pandemic, they became essential: “For the society to continue, many workers had to go to work in order to feed and protect the rest of us” (Hammonds et al., 2020, para. 2). They continued to work, despite feeling unsafe, being unable to practice social distancing, facing belligerent customers, and having low wages (Hammonds et al., 2020, “Key findings include”). The rest of us relied upon these overworked, underpaid, often minoritized individuals to risk their lives and the lives of their communities to keep life as-usual.

COVID’s Impact on Disability Communities and Intersectional Theories

The pandemic also challenged the invisibility of disability; the damaging effects of ableism became obvious when large numbers of people were suddenly at risk and needed medical attention, only to find a lack of space or staff in emergency rooms and hospitals. It has never been more clear that “disability affects us all, not just because we are all only temporarily able-bodied, but because the categories of able/disabled prefigure all of our relationships, discourses, and dispositions” (Dolmage & Lewiecki-Wilson, 2010, p. 38). The pandemic caused some to ask who can access the U.S. medical system, who is at greater risk for COVID-19 transmission, who can safely work, who can stay home, who can have elective surgeries, and who can get vaccinated.

Lack of access to medical help does not only stem from physical conditions, however; some groups have multiple identities that put them at further risk. Scholars have exposed the theoretical links between derogatory medicalized conceptions of disability and the cultural

constructions of women's bodies (Dolmage & Lewiecki-Wilson, 2010), immigrant/citizen bodies (Dolmage & Lewiecki-Wilson, 2010), sex working bodies (Schweik, 2009), unhoused bodies (Schweik, 2009), and black bodies (Bailey & Mobley, 2018). In an article bringing these theories together, Bailey and Mobley (2018) propose a black feminist disability framework, relying on Crenshaw's concept of intersectionality and the American with Disabilities Act, to purposefully account for those who are "multiply marginalized within society" (p. 20).² They begin by highlighting the ableism enforced on Black bodies by notions of enslavement and capitalist labor; how disabled and Black bodies share negative relationships with medicine & eugenics; and the overabundance of white leadership in disability rights movements (Bailey & Mobley). They also critique an identity-based approach to disability as a white, classist privilege. For example, if Black folx are expected to work twice as hard as White folx, then "Black people cannot afford to be disabled when they are required to be phantasmically abled in a white supremacist society" (Bailey & Mobley, 2018, p. 22). This expectation reinforces and reproduces internalized ableism, as well as the historical ableism and racism of Black folx being "suited only for work, and not for freedom" (Bailey & Mobley, 2018, p. 24). Using this example, we can

² It is important to note that academia is where most people learn about (white) feminism (Magnet et al., 2014), meaning its dissemination in training educators is inherently influenced by the white supremacist institutions, and the following characterization of disability is based broadly in U.S. settler colonial history (Goodley, 2013).

Slavery, which was justified through recourse to ableist discourses, was a traumatic and often lifelong experience for black people that physically produced disability through hard labor, malnutrition, violence, and lack of effective medical care and psychologically through fear of physical and sexual violence, disruption of families and communities, and general inhumane treatment. Extreme scars, missing fingers, missing ears, and mishealed bones were all likely impairments resulting from enslavement. Even free blacks were not protected from this threat due to poor free labor situations, racial violence, and the constant threat of re-enslavement or false enslavement. These issues are material facts supported by a variety of historical sources, not metaphors for the oppression slaves and free blacks faced. The disabled slave was typically considered a slave of little to no worth because they were assumed to be unable to produce (enough) labor for an owner and could not be sold on the market for a profit. The pain and trauma inflicted on black bodyminds during slavery was regular and often condoned — if not actually inflicted — by law. This social situation that allowed black people to be regularly, violently disabled or killed did not end with the Emancipation Proclamation. (Schalk, 2018, p. 44)

extrapolate how each identity category is constitutive of the other categories, rather than just an add-on (Bailey & Mobley, 2018, p. 35). With the unbalanced experience of social determinants of health and the high representation among essential workers during COVID, the historical and contemporary racism, ableism, and capitalism have shown up with a vengeance.

Through a black feminist disability framework, we can also examine racism as it constitutes sexism and ableism. Communities of color are also more likely than white people to experience disability throughout their lives (Bailey & Mobley, 2018, p. 32). Drawing from the Family Caregiver Alliance's 2016 survey of caregiver demographics, the authors observe that

Women provide most of the care for disabled people globally. More specifically, women of color disproportionately care for disabled people (Family Caregiver Alliance 2016). Black Studies and Disability Studies need to consider that Black women and other women of color do most of the labor in the service of disability despite the impact on their ability to care for themselves or their families. Caregivers are often engaged in debilitating work for disabled people and become disabled themselves (Moore 2015). The Family Caregiver Alliance notes that 40 to 70 percent of caregivers have symptoms of clinical depression, and caregivers also report worsening physical health as a result of the demands of caregiving on the body (Family Caregiver Alliance 2016). (Bailey & Mobley, 2018, p. 32)

There are several layers expressed here. The first is the disavowal of the practice of caregiving - normative society often relegates that work to women and thus it is gendered and devalued. The second is the over-reliance on Black bodies to provide that caregiving labor. The third is the distress that puts on Black bodies, families, and communities. This sexism, racism, and ableism compile onto normative expectations for labor, and the authors hope that we can reimagine labor itself if we consider liberation through "disabled Black bodies" (Bailey & Mobley, 2018, p. 34). In other words, the underlying assumption is that everyone wants to have a job and work, but this 9-5, five-day work week is unrealistic for some disabled folx, and because of discriminatory practices, it is often more difficult for Black folx (Bailey & Mobley, 2018, pp. 33-34). Accounting for caretaking responsibilities and disabled Black bodies as part of interdependent systems, then, can change the structure of society from assuming "that

everyone should work to get their needs met” (Bailey & Mobley, 2018, p. 33) into something revolutionary. It could change the way we handle national and global pandemics.

However, this merger between the Black Studies and Disability Studies is not currently a widespread practice in the U.S., and the intersections of race, class, gender, and ability merged into even more treacherous events. In 2020, the global pandemic, racism, classism, and ableism converged with coloniality. While violence against and fear of minoritized groups has been socially cultivated in the U.S. for centuries, it has also recently been augmented by 45’s naming COVID “the Chinese virus” and by several simultaneous vicious events in 2020-2021 in the U.S. (violence against Asian presenting folx, the shooting of eight Asian women in Georgia, the capitol insurrection, numerous police murdering trans/black folx, and missing/murdered Indigenous women, to name a few). Once again, these moments demonstrate the clashes of multiply marginalized identities within a white supremacist culture.

Twitter and Cancel Culture

These past five years have also been impacted by the ubiquity of social media and its use for spreading information quickly. On Twitter, culturally, we witnessed the use of hashtags, or categorization of tweets, so that if enough people discussed a topic, the ‘trending topics’ within communities were made visible to prominent media outlets, who are guilty of whitewashing reports (Hobbes & Marshall, 2021).³ Cancel culture, specifically, originated from Black users of Twitter in order to “demand greater accountability from public figures” (Merriam-Webster, 2021, “The origin of ‘cancel culture’”). Canceling someone entails breaking off support for and attention to the celebrity or well-known individual who has expressed problematic opinions or behaviors (Merriam-Webster, 2021, “What does ‘canceling’ mean today?”). Most

³ This characterization is not a valuation of technology or callouts (publicly criticizing or faulting someone); because hashtags can be used by anyone, you can find just as many critiques of power as you will find the disparaging of people’s “oversensitivity.”

notably, canceling was used by #MeToo and #BlackLivesMatter, movements begun and led by Black women. Historically, other scholars have called it “audit culture” (as cited in Magnet et al., 2014, p. 3) and blame culture (as cited in Jóhannsdóttir et al., 2021, p. 350). In the early 2010s, audit culture was a culture of examination and inspection (i.e. distrust), and blame culture was “where people who live on the margins, such as disabled people, homeless people, immigrants and asylum seekers are deemed responsible for various problems in society” (as cited in Jóhannsdóttir et al., 2021, p. 351). We can understand how precipitous this historical combination with cancel culture becomes when we add a global pandemic, stay-at-home orders that increase the use of digital media, and civil unrest.

While withholding attention from celebrities has been the most widespread form of canceling, the strategies have been applied to everyday occurrences, often with severe consequences for the people called out, like job loss and public harassment. Bouvier (2020) analyzes the way Twitter has been used to bring about social justice through callout culture. Twitter is defined as a place of emotion, affect, and nodes, driven by simple narratives and incomplete ideas (p. 2), and Bouvier (2020) makes an important contribution to this conversation. After following eight, high-profile incidents for three years, Bouvier analyzes the hashtag for Kelly Pocha, a woman who was ‘canceled’ after a video clip went viral of her drunkenly yelling at Middle Eastern men to leave Canada. These types of canceling campaigns include identifying and attacking people’s behavior, finding the offenders’ home and work, exposing other social media accounts, and mocking them through memes and traditional media stories (Bouvier, 2020, p. 1). Through coding 8000 of the tweets calling out Pocha, the researcher uncovers several ideological underpinnings about what it means to be racist, such as it being a personal trait, a personal choice, bad manners, a reveal of true self, a symptom of low education, the same as all other racism, and a symptom of entitlement (Bouvier, 2020). Bouvier (2020) reveals that there is an affective community of outrage and delight created by asserting moral high ground while also condemning/shaming the individual, decontextualizing

the person, and exoticizing the act, apart from the system that made space for this event to occur. Users who identified as anti-racists add to the performance by creating an us/I vs. them moral binary; by using aggressive language; or by mocking the person (Bouvier, 2020). Bouvier (2020) observes that “while demonizing a single individual, the feed misses the point in asking how it is that ordinary, and perhaps otherwise apparently decent people, can hold racist views” (p. 2). Obviously, this type of public pressure has resulted in action, and it has been effective for getting celebrities/influencers/cyclical abusers to listen when traditional methods of feedback--like justice systems or dominant communities--may not. But it is also important to recognize the pitfalls and consequences of this type of “accountability,” especially when it becomes internalized and the fear of being mobbed enters spaces where these conversations may be happening.

Pandemic and Equity, in the Classroom

Though all of the topics mentioned so far--COVID’s impact on 2SQTBIPOC, essential workers, disability communities, intersectional theories, and cancel culture--happened first in lockdown, they entered our “classrooms” when we transitioned to remote learning, if we had the technology to do so. In an article about feminism and pedagogies during the pandemic, Denial (2021) asserts that “switching to online instruction in the spring of 2020 was not a power-neutral act” (p. 134). The move to online learning required instructors to account for “new vulnerabilities imposed by COVID-19, [such as] spotty wifi, multiple computer users in one household, and old devices” (Denial, 2021, p. 135), in addition to food and housing insecurity, financial strain, counseling resources, choice of software, “student work schedules, care-giving responsibilities, [...] and conflicts between time zones” (Denial, 2021, p. 135). In my own experience as an educator, teaching with Zoom opened the classroom to people’s home lives; created technological barriers to education; and minimized the space for personal growth afforded by the physical classroom (surveillance from parental figures is a risk). These facts force us to

recognize the continued importance of attention to equity for student success (Denial, 2021, p. 135). Denial (2021) resolves that “To be feminist and teaching in a pandemic is to recognize that our efforts toward broadly-realized social justice cannot falter, that the actions we take for and within a classroom, online or off, are *inseparable from our larger world*” (p. 136, emphasis added). Working from home during COVID-19 revealed that there is no metaphorical space between the classroom, home life, society, and social media. The world and our actions do not cease to exist within the classroom walls as it once might have seemed. So what does this mean for us as teachers of these students? What does it mean to recognize, accept, and engage the holistic student, who may be experiencing some of these traumas personally, physically, or emotionally? How do we treat ourselves and our students with grace as we all take time to process the violent inequities COVID has brought to the forefront so they cannot be ignored? In order to understand how love can be theorized as a classroom intervention, my dissertation posits allyship and accountability as loving ways forward.

Public Definitions of Allyship

We'll begin by defining allyship through referencing folx of color, because 2SQTBIPOC are the instigators for all important cultural movements. As a note, the following resources on effective allyship have been published in popular media outlets, and because of their cultural accessibility, these sources will be referenced here. I will first discuss them in their original contexts, as tools meant to address white supremacy. Then, I will complicate them based on the current cultural moment and propose how bell hooks's vision of love can be actualized as an intervention for accountable allyship in the first-year writing classroom.

Allyship is a verb. According to Dismantle Collective, a POC group “whose goal is to name, disrupt, and dismantle white supremacy” (2019a), allyship involves listening, continuous learning, and action (2019b, para. 3). For Kendall (2003), how each person with privilege tries to be an ally varies and “has [their] own parameters, responsibilities, and degree of risk” (para. 2).

To ally with those who have less privilege “requires a great deal of self-examination on our part as well as the willingness to go against the people who share our privilege status and with whom we are expected to group ourselves” (Kendall, 2003, para. 4). This divestment puts privileged folk “at the risk of experiencing some of that oppression” (Dismantle Collective, 2019b, para. 3). Allies can take several key actions: continuously interrogating their experiences for privilege, oppression, and sharing leadership; striving to understand their comrade’s experiences; advocating internally, interpersonally, institutionally, publicly, and privately for community needs; and committing to responsibility and personal growth, even if uncomfortable, emotionally vulnerable, or mistake-ridden (Kendall, 2003). Specifically, white allies live in a way that disrupts racism and systemic violence: “A white ally acknowledges the limits of her/his/their knowledge about other people’s experiences but doesn’t use that as a reason not to think and/or act” (Dismantle Collective, 2019b, para. 4). Finally, the work of an ally is never done: “Just as a recovering alcoholic is always recovering, we will always be allies-in-training. Even though I hope to be part of the solution, as a well-intentioned WP [White Person], I must recognize that I will always be part of the problem” (Real Talk, 2017, para. 25).

And yet, despite the Collective guidelines, despite Kendall’s widely-referenced 2003 guide, and despite the 1989 publication of “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack” by Peggy McIntosh⁴ that periodically resurfaces in public conversations, allyship has remained performative. As a result, in 2017, there was a call for becoming an accomplice instead. In the keynote address for the International Writing Centers Association, Neisha-Anne Green (2018) characterizes allies as people who “quietly help and support,” while accomplices do their work through actively using words and actions, taking risks, and giving up privilege to marginalized folk (p. 29). Green gives five rules for being an accomplice: being radical rather than liberal;

⁴ In this article, McIntosh lists 26 conditions she can rely upon as a white woman that her colleagues of color cannot, like going shopping without being followed or harassed, or choosing an accommodation without fear that her race will cause maltreatment.

speaking up instead of relying on POC to do so; recognizing that having patience is a privilege; recognizing that systems of marginalization are institutional and structural; and accepting when someone calls you out (p. 31). In a retrospective, Green concludes that we must also acknowledge our privilege, let marginalized voices be heard, do the internal work, and not claim to be an accomplice (pp. 31-32).

Unfortunately, in the time of COVID and the widespread racist, classist, sexist, ableist, and environmental violences, our current cultural structures do not support the space for allyship or accompliceship. There is little room to make mistakes; to be vulnerable; experience conflicts, critiques, and contradictions; and then to be embraced in community. Instead, the reactions are being blurred into one category, rather than being treated on an individual basis: “call outs are being used not just as a necessary consequence for those wielding power to cause harm or enact abuse, but to shame and humiliate people in the wake of misunderstandings, contradictions, conflicts, and mistakes” (brown, 2020, p. 40-41), infractions on more of a gray scale. In trying to find more specific, accurate language to describe cancel culture, Hobbes and Marshall (2021) define the phenomena as “the need to force someone to repent and then to not accept their repentance” (1:15:12). We perpetuate the harm that we are trying to heal (brown, 2020, p. 58), and when we advocate for understanding, “we risk becoming the new target” (p. 56). brown (2021) observes of cancel culture that “the way we’re treating each other, is not making more people want to step in and help take on this work” (1:06:20).

Cancel culture has affected our movement leaders as well, as we have unnaturally high expectations: “If the only place we and our gender are loved is on a pedestal, and one mistake throws us off the pedestal into a pit of hell . . . well, that’s not a recipe for anything like love, or liberation” (Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2018, p. 82). Piepzna-Samarasinha (2018) describes the contradictions about leadership within the queer and trans social justice communities (content warning: suicidal ideation):

We need role models. We want to celebrate folks who are talented organizers and

artists. And we also don't know how to practice horizontal leadership. We lift people up and pedestalize them--expect them to be perfect and have all the answers. We tear them down, murder folks who look like and unlike us when we fuck up, make mistakes, aren't able to be always on call, or just politically disagree. *We don't know how to let people be both gifted and imperfect.* And when we are those people, going from being a nobody to being a movement star, well, *it doesn't leave a lot of room for complexity.* Or to feel comfortable being honest about wanting to die when so many people are looking to you for a reason to live. (p. 73, emphasis added)

So how do we let our leaders and ourselves be both gifted and imperfect? How do we leave room for complexity? For horizontal leadership? For a gray scale? For accountable allyship? Especially in the classroom, where we cannot overlook the power differentials that shape our relationships (hooks, 2010)?

Accountable allyship in the classroom is love

bell hooks's vision of love and community can be actualized as a pedagogical intervention in the first-year writing classroom during this time of mass trauma and uncertainty. Accountable allyship in the classroom is love. In her powerful book detailing new visions of love, cultural critic and the innovative bell hooks (2000) defines utilizing a love ethic as believing "that everyone has the right to be free, to live fully and well" (p. 87), and we act in love "by choosing to work with individuals we admire and respect; by committing to give our all to relationships; by embracing a global vision wherein we see our lives and our fate as *intimately connected to those of everyone else on the planet*" (pp. 87-88, emphasis added). This ethic requires us to shift our priorities:

In large and small ways, we make choices based on a belief that honesty, openness, and personal integrity need to be expressed in public and private decisions. [...] Living by a love ethic we learn to value loyalty and a commitment to sustained bonds over material advancement. While careers and making money remain important agendas, they never take precedence over valuing and nurturing human life and well-being. (hooks, 2000, p. 88)

At the center of this pedagogy is learning to accept and build relationships to counter the dominant culture: "Cultures of domination rely on the cultivation of fear as a way to ensure

obedience. [...] When we choose to love we choose to move against fear--against alienation and separation. The choice to love is a choice to connect--to find ourselves in the other” (hooks, 2000, p. 93). This decision is the process of trying to find the shared humanness within someone else, the connection we all have to one another.

What accountable allyship also means is that we are mindful of the ways that social determinants of health, capitalist inequity, sexism, racism, ableism, violence, and cancel culture are manifesting and constituting one another in the classroom. We decide the parameters, responsibilities, risks, and commitments of this work and continually act while reflecting on privilege and adjusting behavior when called in. We allow ourselves and our students to be both gifted and imperfect. Put another way, brown (2020) hopes that within these unjust systems, we will all “be on liberation paths. Not already free, but practicing freedom every day” (p. 57). As bell hooks (2003) notes in *Teaching community: A pedagogy of hope*, “Every caring teacher knows that our ideas are always in process. Unlike other professions we have the opportunity to return to our written work and make it better” (p. 91). We make space in our classrooms for both our students and ourselves because “it is necessary for people to have an opportunity to process new paradigms, new ways of thinking” (hooks, 2003, p. 194).

In prioritizing community in all aspects of our lives, it is important to note that “simply giving care does not mean we are loving” (hooks, 2000, p. 8) and that “lack of sustained love does not mean the absence of care, affection, or pleasure” (hooks, 2000, p. 9). Recognizing that they are not mutually exclusive, we must also consider that these spaces are complicated by the barrier of shame/shaming, which is both psychological and social (Jóhannsdóttir et al., 2021, p. 345). Jóhannsdóttir et al. (2021) interviewed sixteen 18-35 year old disabled folx in focus groups about their childhood, adolescence, quality of life, and “what they considered to be the most important aspect for enabling young disabled people to participate in society and enjoy life quality” (p. 345). The authors analyze select anecdotes from an ongoing study to exemplify Foucault’s theories of discipline and control as applied to disability studies. Ultimately, they

conclude that “the psychological harm of shame often alienated the young disabled informants in our study, leaving them with the feeling of being inadequate and flawed” (Jóhannsdóttir et al., 2021, p. 353), which then “shaped how they acted in the world, such as by isolating them or by stopping them from doing the things they enjoyed” (Jóhannsdóttir et al., 2021, pp. 353-354). The data demonstrates that “shame is externally imposed and then internalized” (Jóhannsdóttir et al., 2021, p. 354), and “affective practices [...] can bring to the surface the emotional impacts of oppression and marginalization of disabled people” (Jóhannsdóttir et al., 2021, p. 354). Part of accountable allyship is recognizing this barrier to connection and finding shared humanness through acting lovingly. We are acting lovingly when “we openly and honestly express care, affection, responsibility, respect, commitment, and trust” (hooks, 2000, p. 14). If we build up enough of these traits, we can replace the internalized shame with internalized care, respect, commitment, and trust.

Love--the kind of liberatory, accepting love that hooks identifies--cannot be co-opted. It cannot co-exist with harmful systems of oppression because it requires one to relinquish all forms of domination. If it does coexist with harm, then it is not true love. There are two implications for this. The first is that it provides a lens through which instructors can reflect on our privileges. We can constantly ask ourselves: how are my actions aligning with an ethic of love?

Embracing a love ethic means that we utilize all the dimensions of love--care, commitment, trust, responsibility, respect, and knowledge--in our everyday lives. We can successfully do this only by cultivating awareness. Being aware enables us to critically examine our actions to see what is needed so that we can give care, be responsible, show respect, and indicate a willingness to learn. Understanding knowledge as an essential element of love is vital. (hooks, 2000, p. 94)

The next article will take up the questions of how we teach our students to know, how we teach our teachers to know, and how we foster that awareness.

The second implication of love's inability to be co-opted is what it means when we are teaching in classrooms that are upholding larger social structures built off of the land and labor

of marginalized folk. Until some sort of cultural transformation occurs with schooling, we are still teaching within these structures. This brings new meaning to the idea of the third-space, something that is completely outside of our current educational system. It requires that we leave these structures that have been passed down and create a new space from which to observe power structures and imagine a new world. It is not a hybrid or a merging but a divestment in order to cultivate community, accountability, and loving action.⁵

This paradigm also provides a method for constructively disagreeing. A love ethic is not a 'happily ever after': "Love does not lead to an end to difficulties, it provides us with the means to cope with our difficulties in ways that enhance our growth" (hooks, 2000, p. 229). We must also remember that "being part of a loving community does not mean we will not face conflicts, betrayals, negative outcomes from positive actions, or bad things happening to good people. Love allows us to confront these negative realities in a manner that is life-affirming and life-enhancing" (hooks, 2000, p. 139). Transformatively, according to hooks (2003), the opposite of shame is respect, which affirms self-determination (p. 102).

When education as the practice of freedom is affirmed in schools and colleges we can move beyond shame to a place of recognition that is humanizing. *Shame dehumanizes*. There can be no better place than the classroom, that setting where we invite students to open their minds and think beyond all boundaries to challenge, confront, and change the hidden trauma of shame. We do this by enacting a *politics of affirmation where difference is accorded respect and all voices deemed worthy*. As teachers we can make the classroom a place where we help students come out of shame. We can allow them *to experience their vulnerability among a community of learners who will dare to hold them up should they falter or fail when triggered by past scenarios of shame--a community that will constantly give recognition and respect*. (hooks, 2003, p. 103, emphasis added)

⁵ To argue for a love ethic in the classroom is fraught with both privilege and ableism. For example, I can advocate for a love ethic because I am a graduate student who is not likely to lose a job. Also, while I may experience microaggressions based on gender, I am not likely to experience them based on race or ability. It is significantly less dangerous for me to navigate this ethic. Additionally, this choice is done from a white, able body, meaning it is inherently colonizing and given access, which can cause more harm than good.

What is life-enhancing about this description is that it uncovers the shame pedagogies that underlie the dominant structures within the classroom and replaces the paradigm with recognition of someone else's humanity and respect for their right to be in charge of their own lives (which is a major principle in Indigenous and decolonial studies as well).

Disability-positive organizations have utilized this love ethic, and we as instructors can learn from their leadership. Sins Invalid (n.d.), a disability justice based performance project, challenges what it means to be "normal" and "sexy," and instead encourages all bodies ("Our Mission," para. 1). Led by disabled POC, their vision statement focuses on collective liberation inclusive of all communities, by organizing education workshops and giving multidisciplinary performances (Sins Invalid, n.d.). By providing a supportive space for artistic works from LGBTQ+ disabled 2SQTBIPOC folx, they enact accountable allyship as love with a politic of affirmation where all voices are worthy, recognized, and respected. Similarly, disabled activist, writer, and consultant Alice Wong leads the Disability Visibility Project (n.d.), an online community for sharing narratives and connecting with other people, activists, organizations, and their work. Through the extensive use of social media, the Disability Visibility Project (n.d.) demonstrates how the participants choose connection over isolation, one of the hallmarks of accountable allyship as love. These two projects exemplify meaningful, transformative action, and we can call upon our first-year writing instructors to experiment with imagining the possibilities.

Grief

This song has a melody
 but it's so soft
 it slips from my ears.
 My tongue cannot grasp
 the lines. When I shudder
 against the cold on a warm day,
 I wonder how trees preserve
 the birds' songs, how petals

bunch into wild bouquets,
how leaves brighten as they fall,
how nature honors the dying.

Conclusion

In sum, the pandemic revealed inequitable social determinants of health as well as the inadequacy of our medical and economic systems to keep all people safe and well. Many folks also have multiply marginalized bodies who have been maltreated by cultural and historical constructions of disability and caretaking. In addition, Twitter and cancel culture have changed the way people engage in conversation about topics like racism. When all of these cultural systems came into our classrooms during remote learning, it became even more important to adopt a student-centered approach that emphasized the inseparability of culture, community, and classroom. Instructors can consciously and critically engage the whole student by recognizing the responsibilities, needs, and aspirations through acts of love, or valuing humanity above all else. Additionally, we can treat ourselves and our students with grace as we process this often-traumatic cultural moment. Even though there is little structural encouragement for nuanced allyship or accompliceship, we can make the choice to connect with others through our shared humanness, respect, and love (hooks, 2000). To be an accountable ally in the first-year writing classroom during a global pandemic means recognizing the complexity in both yourself and your students and relinquishing systems of domination.

The stakes for this individual development are high. In this time of collective and individual trauma, it is all of our responsibility to keep each other safe, to advocate for the most vulnerable, and to move with one another, as a community, through the reimagination of the present and the future (Cariaga et al., 2020).

Rhetoric of Care: A Critical Pedagogy Framework for Solidarity in the Classroom

“It’s about survival and space for all of us.”

--Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha (Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2018, p. 67)

Crisis Management Rhetoric

The language surrounding a crisis helps us understand how to respond. Through analysis of crisis management efforts at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, Branicki (2020) demonstrates how governmental and business rational crisis management reveal underlying assumptions of “temporality and boundedness” (p. 880). The crisis is framed as having “distinct phases of preparation, response, recovery and learning” and is solved by “sequential attention to goals” with people conceived as “agentic, or vulnerable” (Branicki, 2020, p. 880). This breakdown into clear categories denies the humanness of the situations and promotes individualized problem solving and vulnerability. Branicki (2020) then contrasts this dominant narrative with feminist crisis management, which reveals underlying assumptions of “crises as multiple and contextualized” (p. 880). In this narrative, crisis is framed as having “enmeshed phases of preparation, response, recovery and learning” and is solved by “ongoing attention to relationships” with people conceived as “able to give and receive care differently at different times” (Branicki, 2020, p. 880). This counter breakdown supports problem solving and vulnerability in community. In the short term, it may seem unorganized and messy to shift how the U.S. confronts crises, but these rhetorics pass quickly through society as we all try to cope long-term with the web of nonlinear crises that we are being confronted with on a daily basis. More specifically, as we have realized through 2022, COVID-19 is not something that is predictable or that has a beginning, middle, and end. And like disability, it can happen to any of us at any time.

The classroom is in the middle of all of this crisis rhetoric. And quite literally, we are risking students' lives by asking them to come to campus, to come into contact with multiple classrooms full of students who have come into contact with other classrooms full of students, regardless of whether public health protocols are followed, like social distancing or mask wearing. Through our positions as classroom leaders, instructors have unintentionally become crisis managers. And we, as instructors, can respond in multiple ways. To apply Branicki (2020), if we conceptualize this ongoing crisis system as an enmeshment of phases solved through relationships with people who are variably able to give and receive care, then we can train instructors, and thereby our students, to recognize the care capacities that undergird all of our teacher training and curriculum, so that we can process and move past barriers to cultivate truly caring and loving relationships that allow everyone to flourish in an inclusive environment, despite or even because of the outer circumstances. In this position, it is important for us to account for multiple and contextualized situations, to develop relationships with students and colleagues, and to negotiate care capabilities. My dissertation posits that a critical care pedagogy is one way that we can respond to managing attending class in a pandemic, one way that we can teach our students to respond to handling the vulnerability, and one way that allows us also to care for ourselves along the way, too.

Canonized Rhetorics of Care Work

Before exploring a black feminist love-ethic and white supremacy in the classroom, I will give a brief overview of the care work authors canonized in the field of Rhetoric and Composition. I'd like to note that I am not critiquing the authors' ideas as much as the canonization of the authors' ideas. Many authors listed here have revisited their original conceptions and have built upon the literature, so the purpose of going back through the canon mostly serves to retrace the white, able-bodied tradition that continues to be upheld in dominant publications and to reveal the way that the theorization has been co-opted by normative

academia. After a brief discussion of the canon, I will outline foundational politics in Jennifer C. Nash's 2011 article "Practicing love: Black feminism, love-politics, and post-intersectionality," Erica R. Meiners' article "Disengaging from the legacy of Lady Bountiful in teacher education classrooms," and Cheryl E. Matias's book *Feeling white: Whiteness, emotionality, and education* in order to highlight the deconstruction that needs to occur for instructors to act from a place of solidarity. Finally, I will put Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha's 2018 book *Care work: Dreaming disability justice* into conversation with bell hooks's 2003 book *Teaching community: A pedagogy of hope* in order to demonstrate that solidarity, access intimacy, and intimacy across difference can and should be learned to negotiate care capabilities as part of critical care work.

The Canon

Two works remain the touchstones for care work in the rhetoric and composition field. In 1977, Carol Gilligan published a piece in *Harvard Education Review* that in 1982 became her book *In a Different Voice: Psychological theory and women's development*, which re-wrote the moral development of binary genders, finally giving women's personalities their own space in the field of psychology. Though care work was only a small portion of the book and its connection to femininity was later critiqued and complicated further, the original conception of care work became a large portion of what the book is referenced for, across fields and throughout time. In 1984, Nel Noddings wrote *Caring: A feminine approach to ethics and moral education*. In this book, Noddings (1984) outlined a detailed philosophy of care as a moral foundation of humanity. Both of these authors are considered canon founders of care work rhetorics across myriad academic fields.

The following catalog includes the most referenced pieces from contemporary readings about care work in rhetoric and composition, with brief information about their original publication. From the field of political science, in 1991, Joan C. Tronto's piece "Reflections on

gender, morality and power: Caring and moral problems of otherness” was included in the edited collection *Gender, care and justice in feminist political theory*, edited by Selma Sevenhuijsen. Then, in 1993, Tronto contributed *Moral boundaries: A political argument for an ethic of care*, in which the author responds to Gilligan’s original work and blurs the lines between morality, care, power, and politics. In 1999, in the field of philosophy, Eva Feder Kittay published *Love’s labor: Essays on women, equality, and dependency*, which explores how political and social policies fail to support those who care for dependents. Sevenhuijsen published many important pieces in the field of political science, most notably *Citizenship and the ethics of care: Feminist considerations on justice, morality and politics* (1998) and “The place of care: The relevance of the feminist ethic of care for social policy” (2003), both re-evaluating the intersections of the moral concepts with societal shifts. In 2003, Nel Noddings published *Happiness and education*, which critiques the American school to workforce culture in favor of emotional development. Daniel Engster updates an account of moral obligations to care within the context of our current society in “Rethinking care theory: The practice of caring and the obligation to care” published in 2005, and during that same year, Virginia Held, an oft cited scholar, published *The ethics of care: Personal, political, and global*, with similar intent. Lastly, Kathleen Lynch contributed “Love labour as a distinct and non-commodifiable form of care labour” in 2007. In this article, Lynch (2007) distinguishes between three different types of concentric circles of care work as well as the features of each type of labor (p. 558).

What is revealed through these common citations is that the scholarly conversations have predominantly addressed gender, politics, morals, and ethics, which mirrors the social and political turns in the rhetoric and composition field, as well as the rise of (predominantly white) feminist counter arguments. Notably, all theorists, in their definitions of care work, mention autonomy, interdependence, relationships, trust, collaboration, acceptance, emotion management, and that none of this is taught in schools. While these insights are valid and important, they retain the ghosts of white saviorism that are preventing these moral values from

being truly integrated into school curriculums, teacher education, and the field of rhetoric and composition.

To shift the conversation, I will connect critical care work with three authors. First, I'll explore the classroom with Jennifer C. Nash, who defines a black feminist love-politics, which provide foundational principles for critical care work. Second, I'll turn to Erica R. Meiners and Cheryl E. Matias, who challenge the specters of White Lady Bountiful and white supremacy in the classroom, which are barriers to antiracism work, and thereby critical care work. In balancing these theorizations, I hope we can begin to break barriers to solidarity in the contemporary classroom and recognize care capacities.

Black Feminist Love-Politics in the Classroom

Black feminists have been imagining care work for centuries and publishing about care work since at least the 1960s, despite being largely marginalized by dominant care work theorization. In the 2011 article "Practicing love: Black feminism, love-politics, and post-intersectionality," Jennifer C. Nash historicizes womanist writers during second wave feminism to explore "how black feminist love-politics engenders new publics, new forms of relationality, even if tenuous and fleeting, marked by forms of collective sentiment rather than by identity" (14). Specifically, Nash (2011) reminds us that love-politics and intersectionality originated with black women (reference June Jordan, Alice Walker, Audre Lorde, Kimberlé Crenshaw, Patricia Hill Collins) and that the institutionalization of intersectionality and affect theory have removed the concepts from black feminism's lineage of engaging with identities and love, so that the "categories remain fixed, legible, and knowable, even as scholars attend to how context shifts our experiences of our selves and the structures of domination that constrain us" (7). Nash (2011) "reads black feminist love-politics' insistence on transcending the self and producing new forms of political communities as a kind of affective politics" (p. 3). In this context, Nash (2011) uses affective politics to mean "how bodies are organized around intensities, longings, desires,

temporalities, repulsions, curiosities, fatigues, optimism, and how these affects produce political movements (or sometimes inertias)” (p. 3), as opposed to identity politics.

Black feminist love-politics crafts a political community that eschews the wounded subject that lies at the heart of identity politics. In its place, it crafts a collectivity marked by “communal affect,” a utopian, visionary, future-oriented community held together by affiliation and “public feeling” rather than an imagined—or enforced—sameness. (Nash, 2011, pp. 18-19)

By reconceptualizing the public sphere, there is room for “multiple black feminist political traditions” (Nash, 2011, p. 13) and orientation toward a future apart from our current contexts: “they imagine a world ordered by love, by a radical embrace of difference, by a set of subjects who work on/against themselves to work for each other” (Nash, 2011, p. 18). Nash (2011) further characterizes black feminist love-politics as “reaching toward collectivities and possibilities” (p. 18). Engaging with love-politics encourages collaboration toward a future that helps everyone flourish in an inclusive environment with multiple and contextualized situations.

Exploring a black feminist love-politics in the classroom opens space for our human identities and contexts to shift and become illegible as our experiences change. They motivate us to feel and recognize our emotions and then craft community with colleagues and students based around this (shared) experience. They discard faux sameness and help us to recognize (sometimes extreme) differences between one another so that we have to work on ourselves to work both for each other and for a future in which we can all survive. As instructors, we can embrace our multiple situations and vulnerabilities and build relationships with colleagues and students by existing within this more expansive version of care work in order to deconstruct our classrooms and work from a place of solidarity.

Two Ghosts of White Supremacy in the Classroom: History and Displaced Emotion

White supremacy is the historical and emotional block that prevents this more expansive critical care work from being implemented in classrooms across the United States. The first

ghost of white supremacy that upholds systems of power in the classroom is the image of “white lady bountiful” as delineated by Erica R. Meiners. Historically--from when the Americas were being colonized in the 1800s until the prevalent gender norms of the late 1900s--white, middle-class women were used as models of civility, heteronormativity, Christianity, and morality (Meiners, 2016, pp. 87-88). Considering that in 2017-2018, white public school teachers still made up 79% of the workforce (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.), the historic representation that convinces white women to enter the field, a lineage not widely taught in teacher education courses, remains a strong force in our school systems.

The second ghostly mechanism that upholds the white supremacy of the classroom and prevents critical care work is the displacement of emotions. In a brilliant book unmasking the emotions strategically suppressed by white supremacist systems, Cheryl E. Matias (2016) helps the reader to name, confront, engage, discuss, understand, and deconstruct common emotions brought about when discussing racism (p. 63). Often, the white feelings of guilt, shame, anger, refusal, denial, sadness, dissonance, and discomfort arise as a defense mechanism to displace responsibility and uphold the false dominance of whiteness (Matias, 2016). This mechanism is a direct result of white supremacy’s embeddedness in U.S. sociocultural consciousness. In order to demonstrate how emotions can be structured by systems of power and social hierarchies, Matias (2016) describes emotions as functioning as both “nurture and nature, working simultaneously with our environment and the essence of our humanity” (p. 5). She gives an example using love:

Fortuitous is this perspective in that we need not search for love, for love is already within us. Yet, because of how our environment interacts with us, love becomes redefined, re-felt, and re-interpreted in finite ways. Take for example the desire and need to provide flowers, chocolates, and diamond rings to express a romantic love for another: this is a love redefined under the social spread of capitalism, neoliberal globalization, and strategic marketing practices. Did we not express, feel, and engage with the emotion of love before the advent of the diamond ring? Therefore, love pre-existed the newly socialized world of capitalism, yet has been redefined for the purposes of a changing environment. (Matias, 2016, p. 5)

Through deconstruction, it becomes clear that these emotions are specifically shaped and used to project responsibility for the outcomes onto something else (flowers, chocolates, diamond rings, money). It becomes the emotion in appearance only, leading to a certain passivity (as cited in Matias, 2016, p. 38). When applied to the context of white supremacy, the guilt, shame, anger, and such previously named emotions, serve a similar purpose by projecting the responsibility for alleviating the discomforting emotions onto people of color and make a barrier to cultivating an authentic emotional investment in the work of antiracism (Matias, 2016, pp. 38-39). By extension, the emotions make a barrier to solidarity in the classroom. When students are expected to do their own problem-solving and hold the responsibilities for their vulnerabilities, it becomes nearly impossible to enact care work, especially in this time of crisis.

The affective principles of black feminist love-politics and the constant deconstruction of the two ghosts of white supremacy must coexist within white instructors in order for us to teach and live by critical care work in the classroom. For both of these authors, critical care work would mean uncovering and confronting the histories that shape our inheritance and actively working against them to build authentic responses to vulnerability and problem-solving in the classroom.

Further, this caring strategy for recognizing the ghosts of white supremacy can be applied to other invisibilized power structures that negatively effect relationships in the classroom, such as sexism, classism, ableism, xenophobia, etc., that produce similar discomforting emotions. And, as Matias (2016) strongly suggests, we can take our recognition of privilege further--from the usual performance of normalization of whiteness, ignorance, and projection of angst--and start "self-interrogating whiteness," "how it can manifest individually," "why people often see Whites as racist" (p. 35) and how one "might benefit from being White" (p. 36), so we can then find out how it is impacting our pedagogies, teacher trainings, curriculums, and the relationships we are able to build with our colleagues and students. By

asking these questions, we can dismantle the obstructions and engage our communities more mindfully, humanely, and inclusively.

Finally, we turn to Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha's 2018 book *Care work: Dreaming disability justice* and bell hooks's 2003 book *Teaching community: A pedagogy of hope* to demonstrate the power of solidarity, access intimacy, and intimacy across difference to negotiate care capabilities for both instructors and students while also caring for ourselves.

Forming Intimacy Across Difference

Solidarity within disability communities is “collective noticing and collective hustle. It’s being witnessed. It’s being allowed to relax, expand, just be” (Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2018, p. 103). In a book that maps, celebrates, and encourages further writing into sustainable disability justice and community care work, Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha (2018) observes that building strong care webs means the webs are led and “controlled by the needs and desires” (p. 20) of the people they were meant to serve, with no connotation of moral superiority. No matter if disabled or non-disabled folx are involved in the communities, “they still work from a model of *solidarity not charity--of showing up for each other in mutual aid and respect*” (Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2018, p. 20, some emphasis added). In the classroom, this may take the form of a student-centered pedagogy or a targeted learning community. Both options would enable us to process and move past barriers to cultivate truly caring and loving relationships, within our current circumstances.

Though there is a unique witnessing that happens within these groups, it is important “to argue for access intimacy as a process and a learnable skill” (Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2018, p. 104). As Piepzna-Samarasinha (2018) elaborates, “We realized that even though we were all queer and trans disabled people of color, we didn't automatically know each other's access needs cross-disability. People who were physically disabled didn't automatically understand the needs of folks who were Mad, and vice versa” (p. 25). Both disabled and nondisabled folx can

“not assume and ask each other what our needs are” while also “respecting our knowledge” (Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2018, p. 104). This asking encourages those in care work to renew their commitments and center the people they are trying to serve. In these moments of cross-movement solidarity, we all are privileged to be part of love and access, a “giant paradigm shift.”

Our crip bodies aren't seen as liabilities, something that limits us and brings pity, or something to nobly transcend, 'cause I'm just like you. Our crip bodies are gifts, brilliant, fierce, skilled, valuable. Assets that teach us things that are relevant and vital to ourselves, our communities, our movements, the whole goddamn planet. (Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2018, p. 32)

The author continues that she is still arguing for disabled folx to be loved as they are, to not be forgotten, and to find those life-affirming spaces where “we refuse to abandon each other” (Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2018, p. 33). She specifically explains that “Love in action is when we strategize to create cross-disability access spaces” (Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2018, p. 33). When applied to the classroom, this can take the form of asset-based pedagogy, where every students’ knowledge and background are valued as part of the course. Plus, if access intimacy is learnable, then so is care work.

It requires a certain vulnerability and intimacy in order to acknowledge we don’t know while reaching for another. As noted cultural critic and visionary bell hooks (2003) describes in her book *Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope*, building these relationships means relinquishing “the will to dominate on the basis of race,” class, gender, ability, etc., in order to be in community, “living the truth of our essential humanness” (hooks, 2003, p. 66). Through embracing diversity, we can learn “to be critically conscious of difference without allowing difference to keep us apart” and to “face difference without fear” (hooks, 2003, pp. 80-81). We can promote “the value of moving beyond race while always respecting that race matters” (hooks, 2003, pp. 80-81). As hooks (2003) clarifies,

Once true intimacy is formed across difference it is not that we forget our differences, but they in no way insert themselves as inequalities or unjust power levers that separate us so that we stop thinking about the significance of race or gender, at least when we are

together. (p. 113)

The process can be difficult, but this is where we find hope, “as we confront differences with no need to annihilate [sic] them:”

Dominator culture has tried to keep us all afraid, to make us choose safety instead of risk, sameness instead of diversity. *Moving through that fear, finding out what connects us, revelling in our differences; this is the process that brings us closer, that gives us a world of shared values, of meaningful community.*” (hooks, 2003, p. 197, emphasis added)

When we show up in solidarity and respect, ready to learn others’ needs without it becoming a barrier and an origin of unjust fear, we can honestly assess our care capabilities for ourselves and what we can give to others. This self-knowledge requires us to change the way we relate to one another: if “Every citizen in a dominator culture has been socialized to believe that domination is the foundation of all human relations” (hooks, 2003, p. 75), then by changing the relationships, we are eroding the foundation. hooks (2003) affirms that “we must be willing to share with anyone knowledge about how to make the transition from a dominator model to a partnership model. If we want change, we must be willing to teach” (pp. 75-76). So here we are.

Stipulations for Consideration

I do want to add a few stipulations for consideration in care work. The first stipulation to consider is that community is not always an immediate solution and collective care is not the only way forward:

I think about the many people I know and love who have a really hard time receiving care because "care" has always been conditional, or violent--the invasion of social workers or Child Protective Services or psychiatrists with the power to lock you up. I think about the need for care that can be accessed when you're isolated, disliked, and without social capital--which many disabled people are. I think about how power dynamics and abuse can creep into the most well-meaning care collectives of friends, and of my friends who need twelve to fifteen hours of care a day, which is difficult to impossible for most unpaid friends to provide. (Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2018, p. 55)

The suspicion and power relations we observe on a large scale are also possible in care work,

interpersonal relationships, and the classroom; this is something all of our authors caution readers to stay vigilant against.

The second stipulation to consider is that not all communities are cohesive. Community transformation activist adrienne maree brown advocates for a world where “we have to be able to form communities that are comfortable holding those who have done harm and form communities that are comfortable and able to meet the needs of the survivor” (brown, 2021, 1:04:45-1:04:57). It is a common misconception that we suddenly have to become unified to be in community, but it is possible for multiple realities to exist, even especially in the inclusive classroom. In the writing classroom, it can be easy to feel overwhelmed when there is one instructor for 19-25 students. How can one person possibly meet the needs of that many people while maintaining your own boundaries? Realistically, it’s not possible to please everyone, especially when you have your own needs to think of as well, pandemic or not.

The third stipulation to consider is that defining interdependency can be tricky:

How do we handle the realities of our bodies and minds that need what they need when they need it? What does it mean when I can’t support you in the ways you’re supporting me? Does interdependency mean we do the same for one another at all times, as though there’s even such a thing as “the same” when it comes to this stuff? Is it a gentle ebb and flow? What if my ebb will never match your flow? What if it’s sometimes a torrential downpour and one of us is drowning? What do we do then? (as cited in Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2018, p. 25)

We all need to consider our personal care capabilities at any given time. In sum, while it’s important to stay positive, it is also important to be practical about what it takes to engage in successful critical care work.

Critical Care Work: The Reimagined Classroom

When instructors become crisis managers in ongoing worldwide traumas, I believe that we should respond interpersonally by developing a praxis of critical care work that strives toward barrier-free access and solidarity in the classroom and surrounding communities. In this

paper, I interpret inclusion as “barrier-free access,” when people’s physical, mental, social, historical, familial, cultural, and future selves are welcomed, represented, valued, and cared for in the classroom, and solidarity is an ongoing commitment to that. By upholding the black feminist tradition of love-politics and destroying white supremacist power structures, we can respond to shifts in identities and affect by forming community while acknowledging how history and emotions are used as tools of domination. We can deconstruct displaced emotions and learn solidarity, respect, access intimacy, and intimacy across difference to negotiate our care capabilities. We can critically care for all of us.

Designing Love and Care in the Classroom

Design and Equity

The two theories I will engage with in this chapter are those of design and equity. First, in the award winning open access book *Design justice: Community-led practices to build the worlds we need*, Sasha Costanza-Chock explores the relationship between design, power, and social justice as demonstrated by collaborations between designers, social movements, and community-based organizations. As part of the introduction, in defining the terms and theories that inform design justice, Costanza-Chock (2020) provides many definitions of the word ‘design.’ Quoting from the Oxford English Dictionary, the author asserts that design can be “a plan or scheme conceived in the mind and intended for subsequent execution” (Costanza-Chock, 2020, “[Design Justice: Defining Key Terms](#)”). Though this is admittedly a limited conception of design and the author does acknowledge that design is multitudinous, this definition reminds us that design originates in our minds, that it has a specific form, and that it is meant to take some shape in the real world, which means it will likely have consequences. Another presented definition that is also helpful to consider is that “we deliberate, plan and scheme in ways which prefigure our actions and makings ... we design our world, while our world acts back on us and designs us” (as cited in Costanza-Chock, 2020, “[Design Justice: Defining Key Terms](#)”). While there are internalized mechanisms that influence what we design, our external world also influences our internalized mechanisms.

Further, at the Creative Reaction Lab, they believe that anything designed can be re-designed. In the *Equity-Centered Community Design Field Guide* (2018), while meant to provide practical resources and activities for anyone in underserved communities to take action toward an equity-centered future, the authors’ definitional work provides important insight into design justice. They define human equity as “when outcomes are no longer predicted by any aspect of an individual’s identity” (p. 11). When considering the dynamic interaction between our minds,

our plans, the consequences, and our identities, there are many points of analysis in the process of designing a course at the university level, specifically engaging with design elements that exist at multiple levels and scales, like teaching persona, pedagogy, syllabi, course policies, course materials, curriculum, and assessment. In applying this design justice and equity theory to the first-year-writing classroom, my query throughout this article is how do we equitably design love and care through our curriculum? Through this article, I do this by first thinking of ourselves as designs to be analyzed and redesigned and then by examining how we can hold destruction of whiteness and space for equity.

How Whiteness Designs Us; How We Design Whiteness

Using similar language to design and equity, Cheryl E. Matias (2016) analyzes the emotionalities of whiteness in the context of educating teachers. In discussing the psychological impacts of whiteness, Matias (2016) explores what happens when a person tries to release white identity, namely that it becomes clear how whiteness informs peoples' core values (p. 99). Matias (2016) clarifies "that under a racist system, just as Blacks have to redefine their 'otherness' in juxtaposition to Whites, Whites too must define who they are by demeaning, degrading, inferiorizing, and justifying the belittlement of Others" (p. 102). In my experience, the latter half of the sentence usually goes unarticulated. The difference in this system, Matias (2016) asserts, is that whites receive favorable experiences for their behavior while people of color receive unfavorable experiences for making their way through the system (p. 102). Once white people are able to articulate the system that informs their core values, then "Whites escaping whiteness ponder whether they were ever humane? Knowing that exertion of whiteness demoralizes people of Color, a White person realizing his/her complicity in whiteness feels guilty, ashamed, betrayed" (Matias, 2016, p. 111). At this level, we can observe how whiteness originates in our minds (core values) in a specific form (belittlement) with real consequences (favorable or unfavorable experiences or emotions). This can be a very

fragmented foundation from which to navigate building a curriculum and teaching persona. By extension, the outcomes are very closely aligned with aspects of individuals' identities, making the space inequitable, according to the Creative Reaction Lab definition. Perhaps, though, this analysis of the internal and external mechanisms can also make us aware of the power systems that are working in and around our classrooms, departments, and universities.

Offering Equity or White Supremacy?

Articulating this redesign is incredibly important. While attending a teacher education panel, Matias (2016) asks the predominantly white female teachers, whose specializations were culturally responsive and social justice pedagogies, "How do you model your own deconstruction of whiteness to White teacher candidates" (p. 181)? None of them were able to give an answer to this question. As Matias (2016) argues throughout the book,

it is one thing to become aware that one is white and acknowledge the privileges afforded to such a racial marker, but it is another thing to understand the self so intimately as to realize one's own complicity in whiteness and why one needs to reject whiteness in order to fully participate in racial justice, and to continually engage in that discomfort. (p. 183)

The vital dilemma is what critical race theorist Derrick Bell calls interest convergence, which is only possible if white people "understand the context of their own actions, emotions, and discourses that pained--and pains--people of Color" (Matias, 2016, p. 184). In "binding Whites' racial repression of whiteness to the racial liberation of people of Color" (Matias, 2016, p. 184), everyone has a stake in the work. What follows is my attempt to address my own complicity in whiteness.

Something I recently wanted to do was provide healing in my classroom. It was a deep longing that came after I realized I was afraid I would never be able to provide a safe space for my students of color because of my skin color. This urge also appeared when I felt helpless after the racial unrest of 2020. Or, before that, when I felt the need to empower students. Or,

before that, the need to help students become self-advocates. But once again, I had to realize that I cannot make people heal or empower or advocate for themselves; for me, these yearnings are the specter of White Lady Bountiful that reappears, covers, and upholds feelings of white supremacy. They are a barrier to relationships that I might develop because they assume others will assume I am racist because I am white, thereby displacing the responsibility onto others, instead of me taking the emotional responsibility as a white person. I am preventing these relationships.

Instead, I need to both understand and process the context of my emotions while also moving forward into solidarity with colleagues. The key word for me, as a white person, to avoid triggering the ghost of white supremacy, is space. It is knowing that my emotional and intellectual space is coming from a context of historical complicity in white supremacy before I knew its name and holding as much care and respect for students' and colleagues' identities and experiences as possible. Because all of us are human and deserve nothing less. It is that easy and that hard.

Design Through Wholeness Pedagogy

Cultural critic and visionary bell hooks has charted one such pathway to a curriculum designed with justice, equity, love, and care that allows us to hold destruction of whiteness and space for equity. In *Teaching critical thinking: Practical wisdom*, hooks (2010) gives many concrete strategies for interacting with students in an open, dialogic, and trusting way. In a chapter about engaged pedagogy, hooks (2010) describes the shared task of creating a learning community, where integrity is established in all participants, including the instructor, through courageous sharing of thoughts:

The root meaning of the word "integrity" is wholeness. Hence, engaged pedagogy makes the classroom a place where wholeness is welcomed and students can be honest, even radically open. They can name their fears, voice their resistance to thinking, speak out, and they can also fully celebrate the moments where everything clicks and collective learning is taking place. Whenever genuine learning is happening

the conditions for self-actualization are in place, even when that is not a goal of our teaching process. (p. 21)

By moving past fear or shame to exchange ideas, all participants are able to move toward wholeness. This pedagogy also celebrates learning as a non-linear process and allows for different capabilities and literacies. It accounts for active listening, pausing before speaking, and those who don't speak often but who have something significant to say (hooks, 2010, p. 22). When we consider accessible and inclusive pedagogies in the classroom, this philosophy opens a space for designing a just and equitable learning community. However, there are three considerations to keep this system working in the classroom: trust, power shifts, and self-esteem.

First, this learning community relies heavily upon a system of trust that requires much dedication and upkeep by all parties, a dialogue that “emphasizes considering and reconsidering one’s position, strategies, and values” (hooks, 2010, p. 38). This trust is “constantly re-enforced by the actions we are willing to take both to own the importance of our bond and to protect it” (hooks, 2010, p. 39). In terms of the classroom, hooks (2010) frames it as follows:

Instead of focusing on the commonly held assumption that we are safe when everyone agrees, when everyone has an equal time to speak, if we rather think of safety as *knowing how to cope in situations of risk*, then we open up the possibility that we can be safe even in situations where there is disagreement and even conflict. (p. 87, emphasis added)

hooks (2010) further defines trust as “having confidence in one’s own and another person’s ability to take care, to be mindful of one another’s well-being” (p. 87). Combining the interpersonal definition of trust as a constant reconsideration of one’s position reinforced by actions and willingness to protect that bond, with the classroom definition of trust as knowing how to cope in situations of risk by being mindful of one another’s well-being, gives a solid foundation for designing love and care in the classroom.

Second, the learning community depends on the instructor redistributing power in an

honest way. Of course, instructors cannot fully remove the hierarchy imposed by the university system; at the end of the semester, someone will need to input grades, unless the entire university structure has undergone a radical shift. So as hooks (2010) adeptly states, “We must be willing to acknowledge the hierarchy that is a real fact of our different status, while at the same time showing that difference in status need not lead to domination or any abuse of our power” (p. 114). In my classroom, this takes the form of ungrading, where we determine grading measurements as a class and then students grade themselves through detailed reflective writing, giving a justification for their evaluation. Additionally, we celebrate what has been accomplished, rather than what hasn’t, which tends to be emphasized in traditional and sometimes even contract grading systems. From overall grade determinations to the smallest assignment assessments, we’re able to determine, as a group, what we find valuable and attainable. This invitation for involvement is another way to design love and care throughout the curriculum.

Finally, the learning community depends on an instructor’s ability to address self-esteem in the classroom. Rather than “feeling good about oneself” (p. 121), hooks (2010) expands that self-esteem is confidence (as cited on p. 122). Then, through dehumanization, disrespect, and shaming throughout the educational career, self-esteem is attacked and defending oneself becomes a barrier to learning (hooks, 2010, p. 123). For the instructor, to re-design this self-esteem means bringing attention to student strengths and helping students “recognize their responsibility and accountability for the grade they receive” (hooks, 2010, p. 125). Again, by developing that teaching persona and combining it with the assessment systems, we can design a classroom that bolsters love and care.

Conclusion: Holding All at Once

By becoming aware of the internalized and externalized mechanisms that operate through design and equity, teachers and teacher educators can begin to recognize the

interlocking systems of domination working throughout our teaching persona, pedagogy, syllabi, course policies, course materials, curriculum, and assessment. We can begin to know ourselves in a way that allows us to continually engage in rehumanization of ourselves and the relationships we are able to build with our students and colleagues. In recognizing and working to destroy white supremacy in ourselves, we can then strive toward wholeness in our pedagogy and classrooms, which thrives on integrity and the radical sharing of ideas. This system relies upon trust and protecting that trust, honest redistribution of power, and addressing self-esteem, and with all of these elements, we can purposefully design equity, love, and care throughout our classroom.

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