

2023

Building Sustainable Antiracist Coalition: Developing a Research Team for Studying Diverse Language and Literacy Practices at the University

Nicole L.G. Varty

Wayne State University, ngvarty@wayne.edu

Adrienne Jankens

Wayne State University, dx1044@wayne.edu

Linda Jimenez

Wayne State University, af8225@wayne.edu

Anna Lindner

Wayne State University, anna.lindner@wayne.edu

Mariel Krupansky

Wayne State University, mariel.krupansky@wayne.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/lajm>



Part of the [Language and Literacy Education Commons](#), [Rhetoric and Composition Commons](#), and the [Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Varty, Nicole L.G.; Jankens, Adrienne; Jimenez, Linda; Lindner, Anna; and Krupansky, Mariel (2023) "Building Sustainable Antiracist Coalition: Developing a Research Team for Studying Diverse Language and Literacy Practices at the University," *Language Arts Journal of Michigan*: Vol. 38: Iss. 1, Article 9. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.9707/2168-149X.2353>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks@GVSU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Language Arts Journal of Michigan by an authorized editor of ScholarWorks@GVSU. For more information, please contact scholarworks@gvsu.edu.

Building Sustainable Antiracist Coalition: Developing a Research Team for Studying Diverse Language and Literacy Practices at the University

Cover Page Footnote

We are grateful to our whole antiracist research coalition for continuous thoughtful collaboration and support.

Building Sustainable Antiracist Coalition: Developing a Research Team for Studying Diverse Language and Literacy Practices at the University

NICOLE GUINOT VARTY, ADRIENNE JANKENS, LINDA JIMENEZ, ANNA LINDNER, MARIEL KRUPSANSKY

Recent years have presented K-16 teachers with immanent challenges—an international pandemic, school shootings, and the murders of Black people by police—and teachers have risen to meet those challenges with thoughtfulness, creativity, and hope (Bickmore et al., 2020; Spinner et al., 2021; Young, 2020). There have also been persistent rhetorical challenges which required different, more subtle problem-solving strategies, such as how teachers are represented (or misrepresented) in media, often as a monolith, or scapegoats, as martyrs or heroes (Jones and Kessler, 2020; Thomas, 2021; Rhames, 2012). The need for critical reform and social *justicing* (Gere et al., 2021) within institutions and our classrooms has become acute, and many have taken up, or continued the work (Keirnan, Meier, & Wang, 2020; Warnke & Higgins, 2019). The energy and motivation required to stay engaged—let alone persist—in social justice work, has remained substantial (Eaton & Warner, 2021). How can we engage meaningfully, sustainably, in antiracist work amid all these challenges?

Jones, Gonzales, and Haas (2021) assert in *WPA Journal* that we must not be fooled by the seeming “quick fix” of reading a couple books or attending a lecture. Nor should we remain ignorant of the decades of antiracist and pro-Black scholarship that has identified and contended with issues of equity. Rather, they present a heuristic for building social justice initiatives within writing studies. As other writers have illustrated, we must begin where we are, in our community, with ourselves in the humble posture of learners. Only then can our work take on its own momentum, like ripples in a pond, working change in ever-widening circles of influence (Fleischer et al., 2014). Building on the existing foundation of scholarship, reading current voices in the conversation, and thinking carefully about our local context, as well as our own needs as teacher-scholars, led us to develop a research coalition at our urban research university. In this essay, we introduce several members of our research coalition, the

Antiracist Language and Literacy Practices (ALLP) group, to explain how the affective and interpersonal dimensions of transitioning from reading group into research coalition have shaped the initial phases of our research.

In response to calls across our disciplines to engage meaningfully in social justice work, equitable learning environments, and inclusive teaching practices (Dewsbury & Brame, 2019; Perez-Felkner, Gast, & Ovink, 2022; Young, 2021), our group coalesced around an imperative to begin “recognizing injustices, systems of oppression, and our own complicities in them” (Walton et al., 2019). For over two years, we have met to read, discuss, work through data collection and writing, and collaboratively engage in antiracist work as local agents of change (Fleischer et al., 2014). The group has committed to sharing the labor of this work, as we acknowledge this is a long-game and the work is ongoing (Gere et al., 2021). We are scholars with a wide variety of experiences from three programs (Communication, Composition, and Learning Design and Technology), including tenure track faculty, teaching faculty, graduate instructors, and doctoral candidates. At time of publication, our coalition consists of nine members, four of whom identify as white women, one as a Black (Gullah) woman, one as a Black woman, one as Latina, one as an Arab woman, and one as a white non-binary person. Five members of our coalition came together to author this article; four of us identify as white women, one as Latina. As Jones, Gonzales, and Haas (2021) suggested, we have recruited stakeholders across ranks and departments, and have worked to develop a mission and structure that are “pro-Black and intersectional...centering Black experiences and perspectives” (Jones, Gonzales & Haas, 2021, p. 30), in our reading, discussions, research and professional development interventions. Following Jones (2020) we have made part of our mission to “develop justice-oriented interventions to address intersectional oppressions” (p. 517). To achieve this goal, we took up Jones’ call to engage in coalitional learning together, focusing on “the across” and “the between and in-

between of our academic disciplines” (p. 519), attuning our discussions and collaboration to “issues of power, privilege and positionality,” (p. 519) and focusing on establishing iterative processes for doing the work of coalitional learning that are sustainable for the long term, which means that our work has changed and outputs have adapted as the needs of the group have changed (Jones, Gonzales & Haas, 2021, p. 33). From this posture of coalitional learning, we developed a research trajectory to help us study our own local context in Detroit, designing small research studies to begin gathering data and to keep learning more about ways we can work toward linguistic justice in our institution (Jones, Gonzales & Haas, 2021, Baker-Bell, 2020). Our aim is to engage in grounded research practices to study our institutional context, to gather data on the ways writing is taught and how that teaching is experienced by our students, in order to more strategically work toward infrastructural change (Gere et al., 2021).

Our research has focused on questions regarding student and instructor attitudes about language and their experiences teaching and learning in writing-intensive (WI) classrooms. In Winter 2021, we created two pilot studies that included surveys of WI instructors and students, interviews with instructors, and focus group sessions with students. The participant pool in WI courses roughly reflected the overall diversity of our campus, where, in Fall 2022, 10.8% of faculty and 14.8% of students identified as Black or African American (“Diversity Dashboard,” 2022). Ultimately, 1 of our 5 instructor participants and 2 of 12 student focus group participants identified as Black or African American. Instruments for these methods were revised and implemented again in Fall 2021 and Winter 2022.

Despite limitations, like the necessity of holding interviews and focus groups on Zoom, and the challenge of recruiting participants in an already overburdened time during the COVID-19 pandemic (Roberts, Pavlakis, & Richards, 2021; Howlett, 2022), the studies have provided us with contextual and methodological lessons. We have learned, for example, of the ways that WI instructors both value the influence of students’ backgrounds on the conversational space and maintain an expectation of “standard” academic English for writing assignments. We have also learned that while students are aware of the ways and reasons they adapt their language for social and academic contexts, they do not talk about these adaptations the same ways that teachers (and researchers) do. This reminder has been especially evident in the work of coding interview and focus group transcripts, where the terms we are keen to apply to our analysis because of our scholarly investments (terms like White Mainstream

English, whiteness, linguistic diversity/justice, and code meshing) bump up against the complicated ways research participants describe their work in writing classrooms and dispositions toward language. These studies have given us insights for developing both teaching workshops to support linguistic diversity in WI classrooms and further research that engages students, instructors, and members of our research team in structured discussions such that we learn together how to talk about language, race, and linguistic diversity.

We present our collective work as a research coalition evolving—figuring out what it looks like to engage reflectively and reflexively in this work, build it sustainably, and let it transform our institution and ourselves (Jones, Gonzales & Haas, 2021). As we describe how we have built this relational coalition, dedicated to learning together, our goal is not to focus on any individual research study—we have written about these elsewhere. Our goal here is to present a narrative account of coalitional learning, a dynamic, transdisciplinary process that has taken us, not just through a collaborative research trajectory, but through the building of relationships that we will lean on to continue doing antiracist work at our school, into future research projects and professional development interventions. In doing so, we aim to provide an example of what it looks like when one small group of like-minded scholars from one institution takes up Jones, Gonzales, and Haas’ important questions for embarking on any antiracist action: *“What expertise do I/we actually have in doing antiracist work? What expertise do we need in order to address the anti-Blackness that has been present in our program...from the start?”*

Naming the Problem, Inviting Collaboration, Introducing Coalition

For Nicole, a white woman teaching in the Composition Program, whose scholarship has focused on writing ecologies and assessment, her answer to the above question was that her existing expertise was minimal, at best. At the urban R1 where we teach, the Humanities Center funds working groups, providing resources to read around and discuss various issues of relevance to the humanities. In Summer 2020, in response to racial uprisings around the murders of Eric Garner, Michael Brown, Tamir Rice, Walter Scott, Alton Sterling, Philando Castile, Stephon Clark, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd, Nicole began discussions with two colleagues to find ways to shoulder responsibility, to read and educate ourselves. She recounted:

As we talked, we focused on the tenuous nature of online communications with students, seen through a lens of antiracist pedagogy...we were interested in learning more about how to enact such pedagogies,

but how could we proceed strategically in light of an international pandemic that had pushed every class we collectively taught online? What were the implications of linguistic diversity in an environment where students' primary means of communication with teachers is through writing in digital environments?

The first step for our small group of composition faculty was to gather tenure-track and non-tenure track colleagues, as well as graduate students, in the College of Education and the Communication Department, based on our aligned research interests in antiracist and equitable pedagogy. Together, we applied for, and won, a small Humanities Center working group grant. At the time, we did not realize that we were stepping onto a path of inquiry that would lead us to study our institution and the ways writing is taught there, to develop survey and interview protocols and ultimately gain IRB approval to talk with WI instructors and students about their experiences with racialized language. And we did not realize that we were intuiting Jones, Gonzales, and Haas' (2021) advice to build a coalition.

The first book we read and discussed as a working group was Baker-Bell's (2020) *Linguistic Justice: Black Language, Literacy, Identity, and Pedagogy*, which we chose not only because of Baker-Bell's demonstration of instructional frameworks but also because of the location of her study, in Detroit. Learning more about the connections between race and language demonstrated how we, teachers of written language, had been, as Baker-Bell (2020) stated, "missing the mark as far as examining language-based discrimination from an intersectional standpoint" (p. 16). This drove home the importance of learning more, as many of our students embody intersectional identities. This meant beginning to design studies while keeping in mind, as Baker-Bell continued, that "failing to theorize about language through the lens of race also contributes to us missing opportunities to critique, expand, and improve our theories of language and language pedagogies, which oftentimes perpetuate linguistic racism and uphold white linguistic supremacy" (2020, p. 16).

As we engaged in this formative reading and discussion, Nicole found herself talking more and more about what she was learning. She reflected:

When speaking with someone from outside the academy about this work I was not prepared for the intensity of incredulity and resistance that came in response. I've since had a few more conversations like this, with (white) folks who balk at my statement that white supremacy is perpetuated in our current

educational system (Baker-Bell, 2020, p. 5). I related to the group, "It's not like we're coming for their guns or anything...we are not coming for the English language! Can we just acknowledge that white supremacy exists? Can we just acknowledge that educational institutions, like all institutions, are built on and thrive within a hegemonic and unjust system??"

At times, the answer seems to be we cannot. Yet. It was not enough for us to form a reading group and pat ourselves on the back. There was so much more work to do. We began to design methods to study the attitudes toward and awareness of linguistic diversity in WI courses on our campus. We chose to look specifically at WI courses, because they are taught across multiple departments, not "housed" in any one of our representative programs. In our meetings, we discussed implementing surveys and interviews of instructors, to begin the conversation. Members of the coalition pointed out that if we wanted to include stakeholders in a meaningful way, we needed to include students among our participants as well. We planned to survey students and facilitate focus groups, to both see whether and how students might take up common ideas and experiences, and also to make the data gathering efficient and accessible for students and researchers alike. The COVID-19 pandemic and the online-only conditions it created were key limitations as we designed the study. We had to consider not only what we wanted to know, but how to conduct our inquiry in ways that would reach participants and be sustainable for us in terms of labor. We worked together throughout the summer and fall semester of 2020 to design our first pilot studies to implement during the winter semester of 2021.

Naming the Benefits of Sustainable Coalition

As we continued our interdisciplinary collaboration and prepared to implement data collection, we learned our blended scholarship, individual experiences, and instructional diversity were our strengths. Linda brought her expertise in instructional design (CAST, 2018), learning sciences, and e-learning development to the team, and she resonated with the 4Rs framework outlined in Walton, Moore, and Jones's (2019) *Technical Communication After the Social Justice Turn*. The 4Rs (representation, relationship, responsibility, and resistance) informed the core values of equity, inclusivity and change written into our group's guiding framework/values statement, though our particular word choices reflected our intention to distill the 4Rs into terms already in circulation

at our university, already resonating with administrators and other key stakeholders.

Our coalition meetings thus developed into comprehensive discussions of our investigations and alignment with university initiatives, reflexive assessments, and reviews of interdisciplinary literature. Many faculty and instructors worked remotely and had little to no involvement with the larger strategic priorities on our campus – mainly the rapidly expanding diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives. The pandemic accelerated the adoption of technology and enhanced instructional design on our campus that can potentially create additional barriers to DEI teaching practices. Access to technology, remote instruction, and online learning were challenging for students and instructors, and initially the team aimed to create an action plan on our campus to address barriers to learning and instruction, allowing us to implement, in essence, antiracist language practices by design.

This journey revealed that while we had many more commonalities in our respective disciplines than we intentionally speculated, a jump from reading to action plan skipped over important gaps between institutional initiatives and stakeholder awareness and buy-in. Even as we articulated our core values, it was important to be reminded that despite our best intentions, we as faculty and instructors participate in the intersection of a variety of inequities and injustices at our institution. In the dialogue presented by Garcia, Hutchinson Campos, García de Müeller, and Cedillo (2021), Hutchinson Campos highlights, “Even faculty members supposedly trained in antiracist mentorship and teaching aren’t always the best at identifying how racism gets enacted in their programs,” (Garcia et al., 2021, pp. 66-67). We needed more expertise to support our work if we wanted to truly enact change in our institution. One of our next steps was to apply for internal funding from the Office of the Vice President of Research, in order to sustain the labor involved in revising our studies and continue reading and analyzing the data gathered in the pilot studies.

Part of the OVRP grant required us to demonstrate the “potential of the project to enhance graduate programs, undergraduate research, and institutional reputation,” (“Internal Funding,” 2020), which helped us to clarify for ourselves what we wanted our work to accomplish. Along with goals for publication, we developed substantial goals for professional development at our university. This led us to invite Dr. Natasha Jones (2022) from Michigan State University to share her work on coalitional learning (2020) with instructors

across departments. Dr. Jones was instrumental in helping our team identify easy and hard steps of the coalition-building progression. During her presentation, she emphasized the importance of building community and recognizing our fellow humanity while seeking justice. With the insight provided by Dr. Jones, we were able to identify not only the benefits and potential challenges of coalition-building, but also the importance of prioritizing equity, inclusivity, and change in our research agenda.

With Dr. Jones's recommendations in mind, we continued our analysis of the interviews and focus groups we had been conducting with instructors and students. We had wanted to model change by implementing antiracist teaching and learning best practices within our own instruction and interventions for other faculty. But this modeling, we realized, would need to begin with revised research, not interventions. We needed to assess how instructors perceived linguistic diversity and writing instruction, so that our conversations with stakeholders outside of our coalition could be just as collaborative and collegial as those we were having within.

Naming Whiteness, Moving Toward Research

When Mariel began teaching first-year writing, she reflected on Bartholomae's (1986) foundational article “Inventing the University”:

I do agree with Bartholomae that discourses are often mysterious, even to those who work within them with some success. It seems that initiation into a discourse happens in indirect ways, where students stumble through an indirect explanation of what is expected of them, and they do not learn the rules of the discourse explicitly. Then, the system continues, and the way that the discourse works remains mysterious, as those who work within it know its implied rules because of experience, and find it difficult to initiate others into the discourse because that would require them to name explicit rules that were never fully explained to them.

This reflection was based on her own experiences in higher education, where she stumbled through writing and learning in different contexts, but managed to do so with relative success. While Mariel certainly felt the need for guidance in these situations, she was always able to muddle through in some mixture of prior knowledge and trial and error. Now, she is able to attribute this relative success to, at least in part, the fact that her literacy and language practices were similar

to the “academic language” required at the university. As an instructor, Mariel began to question how she could hold in tension traditional views of first-year writing courses as “academic discourse initiation” alongside her personal goals of affirming students’ existing language practices.

In working with the ALLP, Mariel came to recognize this tension as part of the struggle to recognize and name whiteness and white habitus at the university (Inoue, 2015). Whiteness is something that is often the implicit “given” in many institutions of higher learning, and her own struggle to accommodate “academic discourse initiation” as something necessary for student success while being largely unable to define the boundaries of “academic discourse” is evidence of the insidiousness of white language hegemony. And to fight something so insidious requires negotiating the complexities of a systemic problem—like pulling a thread from a tangled knot of yarn—and is a process not pleasant to work through alone.

The next iterations of our studies aimed to get at this tension through interviews with WI instructors around student language use in the classroom and their own practices for teaching writing. One of the prevailing concepts that has stuck with Mariel throughout the process of implementing the revised ALLP studies is that linguistic racism is tied to, as Flores and Rosa (2015) argued, “*raciolinguistic ideologies* that conflate certain racialized bodies with linguistic deficiency unrelated to any objective linguistic practices” (p. 150). In other words, judgments about language practices can be – and often are – overshadowed by the perceiving subject’s internalized biases: “...the white listening subject often continues to hear linguistic markedness and deviancy regardless of how well language-minoritized students model themselves as the white speaking subject” (Flores & Rosa, 2015, p. 152). However, when whiteness is named and interrogated rather than covered up by euphemistic terms such as “academic English” and “standard English,” it is often revealed to be the unnamed center, the standard by which all others are measured at a deficit. For example, while “diversity” is a buzzword in many organizational settings, the term often stands in for anything that contrasts whiteness. It is defined by the negative (non-white), with whiteness as the (oft-unnamed) standard measure. This became an analytical frame for the “dual mission” we were hearing instructors describing in interviews, and for student confidence in the “diversity” of our institution described in focus groups, seemingly without awareness of pervasive white supremacist language ideologies baked into their academic experiences. Recognizing this, Mariel has started to conclude that finding, naming, and

promoting diversity is not the issue at hand. Rather, it is perhaps finding, naming, and interrogating whiteness within social and institutional structures. When scholars and instructors find, name, and interrogate whiteness, only then does critique of white hegemony become possible.

Naming Language and Literacy Practices

Anna was motivated to join this team out of a desire to integrate scholarly knowledge with her activist convictions, aware that reading and writing about these issues without taking action would be absurd. She jumped at the opportunity to become involved in a project confronting the white supremacist structuring of academia and the ways those norms infect all aspects of our teaching and learning. She reflected:

This team has provided the missing piece for me: through our readings, I’ve discovered that in some ways, linguistics is the “last frontier” in antiracist work. Cognitively, I understand that everything is undergirded by white supremacy, but testimony by Baker-Bell (2020) and Inoue (2021) about being racialized instructors who were unwittingly furthering white supremacy in their classroom practices, because it’s what they were taught and all they know, made everything come full-circle for me. Simultaneously, I struggle to put these ideas into practice as a Graduate Teaching Assistant leading my own classes. I continue to be deeply bothered by what I perceive to be “bad” grammar, and have to stop myself from compulsively correcting students’ writing.

Anna reflected on ways that our team’s struggles with terminology serve as a metaphor for the slipperiness of not only language, but also research and its relationship with real-world problems. What do we call the language we’ve been taught is “best,” “correct,” “clear,” etc.? Standard edited mainstream academic white supremacist American English? And what about other Englishes that have historically been at best, discouraged, and at worst, criminalized and punished? Racialized, Minoritized, Historically Marginalized Englishes? How do we simultaneously acknowledge the historic discrimination against these Englishes, along with the widely unacknowledged fact that these dialects, including Black English, have their own comprehensive, logical grammatical systems in a single term? We began from a social constructivist framework, in the spring and summer of 2021, to apply direct content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) to our transcripts. These questions remained at the back of our minds as we read through the interview transcripts and survey responses from

our study. As we thematically organized the data, we realized that participants largely avoided addressing these tensions, and the vast majority, both instructors and students, opted to use Standard Edited Academic English. This troubled our coding process. Many of our meetings were spent in discussion around how to name the literacy practices and language awareness (or lack thereof) we were seeing in the data, and discussion about how to do so while maintaining our pro-Black focus and mission.

Anna reflected that maybe the best solution is that long string of adjectives to capture this complexity, along with acknowledging the fact that standard American English is not actually as standard as the powers-that-be, who exercise linguistic hegemony through social institutions, would have us believe (Young, 2010). This helped Anna keep this all in perspective as the grammar-correcting monster threatened to rise up when she read her students' work. This difficulty of naming our object of study was reflected not just in our individual approaches to reading student writing, but also as we worked through results of our pilot study, and saw many interviewees expressed similar difficulties in framing their pedagogy. Working to consistently define and redefine for ourselves what we mean when we say certain words, became integral to not just antiracist approaches to pedagogy, but to ongoing research and even the long-term health of the group itself.

Sustaining the Work through Reflective Practice

Adrienne's work with the team was urged on by one sentence from the introduction of Baker-Bell's (2020) *Linguistic Justice*: "There really is not a legit reason why any teacher in the State of Michigan should walk out of a teacher education program unaware and ill-prepared to address Black Language in their classroom, but here we are!" (p. 4). After twenty years of teaching high school and college writing classes, Adrienne reflected that, as a licensed 6-12 teacher in Michigan, she was not "unaware" of Black Language, but had not spent time *studying* Black Language since one semester in her undergraduate coursework when she read Smitherman's (2000) *Talkin' That Talk* for a research project in a class on the history of the English language. She was definitely "ill-prepared" to support the graduate students she works with in teaching practicum courses with how to address Black Language in their classrooms; she was (and still is) certainly in need of ongoing reflection work to understand how our classrooms are imbued with the habits of white language (Inoue, 2021), and how she could address that in her own

classroom ecologies in Detroit. She conducted research in her composition practicum to support graduate instructors on integrating scholarship critical language awareness and linguistic diversity into their composition courses.

Mindful that reflective practice (and other aspects of antiracism in higher education) cannot be treated like checkboxes, like Garcia et al. (2021) pointed out in their discussion on mentoring for BIPOC scholars, Adrienne worked to turn reflection into manageable action. Coordinating action in these initial years of coalition-building has especially involved bringing our reading to our research analysis, holding weekly conversations with the team and with Adrienne's graduate students about linguistic justice, centering Black perspectives in her course syllabi and writing work, and coordinating the work of the team through a research project with planned phases and grant funding. This coalitional work has continued to develop online, and we have built trusting relationships with each other for overcoming the challenges of qualitative research, project administration, and the other parts of life that are ever-present. Because our team's work continues via bi-weekly Zoom meetings, and team members have taken up adjacent work related to our group's mission (i.e. participating in teaching circles, facilitating teaching workshops, writing grants, developing curricula, etc.), these meetings have been essential to sustaining our research inquiries through to impactful ends. Through our collaborative reflection—on our reading, on our research, on our institutional actions, and on our goals—we reiteratively coordinate our learning, taking new steps forward each month. This iterative reflective practice has led us through collaborative (re)readings of interview and focus group transcripts and revisions of the design of survey items and interview protocols to work toward a shared vocabulary for talking about languaging at our university. We are beginning to know more about the spaces in our university's writing courses where students may be most attuned to what instructors have to say about language practices.

Conclusion

The antiracist research work undertaken by our coalition—from the process of designing studies through synthesizing results to strategies for how best to make sustainable changes—includes understanding the attitudes and experiences of instructors across disciplines who teach writing in their classes. In our local context, we are mindful that our work with antiracist language and literacy practices has a real impact not only on Black students, but also on the Arab-American, Indian, Bangladeshi, and Latino/a students

who attend our university and bring rich linguistic resources and knowledge to our classrooms. Like Jones, Gonzales, and Haas (2021) are careful to say, emphasizing the research and scholarship of Black women on this work over several decades, “it’s arrogant, at best, and violent, at worst, to assume we can prepare our programs and organizations to engage in antiracist work in a few short days or weeks or even months” (p. 31). No, the work requires deep research and reading and reflection and ultimately, time.

So this is a moment for us to look back and reflect on what we have only begun to do and what we still need to do. We turn to Jones, Gonzales, and Haas’s (2021) requirements for antiracist work in writing studies as a set of benchmarks by which to assess what we have done so far and what we hope to do next in developing our work, resisting mere performativity and pushing into (pro-Black) action and sustainability.

In our first years as a research coalition, we have set forth a vision that matches with these tenets, developing work and practice that is coalitional, reflective, and reflexive. In our writing work, we must continue to be intentionally “pro-Black and intersectional” and to “grapple with power dynamics” (Jones, Gonzales, & Haas, 2021, p. 33). And we must continue our research with faculty and students, mindful of whose labor is implicated in the work, making sure the work is sustainable and transformative, and not merely additive (p. 33). This work can only be accomplished with a team. It can only be built through each member consistently deciding to show up. It can only be maintained through collaborative inquiry that starts where we are, grapples with what we don’t yet know, and moves forward as each member has capacity to move us forward. At times, the steps feel so small, the research participants so thin on the ground, the glaring hegemonic oppression so overwhelming, that we almost despair of making any headway. But move forward, we do, together.

References

- Baker-Bell, A. (2020). *Linguistic justice: Black language, literacy, identity, and pedagogy*. NCTE.
- Bartholomae, D. (1986). Inventing the university. *Journal of Basic Writing*, 5(1), (pp. 4-23).
- Bickmore, S., Rumohr, G., Shaffer, S., and Sluiter, K. (2020). Empowering English teachers to contend with gun violence: A COVID-19 conference cancellation story. *Language Arts Journal of Michigan*, 35(2), (pp. 8-20).
- CAST (2018). Universal Design for Learning Guidelines version 2.2. Retrieved from <http://udlguidelines.cast.org>
- Dewsbury, B., & Brame, C. J. (2019). Inclusive teaching. *CBE—Life Sciences Education*, 18(2), fe2. doi:10.1187/cbe.19-01-0021
- Diversity Dashboard*. (2022, November 16). Wayne State University. Retrieved February 8, 2023 from <https://irda.wayne.edu/dashboard/diversity>
- Eaton, A., & Warner, L. R. (2021). Social justice burnout: Engaging in self-care while doing diversity work. In M. E. Kite, K. A. Case, & W. R. Williams (Eds.), *Navigating difficult moments in teaching diversity and social justice* (pp. 31–43).
- Fleischer, C., Daniel, E., Eddy, L., Gedeon, K., DeYoung Kander, J., Kanga, D., & Guinot Varty, N. (2014). Teacher researchers as local agents of change: Exploding the myth of the bad teacher. *Language Arts Journal of Michigan*, 29(2), (pp. 41-46).
- Flores, N., & Rosa, J. (2015). Undoing appropriateness: Raciolinguistic ideologies and language diversity in education. *Harvard Educational Review*, 85(2), 149-71, (pp. 300-301).
- Garcia, C., Hutchinson Campos, L., García de Müller, G., & Cedillo, C. V. (2021). ‘It’s not you. You belong here.’: A Latinx conversation on mentorship and belonging in the academy. *Composition Studies*, 49(2), (pp. 53-69).
- Gere, A. R., Curzan, A., Hammond, J. W., Hughes, S., Li, R., Moos, A., ... & Zanders, C. J. (2021). Communal justicing: Writing assessment, disciplinary infrastructure, and the case for critical language awareness. *College Composition and Communication*, 72(3), (pp. 384-412).
- Howlett, M. (2022). Looking at the ‘field’ through a Zoom lens: Methodological reflections on conducting online research during a global pandemic. *Qualitative Research*, 22(3), (pp. 387-402).
- Hsieh, H. F., & Shannon, S. E. (2005). Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qualitative Health Research*, 15(9), 1277-1288.
- Inoue, A. B. (2015). *Antiracist writing assessment ecologies: Teaching and writing for a socially just future*. The WAC Clearinghouse.
- Inoue, A. B. (2021). *Above the well: An antiracist literacy argument from a boy of color*. University Press of Colorado.
- Jones, A. L., & Kessler, M. A. (2020, November). Teachers’ emotion and identity work during a pandemic. In *Frontiers in Education* (Vol. 5, p. 583775). Frontiers Media SA. doi: 10.3389/educ.2020.583775
- Jones, N. (2020). Coalitional learning in the contact zones: Inclusion and narrative inquiry in technical

communication and composition studies. *College English*, 82(5), 515-526.

Jones, N. (2022, February 25). *Black feminism, coalitional-learning, and taking action in writing programs* [Webinar]. Wayne State University, Detroit, MI.

Jones, N., Gonzales, L., & Haas, A.M. (2021). So you think you're ready to build new social justice initiatives?: Intentional and coalitional pro-Black programmatic and organizational leadership in writing studies. *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, 44(3), 29-34. http://wpacouncil.org/aws/CWPA/asset_manager/get_file/604389?ver=2

Kiernan, J., Meier, J., & Wang, X. (2020, June). Promoting linguistic equity through translanguaging, transcultural, and transmodal pedagogies. *Composition Forum*, 44. Association of Teachers of Advanced Composition. <http://compositionforum.com/issue/44/msu.php>

Perez-Felkner, L., Gast, M. J., & Ovink, S. M. (2022). Liberating our writing: Critical narratives and systemic changes in education and the social sciences. *Multicultural Perspectives*, 24(3), (pp. 162-169).

Rhames, M. (2012, June 20). Teachers: Heroes, victims, or somewhere in between? *Education Week*. <https://www.edweek.org/leadership/opinion-teachers-heroes-victims-or-somewhere-in-between/2012/06>

Roberts, J. K., Pavlakakis, A. E., & Richards, M. P. (2021). It's more complicated than it seems: Virtual qualitative research in the COVID-19 era. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 20, 16094069211002959.

Smitherman, G. (2000). *Talkin that talk: Language, culture, and education in African America*. Routledge.

Spinner, E.; Sommer, E.; Limlamai, N. C.; Roseboro, A. J.; Lesky, L.; Stein, K.; Kreinbring, R.; and Esman, S. (2021). From critical self-reflection to cultivating equitable literacy classrooms: Educators creating PD as they move forward with hope. *Language Arts Journal of Michigan*, 37(1), (pp. 48-54).

Thomas, L. (2021, December 6). Teachers (and students) can only take so much. *Edutopia*. <https://www.edutopia.org/article/teachers-and-students-can-only-take-so-much?fbclid=IwAR3OcWQ0qXxxTaupBofyw6XRQ3xovhsyVQofb-6vLMgzFUReVMrjzZL5p7c>

Walton, R., Moore, K. R., & Jones, N. N. (2019). *Technical communication after the social justice turn: Building coalitions for action*. Routledge.

Warnke, A., & Higgins, K. (2019). A critical time for reform: Empowering interventions in a precarious landscape. *Best*

of the Journals in Rhetoric and Composition 2019, 45(4), (pp. 185-213).

Young, V. A. (2010). Should writers use they own English? *Iowa Journal of Cultural Studies* 12(1), (pp. 110-17).

Young, V. A. (2020). Black lives matter in academic spaces: Three lessons for critical literacy. *Journal of College Reading and Learning*, 50(1), (pp. 5-18).

Young, V. A. (2021). 2020 CCCC Chair's Address. *College Composition and Communication*, 72(4), (pp. 623-639).



Dr. Nicole Guinot Varty is an Associate Professor of Teaching for the Composition Program in the English Department. Her scholarship encompasses ecological models of writing development, assessment, learning communities, and first-year writing.



Dr. Adrienne Jankens is an Assistant Professor in the English Department at Wayne State University. Her research centers on reflective writing, first-year writing, teacher development, and writing program administration.



Dr. Linda Jimenez is an Associate Professor of Teaching in the Learning Design and Technology program at Wayne State University. She has over 20 years of teaching experience in higher education. Her research interests include universal design for learning, interactive technology applications, and inclusive design pedagogy.



Mariel Krupansky, a Ph.D. Candidate in the English Department, researches across multiple areas including Writing Studies, Writing Assessment, Technical and Professional Communication, and the Rhetoric of Health and Medicine.



Anna E. Lindner is a critical/cultural media historian. Her dissertation applies discourse analysis to Spanish colonial letters, official reports, and news publications about African rebellion in nineteenth-century Cuba. Her other research interests include racialization and linguistics, intersectional feminisms, queer studies, and racial justice activism.