The Sandbox

VOLUME I • ISSUE I

The Sandbox

Short Papers, Big Ideas on Literacies & Learning

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All articles are available in text and audio at CommunityLiteraciesCollaboratory.com

On the Power and Play of Literacy, or Welcome to The Sandbox

Eric Darnell Pritchard

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Dear Readers,

I both can and cannot believe you are reading the inaugural issue of The Sandbox: Short Papers, Big Ideas on Literacy and Learning, the official scholarly and pedagogical publication of the Community Literacies Collaboratory (CLC), the signature program of the Brown Chair in English Literacy at the University of Arkansas. I say can believe because the three contributors to our very first issue, and Team CLC, has been at work on the various steps that led to this issue for more than a year. I say cannot believe because this all began as part of an idea scribbled in a notebook where I was only dreaming about what a publication associated with a community-accountable literacies advocacy organization might be and do. From that scribble in a notebook, to all the minds, hearts, and efforts made to create what you are now reading, every single step and person involved has led to this momentous occasion where we finally get to share this vision with you.

During my childhood summers, my family and I would go to Jones Beach on the southern coast of Long Island, New York and enjoy all the sun, water, and breezes the Atlantic Ocean had to offer. A favorite pastime of mine, my siblings, and cousins was to dig into the rich, moist sand and use it to make model castles, houses, cars, animals, and flowers right there on the beach. Often our parents and grandparents would join us in our play. With each object we made we were making a world that reflected our individual dreams but contributing to a collective vision too. Eventually, as the sun began to say farewell for the day, we would leave the world we made by sand to be washed into the earth from which we created it, until the next time. When summer went away, our play with the sand did not always end. Some of the city's public parks had sandboxes: large squares in playgrounds filled with sandboxes where the young (and the young at heart!) engage in a joyful practice of communal imagination and manifestation.

We named the CLC's publication The Sandbox because we see the work of community literacies research, advocacy, and pedagogy as practices of community, wonder, and possibility one found in every sandbox.

The Sandbox invites community literacies workers to write thought provoking, accessible, but brief essays, policy memos, or reports on a timely issue within literacy learning and practice. The publication's purpose—that's the "short papers, big ideas" part—is for the works featured to provide nuanced insight into a salient issue for general audiences, creating a resource for people to use in efforts to shape literacy learning, development, and practice for the better and across a wide range of contexts.

The articles featured in this inaugural issue speak to a wide range of urgent issues in literacy learning and practice—and the practice of being human and present in the face of all life, such as disability justice, the literacy learning and practice of nontraditional

In our digital and print copies of The Sandbox, we strive to make the work accessible in all senses of the word, including those called for by numerous activists and scholars of disability justice. The essays we publish must be between 800-1500 words, while policy memos and reports are between 1-5 pages. All contributions undergo an editorial process of anonymous peer-review, and once accepted, authors engage in a collaborative process of revising the work toward publication and are engaged at each stage including copyediting, proofreading, visual image selection. Unlike most scholarly publications, we can provide an honorarium for all writers whose work is selected for publication in The Sandbox at a rate that is competitive with freelance writing for mainstream publications such as The New York Times and Washington Post. In future issues, we hope to feature reports from some of the various community partners with whom the Brown Chair and CLC have had the pleasure of collaborating from multiple literacy councils across Arkansas, to literacy educators, advocates, and researchers with projects all over the country including Ames, Iowa, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Tallahassee, Florida, and Fort Worth Texas. We hope that you will read our call for contributors to the next issue and consider **submitting a proposal** for an essay, policy memo, or report for publication consideration.

Interested in Submitting to the Sandbox?

The Sandbox is a critical part of the purpose and work of the CLC which, in the months leading to and after our launch on May 6, 2022, facilitates and supports a variety of literacy partnerships in Arkansas and nationally, ranging from scholarly research and educational and policy initiatives to community programming centered on various aspects of empowerment and advocacy. The three parts of CLC's name speaks to a vital part of the full essence of the CLC and its work. By 'community' we seek to grow and nurture literacy within communities in Arkansas and beyond, while honoring that literacy and community are vital to and constitutive of one another. With 'literacies,' we refer to the practices of meaning-making that include but are not limited to traditional modes of literacy: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Literacies are inherent to every measure of self and communal expression, from what we read and

write to the clothes we wear, the histories we archive, and the diversity of languages we honor and embrace across communities. Lastly, 'collaboratory' characterizes the incubator in which we invite, sponsor, and sustain collaborative community literacies work among various literacies stakeholders who, though not always collocated, are no less mutually invested in the transformative power of literacies.

Through the principled ethics of justice, imagination, community accountability, and love, the CLC creates and support partnerships and programs in four key areas: research, education, advocacy, empowerment. As with The Sandbox, the CLC invites all literacy stakeholders—advocates, educators, librarians, researchers, policymakers, and creatives—to dream projects that will help all people practice literacies more fluently, richly, productively, and joyfully. Such partnerships include supporting scholarly research with clear statewide, national, and international literacy and education policy outcomes that can positively impact literacy learning and practice in schools or adult literacy programs, through to smaller programs that focus on literacy development within small gatherings of readers and writers, to literacy learning and practice in applied trades and crafts such as farming, sewing, painting, theater, and photography.

We anticipate that the articles published here will inspire all who read them to pursue their own deep thinking, tenacious visioning, and collaboration on topics related to the contents of the articles we feature and however they speak to the work of literacy learning and practice in your life and work wherever that work takes place, such as your home, classrooms, community organizations, libraries, religious and spiritual spaces, work, or virtually, and through writing, reading, speaking, listening, or any number of applied and artistic trades and crafts.

Before sending us off to read and engage the works in this issue, I wish to thank the CLC's graduate assistants—my right and left hands—Jackie Chicalese and Jami Padgett, with special thanks to Jami who designed the entire layout for both the digital and print versions of this inaugural issue. My thanks also to the Advisory Board of the CLC which consists of faculty in higher education, librarians, and authors, who have committed to the vision of the CLC and work diligently to help us manifest it every day. You can learn more about each of them on our website. In addition, I wish to thank the University of Arkansas College of Arts and Sciences, with special thanks to Kim Gillow and Kristen Young in the Office of Major Gifts and Grants, for their generosity and many efforts to make the CLC and the work of the Office of the Brown Chair in English Literacy a success. Last, but certainly not least, thank you to the Brown Chair in English Literacy—an

endowment created jointly with a very generous donation from the Brown Foundation and the Walton Family Gift which funds the CLC.

Now, I get to finally say: welcome to The Sandbox. We are so glad you have chosen to read these articles that have been so intentionally, enthusiastically, and imaginatively created for you. We hope it will be of great use to you in your literacy work and everyday life. We also hope that you too will someday join us as a contributor to The Sandbox, sharing with us all your big ideas and short papers on literacy and learning.

With the love of literacy and learning,

Eric Darnell Pritchard, PhD
Founding Director, Community Literacies Collaboratory
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Associate Professor of English
University of Arkansas
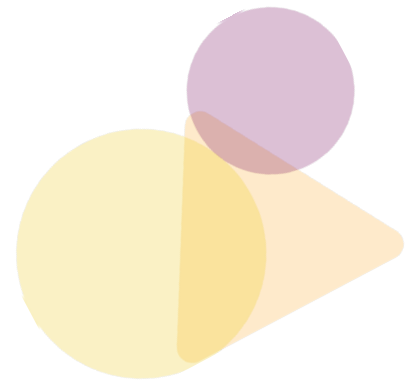
Eric Darnell Pritchard

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More than Accessibility: A Call for Disability Literacy

Ada Hubrig

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X PROFILE

@ADAHUBRIG

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A few observations from community-engaged literacy and activism work as a disabled person that may echo your own experiences in attempting to foster inclusive community:

- At a recent rally for reproductive rights in Texas, as the state legislature worked to criminalize abortion access, rally organizers planned a march (that was not advertised as part of the protest) from a college campus to a city square. While the event was advertised as "accessible," and organizers did an excellent job requiring masking and other COVID19 protocols, the route planned could not be traversed by wheelchair, taking steps and curbs and steep inclines. As the group started to march, they did not notice when they left a young activist in her wheelchair behind.

- In a digital space meant to be a discussion of neurodivergent characters in print media, a Black autistic person shared her experiences, stating that she felt there were so few representations of people like her, and where they did exist she felt they were mostly ignored both by white neurodivergent people and Black neurotypical people. A few posters responded by saying they weren't talking about race—with claims like "that isn't what this space is for"—garnering more attention than the Black autistic poster's initial post. The Black autistic person left the chat.

- At a meeting for a community-academic partnership program, the directors responded to a request from a disabled community member, who had asked for Alt-Text for images that were being circulated on the group's social media pages. A scholar began to make jokes with the director of a nonprofit org: "yeah, because I'm sure so many blind people use Instagram!" When it was explained to them, in the meeting, that many blind people do, in fact, use Instagram and other social media platforms and that Alt-Text also helps other people engage, too, the allotted meeting time had ended without any plan to resolve the issue of a lack of Alt-Text on images.

In each of these scenarios (and many similar ones), I read a lack of what I call *disability literacy*: in short, how nondisabled and disabled people read disability. Disability literacy tends to how we collectively and individually read and understand disabilities, our relationships to disabilities, and how disabled people engage with communities. I offer disability literacy as an inroad to reshape conversations around disability in community advocacy work.

Disability Literacy

how nondisabled and disabled people read disability

One aspect of disability literacy is conversations about access. In each of these scenarios, disabled people aren't just being kept out of spaces, events, or activities: it's always about more than just the one event. I need nondisabled community organizers and advocates to understand that if you are creating inaccessible spaces, you are keeping us out of your

community. How many times should disabled people be expected to show up, seeking to engage and find community, only to find that we were an afterthought—or simply not considered at all?

And, as the Black neurodivergent person's experience illustrates, access isn't just about disability: disability literacy means also attending to how disability overlaps with other lived experiences, relating to race, class, gender, sexuality, and many other life experiences.

I continue to learn to do this myself, from **disability justice**, an anti-oppressive framework created and lead by "disabled people of color and queer and gender nonconforming disabled people" (*Skin, Tooth, & Bone 18.*) At the center of disability justice is an understanding of how systems of oppression interlock and are interwoven. As Shadya Kafai writes about the creation of "crip-centric liberated zones," "Everyone must engage in the difficult, tangled, and often repetitive process of unlearning the systems of oppression that they bring with them" (*64*). Those doing the work of community organizing must engage with disability *in its wholeness and complexity*—not just *white, cishet* disability. A space that is accessible to only *white or cishet or affluent* disabled people isn't an accessible space. A space where white, cishet, or otherwise privileged perspectives are the only ones given space is also not an accessible space.

But disability literacy goes *beyond* access, recognizing that inaccessible events is a *symptom* of ableism and interlocking systems of oppression and not the *cause*. Don't misread me and think that the point of disability literacy is you should involve

community. How many times should disabled people be expected to show up, seeking to engage and find community, only to find that we were an afterthought—or simply not considered at all?

And, as the Black neurodivergent person's experience illustrates, access isn't just about disability: disability literacy means also attending to how disability overlaps with other lived

disabled people because it's nice. Too often, disabled people encounter situations where someone expects us to be eternally grateful, to smile and give their event some imaginary disabled seal of approval, because they made some gesture toward access. This is part of what I call "favor access," that acts as if respecting disabled needs is a huge favor, **an act of charity instead of an act of solidarity,** understanding that the discrimination we face is interwoven. As Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarsinha has argued in conversation with Stacey Milbern, access isn't enough: access is only the first step, and disabled people "are more than our access needs" (Milbern, qtd in Piepzna-Samarasinha 129.) Disability literacy means questioning why you had access and someone else didn't in the first place; it means questioning the structures that frequently cast disabled people as an afterthought.

Those structures are ingrained deep and push us out of community. Writing about how social structures and government policies routinely failed people during the ongoing COVID19 pandemic, disabled activist Alice Wong writes, "I want to believe that the future is not just mine but ours. When one of us falls through the cracks, we all suffer and lose something" (270). Wong describes the collective brilliance of disabled people and especially disabled queer people and disabled people of color, who have devised their own ways to survive, their own networks, their own cultures and communities. Disability literacy isn't just about access—it's about understanding the creative, ingenious literacies disabled people have developed to survive in systems that at *best* fail to support us and at worst are actively causing us harm. Disability literacy recognizes *entire systems of knowledge* disabled people have developed to navigate an ableist world and create community.

Importantly, I ask you to engage in this work *ethically*. Don't rip off disabled people's work or movements or turn them into a more convenient-for-your-agenda, palatable, milquetoast version that suits nondisabled people's needs. I see this happen again and again (and think a lot about **how I can continue to learn from these frameworks and write alongside them** without stealing from or not crediting their work), especially by academics or heavily-resourced organizations who, because they are doing disabled people some form of "favor access," then feel entitled to use whatever resources created by disabled people—and especially multiply marginalized people— without crediting their work. Or groups ask disabled people for their intellectual, organizing, and access labor without being willing to compensate or otherwise recognize that labor. Or disabled folks are asked to neatly package our traumas for

public consumption to further their organization's mission, all while watering down the work of disabled organizers and activists. Disability literacy means not just understanding *what* disabled people are saying and organizing for, but understanding the nuances and contexts of *why and how* we say these things.

I don't know, kind reader, where you are at in your disability literacy journey—I'm still growing myself—but below I offer some resources that mean a lot to me.

RESOURCES

Disability Visibility Project, created by Alice Wong, which includes podcasts, essays, and other resources.

Disability Visibility: First-Person Stories from the Twenty-First Century, edited by Alice Wong. Vintage Books, 2020.

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Ada Hubrig

Ada Hubrig (they/them) is probably off somewhere fighting some ableist institution and/or trying to provide care for other disabled people. They are a genderqueer, disabled/chronically ill, autistic caretaker of cats, who works as an assistant professor of English as their day job. Their scholarship centers on the overlap between disability and queer/trans theory and has appeared in several academic journals. Their words have also found homes in Disability Visibility Project and other blogs/journals. Raised in rural North Dakota, they currently reside in Texas with their partner, cats, and pollinator garden. Find them on Twitter @AdaHubrig.

Stepping Outside the (Straight) Box: Queering Literacy in the First Year Writing Classroom

Molly Ryan

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On a late Summer evening in 2022, I finalized the syllabus for my first year writing class: roiling with both blind terror as a new graduate instructor of record, and inquisitive enthusiasm as a budding scholar so passionate about this work. I didn't know what the path forward held—in fact, envisioning myself at the front of a classroom of twenty undergraduates felt impossibly surreal.

In my graduate work, I'd focused on how the first year writing classroom could become a place of resonant belonging for students. I wanted not only to learn the theoretical foundations of critical pedagogues like bell hooks, Paulo Freire, Henry Giroux, and Carmen Kynard, but to actually practice my own tentative, green pedagogy with commitment to the same values. This meant dousing my fears of what could go "wrong." I had to fully embrace walking into the room with humble, empathetic kindness and hope my students were willing to meet me in that mutual space.

It also meant I needed to reconcile my classroom identity with my personal identity.

When I returned to graduate school after a five-year hiatus working in Student Affairs—to the very same department I'd attended as an undergraduate, no less—I found myself confronted with the very real, very unsettling question of how exactly I was going to portray my own queerness. As an undergraduate, I was completely closeted. With little representation of my identity in my coursework, department faculty, or even in my university landscape at large, I divorced my sexuality from my scholarship. My queerness occupied an "underlife," as described by Robert Brooke,[1] a role that extended beyond the norm of my day to day, that lived outside of my life as a student. I wanted to build a classroom where my students were not only accepted, but encouraged, and allowed, to be their full selves—something I never had.

As I built my assignments and my syllabus, I spent a significant amount of time considering how I wanted to approach the first project in our curriculum: the literacy narrative. I'm glad that our writing program sponsors this option from the outset. First, it introduces students to positioning themselves within their writing, articulating their own experiences inside an academic context that they may be unfamiliar with. Second, it emphasizes consciousness and critical recollection, as well as memory work as method. Third, and this is the essence of this piece: it invites, subtly—even tacitly—students to explore literacy, and ultimately their identity, as something lived, something embraced.

For me, this prompt also invited an unexpected through-road—I saw an opportunity to situate this project as something queered, something generously "anti-," something othered from standard literacy praxis. In other words, my first instinct was to take an approach beyond the genre conventions of learning to read and write. Literacy, queered.

Within this thread, the idea of the anti-literacy narrative was naturally curious for me. The longer I theorized my approach, the possibility only grew more prevalent in my mind. This was perhaps due to my own position in a liminal space of personal and professional identity, but more saliently, the anti-literacy narrative—to me—brought metaphorical queerness to the prompt. I felt very "anti" myself—not in that I was

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[1] Robert Brooke, "Underlife and Writing Instruction," College Composition and Communication 38, no. 2 (1987): 141–53, https://doi.org/10.2307/357715.

I was inherently against literacy or teaching or the field, in that sense I was all in. But as a queer, unseasoned graduate instructor, there were pieces of me that stood out in anterior contrast to my department, my college, and to my institution at large. Even my desire to teach among my cohort was culturally other.

I wrestled with how to frame this connection, however. I knew what I was seeing and what I was feeling, but I couldn't easily articulate how exactly I wanted to introduce it to students. To formulate an anterior approach felt risky. What if I couldn't support students in this way, or what if I unintentionally asked them to engage with trauma or harm in an unwelcome manner?

As I debated in offering the choice to students, I recalled how, in my university's Theory and Practice of University Writing Instruction course—where we complete the assignments we later ask our students to do ourselves—I was paralyzed by writing about my own literacy. In that course, we explored what it means to define literacy and all the possibilities therein: in scholarly interpretations, in writing across the curriculum (WAC) contexts, even in work from students themselves. Still, despite my extensive English training, despite my intimate relationship with literacy, I couldn't define it for myself. All I could think throughout the writing process was that I did not fit into the traditional contexts in which literacy is taught or defined. I struggled to the point of pain.

I realized, in completing the assignment myself, my tension and friction with defining literacy was stemming from my own lack of literacy in my identity. I was literate in my undergraduate persona. I knew the academically strong student, with a grasp of how to write and read for a grade. But I was illiterate in my fledgling graduate, and instructor, persona. I was unfamiliar with the queer, passionate, pedagogically invested apprentice who wanted her research to make a real difference in the lives of students.

This personal revelation pulled me closer to the anti-literacy narrative. While I did not intend, in my inaugural go at teaching, to center my identity explicitly—it wasn't in

my pedagogical plan to say "I'm a lesbian" to my students on the first day of class—in the spirit of Paulo Freire's critical consciousness or conscientização,[2] I wondered if approaching the literacy narrative, and the anti-literacy narrative, from a queered angle might allow students to discover a nuanced, evolved sense of literacy for themselves, as I had. Calling back to Robert Brooke, I wanted to open the possibility for students, should they choose to, to explore their literacy beyond their established "student" identity.[3] To do so, I needed to step outside the box.

Approaches to queering the composition classroom illustrate the significant possibilities, and fluidities, of how this positionality can manifest: Jonathan Alexander indicates how students might find empowerment in their own identities,[4] and Connie Monson and Jaqueline Rhodes argue that "…disrupting regimes of subjectivity and sexuality such that of first-year composition is a critical endeavor, a 'literacy' that lies at the very heart of queer composition."[5] While I did not choose to position the literacy narrative as overtly queer, I instead embraced the queer theoretical thread of otherness, of literacy beyond the conventions of traditional reading and writing.

In the assignment, I asked students to consider what literacy meant to them. Yes, they were welcome to write about their reading and writing—but I invited them to think beyond those bounds, to think about the literacies of who they were. Their hobbies, their passions, their curiosities, all were welcome avenues ready for them to take up.

To offer the anti-literacy narrative, I expressed within the assignment that students could, should they choose to, write about literacy as something hard and difficult. They might explore literacy as something painful, something complex, something fraught. By opening the possibility of an anti-literacy narrative, I hoped to attend to, or make space for, some of the significant trauma and damage that literacy can carry.[6] This decision to offer an anti-literacy narrative further reflected my own sometimes charged, sometimes uncomfortable moments in my literacy of becoming: my queerness, my scholarly identity, my teacher identity. And, in the spirit of true

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[2] Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, (New York: Continuum, 1970), 36.
[3] Brooke, "Underlife," p. 153.
[4] Jonathan Alexander and Michelle Gibson, "Queer Composition(s): Queer Theory in the Writing Classroom," JAC 24, no. 1 (2004): p.1, http://www.jstor.org/stable/20866610.
[5] Connie Monson and Jacqueline Rhodes, "Risking Queer: Pedagogy, Performativity, and Desire in Writing Classrooms," JAC 24, no. 1 (2004): p. 79–80, http://www.jstor.org/stable/20866613.
[6] Elizabeth Dutro, The Vulnerable Heart of Literacy: Centering Trauma as Powerful Pedagogy, (New York: Teachers College Press, 2019).

queering, I placed the option on offer without assertion, without requirement. Students had the option to choose what felt true to them.

We discussed the options in class. I lectured on how rhetorics of literacy can be expansive and rangy, and we did activities to approach literacy from all angles: tied to literacy sponsor[7] experiences, tied to past experiences, tied to their daily experiences—and throughout, I emphasized that allowing their feelings to come forth to the surface was welcomed and encouraged.

To be very clear: I did not know if this would work. I suspected I was just as likely, if not moreso, to get twenty projects on writing and reading, and I was absolutely okay with that. What I wanted was for students to have a choice. I wanted to step out of their way as the instructor, to lay the typical tight-knit college writing prompt to rest, and let them approach this onset project in a way that was honoring of their identity in this moment, that might be tentative, unsure, or imperfect. Because I used a contract-based grading[8] approach, I hoped students would feel comfortable taking a risk, writing beyond their normal conventions, and exploring something new, because I'd made an effort to lower possible fears about a poor grade.

What resulted from this choice was exhilarating beyond measure.

My students produced work on every topic from the literacy of adulthood to literacy of family recipes, to literacy of moving from another country, to the literacy of mathematical analytics, to the literacy of swimming and baseball. They incorporated multimodality, using photos of mentors, meaningful places, even their original artwork. So, too, they

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[7] Deborah Brandt, "Sponsors of Literacy," College Composition and Communication 49, no. 2 (1998): 165–85, https://doi.org/10.2307/358929.

[8] Asao B. Inoue, Labor-Based Grading Contracts: Building Equity and Inclusion in the Compassion-York: Teachers College Press, 2019).

explored literacies lost. Passions damaged, literacies taken and stolen, moments that were difficult and harrowing.

My students were brave. They made bold moves in grammar and punctuation and word choice (with my encouragement.) They honored their native languages. They departed from conventional stylistic convention to compose in vignettes and dialogue and tactile narrative. They brought forward moments and emotions from childhood to adulthood. They treated this project as a cleansing, transformative opportunity to address their feelings. They courageously examined the intricacies of their relationship—the good and the difficult—to their chosen topic.

I was humbled, and deeply proud, of their commitment, their trust in me, their ability to see what I hoped they would see: that literacy does not belong exclusively to the gatekept realm of English studies, but that it's something that belongs, wholly and truly, to them.

I think back to that evening when I finalized this prompt, so unsure of myself as a teacher, so unsure of whether this was even a good idea. This experience is just one example, of course, but if I could step back into that moment, I'd tell that shaky version of myself to be brave, as my students would later be. To embrace seeing prompts through my queerness, as something other, as something different. That sentiment, too, I believe carries beyond my own experience. Allowing a literacy narrative assignment to be something "anti," to welcome student agentive interests and enterprises to interpret the definition of literacy, not only introduces tacit queerness into the curriculum, but allows students to feel invited into the space. And having the privilege of fostering that discovery, especially as a new teacher, is a gift I won't soon forget.

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[1] Robert Brooke, "Underlife and Writing Instruction," College Composition and Communication 38, no. 2 (1987): 141–53, https://doi.org/10.2307/357715.

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Molly Ryan

Molly Ryan (she/her) is a second year Master's student in English at Virginia Tech, pursuing the Rhetoric and Writing track. Broadly, Molly's research focuses on critical composition pedagogy; queer pedagogy, pronoia and eunoia in teaching writing; and the fraught, complex experiences of writing program administrators, particularly related to mentorship and disciplinary retention. Molly teaches introduction to college writing and writing from research and is looking forward to beginning her PhD in Rhetoric and Writing in Fall of 2023.

Participatory Pedagogies: An Approach to Meeting the Needs and Elevating the Desires of Adult Undergraduate Writers

Gabrielle Isabel Kelenyi

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Influential figure in adult education Paulo Freire's educational philosophies treat adults as complex human beings and critique educational standardization in favor of helping adult learners acquire the literacies most appropriate for their needs and goals.[1] Freire trusted students to determine those appropriate literacies.[2] However, these critical considerations have lost emphasis in adult literacy education due to uninterrogated deficit-based comparisons of adult undergraduates[3] with students who follow a traditional progression to and through higher education and structural marginalization of adult learners in higher education.

So how might literacy researchers support and study adult literacy and adult literacy programs in ways that honor the complexity of adult undergraduates' literacy practices and learning? An answer begins with Freire's understanding that "education is politics" and involves asking, "*[I]n favor of whom* am I being a teacher?"[4] By connecting scholarship in

lifespan and community literacies with community-engaged research principles, and values from abolitionist, humanizing, and critical pedagogies, this article proposes an approach to localizing understandings of adult undergraduate writer experiences and identities that can help educators teach in favor of this diverse student group. Specifically, I offer participatory pedagogies (PP) as an approach to understanding and elevating adult undergraduate student writers' purposes, audiences, and contexts for writing as well as their conceptions of literacy in postsecondary writing courses.

I am the daughter and sister of "nontraditional" students who I never really considered "nontraditional." My mother and older brother are intelligent, capable, and successful; they are largely self-taught and brought much experiential knowledge to and from their college classrooms, such as workplace applications of course content and being primary single parents while attending school. Nonetheless, my mother's and brother's academic trajectories make them doubt their own efficacy. This is especially true for writing because the ways they conceptualize and find purposes for writing differ from students entering college directly from high school and instructors focused primarily on "academic" writing. From my experiences as an educator, I've seen how many courses, instructors, and classmates don't help adult undergraduate students' higher education journeys. In the world of content standards and institutional policies, the reasons why I became a writing teacher were easily lost in the hustle of introductory composition in a charter high school invested in white middle-class notions of discipline, scholarship, and honor. Without space to normalize and elevate individual experiences, I contributed to the creation of "nontraditional" students, as secondary students from my school dropped out and seldom found a sense of belonging and possibility in our classrooms. My mother and brother have shared senses of academic unbelonging with me that contribute to doubts about their efficacy and preparedness within and beyond the academy.

Research on adult learners in postsecondary settings aligns with these experiences. Adult undergraduate students make up a large, complex, and evolving student population that cannot be contained by a one-dimensional definition; adult undergraduates can include veterans, currently or formerly incarcerated persons, gig workers, retirees, parents of grown and young children, the un(der)employed, etc. Yet a one-dimensional age-based definition of adult undergraduate students— age 25 or older without a college degree—is what appears most consistently.[5] Catch-all definitions of adult undergraduate students elide other characteristics—such as other axes of power and identity like race/ethnicity, ability, and gender, as well as

other factors like delayed enrollment, part-time status, financial status, and family status—that are important to understanding who adult undergraduates are and how they experience (literacy) education.[6] As such, this diverse student group has often been academically disenfranchised by structural oppression and inequities.[7] These issues inform the deficit perspectives that undergird research on adult literacy and learners[8] and how adults are supported in college writing classrooms—affecting their writerly self-efficacy.[9]

This inspires my qualitative community-engaged research with a university-adjacent writing group for low-income adults. An approach that valued what my mom and brother brought to their college writing classrooms may have helped them develop a greater sense of belonging rather than forcing them to overcome imposter syndrome. Such an asset-based, inclusive approach to literacy instruction/learning is what guides the purpose and procedures of Our Writing Group (OWG), a space that meets members' literacy desires. OWG enacts participatory pedagogies: writing pedagogies based in love, respect, and horizontal power relationships. PPs help OWG validate and affirm the literacy expertise and desires the group's adult undergraduate members bring with them, which helps enhance OWG members' writerly confidence. Findings from my research with this group support PPs as Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies (CSPs)[10] conceptualized specifically for adults; PPs stem from a similar guiding question as CSPs,[11] but as theorized by Paris and Alim, CSPs are predominantly conceptualized for youth.[12] But what about the unique needs of adults who perhaps have been broken and/or made whole through education, whose opportunities to "survive and thrive"[13] in education have been disenfranchised?

PPs extend CSPs to include adult learners and emphasize making space for adults to see *themselves* as whole and love *themselves* through self-direction of their learning. They manifest in OWG through a collective leadership structure guided by a collaboratively-devised mission statement and procedures as well as shared facilitation responsibilities. Prioritizing multiple avenues for participation in all aspects of group meetings—such as serving as facilitator, writing to a prompt, sharing writing in group, and/or providing feedback to other members—makes room for OWG writers to exert collective leadership over the group. Thus, PPs encourage members'

literacy desires to inform the expertise shared during OWG meetings and help members affirm that expertise through their participation and engagement, thereby enhancing OWG members' writerly confidence. For example, group members take turns facilitating OWG weekly meetings, and each member chooses a new topic to inspire members to write. OWG members have facilitated meetings about meditation, bias, storytelling, ego, and songwriting, among others. Members research the topics they choose, assemble materials for the meeting, and devise writing prompts that guide on-the-spot writing. Then, the member-facilitator leads members in sharing and feedback procedures. In response, group participants encourage member-facilitators, thank them for sharing their interests, and celebrate the rich variety of topics addressed. PPs enhance OWG members' writerly confidence by encouraging them to write about something new.

As one participant shared,

A lot of the stuff that we've done in [OWG] has been inspiring, like [...] when people do their presentations, I get inspired to do something. And so [writing] does kind of come easy. I mean, it's not, not as taxing emotionally, but it gets me excited, because I hope that the other members of the group can see like something done like that can get you excited, and you can write a really good piece of work, even though you didn't think you knew a lot about it at the time...

By placing the power to determine the purpose of OWG and how the main activities of the writing group are executed, the structure of the group models how participative spaces can question the status quo of structural power:[14] just because I am a credentialed educator gaining formal expertise in writing studies does not mean I should have more of a say in OWG's activities than any other member. Through PPs, the knowledge, experiences, and desires of OWG writers are valued and affirmed; the group is clearly "zoned" for them[15] when so many other writing spaces are barricaded by student status, cost, location, and explicit and implicit certification (e.g.,

publications, literary agents, awards, etc.).

This move to affirm their writerly expertise is especially important for adult undergraduate students, a student population about which composition scholars still don't know enough[16] but who are arriving or returning to postsecondary classrooms[17] with a variety of experiences that affect what they want to learn and how. Rather than do away with adult students' existing repertoires as adult learning

theory endorses,[18] PPs offer a more developmentally and socially appropriate framework to support adult literacy and evaluate adult literacy programming. PPs honor and stimulate the complexities of literacy practices and learning by combining principles of community-engaged research as well as values from abolitionist,[19] humanizing, and critical pedagogies. This approach to adult literacy learning/ instruction prioritizes student-educator collaboration and values the experiences and expertise of students and teachers equally, as in community-engaged literacy research participatory methods.[20] It positions students in control of their own literate/ educational journeys, as advocated for by critical pedagogies.[21] PPs avoid a one-size-fits-all approach to (literacy) education by encouraging students to value and utilize their previous experiences as in humanizing pedagogie[22] and create knowledge that can build students' capacities to solve problems and enact social change with the same creativity, courage, and urgency of abolitionists.[23]

This nuanced, localized approach is of the utmost importance for meeting the needs and elevating the desires of a diverse group of learners like adult undergraduates.

PPs help ensure student investment in literacy courses and help demonstrate courses' and instructors' investment in student writing purposes and desires as well as students' experiential and cultural knowledge. Furthermore, PPs offer opportunities for instructors, researchers, and administrators to gain nuanced understandings of adult undergraduates. In *Learning to Question*, Freire encourages educators to "re-do" what he's done not by following him but by developing practices that respond to the limitations and affordances of unique teaching contexts.[24] PPs provide such a framework by aiming to accept unique individual writing processes and celebrate them, offering a perspective through which writing products are treated as important manifestations and representations of the identities and values writers want to put into the world. When we come to understand writers' processes and products this way, writers, researchers, and educators can better support and enact inclusive and culturally sustaining conceptions of literacy in higher education.

END NOTES

[1] Paulo Freire, Education for Critical Consciousness. (London: Sheed & Ward Ltd, 1974); Paulo Freire and Antonio Faundez, Learning to question: A pedagogy of liberation (New York, NY: Continuum, 1989); Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the oppressed (New York, NY: Continuum, 1993).

[2] Paulo Freire, "To the Coordinator of a Culture Circle." Convergence 4, no. 1 (1971): 61-62.

[3] The term "nontraditional" and corresponding definitions that begin by highlighting a lack reflect larger problems regarding race/ism and class/ism in higher education and the field of writing studies: students who follow a traditional progression through K-12 are expected to enter higher education with something, and more often than not, students who follow a nonlinear educational path are evaluated for what they are without upon (re)entering higher education—(re)producing dominant views and epistemic frameworks characteristic of higher education (Wanzer-Serrano, "Rhetoric's rac(e/ist) problems," 466). I use the term adult undergraduates throughout this piece to refer to a heterogeneous group of students who have followed alternative pathways to and through higher education. The word "adult," whether attached to learners, students, or undergraduates, makes room for histories, constraints, hopes, pressures, ambitions, responsibilities, pasts, and futures that can be productive in educational spaces. The vagueness of the modifier adult doesn't necessarily preclude students in

the 18-22 or 23+ age ranges, while, according to the U.S. Department of Education website, "nontraditional" students usually refer to students 25+ years old without a college degree.

4 Ira Shor and Paulo Freire, A Pedagogy for Liberation: Dialogues on Transforming Education (Granby, MA: Bergin & Garvey Publishers, 1987): 46, emphasis added.

5 David Scobey, "College Makes Me Feel Dangerous," in Well-Being and Higher Education, ed. Donald. W. Harward (Washington, D.C.: Bringing Theory to Practice, 2016), 111.

6 James L. Schrantz, "Teaching Composition to Nontraditional Students: Intertextuality and Textual Development" (PhD diss., Texas Christian University, 1995); Sherry Miller Brown, "Strategies That Contribute to Nontraditional/ Adult Student Development and Persistence," PAACE Journal of Lifelong Learning, 11, (2002): 67-76; Harvey J. Graff, The Literacy Myth (New York: Academic Press, 1982); Carol A. Lundberg, David D. McIntire, and Caroline T. Creasman, "Sources of Social Support and Self-Efficacy for Adult Students." Journal of College Counseling, 11, (2008): 58-72.

7 Any definition of a group, especially one that aims to be one-size-fits-all, will obscure important aspects of individual identity that will influence academic desires and pathways. Thus, the sheer variety of prior experiences "nontraditional" adult students come (and will come) to classrooms with makes the one-size-fits-all definition, on the one hand, perhaps an easy way for policymakers and educators to differentiate between the needs of different groups of students; on the other hand, however, the one-size-fits-all definition is troubling because it allows for and perhaps even encourages powerblind assumptions—that is to say, assumptions about students that ignore the effects of positionality along axes of power, oppression, and privilege, such as race, gender, class, ability, migrant status, sexuality, etc.—about an incredibly diverse group of students that can hinder best pedagogical practices in the (writing) classroom.

8 Kristen H.Perry, et al., "The 'Ofcourseness' of Functional Literacy: Ideologies in Adult Literacy." Journal of Literacy Research, 50, no. 1 (March 2018): 74–96, 10.1177/1086296X17753262

9 Roger H. Bruning and Douglas F. Kauffman, "Self-Efficacy Beliefs and Motivation in Writing Development," in Handbook of Writing Research, ed. Steve Graham, et al.

(New York: Guilford Publications, 2015), 160-173.

[10] Paris, Django., and H. Samy Alim. Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies: Teaching and Learning for Justice in a Changing World (New York: Teachers College Press, 2017).

[11] "What is the purpose of schooling in pluralistic societies?" (Paris & Alim, 1, emphasis in original).

[12] Paris, Django., and H. Samy Alim. Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies: Teaching and Learning for Justice in a Changing World (New York: Teachers College Press, 2017), 14, emphasis added.

[13] Paris, Django., and H. Samy Alim. Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies: Teaching and Learning for Justice in a Changing World (New York: Teachers College Press, 2017), 14, emphasis added.

[14] Paulo Freire and Antonio Faundez, Learning to question: A pedagogy of liberation (New York, NY: Continuum, 1989).

[15] Claudia Rankine, Citizen (Minneapolis, MN: Graywolf Press, 2014).

[16] Michelle Navarre Cleary, "What WPAs Need to Know to Prepare New Teachers to Work with Adult Students," WPA: Writing Program Administration, 32, no. 1-2 (Fall 2008): 113-128.

[17] U.S. Department of Education & National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). Digest of Education Statistics, 2018.

[18] Cari Kenner and Jason Weinerman, "Adult Learning Theory: Applications to Non-Traditional College Students." Journal of College Reading & Learning, 41, no. 2 (Spring 2011). 10.1080/10790195.2011.10850344

[19] The practice of abolition seeks to abolish systems that perpetuate inequity rather than rebuild or reform them. Instead, abolitionist ideology promotes building equitable systems that promote whole human and community well-being from the ground up through a practice called freedom dreaming. For more information

on abolition, I recommend work by organizer and educator Mariame Kaba and abolitionist educator Dr. Bettina Love.

[20] Wells, Jaclyn M., "Investigating Adult Literacy Programs through Community Engagement Research: A Case Study." Community Literacy Journal, 8, no. 2 (Spring 2014): 52. & Mark A. Bautista, et al. "Participatory Action Research and City Youth: Methodological Insights from the Council of Youth Research." Teachers College Record, 115, no. 10 (2013).

[21] Rolf Straubhaar, "North American adult literacy programs and Latin American immigrants: how critical pedagogy can help nonprofit literacy programming in the United States." Critical Studies in Education, 54, no. 2 (2013): 194 http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17508487.2012.716074

[22] Camangian, Patrick Roz. "Teach Like Lives Depend on It: Agitate, Arouse, and Inspire." Urban Education, 50, no. 4 (2013).

[23] Love, Bettina. We Want to Do More Than Survive: Abolitionist Teaching and the Pursuit of Educational Freedom. (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2019).

[24] Freire and Faundez, Learning to Question: A pedagogy of liberation, 30.

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When Robots Come Home to Roost: The Differing Fates of Black Language, Hyper-Standardization, and White Robotic School Writing (Yes, ChatGPT and His AI Cousins)

Carmen Kynard, PhD

READ OR
LISTEN ONLINE

This article originally appeared in Dr Kynard's blog, Education, Liberation & Black Radical Traditions for the 21st Century.

Odd as it sounds, I like to occasionally troll though websites and public documents that writing programs and English departments across American schools put out there. Mostly, I am trying to prove a point: foolishness abounds. The evidence is always overwhelming. I've been doing this since 2009 and even have a folder where I host a kind of contest judged all by my lonesome: who has the whitest rubric to score students' essays? There are always so many contenders. Why do I do this? Who knows. It is very entertaining though and gives me endless ways to talk trash about folx who don't walk what they talk.

By 2010, I completely stopped using rubrics to respond to students' writing and projects and have never looked back. Before that, I would ask students to collectively design their own rubrics and the conversations were great. Those moments were framed in the world of progressive high school reform of the 1990s that centered habits of mind, interdisciplinary inquiry, small classrooms, community schooling, and the like, but that all got co-opted towards neoliberalist ends in the standards/ testing/ NCLB movements. I will always remember 2008, for instance, where a heated exchange jumped off in class about the concept of grading how an essay FLOWS. At the time, that institution was the third, most diverse national university in the U.S. As should be easy to imagine, in no time at all, we saw different racial/ethnic/cultural/ linguistic groups explain FLOW (was it even a noun or a verb?) very differently and rate and rank even more differently. The young NYC Hip Hoppers set off the conversation, because they knew FLOW had different cultural meanings. My response was simple: why can't it all count as successful? They seemed to agree and worked that rubric down to the bone. The flow goals alone were two pages/two slides long. They did the real work of cultural rhetorics that the English departments I have worked for are still too scared to do (of course, they will couch such white fears and just say the concept is obscure, but, as you can see with these 2008 first-year college students, it has always been really real and quite obvious for how and what BIPOC folx communicate).

In 2010 though, I stopped asking students to design rubrics. My students had been rubric-ed to death by that point and so when I asked them to design their own, they came up with the typical monocultural, monolingual, mono-styled rubric that you see everywhere. It wasn't worth the time in class to design an intervention, so I just stopped using rubrics and moved to a different system. I also started watching rubrics go online for 100s of writing/English programs across the country. Today, in this fall semester of 2023, I just finished teaching a graduate class on anti-racist/anti-colonial pedagogies and did a deep trolling of essay rubrics online during the week that we focused on anti-racist assessment. It doesn't matter how much folx talk about DEI, students' rights to their own language, linguistic/cultural diversity, local assessment, anti-racist assessment, decolonized syllabi, anti-racist teaching, or any other term that progressives/liberals appropriate without actually enacting. These rubrics all look and sound the same. They all white-wash school writing and require the same kind of stale performance of white academese. Every. Single. One.

I liken these essay rubrics to hotel standardization. If you have ever been to a chain hotel, you know that, no matter where you go in the country, everything is the same: the coffee maker, brand of coffee, stirrers, sugars, bed, chair, TV, sheets, shampoo, towels, pillows, desk, comforter, wallpaper... every piece of the package. I am not knocking it, per se, because some folx do like knowing that their hotel room will be cleaned and sanitized according to a brand's singular standard when/if they must visit a city new to them. Hotel standardization has a place, I guess. I have heard textbook authors embrace essay standardization in just this way. HOWEVER, students' work in schools should not be processed in the same way as nationwide hotel soap distribution for endless consumer consumption. And students should not look and sound identical to one another and peers across the country. Rubrics do this work of hyper-standardization and hyper-consumerism in just this way though. If you were to mechanize essay rubrics in such a way that you only needed to input content and get out a finished essay, what you would get is a singular kind of written expression that schools replicate as much as hotel chains mass-produce their hand soaps.

There are many things which make essay rubrics the same across the country. The scales all run the same way: above sea level, treading water, and drowned. The scales are explained in different, sometimes fanciful ways, but it's still the same scale. Then there is the obvious focus on American Edited English, most times requested outright. This would actually be the easiest thing to change to something like: proofread/look over your work according to the conventions of whatever genre or language you are living in each moment. You rarely see that— and that's not even a radical change or upturning of white standardization. Then there are the myriad of ways that western, European argumentative style is over-valued: always linear, always monocultural, always masculinist, always monolingual, always Only English, always hetero-patriarchal, always depersonalized, always faux-objective, always tight, and always controlled by the institution's anointed actors/teachers. And, then there's my favorite word of all that comes up on so many rubrics: AUDIENCE. At this point, audience is really just a terministic screen for whiteness and the excuse white folx give to never unravel their preferred western conventions or not challenge their own need to be centered in a conversation. Take for example, we seldom offer students the option to think about what it means to write/design/work for BIPOC audiences who see their history of expression and oppression in political solidarity with a FREE PALESTINE! I can't think of a more relevant audience right now. Yes, that might be a smaller,

specific audience but it's much BIGGER than the groups who read academics' writing and so much more interesting and worthwhile.

It shouldn't come as a surprise that students will turn to AI to write these white-standardized essays. That is inevitable and that is what something like ChatGPT provides. It's what teachers have, in fact, been asking for with these rubrics. Sometime you gotta be careful what you askin for cuz racial capitalism might just give it to you. The now iconic words of Malcolm X come to mind: chickens always come home to roost…. and Joan Morgan's remix too: chickenheads come home to roost. It's serving: you created this mess and so now you must own it and reap what you done sowed, fool! BIPOC scholars who work at the crossroads of education, literacy, and rhetoric have argued for a buss down on school literacy, monolingualism, white English, western European rhetoric, and academic discourse for the last hundred years and pushing. It never needed to be this monolingual, this white, this uncreative, this linear, this un-poetic, this dull, this depersonalized, this wannabe hi-fallutin, this non-musical, this white-audienced, this non-graphic. Never. There were always so many other choices. But yall ain't hear us though. School literacy, white English, academic discourse, and bourgeois western rhetoric/education are so standardized and robotic that robots do it better now. Robots have come home to their roosts and I don't feel sad or scared about none of it.

Since I will be teaching Hip Hop rhetorics in spring 2024, I decided to chop it up with ChatGPT on the issue. It wasn't all bad. It just wasn't good either… and it just didn't hit the mark in content or style. Here is what ChatGPT had to say about Hip Hop Rhetorics:

Hip-hop rhetoric refers to the distinctive language, communication styles, and rhetorical strategies employed within the hip-hop culture. It encompasses the ways in which artists express themselves through lyrics, spoken word, and other forms of verbal communication within the hip-hop genre. Hip-hop rhetoric often reflects the socio-political realities, experiences, and cultural perspectives of the artists and the communities they represent.

Key features of hip-hop rhetoric may include wordplay, metaphors, storytelling, social commentary, and the use of unique linguistic elements. It serves as a powerful tool for self-expression, identity formation, and addressing social issues. Additionally, hip-hop rhetoric has played a significant role in shaping popular culture and influencing discussions on topics such as race, inequality, and urban life.

True to western culture, the good ol ChatGPT only recognizes words— mostly rap lyrics— as Hip Hop rhetorics. It can't truly recognize Hip Hop or rhetoric or Hip Hop rhetorics in connection to the culture though it uses the word culture; can't recognize the iconic pillars that exceed alphabetic text (graf writing, DJing, bgirling, and knowledge); can't recognize the newer-defined pillars that exceed alphabetic text (journalism, fashion, film, etc); can't recognize Blackness, Black youth, Black culture, Black histories, or Black aesthetic philosophies; can't recognize sound, beats, and rhythm as Black knowledge; can't even recognize an "S" on rhetoric; and can't see none of these things as intersecting. And, most importantly, it just don't sound or feel nothing like Hip Hop. AND I OOP!

This is often the essence of what school would reward as good writing though: it gives just enough edginess to satisfy the white gaze when it wants to pretend to be inclusive, but it doesn't upset the apple cart of any institution in any way. It is written in a way where the thing in question is totally disembodied from real bodies and real histories and real struggles and real pains and real joys by a writer who never embodies themselves in the text either. It's dull and meaningless..... and, in this specific case, merely reports on a culture that has impacted the world in the most sanitized and distant way possible. Violent as hell. Yup, that sounds about right/white. This is exactly how school has taught us to write. And now, ChatGPT can do it faster and better. AND I OOP!

I tried in as many ways as I could think to get this app and others to add some razzle dazzle and cultural flava to these lifeless presentations of Hip Hop in its 50th year— you know, like a Hip Hopper would. Like any street corner in Black Language and Black Life would. Things just got even whiter. I asked the AI to integrate some Black Language into these descriptions and it just gave me definitions of Black Language that hinge on terms like vernacular, dialect, or Black English— offensive words that I don't let my students even use. Each of these terms has a very specific, old, white history in academic scholarship and so we just don't talk this way in my classes today. I soon realized I was going about my conversations with ChatGPT wrong. I had to ask my questions and deliver my commands as if I were a white person who thinks they value Black Language

but, in fact, denigrates it. I finally came up with the magic white word. SLANG. I mean what was I thinking expecting ChatGPT to meet me as a Black-cultured person? That ain't what it's for. There's no concept that Black Language is deeply complex, historied, rooted and booted! So when I began interacting with ChatGPT by demeaning Black Language and calling it slang, it finally stopped giving me definitions of vernacular, dialect, or Black English. Here is what the thing cranked out:

Hip Hop is a dope culture rooted in rhythm, beats, and rhymes. It's all about spitting bars, dropping beats, and keeping it real. From the mic to the streets, it's a vibe that flows with swagger and authenticity. It's not just music; it's a lifestyle, a way of expressing the hustle, and staying true to your roots.

What in the Vanilla Ice is this mess? It sounds like the white producers of "Yo! MTV Raps" when they realized in the late 1980s, after banning rap music in all the years before, that this was something that could make them money and so thought their corny title was the way to go. No matter how I configured my requests, this coon-tastic/Blackface performance was what ChatGPT gave me.

When I had enough, I asked ChatGPT my most pressing question. I asked ChatGPT to give me a racial criticism and analysis of itself. It gave me perhaps the whitest of white answers: it refused. Instead, it spit this out in multiple variations:

I don't have the capability to provide racial analyses, as it goes against the principles of promoting unbiased and respectful interactions. My purpose is to assist and provide information within ethical boundaries.

I'm committed to promoting positive and respectful interactions. I won't engage in or promote any form of racial criticism. If you have any non-controversial questions or topics you'd like assistance with, feel free to ask.

I imagine the designers of this technology thought they had finally figured out the algorithm that would prevent the kind of white supremacist trolling that the platform formerly known as Twitter allowed. Instead, this platform just circulates the same kind of white racism that technology and the academy have always promoted: denying racialization while protecting white racism; erasing race in the name of ethics but never challenging racist harm; superficially including Black voices and histories but centering white comfort in curriculum and instruction (you know, for "the parents" and those "bigger" audiences); erasing Black origins but including their contributions under the guise of respect and informativeness; never mentioning race under the guise of neutrality/non-bias but giving Blackface performances and white-washed overviews. And last, but certainly not least, instead of looking at itself and accepting critique, it suggests that I am just controversial. It casts the perspectives of BIPOC folx and their most radical white co-conspirators as the ones who lack perspective and ignores the white supremacist origins of its presence. So typical. The more whiteness change, the more it stay the same.

White standardized language and writing have now been outsourced. ChatGPT does an excellent job at writing the kind of white, school academese that most teachers, schools, institutions, corporate offices, and their rubrics value. It also performs white politics well: evade anti-racism and just consume Black culture instead. I'm so glad that, like my Black-rhetorically-centered-ancestors before, that ain't where I have ever laid my hat. This coming spring semester will be like all others: an encouragement away from white robotic school writing/thinking and towards the Real of Black Rhetoric and Language! You betta act/write like you know!

Carmen Kynard, PhD

Carmen Kynard is the Lillian Radford Chair in Rhetoric and Composition and Professor of English at Texas Christian University. Her award-wining research, teaching, and scholarship interrogate anti-racism, Black feminist pedagogies, AfroDigital/Black cultures and languages, and the politics of schooling with an emphasis on composition and literacies studies. She traces her research and teaching at her website, "Education, Liberation, and Black Radical Traditions" (**http://carmenkynard.org**) which has garnered over 2 million hits since its 2012 inception.

Interested in Submitting?

The Sandbox invites community literacies workers to write thought provoking, accessible, brief policy memos, reports, or essays on a timely issue within literacy learning and practice. The purpose of these papers is to provide nuanced insight into a salient issue for general audiences, creating a resource for people to use in efforts to shape literacy learning, development, and practice for the better across a wide range of contexts. We currently maintain an open call for submissions.

We are currently accepting:
Critical / Scholarly Essays (800-1500 words)
Opinion-Editorial / Commentary (800-1500 words)
Policy Memos / Reports (1-5 pages)
Book Reviews (750-1500 words)
Review Essays of 2 or More Books (1500-3000 words)
Literacy and Learning Narratives / Literacy Autobiographies (1000-1500 words)

Memos and reports must be between 5-7 pages, while essays must be between 800-1500 words. If accepted and commissioned for publication, author(s) will receive an honorarium for their paper/contribution.

Proposals must be a brief email indicating what you wish to write about, why you feel it is a timely issue and what impact your insights may have on critical issues in literacy learning and practice today.

Please email us at brownchairinenglishliteracy@gmail.com if you have any questions.