

CHAPTER 1.

PRACTICE, WORK, AND FURTHER POSSIBILITIES FOR IE

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It seems fitting for this book series that we open with a chapter-long reflection on the study of work and work *practices*, in order to lend perspective to the use of both terms in writing studies research and for projects adopting institutional ethnography (IE). In light of the weight we place on the key terms “work,” “practice,” and “work practices” as entrance points into the study of institutional settings, it is crucial to unravel the histories and assumptions commonly indexed by the use of these terms. In doing so, we will not only continue the conversations begun elsewhere about the value of IE and adaptations to its framework for the study of writing, writers, writing instruction, and sites of writing, but also further research-based conversations about the nature of our work, our experiences as workers within institutional contexts, and how we participate in, if not resist and remake, those sites towards more equity.

UNCOVERING PRACTICE

The study of practice—whether we understand “practice” in its most simple definition, as “arrays of activity,” or more dynamically as “embodied, materially mediated arrays of human activity centrally organized around shared practical understanding” (Schatzki 2), ranging from “ephemeral doings to stable long-term patterns of activity” (Rouse 499), or as a bridge between what people do and how they do it, such that “bundled activities interw[eave] with ordered constellations of nonhuman entities” (Schatzki 2)—puts people, the power of their individuality, and their choices at the center of our research interests. In the introduction to the collection *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory*, social theorist Theodore Schatzki argues that a turn toward “practice” has allowed social scientists to sidestep “the problematic dualisms” that have historically stymied the study of the social order through the 20th century. At the root of these dualistic impasses is a realization that legacies of positivism often focused researchers on seeking pronouncements about the “enduring” social structures that they had encountered (or imagined). This focus resulted in unequal attention to the

perceived “universal[s],” and/or commonalities across social patterns, and often then occluded or over-generalized resulting understandings of the dynamic, situated, material, and embodied nature of individual experience. A focus on practice, Schatzki notes (underscoring our opening argument), realigns our understanding toward the building-blocks of activity as the doings of individuals within rich and often subtly coercive contexts.

Similarly, when IE researchers begin with “practice” as their entrance point into understanding work, they seek to uncover how individuals do what they do free from pre-limiting preconceptions about what should be going on in a site or what that doing might look like. Within the rarified fields of composition and writing program administration—fields often structured via the dampening influence of what Donna Strickland has called “the managerial unconscious” around writing and writing program administration—this approach to the study of writing programs and sites of writing can be an intervention into the ideals of practice that attend our attachments to disciplinary expertise, dominant models of knowledge construction, highly constrained employment settings, and professional discourses that seek to determine, evaluate, and often norm what people do. Writing studies researchers are enabled to uncover, explore, and reflect upon actualities of practice—what people are actually doing in a site—with more purpose and granularity.

Many ethnographers and writing studies scholars have championed similar processes of “looking up” (Smith *Institutional . . . Sociology*) or “studying up” (Nader), a process of starting from the lived experiences of people whose everyday lives are organized by powerful, but often unrecognized, forces that impose ways of doing, knowing, and being across time and space. An interest in the actual forms practice takes, in our methodological handbook, not only grants meaning to the highly individualized ways people negotiate and carry out their work, but also opens opportunities to trace the how those practices come into being in light of the expectations, values, histories, and ideals of belonging most active within those sites. Researchers might then seek and interrogate those moments when practice takes shape in easy alignment with dominant understandings of a site, but more tellingly how the work people actually do may resist, remake, or revalue those discourses towards quite different ends.

Writing studies researchers have not entirely eschewed defining or theorizing practice, of course. Late 20th century scholars of writing debated the presumed (and often irreconcilable) distinctions between theory and practice at length. Lynn Worsham, John Trimbur, Bruce Horner and others note that this tension in the field arose as a product of the material relations of composition and higher ed labor within English departments, particularly the “stigma” of teaching

writing, perceiving writing instruction (and by association teaching writ large) as a remedial service to the institution (Worsham) versus the more vaunted production of scholarship, as theory- or knowledge-making. Worsham names the resulting “pedagogical imperative,” that has often then driven scholarly concerns in writing studies, as “the overriding desire to convert writing theory into classroom practice” (Trimbur 21). The impact of this binary can still be felt two decades into the new century, Kory Ching notes, as “In composition studies, the value or worth of theoretical discourse is often measured by the degree to which it seems relevant to classroom practice” (452).

In the early 21st century, those in writing studies who took up “practice” as a matter of scholarly concern often complicated the theory-praxis binary, recognizing the interreliance of theory and practice for teachers and scholars alike. Cindy Moore and Peggy O’Neill’s edited collection, *Practice in Context*, for example, showcased the reflexive nature of “theory-driven teaching” (a term lifted from Hillocks) central to composition studies. Contending that theory and practice are best understood as “blurred” (xi), Moore and O’Neil foregrounded composition pedagogy as both “scholarly conversation carried on among prominent academics in journals and books *and* more of an everyday intuitive endeavor carried out by teachers in their classrooms” (xxii). Through attention to pedagogical practice, they argued, composition scholars might come to understand the “deep structures” (here they borrow from Phelps) of our programs, teaching repertoires, and assumptions about writing and writers. Moore and O’Neil do not explicitly name Paulo Freire’s arguments for “praxis” as a genesis for the authors in their collection, but clearly seek to define “reflexive practitioners” of writing instruction, as those who understand the close knit and liberatory connections between practice and theory. “Reflective teaching,” they implicitly argue, is always relational, that is “located in the nexus of teacher, student, curriculum, and life” (xi). Throughout their collection, teaching practices are both bound and produced by the disciplinary, social, and material complexities teachers negotiate as they mindfully design their assignments, courses, and interactions with students.

Methodologists, such as Patricia Sullivan and James Porter, took pains to further unpack their understandings of practice in relation to research undertakings within the field. In their germinal text *Opening Spaces: Writing Technologies and Critical Research Practices*, Sullivan and Porter argue for “situationally sensitive approaches to research” (xvi), to account for how computers, as a tool with wide ranging impact, changed writing practice and so our pedagogical approaches to teaching writing. Implicitly their argument foregrounds the power of empirical methods for understanding practice, which they define both as “symbolic action” and as “complex actions that are taken in situ” (9). Their definition of

practice moves us more intently into Freirian understandings of the term, as they pose a relationship (akin to the rhetorical triangle) between:

1. ideology, or “assumptions about what human relations should be and about how people should use symbol systems,”
2. practice, that is, “how people actually do constitute their relations through regularized symbolic or discursive activity,” and
3. method or “tactics, procedures, heuristics, or tools that people use for inquiry” (10).

Further, in their recognition of the interconnections between practice, ideology, and methods (or tools) we see again that what people do always takes shape in relation to the ephemeral and material conditions that infuse and inform a site. Practice cannot be separated from the unique sensibilities, values, investments, identities, histories, expertise, and predilections of knowing and active individuals. When an “in situ” understanding of practice informs our approach to studying writing, teaching, administration, and knowledge construction, Sullivan and Porter contend that researchers are better able to demonstrate “knowledge as local, as contingent, and as grounded not in universal structures but in local, situated practices” (10). Like Sullivan and Porter, those who adopt IE in order to study practices have argued that critically tracing practice is a move that “views the material practices (of work, especially) as vital to the understanding of social activity . . . [and] Understanding those material conditions is key to changing those conditions” (12).

Those invested in cultural-historical activity theory, also called “practice theory” (Foot), have likewise made connections between what people do and the “neoplatonic realm of rules” (qua theory) that govern writing and its situations, including “communicative norms,” such as the rules of language, the organization of the social, and other cultural expectations. Paul Prior et al. write that practice is one product (“an externalization”) of people’s mediation of environments:

[A]ctivity is situated in concrete interactions that are simultaneously improvised locally and mediated by historically provided tools and practices. Those tools and practices range from machines, made-objects, semiotic means (e.g., languages, genres, iconographies), and institutions to structured environments, domesticated animals and plants, and, indeed, people themselves. Mediated activity involves externalization (speech, writing, the manipulation and construction of objects and devices) and co-action (with other people, artifacts, and elements of the social-material environment) as well as internal-

ization (perception, learning). As objects and environments are formed and transformed through human activity, they come to embody the goals and social organization of that activity in the form of affordances for use.

Work with CHAT, enables researchers to see the intricate connections between broader systems of meaning making and the subsequent systematization of what people do and how they do it. The individual and what they do comes to be understood as a complex expression of the social contexts uncovered.

But here we also begin to see the difference between these approaches to practice and work practice that IE brings to focus. IE asks us to start with standpoint—that is, as Smith explains, the experience of “‘expert knowers’ of their situated work, genuinely listening and watching for their skilled expertise, and learning from them what they know about the smooth running of an everyday work day” (*Institutional . . . Sociology* 8). In this move, Smith draws from feminist cultural materialism, to argue, like Sandra Harding and other feminist critical theorists, against “metonymic epistemologies” that often rhetorically foreclose our methodological undertakings (Harding)—that is, because one site may resemble another, we should not assume that what people do is exactly the same. Finely grained differences may be very telling. (Though Rankin calls for discerning self-awareness in our analysis, as “Institutional discourses can harness the researcher to the ruling relations and impede good analysis” (9).) Smith calls the ways we often miss seeing individuals in our research “institutional capture,” (*Institutional . . . Sociology* 225), a series of institutionally-driven blind spots, which are the result of what she names “blob ontology,” a false sense of fixity or stability produced by the naming of sites, people and their social roles (56).

Rankin and Smith pose these cautions, because *the blinders and attendant assumptions researchers import into sites often set us up to find what we expect to find*: “[f]or every concept out there, there is taken to be something out there that corresponds to it” Smith surmises (*Institutional . . . Sociology* 56). The goal, then, is to use “practice” as the entrance point to the sites we study to sharpen our processes of uncovering, recognizing, and coming to understand the stories, sensibilities, and affiliations that may be revealed. Indeed, many writing studies researchers have turned to a number of similar methodological strategies to avoid what Haraway once named the “God Trick,” a seductive preoccupation with the “arrogant and mistaken belief that we can know objectively, transcendently” (Selfe and Hawisher 36), a tendency that cozens researchers into “miss[ing] the human and very personal face of social, cultural, economic phenomenon that so fundamentally shape the project of education and the nature of institutions, departments, and classrooms” (Selfe and Hawisher 36).

Smith's focus on the individual and the ways identity categories and standpoint may morph dynamically in relation to any number of material and social factors reminds us that social forces may bind us, but that categorizations and differentiations are often more overdetermined and fixed due to conventions in research methods and structures of communication. As Smith writes, "[S]ocial organization is not a concept [best] imposed externally on and used to interpret data; rather, the [goal for ethnographers] is to explicate what is discovered in the process of assembling work knowledges and finding out how they articulate to and coordinate with one another" (*Sociology* 163). The individual, differences (especially within categories), and divergences of practice are often erased by the tendencies of researchers to see systems, patterns, and trends over unique and dynamic individuals.

In light of this history and the interventions that Smith's work offers, we see practice as materially mediated activities that take shape when unique individuals knowingly negotiate their everyday contexts. Drawing from IE, we argue that what individuals do is always coordinated across time and space, understood and taking place in relation to powerful institutional and social forces, but also always uniquely a product of how an individual understands, values, and chooses to produce that practice—a process of co-constituting the institution and its social relations. Practice emerges, then, in a unique relationship to the values and relationships that situate, compel, and organize both ephemeral and more stable patterns of activity. Through these micro-moments, people actively negotiate their belongings within institutional locations, taking up, resisting or refusing, remaking, recasting, and making their understandings of their roles visible.

We argue that the study of work with the IE framework asks us to seek out these uniquely telling micro-moments that are deeply situated with the everyday. As our participants and collaborators share with and reveal to us how they shape their work practices, we may come to more clearly see the interconnections between broader social forces, ideologies, norms, and professional expectations and the many choices, habits, and processes that constitute the institution. Even a small signifier or a minor notation (such as an HR designation, a note on an annual evaluation, or the organization of an observation form) might leverage an undeniable degree of force upon daily life within an institutional context—directing implicitly or explicitly what gets done, how it gets done, and the value that work accrues (LaFrance and Nicolas).

It is this focus on the material actualities of practice, as it grounds the ethnographic researcher in the pragmatic, that has captivated us for the last decade. We see the careful study of practice, specifically work practice, as the means to illuminate those finely grained moments where language, literacy, and so, writing, are inextricable from social contexts, institutional values, and systems of domination.

WORK

Smith's definition of work is characteristically non-hierarchical: "Anything that people do that takes time, effort, and intent" (*Institutional . . . Sociology* 229). Such generosity (if admittedly maddeningly vague) characterizes Smith's career-work developing a "Sociology for People," which began in the early 1970s with her critique of universalist understandings of the social world, which tacitly normalized a "masculinist" baseline, discursively marking anyone who wasn't male (and White and bourgeois) as always already divergent from the norm. Yet, as we join Smith in arguing for research methods that uncover how work practices take shape, believing that these forms of inquiry are essential to understanding how writing programs, writing instruction, and writing itself respond to the neoliberal and global contexts of the early 21st century, we see a real need to look into how "work" operates as a key term in writing studies research, especially those that draw from IE.

The study of work is increasingly pressing in today's higher ed contexts. It goes without saying that Western neoliberal ideologies are inextricable from our ideals of what we do and how we do it—especially as "austerity" politics (Welch and Scott) have continued to stratify our professional identities and investments. Projects informed by IE's frameworks often map these larger sets of relations, offering understandings of consequences, affordances, and other actualities that may not be adequately traced without the tools and strategies offered by this unique methodology. The resulting critical attention to our key terms and their definitions may additionally help us to mindfully reframe our relationships to those we work with and beside. For those who adopt IE, *recognizing others as the knowing experts of their own lives* is crucial. We must not forget the radical potential of that simple act, as it is key to understanding how institutions, systems, and indeed business as usual in a university setting may overwrite, erase, elide, or marginalize vulnerable peoples.

If an interest in "practice" turns the researcher's attention to visible micro-moments of individual knowing, doing, and being, the term "work" focuses the researcher on forms, methods, processes, procedures, and principles that are thought to repeat within the site. "Work" also indexes the priorities that lend purpose to what people do and how they do it. Social theorists, such as Devault, argue for instance, that work and work processes are "[o]rganizational strategies . . . [that] highlight and support some kinds of work while leaving other tasks unacknowledged, to be done without recognition, support, or any kind of collective responsibility" (6). As "distinctive relational sequences"—or how work gets done—processes reveal the ways local cooperative efforts respond to and reinscribe broader economies of value (Smith *Institutional . . . Sociology* 54). These

moments of process, procedure, and ordering, Smith contends, are where the interplay between individual and ruling relations become visible, as people carry out their work in coordination with the highly structured social complexities of a site. Sites and what people do within them (whether we call this “work” or not) also clearly have characteristics, cultures, shared investments and expectations, economies and/or ecologies of interest to writing studies researchers—indeed, building bridges between what individuals do, how they do it, and the larger socio-cultural contexts of those sites is one of the many aims of work with IE.

“Work” is the character (the “how” or the “shape”) that practice takes on, coordinated across time and space with what others do elsewhere and elsewhen. As such, for the IE researcher, “work” can be collapsed into paid labor, but we might also understand it as a characteristic, style, or category of doing, a form of knowing that is mediated, ephemeral, and individualized. Work, more generally, is not then simply what we do, as it emerges in moments of quite personal and individual attachment to doing within hierarchically organized systems of coordination.

Despite the term’s ubiquitous appearance in writing studies literature(s), as a key term, “work” proves quite slippery to define, a fact remarked upon when writing studies scholars do attempt to pose definitions. In his “Foreword” to Horner’s eponymous *Terms of Work for Composition: A Materialist Critique*, for example, Trimbur notes, “the terminological tangles,” and persuasive disagreements that have accompanied use of the term “work” in composition. He writes: “the problem begins with the surplus of meanings that have attached themselves to the nature of work and exert their special pulls,” and argues that the confusions are “not so much a sign of muddled thinking as an evasion of the material conditions and social practices of work” (xi). Indeed, these conditions and materialities are quite difficult to unravel. Throughout our literature(s), uses of the term “work” may intersect, engage, and demystify the many tensions between the individual and material systems of social domination and control of most interest to the researcher, but these difficulties may just as quickly be deemed “labor,” activity, or some other specialized term fitting the setting or practice, such as “writing,” “teaching,” or “administering.”

In his chapter on “work” (replaced in the updated version of *Terms of Work for Composition, Rewriting Composition: Terms of Exchange* by a chapter named “labor”), Horner opens by noting that his use of the term “work” allows for a crucial focus on the materialities organizing composition as a field:

For work—demoting simultaneously an activity, the product of that activity, and the place of its practice—encourages us to think of what we do as located materially and historically: as material social practice. Further, this identification of composi-

tion as work, so understood, also encourages us to think of it in relation to other places, activities, and social forces, responding to and conditioned by them, and shaping them in return. It can accentuate the materiality and historicity of our work, and so enable us better to understand the specific and changing delimitations governing it and its real potentialities. (xvii)

Horner further underlines the three ways theorists have indexed materiality as they have discussed work: materiality may reference the use of tools (such as technology); broader “hosts or socioeconomic conditions contributing the contexts that surround physical production,” which connect us to the social sphere; or the “networks” of circulation and access that are produced by “global relations of power” (xvii). Work, for Horner, always indexes the “materiality between students and teachers in the composition classroom,” but by this he means the broad ways the social organizes our bodies, being, and doing, such as “relations of race, gender, class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, generation, and region, among others within the classroom and/or in the larger social realm.” He notes, as well, the “personal relations (e.g., familial) relations—and the lived experience of history of these relations to which any act of writing may be seen as responding” (xviii). But, more commonly Horner acknowledges, we see work referring to “paid employment,” “written texts,” and—important for the IE researcher—the “actual concrete activities of teaching” (xviii). For Horner, then, work is a dynamic term, best defined in context, but always hinting, to some degree, at these complexities and layers of socio-cultural materiality.

Embracing exactly the tangles Trimbur laments, Jessica Restaino opens her ethnography, *First Semester: Graduate Students, Teaching Writing, and the Challenges of Middle Ground*, by foregrounding the “interdependence, balance, and, at times, interchangeability” of Hannah Arendt’s “three-part theoretical construct of labor, work, and action,” in *The Human Condition* (14). Noting that terms like “work” are simply and inevitably “in orbit with” the terms “labor” and “action,” Restaino sits with Arendt’s distinguishing moves: Arendt compares labor to “tilled soil,” which “needs to be labored upon time and again” Laboring is, as such, a sustained practice and never quite finished. “At the end of each day, our labor is wiped away, and we are faced with yet another weedy garden” (14). Arendt’s equation of labor to human sustenance, Restaino notes, marks labor as “essential, yet rewarded with the least enduring of gifts” (23). Action, for Arendt, takes on both a daily and public nature and Restaino notes that “Arendt often describes action as a self-disclosure or revelation, where we appear as ourselves before others. For this reason, Arendt connects action to ‘plurality’ because action is utterly dependent upon the presence of others to witness and remember” (15). And finally,

work, which for Arendt is “fabrication,” distinguished from labor as it takes on a permanence. As Restaino writes: “the lasting record, made by human hands, of our most striking words and deeds. Work is the product, or proof, of human ingenuity, rebellion, and resistance” (16). For Restaino: Labor is what people do. Work is the material, social, and historical product of that doing. Action—the particular doings of people—takes on shape, force, and meaning around the purpose and permanence of work.

Others, like Asao Inoue who exhaustively theorizes and defines “labor” in *Labor-Based Grading Contracts: Building Equity and Inclusion in the Compassionate Writing Classroom* are more intent on a precise and careful understanding of the subtexts of our chosen language. Inoue’s purposeful adoption of “labor,” for instance, places us immediately and squarely within the issues of racial embodiment central to his arguments about rethinking grading to allow for linguistic justice:

Labor requires a body in motion, even if the motions are small or slight. We speak through our bodies . . . Each time we speak, our bodies move in amazingly elaborate and coordinated ways, like a synchronized dance group, each dancer moving their part, forming a larger organism that produces something more than the sum of the individuals dancing . . . When we write, a similar coordinated dance occurs, whether we put pen to paper, or fingers to keyboard, or dictate into a smartphone, our bodies move and our brains work to make and process language. When we read text or make sense of images or symbols, we similarly expend bodily energy . . . When we manipulate a computer keyboard or mouse to scroll through pages on a screen, or lick our fingers to turn a page, our eyes move back and forth, our brains activate neurons . . . These bodily movements, combined with our brain’s firing and burning of energy, make the acts of languaging bodily labor, work, energy expended. Bodily labor is fundamental to all learning. No one learns without laboring, without doing in some way, without moving their body. (77-78)

It is the bodily materiality of labor that puts us into relationship with others (and the things around us), Inoue notes.

Inoue’s intent is to bring our attention to the ways we value and evaluate what student writers do, the way we value and evaluate language (as) practice(s), and how we undertake these evaluations within undeniable material, socio-political contexts that we have inadvertently historically disavowed, erased, ignored, or too conveniently forgotten as we have—perhaps unconsciously—valued

and privileged white language practices over other linguistic forms. We may call these contexts “ecologies” or “economies” (or “political economies,” as does Scott 2009), or think of them in cultural terms, as does Inoue when making his case for the pervasiveness of White supremacy as an unmarked form of cultural dominance (the “habitus,” he calls it, drawing from Pierre Bourdieu. Inoue’s work insists that there is no understanding labor—be it faculty, student, paid, or unpaid—without the judgments, expectations, influences, conditions, etc., that structure our cultural systems, not just including, *but particularly via*, education and our classrooms, in White supremacy (79-80).

Ultimately, Inoue additionally suggests that Arendt’s distinctions pose labor as a verb and work as a noun (119)—an important realization for ethnographers who sometimes find themselves hoping to name processes, products, sequences, relationships, and tensions that live in between these two poles of signification. And, all of these definitions seem to call up ideals of work as more conceptually or taxonomically-oriented. (Think “career” over “job” and other categorical differences: White collar in distinction from blue collar, educator in distinction from writer.) Put succinctly into context by Pamela Takayoshi and Sullivan, while the meanings of labor as a writing studies concern may “shimmer between” socio-political dimensions the “political” and “assembly line” connections of labor “rob the term [labor] of creativity” and “consequently make it mundane” (3). To labor is to use hands and body toward subsistence; to work is to stay in the realm of ideas and ideals.

To Inoue’s differentiation between labor-as-verb and work-as-noun, I add Seth Kahn’s distinction of managed labor. Kahn writes, “if we’re not talking about how work is managed, we’re not talking about labor issues. We’re talking about work” (Kahn and Pason 14), a definition that positions both terms in discourses of organized labor and activism. Institutional ethnography similarly reframes labor as doing-in-the world and work as being-in the world. But IE also understands the distinction between doing and being as *permeable*. There is simply no doing without being; this inter-reliance explains why the terms are so easily confused or swapped in for one another in so many academic and nonacademic texts and contexts. If labor can be understood as what our bodies and hands actually do and work is what socially shapes and instills value in those doings, being and doing must also be understood as inherently bound to one another. Similarly, those who practice IE, are likely to resist any fixity of the terms, arguing that whether a researcher chooses to use “labor” or instead opts for “work,” the terms will take on verb-ness or noun-ness, doing-ness or being-ness, as a demonstration of the contextually responsive nature of the study at hand.

We can understand “work” (in an office, in a classroom, with students), then, simultaneously as a social collaboration—so a construction—and a product of

uniquely personal understandings, preferences, identifications, and affiliations within particular institutional settings, disciplinary and professional identities. And in thinking with Trimbur, Horner, Restaino, Inoue, and Takayoshi and Sullivan, we underscore the dynamic, individual, and embodied nature of the micro-moments that capture our attention as researchers, a directed focus we encourage those working with IE to explicitly explore as they seek to uncover multilayered actualities that have for too long been just beyond our gaze.

CODA: FROM DEFINITIONS TO POSSIBILITIES

It is one goal of the IE researcher to sit with exactly these moments of intersection, intractability, and lively, lovely mess, learning from them *as they are* over how we assume or might like them to be. Relations and actualities are rarely as neatly lived as the research narratives we compose. Unpacking definitions can help us to reveal how we may reply on commonplaces, elisions, and assumptions that subtly undermine our efforts at understanding.

A case in point can be found in Carmen Kynard's pointed antiracist critique, "All I Need Is One Mic': A Black Feminist Community Meditation on the Work, the Job, and the Hustle (& Why So Many of Y'all Confuse This Stuff)." In this talk, delivered at the 2019 Conference on Community Writing, Kynard takes on a common confusion, whereby faculty "base their entire scholarly and professional identity within the college where they work." Yet, she is quick to clarify: "But that's the job, not the work" (19).

"The conflation of the job and the work, however, is only possible for those groups sanctioned within the terms of a default white norm and privilege," she continues. "It is easy to see the job as your work when the people and the culture around you are YOU." Here, Kynard then turns her eye toward the racial erasures and confusions these conflations support, naming them conditions supported by White supremacy and calling us to be more discerning in our understandings of how our work lives take shape through these processes of racialized, ordering, and valuing working bodies:

The fact of the matter is that Black folk cannot readily find themselves in most university spaces (outside of the HBCUs) and non-profit funding cultures so they have to understand rather quickly where the institution ends, where their own lives and minds begin, and not expect a centering unless by way of tokenism. This is an important praxis for leading intellectual and activist lives at institutions today because neoliberalism does not love anyone, not even its white citizenry . . . Black

faculty, especially those with Black content, know the university doesn't want us, hasn't ever humanized us, and only allowed us entry because of Black student protest. (19)

I would be remiss in my work as an activist scholar myself if I did not also pause to note that Kynard turns her eye to critiquing “critical university studies and neo-marxist managerial critiques in composition-rhetoric studies” for being too inexorably “white.”

I imagine Kynard would level a similar critique toward this collection.

And, I acknowledge our need to do better at decentering Whiteness as we take up tools like IE and explore “work” as an institutional construct. Like many tools, IE is constrained by the hands that wield it. And this is exactly why the discerning study of work—our work—matters. These types of parsings and the antiracist work of scholars like Kynard, help us to understand how work that we imagined as liberatory has (perhaps inadvertently) leaned into silence, erasures, and marginalizations of those we work with, despite our intentions to make change or to serve in our roles as administrators, researchers, teachers, and colleagues.

We are called to do more and do better.

I have theorized “our work” in this chapter as a set of practices that are co-constituted in the moments that knowing and unique individuals negotiate their everyday experiences (2012). (In this framing, the term “work” would umbrella or encompass a term like “labor.”) Similarly, Michele Miley has argued that understanding our work as always “coordinated” (and/or relational) allows us to see how local frames of meaning allow us to understand the moments people enact professional identities, affiliations, and understandings of their institutional roles. They negotiate those roles through practice.

What we do simply cannot be separated from who we are and the systems of value that grant that work legitimacy. Doing, being, knowing, individual experience, ideals of practice, local materialities, and institutional discourse are mutually constitutive. With these understandings, we might more mindfully carry out our work as researchers, as we continue to extend and deepen the critiques, findings, and understandings that are made possible when we adopt frameworks such as IE.

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