CHAPTER 3.

VOICING TRANSFER: EXAMINING RACE, IDENTITY, AND STUDENT LEARNING

Crystal VanKooten

Michigan State University

Paired readings:

- VanKooten, Crystal. "A Research Methodology of Interdependence through Video as Method." *Computers and Composition*, vol. 54, Dec. 2019, pp. 1–17.

- VanKooten, Crystal. *Transfer across Media: Using Digital Video in the Teaching of Writing*. Computers and Composition Digital Press/Utah State University Press, 2020, https://ccdigitalpress.org/book/transfer-across-media/index.html.

In this chapter, I reflect on how the decision to ignore race in writing research potentially upholds white, oppressive ways of writing, knowing, and being. To start to identify the importance of race within my research, I look back to video interview data I collected about two student participants of color, and I explore intersections between my white-researcher identity, their identities as Black students, and the conclusions I might draw about their learning in first-year writing. I interrogate the voice and voices within my research as they are connected to race and identities, and I question the ways that transfer becomes voiced in my work: whose voices are the focus, and why? How do I construct and represent these voices through video? In particular, how do I ethically represent the voices, bodies, and experiences of students of color on video? Through exposing my own omissions, failures, and questions related to the intersections of identity, race, student learning, and video in research, I call other (white) researchers in writing studies to likewise begin or continue a process of learning to pay careful attention to the role of race as we design and conduct new research.

> "But my research isn't really about race…" I thought to myself. "It's about student learning, and transfer, and video technologies, but not directly about race. I shouldn't go there. I can't go there—I don't even know where to start."

I had these thoughts as I was working through the analysis of student interview data that I had collected on video for the first-year writing study, a qualitative research project. The student interviewee, Travon, completed a video project in his first-year writing course, and I interviewed him several times across the semester about his learning experiences. Travon was a Black student with a white writing instructor, and I was a white researcher. While this was rather obvious to all of us as I conducted the study, we never explicitly talked about race with one another. Travon didn't mention race or Blackness during his interviews with me, and I didn't ask. But Travon was a Black student, and I was a white researcher, and race and Black experiences were at the center of Travon's video, which featured images and voices from an array of Black students at the university speaking about the school's summer bridge program, as well as Travon as the narrator throughout the video.

Travon turned in an eight-minute first draft of this video, and his instructor then asked him to revise by drastically cutting down the video's length (the suggested length was two minutes). Travon talked with me about his dissatisfaction as he revised in response to the feedback. He didn't want to cut content, and he didn't want to reduce his own role as narrator. "I don't put nothing in a paper or in my video for no reason," he told me. He felt as if something was missing after cutting out his role as narrator to save time: "I'm missing in my video. So that's why I feel like, mmmm . . . it's lacking something."

As I thought through how to interpret Travon's comments about his composing experiences and his sense of a missing self in his video, I talked with a mentor who advised me to pay attention to how race—Travon's, that of his peers and teacher, and mine—were an important factor within this learning situation. And that's when I started making the excuses listed above as to why race didn't really belong in the study. I was overwhelmed with the thought of theorizing Travon's learning experiences through race, and I was unsure (and a bit afraid) of how to proceed in that direction. I wanted to protect the instructor participant (and myself) from negative scrutiny. I wanted to arrive at simple answers instead of complex questions that involved the intersections of learning, video, identity, and race.

A METHODOLOGY OF INTERDEPENDENCE—WITHOUT RACE?

The first-year writing study that Travon was a part of focused on student learning in writing courses, particularly what and how students learn when they compose

with various modes and media. I looked and listened for *transfer across media* within Travon's and other students' experiences, and to do so, I used qualitative and digital research methods. I call the methodological approach to this work a methodology of interdependence through video as method, and I write about this methodology in detail in the companion texts to this chapter, "A Research Methodology of Interdependence through Video as Method," and my digital book, *Transfer across Media*. Drawing on the work of Kristie Fleckenstein, Clay Spinuzzi, Rebecca J. Rickly, and Carole Clark Papper, I approach classroom and interview research scenes as *interdependent*, with elements—participants, environment, technologies, and me—all interacting and influencing one another across "multiple linkages of the research web" and often in "wet, messy, rowdy" ways (Fleckenstein et al. 396). Video, then, is a key method within this research web in that I collect data on video, and then analyze that data and present findings on video, along with more traditional processes of analysis and presentation based in alphabetic writing. As I've written about in the two companion texts, this methodology and these methods often feel (and are) risky, experimental, messy, and chaotic. But they are also generative, freeing, helpfully disruptive, multimodal, and multi-sensory.

In *Transfer across Media*, I ultimately argue that video provides useful opportunities for transfer across media for students in writing courses through multimodal production. I work toward this thesis using an in-depth look at the digital video composing experiences of eighteen students in six different writing classrooms at two universities. For many students in the study, video composition was a productive site for transfer across media. While working with video, students transferred compositional knowledge via various pathways: by envisioning connections between assignments in their courses (*Transfer across Media* chapter 2); by applying functional and rhetorical literacies to a new context (*Transfer across Media* chapter 3), by developing critical literacies through multimodal production (*Transfer across Media* chapter 3), and by developing different kinds of meta-awareness about composition that opened pathways for future transfer (*Transfer across Media* chapter 4). In the book, I describe and analyze these moments of transfer via prose and via video, exploring recorded excerpts from classroom observations and interviews, as well as documents such as student-authored videos.

Much about the methodology of interdependence and the corresponding methods for *Transfer across Media* was developed and theorized along the way as I enacted the first-year writing study. Through collecting and analyzing video data in many classrooms at two universities across a several-year period, I learned to plan, make methodological choices, reflect, and adapt methods accordingly. The study, for example, was IRB-approved at two different institutions, and I

was allowed to record students in class. If and how to discuss and share recordings and aspects of student identities and experiences, though, was still up to me as the researcher. As part of the informed consent process, I developed forms that asked participants to choose to be identified using a real name or a pseudonym and whether or not to give permission for the use of their recorded images and voices. In this chapter and in other work, I discuss student experiences—like Travon's—using real names with permission, and I share images and sounds from recordings also with permission.

In "A Research Methodology of Interdependence," I offer detailed description of the messy process of designing, conducting, and retooling the methodology of the first-year writing study as I came to understand the interdependent research scene and my own role within it with more complexity. In the article, I discuss how I made decisions like those described above around participant identification and video; how and why I chose to use video for data collection, analysis, and presentation; how I learned to consider and revise my approach to camera placement in classrooms and interviews; and how I experimented with new-to-me ways of data analysis using a video editor that included designing visual and aural juxtapositions, composing multimodal quotations, and using captions and narration for various effects.

I used video in these ways to analyze and present multimodal data about Travon's learning experiences in *Transfer across Media*, along with the experiences of other students who participated in the study. Through videos within the book, readers can see recordings of Travon and hear his speech patterns—and it's obvious from these videos that Travon is Black. But what I now notice when re-watching the videos about Travon is the omission of any *explicit* mention of race in my analysis. I also don't mention my own race, nor do I appear in any of the footage where Travon appears. Even as video renders Travon's race immediately visible, my other choices as a researcher render race nearly invisible. But race, and other elements of participant and researcher identities, are indeed a part of the interdependent, messy research ecology. Leaving race mostly out of the analysis was taking the easy road, a road that I went down willingly and quickly.

In this chapter, I reflect on how the decision to ignore race in writing research, and for me, within my own research on writing transfer, potentially upholds white, oppressive ways of writing, knowing, and being, and at the very least, assumes a neglectful "color blind" stance communicating that race is not so very relevant to writing or learning. Responding to Alexandria L. Lockett, Iris D. Ruiz, James Chase Sanchez, and Christopher Carter, I seek to start to identify the importance of race within my research. To do so, I look back to the video interview data I collected about two student participants of color—Travon

and Daijah—and I explore intersections between my white-researcher identity, their identities as Black students, and the conclusions I might draw about their learning in first-year writing. Following Bump Halbritter and Julie Lindquist, I interrogate the voice and voices within my research as they are connected to race and identities, and I question the ways that transfer becomes voiced in my work: whose voices are the focus, and why? How do I construct and represent these voices through video? In particular, how do I ethically represent the voices, bodies, and experiences of students of color on video? Through exposing my own omissions, failures, and questions related to the intersections of identity, race, student learning, and video in research, I call other (white) researchers in writing studies to likewise begin or continue a process of learning to pay careful attention to the role of race as we design and conduct new research.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF IGNORING RACE, AND WHAT TO DO ABOUT THEM

Lockett, Ruiz, Sanchez, and Carter critique writing studies as a field, pointing to a lack of consistent, critical engagement with—and even a complete neglect of—race and racism in our histories, pedagogies, and methods and methodologies for research (10, 17). They point to a pattern in writing research that mirrors my own decision to ignore race when it came to Travon: "too many rhetoric, composition, and writing studies (RCWS) teacher-scholars-administrators select and execute forms of investigation that inadvertently, or perhaps all too knowingly, sidestep race in favor of less troubled territory" (11). This neglect, they warn, has dire consequences: "knowledge-making reifies colonial perspectives that privilege white hegemony" (17). Lockett et al.'s critique of the field is aimed directly at me and other white researchers like me who are complicit in these actions. To ignore race and racism in research is to promote white ways of knowing and to perpetuate white privilege and white supremacy.

In the past, rhetoric and composition's methodologies and methods for studying student learning—and particularly for studying writing transfer—have been overwhelmingly white. Not only are most of the published writing transfer researchers white (as, too, am I), but so are many of the participants that we have highlighted in published studies. While this whiteness does not invalidate the work on transfer in our field, we are in need of methodologies and methods that look beyond white-student and white-researcher experiences and positionalities and that engage the complexities of identity as it interacts with transfer. As white researchers, we need to look for and acknowledge the role of race and racism in the ecologies we study, and we must discuss our own identities, positionalities, and privileges in relation to the knowledge we seek to make.

Additionally, Lockett et al. encourage white researchers to go beyond simple acknowledgement of race and racism:

> Too often, predominantly White rhetoric and composition researchers carefully acknowledge the importance of taking race and racism into account when teaching and researching while concealing their specific relationship to racial identification. From a decolonial antiracist perspective, their self-image illustrates normative whiteness. They are almost always strategically naive, appearing before their audiences as benevolent, well-meaning colonizers who generously utilize their social status and privilege to study subaltern populations such as our composition students, or other downtrodden "barely literate" or "aspiring-to-become-literate" populations—including their historically marginalized colleagues (Heath; Sternglass). However, such posturing raises questions about how racial dynamics affect exchanges of power between researcher and the researched. (24)

To better illuminate these exchanges of power, Lockett et al. call white researchers to much action: to disclose what is at stake when writing about race, to take risks as they do so, to explicitly identify a relationship to race and racism, to acknowledge identity and privilege, to articulate how historical practices of exclusion are related to current practices, and to concede the limitations of their cultural knowledge as an outsider (25-26).

Below, I further discuss the first-year composition experiences of Travon, and of a second Black student from the first-year writing study, Daijah. As I do so, I take a few small steps toward responding to Lockett et al.'s call to identify, acknowledge, disclose, articulate, and concede when it comes to the role of race in research. I grapple with my own white researcher identities in relation to the data relating to Travon's and Daijah's writing experiences, and I ask questions that I hope will push me and other researchers toward more just and equitable research outcomes, for the field and for our students.

"ABOUT TO LOSE MY VOICE": TRAVON

Bump Halbritter and Julie Lindquist usefully trace the history of *voice* in writing studies, citing lively conversations about the metaphor of voice in student writing in the 1990s (see Kathleen Blake Yancey's 1994 collection *Voices on Voice*), followed by a waning interest in voice into the 2000s. Halbritter and Lindquist suggest we now "make an enthusiastic return to consideration of voice" through

digital composition, where "qualitative researchers have ever-increasing capacities to make and manipulate audiovisual materials" (section 2, "The Idea of Voice"). "What does it mean to have—that is, to be in possession of—an audible voice?" they ask, demonstrating how editing audible voices can transform how we consider, share, and speak through research data (section 2). In section 4 of their webtext, Halbritter and Lindquist ask another set of questions about soundwriting that lead me to engage differently with the data I collected about Travon, especially as I think through Lockett et al.'s call for white researchers to pay more attention to race. Halbritter and Lindquist ask, "What are the roles of the researcher(s), who (all) emerges as the authors, who (all) speaks, who (all) hears, who (all) has the final say, and to what ends?" (section 4, "Listening Ahead").

Through research videos like those in *Transfer across Media*, Travon and other students speak: we hear their voices and see their bodies move. But I as researcher make methodological choices that control when, how, and how much they speak through selection and editing of interview clips. Halbritter and Lindquist's questions remind me that I all too often have "the final say" about what happened with a student's learning experiences. For example, you can read about, watch, and listen to Travon discuss his learning experiences in first-year writing in section 4.3 of *Transfer across Media* (https://ccdigitalpress.org/book/transfer-across-media/4-3-meta-awareness-of-process.html), where I include a research video featuring Travon speaking along with my own multimodal and written analysis of his experiences. The narrative I construct and present in this section, through both the video and written paragraphs, presents Travon as beginning his writing course disliking revision, but through the process of revising his papers and his video (and cutting out his narrator role), he develops a "meta-awareness of how revision might be one not-so-terrible tool he could use as a writer" (*Transfer across Media*, 4.3).

It may be that my tidy conclusions that Travon learned how to *really* revise through his writing course, and that video served as a site for transfer of this knowledge across media, serve my own ends as an eager, optimistic researcher. I return to the accounts of Travon's experiences now to explore how race and racial dynamics may have played a part in his learning. "Who (all) has the final say, and to what ends?"—Halbritter and Lindquist's question reminds me that the research conclusions I reach and if and how I choose grapple with the complexities of identity factors such as race, all of this makes a difference for the outcomes the research might achieve.

Looking back to my first interview with Travon near the beginning of the writing course, Travon talked about composing the first paper, a literacy narrative. He drafted the paper in one sitting and turned it in, and then met with

his instructor to discuss the draft. She asked him to revise a lot of the content, according to Travon: "she tore it down paragraph by paragraph, sentence by sentence, kind of like, 'Okay, this don't need to be here. You'd be better on this one. You need to examine this more, more clarity.'" Travon described the process of receiving this feedback and considering how to revise the paper as "painful," continuing, "I'm about to lose my voice trying to basically, you know, critique my paper how she is, so I basically just did it over. I added some of her stuff, but instead of just adding what she wanted, I elaborated more on what she wanted so it could be more of my own." Travon was concerned that he was about to *lose his voice* by writing his paper using too much of his instructor's feedback and desires, and thus he compromised by elaborating on her requests in what he considered his own way. It seems important to me now to consider Travon's voice as tied closely to his identity—and to his race—and I note how much value Travon placed on having a clear, unique voice in his writing.

Travon experienced a similar feeling of losing his voice when it came to his video project later in the term. His video was about the summer bridge program at the university, of which he had taken part as a student a few months before, and of which many of his classmates of color had also been involved. Travon's section of first-year writing was a part of the school's Comprehensive Studies Program (CSP), which provided classes tailored to students from underrepresented communities, and his instructor had taught in that program for several years. Thus, Travon composed his video about the summer bridge program for an audience of his instructor and classmates, many of whom were Black students or students from other minority groups underrepresented in the academy, who had also completed the summer bridge program. As I write this, I realize that I never included such a detailed description of his writing course section in *Transfer across Media* or in my doctoral dissertation, where I discussed Travon's and his classmates' learning in depth. As a part of the CSP, Travon's section was filled with students of color (out of eighteen students in the class, twelve—66 percent—were Black, Hispanic, or Asian, and six students were white), which was in stark contrast to other sections at the same school that I observed for the study that had a much smaller minority student representation (in another non-CSP section with eighteen students, four—22 percent—were Black, Hispanic, or Asian, and fourteen were white).

Thinking back to my classroom observations, I noticed the racial makeup of Travon's first-year writing section right away as a white person used to classrooms mostly filled with other white faces and bodies. The white instructor and I were racial minorities in the class, which was filled with students of color. At the start of data collection, I remember being excited because of the racial makeup of the course and its designation as a CSP course, and I was glad that varying

student perspectives would be included in the study. Somewhere along the way, however, I chose not to highlight or even to mention the racial makeup of the class in my descriptions in *Transfer across Media*, and likewise to ignore this element of the research scene in my analysis of the students' work and learning. The demographic statistics listed above make clear that racial dynamics were likely often relevant in such a course, as students of color interacted often with each other and with a professor and a researcher of a different race. To ignore race as a factor that may have had influence on student learning in such a situation seems, at the very least, foolish and irresponsible.

So, Travon composed his long video draft for his classmates—many of whom were Black—and the draft included interview clips with other Black students from across campus about their experiences in the summer bridge program. When Travon's writing instructor asked him to cut down his video, he went to the in-class peer editing workshop (see Figure 3.1) asking for advice on how to cut the video down, and his classmates suggested he cut out himself as narrator: "They were leaning towards, *well, maybe if you cut yourself out and keep the interviews*, and I was like, *well, fine* [shrugs shoulders]." Travon's classmates gave advice that attempted to align with the instructor's feedback, and thus the instructor's suggestion and the assignment's length requirement dictated Travon's compositional choices. In the moment, Travon shrugs, seemingly ambivalent, feeling forced to make cuts that he didn't want to make and to remove himself from the video. In the end, Travon was not happy with the result: "it didn't turn out how I wanted it to turn out. [. . .] I had to cut a lot of the themes out that made the video more creative how I wanted it."

Figure 3.1. Travon (left) workshops his video in class with two peers.

Travon's earlier statement again comes to mind: "I'm about to lose my voice . . ." Reflecting on his statement now causes me to wonder, what is at stake when we (instructors) ask students, and especially students of color, to heavily revise their work with our (white) input? What standards or conventions (here, the length of the video) are important to uphold, and what do we trade when we uphold these conventions over other concerns, such as voice? What do we *lose* when we ask students to write and revise in ways that *we* stipulate? For Travon, we may have lost some of what he interpreted as his own voice. We may have lost footage highlighting other Black experiences at the university. We may have lost perspectives of students of color at a predominantly white institution. And as a researcher, I originally decided not to dig into the potential role of race in this situation.

Halbritter and Lindquist question: "Who speaks? Who has the final say? And to what ends?" Revisiting this data about Travon's composing experiences with explicit attention to race highlights that Travon did not speak in ways he valued highly nor have the final say in this compositional moment—and he felt it. The instructor's pull and power were strong, and her values as to what was needed in the composition were different than Travon's. Even so, Travon took the feedback, revised his video, and by the end of the course, he spoke about the importance of learning to revise his work overall, something he rarely did before the course. In *Transfer across Media*, I focused on Travon's learning about revision, which may have been the "end" that the instructor valued. An alternate "end" would perhaps simultaneously value and encourage the development of the writer's own voice in ways that the writer envisions, a voice that may be closely tied to race and other identity factors.

LEAVING OUT A VOICE: DAIJAH

Halbritter and Lindquist state that "sometimes, it is the conspicuous absence of voice that speaks most loudly" (section 6, "No Words, Guys. No Words."). In their project, they discuss the ethics of representing Jovanna's voice on video, the sister of their research participant Liberty. Jovanna "has no spoken language," due to severe cerebral palsy, and Liberty introduces the audience to Jovanna on video in a dark bedroom, where Jovanna is barely visible. Halbritter and Lindquist describe for us what decisions they made when deciding how to edit—or not to edit—the footage and audio where Jovanna appears. In the transcript for their videos, they chose not to transcribe Jovanna's nonverbal sounds, rendering her voice "conspicuously absent" from the transcript. They explain, "we do not mean to silence Jovanna's voice, but to help you *see* the conspicuous absence of her audible voice and offer to you our shared challenge: How do we transcribe

what we may be only beginning to hear, let alone understand?" In combination with the transcript, the audiovisual video footage of Liberty and Jovanna thus "allows viewers/auditors to sort through, negotiate, position, and reposition the action in this scene" for themselves and to evaluate Halbritter and Lindquist's interpretations (section 6, "No Words, Guys. No Words."). Halbritter and Lindquist's careful discussion of how they negotiated (and omitted) visual and aural representations of Jovanna leads me to return to my experiences with student participant Daijah, and my omission of much of her voice from my study.

I didn't write very much about Daijah or compose any videos about her experiences in *Transfer across Media*. I may even say now that her voice was left out of the book in many places, or that there is a "conspicuous absence" of her voice in my work. In part, this absence occurred because the coding and analytical methods I used did not lead me to write much about her. I also shied away from in-depth analysis of Daijah's experiences because she did not complete the multimodal composition assignment that was at the heart of the study. In Daijah's course, this assignment was the Career Investigation Project, where students were asked to select a future career of interest, research the career using primary and secondary methods, and report on their research through a one-minute video, a Prezi, and an in-class oral presentation. Daijah talked with me during an interview about working on her video and Prezi, but she never turned in the final draft.

Looking back, I now question what was going on in my coding process that Daijah's experiences rarely came up in my coding scheme. I coded the interview data with a grounded theory approach to analysis (Corbin and Strauss; Merriam). I read and re-read through interview transcripts, placing codes on meaningful excerpts, and then I grouped these codes into categories. Themes emerged as I looked across and further grouped the categories. I then used these emergent themes and the coded segments of data within them to select and arrange video clips within a video editor. I further analyzed selected clips through video editing, cutting down the clips, moving them around, and placing them into juxtaposition with other clips. After working with the data in this way, I selected some student participants to feature in research videos or sections of the book. Travon was one such student who I featured in his own research video, linked in the previous section. But excerpts from Daijah's interview did not appear often across the analytical categories. In the end, because her material rarely appeared in my coding scheme, I did not feature Daijah in her own research video in the book, and during the analysis process, I didn't consciously reflect over why.

My choice to leave out Daijah's voice from many parts of the book was surely influenced by a web of complex factors. But unlike Halbritter and Lindquist, I made no careful, informed decision to omit or edit her voice. In light of Lockett et al.'s urging to acknowledge and think more often about race as a factor that

influences research and student experiences, I return to my interviews with Daijah to ask questions about the potential role of race and other identity factors in her learning and our interactions, and perhaps in my analysis of the data. I was a white female researcher in a position of power, looking for insight into how multimodal composition may or may not have contributed to moments of transfer for first-year writing students. Daijah was a Black female student who didn't have a great experience with the multimodal project in her course, and ultimately didn't turn it in for a grade.

Daijah chose to do her Career Investigation Project on becoming a dentist. As part of the project, students had to research the role of writing and communication in their chosen career. However, Daijah hit an early roadblock when she interviewed an orthodontist who told her that they didn't use writing and communication outside of referrals. Daijah told me that with this information, she would have preferred having to write a more traditional essay instead of a multimodal project. She stated, "I would have rather wrote a paper on it. [. . .] Because I think it depends on the career you have. Like mine, it's not really much I could—not much I can say. It's not a lot to talk about, 'cause we don't—as an orthodontist, you don't really use writing in your daily job. I would have rather just had a regular writing assignment." Daijah seemed stymied by the unexpected information she collected from her interview, and this combined with the video and Prezi format of the project, made it difficult for her to know how to proceed.

At the end of class, Daijah told me that the video/Prezi project was the project she could see having least application to her future writing. Prezi, she reported, made it harder to organize her thinking:

> *Daijah*:   It was just like with the Prezi, … It was like you need to know exactly where you want to put things or it can get confusing to have to take it out and put it back and makes it like it was just—I'd rather be able to erase it or backspace delete and then type it again.
>
> *Crystal:*   It wasn't easy to put—to organize your ideas?
>
> *Daijah:*   Yeah, to organize my thoughts.

A few seconds later, Daijah added, "I mean it [the multimodal project] did teach me one thing, that I don't want to be a dentist anymore." Due to her struggles with the assignment, along with what she learned as she talked with and observed a professional in the field, Daijah seemingly altered her career aspirations.

There is much here that would be useful to dig into for a researcher interested in how multimodal composition might facilitate transfer across media, or why

transfer might not occur in a given learning situation. Daijah did not experience transfer as I was defining it in my study, but she did begin to articulate why Prezi in particular was a difficult composing environment for her, especially when faced with unexpected information about her research topic. In looking back to my codes from when I open-coded Daijah's interview transcripts, I did mark Daijah's comments about the multimodal project as a negative instance of transfer across media. I did not follow up on this code in my later analysis or selection of data to use and feature, though, and Daijah's narrative of struggling to compose with unexpected information and with Prezi did not make it into any publications nor my book—until now. This omission is not necessarily rooted in race. However, had I been more open to exploring the many factors—including race—that were influencing Daijah's learning, I might have been more curious about her narrative, and more willing to dig into what I may have considered "disconfirming evidence," evidence that I thought didn't further my thesis of video as an apt site for transfer.

Daijah also mentioned that she missed the peer review session for the Career Investigation project, and we did talk a little bit about why:

> *Crystal:* Okay. You just missed it [the peer review]? *[Pause]*
>
> *Daijah:* It was. It was online. I think it was a homework, but your Prezi had to be done, and mine wasn't done in time for it to put the link up.
>
> *Crystal:* Okay, so you didn't put it up?
>
> *Daijah:* No.
>
> *Crystal:* Do you want to talk about what was going on with it and why you couldn't finish it on time?
>
> *Daijah:* It just wasn't ready in time. *[Laughs a bit while speaking]*
>
> *Crystal:* That's all you want to say? *[Laughter]*
>
> *Daijah:* Yeah.
>
> *Crystal:* Okay. That's fine.

Why was Daijah reluctant to talk with me about her missing work, and why did the fact that she did not turn in the assignment for a grade not come up in our conversations? We both laugh in the exchange above in part because the interaction was a little bit forced and awkward. (To view a recording of this interaction between Daijah and me, please visit https://youtu.be/nAk8a6icSe8). She didn't want to elaborate, and I wanted more information.

Figure 3.2. Daijah and I talk during an interview.

Perhaps Daijah did not want to share her shortcomings with me, a researcher of a different race that she didn't know well. Perhaps there was a personal situation in her life preventing her from finishing the assignment that she did not feel comfortable sharing. Perhaps she thought I might judge her negatively for not completing the work, or she knew that I was a fan of digital composition and she was not. Asking these questions about our interaction and identities, though, was something I did not do as part of my initial analysis of Daijah's interview material.

While Daijah was not a fan of the multimodal assignment, she talked at length about another assignment from the writing class that she *did* enjoy, the ad analysis essay. Students were tasked with selecting an advertisement, analyzing the rhetorical situation and appeals within the ad, and then redesigning the ad for a new audience. Daijah's selected ad was a print ad for leave-in conditioner from the magazine *Ebony*, a magazine tailored to a Black audience. This assignment was one of Daijah's favorite assignments from the class because "it wasn't something I had to research. . . . I'd rather talk about something that I could possibly make up than actually help to have the facts from or about." Here, Daijah begins to articulate the value that she placed on writing about something she had personal knowledge and connection to, instead of writing about a disconnected topic that required outside research. Indeed, she told me during our first interview that "I'm more of a better freestyle writer. Like I'm not good on specific topics. . . . Freestyle writing as a— like you have to write about maybe something that happened to me personally, or I can just write about anything I want."

Daijah's comments here bring me back to questions of voice in our teaching and research, and of choosing to omit, or even to edit a voice. Whose voice is

edited or omitted in the classroom through assignments that ask students to write about topics they can't (or don't) invest in? Whose voices are edited or omitted from our research when we code and categorize data with stated (or unstated) priorities? Halbritter and Lindquist explain that for video and sound editing, "the voice of the editors is characterized not by way of sound as much as by way of choice" (section 7, "Audible Voice as Synecdochic Identity"). What choices did I make as a researcher that then ultimately silenced Daijah's voice?

For Daijah, the answers to Halbritter and Lindquist's questions of "who speaks? Who has the final say? And to what ends?" are complex. Personal factors that included race and racial dynamics between her and I may have influenced Daijah's willingness to speak in interviews. Then, my analytical choices as the researcher, some deliberate and others less so, also influenced her ability to speak within the study. Revisiting Daijah's experiences now makes clear that paying closer attention to how race and identity influence who speaks, how they speak, and who does not speak is an important and often overlooked aspect of research methodology and reflection.

TOWARD ANTIRACIST METHODOLOGIES AND METHODS

Lockett, Ruiz, Sanchez, and Carter note that "racial dynamics affect exchanges of power between researcher and the researched" (24), and this is indeed true in the first-year writing study, as this chapter begins to reveal. As a white researcher, I am someone who benefits from white privilege, a relatively able body, a tenured faculty position at a university, and many other support systems. In revisiting and asking questions about Travon's and Daijah's learning experiences and my choices as the researcher, I expose some ways I was careless with or even misused my power and privilege, ignoring or directing attention away from race as a contributing factor in the interdependent research scene. While it might seem that the use of video for data analysis and presentation automatically brings race and other identity factors to the forefront of research, my reflections and remaining questions make clear that it is indeed possible to virtually ignore race and race's influence on research findings even while viewing, listening to, selecting, and editing images and sounds of Black bodies and Black voices. Such a color blind researcher stance does no favors to participants from traditionally marginalized groups, and in fact perpetuates a white, seemingly-raceless learning environment where race and other identity factors are not relevant.

At stake in the revisiting within this chapter is the need to disrupt comfortable whiteness, where white researchers get to dismiss questions of race and identity as irrelevant to inquiry, or as too complex or enmeshed to consider. At stake is a need to strive for greater equity and justice for BIPOC students and

research participants, even if that equity means admitting carelessness or fault on the part of the researcher. At stake is the ability to design and conduct research that is not simply aware of race, but overtly antiracist.

In this chapter, I look and listen more carefully to Travon and to Daijah with these high stakes in mind, and I conclude now with several takeaways gleaned from this revisiting that I hope might be useful to other researchers. First, researchers might more often consider the role of identity factors such as race *from the start* in writing research, even if the study at hand isn't explicitly about identity or race. I may have paid closer attention, for example, to particular moments in Travon's and Daijah's narratives had I been looking and listening specifically for ways their identities intersected with their learning, or I may have noticed additional information had my researcher senses been better attuned to race and identity as they intersected with learning from the beginning.

Second, it is likely normal and probable for a researcher to feel resistance and even fear when beginning to analyze data relating to race and identities, especially if the researcher is white. Digging into the role of race might be unfamiliar or intimidating, and findings might be uncomfortable or even disturbing. These emotions, however, can be productive and may signal a need to pay close attention to the interaction of elements within the research scene. In response to the fear and apprehension I felt when I was first prompted to consider the role of race in my study, I initially rejected the idea that I might find new insights if I did consider race, and I chose not to pursue the topic, which for a time resulted in the silencing of participant voices and experiences. Instead, the negative emotions I felt may have been an indication that my white privilege was being revealed and that race—my own, the students' and the instructor's—warranted more investigation.

Finally, when race or other identity factors emerge *during* a research study, as they did during mine, it is likely important to explore those avenues, even when doing so requires more work. There may be more reading to do, or different reading, and more time needed. A focus on identity may require at-times uncomfortable self-reflection about race and privilege. It may require asking new questions, or different questions, or learning to be comfortable with difficult, complex answers. These actions are small steps for researchers to prioritize so that more voices can speak freely, so that more voices can have a final say, and so that these voices can help us discover more just and equitable ends.

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