Chapter 1. Writing Center Labor in the Neoliberal University: Where Have We Been (So Far)?

Neoliberalism in the 1970s-'80s (and continuing today) in the United States has had wide-spread ramifications for jobs across many sectors. Techniques of neoliberalism such as privatization, outsourcing, deskilling, deregulation, and globalization all but wiped out some industries (like manufacturing) while also deeply transforming state-supported or state-funded industries like education, medicine, utilities, etc. As whole industries previously controlled or owned by the government were privatized, revenue ballooned even as the costs of these services were largely passed onto the consumer (Cohen & Mikaelian, 2021). In public higher education, this process included de-funding educational institutions and selling off university resources like utilities or parking infrastructure to private companies, even as tuition costs have soared over the last 40 or so years. The concept of "the managed university" is not new–it has been around since the 1980s–and it encompasses a perfect storm of neoliberal practices coalescing around deregulation, deskilling, and privatization. The managed university often sees a rapid increase in student enrollment at a time of decreased funding for higher education. This results in "greater managerial control and a diminishing sphere of academic professional autonomy" (Parker & Jary, 1994). In public universities, the managed university can often take the form of heavy top-down management that includes punitive budgetary practices like responsibility centered management (RCM), where individual programs or "units" are responsible for generating all of their revenue (Giaimo, 2022). In a university, RCM can play out with departments, colleges, or other units under-cutting each other for student enrollments in all kinds of creative ways, such as through the creation of mega-courses or 100-person sections of first year writing supported by an army of underpaid TAs running 30-40 student discussion sections. It can also lead to universities merging, cutting, or outright removing entire programs of study, as is occurring during the time of this writing at West Virginia University (Quinn, 2023). Such practices are part of the corporatization of higher education and, as the COVID-19 pandemic drastically impacted student enrollments and therefore revenues, these and other neoliberal business practices have become even more commonplace, especially as schools experience falling enrollments and ever-more reliance on tuition dollars to remain in the black.

As neoliberalism has shaped the landscape of higher education, so, too, has it shaped the ways in which programs and departments within these institutions are run. Writing centers are no exception to these practices, and there are several examples of scholars grappling with the effects of neoliberalism on writing center

work and doing more with less (Iantosca, 2020; Mahala, 2007; Monty, 2019). In composition studies, more broadly, the COVID-19 pandemic brought such issues to the fore, such as in the article "Drown[ing] a Little Bit All the Time" which identifies a similar set of shifts in increased work demands, especially in teaching writing online with no additional compensation (Wooten et al., 2022). And while many writing center workers have tried to resist neoliberal impulses, there is a trend within writing center scholarship that ironically embraces the logic of neoliberalism–such as through extolling assessment and data–even as it argues that such practices can serve as a buffer against some of the neoliberal practices detailed above. Corporate-education partnerships, conference sponsorships, outsourcing for scheduling, and more have become even more prominent in the last ten or so years, and these trends doubtlessly affect writing centers, as well. At the same time, part of the managed university includes using data (and other empirical markers of success like revenue) to justify budgets or to seek external privatized partnerships as a way to maintain funding, which scholars in our own field often highlight or write about.

So, while we may mean well through our scholarship, our corporate partnerships, and our assessment practices, neoliberalism and its logic inform, drive, and respond to our praxis. Neoliberalism also informs the ways in which our professional associations structure their support and resources, such as through workshops, institutes, and events that prepare a highly transient population for writing center administration. As we and others in our field have found through assessment, writing center practitioners often occupy precarious, non-tenure track positions. Many come from fields outside of rhetoric and composition. And many do not remain in their positions–or in the field–beyond five to seven years (IWCA-sponsored survey on social justice and working conditions, Giaimo et al., unpublished). At times, our organizations, our journals, and our profession may feel like they are recreating the wheel of writing center work to prepare a revolving set of workers.

Other research confirms the high rate of attrition in our profession. In *The Working Lives of New Writing Center Directors*, Caswell et al. (2016) traced the field's discussion of the "work" in the profession, finding its earliest instance in Healy's (1995) report of his survey of writing center directors, describing their demographics, institutional status, distribution of workload, pay. Caswell, McKinney, and Jackson also conducted their own ethnographic study of the working conditions of new writing center directors where they found that the majority of their participants left their jobs not long after taking them. Caswell et al. (2016) also found "advice narratives" to be especially (and troublingly) prevalent, contributing "to our fuzzy perspective on writing center labor" (p. 8), echoing Boquet's (1999) observation that narrative and lore seem to pervade even our historical understandings of the origins of our centers and programs. At the same time, empirical pockets of research have found that work in our profession is more complex and perhaps more mobile and tenuous than we might like to imagine.

Since Caswell et al.'s (2016) study, interest in understanding and examining how writing center and writing program practitioners experience their labor has grown. For instance, Wynn Perdue et al. (2017) examined writing center job advertisements between 2004 and 2014, finding that writing center work was often configured as an unstated "add-on" to the supposedly primary duties of teaching and research. They also found the descriptions to be missing crucial information about the nature of the work, believing "at least in some cases, that hiring committees know that advertising these aspects of their jobs will make the positions less appealing. It is quite possible that this information is omitted intentionally" (p. 284). Many of the narratives in the present collection confirm this finding. The narratives in the collection also extend Perdue et al.'s finding about the identity crises among writing center administrators (WCAs) in terms of balancing their writing center work and identity alongside their other (teacherly, scholarly) identities.

Several books focusing on WCA identity and work have also been published in recent years. For example, Denny et al.'s (2019) *Out in the Center* and Wooten et al.'s (2020) *The Things We Carry: Strategies for Recognizing and Negotiating Emotional Labor in Writing Program Administration* are both edited collections that explore different facets and qualities of writing center labor. *Out in the Center*, for example, focused on the sorts of labor writing center practitioners engage in while negotiating dimensions of their intersectional identities. *The Things We Carry* shared case studies and essays on navigating emotional labor in the center. These collections show the way that our work inflects and is inflected by identity and affect, and each includes calls for more research. Similar to Caswell et al.'s (2016) study, Webster's 2021 *Queerly Centered* is "about a job" (p. 3), but specifically examines what labor looks like when queer people direct writing centers, especially what local and disciplinary phenomena surface alongside queer writing center leadership" (p. 6), finding a distinct imbalance between the labor performed by queer practitioners compared to their straight counterparts. Giaimo's (2021) edited collection *Wellness and Writing Center Work* similarly situated writing center work around identity and wellness practices, problematizing the fact that the incorporation of wellness in workplace contexts tends to focus on optimizing tutor labor–extracting still more of that labor from an already exploited workforce.

So, work is definitely in the imaginary of our profession, and several projects in the field increasingly focus on different aspects of labor in writing centers and administration work such as the *Writing Center Journal* special issue on contingent writing center workers (Herb et al., 2023), the *Journal of Multimodal Rhetorics*'s special issue on care work during the COVID-19 pandemic (Manivannan et al, 2022), the call for submissions on reluctant supervision in the writing center (Azima et al.2022), and the edited collection *WPA Advocacy in a Pandemic: Lessons Learned* (Ruecker & Estrem, 2022). This is just to name a few collections and special issues about labor and the profession, many of which are at a particular moment impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Professional associations (like the Northeast Writing Center Association in spring 2022 and the 2022

International Writing Centers Association Summer Institute) are increasingly offering workshops on labor studies with a particular focus on burnout, workism (Giaimo, 2022), and emotional labor (Mannon, 2023).

Yet, self-care cannot solve larger field-specific issues that arise from neoliberalism like austerity, retrenchment, precarity, etc. Wellness has appealed to our discipline for a long time, represented in scholarship and praxis around Zen Buddhism (Gamache, 2003; Murray, 2003; Spohrer, 2008), as well as in well-being and contemplative praxis work that was produced more recently (Driscoll & Wells, 2020; Emmelhainz, 2020). We argue here that wellness is a stand-in for broader workplace issues. While some of the research on tutor (and student) well-being was touted as helping to make these groups more productive–and, in the case of tutors more effective at their job (Mack & Hupp, 2017; Johnson, 2018; Kervin & Barrett, 2018)–other related issues such as the mental health concerns that tutors bring into their work (Degner et al., 2015; Perry, 2016) are not. They represent a larger issue with the collision of worker well-being, workplace environment and expectations, and the broader societal challenges that we are all facing at this current moment (Giaimo, 2023). Tutors are not outside the world, just as their work is not divorced from the economic, political, and environmental realities of the 21st century, which include the destructive products of neoliberalism, such as climate change, school shootings, police brutality and racism, income inequity, and more. Our work, then, is far larger than addressing wellness and well-being in our centers; it requires a larger examination and critique of our workplaces, of our labor politics, and of the economic and political decisions that have led to our current moment.

Even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, writing centers struggled with attrition and austerity. Half of the twelve people featured in *The Working Lives of New Writing Center Directors* left the field early in their careers. These departures occurred during the post-2008 ("Great Recession") climate of cuts and further neoliberalization in the university, marked by budget cuts, increased pressure on faculty and programs to "do more with less," and ever increasing scrutiny under the guise of accountability (Scott & Welch, 2016). In turn, these conditions have led to increasing instability and uncertainty in academic labor markets. These austerity measures–and the instability they bring–have accelerated during the COVID-19 pandemic era (2020-2023 and beyond). Entire programs, departments, and units have been cut across the country (Dickler, 2020); faculty have been released en masse (Cyr, 2021; Marcus, 2021; Rodriguez, 2021) or faced salary reductions (De Dios, 2020; Flaherty, 2021); while others face increased teaching and overall workloads (Marcus, 2021; Miami AAUP, 2021).

Accordingly, we feel that we are at a tipping point in our field in terms of how we labor. Because no job is safe in our post-pandemic reality, we believe that now is the time to collect narratives about our field before they are lost and before more people disappear from our professional pipeline. We have, through referencing the scholarship above, offered a macro-view of many of the effects of

austerity in higher education and in writing centers, but the lived experiences–the *felt sense*–of those effects are often lost, which is why we turn to stories in Act II of this project. Given what we have learned from the stories collected, we also wish to pool advice for how to move forward with less extractive and precarious models for labor in our profession. Finally, we also know little about why people engage in writing center work in the first place. The serendipity invoked in our introduction might seem magical or otherwise happenstance, but it is imprecise in terms of what people get out of their work, why they do this work, why they stay in this work, etc. Accordingly, we paid careful attention to positive stories about the profession as well, asking "what sustains us in our labor?"

At times, however, a single story details *both* the positive and negative aspects of our labor; this duality, we believe, is also worth pondering. What forces give rise to our joy but, also, which ones give rise to despair? Neoliberalism has been linked to negative collective outcomes in well-being and health (Card & Hepburn, 2022), and austerity is a common byproduct of neoliberalism that likely caused a lot of the wide-spread systemic failures in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly in our health field (Navarro, 2020). While we writing center workers are not on the front lines like hospitals, we, too, have our own professional bellwethers that show us how neoliberalism and its consequences impact our labor. As a profession, we have been circling around this topic for nearly two decades (Mahala, 2007), yet how and why we work is not exactly the same as developing frameworks of labor and resistance. Compositionist James Daniel (2021) distinguishes between work and labor, asserting that labor "is associated with production" whereas work "names the conditions and locations of labor." The present project is thus not only about work–in the sense of how we do what we do and why–but also about labor, the larger constellation of issues related to our profession, our workplaces, our jobs (and its joys and challenges) in the aggregate.

Tracing Invisible Work to Metalabor

Though in the previous section we followed strands of labor associated with academia and writing centers, here we look back specifically to the 1980s to trace the origins of the then-nascent theory of invisible work and update it for our current labor moment. We see it as inextricably linked to this project's emerging theme: metalabor. Many of the conversations from that period–when neoliberalism began encroaching in academia and other spheres–anticipate and mirror many of the discussions we see as (disappointingly) necessary now.

Indeed, it seems that for as long as writing centers have been around in their modern-day iteration (circa 1970), there has been debate about whether or not the model of writing center work is a sustainable and justifiable one (Kail, 1983). While we read about arguments of optimization and growth in early research, we also see concerns about loss of administrative control and even backlash against writing center praxis. We also recognized a commonly occurring concern for

student writers rather than for writing center workers. For example, in "From Factory to Workshop: Revising the Writing Center," Ann Moseley (1984) argues that "limiting the services of a writing center is paralleled by the danger of expanding too much or too quickly for existing or dwindling tutor resources" (p. 33). Dwindling tutor resources:

> threatens not just the existence of the center but its ultimate success with individual students. More specifically, the danger is that in our zeal to be accountable and cost efficient–to prove our success to faculty and administrators–we may be seduced into paying more attention to test scores and number of students than to the individual student and his or her writing process. (p. 33)

While Moseley (1984) gets a lot right about how the booms and busts of writing center resources significantly impact student writers, she pays little attention to how writing center workers are hurt by these same booms and busts. It seems we have always had conversations about our field's "worth," which is measured through only *some* of its production (i.e., supporting student writers) but not others (i.e., supporting student workers). Moseley notes that the writing center administrator, in their "zeal to be accountable and cost efficient–to prove our success to faculty and administrators," loses sight of the "true" impact of writing center work which is not measured in student grades or even number of people served but in individual (and likely incremental) changes to how students write (p. 33).

This focus on the individual student, to our minds, still misses the focus on the systemic and the collective. Kail rightly attends to the job expectations of peer writing tutors and questions whether a model of student-teacher collaborative learning is one that institutions will determine is worth investing in, or, as Kail puts it "whether or not it is worth the trouble" (p. 598). In place of a student-worker centered professionalization model of tutoring is what Kail describes as a deskilled model where "student tutors are used exclusively as quiz graders and exercise givers, lab aides who administer to but do not collaborate with other students who are classified as 'remedial' and in need of certain 'writing skills'" (p. 598). While Kail sees this alternative deskilled model of tutoring as one that preserves faculty autonomy and teaching authority–to the detriment of student writers, student workers, and a collaborative learning model–we see this as evidence of the material change in how tutoring work is understood in the constellation of academic support in a university. In this instance, student labor is intentionally limited in order to shore-up faculty autonomy and other elements of their material position at the university. It also impacts the future of sustainable writing center work.

In the 1980s, there was a lot of concern about how peer tutors might undermine or undercut faculty/teacher authority and, perhaps, even engage in work

with student writers that transforms writing so much as to be considered plagiarized. Implicit within this panic around peer tutoring edging into the work of faculty who teach writing is a kind of class-based fight over who gets to do teaching work and what kinds of authority and resources each group is awarded to do so. The flip side of this, of course, which Kail (1983) also talks about, is how peer tutors and writing centers/labs teach faculty how to teach writing. But this, too, could be seen as an encroachment on academic freedom in the classroom even as it outsources faculty labor to underpaid student workers. Here, we see a model of labor replicated in the university that is common in a globalized economy (and which really picked up steam in the United States in the 1980s): outsourcing specialized labor to a less skilled, lower-paid, and more precarious workforce. These are laborers whose labor is seen as somehow less legitimate, which impacts the "industry" of writing center work more broadly and into the future.

Collaborative learning (and ethical writing center work), then, comes with anxieties centered on workers other than faculty taking over writing pedagogy work: who is qualified to teach, and in what modes? And, as Kail (1983) suggested, the resource-intensive and time-consuming model of tutor training and work might be replaced by a deskilled model to placate faculty. Of course, 40 years on, we know that this model continues to thrive in writing center spaces and even expand to other kinds of tutoring work both inside and outside the classroom and across disciplines. There are even peer mentor models for mental health and well-being, first-year experience, and other, more niche needs on campus. Yet, writing centers are still faced with a deskilling crisis (and one might argue that the proliferation of peer mentor and tutoring programs is evidence of deskilling labor more broadly as universities and colleges grew but failed to invest in fair wages and stable jobs). As many of the stories included in this book note, yearly budgets are cut, staff are reduced, student workers leave for better paying jobs, and quick "fixes" for labor and staffing crises abound. While peer tutoring has become more legitimized as a vital informal learning model, it is no less precarious. While writing center administrators in Act II of this book talk about their struggle to resist the factory model that institutions would like to impose upon them, the theme of optimization runs through many of these stories. As Moseley (1984) suggests, because we are "forced to take on more and more tasks with fewer tutor resources (p. 34), we try to find the middle ground between exploiting precarious labor and uplifting it. In this way, it seems, very little has changed in nearly half a century, though writing centers are perhaps even more ensconced in the neoliberal university today simply because academia has become increasingly corporatized and managed.

At the same time, this is *not* the 1980s. Writing centers have become academic and scholarly spaces in their own right and have continued to employ tutor workers as these field-wide conversations have developed. We have several professional conferences, organizations, and journals, and a deep commitment to peer training and mentorship, as well as peer-led scholarship and assessment.

Many of the old insecurities have given way to newer ones, though we still can hear echoes of the past in them: organizational challenges, structural changes, resource limitations, limited legitimacy, and (implicit but very often left unarticulated) labor anxiety.

These issues with how we labor can also be traced back to the 1980s with what Arlene Kaplan Daniels (1987) formulated as *invisible work*. Daniels argued that work is often perceived as legitimate–as visible–only if it is public, compensated, and valued. As a field, we often search for legitimacy through over-working, working outside of our contracts and bounds, and through taking on volunteer service and care work. In short, an argument can be made that our field has been suffused with invisible work–work that might be visible to the field but not our institutions–ever since writing centers were first established. Created by contingent workers (adjuncts, graduate students, faculty wives) and supported by volunteer labor, writing centers *are* invisible workspaces. Since then, we have struggled to establish our legitimacy, but perhaps this is the very paradox that we find ourselves confronting: we are asking (demanding) others to recognize our invisible work when we might not even really note it ourselves.

For instance, Grutsch-McKinney (2013) has explained the problems of coziness and comfort as part of the "grand narrative" around center work. Grutsch-McKinney has also (2005) examined the problems of the governing metaphor of "home" for writing centers. This metaphor is problematic for several reasons: because homes are "culturally marked" (Grutsch-McKinney, 2005, 6); because for some students, schools are an escape from home and because of the gendered assumptions informing notions of "home" in Western cultures and thus of writing center work (p. 17). Yet, homes also involve unpaid labor, which is disproportionately performed by women (Dugarova, 2020). Writing-center-as-home makes the workspace freighted with gendered, classed, and raced understandings of work and its value. Of course, Daniels (1987) had already discussed the problems of positioning unpaid labor, explaining that "[i]n short, a real pressure underlying the work of the homemaker is lack of validation" (p. 407). Because it is not seen as work but rather as a natural extension of gender roles, such work is invisible and thus not valued, though it props up the paid economy and fills gaps when social and government support fails. Writing centers are often perceived as (gendered) *care* work, and folk knowledge–common sense–around care work is that it is not *real* work. The connection to domestic spaces and, inevitably, unpaid labor has been considered in the field. However, a larger labor-focused study in our field has yet to be produced on this topic. In this project, we develop and extend Daniel's (1987) concept of invisible work, focusing on a particular type of invisible work we call *metalabor*: work for and about work.

This book thus extends a field-wide conversation currently taking place about our work, particularly work during and after (if we are even *after*) the COVID-19 pandemic. And, of course, with the Great Resignation (Sull et al., 2022), or Great Reshuffling, continuing across the United States, and the increase of unionization

efforts in spaces like Apple, Starbucks, Amazon, Kaiser Permanente, CVS, and GM (among many others), we are in an exciting moment where workers in many different industries have more power than at any time since the 1970s. Higher education is due for a reckoning, as the strikes at Rutgers and the UC system over the last year and a half–2022-2023–indicate. We are excited to contribute to this body of research but also offer practical guidance on how to advocate for one's personal labor rights as well as the rights of others. This book and the stories it contains, then, are a bellwether for our profession. We ought to listen.

Race, Capitalism, and Labor Studies

While we collected many stories about work in this project, many of them were written by white people. BIPOC contributors do share their stories, but many of those stories focus more on labor and capitalism than on racial identity or the intersection between race and labor. Yet, many labor stories also talk about the intersection of work with gender and sexuality, which leads us to ask: who feels empowered to talk about their labor *and* their identity? And what can we do to encourage narratives about both race and labor?

Currently, as in the past, there seems to be a split between research and scholarship on race and on labor–a kind of bifurcation that has roots in overtly racist union tactics and the collapse of coalition politics of the latter half of the 21st century. In the field of composition studies, scholars have moved away from studying how capitalism impacts its labor, though such studies were more pervasive in the 1980s and '90s. Instead, as Daniel (2022) notes, "interest in this critique [of capitalism] have declined over recent decades, with scholars increasingly moving into other areas, often situating themselves within critiques of identity with nominal relation to capitalism" (p. 13). Yet, the exploitative nature of capitalism enables and encourages racism and other systems of oppression through both economic and social control. While counterstory research featuring BIPOC voices has increased, we hope to see more pieces exploring the intersections of how class, race, and other forms of marginalized identity develop, survive, and are impacted by capitalism. These issues are not mutually exclusive–far from it–and they warrant exploration that bridges these fields of study.

Of course, because rhetoric and composition and the subfield of writing center studies are largely white fields, it makes sense that BIPOC writing center workers might not want to share their stories because there might be consequences that accompany such sharing. This is, of course, just one reason among many not to share overtly racialized labor stories. But we look to stories featured elsewhere that show us the power of linking race and labor. We see it in "Dear Writing Centers: Black Women Speaking Silence into Language and Action," where Talisha M. Haltiwanger Morrison and Talia O. Nanton (2019) talk about oppressive "toxic positively" workplace practices that prioritize comfort over worker safety and the white fragility of writing center workers which led to the unfair

treatment of a Black tutor and her subsequent dismissal/resignation from her position. This piece features the story of a fumbling and unfair manager, uncomfortable white tutors, and a workplace that could benefit from worker meditation, updated worker policies, and training on microaggressions and cultural differences in communication (among other things). We also see this in stories like that of Neisha-Anne Green in "Moving beyond Alright: And the Emotional Toll of This, my Life Matters Too, in the Writing Center Work" (2018), a speech at the International Writing Centers Association conference in 2017 and published in *Writing Center Journal* (2018), where she details the micro and macro aggressions she experienced as a Black female writing center director at a school where several racist incidents targeting Black students and workers occurred. She talks about her Blackness–her racial identity–alongside her labor. Race and work are intertwined as she shares stories of alienation and aggression in writing center work and in higher education as the first Black woman in all of her (highly visible) writing center jobs.

So little has been written about these taxes and tolls that BIPOC workers experience in writing center labor, though, as both Morrison and O. Nanton (2019) and Green (2018) pointedly note, racist writing center workspaces have profound negative effects on Black (female) workers. So, in addition to invisible work–which we all perform for one reason or another–our BIPOC colleagues are doubly or even triply "taxed" in their work. As researchers Travis and Thorpe-Moscon (2018) explain:

> Emotional Tax is the combination of feeling different from peers at work because of gender, race, and/or ethnicity and the associated effects on health, well-being, and ability to thrive at work. These experiences can be particularly acute for people of color who fear being stereotyped, receiving unfair treatment, or feeling like the "other" (i.e., set apart from colleagues because of some aspect of their identity such as gender, race, or ethnicity). While most experiences of otherness are detrimental, a lifetime of being marginalized can have uniquely potent effects, including on health and well-being. (n.p.)

Yet, we know little about Black or BIPOC approaches to confronting their WCA work. Though Green details learning how to "fill these positions . . . as myself" (p. 21), the philosophical and ideological approaches to being a BIPOC writing center administrator are only alluded to in her piece.

Sheila Carter-Tod's chapter "Administrating While Black: Negotiating the Emotional Labor of an African American Female WPA" (2020) provides an example of a piece that not only connects race and labor, but also a new Black administrative consciousness. Carter-Tod (2020) notes the need for support systems, and the need to collect stories from Black writing administrators. While Carter-Tod (2020) offers strategies for navigating emotional labor as a Black writing program

administrator, she also recognizes that systemic oppression will not be solved by such individualistic practices. As Carter-Tod (2020) notes in her chapter, our field needs more BIPOC labor stories, and we also need to acknowledge the issues with collecting such stories from a small and potentially vulnerable population. So, in addition to methodological concerns around anonymity and protection, the fact that there are fewer BIPOC writing center administrators is also concerning. This is yet another issue our field needs to confront: we need to make our profession more deeply welcoming rather than rhetorically welcoming, as Morrison and O. Nanton discuss (2019).

In all the stories that we detail in this section, one throughline is the mental health concerns that BIPOC (particularly Black) workers experience due to micro and macro aggressions stemming from implicit or overt racism. These experiences, which come along with being in highly visible positions–such as directing writing centers and programs–create a dual issue: not only is the labor itself devalued, but so is the BIPOC WCA's selfhood. So, while many writing center administrators contend with reduced budgets, or being forced to work for free, there are additional historical and political contexts for Black female writing administrators who experience this kind of exploitation. Green (2018) references a Black Lives Matter (BLM) activist's contemplation of suicide. O. Nanton (2019) discusses emotional anguish, crying, and withdrawing from work. Carter-Tod (2020) talks about self-doubt and hypervigilance in workplace encounters:

> While explanations of these decisions exist outside of race or gender bias, the burden comes with finding ways to work in an environment that requires that you solve the needed administrative problem (functioning without sufficient support or funding) while wrestling with the reading of the situation and further having to regulate your reactions, responses, and decisions. (p. 204)

The invisible work that we alluded to earlier is only further compounded by the kind of scrutiny that accompanies the racialized aspects of each and every interaction that this project's contributors detail in their workplace experiences.

The majority of BIPOC contributions for this project were either anonymous or did not feature explicit discussion about race in relation to labor. A collection featuring a lot of visible white voices on labor is a kind of cliche in labor studies and in labor movements. We recognize this limitation and acknowledge the need for more scholarship that bridges race, class, and labor studies, and we hope that this book can help to foreground some of this necessary future work even as we call attention to the dangers of sharing explicit stories that include race and labor.

In Act III, we argue that to ameliorate so much of the metalabor seemingly inherent in writing center work (we will explain this key concept momentarily), we must adopt an anti-capitalist framework for our labor. So much of the contemporary iteration of neoliberalism is bound up in Max Weber's Protestant work

ethic: gig work, workism, and the fetishization of the grind. This is, of course, a raced, bodied, and gendered conception of what ought to be valued in a culture. As disability advocate Talila A. Lewis (2019) conceives it, ableism is:

> A system that places value on people's bodies and minds based on societally constructed ideas of normalcy, intelligence and excellence. These constructed ideas of normalcy, intelligence and excellence are deeply rooted in anti-Blackness, eugenics and capitalism. This form of systemic oppression leads to people and society determining who is valuable or worthy based on people's appearance and/or their ability to satisfactorily produce, excel & "behave." Importantly, you do not have to be disabled to experience ableism. (n.p.)

Ableism is thus informed by the same sorts of normative values that inevitably exert pressure on other forms of identity in order to extract ever more productivity from its subjects, thus narrowly constructing notions of "normalcy, intelligence, and excellence" (Lewis, 2019, n.p.). within the contexts of a capitalist, patriarchal, cisgendered society. We hope that the stories and work in this project can help make more visible the ways in which laborers in the current epoch of academic capitalism are interpellated and thus create more solidarity among various intersectionalities of identity. In short, we assert that anti-capitalist work is also antiracist, antisexist, anti-classist, anti-heteronormative, and anti-ableist.