PART 1

Voices

1

THE TRAUMA OF GRADUATE EDUCATION

Graduate Writers Countering Epistemic Injustice and Reclaiming Epistemic Rights

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When there's no name for a problem, you can't see a problem. When you can't see a problem, you can't solve it.

—Kimberlé Crenshaw

INTRODUCTION

During my graduate education, I began an empirical study of collaborative writing talk, or one-with-one writing conferences, seeking to identify the power and potential of this talk. I experienced a sense of "transformation" as both a writer and tutor in one-with-one conferences (Godbee 2012), and I noted that many scholars in writing studies similarly attributed extracurricular writing talk as having transformative potential (e.g., Denny 2010; Gere 1994; Heller 1997; Whitney 2008). These initial observations led me to videotape conferences and interview writers and educators involved in ongoing partnerships, in both campus and community writing centers. From this study emerged several focus populations, among them graduate student women, as their work of "asserting the right to belong" in academia emerged as particularly poignant (Godbee and Novotny 2014).

Graduate writers are expected to produce particularly complex and high-stakes writing, from first publications and original research to CVs and other job search materials. They also navigate complex asymmetrical power relations when working with faculty advisors, committee members, employers, and disciplinary colleagues. At the same time, graduate writers are working to create space for themselves and their research projects, commitments, and contributions within higher education. The challenges abound but also emerge differently and with different

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consequences depending on how graduate writers are (institutionally + historically + socially + culturally) positioned. Listening to participants, I heard a chorus of struggles—and downright trauma—associated with graduate education. In articulating what was helpful in making it through the trauma, participants emphasized the importance of writing conferences as essential "therapy"—that is, academic or writing therapy. Without exception, *every* graduate writer in my study used the words "therapy" or "healing" to describe the psychological and emotional benefits of their collaborative writing partnerships.

From these starting points, I describe in this chapter the trauma of graduate education, particularly for people marginalized within academia. In addition to facing everyday microaggressions (e.g., Gomez, Khurshid, Freitag, and Lachuk 2011; Sue 2010), many graduate writers experience epistemic injustice, or harm in their capacity as knowers (e.g., Alcoff 1999; Fricker 2007). Rather than presenting an empirical study, I use stories from research and experience to build our collective linguistic resources for talking about the trauma of graduate education, the problem of epistemic injustice, and the potential of epistemic rights. To do so, the chapter is organized into three sections: (1) defining epistemic injustice; (2) countering epistemic injustice, affirming epistemic rights; and (3) valuing feminist co-mentoring. After defining epistemic injustice, I call for educators to affirm writers' epistemic rights, or the rights to knowledge, experience, and earned expertise. And I highlight cases of graduate student women of color who collaboratively affirm and assert their epistemic rights—work that illustrates why feminist co-mentoring matters in graduate education.[1]

IDENTIFYING TRAUMA AND INJUSTICE IN GRADUATE EDUCATION

The literature on graduate writing and writers includes attention to writing groups (e.g., Aitchison 2009; Aitchison and Guerin 2014); to providing support for graduate writers across disciplines (e.g., Brooks-Gillies, Garcia, Kim, Manthey, and Smith 2015; Lawrence and Zawacki 2016); and to the experiences of and need to support faculty writers (e.g., Boice 1990; Geller and Eodice 2013). Cross-disciplinary literature also addresses the need for various types of mentoring: not only mentoring by faculty members and dissertation advisors (e.g., Eble and Gaillet 2008; Wiltshire 1998) but especially peer or co-mentoring with and among graduate students (e.g., Goeke, Klein, Garcia-Reid, Birnbaum, Brown, and Degennaro 2011; McGuire and Reger 2003; Patton 2009). Together, this literature suggests the importance of ongoing and

structured feedback from multiple in-field and out-of-field, expert and non-expert readers. It draws our attention to the need for support structures like writing groups and one-with-one conferences, as well as the value of the support colleagues and friends provide as mentors.

What has been under-addressed in this literature is the need to counter the trauma associated with graduate education, a trauma Black queer feminist sociologist Eric Anthony Grollman addresses in his blog *Write Where It Hurts*. In a March 16, 2016 post, "Recovering from Graduate School: Rewriting the Trauma Narrative," Grollman argues that to recover from graduate school, it is important to "rewrite the trauma narrative." For Grollman, this rewriting involves "writ[ing] down every challenging, offensive, and potentially traumatizing event or condition" that can be remembered; naming these experiences *as trauma*—that is, identifying "just how traumatizing graduate school was"; and then rewriting the narrative to include moments of "pushing back," "defining [your] career for [your]self," or "defying mainstream expectations." Such rewriting is a process of recasting and reclaiming agency within graduate education and of healing from the trauma. And trauma itself is more widespread than typically realized, as illustrated by the related special issue of *Praxis* on graduate writers and equity (see, e.g., Cedric Burrows's "Writing While Black: The Black Tax on African-American Graduate Writers" [2016] and Neisha-Anne Green's "The Re-Education of Neisha-Anne Green: A Close Look at the Damaging Effects of 'A Standard Approach,' the Benefits of Code-Meshing, and the Role Allies Play in This Work" [2016]).

To explain the trauma of graduate education, we might look to the edited collection *Presumed Incompetent* (Gutiérrez y Muhs, Niemann, González, and Harris 2012), which provides a framework and the language for interpreting the many compounding experiences that lead graduate students and faculty women of color—and those of us with marginalized identities—to experience our worth as diminished within higher education. As editors Angela P. Harris and Carmen G. González (2012) explain in their introduction, the same systemic inequities, pervasive biases, and daily microaggressions that are part of the world around us permeate higher education. And inequities and injustices are further amplified because "the culture of academia is distinctly white, heterosexual, and middle- and upper-middle-class. Those who differ from this norm find themselves, to a greater or lesser degree, 'presumed incompetent' by students, colleagues, and administrators" (3). This experience is widespread and saturated within campus climates, faculty-student relationships, and social hierarchies in academia. It represents

both individual and collective experience, and it thrives in current challenges facing higher education, including corporatization of universities, shifts in academic labor toward non-tenure-track and part-time positions, and the treatment of education as commodity and students as consumers (5–6). Yet, despite its widespread and insidious nature, the condition of being "presumed incompetent" often goes unnamed, making it more easily internalized by those who are marginalized and written off by those with privilege and power.

To illustrate, Brenda J. Allen (2012) describes the impact of the book and its title—*Presumed Incompetent*—on a colleague, a Black woman faculty member, who responded, "'That was exactly my experience in grad school. . . . You just don't know what I went through . . . I can't believe how much this still hurts'" (17). By all measures, this colleague was thriving in higher education, having passed her dissertation "with flying colors," having earned a tenure-track position and then tenure and promotion, and having succeeded at both her home institution and within her profession. Yet, the experience of being "presumed incompetent" marked her experience along this journey and still brought much hurt—much trauma (Grollman 2016)—related to "feeling unwelcome" and facing ongoing "strife" and "struggles" within the work (Allen 2012, 17). What this colleague relates, Allen says, reflects the reports of "countless other women of color graduate students and faculty members who have shared stories similar to this young woman's" (17). And it certainly reflects the experiences shared with me by graduate writers in my own qualitative study.

I begin with these stories of trauma and of being presumed incompetent because they represent the injustice that is part and parcel of graduate education for *many* graduate writers, particularly for people who don't match the "mythical norm." As Audre Lorde (1984) explains, "In america, this norm is usually defined as white, thin, male, young, heterosexual, christian, and financially secure" (116). And this norm defines what is valued and expected within academia to such a high degree that the connections are often implicit, if not hidden, from view. For instance, the valuing of rationality and "value-free science" connects with masculinity and the Western intellectual tradition (Harris and González 2012, 4–5). In turn, "rigorous" or "objective" research gets prioritized in ways that value not only mythical-norm people but also the epistemologies (ways of knowing, being, and acting) associated with the norm. Concomitantly, preferences for the mythical norm carry over into teaching so that white, male instructors are strongly favored—by men and women, white people and people of color alike (6).

The unconscious bias that leads to the favoring of mythical-norm research/researchers and mythical-norm teaching/teachers further influences hiring practices, committee reviews, and systems of tenure and promotion. In these high-stakes contexts, "unconscious bias triggers greater scrutiny of the presumptively incompetent applicants of color while the flaws of white male applicants [or thesis or dissertation writers] are minimized or disregarded" (Harris and González 2012, 8). Such differential valuing means graduate writers who are marginalized face what philosopher Miranda Fricker (2007) refers to as an "identity-prejudicial credibility deficit," or "epistemic deficit," meaning that structural prejudice operates on the hearer's part to give the speaker less credibility (17). This deficit is in opposition to an epistemic or credibility excess that benefits people with privilege and institutional power who are readily listened to/for based on their mythical-norm identities. When graduate writers are presumed to be incompetent, they face not only epistemic deficit but also are further disadvantaged/differentiated from those who have an inflated or excess credibility. The result, Fricker terms, is "epistemic injustice," or "a wrong done to someone specifically in their capacity as a knower" (1).

I turn next to considering the manifestation of two forms of epistemic injustice within graduate education and a range of primary and secondary harms that result from this injustice. Such a discussion, I hope, helps us name and identify what many graduate writers face, as well as helps us imagine and make interventions toward countering this deep injustice.

DEFINING EPISTEMIC INJUSTICE

The work of higher education is work within the knowledge economy, and as such, it involves dealing in—reading, responding to, challenging, and contributing—knowledge. Such work is inherently epistemological, involving ways of knowing, making meaning, experiencing, and articulating (i.e., writing) the world. And such work is not value neutral but instead value laden, with particular ways of knowing valued over others (see, e.g., Deloria 1970; Yosso 2005). This context matters for graduate writers who must navigate their own and others' epistemic agency, entitlement, and rights. Among the many philosophers interested in these matters, Fricker provides in-depth analysis in her 2007 book *Epistemic Injustice* in which she explores the associations among power, prejudice, and the ethics of knowing. Fricker identifies two types of epistemic injustice: (1) testimonial injustice and (2) hermeneutical injustice. Both these types, I maintain, relate to graduate writers,

particularly writers who don't fit the mythical norm and are presumed incompetent within academia.

First, "testimonial injustice" refers to epistemic deficit or the experience of being "perceived incompetent," as it "occurs when prejudice causes a hearer to give a deflated level of credibility to a speaker's word" (Fricker 2007, 1). It occurs whenever prejudice (often implicit and unconscious) leads a hearer/reader to give less credibility to a speaker/writer than otherwise would be given (4). Fricker offers the example of police officers and juries not believing Black defendants, witnesses, and others *because* they are Black. Testimonial injustice can also be seen in situations like the Flint water crisis: though community members knew and reported a number of problems with their tap water, their knowledge was downplayed, if not disbelieved. It was not until professors, physicians, and researchers became involved and verified lead contamination that the media took notice and a state of emergency was declared (see Lurie [2016] for a timeline). Testimonial injustice wrongs people in their capacity to share experiences, give information, and construct new knowledge.

Within academia, we might think of stories like the one Linda Martin Alcoff (1999) relates of an untenured Chicana philosophy professor who suffered undermining complaints from a white male teaching assistant (TA). Not until a senior white professor suffered the same sort of complaints did colleagues support the untenured professor. Fricker uses this example to explain double testimonial injustice, or the problem of not being believed about not being believed. In this case, a first testimonial injustice occurred when the TA undermined the faculty member's teaching, and a second testimonial injustice arose when departmental colleagues failed to believe her reports about the undermining. This double testimonial injustice deeply impacted the untenured faculty member "as a giver of knowledge" (Fricker 48), and we can infer similar impacts on graduate writers, who also occupy positions of institutional instability and vulnerability. As Burrows (2016) writes about "the Black tax," Black graduate writers are often called into question: we find evidence in his own account of being questioned by a white tutor in the writing center. Put simply, testimonial injustice undermines one's credibility and related confidence, achievements, sense of self-worth, and even personhood.

Second, though often working in conjunction with testimonial injustice, "hermeneutical injustice" manifests "at a prior stage, when a gap in collective interpretive resources puts someone at an unfair disadvantage when it comes to making sense of their social experiences" (Fricker 2007, 1).

Whereas the experience of being perceived incompetent represents testimonial injustice, the creation of the term *perceived incompetent* helps correct the hermeneutical injustice of having this experience unnamed and largely unknown. Fricker shows that, historically, naming and defining concepts like sexual harassment and postpartum depression have helped correct for "hermeneutical inequality" (162). When these critical concepts were named, new understandings "awakened hitherto dormant resources for social meaning that brought clarity, cognitive confidence, and increased communicative facility" (148). Such naming counters epistemic marginalization and can open channels—from collective consciousness raising to the pursuit of economic or legal recourse—for challenging injustice.

Again, turning to academia, I think of a story of my own. In my graduate program, students were regularly taking a year or more to move from the prelim defense (earning ABD status) to dissertation proposal defense (initiating data collection), so a new guideline was created, indicating that the proposal defense should take place within six months of prelims. Despite the new guideline, I struggled after prelims with exhaustion, mental depletion, and shaken confidence (from a year-long experience I am making sense of to this day *as trauma*). With concerted effort, I defended my dissertation proposal nine months after prelims, all the while feeling I was behind schedule and therefore falling short. It was not until some months later when talking with a friend in social work (a graduate program across campus) that I learned the term "the lost year." In social work, this phrase names the recovery time needed following prelims. The term itself enables a supportive environment in which graduate students prioritize self-care, and faculty expect students to move slowly through this stage in their graduate careers. When I learned of the term, I experienced enormous relief and a feeling that I wasn't alone. The very concept of the lost year allowed me to rewrite the narrative of my progression from prelims to proposal defense: instead of falling behind, I had actually moved ahead in *under* a year! While not challenging the "more, faster, better" philosophy of the knowledge economy (e.g., Bauerlein and Jeffery 2011), this revision allowed me to redefine myself as successful and to regain confidence. The naming of this experience was liberatory in the way that countering injustice (in this case, arising through institutional power that limits the voices and experiences of graduate writers) can be.

Both testimonial and hermeneutical injustice occur within graduate education and impact graduate writers—and notably some more than others. Fricker (2007) traces numerous *primary and secondary harms* of

epistemic injustice for those who experience it, those who contribute to it, and the communities in which we all live. While epistemic injustice hurts everyone and influences even large domains like the economy (e.g., when a smaller pool of collective resources and contributors limits new ideas, inventions, and their related economic gain), it also does direct, dehumanizing harm to those who experience it. In addition to the primary harm of being wronged in one's capacity as a knower, secondary harms "can cut deep" and "tend to ramify in a person's life" (49). Harms are both wider reaching and deeper than we might expect. When a person is insulted, undermined, or otherwise wronged, they also face exclusion and marginalization: in higher education, this exclusion and marginalization can be felt within one's home institution, disciplinary community, or both.

While avoiding "Oppression Olympics" (Martínez 1993), it is important to note that histories of injustice mean marginalized peoples, particularly Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC), face deeper and more persistent epistemic injustice than those who experience power, privilege, and epistemic excess associated with the mythical norm. Though graduate writers as a group are vulnerable because of student status and are often writing to those institutionally positioned with *power over* them, student status alone does not add up to "persistent and systematic" (Fricker 2007, 54) epistemic injustice. Like other microaggressions, when epistemic injustice compounds—doubling, tripling, and adding up to a serious, ongoing case of injustice—it impacts most directly and deeply graduate writers who are marginalized within academia. When epistemic injustice is persistent and systematic, it cuts down a person based on their social identity (race, class, gender, and other intersecting identities), so it cuts down human dignity, respect, and even personhood. Hence, Fricker describes these deep cuts as a "double assault on one's personhood" (54). It is no wonder Grollman (2016) names the cumulative effect of such everyday microaggressions as *trauma*.

Moreover, repeated epistemic injury can erode intellectual courage, or the ability to take a stand for one's own convictions (Fricker 2007, 49–50). Intellectual courage is an important virtue and one I see particularly aligned with what is expected of graduate writers. Much of our writing in academia involves making and defending claims. Even when we offer original research findings, we present this knowledge by situating our ideas—and, truly, ourselves—within disciplinary frameworks, epistemological practices, and others' scholarship. These rhetorical actions require intellectual courage, as do other communicative actions like seeking feedback from thesis and dissertation directors, speaking

with in-field colleagues, sending manuscripts for review, and promoting one's self through CVs and job-search materials. Epistemic injustice, therefore, impacts the core of and perhaps all of one's graduate education. Think of how difficult it is to "speak with authority" when "a history of injustices gnaws away at a person's intellectual confidence" (Fricker 2007, 50)—this intellectual courage being an essential ingredient of success in higher education.

COUNTERING EPISTEMIC INJUSTICE, AFFIRMING EPISTEMIC RIGHTS

Given this picture of epistemic injustice in graduate education, how do we respond? Though the answers certainly depend on one's institutional power, intersectional identities, and social positioning, answers must involve valuing and affirming writers' epistemic rights. Drawing from sociolinguistic research (e.g., Goffman 2016; Heritage and Raymond 2005; Raymond and Heritage 2006), I define *epistemic rights* as rights to knowledge, experience, or earned expertise. Recognition of epistemic rights suggests the importance of a broader repertoire of *writers' rights*, which would include rights researchers in composition, rhetoric, and literacy studies have long advocated. These include linguistic rights (e.g., Perryman-Clark, Kirkland, and Jackson 2015; Smitherman and Villanueva 2003; Conference on College Composition and Communication 1974); human rights (e.g., Diab 2016; Lyon and Olson 2014); and intellectual property rights (e.g., Lunsford, Fishman, and Liew 2013). This language of rights (of which epistemic rights are an important type) could help us understand how writers are hurt when they—or their language or knowledge—are undermined, devalued, or written off. Further, the language of rights calls on us all (and educators and administrators especially) to value, affirm, and uphold writers' rights and to correct the injustice that manifests when rights are denied. In the case of epistemic rights, this call means we all (and educators and administrators especially) have responsibility to affirm writers' rights to know, relate, report, claim, and act based on knowledge, experience, and earned expertise.

My ongoing research (Godbee 2017) sheds light on moments when educators affirm and when writers assert their epistemic rights. I show how affirmations and assertions of epistemic rights can work to counter epistemic injustice, particularly when writers are supported in "writing up" (akin to speaking up) to audiences with greater institutional power and more implicit right to speak. And through "writing up," writers are

positioned to "upgrade" their epistemic rights—that is, to assert authority in writing in ways that challenge the identity-prejudicial credibility deficit associated with testimonial injustice. Conversation analytic renderings of collaborative composing depict how writers—many of whom are graduate students—"write up" to thesis and dissertation committees, potential employers, and other audiences who are institutionally positioned with *power over* the writer.

As an illustration, one case focuses on two Black graduate student women working within a predominantly white university like the authors of *Presumed Incompetent* (Gutiérrez y Muhs et al. 2012). Together, the tutor Traci and writer Ella B. (pseudonyms) build solidarity that allows Ella B. to compose a strong critique, asserting her right to enter and alter academic discourse. Specifically, Ella B. writes about popular representations of Black women, identifying a larger "damaged discourse" that has been shaped from the outside by unrealistic expectations. In making this analysis, Ella B. engages in self-representation, defining her own experiences through insights gained through original, historiographic research. She critiques the damaged discourse she identifies having experienced herself, and she engages in the very practice she finds reclaims agency: that of Black women writing their own stories.

As a tutor, Traci supports this work by endorsing (verbally and nonverbally) both Ella B.'s claims and her act of asserting herself within higher education. For example, in one interaction, Traci moves her hand like a pen, showing that Ella B.'s idea deserves to be written, recorded, and remembered. Another time, when Ella B. arrives at a strong claim after several minutes of struggling to find the words, Traci says, "That's right! Let 'em know," while holding her fist in the air, a sign of strength and Black power. These gestures (and many others) serve as affirmations for Ella B.'s work. They embody the experience of having another person involved—another person validating, appreciating, and encouraging one's writing, especially when it is likely to be met with resistance. In this and other cases, we see graduate student women of color navigating a largely closed community, which tests, if not undermines, their credibility. And the work of countering epistemic injustice arises in relationship—in the educator affirming and the writer (re)claiming epistemic rights.

Another example appears in the article "Asserting the Right to Belong: Feminist Co-Mentoring Among Graduate Student Women," in which Julia Novotny and I share the case of Charisse and Andrea. The tutor Charisse (a Black woman) and writer Andrea (Chicana) devote weekly writing conferences to talking through the theoretical framework

of Andrea's dissertation proposal in education. This talking involves relating, reliving, and processing past educational experiences—that is, using the feminist/womanist epistemological practice of storytelling (Collins 2003) to make meaning and clarify the central concerns of Andrea's dissertation. Andrea shares her insights as a former classroom teacher, and Charisse positions herself largely as a listener, scribe, and recipient of Andrea's research. In doing so, Charisse assumes the stance of *power with*, or a relational approach of providing mutually empowering/mobilizing support. We describe this relational stance of *power with* as "feminist co-mentoring" for its potential "to redress structural inequities and to restructure power relations" (Godbee and Novotny 2014, 180).

Novotny and I analyze a span of nine minutes of Charisse and Andrea's talk in which "we see Andrea move from a place of hedging, slumping, and what appears to be uncertainty to a place of strongly asserting her argument based on her expertise not only as a researcher, but especially as a former classroom teacher" (Godbee and Novotny 2014, 184). Like Traci, Charisse signals *power with* both verbally and nonverbally, even clicking her teeth as an embodied and affirming response to show when an idea has truly clicked. Charisse validates Andrea's experience as an important source of information and validates storytelling as a valuable form of meaning making. As Andrea shares her teaching experience, she asserts her expertise. In asserting her expertise, she also (re) claims her epistemic rights—again, working to counter epistemic injustice that undermines her expertise as an experienced teacher. (I hope interested readers will read the article for a fuller analysis.)

When undergraduate researcher Natalie DeCheck wrote about Andrea and Charisse in her article "The Power of Common Interest in Motivating Writers: A Case Study" (2012), she described Charisse as having a "deep curiosity" about Andrea's work and a "passion" for education herself. DeCheck shows how an educator's "interest in the writer's work can improve the writer's motivation" (30), and she makes this case by describing Andrea and Charisse's rich relationship, which motivated them both to write, to meet in writing conferences, and to stay focused on their graduate studies. Though Andrea had visited the writing center twice before, it was not until she was paired with Charisse that she began to schedule regular, weekly meetings. Charisse indicates in an interview that it mattered to her that she and Andrea shared experiences as women of color, interests in Black and Chicana feminism, and commitments to equity in education. DeCheck finds that these points of common ground motivated Andrea as a graduate writer.

Like other participants in my study, both sets of tutoring partners—Ella B. and Traci and Andrea and Charisse—form what I would characterize as a mutually supportive relationship of feminist co-mentoring. First, they share challenges they've faced in graduate education, processing epistemic injustice through a sort of therapy to counter trauma. Second, though they are positioned as colleagues (hence, the *co* in feminist co-mentoring), the tutors act as responsible educators by affirming the writers' epistemic rights—encouraging Ella B. and Andrea to write based on their experience and expertise. Third, by working in ongoing writing partnerships, they all are strengthened by having another person involved in writing—someone affirming and also modeling how to (re)claim rights. Together, these pieces indicate the importance of supportive writing relationships, mentoring, and people standing-in-solidarity toward countering epistemic injustice, affirming epistemic rights.

Case studies of feminist co-mentoring highlight that many graduate writers are successfully navigating the rocky terrain of graduate education, especially when working in partnership with other graduate writers. When asked by a colleague how faculty mentors can support graduate writers in this work, I realize we need to employ the epistemic resources we see graduate student women of color employing. These are hermeneutic resources, or those that help us *name* the problem of epistemic injustice, a problem many/most of us must confront within ourselves. We can begin by asking questions like the following:

- Which writers do we imagine as more competent? Which do we presume incompetent?
- What actions do we take when we see presumed incompetence or other sorts of epistemic injustice playing out on campuses or in our disciplines—in courses, defenses, reviews, publications, conferences, committee meetings, and so forth?
- What sorts of knowledge (e.g., empirical data, references to published scholarship, historiography, lived experience, storytelling) do we value *and devalue*? And why?
- How do we support writers who face epistemic injustice and other forms of trauma in graduate education? Do we validate the existence of trauma, or do we invalidate and deny this lived experience? Are we aware of trauma when we see it?
- Can we articulate a full set of writers' rights? How do we affirm epistemic, linguistic, cultural, and other rights? How do we respond when we see these rights denied?

You can imagine how questions such as these will proliferate if we are to engage in ongoing, self-reflexive inquiry aimed at changing ourselves and our institutions. To invest in countering epistemic injustice, we must

invest *both* in seeing the problem for ourselves *and* envisioning more just relations, relations like those we see among the graduate student women of color who affirm their individual and collective epistemic rights.

As I hope is apparent throughout this chapter, the work of countering epistemic injustice begins with countering the hermeneutical injustice that obfuscates naming, identifying, and understanding the trauma of graduate education. As Kimberlé Crenshaw (2016) says in her TEDWomen talk (the epigraph at this chapter's opening): "When there's no name for a problem, you can't see a problem. When you can't see a problem, you can't solve it." Therefore, I hope we all—writers, tutors, faculty advisors, mentors, writing program administrators, and leaders in higher education—invest in seeing the problem of epistemic injustice. Once we name epistemic injustice as a true and significant problem to reckon with, how can we possibly stand silent or still, continuing graduate education as it currently is?

VALUING FEMINIST CO-MENTORING

Once we see the trauma of graduate education, we must ask, like Grollman (2016), how to resee/rewrite it. How do we intervene in educational trauma and epistemic injustice? How do we enact graduate education that upholds and honors *all* writers' rights? For Grollman, rewriting trauma involves (1) "pushing back," (2) "defining my career for myself," and (3) "defying mainstream expectations." When educators affirm and graduate writers assert their epistemic rights, they are engaged in this important rewriting work. I find much to appreciate—and to learn from and to replicate—in the cases of graduate student women of color engaged in feminist co-mentoring. When writers affirm their epistemic rights, they simultaneously counter epistemic injustice, shaking up/off the assumption of presumed incompetence and challenging others to see them (and their writing) differently. These acts of resilience and resistance make use of and also build "community cultural wealth," which Tara J. Yosso (2005) explicates as multiple strengths of Communities of Color.

When educators assume the relational and feminist co-mentoring stance of *power with*, possibilities for reseeing/rewriting emerge (Godbee and Novotny 2014). *First, graduate writers* can acknowledge and tap into the six types of community cultural wealth Yosso identifies: aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, and resistance capital. Cultivating and making use of these strengths make it possible for writers to recover from cumulative moments of trauma in graduate education. *Second,*

educators (tutors, instructors, faculty advisors, mentors, and others) can rethink the strengths and contributions of graduate writers, breaking biases associated with inequitable epistemic excess and deficit. In addition to engaging in self-reflexive inquiry and ongoing question asking, educators can invest more in affirming writers' epistemic rights—not only by working directly with graduate writers (through mentoring, one-with-one writing conferences, and written feedback) but also by advocating with faculty colleagues and changing the culture within programs, departments, and universities. *Third, program administrators and leaders* can value writers' epistemic and *many* rights in all aspects of leadership, including recruitment, hiring, and retention; mission statements and programmatic materials; curricular decision-making and designs; staff education and professional development; budgeting, salaries, and financial matters; and ongoing research agendas. For all decisions, no matter how small, administrators can ask: Does this decision stand in solidarity with graduate writers? Does this decision affirm writers' rights?

As these questions indicate, we must envision institutional change. For relational work to be more than piecemeal—more than Andrea luckily finding Charisse on her third (and likely last) try with the writing center—feminist co-mentoring must be studied, supported, and truly valued. We all—and especially educators and writing program administers—can do more to learn about and create institutional structures that support this important work. These structures might range "from giving individuals 'credit' for the time involved in relational work to rethinking systems of credit that get in the way of more meaningful mentoring" (Godbee and Novotny 2014, 191–192). These structures could include writing groups/conferences led by and for graduate writers of color, as well as professional development for educators to learn more about epistemic injustice and epistemic rights. Additionally, these structures could readily involve writing programs in advocacy with faculty who mentor graduate writers and in collaboration with graduate programs/schools.

Certainly, a number of relational and institutional responses are needed for those of us in higher education to begin intervening in the epistemic injustice represented in the phrase *presumed incompetent*. But intervene we must. We must interrupt the many harms that result from persistent and systematic epistemic injustice. I ask that we consider seriously the implications of epistemic rights as part of a broader repertoire of writers' rights. And I ask that we look to our writing programs for making institutional change. The more we create conditions for graduate writers to engage in feminist co-mentoring, the more we envision

and enact meaningful, mutually supportive relations. Such a relational approach is needed for supporting graduate writers who are actively countering epistemic injustice and reclaiming epistemic rights.

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NOTE

1. Through primarily theoretical, this chapter weaves together cross-disciplinary literature with insights gained through IRB-approved qualitative research (protocol SE-2009-0013 at the University of Wisconsin–Madison and HR-2544 at Marquette University).

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