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### Between You and Me: Engaging Graduate Students in Conversations about Academic Writing

In this presentation, we discuss the process of transforming our graduate writing workshops for delivery in an online landscape. As writing center scholars have noted, there is a significant dearth of writing instruction and support for graduate students (Brooks-Gillies, Garcia, and Katie Manthey 2020; Lawrence and Zawacki 2018). Like the one-with-one conferences and formal writing groups these authors propose, the series of workshops on academic writing we offered to graduate students at the University of Georgia during the Fall 2020 semester sought to better serve a demographic of writers that is chronically under-resourced during a time of disruption and upheaval. Though our move online was necessitated by the extenuating circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, we discovered significant advantages to this new format. Our online delivery of these resources allowed us to reach a broad audience of graduate students across disciplines without expending more resources and to engage in conversations not only about the conventions of Standard American English (SAE), but also about the linguistic White supremacy that those conventions imply. As co-facilitators, we prioritized a conversational mode in these workshops to compensate for the lack of in-person interaction. The flexibility of a conversational back-and-forth between a graduate student working in the humanities (Emma) and a graduate student working in the social sciences (Christina), invited workshop participants to contribute their knowledge about writing in their disciplines and to reflect on how their linguistic heritages impact the formation of their written academic voices.

We use the spatial notion of “betweenness” to frame our reflection on these workshops and to refer to the institutional positionality of both graduate students and writing centers. In developing this framework, we draw from Melissa Nicolas (2008) who describes graduate school as an “in-between space” that is at once stressful and full of potential and from Muriel Harris’s (1995) influential formulation of writing center work as “talking in the middle”—situating us between the student writer and the requirements of the institution. As graduate student writing consultants who specialize in working with graduate student writers, we are situated between studenthood and professionalization, and we are occupants of the murky ecotone between graduate student peers with diverse interests and expert writing consultants who are paid for their ability to consult across disciplines. Furthermore, we are continually caught between our commitment to helping graduate students meet writing goals that are often oriented toward linguistic assimilation and our conviction that linguistic diversity is an invaluable resource. Including a disclaimer expressing our ambivalence about SAE in each workshop signaled our openness to discussing these ideas, and we were grateful for the conversations we were able to have with our graduate student peers. Through the process of transitioning our workshops online, we have realized that this profound and uncomfortable betweenness is also a zone of possibility. Our presentation will illuminate the potential for public-facing, online workshops to address graduate student needs while also fomenting a campus-wide writing culture that encourages linguistic diversity.