

DOING THE WORK OF THE “WOKE”: WRITING CENTER TUTORING AND  
SOCIAL JUSTICE

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL  
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY

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## Chapter One: Introduction and Review of the Literature

### Social Justice as a Theme in Writing Center Studies

For several decades, writing center scholarship has advocated for the work done in writing centers to be transformative, to strive for social justice. Perhaps one of the best examples of this trend in the literature can be seen in Nancy Grimm's work. In *Good Intentions* (1999), she criticizes the idea of writing center tutors offering "help" to student clients, as though they are deficient and need assistance in their journeys toward academic indoctrination. She argues that writing center professionals should value clients' differences and recognize that "institutional practices are not fair" (Grimm 102). Rather than find fault in individual clients for their literacy struggles, tutors "need to hold themselves responsible for not only granting students membership to the academic literacy club but also for changing the gates of that club when change is necessary" (103). She argues that people who work in writing centers need to pay attention to institutional practices that oppress some students and take responsibility for changing the oppressive structures (108).

More recently, in the introduction to the special issue of *The Peer Review* on "Writing Centers as Brave/r Spaces," Rebecca Martini and Travis Webster "reject the notion that writing center tutors and administrators should focus on 'just writing' in their centers"; they reject the move to depoliticize writing center practices and spaces. Instead, they argue, writing centers should continuously endeavor to become braver spaces by engaging in conversations about privilege and difference, "even though it is emotionally challenging and often involves risk taking" (Martini and Webster). Articles within the special issue take up topics such as cultivating positive attitudes toward multilingualism, confronting issues of class in the writing center,

engaging in radical resistance, and educating tutors about social justice in the writing center context.

In her article in this special issue, Bridget Draxler discusses some of the effects of her approach to tutor education, which includes a “perspective of the work [writing tutors] do as ethical, political, and radical.” In one of their tutor education sessions, Draxler and the tutors took time to identify the language(s) of oppression on their campus, paying particular attention to the problem of avoidance when it comes to controversial topics. Having open discussions about the intersection of writing center tutoring and social justice in tutor education, Draxler illustrates, has helped develop tutors’ empathy for others, encouraged them to take up justice-oriented writing center research projects, and motivated them to engage in political protest. She states, “[An] activist approach to tutoring lets us think about making better people, not just better writers. My tutors want to be politically active and they want to promote social justice, and they crave outlets to do that... Writing tutoring is a [small...] but critically important way to promote civil discourse and social justice... We are uniquely positioned to have difficult conversations about language.”

Another recent example demonstrating how the field of writing centers has embraced and promotes social justice can be seen in the International Writing Centers Association’s series of posts on Facebook, called “Social Justice @ the Writing Center.” The feature is “a lead up to the 2018 IWCA Conference... highlight[ing] social justice initiatives at various Writing Centers to help demonstrate the different ways we engage in social justice work.” One of the posts shares Marian University’s story of social justice: it operates a community writing center that provides free consultations and workshops to community writers. The theme for the 2018 conference in Atlanta is “the citizen center,” and the call for proposals states conference attendees are invited

to “reflect on how writing center professionals can engage in active citizenship and social justice work” and to wonder, “how might we actively engage the calls to action that Grimm and others have placed before us?”

### **A Divide between Theory and Practice, a Need for Empirical Research**

I find the scholarship of the field convincing in that I agree there is ample opportunity for writing centers to take up social justice initiatives and that is something they should be doing in order to play their part in shaping a better world. However, based on my experience as a writing center administrator and researcher, I speculate that there may be a bigger gap between theory and practice than writing center scholars would hope. I’ve observed (informally) tutors resist tutor education designed to raise their awareness about language diversity and encourage them to engage in antiracist tutoring. I’ve observed them miss or avoid opportunities to engage in justice-oriented discussions during their tutoring sessions. And when the tutors I’ve worked with have provided input about what they’d like tutor education meetings to focus on, they mostly request information about “practical” issues, such as citation styles, grammar rules, and discipline specific writing conventions. Laura Greenfield and Karen Rowan have also noted the pressure they feel to put off important discussions on racism to attend to “practical, or ‘normal,’ tutoring issues” with their tutors, such as “prioritizing concerns in student writing, employing productive questioning techniques, building writer confidence, and so on” (128).

I have even heard debate in writing center conference sessions amongst writing center professionals about the merit of a social justice approach to writing center work, which indicates that the scholarship of the field isn’t equally convincing to all of the field’s members. In fact, when I introduced this very project to other writing center professionals during a works-in-progress session at the 2017 IWCA conference, one person (name withheld) gave me this

feedback: “Why advocate for social justice in a writing center?... Shouldn’t writing tutors supplement goals of social justice advocacy fostered in instructors’ classrooms, rather than serve as advocates themselves?” His feedback surprised me, but it was unique; other people at the session did not struggle to see how my study fits into a tradition of writing center scholarship that promotes social justice, and several people also commented on the importance of the study.

Nevertheless, my time spent working in and studying writing centers has led me to believe that, although much of the writing center literature promotes a kind of tutoring that demonstrates concern for justice and equality, tutors may not actually be so “woke” as to make it happen, and even some administrators may have yet to buy into the idea that increasing equality is within the purview of writing centers. One thing is certain: more empirical research on social justice in writing centers is needed to help writing center professionals gain a better understanding about how, or even if, social justice functions in writing centers. If practice isn’t responding adequately to the calls of the scholarship, that’s something the field should know so they can address it or adjust their beliefs about social justice as writing center work. My dissertation research has attempted to both test my own experientially based assumptions about the theory/practice divide and begin to fill this gap of empirical research on social justice (via its connection to critical consciousness) in the writing center.

Reflecting on the divide between theory and practice, Eric Hobson posits, “No single theory can dictate writing center instruction. Instead we must reshape theory to fit out particular needs in the particular historically located situations in which writing center practitioners find themselves” (8). I agree with the idea Hobson works toward, that tutors must be flexible and reflective in their practice, especially with consideration of local settings and circumstances, as well as the idea that theory and practice should and do inform one another; at the same time, I

maintain a belief that writing tutors could be more concerned with social justice, and that concern would have the consequence of bringing theory and practice into closer alignment. I believe that good tutoring, or tutoring that does good in the world, tutoring that “make[s] better people” (Draxler), requires tutors to have awareness of oppression and find ways to push back against oppression in their tutoring.

### **Key Terms: “Woke” and “Critical Consciousness”**

The title of this dissertation conveys my interest in what writing tutoring looks like when it involves tutors who are woke. Woke, recently added to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, is used to describe a person who is “well-informed, up-to-date,” especially in regard to “racial or social discrimination and injustice” (qtd. in Steinmetz). In a *Time* article, Katy Steinmetz explains that the term woke “has spread virally in recent years after being embraced by the Black Lives Matter movement,” but it “has been used to describe those who are aware since the early 1960s.”

In a different article about wokeness, Amanda Hess explains the complexity of the term: she confirms that “the ‘woke’ badge... implies that you’re down with the historical fight against prejudice,” that “‘woke’ denotes awareness.” However, Hess says, it simultaneously “connotes blackness.” If you’re a white ally who “walk[s] the walk, [you] get to talk the talk,” but it’s not a term you can confer upon yourself. “Those who try to signal their wokeness by saying ‘woke’ have revealed themselves to be very unwoke indeed,” leading “black cultural critics [to retool] ‘woke’ yet again, adding a third layer that claps back at the appropriators. ‘Woke’ now works as a dig against those who claim to be culturally aware and yet are, sadly, lacking in self-awareness” (Hess). Said another way, according to Hess’s understanding of the term, wokeness is part of the black tradition, so some distrust is inherent for the performance of wokeness by white people.

This third layer of “woke” is similar “social justice warrior,” which seems to always carry a negative connotation: the term is used derogatorily to call out people who take every opportunity to fight for civil rights, but do so in a condescending and morally superior way that is off-putting to potential allies. The two terms, woke and social justice warrior, police white allies’ contributions to the fight for social justice, holding them accountable for authenticity rather than self-congratulation. White people with consciousness, as Hess explains, get caught “between allyship and appropriation... Speaking up on behalf of others... means amplifying the ally’s own voice, or centering a white person in a movement created by black activists” (Hess). This is an important point for me and others in the field of writing centers to recognize, as the field is largely composed of well-intentioned white women.

In her keynote speech at the 2017 IWCA conference, Neisha Anne Green speaks to this audience of mostly white women in writing center work, addressing concerns about how to best do allyship. She says (to paraphrase), “Don’t be an ally. Be an accomplice. The difference between the two is action.” She reiterates the idea that white allies need to walk the walk in order to get to talk the talk. Talk is good, and can accomplish change, but action is better, at least when it is rooted in awareness and working toward social justice. I recognize that some people will take issue with my using the term woke in this study, considering my own white identity. What can I know about wokeness, and what gives me the right to label tutors woke? I use the term, still, at moments in this study to describe tutors who have the kind of awareness of systemic oppression that impacts their way of being in the world.

Another important term in my study that I use almost interchangeably with “woke” is critically conscious. The two terms have very different origins (in the civil rights movement v. theories of education) and tend to be used in very different contexts (popular v. academic), but

they both get at a similar idea, which is the union of awareness and action for social change—although the emphasis for being woke is certainly on awareness first (woke, awake, aware). I see critical consciousness as bringing together a state of wokeness and a commitment to social justice, which ultimately requires (and is the outcome) of action. Another benefit of this term is that it doesn't carry the baggage that "woke" does. Critical consciousness is complex in its own right, but my understanding of the term comes primarily from its connection to critical pedagogy, which was popular in the field of writing studies in the '90s, but has since lost some of its momentum to other areas of scholarship, such as writing about writing. According to Paulo Freire, critical consciousness is the ability to "perceive critically the way [we] exist in the world with which and in which [we] find [ourselves]... to see the world... as a reality in process" (65). Writing tutors who are critically conscious, then, should be able to recognize and make visible oppressive systems, critique them, imagine alternatives, and implement change that works toward social justice. For this reason, and the fact that critical consciousness has been studied empirically in other fields, I have chosen to reclaim critical consciousness as a term that continues to be relevant to writing studies, if less trendy than "woke." Critical consciousness in tutoring practice might look like working with students to critique institutional practices that harm minority groups, imagine ways to disrupt classist, sexist, racist, and other oppressive traditions of language use, and make reasoned decisions about steps to take toward writing practices that are more socially just.

### **The Study: Purpose, Significance, Design, and Findings**

As previously mentioned, this dissertation research empirically examined how social justice happens in writing centers as a way to discover whether my experiences and informal observations indicating a significant divide between theory and practice were accurate. Beth

Godbee, Moira Ozias, and Jasmine Kar Tang, in a recent issue of *Writing Center Journal*, make the case for developing in tutors a “critical praxis” so they might better identify and work in opposition to systemic oppression. As I’ve noted, calls like this for a critical approach to writing center tutoring are common in the field’s literature, yet none, to my knowledge, empirically examine the extent to which tutors are critically conscious and putting their consciousness to use in their tutoring practice. In filling this gap, my study has implications for writing center theory and administrators designing tutor training programs, and it may also be of interest to educators who value critical pedagogy, composition instructors, writing program and writing across the curriculum administrators, and administrators responsible for the general education curriculum and academic support services for students in higher education.

In our current sociopolitical climate, which promotes nationalism over globalism, the separation of people/ideas/cultures with physical and ideological boundaries, and traditionalism over progress, it’s increasingly important that educational institutions value and encourage intercultural exchanges and positive attitudes about diversity. This study, I believe, is important to the field because writing center spaces, when they function as contact zones where people from different cultures connect with and learn from each other, and the roles tutors play in these sites have the potential to change society—for instance, by cultivating positive language attitudes in student clients and, by extension, the people they encounter in their lives outside of the writing center. However, it is important that writing center professionals assess the work tutors are doing to further the goal of social justice, as well as the support administrators give to tutors to take on such a task.

With that in mind, this research project was designed to discover the extent to which writing center tutors in one region of the U.S. (the east central region, for proximity

convenience) are critically conscious and the way they perceive their critical consciousness to influence their tutoring practice. It also examined the characteristics of writing center tutoring sessions at a particular site that employs tutors with reportedly high levels of critical consciousness (in comparison to other sites in the region), and the features of tutor education at that site and how it might contribute to the development of tutors' critical consciousness. The research rests on an assumption that critical consciousness, because it involves both awareness and action, would motivate tutors to find ways to put their tutoring to use for the goal of social justice. When designing the study, I hoped I would be able to identify and describe moments of tutoring for social justice in critically conscious tutors' writing center sessions. Although I recognize that there are ways other than one-to-one tutoring that writing centers can work toward social justice, this study focuses on tutoring, arguably the primary work of writing centers, in order to limit its scope.

I used a mixed methods approach for the research, surveying tutors in the region about their critical consciousness and then selecting one site to study qualitatively. The survey was developed by modifying existing measures for critical consciousness, which are discussed in the literature review below. The case study site was selected primarily based on its tutors' critical consciousness, indicated by survey responses. Research methods are discussed more thoroughly in the following chapter.

Results for the study, although not generalizable, suggest that participants are still developing, to various degrees, their critical consciousness, especially when it comes to awareness about issues related to race and class, but tutors with multiple minority identities tend to be more critically conscious than their peers. Tutors in the study, in general, also seemed to struggle to apply their critical consciousness in the writing center context. I also identified,

during the case study, two factors that seemed to inhibit tutoring for social justice, even though clients were working on papers related to social justice or ethics, the writing center's new director expressed a personal commitment to social justice, and the university as a whole had recently instituted a social justice and diversity initiative for the curriculum. Those two factors were a lack of diversity in the student body at the institution and tutors' tendency toward "niceness." The main way in which tutors believed themselves to be tutoring for social justice was in their use of student-centered strategies. Together, these findings indicate a need for writing center administrators to identify the gaps in tutors' critical consciousness and local barriers that might prevent tutors from engaging in social justice work in their tutoring practices, so that these things can be addressed in tutor education. Tutor education should also focus explicitly on helping tutors recognize how writing centers can unwittingly participate in systems of oppression, unless we make those systems visible and actively resist.

After reviewing the relevant literature, here, and discussing the research methodology for the study, in chapter two, the rest of this dissertation will discuss in detail findings from the survey research, findings from the case study research, and, finally, the implications of these findings, as well as potential directions for future research.

## **Review of the Literature**

### *Social Justice and Antiracism in Writing Center Scholarship*

There are several books on writing center theory and practice that reflect and advocate for a critical approach to our work, although the authors use varied terms to express the ideals they have in common of democracy, equality, and social justice. Elizabeth Boquet's book *Noise from the Writing Center*, for example, uses sound and music as a guiding metaphor as the author focuses on a reimagining of how the writing center is seen/heard and encourages readers to

conceive of “alternative ways of enacting a pedagogy, an administration, a profession” (6). She argues that writing centers should not take up the higher education system’s obsession with efficiency, which “depends upon the exclusion of a third party, whose contributions are dismissed as mere *static in the system*” (51, italics added). In order to grow, learn, and develop, we need to *amplify*, not contain, these “third party” student populations, Boquet argues (67). The book’s intention is to encourage reflection and change in the way students of minority groups are valued in writing centers.

Geller et al.’s *The Everyday Writing Center* likewise emphasizes the critical elements of participation and liberation as they construct their argument that we need to “keep both uncertainty and opportunity possible at all times” in our everyday writing center work (10). In their chapter on “everyday racism,” the authors state a need for writing center workers to account for operations of power, identity, and meaning-making in the writing center context. By doing this, writing centers are transformational and can exert influence on the institutions in which they are located. In *Facing the Center*, Harry Denny advocates “facing the center and attending to the margins, looking to our writing centers and their practices and becoming aware of the ways assimilation, opposition, and subversion come about in them” (165). He’s arguing for a change that might better deal with identity politics and difference. Denny suggests that the method of subversion, as it is used in writing centers, has the potential to increase consciousness-raising. Activism in the writing center, therefore, often looks like tutors and students working together for the rhetorical manipulation of responses to expectations that are placed on them. This critical tutoring builds for a “slow revolution.”

Furthermore, Jackie Grutsch McKinney reflects critically on the grand narrative of the writing center, in *Peripheral Visions for Writing Centers*, suggesting that the narrative has

negative consequences for people working in the writing center environment (85), and that we should expand our understanding and representation of writing centers to include more of the periphery (89), which would help elucidate the complexity of the writing center space and our work within it. In the book's fifth chapter, Grutsch McKinney questions the assumption that one-to-one tutoring for all students is/should be the primary work of writing centers, and, although most survey responses from her research aligned with the grand narrative in this regard, she posits some alternative goals for consideration, e.g. to challenge systems of oppression.

Pemberton and Kinkead's collection *The Center Will Hold: Critical Perspectives on Writing Center Scholarship* states as part of its title that the contributing authors discuss writing center issues from a "critical perspective." Grimm has a chapter in the book, for example, that argues that we bring research, service, and teaching together in our writing center work (57). In doing so, writing centers are positioned as "change agents rather than protectors of the status quo" (57). In "Really Useful Knowledge," Marilyn Cooper advances a similar idea, that "writing centers are in a good position to serve as a site of critique of the institutionalized structure of writing instruction in college," and tutors, therefore, "should... create useful knowledge about writing in college and... empower students as writers who also understand what writing involves and who act as agents in their writing" (336). Clearly, Cooper isn't alone in this call for institutional critique and empowering students to act as agents, which are two of the foundational elements of a critical pedagogy, the tradition from which critical consciousness stems. Cooper's point, although she calls it "cultural studies," has significant overlap with "critical consciousness" as it relates to critical pedagogy.

Warnock and Warnock explicitly address the role of critical consciousness in the writing center context in "Liberatory Writing Centers: Restoring Authority to Writers." They argue that

while not all writing centers are liberatory, they can function as sites that cultivate “attitudes that invite revision—revision of the self..., revision of the language by which the self comes to terms with the universe, revision of the methods which put these terms into action, and finally revision of the world which in turn defines the self” (17). This perspective of writing center work requires that students be imbued with “authority and responsibility” (19), so they may engage with alternative viewpoints, allow for change to take place within themselves, and take the initiative to also act upon the world when they perceive a need. To the authors, “a critical stance is revolutionary and re-visionary,” and writing centers can work to counteract the oppressive force of the university-at-large (22). Although the article is dated (published in a collection from 1984), its foundational idea that writing centers should be sites that empower both tutors and students and help them to take agency and “happen” to the world is not unfamiliar in more current scholarship, too.

For instance, one of the writing center journals recently dedicated an entire issue to the concept of writing centers as “brave” spaces, as opposed to “safe” spaces. This terminology indicates a shift “from polite to provocative,” according to Brian Arao and Kristi Clemens (135). Arao and Clemens explain that bravery is a “new way [of framing] dialogue around diversity and social justice” in education (135), one that acknowledges the risk that exists in having conversations that focus on issues of diversity. Reframing a learning environment as brave suggests that it requires teachers/tutors and students to have courage, and it no longer relies on an illusion of safety (141). To put this framework into practice, the authors offer guidelines, such “controversy with civility” to take the place of the safer rule “agree to disagree,” which shuts down conflict and, simultaneously, learning moments. Altogether, the point of bravery seems to be to develop greater understanding of diverse points of view with a goal of justice.

Another article that places the emphasis on freedom as a goal of writing center work is Kathy Evertz's "Can the Writing Center Be a Liberatory Center When It's Also a WAC Center?" She claims that tutors in a WAC writing center, in order to enact a liberatory pedagogy, need to "become 'critical co-investigators' with WAC faculty into the theory and practices of different discourse communities," dialoguing and interrogating with each other (4). In doing so, agency can be achieved, replacing a more traditional service model of writing center work. This perspective speaks, to some extent, to the concern raised in the introduction of this prospectus about whether, or how much, writing centers should participate in the privileging of academic discourses over students' varieties of community/home discourses. These exemplary texts reflect a tradition of critical perspectives in writing center scholarship, spanning at least the last couple of decades. For this reason, several recently published texts from the writing center field have addressed critical approaches to tutor education, as well.

In the introduction to their collection on writing centers and antiracism, Greenfield and Rowan point out that race, in particular, has been one element of a larger conversation in the field's scholarship about writing centers and institutional oppression (7), a conversation that must continue. Their chapter in the collection, "Beyond the 'Week Twelve Approach': Toward a Critical Pedagogy for Antiracist Tutor Education," promotes the use of critical pedagogy for antiracist tutor education. They assume that "education is inherently political, and that our job as students and as educators is to recognize our agency within the power dynamics that shape our institutions and societies and to critically and actively resist injustices" (Greenfield and Rowan 125). Furthermore, writing center work is always raced, so tutor education should contribute to antiracist endeavors within the institution. In addition to encouraging directors not to avoid difficult discussions of race in tutor education, Greenfield and Rowan also promote a "shift from

a pedagogy of coverage,” or the “week twelve approach” that sees race as a topic, “to a critical pedagogy,” which takes race as deeply embedded in institutional systems (127). The kind of critical pedagogy they promote “offers students conceptual frameworks through which to explore, come to understand, and act in response to each of the topics discussed” (136). It uses “critical questioning and analysis as a means to understand, challenge, and act in response to any and all material or ideas encountered, particularly ideas that present themselves as natural” (136). It “allow[s directors] to help tutors develop their own interpretations of writing center theory and practice, including the role of racism and other systems of oppression,” and it “demands that students... act on their new and evolving interpretations of writing center theory and practice, using them to challenge and change local practices” (136). This critical approach to education can, simply stated, improve the world we live in by redistributing power more equitably; it “can and should change the world” (125). The writing center should not be exempt from doing social justice work, and, in fact, because of its positionality within the institution (i.e. not directly attached to curriculum, grades, etc.), it has more freedom than other academic spaces/programs to act subversively.

Two articles that speak to that call for developing tutors’ critical consciousness are “Body + Power + Justice: Movement-Based Workshops for Critical Tutor Education” (Godbee, Ozias, and Tang) and “Theory in/to Practice: Addressing the Everyday Language of Oppression in the Writing Center” (Suhr-Sytsma and Brown). The former discusses a workshop series that uses embodiment to help tutors develop critical praxis for racial justice in the writing center. Godbee, Ozias, and Tang point out that one of the lessons they learned from a productive failure experienced within one of the workshops was that learning to witness is essential to learning to intervene in systemic oppression. They argue that members of the writing center community

need to connect with our bodies, our bodies in relation to other bodies, and our bodies within larger systemic constructions. The second article mentioned discusses the authors' attempt to use tutor education as a way to identify and interrogate common language practices in tutors' talk and students' writing that contributes to oppression. Suhr-Sytsma and Brown work with tutors to reflect on privileged discourses, power dynamics, and forms of oppression in writing center experiences. Through this tutor education, they have developed and revised heuristics for how language perpetuates oppression and how tutors and writers can challenge oppression by attending to language, which have strengthened tutoring practices.

In the conclusion of "Unmaking Gringo-Centers," Romeo García suggests using portfolios in tutor education "as a meditational and reflexive activity of decolonial action" (50). His overall argument in this article is that the white/black racial paradigm that permeates writing center scholarship flattens difference and does cultural violence to other groups of people of color, such as Mexican Americans like himself, as well as limits the writing center community's ability to enact a truly antiracist agenda. He believes that although writing centers are implicated in systems of privilege, they have an "opportunity... to make and re-make [themselves] in productive and meaningful ways" (García 32). This remaking can begin with rhetorical listening—"para que sepas y aprendes" (52)—and a "mindfulness of difference" (45). "What is at stake," he argues, "is the exclusion of others" and "the opportunity to learn from the encounters and interactions that take place in our writing centers" (39). When tutors learn to attend to space, time, and materiality, they act as theorists of race/racism and as agents working at decolonialization (42).

These selections from the literature on writing center theory and practice make the case that critical perspectives in writing center workers are essential to the examination of

institutionalized practices that are oppressive to certain student populations and the cultivation of an approach to tutoring that works in service of social justice. Many writing center professionals understand writing center work as work that can make a real difference, by helping students to understand their roles within the university and the way in which systems exert control over them, how they might resist some of those negative effects and advocate for themselves, as well as use their writing as a form of activism to change people's biased perceptions of "other" ways of being.

The following section in this review of the literature discusses some of the language related issues that wrote tutors might attend to in their writing center work. Although much of the recent writing center literature (for example, the literature discussed in this section of this literature review and the next) that takes up issues of social justice also focuses on race/racism, in particular, I have chosen not to limit my study by focusing exclusively on issues related to race for two reasons: first, racism isn't the only kind of oppression that occurs in writing centers, although it may be one of the most obvious, and, second, because intersectionality theory holds that a person's multiple identities are connected with each other in complex and overlapping ways. Racism, as well as classism, sexism, heterosexism, ableism, and so on, are all equally open to examination and critique by those who are critically conscious. However, because of the attention race (and language issues) has received in the scholarship, I was initially hoping to observe in my case study research instances of critically conscious tutors addressing race and language issues in their sessions. Unfortunately, as I will discuss further in Chapter 4, that did not happen.

### *Linguistic Diversity, Language Attitudes*

Language practices that work against racism, sexism, classism, and other forms of oppression in the university would inevitably include a critique of the dominance and privileging of institutionalized versions of English, referred to by many variations that include different combinations of the following terms: standard, American, academic, written, and edited English language. Nancy Effinger Wilson's article "Bias in the Writing Center: Tutor Perceptions of African American Language" is an example of a piece that takes up this task. She reports findings from a survey study intending to understand tutor and faculty attitudes toward African American Language (AAL). Results show "a clear bias against AAL," along with the association in participants' minds between AAL and "some fundamental flaw in the writer" (Wilson 178). However, when survey respondents encountered writing from English Language Learners (ELL) in the survey, they were "forgiving" of deviations from Edited American English (EAE) (178). Wilson laments the findings that indicate "an assumption that an AAL speaker/writer lacks intelligence" and encourages writing center tutors and administrators to see EAE within its historical, contextualized position, as well as emphasize the validity of AAL and other deviations from EAE (178). Her chapter illustrates the way in which the academy's insistence on "correct" and "standard" language has aided in cultivating racist perceptions of writers with other ways of speaking/writing, and it also points out a need for change.

Asao Inoue is another writing center director who makes an excellent case for the need to critically examine Standard Academic English (SAE) as the golden language of the academy. In a recent post on his personal academic blog, he clarifies a statement from his writing center on antiracism and social justice in response to the negative attention it received in the media, wherein he was declared as promoting English grammar as racist. The original statement from

the writing center claims as fact that our society is a racist one, not only because of individuals' prejudice, but because of the pervasiveness of racism within "systems, structures, rules, *languages*, expectations, and guidelines" (qtd. in Inoue, italics added). He expands on this in the blog, writing that "people are racialized, as are our languages and other social practices," and racial constructions are crafted hierarchically (Inoue). Furthermore, "white middle class people have dictated what is acceptable English" in important areas such as "business, commerce, and education" (Inoue). For this reason, that version of English is commonly perceived as "proper," when actually it has been imbued with power by populations of people in power who speak it. He clarifies here that there is nothing inherently wrong (or inherently right, for that matter) with this version of English; the problem comes when people use it to discriminate against those who speak and write in other variations of English or other languages. His advice, from this knowledge, for writing center workers is to help writers see language as shaped by history and to encourage them to "make decisions about their words, [not to] follow orders" (Inoue). This approach will help writers of "nonstandard" language varieties combat the notion that they are illiterate or unintelligent.

Translingual theory can further support critically conscious tutors in their understanding of and approach to writing. Min-Zhan Lu and Bruce Horner, in their chapter in *Literacy as Translingual Practice: Between Communities and Classrooms*, point out that a translingual perspective requires us to "deliberate over how and why to do what with language in light of emergent and mutually constitutive relations of language, context, identity, and power relations" (35). In other words, because language use has material consequences in the world, we—all of us—need to take agency for our choices regarding language. Writers with agency are able to see the ways in which they might "re-fashion standardized norms, identity, the world, and their

relation to others” with respect to context (28); they see both possibility and responsibility in their language use. Writing center tutors, then, in order to get students to use language responsibly, can encourage them to view Standard American English as just one option of many that they have for their writing and understand that using it (or any language variety) has implications for the writer and the world.

Code-meshing, like Vershawn Young promotes in the article “Should Writers Use Their Own English?,” is similar to translanguaging in its celebration of language varieties coming into contact with each other in productive ways. Young argues that we should “be open to the mix of [dialects] in oral and written communication” because code-meshing “benefit everybody” and “help reduce prejudice” (63, 71). Neisha-Anne Green discusses her personal experience as someone with multiple, competing linguistic codes and the struggle she has faced to express them in her academic writing—at all, as well as “enough”—in the article “The Re-education of Neisha-Anne S. 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.” She writes that, because “language and identity are directly connected,” she felt “at war with [her] selves” when she experienced pressure to write and speak in certain codes and not others. She quotes Young, one of her mentors, when she says that “code-meshing allows [her]... to be able to self-consciously and un-self-consciously blend [her] own ‘accent, dialect, and linguistic patterns.’” For this reason, she advocates for educators not to force a “standard” agenda on students, not to police and limit their use of codes, although we should be able to recognize the difference between grammatical error and savvy rhetoric. Writing center tutors, like writing instructors, can discuss with student clients their options for blending codes in their writing in a way that respects their identities and is also rhetorically effective.

Tutors I've worked with, however, frequently espouse the belief that it is their responsibility to teach student clients the language of the academy so they can be successful (i.e. get good grades on their papers), and students frequently ask for that kind of help, as well. This perspective makes sense considering the material consequences for minority students of resisting assimilation. Several scholars (Bizzell; Delpit and Dowdy), even when they agree with the need to critique the primacy of SAE, argue that students should be socialized into the language of the academy, empowering them by granting them access to a privileged discourse used in the sanctioned production of knowledge. In this approach, students not already fluent in SAE must assimilate in their language use in order to put forth subversive ideas; they must master the discourse before they can disrupt its oppressive force.

A ground-up approach, on the other hand, like the one Young demonstrates and advocates, would encourage students to take risks in order to change the widely held public opinion that SAE is inherently better or more correct than other language varieties and that the speakers/writers of SAE are inherently smarter than others. That language attitude, privileging SAE, has played a role in a tradition in higher education in which white, wealthy, male values and bodies are privileged over others—a tradition which has limited access to minority groups. Code-meshing, then, is an example of a communicative strategy that students can use to challenge the belief that SAE is the only acceptable language for sharing intellectual information and making meaning in the academy. In fact, other language varieties might be more rhetorically effective at getting across a particular message, depending on the communicative context. Gerald Graff, for instance, in his chapter in *Code-Meshing as World English: Pedagogy, Policy, Performance* makes the case that “teaching the conflicts,” where “the conflicts” reflects one

aspect of the Black English Vernacular tradition, can help all students build skills of argumentation and debate as they “[mix] academic and personal styles” (18).

In addition to dealing with issues related to language, woke tutors might also question the primacy of the written in word in communicative texts. Several composition scholars, including Kathleen Yancey and Cynthia Selfe, have discussed the importance of attending to multimodality in composition, in part because of its potential to communicate a message more effectively than with written words alone and speak across cultures in a contemporary communicative context. In *Multimodality: A Social Semiotic Approach to Contemporary Communication*, Gunther Kress argues that people should be more inclusive of the use of various modes in communications, instead of privileging writing and speaking, because all signs in any mode have meaning and can be used in relation to each other in response to particular cultural contexts and for particular audiences. His book challenges teachers to question traditional conceptions of literacy and understand the choices communicators make about modalities, which are ideological and indicative of societal power relations.

To summarize, based on the way language ideologies and multimodal composition have been discussed in recent scholarship, it makes sense that critically conscious writing center tutors would make a concerted effort to question societal and academic norms for the use of language and other modes of communication in writing when they work with student clients. Discussing with clients why and how they might disrupt some of those norms, for example with the strategy of code meshing, could be both empowering for them personally (as in the case of Neisha-Anne Green) and a way to resist systemic, institutionalized oppression as it manifests in language practices.

### *Research on Critical Consciousness*

Critical consciousness comes from Paulo Freire's conception of critical pedagogy. Although there are many variations of and terms for critical pedagogy, as well as approaches to and ways of enacting it, Freire's conception of critical pedagogy (from *A Pedagogy of the Oppressed*), as indicated above in the "Key Terms" section, promotes problem-posing education in which teachers and students work dialogically for freedom by unveiling reality, developing consciousness, and intervening in the world. Through critical pedagogy, students "develop their power to perceive critically the way they exist in the world with which and in which they find themselves; they come to see the world... as a reality in process, in transformation" (65). This perception is critical consciousness—the ability to see problems in the world, problems that inhibit freedom and that require intervention. Despite its origins as inherently connected to critical pedagogy, critical consciousness can manifest as a result of a person's experiences outside of educational contexts, as well. The development of critical consciousness is important because it serves as a "source of human agency among people who face marginalizing structural conditions and more limited access to opportunity" (Diemer et al. 810). This study looked into writing center tutors' critical consciousness, which may be motivated by critical pedagogy in tutor education or other factors, and the ways in which their tutoring practice is affected by it.

Existing scholarship has established both a commitment to ideals of antiracism and social justice in writing center work and ways to critically approach issues of language use in writing. Although there are currently no studies that have measured the extent to which writing center tutors rely on critical consciousness, specifically, as they tutor, a gap which this research project aims to fill, survey instruments for studying critical consciousness have been developed. These constructs have helped inform the way in which critical consciousness was measured and studied

in the survey portion, especially, of this research project. Diemer, McWhirter, Ozer, and Rapa review three of the recently developed measures of critical consciousness in “Advances in the Conceptualization and Measurement of Critical Consciousness”: the Measure of Adolescent Critical Consciousness (MACC), the Critical Consciousness Inventory (CCI), and the Critical Consciousness Scale (CCS). Although researchers have struggled to conceptualize Freire’s description of critical consciousness, each of these three instruments measures the three core components of critical consciousness, which are critical reflection, critical motivation, and critical action (Diemer et al. 810).

The reviewers point out that the CCS would be good for measuring whether youths make structural or individualistic attributions for inequities, the influence of consciousness-raising interventions, and youth’s perceptions of social justice. It also measures specific forms of actual participation to effect change and the frequency of such activity. The CCI, on the other hand, is good for examining awareness of discrimination at an interpersonal, rather than structural, level. One of its potential weaknesses is that it assumes critical consciousness develops across distinct stages, which is an outdated view. The MACC is the only one of the three instruments that examines critical motivation, which is an important indicator of “how young people become engaged in and morally committed to changing the world” (815). Like the CCS, it measures actual participation, too, but it does so more generally. Another strength of both the CCS and the MACC is that they have the capability to indicate respondents’ greater or lower levels of critical reflection, agency, and action. Diemer et al. also make the case that validity of the survey instruments could be further tested by “examining patterns of convergent evidence” across the measures (818) and that the best way to study critical consciousness is to use a mixed methods approach that includes observation, interview, and survey data (813).

A fourth survey instrument, not included in Diemer et al.'s review, is the Contemporary Critical Consciousness Measure (CCCM), developed by Shin, Ezeofor, Smith, Welch, and Goodrich (2016). They explain, in "The Development and Validation of the Contemporary Critical Consciousness Measure," that their purpose was to "develop a psychometrically sound measure that assesses [critical consciousness], operationalized as awareness of the systemic, institutionalized forms of discrimination associated with racism, classism, and heterosexism" (210). The measure is informed by the theoretical frameworks of critical consciousness and intersectionality. The authors state that the CCCM covers shared ground with the three measures reviewed by Diemer et al., as well as another recently developed measure (the Sociopolitical Consciousness Scale), but it is "distinctly different... in terms of operationalization, scope, and the populations for which it is intended to be used" (212). Most notably, the other scales focus on the action components of critical consciousness, whereas the CCCM focuses on awareness of and reflection on systemic and structural social inequalities. Also, the CCCM can be used to assess adults from any demographic in the United States rather than adolescents from oppressed groups. After generating items for the measure and then analyzing and testing the measure, the authors ended up with a valid, reliable 19-item measure, which they say has implications in particular for the counseling psychology field. The CCCM may also be used as a "pre/post measure to assess students' [critical consciousness] development after taking part in social justice oriented courses and field placements" and "as an outcome measure to help evaluate the effectiveness of multicultural training and prevention efforts in schools and communities" (220).

Because I studied critical consciousness in adults from a variety of backgrounds, and I'm interested in both their awareness of systemic injustice and the actions they take from that position of awareness, I strategically combined parts of each of these measures discussed above,

excluding the MACC, and adapted them for a writing center tutoring context. Modifications are further explained in the following chapter.

Because I included some open-ended questions in the survey instrument and I observed tutorials to try to identify moments influenced by the tutors' critical consciousness, I also looked into scholarship that provided examples of qualitative studies of critical consciousness. "A Phenomenological Study of the Development of University Educators' Critical Consciousness" by Landreman, King, Rasmussen, and Jiang (2007) is one such qualitative study. The researchers conducted in-depth interviews with twenty university educators with varied racial/ethnic, gender, and sexual orientation demographics. Their goal was to understand the experiences and life events that influenced the participants' commitment and ability to work on multicultural education initiatives; the specific phenomenon studied was "the process of coming to critical consciousness" (Landreman et al. 277). This study has implications for my own research project, considering I believe that formal tutor education isn't the only contributing factor in tutors' development of a critical consciousness. Landreman et al., from analyzing their interview data, developed a model to describe the phenomenon studied. The model includes two phases: awareness raising (consisting of exposure to diversity, a critical incident, and self-reflection) and moving to critical consciousness (consisting of social justice action and intergroup relations). "Sustained involvement in environments, activities and intergroup relations, where participants' values, beliefs, and social locations were challenged, nurtured their developing critical consciousness" over time, explain the authors (292). Based on the findings, the authors suggest that conflict drives learning and that educational institutions are important to students' socialization although they may not immediately understand the impact of intercultural experience.

Another qualitative study on critical consciousness involves case study research on an online, critical conversation between undergraduate peers. Michelle Lazar begins her article “Doing ‘Critical’ in a Postfeminist Era: Reviving Critical Consciousness through Peer Dialog” by suggesting that, in the face of neoliberal and postfeminist ideologies, her current students (in this case, in Singapore) question the need to critically analyze gender relations, at least in modern, first world societies. She asks how Critical Language Awareness (CLA) can maintain relevance for cultivating critical consciousness in today’s students, and she answers the question by first discussing CLA, which is used to raise critical consciousness in language education, and demonstrating its applicability by using it to identify discourse-based gender asymmetry. She then argues that educators should provide opportunities for critical dialogue and reflection in the classroom, and she offers an example of what this might look like in a group of her students “do[ing]’ critical” in peer discussion as they collaboratively examine gender and postfeminist ideals (735). This study has relevance to my research in two obvious ways. First, CLA makes a connection between language and oppression and offers a method for critical reflection, while my study also hoped to look specifically at the ways in which writing center tutors who are critically conscious address language issues with student writers. Second, the author promotes the power of peer dialogue in helping students develop and enact critical consciousness, and peer dialogue is an important, if contested, tenet of writing center tutoring.

I want to know if the writing center community, in general, is woke and, if so, how being woke can influence tutoring practice. However, critical consciousness—a productive catchall term indicating the ability to recognize and combat injustice—is what has been studied in other social science research. The texts discussed in this section of the literature review help me conceptualize critical consciousness as a quantitatively and qualitatively measurable trait. My

research has relied on and extended previous research, while focusing on writing center tutors as the participant population and their tutoring sessions as the site of application for critical consciousness.

### *Theoretical Framework*

The two texts that have most notably influenced the critical theory framework for this research project are Nancy Grimm's *Good Intentions*, mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, and Greenfield and Rowan's collection of articles in *Writing Centers and the New Racism*, although Grimm identifies her framework as postmodern and I would call the overarching framework of the latter text critical race theory. Grimm's text, especially, demonstrates a commitment to a critical stance in/for/about writing center work—the questioning of our assumptions about systems of power and acting to change them when they are, in her words, unfair. Without using this specific terminology, she offers suggestions for how tutors might translate their critical consciousness into tutoring strategies. For the proposed project, I am also working within the worldview that writing centers can be spaces that promote social justice, and I'm starting from the assumption that, in practice, we, collectively, are not utilizing critical consciousness as frequently or as effectively as we should be. A broad goal of the project is to continue Grimm's insistence that writing centers should strive to bring theory and practice together in this particular way.

Grimm's (updated) ideals are featured also in Greenfield and Rowan's collection. She addresses race and privilege in the writing center, specifically, as she first critiques the “ideology of individualism in writing center discourse” (81) and then advocates a social theory of learning and increased participation among diverse tutors and engaged clients. Borrowing from Wenger, Grimm states, “When writing centers are open to rethinking their encounters with diversity in

linguistic and cultural backgrounds, they have the potential to be deeply transformative sites, particularly if they are theorized in ways that locate communication ‘problems’ in the nature of diverse, rapidly changing, and competing discourse and cultural systems rather than in individual writers” (90). The collection as a whole, in which this article is situated, aims to spur action against social injustices by pursuing a discourse on the new racism, i.e. a rhetoric of silence on racial issues (Greenfield and Rowan 9). The ideals of democracy, social justice, and action-oriented change running through the collection reflect the ideals that I see guiding my research.

Other sources that have influenced my critical theory framework are Canagarajah’s *A Geopolitics of Academic Writing*, which critiques the systematic oppression inherent in Westernized research and publication practices; Prendergast’s *Buying into English*, which looks critically at the widespread assumption that learning English will equate to upward social mobility and financial gains; Rothenberg’s *White Privilege*, challenging readers to examine the side of racism that is commonly overlooked; Smitherman’s *Word from the Mother*, which argues that the linguistic practices of many African Americans should be valued rather than viewed as deficient and dangerous; Delpit and Dowdy’s *The Skin that We Speak*, a critical approach to understanding race in education; Kirklighter, Cárdenas, and Murphy’s *Teaching Writing with Latino/s Students*, a collection that addresses critical issues for teachers and students in Hispanic serving institutions (HSIs); and Severino, Guerra, and Butler’s *Writing in Multicultural Settings*, a collection that, as a whole, examines composition from a cultural studies approach. The texts take up issues of literacy, language, education, race, and culture, but they all do so with critical intentions, the goal of which is social change.

## Chapter Two: Research Methodology

### Research Questions

My specific interests within writing centers studies and the gap in the field's literature led me to develop the following research questions, which have guided my project:

- To what extent are writing center tutors in the east central region of the U.S. critically conscious (based on a modified version of existing survey instruments for measuring critical consciousness), and how do they perceive their level of critical consciousness to influence their tutoring practice, especially with respect to talk about language related issues?
- What are the characteristics of tutoring sessions in a writing center in which tutors have comparatively high levels of critical consciousness?
- What does tutor education at that site look like, and what role might it play, as just one factor, in developing and encouraging tutors' critical consciousness?

### Research Design

The research project was designed to best help me answer the questions above. It utilized a mixed methods approach, which involved two phases of data collection: first, survey research and, then, case study research. Mixed methods studies make use of both quantitative and qualitative approaches to research; they measure variables and examine the relationship between variables, as well as explore the meaning behind human issues. John Creswell makes the case that using “both approaches in tandem [makes] the overall strength of a study... greater than either qualitative or quantitative research” (4). The study's design also responds to a collective call from the writing center field for more empirical, replicable, aggregable, and data-driven (RAD) research (Babcock and Thonus; Driscoll and Perdue; Grutsch McKinney). RAD research, according to Babcock and Thonus in *Researching the Writing Center: Towards an Evidence-Based Practice*, connects theory to practice and improves the profession: “theoretical investigations build the foundation for writing center studies, and anecdotal experience points in

the direction of best practices, [but] empirical research will create a credible link between the two” (3).

In *The Peer Review’s* “guide for new authors,” Driscoll and Powell explain that RAD research helps writing centers develop best practices based in evidence, as well as bolster their credibility. They reference Haswell when they provide a definition:

It is replicable, meaning that others can conduct the same study in a different writing center; it is aggregable, meaning that the original work is specified and clear enough that it can be built upon by others; and it is data-supported, meaning that the claims it makes are supported with systematic data... [It] is not synonymous with a type of data collection but rather it is a systematic process for handling any data that we collect. (Driscoll and Powell)

A good example of a recently published empirical writing center study is *Talk about Writing: The Tutoring Strategies of Experienced Writing Center Tutors* by Jo Mackiewicz and Isabelle Thompson. The authors systematically analyzed the talk of experienced tutors and their clients in tutoring sessions deemed satisfactory. In the conclusion of their methods chapter, they write, “By openly discussing our methods and the lessons we learned as we carried out our study, we hope to advance not just what we know about tutors’ talk but also how we perform writing center research.” (62).

The authors, Mackiewicz and Thompson, comment on the importance of RAD research to writing center studies (which was the theme of the IWCA Collaborative conference in both 2015 and 2016) and make efforts, as a result, to thoroughly explain their methodology while encouraging others to do the same. Their methods, especially the detailed explanation of their approach to the research and their focus on both micro and macro level analysis, influenced the design of my own study by encouraging me to think through my methods for analysis and the way in which I should convey those methods to readers so they would find the study credible. Even though findings from my study are not generalizable, the study should still be considered

empirical/RAD because I have taken care to thoroughly explain my research methods so the study could be replicated by another researcher in a different context, I have discussed how I arrived at conclusions and offered suggestions for the ways in which others might build upon this study, and I have been transparent with respect to my analysis by including a significant amount of raw data along with it in the chapters that follow.

### **Positionality of the Researcher**

At this point, I should address how my own positionality has influenced the design of the research project. I have worked in writing centers at four universities, from a small, private university to a large, state university, for about six years and in various roles, from tutor to assistant director. I have also conducted multiple writing center research projects previously (both individual and collaborative), looking into what happens in a writing center wait area/computer lab space, how tutors respond to clients' feedback requests, how marketing materials can be used strategically to promote a center's mission, and how the habits of mind (from the *Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing*) can be used as a heuristic in tutor training. I am also an active member of the International Writing Centers Association, participating in writing center conferences regularly. I value the good that writing centers do (or have the potential to do) on campuses all over, and I want my continued activity in the field of writing centers, at specific institutions and in the larger scholarly community, to help writing center professionals reconceive of what constitutes their work and find ways to do that work better.

My theoretical lens for this research project is one that Creswell would call "critical" in that I believe racism, sexism, and classism, among other forms of oppression are reflected in the microcosm of academic institutions, and writing center tutors can help to address those problems

and change our reality through their work in writing instruction. I buy into the value of developing tutors' critical consciousness as a strategy for enacting positive change. According to sociologist Agger (in Creswell 31), such a framework would make my approach to the research substantively critical. That said, throughout the study I was hopeful that my preconception—that writing center tutors do not, in everyday practice, work from a critical consciousness as much as writing center scholarship implores them to—would be disproven. Simultaneously, I remained open to listening thoughtfully to tutors who gave justifications for their tutoring behaviors that purposefully did not serve social justice efforts. Although those perspectives have not changed my own, they have helped me understand the position that some writing center tutors may take on the issue, and that has helped me, further, to imagine the ways in which tutor education could explicitly address their concerns and inhibitions when it comes to tutoring from critical consciousness and for social justice.

Additionally, it's worth noting that I recognize the difficulty administrators face in training a constantly shifting workforce of tutors who may be deeply entrenched when they begin to tutor in ideologies that reflect and reinforce privilege and the hierarchies of power that already exist. My primary goal in the project, then, has not been to criticize any specific administrators or tutors for anything I have observed them say or do; rather, I used the data to attempt to discover ways in which writing center professionals might better be able to do what the field's literature says they are capable of doing—that is, being “change agents” in the face of oppressive forces (Grimm 57). In other words, the project seeks to improve what happens in writing centers, generally, not to shame or blame individuals, specifically. In a piece on institutional critique as research methodology, Steve Lamos explains, the “analytical goal is reform-minded [cross-] institutional critique, not the generation and delivery of bad news per se” (166). Institutional

critique, then, according to Lamos, is the “project of understanding and reforming problematic institutional power dynamics across a variety of settings” (167).

### **The Survey: An Overview**

After defending my research prospectus to my dissertation committee and receiving “exempt” status on my IRB application, the initial survey (see appendix) was distributed early in the summer of 2017 to writing center tutors in the east central region of the U.S. who were employed during the spring semester or summer session in 2017. Results provided some quantitative data for the study. The survey was developed by modifying three other recently developed measures of critical consciousness, all tested for their reliability and validity, and by adding a few items that specifically addressed the writing center context. Survey results offered an overview of the state of tutors’ critical consciousness, based on their self reporting, which gave me an idea of the extent to which tutors in this region see themselves as critically conscious. Findings also offered some idea of how tutors’ critical consciousness influences their tutoring, again from their own perspectives. Finally, survey data was useful in helping me to select a single site within the region to study further. The findings from this phase of the research project are reported and discussed in the following chapter.

### **Survey Distribution and Participants**

I limited the survey study by sending it only to writing center tutors in institutions of higher education (undergraduate, graduate, or staff) in the east central region of the U.S. I did not include tutors in high school writing centers because it would have been logistically difficult to get consent from the guardians of minors. And I focused on a particular geographic region, with the hope that this study might be replicated in other regions in the future, because I knew I would be traveling to one of the writing centers represented in survey data for the case study phase of

my project. I began identifying writing centers in the east central region of the U.S. by their appearance in the list of schools represented at the 2017 East Central Writing Centers Association conference. I then cross-checked the list I had developed with St. Cloud University's writing center directory. This resource helped me identify and add writing centers in Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin, and, to a lesser extent, in Kentucky and Pennsylvania.

I also looked at the individual writing center websites, when available, for each institution on my list of writing centers in the region at this point to verify that the director's or center's email information from St. Cloud's directory was current. Ultimately, I sent emails to 184 writing centers or writing center directors, asking them to share my survey with their tutors. (Not all of these emails reached their destination because of invalid addresses or changes in leadership, but I attempted to rectify such mistakes in each case for which it was possible.) I left the survey open for one month and sent two follow-up/reminder emails during that time. It may be that distributing the survey in the summer, when many writing centers are closed and tutors are not checking their emails regularly, had a negative impact on participation because I received a total of 101 responses from representatives of only 21 institutions. (Some participants did not indicate institutional affiliation in the survey, so this number could be higher.)

Participants' responses for this survey are not generalizable for a couple of reasons. Most importantly, I used a combination of convenience and purposeful sampling, rather than random sampling, by placing limitations on the kind of person who qualified to participate in the study, as well as by distributing the survey to directors, who had to choose to share it with their tutors, who also had to choose to take it. Creative Research Systems, a company specializing in survey software, states that samples that are not truly random cannot rely on confidence interval calculations. Still, if my sample was random, and I had been looking for a confidence interval

(i.e. margin of error) of 5 at a confidence level of 90%,<sup>1</sup> I would have needed to get survey responses from at least 267 participants.<sup>2</sup> This would mean that if half of the participants selected a particular response for one of the survey questions, I could be 90% sure that between 45 and 55% of the entire relevant population would choose the same response. Because I only received 101 responses, my confidence interval widened to 8.2, meaning that survey responses have less accuracy than I hoped they would or than they would if I had managed to get more participants to take the survey. Even though participants' responses are not generalizable to writing center tutors in the East Central region as a whole, they still provide some interesting insight into participants' critical consciousness.

Based on what participants disclosed in their responses to the survey question about demographics/identity, the majority of them were white, straight, middle class, and able-bodied U.S. citizens, although there was diversity in each of these categories (race/ethnicity, sexuality, class/income, ability, and nationality), as well. There were significantly more women than men who took the survey. Participants' demographics are discussed in more detail as part of data analysis in the following chapter on survey findings.

### **Development of the Survey Instrument**

The survey instrument I created for this study was modified from the Contemporary Critical Consciousness Measure (CCCM), which was designed for adult participants from any demographic and focuses on their awareness of inequalities; the Critical Consciousness Inventory (CCI) because it addresses discrimination on an interpersonal level (and tutoring is highly interpersonal); and the Critical Consciousness Scale (CCS) because it has the capability to

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<sup>1</sup> A confidence level of 95 or 99% is more commonly used than 90%, but since this research is fairly low-stakes (compared to, for instance, medical research that would have an impact on the population's health), there are no dangerous consequences to slightly lowering the confidence level. A confidence

<sup>2</sup> Sample size calculation was made using Raosoft's online calculator.

measure levels of critical consciousness and addresses critical *action* to a greater extent than does the CCCM. I also examined the Measure of Adolescent Critical Consciousness (MACC), but found the items in this measure to be too simple for the target population of my survey; I, therefore, included none of them in the survey for this research project. My survey pulled seven items from the CCCM, six items from the CCS, and three from the CCI. When selecting items from these three measures, I focused on forming a group of questions that would cover critical consciousness in both awareness and action, as well as critical consciousness with respect to different kinds of oppression (racism, sexism, heterosexism, and classism) and in a variety of settings (e.g. education, etc.). I changed the wording only slightly, for clarity, for a few of these borrowed items, and I modified some of the response scales so the survey as a whole would be more cohesive and easier to score.

I added four items of my own (not including the questions on consent, tutor education background, participant demographics, and institutional affiliation), in addition to the ones borrowed from existing measures, to increase the instrument's relevance to the writing center context. The survey was twenty-four questions in total. The first question was consent to participate, and the next nineteen were multiple choice and scored on a scale of critical consciousness. One of those nineteen questions also provided an option to write a short response rather than selecting one of the given statements, but the short responses were not scored. The final four questions were open-ended response. Item 21 asked participants to tell a story about a time they were a tutor for social justice. Item 22 asked them to describe their previous experiences with tutor education. Item 23 asked them to provide information about their identities, and the final question asked them to state their institutional affiliation. The survey did not ask tutors to provide their names because, although I used data to select a case study site, I

did not necessarily intend to observe individually identified survey respondents during the case study research. All of the survey questions were marked “forced entry” when I created the survey except for the two questions about tutor education and participant demographics.

### **Analyzing Survey Data**

I used the survey site Qualtrics, provided by Ball State University, to collect and analyze survey data. Because the majority of survey questions had response options corresponding to a scale of critical consciousness, it provided some numerical data to my findings. Because I had modified the scoring scales from the existing measures when I brought selected items together for my own purposes, and because my target population of participants was so specific, I chose not to use a predetermined method for scoring the survey or compare my participants’ critical consciousness scores to critical consciousness in other populations. Instead, I compared participants only to each other when analyzing the data, and I ranked them into three categories with an even distribution of participants based on their cumulative scores from the multiple choice items: the top, middle, and bottom critical consciousness groups. Participants ranked in the top third, based on their survey responses, are more critically conscious than participants in the middle third, who are more critically conscious than people in the bottom third. These groupings served, primarily, to help me identify noteworthy patterns in participants’ responses, as well as identify a site for the case study.

In addition to scoring the multiple choice items to place participants into these leveled critical consciousness categories, I used cross-tabulation to understand the relationship between participants’ critical consciousness and their responses to particular items, such as their demographics and their backgrounds with tutor education. I also categorized the scored items according to whether they dealt with the action or the awareness side of critical consciousness,

on which type of oppression they focused, and which context they addressed. Doing this allowed me to isolate and compare, for example, only the responses to questions that addressed the writing center context, or to compare questions that addressed the writing center context to questions that addressed a general education context, and so on. I found the average scores for items labeled action, awareness, and action and awareness, and examined items with outlier scores, using the other two categories (type of oppression and context) to help me arrive at possible explanations. Qualtrics portrayed both frequency counts and percentages of responses for each multiple choice item. For Item 21, which was short response, I used latent coding to analyze participants' responses. For Item 22, also short response, I used a combination of manifest and latent coding because some responses required more interpretation than others (e.g. the "practical issues" category of "topics covered in tutor education"). Once codes were finalized for these two items, I counted the frequency with which each code was applied. Much of this analysis is displayed in graphs in the following chapter, along with explanation and, in the case of short answer items, examples for illustration.

### **Rationale for Case Study**

The observations, interviews, and collection of artifacts for the case study phase of the project complemented the survey research with more qualitative information from a single writing center site. This contributed thick description to supplement the numerical data. Three reasons to conduct qualitative research are "because a problem or issue needs to be explored" (Creswell 47), "because we need a complex, detailed understanding of the issue," and "because quantitative measures and the statistical analyses simply do not fit the problem" (48). The open-ended nature of my research questions, plus the fact that I studied people (writing center directors, tutors, and clients) and their complex motivations in interactions, indicated that a

thorough exploration of tutors' use of critical consciousness was needed, and qualitative methods helped accomplish this more effectively than quantitative methods alone would have done.

A case study approach to inquiry helped me to, after analyzing and understanding tutors' critical consciousness on a larger scale from survey data, hone in on several tutors from a single site and their tutoring sessions to determine the ways in which their critical consciousness influenced their tutoring practice, as well how tutor education in that writing center has helped to develop and encourage tutors' critical consciousness. According to Creswell, the focus of a case study is on “developing an in-depth description and analysis of a case or multiple cases”—a case being an event, activity, or individual (104). The case study researcher analyzes data from interviews, observations, and artifacts, identifying themes within and across cases (105). I recognize that, by limiting the case study to a single site, I have made it so findings are not generalizable across types of institutions or other geographic locations. Generalizability, however, is not necessarily the goal of qualitative research. This study, instead, offers rich portraits, context, and a nuanced understanding of the research subject. Furthermore, the variety of methods used and kinds of data collected for this case study have provided the research with triangulation to verify findings (Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña 299).

### **Site Selection**

The region for survey distribution was selected for geographic convenience, considering limitations on my time and budget for travel, but the case study site within that region was selected primarily based on where there existed a cluster of critically conscious tutors, as indicated by survey responses. The main goal of the case study was to describe characteristics of critically conscious tutoring, working from the assumption that if some of the tutors at this site had comparatively high levels of critical consciousness, according to survey data, that same

phenomenon might apply to most or all of the tutors at the site, and that their critical consciousness would have an impact on their tutoring practice. When selecting the case study site, I also considered the director's (and the IRB's) willingness to allow me to conduct research in that writing center, estimated travel time to the site and cost of travel,<sup>3</sup> and the center's hours of operation.

The interim director of the writing center I chose for the case study had distributed my survey to tutors over the summer, but the new, incoming director gave me permission to conduct case study research beginning in the fall. I added her letter of support as an addendum to my IRB package. I also gained permission from the case study institution's IRB office after sharing with them the IRB application I had submitted to Ball State University and confirming that no personnel from the case study institution would take part in recruiting participants or collecting data for me. Aside from emailing with the director, my first contact with participants took place at their first staff meeting of the fall semester, which I attended to introduce my research project and recruit tutors for the study. I did not offer incentives to participants, yet all of the tutors gave consent.

### **The Case Study Site and Participants**

The site that I selected for the case study was a writing center within the English department of a private university with fewer than 5,000 students, both undergraduate and graduate, in a large Midwestern city (although the university itself is in a residential area of that city). Around twenty tutors are employed in this center—all students, mostly undergraduate and from a variety of disciplines. The center is located in a large, open room, although it also has

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<sup>3</sup> I had to eliminate a top option from potential case study sites because it was approximately 650 miles traveling distance, which wasn't feasible for me. I did, however, receive a scholarship (The Hanson Award) for up to \$500 to help fund my research. I used almost the full amount for mileage, parking, per diem, and a book that wasn't available through InterLibrary Loan.

moveable partitions to provide some visible, if not auditory, separation of tutoring sessions.

While I was visiting the site, the director and tutors were in the process of redecorating the space to make it feel updated and welcoming to student clients. Another notable feature of this center is the director's small dog that she frequently brings in with her, which the tutors call their "therapy dog."

The participants in the case study included eight tutors employed in the writing center at this university during the fall semester of 2017, eight student clients of the writing center, the new director of the center, the previous interim director, and the former long-term director. I did not explicitly ask the participants to disclose any demographic information about themselves. It appeared to me, however, that all participants were white (or could pass as white) except for two of the clients—one of whom told me during our interview that she is Puerto Rican. All of the tutors and clients I observed were undergraduate students, except for one of the tutors, who was in the English MFA program. All of the tutors and clients also appeared to be traditionally aged college students, again with the exception of the graduate student tutor, who told me she had a daughter around the same age as most of the clients she works with in the center. Three of the tutors presented as men, and the rest as women. Only one of the clients from my observations was a man.

### **Case Study Protocol**

I visited the case study institution eight times over the next six weeks after attending the tutors' first staff meeting of the semester. All together, I spent approximately twenty hours at the case study site, which allowed me to do a preliminary observation of the site, observe eight tutoring sessions, and conduct fifteen interviews with clients, tutors, and the director(s) (not including the two interviews I conducted by phone). Eight sessions provided me with a sufficient

amount of data for my research questions without becoming overwhelming, considering the study's timeframe.

Most of the interviews with student clients were conducted directly after their observed sessions because I believed they would be less likely to return at a later date for the interview, and they were all shorter than fifteen minutes each. However, I scheduled the follow-up interviews with tutors to take place after I had time to transcribe the observed sessions, and I used a stimulated recall method to jog participants' memories of their sessions. The longest tutor interview lasted about 45 minutes. I was able to interview all of the student clients, but only six of the eight tutors because two of them never responded to my request to schedule an interview. The interviews with clients asked them to respond to moments I identified as notable from their sessions, as well as discuss their general experiences as college writers and writing center clients. The interviews with tutors also asked them to respond to key moments from the sessions I observed, as well as to discuss the role they see social justice playing in their tutoring practices and describe their experiences with tutor education.

The interviews with the directors (current, interim, and former long-term) focused mainly on their approach to tutor education, so I could get a sense of how that may have contributed to the development of tutors' critical consciousness in regard to their tutoring practices. I wanted to learn about their values with respect to tutoring, their methods for consultant development, and the scholarship that had been influential to their approach to writing center work—recognizing that tutor education is only one factor in a complex process of tutor's development of critical consciousness.

All of the interviews and observations took place in person, except for one of the tutor interviews (because of a scheduling issue) and the interview with the former director (because

she had moved away); these two took place over the phone. None of the sessions I observed were online sessions because online sessions were not offered at this writing center. During observations and interviews, I used a double entry method for note-taking, which allowed me to note material and physical characteristics of the session and what was happening or what was being said in the interview, as well as my own thoughts and interpretations of these things with respect to the study's guiding research questions.

All of the sessions I observed and the interviews I conducted were audio recorded and transcribed. I used a website called *oTranscribe* as a transcription tool because it was free, saved my work automatically, and allowed me to slow down or speed up the audio. Additionally, I collected some materials from participants: student clients' writing that they brought in or developed during the sessions I observed, their assignment prompts, and emails from the director and assigned readings that related to tutor education meetings for the fall semester.

Unfortunately, I was unable to attend any of those meetings due to scheduling conflicts. Seeing students' writing and what prompted it helped me identify potential missed opportunities for tutoring from critical consciousness, and seeing tutor education materials helped me understand how they might contribute to the development of tutors' critical consciousness.

To analyze transcribed data and the materials I collected, I began with a first cycle of coding, which used a provisional method for developing "a 'start-list' of researcher-generated codes, based on what preparatory investigation suggests might appear in the data" (Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña 77). In the codes, limited by my research questions, I noted moments that seemed to reflect the influence of critical consciousness on tutoring, moments in which tutoring for social justice might have happened, but didn't, and moments that offered some explanation about what was happening and tutors' motivations. Interview data, in particular, was

essential to verifying or challenging my interpretations of tutors' motivations and intentions and to reporting them ethically (309).

In a second cycle of coding, the provisional codes were refined and consolidated as I noted emerging patterns and themes across sessions and in interviews. Cross-case analysis helped me describe factors that influenced outcomes and enhance my explanation of the findings (101). As Miles et al. explain, "Each case must be understood in its own terms, yet we hunger for the understanding that comparative analysis can bring" (101). One of the patterns that emerged brought attention to a missing feature in the data—something that I had originally expected to see, but ultimately did not.

Although I did count the codes, the frequency with which they occurred in the case study data was less important than giving specific examples to illustrate each code and allow the reader to evaluate my interpretation of the findings. Therefore, the case study chapter is organized according to major patterns identified in the data, and each of the main sections offers triangulated evidence, primarily from observations of sessions and interviews with tutors, clients, and the director(s). Typically, examples support the findings, but I have also included instances from the data that do not conform to patterns identified, for example, in a few of the "student-centered tutoring strategies."

### **Ethical Considerations**

In addition to securing appropriate permissions for the research and seeking input from participants to check my interpretations of observation data, I made other ethical considerations for the case study. For example, I only worked with participants who signed consent forms stating that they voluntarily agreed to be observed and interviewed (Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña 59). I spoke transparently about my research with the participants up to the point, I

believe, of influencing them in such a way as to affect the study's results (62). I protected the participants' identities by using pseudonyms and by not identifying the case study institution (63). Although some researchers work from a transformative framework that views participants as co-researchers (Shirley Brice Heath; Creswell 36), and I see the value in such a stance (and would, in fact, like to conduct this kind of research at some point in my career), I chose to be the sole researcher for this project so it would progress efficiently.

### **Limitations to the Case Study**

I have already mentioned that because this case study research focused on a single site, findings are not generalizable. Another potential limitation to the study I considered before collecting data came from the fact that I would be working with participants who were unknown/unfamiliar to me, which, on top of the threat of the audio recorder, might have caused them to act with inhibitions, to be unwilling to open up during interviews or behave naturally during observations. However, I found that participants—tutors, student clients, and directors—seemed unconcerned about the recording device and were overwhelmingly generous with their time and ideas, perhaps with the exception of the two tutors who chose not to schedule follow up interviews with me.

One tutor did express to me that she had some anxiety going into the interview because, as I understood, she wanted to give “right” answers to the questions I was going to ask her, but I reassured her that I wasn't looking for her to tell me anything in particular, but instead to share her thoughts, which would contribute to my understanding of the research topic; and, as the interview progressed and she got into the conversation, her anxiety visibly dissipated, and she said as much, as well. Furthermore, although working with unfamiliar participants could have

been a limitation to the case study, it may have actually been an affordance, considering I entered the research site with few preconceived notions or biases.

Another significant limitation to the study is that my focus was on critical consciousness in writing center *tutoring* alone. I recognize that there are other ways in which a writing center and its director might utilize critical consciousness—for example, through effective design of space and materials, the ways in which clients are greeted upon entering, interactions with faculty, etc. Even though I limited the topic of my study to tutoring, I think it would be worthwhile for future research to extend that topic by looking at other ways in which writing centers use critical consciousness to inform writing center work outside of the 50-minute (or so) tutoring session.

The following two chapters report findings from, first, the survey and, second, the case study. The conclusion chapter discusses the significance of these findings and implications for writing centers and tutor education.

### **Chapter Three: Survey Results and Discussion**

The first phase of the research project involved a survey on critical consciousness. The survey served two main purposes: 1) to help me answer the research question, “To what extent are writing center tutors in the east central region of the U.S. critically conscious, and how do they perceive their level of critical consciousness to influence their tutoring practices?” and 2) to help me identify a location for the case study portion of the research project. The survey was successful in giving me some insight into the state of critical consciousness for the participants, at least, if not the entire region or all of the writing tutors in it. It also achieved the goal of helping me to identify a site for further study.

The twenty-four question survey, included as an appendix, was developed by combining original items, specific to critical consciousness in the writing center context, and items from three existing measures for critical consciousness: the Critical Consciousness Inventory (CCI), the Contemporary Critical Consciousness Measure (CCCM), and the Critical Consciousness Scale (CCS). For a few of the questions borrowed from existing measures, I changed the wording very slightly for clarity, and I modified some of the response scales, as well, to make items easier to score after being consolidated into a single survey instrument. The items that were selected for use from the existing measures were chosen for their representativeness in the study of critical consciousness, and other items were excluded to avoid redundancies. (Further explanation of the development of the survey instrument can be found in the previous chapter.)

#### **Scoring the Survey**

Because the survey I developed—with its borrowed and new items—was used with a very particular audience of writing center tutors, I chose to analyze participants’ scores only in relation to each other and not according to a previously determined scoring method. I ranked

participants into three categories, based on their scores—referred to throughout this chapter as the top, middle, and bottom thirds, in order of descending critical consciousness scores—again, in relation to each other. To determine the rankings, I took only the finished survey responses in order by score, divided them into three even groups, and then looked at the point ranges of the three groups. When analyzing responses to individual survey items, however, I included all of the responses for those items, even if they belonged to participants who had not finished completing the whole survey, meaning that said participants might be labeled as falling into the bottom third category by lack of response. Participants’ scores, ranked by top, middle, or bottom third in relation to each other, then, don’t actually tell me much about their critical consciousness, at least not compared to the critical consciousness of the general population; the “top third” does not equate to “very critically conscious,” but it does indicate that participants in this category are more critically conscious than participants in the middle group, who are more critically conscious than participants who fell into the bottom group. What the scores and the system I’ve used for scoring have helped me do is identify noteworthy patterns in participants’ responses and institutional contenders for the case study site.

Diemer et al.’s article, which reviews the CCI, the CCS, and the MACC, and Shin et al.’s article about the CCCM focus primarily on the process by which these recently developed critical consciousness measures were created, their target participant populations and intended contexts for use, and discussions of testing for validity of the measures. In other words, the articles I read on these measures were introducing them, not reporting on research studies that had used them for purposes other to determine their reliability and validity. The most thorough discussion of scoring a measure was found in Shin et al., wherein the authors make a few recommendations for scoring the CCCM, which is complicated due to its bifactor model: “each

item is one part general factor, another part group factor” (219). One important factor to consider when scoring the measures is what they’re being used for. One way in which the CCCM was designed to be used, for example, is as a training tool, so given as a pre/post measure to assess growth in critical consciousness resulting from intervention (220). It can also be used with counseling clients from marginalized groups to assess internalized oppression (220). In the first case, a change in scores is what would be important, while, in the second case, scores on subscales (racism, classism, and heterosexism) would be important. Diemer et al. also mention that the three critical consciousness measures they discuss can be used to assess interventions, measure development over time, and test relationships between critical consciousness and “other indices of positive youth development” (818), yet they don’t discuss ways of scoring the measures in any depth. This is one of the main reasons I chose to develop my own scoring system for the survey used in my study.

For a completed survey (a survey in which all scored responses have been answered), the lowest possible score one could receive is twenty because all answer choices for scored questions had a point value of at least one. The highest possible score one could receive is 114. The actual lowest, finished score a participant received was 47.5 and the actual highest was 105. The score ranges for the three categories from my calculations can be seen in the following table.

Table 1

Score Ranges for Critical Consciousness Groups

Bottom Third	Middle Third	Top Third
Scores can range from 0 (if incomplete) to 72 (a 72 point spread)	Scores range from 73 to 89 (a 16 point spread)	Scores can range from 90 to 114 (a 24 point spread)

Because the bottom third critical consciousness group covers a significantly larger area of points than the other two categories do (i.e. the scores are more concentrated at the higher end of the critical consciousness scale), I'm led to believe that tutors responding to this survey, all together, had generally high levels of critical consciousness. Those who have been placed in the bottom third category, then, may not actually have low levels of critical consciousness in comparison to the general population, but, again, more data would be needed to make such a claim for certain.

### **The Participants: Identification and Critical Consciousness**

The survey was distributed in early summer 2017 by email to 184 writing center directors in the east central region, although not all of the emails reached their destination due to invalid email addresses or changes in employment. The directors were asked to share the survey with tutors who had worked in their centers in spring semester 2017 and tutors who were currently working in their centers during the summer. The survey was available for one month, and I received 101 responses from representatives of at least 21 institutions (see fig. 1 below). Thirty-five of the survey participants gave no response, an indecipherable, or a negative response to Item 24, which asked about their institution of affiliation. Only 69 of the 101 responses were labeled "finished"—meaning all questions answered—by Qualtrics, the survey program that was used. More responses would have increased the reliability of the findings. Participants' levels of critical consciousness, as indicated by the survey results, are not representative of all tutors in the region. In my analysis, I do not draw conclusions about the east central region as a whole, but only about the survey participants. Furthermore, I cannot compare the tutors in this region to tutors in other regions without additional data. As stated above, I looked at participants in

relation to each other when assessing their critical consciousness, and I considered the extent to which their responses met my expectations or were surprising.

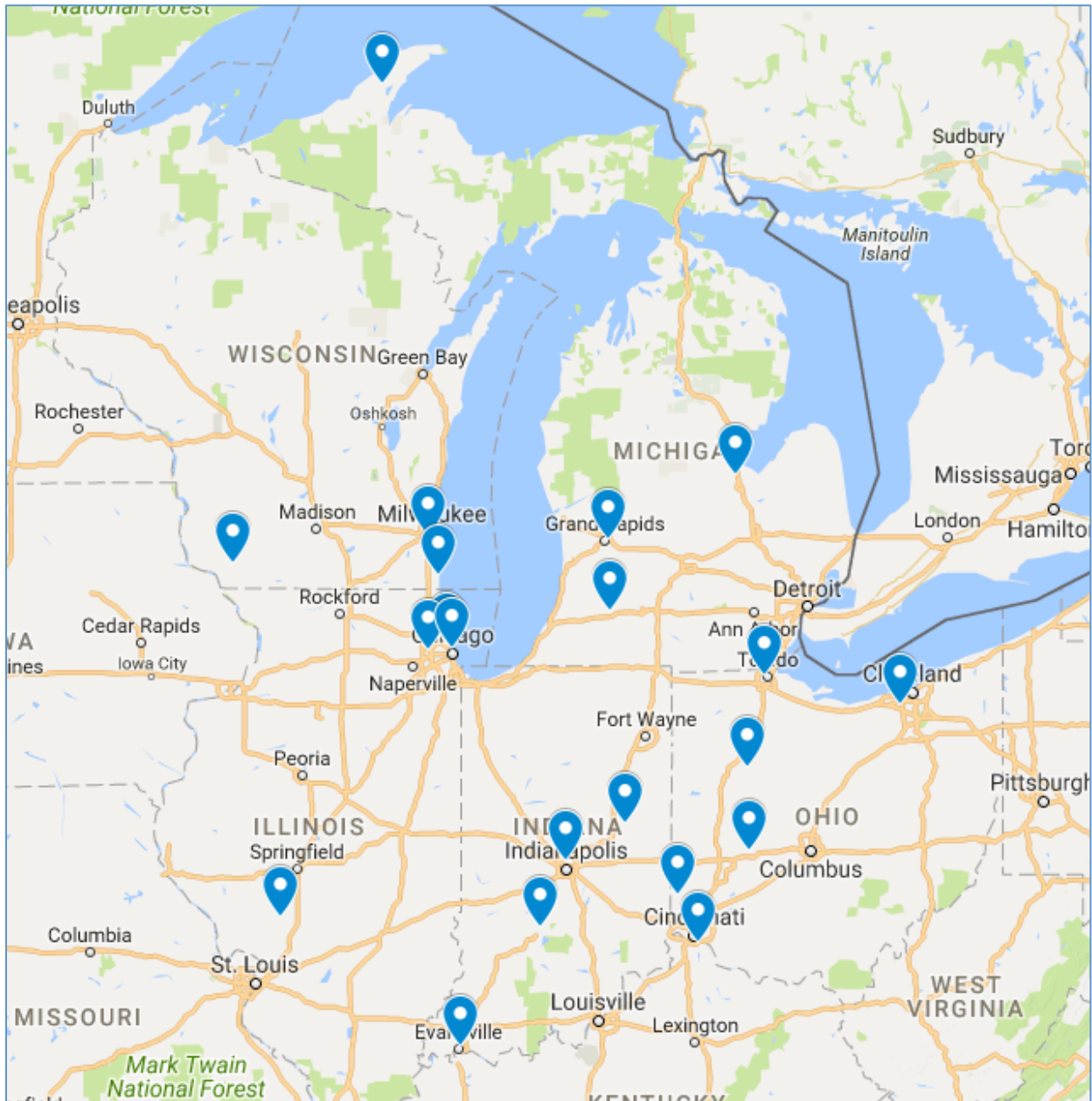


Figure 1. Survey Respondents' Institutions Mapped

When developing this survey, I knew it would be important to collect participants' demographic information, so that I could try to understand their self-reported critical consciousness in the context of their identities, which, inevitably, along with other factors,

influence their worldviews. At the same time, I didn't want to limit participants' autonomy in describing the identities that belong to them, so I left the question about their demographic information open-ended: "Please tell me about the demographic parts of your identity... that matter most to you and that you feel comfortable disclosing." I did this despite the fact that I knew the element of a self-selection bias in participants' responses would make it more difficult and time-consuming for me to run correlations. The responses and the ways in which participants chose to word them were interesting and informative, as I will discuss further after reporting on participants' demographics.

Out of all the survey respondents, 61 answered the demographics question. Those 61 were of near equal distribution among the three critical consciousness score groups, assigned during analysis (21 in the top third, 22 in the middle, and 18 in the bottom). In their responses, it was common for participants to discuss nationality, race and ethnicity, sex and gender, sexual orientation, class and socio-economic status, age, and (dis)ability. A few of the participants also commented on religious affiliations, their family's education, and other aspects of their cultural upbringing. Most of the respondents fell into majority categories, as might be expected—as white, straight, middle class, and able-bodied U.S. citizens. However, there were many more participants who are women than men.

In my analysis of participants' reported demographics, I've examined the top, middle, and bottom critical consciousness groups in relation to each other by demographic category, which has offered some insight into the role demographics might play in the development of critical consciousness. The chart below shows participants' levels of critical consciousness as they correlate with the number of minority groups with which they expressed affiliation.

"Minority groups," in this case, includes women—although there were more women participants

than men for this survey—and all other groups across demographic categories (ethnicity, class, etc.) that have historically experienced oppression. I did not include age as a category for consideration in counting for this chart, however, because both young adults and middle-aged adults may experience discrimination depending on context.

The graph below shows that participants from the top and middle critical consciousness groups, again when participants are compared only to each other, were significantly more likely to report belonging to multiple minority groups than the bottom critical consciousness group. Participants from the bottom critical consciousness group not only had slightly fewer responses all together for this demographics question, but they also tended to give more straightforward and simplistic responses in comparison to the other two groups.

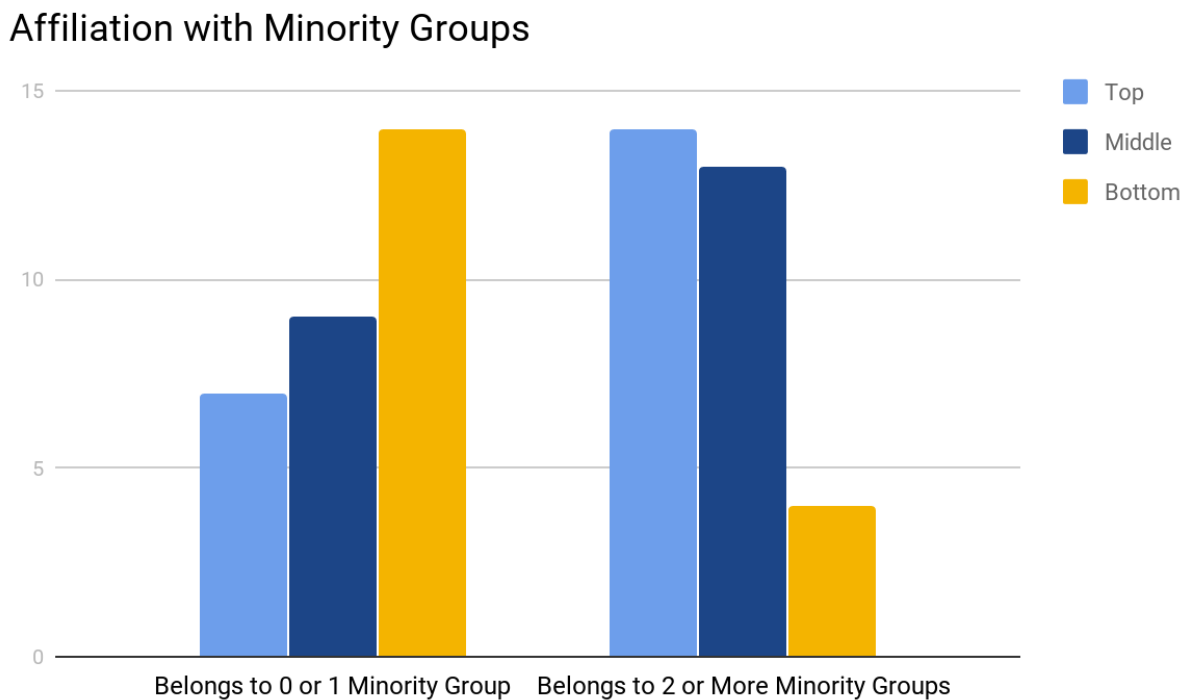


Figure 2. Participants' Stated Affiliation with Minority Groups by Critical Consciousness Category

The following few graphs illustrate how participants reported or chose not to report their demographic information in the categories of nationality, race and ethnicity, gender and sex,

sexual orientation, class/income level, and ability. As in the graph above, these also show separation by critical consciousness group for comparison. When possible, I've been sure to include participants' own language in the graphs, or at least in my explanation of them.

It is noteworthy in the nationality category that only three participants reported having a nationality other than (or in addition to) American/U.S. citizen. This demographic category also had a low response rate: there were 31 of the 61 participants who responded to this question who did not comment on their nationality compared to, for example, only eight participants who opted not to disclose their race/ethnicity. Of the three people who identified as something other than American, one of them labeled herself a "third culture kid," which is someone who was raised in a country other than that of their nationality or their parents' culture. To be more specific, this participant actually was still a U.S. citizen, but she grew up in Thailand. The other two participants were Canadian and Vietnamese, respectively. None of these three were in the bottom critical consciousness group in terms of their survey scores. Participants in the middle critical consciousness group were the most likely of the three groups to indicate their nationality when answering this question.

## Nationality

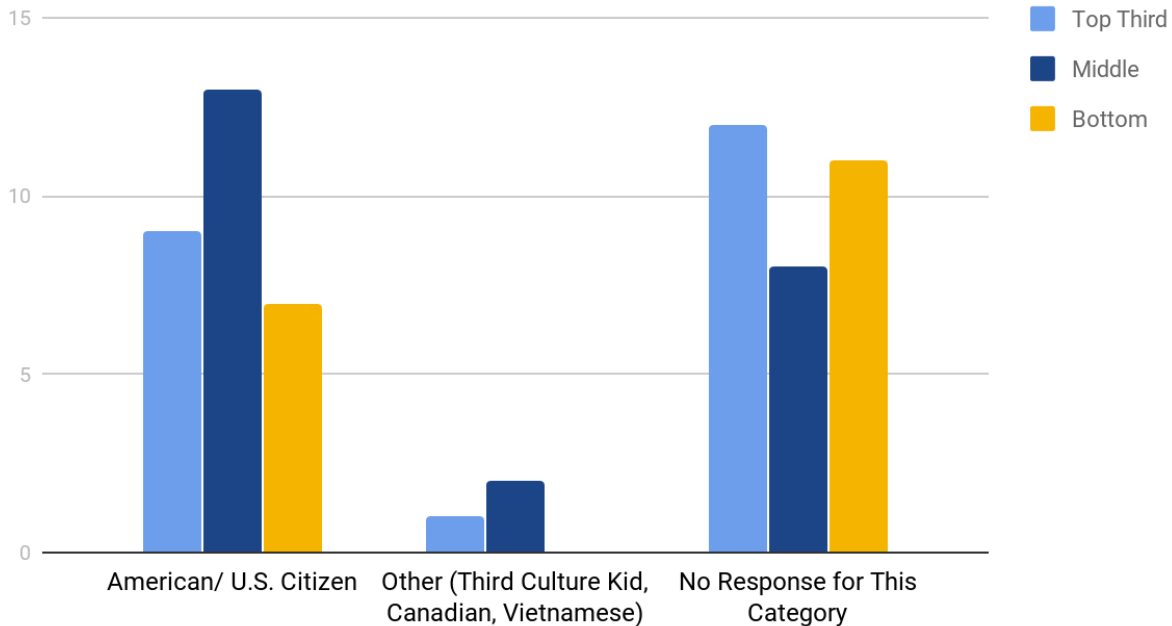


Figure 3. Survey Participants' Nationality by Critical Consciousness Category

In the race and ethnicity graph, we see, again, that the majority of participants self-identified as white or Caucasian.<sup>4</sup> Four participants identified generally as multiply raced (one of whom also claimed the ability to pass or be mistaken as white), while six provided more specific ethnic identities, which are listed in the graph. While the middle critical consciousness group was the most likely to disclose their nationality, they were simultaneously the least likely group to disclose their race or ethnicity—although not by much—and only two from this group claimed an ethnicity other than white. The top critical consciousness group had the most non-white disclosures for this question at five participants.

<sup>4</sup> The use of the word “Caucasian” to describe white people is problematic because it has origins in (pseudo)scientific or biological racism and it implies racially based difference that has been used to justify racist systems, such as slavery. A more accurate, appropriate, and acceptable term to describe white people of European descent is “white.” However, several of my participants, across all critical consciousness score groups, used the term “Caucasian” when disclosing their racial identities, so I have included it here, as well.

## Race & Ethnicity

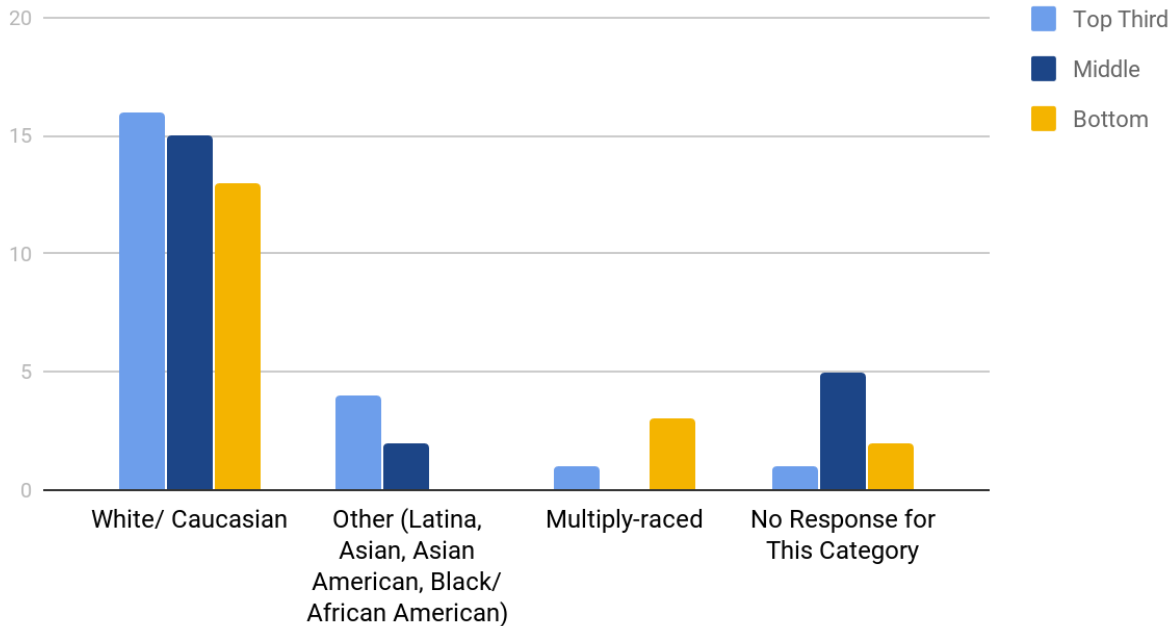


Figure 4. Survey Participants' Race and Ethnicity by Critical Consciousness Category

The gender/sex demographics category had the most participant disclosures (followed by race/ethnicity and then sexual orientation) when compared to the other demographics categories. When disclosing this aspect of their identities, most participants used either the terms male/female or man/woman. However, participants in the top critical consciousness group were the only ones to use the terms cis woman or cis man, indicating their gender identity conforms to their birth sex. The only participant to claim a gender other than these—a nonbinary one—was also from the top critical consciousness group. All participants from the top and middle critical consciousness groups who responded to this demographics question disclosed their sex or gender, whereas three participants from the bottom critical consciousness group neglected to.

The most noteworthy finding about the participants' demographics in the sexual orientation category is that the top critical consciousness group actually had more participants claiming a minority identity than the majority one; nine from this group said they are bisexual,

one said they are queer, and one said they are asexual/panromantic, while only seven of them said they are straight or heterosexual, and three did not provide data in this demographics category. For comparison, only two participants from the bottom critical consciousness group claimed a sexual orientation identity other than straight/heterosexual.

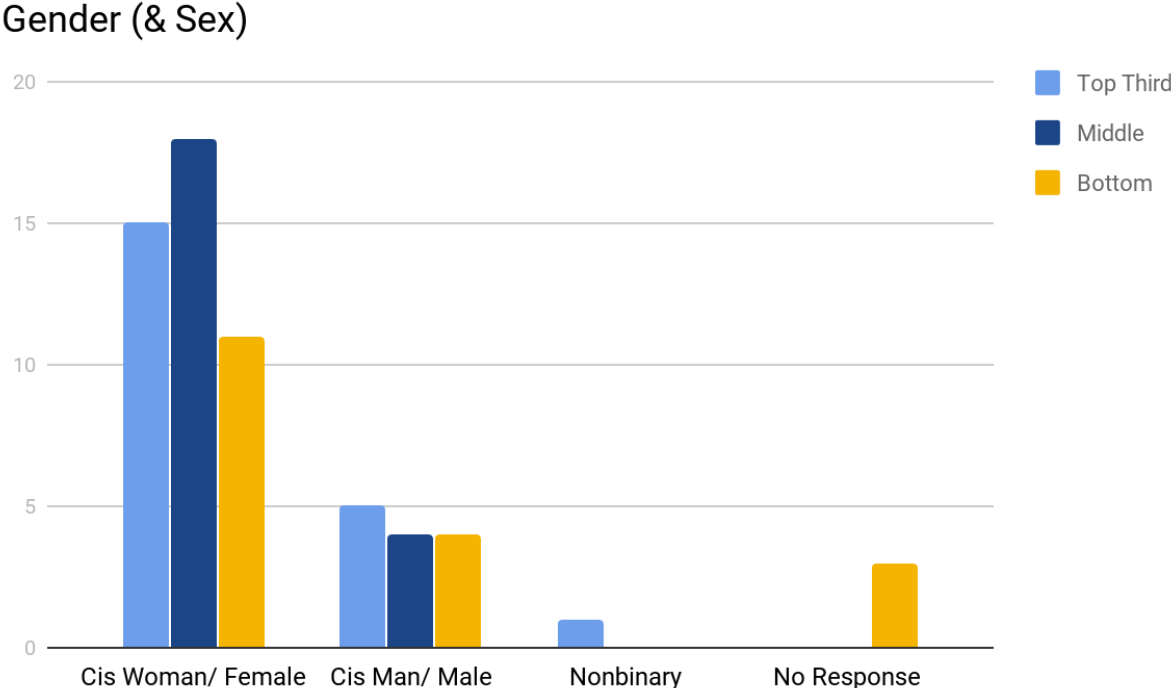


Figure 5. Survey Participants' Gender (and Sex) by Critical Consciousness Category

## Sexual Orientation

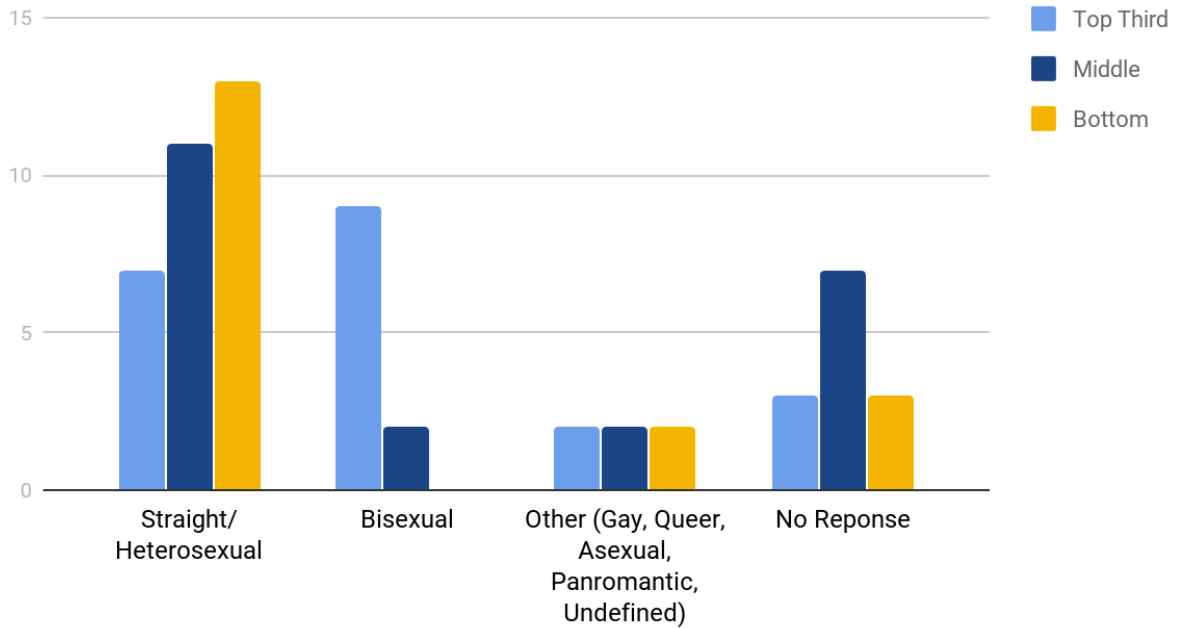


Figure 6. Survey Participants' Sexual Orientation by Critical Consciousness Category

The class demographics category was primarily interesting for the ways in which the bottom critical consciousness group responded. This was the only group with participants claiming membership in the upper class, and several people in this group chose not to disclose their class at all. Over all in this demographic category, the middle class claimed the most affiliation.

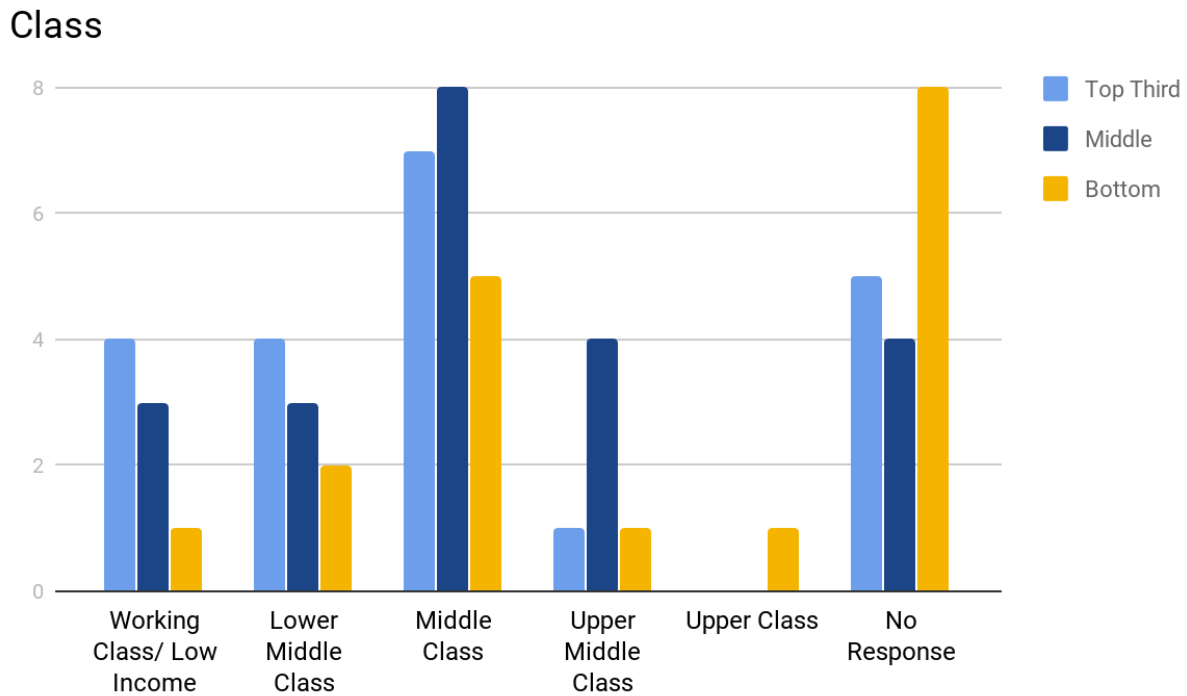


Figure 7. Survey Participants' Class by Critical Consciousness Category

Ability was another demographics category, like nationality, that few participants felt the need to address. One participant wrote “?” in response to the invitation to discuss ability. Out of the people who did discuss ability in their response to the demographics question, 15 said they are able-bodied or neurotypical, and nine said they are generally disabled or neurodivergent, or they stated having a specific disability (including autism, ADHD, anxiety, depression, mental illness, or chronic illness). Earlier I mentioned that the top critical consciousness group used different terms than participants in the other two groups when discussing sex and gender, and ability is another demographics category in which this happened. Participants in the top critical consciousness group were the only ones to use the terms neurotypical and neurodivergent. There were no participants from the bottom critical consciousness group that disclosed having a disability of any kind.

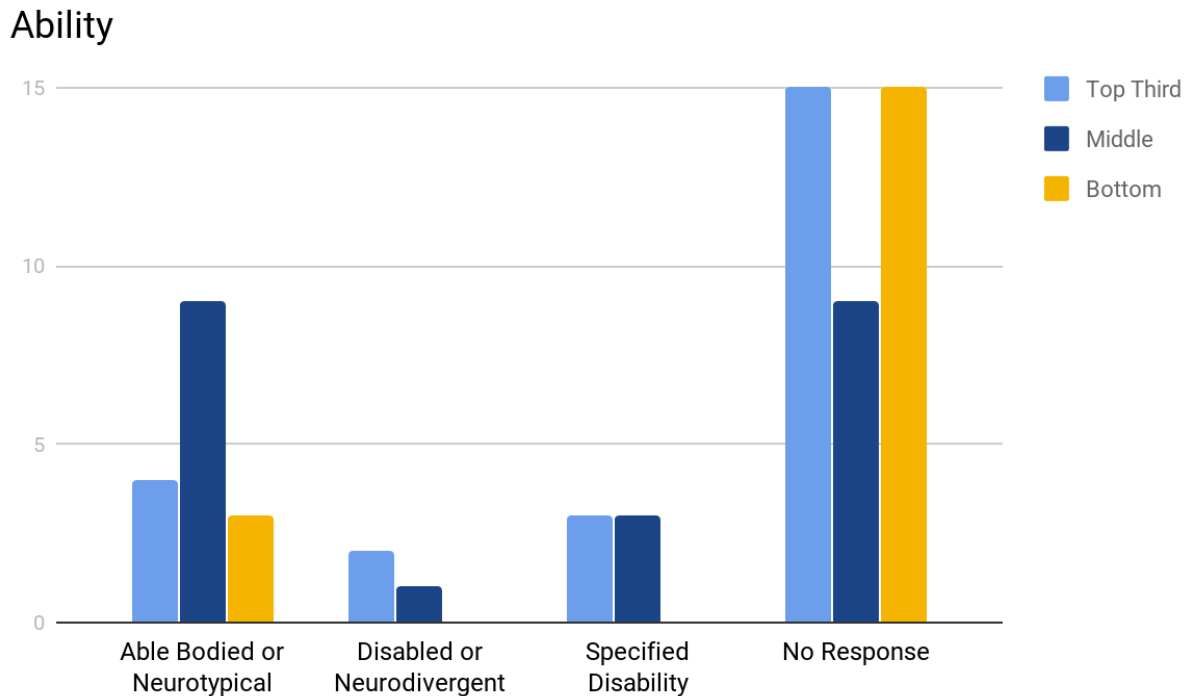


Figure 8. Survey Participants' Ability by Critical Consciousness Category

I have not included a graph about age because all of the participants who addressed age as part of their demographics were between 18 and 22 years old or, more generally, in their 20s, except for two participants who identified as middle-aged (one in the top critical consciousness group and one in the bottom). I also have not included a graph for the “other” kinds of demographic information participants provided, but will discuss it now. Although participants did not go into detail in their responses to this question about how their identities have influenced their worldviews, it makes sense that they shared these aspects of their identities because they do matter in some way to their beliefs and their ways of being and ways of being seen in the world.

In the top critical consciousness group, two people identified as not religious, and two identified as first generation college students. In the middle group, three people discussed religion: one person identified as Christian, one as Catholic, and one as agnostic/atheist. In the same group, three participants discussed various aspects related to location: one identified as a

rural Midwesterner, while another identified as an urbanite, and another claimed to have grown up in a minority-majority area. Also in this middle critical consciousness group, three people discussed their identities related to education: one was home-schooled, another is a first generation college student, and another is an international student. Two people in this group discussed family relations: one was adopted and another shared their identity as a married person. Finally from this group, one person discussed political affiliations, claiming membership in the Democratic Party. From the bottom group, two people discussed religion: one participant identified as a Christian and another said they were raised Methodist. Four participants in the same group discussed politics and ideologies: two stated they are liberal, one identified as a secular humanist, and another as a feminist. Two participants in this group also discussed their identities related to work and education: one said they are a grad student and another said they are an adjunct with a PhD.

### **Discussion of Participants' Demographics**

Findings from this demographics question seem to support the idea that a tutors' minority status(es) can result in a lived experience that increases their awareness of oppression. The first graph in this section about tutors' affiliation with minority groups, in particular, illustrates that tutors' levels of critical consciousness are impacted by their personal experiences with discrimination and oppression. Participants seem to have the most diversity, at least in the top critical consciousness group, when it comes to the sexual orientation category, compared to other demographic categories. Tutors who have faced challenges as a result of their identities—especially when those identities are compounded (e.g. ethnicity *and* class)—appear to have a more developed critical consciousness than those who have not, at least in these limited survey results.

An implication of this finding is that directors should commit to efforts to hire diverse tutors, a practice that the International Writing Centers Association has also advocated in its “Diversity Initiative” document: Writing centers not only “serve all students,” the organization states, but they also employ “a diverse population of tutors and administrators” and “[value] diversity” (1). Likewise, Nancy Grimm, in her contribution to *Writing Centers and the New Racism*, asserts that in seeking out prospective tutors with “metalinguistic, sociolinguistic, and [‘patience, tolerance, and humility’],” she has ended up with a “diverse staff,” much more so, at least, than when the primary criterion for being hired was a “strong performance in English classes” (88-89). And in the same collection, Valentine and Torres recommend “that writing centers be assertive when it comes to hiring” by “recruit[ing], hir[ing], and support[ing] a diverse population of tutors” (205).

Of course, everyone has multiple identities, some of which bring privileges and some of which cause them to experience oppression. One participant in this study made that tension clear in her vivid description of a couple of the identities—“poor as fuck, but incredibly capable”—belonging to her. It’s because of responses like these that I’m pleased, retrospectively, with the choice to leave this survey question open-ended. This tutor doesn’t see herself as working class or, perhaps, from a middle class family but circumstantially poor due to her student status; she sees herself as “poor as fuck.” And she doesn’t see herself as able-bodied; she is “incredibly capable.”

Those differences matter to a person’s identity, and the wording participants used reflects their feelings, how they see themselves (and see people who are different from them) and want to be seen, and, to a degree, their level of critical consciousness. Earlier I noted some of the ways in which participants’ terms varied as they described their identities. The top critical consciousness

group was the only one with participants who had the awareness and motivation to use terminology in the gender and ability demographic categories, such as “cisgendered” or “neurotypical,” that is timely, politically correct, and culturally sensitive. In sum, a person’s demographics matter to their critical consciousness, and the language used to discuss demographics can reflect critical consciousness.

The extent to which participants’ addressed specific demographic categories was also telling. Participants were more likely to discuss their gender and ethnicity than their nationality or ability, which may reflect the amount of attention they devote to them—in their own lives and in their tutoring practices. For instance, the high response rates for gender/sex disclosures may indicate the visibility and importance of gender and sex to participants. That visibility makes sense, considering that there were only about a third as many male participants as females for the survey and that writing centers, historically, have been feminized, which both associates writing centers with and perpetuates them as women’s work (Fitzgerald and Ianetta 37; Nichols “Why There Is No Happily Ever After”).

On the other hand, many fewer participants felt compelled to comment on their nationality or their ability, which, I believe, indicates a lack of diversity in and subsequently a lack of attention to these areas. One could argue that participants chose not to disclose their nationality for other reasons, e.g. fear of being reported as an undocumented immigrant, especially in the wake of the election of an outspokenly ethnocentric and xenophobic president. However, I think it is more likely that participants who did not explicitly state their nationality are U.S. citizens who spend little time thinking about the privileges that citizenship affords them. Often, when people belong to a privileged group, they experience little pressure to consider how

their lives are affected by that belonging—and also how others’ lives are affected by not belonging.

The rest of this chapter will discuss survey respondents’ critical consciousness scores in more detail and their tutor education backgrounds in relation to their scores.

### **Critical Consciousness Scores and Categorization of Questions**

The scored survey questions were categorized in three different ways, so that I could be sure to include a variety of kinds of questions. These categories can be seen in the second column from the left in table 2 below. First, they were categorized according to where they fell on the critical consciousness scale from *awareness*, or knowing that a problem exists, to *action*, or taking steps to intervene with the problem. It was important to me to include questions asking about awareness and action, as opposed to awareness only, because change resulting from critical consciousness requires both of these. Deimer et al. argue that one of the values of critical consciousness measures is their ability to test the core tenets of critical consciousness: “one central idea is that as critical reflection develops, critical action also develops... Freire [notes], ‘... reflection—true reflection—leads to action’” (817). Nine of the survey questions were labeled *awareness* (items 4, 6, 7, 8, and 10 through 14), seven were labeled *action* (items 9 and 15 through 20), and three were labeled as both (items 2, 3, and 5).

Second, questions were categorized according to the type of oppression on which the question focused. I limited the options for this category to *racism*, *classism*, *sexism/heterosexism*, and *general oppression*—mostly because the CCCM does something similar and I thought it was a good model for covering the bases. In retrospect, however, these categories chosen for the sake of simplicity may have realistically been overly broad. For instance, the final scored question (item 20) was labeled as *racism*, although *nationalism* or *linguicism* may have been more

accurate. The counseling psychology researchers who developed the CCCM even say that there are clearly other oppressive forces, such as ableism, for which additional subscales should be added (Shin et al. 220). Nonetheless, I found it important to label the types of oppression being addressed because, as Deimer et al. point out, “levels of [critical consciousness] vary not only from person-to-person, but also within an individual across different domains, depending on the kinds of marginalization that people experience” (811). In other words, as an example, people may have a higher level of critical consciousness when it comes to racism than sexism if they have personally experienced racism more than sexism in their own lives. This is a principle that I did see reflected in the data, as I will discuss later. Four questions were labeled *sexism* and/or *heterosexism* (items 8, 9, 10, and 19), three of the questions were labeled *racism* (items 6, 7, and 20), two were labeled *classism* (items 13 and 14), one was labeled both *racism* and *classism* (item 12), and nine questions were labeled *general oppression* (items 2 through 5, 11, and 15 through 18).

The third way in which I categorized the questions was by the context they addressed. Labels within this category included *writing center* (new to this survey instrument in comparison to the others after which I modeled it; three items—5, 11, and 20), *education* (three items—4, 7, and 14), *employment* (two items—10 and 13), *politics and law* (five items—9, 13, 16, 17, and 18), *interpersonal* (three items—3, 15, and 17), and *general* (eight items—2, 6, 8, 12, and 16 through 19). Four questions had some combination of these labels (items 13, 16, 17, and 18). I wanted to be sure to include some questions that addressed the writing center context in particular as a result of McWhirter and McWhirter’s advice: “A measure should be easy to administer, brief, sensitive to change, and domain-specific such that it captures the relevant dimensions of critical consciousness for the target population” (544-45). Considering my target

population was writing center tutors, I added questions to this survey that focused on the writing center context.

Table 2

Scored Survey Questions, with Categories Listed, and Participants' Responses

<b>Scored Survey Questions and Participants' Responses</b>				
<b>#</b>	<b>CC Category:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness or Action</li> <li>• Type of Oppression</li> <li>• Context</li> </ul>	<b>Instructions/Question</b>	<b>Response Options</b>	<b># (and %) of Participants Selecting This Option</b>
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness &amp; Action</li> <li>• General</li> <li>• General</li> </ul>	Select one item from this set that is most true for you.	I don't see much oppression in this country.	3 (3.7%)
			I feel hopeless and overwhelmed when I think about oppression in this country.	24 (29.3%)
			I feel like oppression in this country is less than in the past and will continue to change.	30 (36.6%)
			I actively work to support organizations that help people who are oppressed.	25 (30.5%)
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness &amp; Action</li> <li>• General</li> <li>• Interpersonal</li> </ul>	Select one item from this set that is most true for you.	I don't notice when people make prejudiced comments.	2 (2.4%)
			I notice when people make prejudiced comments and it hurts me.	10 (12.2%)
			It hurts me when people make prejudiced comments,	32 (39%)

			but I am able to move on.	
			When someone makes a prejudiced comment, I tell them what they said is hurtful.	38 (46.3%)
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Awareness</li> <li>● General</li> <li>● Education</li> </ul>	Select one item from this set that is most true for you.	I think that education gives everyone an equal chance to do well.	3 (3.7%)
			I think that education gives everyone who works hard an equal chance.	14 (17%)
			I think that the educational system is unequal.	12 (14.6%)
			I think that the educational system needs to be changed for everyone to have an equal chance.	53 (64.6%)
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Awareness &amp; Action</li> <li>● General</li> <li>● Writing Center</li> </ul>	Select one item from this set that is most true for you.	Issues of oppression do not come up in writing center work; it is apolitical.	12 (14.6%)
			I sometimes identify opportunities to fight oppression in my work as a writing center tutor, but rarely or never address them because it makes me uncomfortable or I think other issues are more important.	15 (18.3%)
			I find and also respond to opportunities to fight racism, classism, and/or sexism in my work as a writing center tutor.	42 (51.2%)

			I frequently endeavor to fight oppression in my work as a writing center tutor, and I encourage other tutors to, as well.	13 (15.9%)
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Awareness</li> <li>● Racism</li> <li>● General</li> </ul>	Rate the following on a scale of agreement. All white people receive unearned privileges in U.S. society.	Strongly disagree	4 (5.2%)
			Disagree	5 (6.5%)
			Somewhat disagree	7 (9.1%)
			Somewhat agree	15 (19.5%)
			Agree	24 (31.2%)
			Strong Agree	22 (28.6%)
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Awareness</li> <li>● Racism</li> <li>● Education</li> </ul>	Rate the following statement on a scale of agreement. More racial and ethnic diversity in colleges and universities should be a national priority.	Strongly disagree	1 (1.3%)
			Disagree	3 (3.9%)
			Somewhat disagree	3 (3.9%)
			Somewhat agree	24 (31.2%)
			Agree	18 (23.4%)
			Strongly agree	28 (36.4%)
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Awareness</li> <li>● Heterosexism</li> <li>● General</li> </ul>	Rate the following statement on a scale of agreement. Discrimination against gay persons is still a significant problem in the U.S.	Strongly disagree	0 (0%)
			Disagree	1 (1.3%)
			Somewhat disagree	1 (1.3%)
			Somewhat agree	11 (14.3%)

			Agree	24 (31.2%)
			Strongly agree	40 (52%)
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Action</li> <li>Heterosexism</li> <li>Politics &amp; Law</li> </ul>	Rate the following statement on a scale of agreement. I support including sexual orientation in nondiscrimination legislature.	Strongly disagree	1 (1.3%)
			Disagree	1 (1.3%)
			Somewhat disagree	0 (0%)
			Somewhat agree	5 (6.5%)
			Agree	22 (28.6%)
			Strongly Agree	48 (62.3%)
10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Awareness</li> <li>Sexism</li> <li>Employment</li> </ul>	Rate the following statement on a scale of agreement. Women have fewer chances than men to get good jobs.	Strongly disagree	0 (0%)
			Disagree	4 (5.2%)
			Somewhat disagree	7 (9.1%)
			Somewhat agree	15 (19.5%)
			Agree	33 (42.9%)
			Strongly agree	18 (23.4%)
11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Awareness</li> <li>General</li> <li>Writing Center</li> </ul>	Rate the following statement on a scale of agreement. Writing centers should empower individuals, challenge the status quo, and increase social justice for all student writers.	Strongly disagree	1 (1.3%)
			Disagree	0 (0%)
			Somewhat disagree	6 (7.8%)
			Somewhat agree	14 (18.2%)

			Agree	24 (31.2%)
			Strongly agree	32 (41.6%)
12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness</li> <li>• Racism &amp; Classism</li> <li>• General</li> </ul>	Rate the following statement on a scale of agreement. "Reverse racism" against white people is just as harmful as traditional racism.	Strongly agree	7 (9.1%)
			Agree	11 (14.3%)
			Somewhat agree	8 (10.4%)
			Somewhat disagree	14 (18.2%)
			Disagree	16 (20.8%)
			Strongly disagree	21 (27.3%)
13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness</li> <li>• Classism</li> <li>• Employment, Politics &amp; Law</li> </ul>	Rate the following statement on a scale of agreement. Social welfare programs provide poor people with an excuse not to work.	Strongly agree	0 (0%)
			Agree	3 (3.9%)
			Somewhat agree	6 (7.8%)
			Somewhat disagree	10 (13%)
			Disagree	28 (36.4%)
			Strongly disagree	30 (39%)
14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness</li> <li>• Classism</li> <li>• Education</li> </ul>	Rate the following statement on a scale of agreement. Preferential treatment (e.g. financial aid, admissions) to college students that come from poor families is unfair to those who come from middle or upper class families.	Strongly agree	1 (1.3%)
			Agree	5 (6.5%)
			Somewhat agree	12 (15.6%)
			Somewhat disagree	12 (15.6%)
			Disagree	20 (26%)

			Strongly disagree	27 (35.1%)
15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Action</li> <li>General</li> <li>Interpersonal</li> </ul>	Rate the following statement according to how often you engage in the activity. Participated in a discussion about a social or political issue.	Never did this	0 (0%)
			Have done once or twice	3 (3.9%)
			Once every few months	4 (5.2%)
			At least once a month	7 (9.1%)
			At least once a week	29 (37.7%)
			Almost daily	34 (44.2%)
16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Action</li> <li>General</li> <li>General, Politics &amp; Law</li> </ul>	Rate the following statement according to how often you engage in the activity. Signed an email or written petition about a social or political issue.	Never did this	11 (14.3%)
			Have done once or twice	24 (31.2%)
			Once every few months	15 (19.5%)
			At least once a month	21 (27.3%)
			At least once a week	5 (6.5%)
			Almost daily	1 (1.3%)
17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Action</li> <li>General</li> <li>General, Interpersonal, Politics &amp; Law</li> </ul>	Rate the following statement according to how often you engage in the activity. Contacted a public official by phone, mail, or email to tell them how you felt about a social or political issue.	Never did this	31 (40.3%)
			Have done once or twice	30 (39%)
			Once every few months	6 (7.8%)
			At least once a month	4 (5.2%)
			At least once a week	5 (6.5%)
			Almost daily	1 (1.3%)

18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Action</li> <li>General</li> <li>General, Politics &amp; Law</li> </ul>	Rate the following statement according to how often you engage in the activity. Joined in a protest march, political demonstration, or political meeting.	Never did this	24 (31.2%)
			Have done this once or twice	37 (48.1%)
			Once every few months	9 (11.7%)
			At least once a month	5 (6.5%)
			At least once a week	1 (1.3%)
			Almost daily	1 (1.3%)
19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Action</li> <li>Sexism &amp; Heterosexism</li> <li>General</li> </ul>	Rate the following statement according to how often you engage in the activity. Participated in a human rights, gay rights, or women's rights organization or group.	Never did this	25 (32.5%)
			Have done this once or twice	19 (24.7%)
			Once every few months	15 (19.5%)
			At least once a month	10 (13%)
			At least once a week	7 (9.1%)
			Almost daily	1 (1.3%)
20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Action</li> <li>Racism</li> <li>Writing Center</li> </ul>	How would you respond to the following hypothetical scenario? An international student client explains at the beginning of her tutoring session with you that she wants help making her writing sound "more American." She's upset that she keeps making bad grades on her papers because, according to her professor, she needs to work on her "grammar and syntax."	I would help her edit her paper so that it sounded more like a native English speaker wrote it so that the student could get a better grade in the professor's class.	0 (0%)
			I would identify some of the most common or most obtrusive mistakes in grammar and syntax the student was making, and teach	27 (37.5%)

			her how to fix them and avoid making them again.	
			I would engage the student in a discussion about the process of English language acquisition and her professor's potentially unfair expectations for her writing so that she might better advocate for herself.	2 (2.8%)
			I would do both option 2 and option 3.	38 (52.8%)
			Other: _____ [See discussion above]	5 (6.9%)

The table above, besides showing the categories for each item, also provides the wording of the scored items and their corresponding response choices, and it gives a breakdown of how participants responded to each of those questions. Here, though, I point out some of the more notable findings, grouped by the question categories explained above, followed by a discussion of what the data might indicate. In the first category for questions, *awareness* and *action*, the most notable trend was that participants tended to, overall, have higher critical consciousness scores on the questions labeled *awareness* than on the ones labeled *action*. The graph below shows the average scores for questions by these labels.

## Average Scores for Awareness - Action Questions

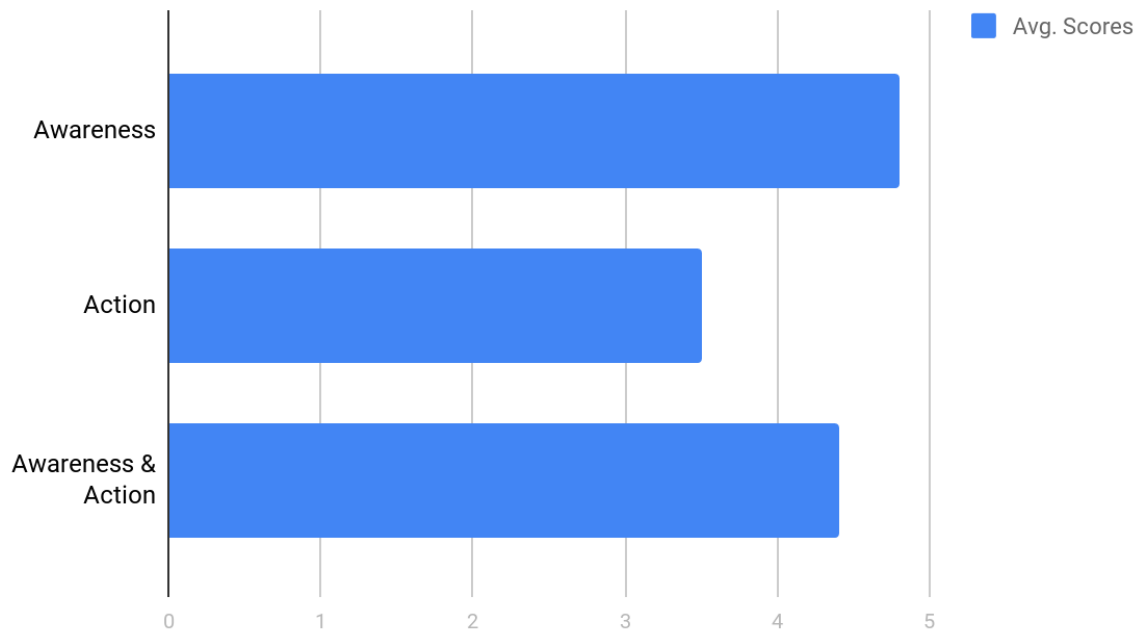


Figure 9. Average Critical Consciousness Scores for Items Labeled “Awareness,” “Action,” or “Awareness and Action”

## Results for Item 18

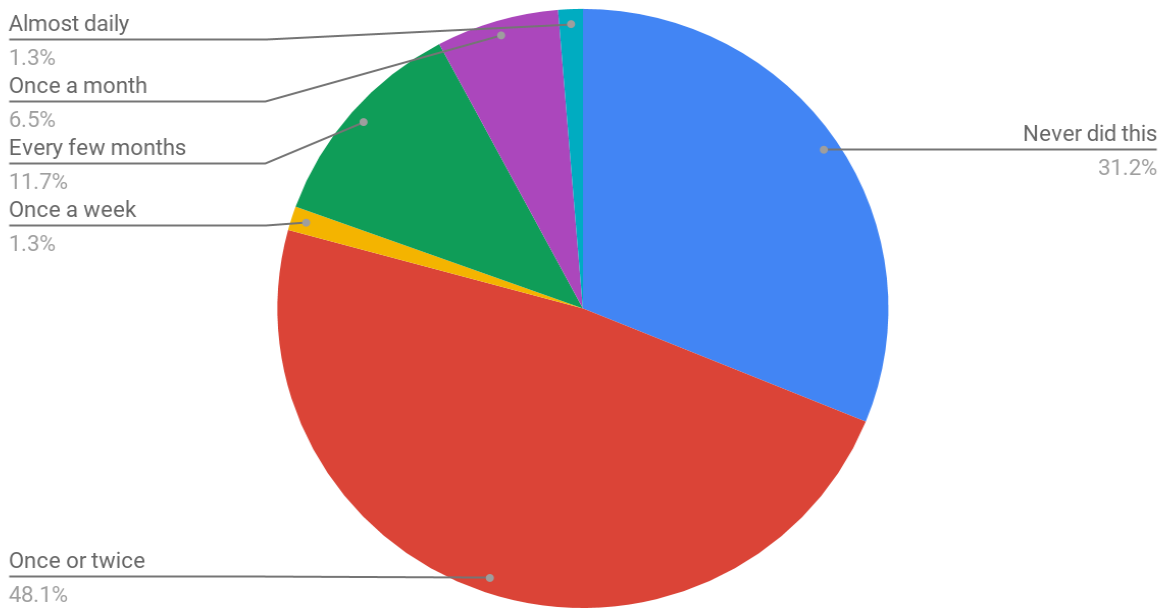


Figure 10. Results for Question “How often do you participate in a protest march, political demonstration, or political meeting?”

Item 18, which asked participants to state how frequently they participate in “a protest march, political demonstration, or political meeting,” is a good example of a survey question categorized as *action*. The results for the 77 participants who responded to this question are shown in the pie chart above.

In the second category about type of oppression addressed by the question, a noteworthy finding was that participants typically had higher levels of critical consciousness on the questions covering *sexism* and *heterosexism* than they did on the questions covering *racism* and *classism*. An exception to this can be seen in item 19 (asking participants to state the frequency with which they have “participated in a human rights, gay rights, or women’s rights organization or group”), which may have had lower scores because it is also labeled an *action* question, and those, as mentioned previously, tended to have lower scores than questions labeled *awareness*. Questions eight and nine (see the callout box below and adjacent line graph for response rates), however, provide good evidence for the otherwise high scores on *sexism/heterosexism* questions. The average critical consciousness score for these two questions was 5.4 out of 6.

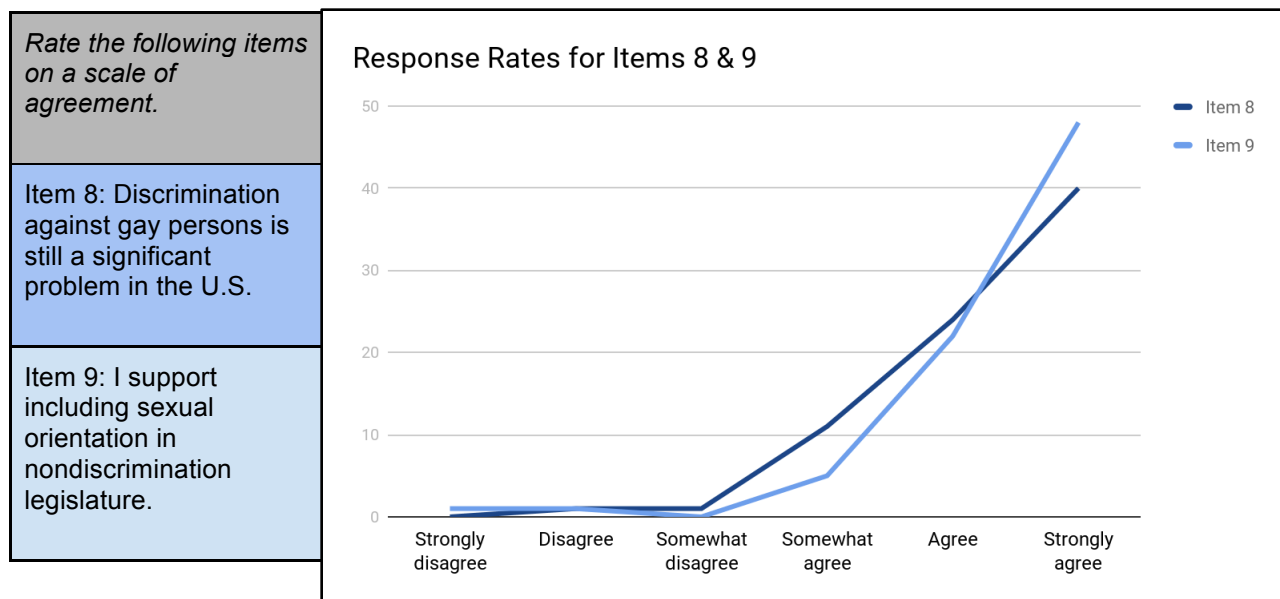


Figure 11. Line Graph of Responses to Two Items about Heterosexism

Compare these responses to participants' responses on items 7, 12, and 14, which cover topics of diversity in education, reverse racism, and affirmative action. Note that items 12 and 14 are reverse scored (the "strongly disagree," as opposed to the "strongly agree," response option is worth the most points, indicating the highest level of critical consciousness) and item 7 is not. The majority of participants' responses are still on the higher end of the critical consciousness spectrum for these three questions. However, out of the 77 respondents for these three items, seven participants disagree to some extent that racial and ethnic diversity in higher education should be a national priority; 26 participants agree that "reverse racism" not only exists but is also just as harmful as traditional racism; and 18 participants agree that preferential treatment to college students who come from poor families is unfair to those who come from middle or upper class families.

Rate the following items on a scale of agreement.	Item 7: More racial and ethnic diversity in colleges and universities should be a national priority.	Item 12: “Reverse racism” against white people is just as harmful as traditional racism.	Item 14: Preferential treatment... to college students that come from poor families is unfair to those who come from middle or upper class families.
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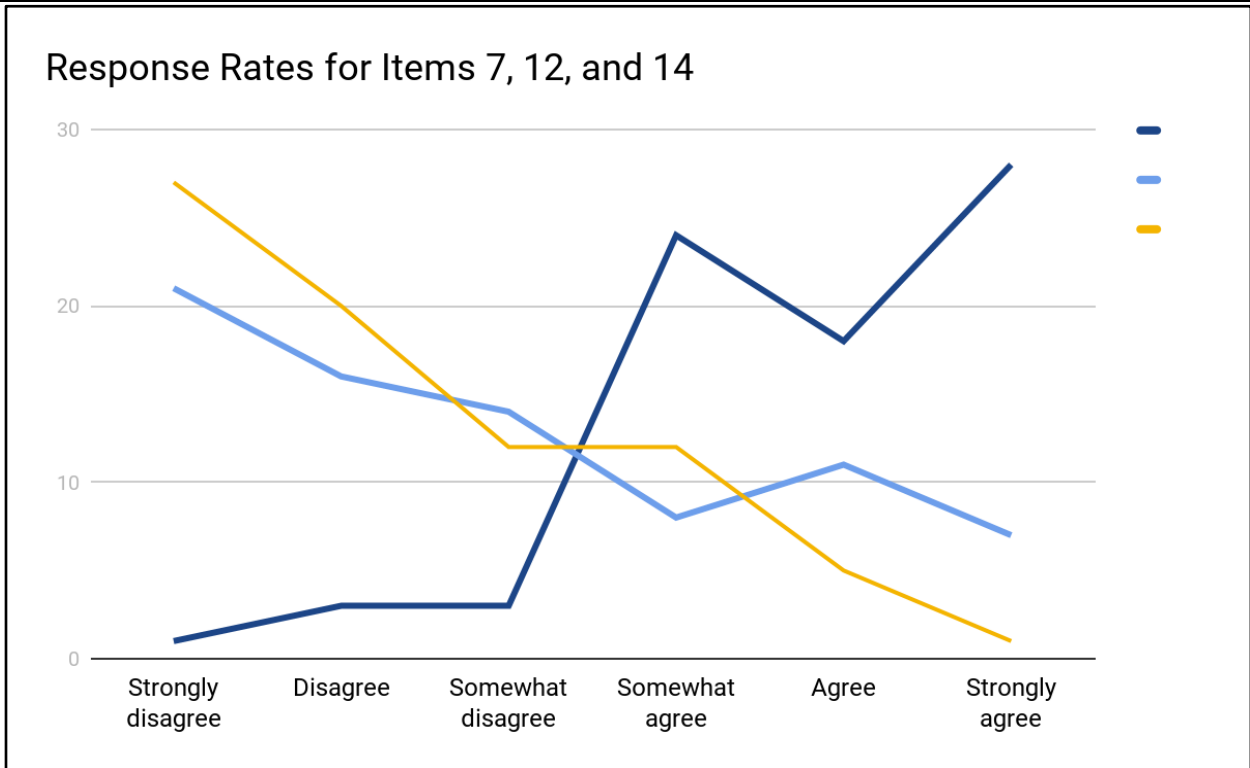


Figure 12. Line Graph of Responses to Three Items about Racism and Classism

For the final categorization of questions, about the context with which they dealt, I paid particular attention to the ones labeled *writing center* and *education*. Comparing responses to the *education* questions with each other, some slight discrepancies in participants’ thoughts can be seen. Specifically, item 7 had slightly higher critical consciousness scores when compared to items 14 and 4 (which asked participants to evaluate the extent to which the education system contributes to inequality), despite their relatedness.

Table 3

Highlighted Responses to Survey Items 7, 14, and 4

- 7.1% of participants disagree, to varying degrees, that racial and ethnic diversity in higher education should be a national priority.
- 20.7% of participants believe that education gives everyone, or everyone who works hard, an equal chance in life.
- 23.4% of participants agree, to varying degrees, that preferential treatment for students in poverty is unfair to students from middle and upper class families.

In the *writing center* questions, it is noteworthy that 15% of respondents stated a belief that writing center work is apolitical and another 18% said that they typically ignore opportunities to fight oppression when tutoring (in response to item 5). However, the vast majority of the same respondents—91%—agreed, to varying degrees, that the writing center should be a place to work toward social justice for all student writers (in response to item 11). This, again, as with the *education* items noted above, indicates some discrepancy in participants' critical consciousness, even on closely related items. It's possible that discrepancy can be explained, in part, by the fact that item 5, the lower scoring item, was labeled both *awareness* and *action* as opposed to item 11 which was just *awareness*. Recall my previously mentioned finding that participants scored higher, generally, on *awareness* questions than on *action* questions. Responses to question 5 do seem to align roughly with responses to item 20, though, in which 38% of respondents said they would focus on helping the student in the question's hypothetical scenario to improve her English grammar while ignoring any discussion of the issue of English language acquisition and academic expectations for Standard Academic English (SAE).

Table 4

Responses to Survey Items 11 and 5

<i>Item 11: Writing centers should empower individuals, challenge the status quo, and increase social justice for all student writers.</i>		<i>Item 5</i>	
<p><b>1%</b> of participants strongly disagree</p> <p><b>8%</b> of participants somewhat disagree</p>	<p><b>91%</b> of participants agree (to varying degrees)</p>	<p><b>15%</b> of participants believe writing center work is apolitical.</p> <p><b>18%</b> of participants choose not to respond to opportunities to fight oppression in their tutoring.</p>	<p><b>51%</b> of participants use their role as tutors to fight oppression, and <b>16%</b> also encourage other tutors to fight oppression.</p>

Table 5

Responses to Survey Item 20

<i>Item 20: An international student client explains at the beginning of her tutoring session with you that she wants help making her writing sound “more American.” She’s upset that she keeps making bad grades on her papers because, according to her professor, she needs to work on “grammar and syntax.” How do you respond?</i>	
<p><b>0%</b> of participants would help the student edit to sound more like a native speaker and get a better grade.</p>	
<p><b>37%</b> would help the student identify and correct her most common or obtrusive mistakes.</p> <p><b>3%</b> would discuss the disconnect between language acquisition and expectations for academic writing so the student might advocate for herself.</p>	<p>← <b>53%</b> would do both of these.</p>
<p><b>7%</b> of participants chose “other” and wrote in their own response.</p>	

Item 21 was not a scored question, but it is relevant to mention here because it is also specific to the *writing center* context. It asked participants to give an example of a time they were a tutor for social justice, to which 57% of respondents, rather than telling a personal story, chose the option, “I cannot think of a time in which this has happened.” Compared to responses to item 5, in particular, one would not have expected that number to be so high.

## Discussion of Scores by Category and Limitations to Survey

Even though near the beginning of this chapter I stated that participants, all together, had relatively high levels of critical consciousness, there was still much from the survey data that was disappointing to see. At the same time, some of the results were not surprising. For instance, the fact that scores on *awareness* questions were higher than scores on *action* questions could have been expected. Ideally, one would hope that respondents who are aware of social injustices also take action against them, yet several of the *action* questions asked participants to state how often they do or have done the activity, and participants may not be able to find abundant opportunities for doing some of the activities about which they were asked. Recall the example of item 18 that I illustrated in a pie chart above: It would be difficult for a person to participate in “a protest march, political demonstration, or political meeting” almost daily (with the exception, perhaps, of digital demonstrating via hashtag movements)—although one person did mark that high-scoring response choice—because marches and meetings require group organization and planning. Guobin Yang, director of the University of Pennsylvania’s Media Activism Research Collective, agrees: ““You can’t go [to large-scale rallies] every week[;] people have families”” (qtd. in Ruiz-Grossman).

In the same article, Ruiz-Grossman argues that millennials are currently more involved in political protests than older generations; poll data shows that, of politically active adults, 24% of millennials (ages 18 to 30) have gone to a demonstration since the election of President Trump compared to only 10% of people in each of these age groups: 30 to 44, 45 to 64, and 65+. Almost all of the participants in my study were millennials, according to their reported ages, and item 18 showed that 69% of them had participated in a protest march, political demonstration, or political meeting at least once at some point in their lives. Nevertheless, it was disappointing to read that,

on the flip side, 31% of respondents reported *never* participating in a protest march, political demonstration, or political meeting. This number may be lower than in the general population, if results are at all comparable to the *Huffington Post*'s poll, but there remains room to improve. Without overgeneralizing from these survey results, which are limited by the number of participants who responded to it, I can see some confirmation of my initial suspicion that writing center tutors, even when they have some awareness of issues of social justice, may have difficulty putting that awareness into action in general and in their tutoring practice.

Furthermore, it's terribly disappointing that so many participants indicated racist and classist tendencies. Recall from item 12, as just one example of several, that 33% of participants reported a belief that "reverse racism" is as much of a problem as traditional racism. That perspective represents the minority of participants, but it is still higher than one would hope to see when looking for high levels of critical consciousness in tutors, and it reveals a lack of awareness of systems of oppression that are bound by history and perpetuated by tradition. Participants' demographics, discussed earlier in this chapter, can begin to explain these results for critical consciousness scores. For example, the lower scores on items categorized as *racism* and *classism* can perhaps be explained by the fact that participants were nearly five times as likely to identify as white than any other race or ethnicity. Demographics may also play a role in participants' tendency to display greater sensitivity to the problems of sexism and heterosexism. Remember that of the participants who disclosed their gender identity or sex, 43 identified as women, while only 14 identified as men; one participant claimed a non-binary gender identity. Furthermore, quite a few participants (17) labeled themselves as gay, bisexual, asexual, queer, or undefined, especially within the highest scoring group (9), although the majority of participants (31) who disclosed their sexual orientation still identified as heterosexual or straight.

Survey results have told me where some tutors in the east central region stand on issues of social justice, yet the small sample size of the study is an obvious limitation. Another limitation to the study, and one potential explanation for discrepancies between related items (such as those from the education category, discussed above), is the difficulty of effectively wording items and response options. For instance, item 16 asks participants about how frequently they have signed petitions about social or political issues, yet the signing of a petition doesn't necessarily equate to a move toward social justice. Also, all of participants who chose to write in their own answer to question 20 did so because they had some issue with the wording of the response options I provided to them. (Four respondents mentioned they would avoid pitting the student against her professor in their discussion. Two of those four explained that the privileging of SAE is an institutional, not an individual, problem. Another of these combined elements from the second and third options I provided but intentionally left out the piece about the "professor's potentially unfair expectations." And another respondent said their focus would be on helping the student gain confidence in language acquisition. A fifth respondent who wrote in an answer took issue with my use of the word "mistakes": "What could be perceived as a 'mistake' from the grammatical framework of SAE, could actually be based on the sophisticated grammatical structure of another English.") I don't doubt that participants would have voiced concerns about the wording of other questions and answers—a move that in itself indicates critical thinking—had I given them the option to do so.

One other limitation worth mentioning, common to many surveys in general, is the "[effect] of social desirability" (Shin et al. 220), which can impact survey results. (This is similar to the Hawthorne Effect, which suggests that people act differently/more appropriately when they know they're being observed.) For this survey, participants may have been able to identify

that choices indicating higher levels of critical consciousness were more “desirable” and consequently skewed their response methods. Hopefully the anonymity of their responses counteracted that inclination, motivating them instead to be honest. These limitations, to an extent, are indicative of the nature of survey research, and I have taken measures to supplement this data with more qualitative research in the case study phase of my project.

### **Short Responses: Tutoring for Social Justice**

Question 21 asked participants to give an example of a time they had tutored for social justice. As previously mentioned, 57% (41/72) of the participants responding to this question, disappointingly, marked the option, “I cannot think of a time in which this happened.” I coded the open-ended responses in which participants gave examples of how they have tutored for social justice, according to their interpretations of what it means to tutor for social justice. A few of the responses, from my perspective, don’t actually describe acts of social justice. For instance, one respondent wrote the following:

Last semester I had a student who wanted to write a research paper about the legalization of drugs, claiming that people should be able to put whatever they want into their bodies as long as it isn’t hurting others. Many of the claims which the student made were unsubstantiated, problematic, and did not address the topic’s counter argument. I tried to address this issue by pointing out counter arguments that the student could address and suggesting additional avenues of research. However, this student was convinced that the research paper and claims were perfectly acceptable and did not heed my advice. (Survey participant response)

I coded this response as “help students improve writing...,” although I’m not completely sure what the justice outcome the tutor was striving for actually was.

Another issue with the results for this question is that a few of the responses were not specific to the writing center tutoring context. For instance, one participant begins her response, “On a service trip...,” and another states, “There are rarely times in tutoring appointments that

social justice is relevant... However, there have been many times I ‘tutor’ friends on issues of social justice in a no formal setting...” Despite this, all of the responses were included in my analysis. I categorized them with others that were similar, even if they didn’t fit perfectly (as in the example given in the previous paragraph), so that all participants who responded to this question would be represented in the findings. The four codes applied to the responses, the frequency with which they were given, and examples of each of them from the data can be seen in the table below.

Table 6

Codes for Responses to Survey Item 21, Frequency of Codes, and Examples of Coded Responses

Codes for Open-ended Responses	Frequency	Examples
Discuss biases in students’ writing, discuss social justice issues, and/or foster open-mindedness	☆☆☆☆☆☆ ☆☆☆☆☆☆ ☆☆☆☆☆☆	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “I once advised a student to use different terms in regards to an essay he wrote about Native Americans (as he had boxed them into a stereotype.)”</li> <li>• “[A client] subtly used language that implied that segregation and racial prejudice are no longer active. I shared a personal experience with her and also some data about the achievement gap between white and non-white students and I encouraged her to consider how that movement may still be alive today.”</li> <li>• “The draft was taking a stance along the lines of ‘women always need a man to do well.’ I said something along the lines of ‘some would say [opposing view]. How would you respond to them?’”</li> </ul>
Help students gain confidence (specifically in language ability) and/or develop strategies for self-advocacy	☆☆☆☆☆☆ ☆☆☆	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Our center receives a lot of traffic from international students, and I feel that I am often presented with opportunities to help these students feel more confident in their language abilities and express themselves more openly.”</li> <li>• “I work with a Chinese student whose accent is a barrier to her academic success. I helped her work on understanding that the burden of communication cannot be entirely on her and that others should also be working to understand her. I advised, for instance, that conversations in office hours might give her professors an opportunity to learn her accent so she could be better understood in class.”</li> </ul>
Help students improve writing (grammar,	☆☆	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “A student came into the center to write about how trauma affected women of color and I helped the student prompt</li> </ul>

structure, argument) to better convey message of justice		this message by correcting their grammar and paragraph structure so they could present this thought in a formal academic setting.”
Report faculty member for intolerance	☆	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “I reported a professor for being religiously intolerant due to the prompts and emails showed to me by a student.”</li> </ul>

The code “discuss biases in students’ writing, discuss social justice issues, and/or foster open-mindedness” was the most common one (given 18 times) used to categorize the examples that participants gave. Given that frequency and the fact that the code has three distinct components to it, it may seem broad. However, in my second round of coding, during which I grouped similarly coded responses together to note overarching patterns, I found strong similarities between those three threads. Participants whose responses were coded this way focused on challenging students to reexamine the biased language they used in their writing and/or their written or spoken ideas and the ways in which those might reflect anything from a lack of awareness to prejudice. They pushed clients to consider perspectives other than their own and to explore issues of injustice that may have felt uncomfortable or unfamiliar to them.

One response to question 21, coded as “discusses biases in students’ writing...,” that I found compelling—particularly because of the tutor’s conclusion to it, seeming simultaneously hopeful and frustrated—tells the story of a student working on a paper about the queer narrative in the movie *E.T.* The tutor explains that that the student “thought the idea was reaching too far and ridiculous,” but for the purposes of the class, “he had to pretend he agreed.” They write:

I managed to have a halfway productive conversation with him about how and why scholars from minority groups have to do more digging to find representation in popular narratives, and why queer narratives in particular often are purposefully buried in the subtext... I don’t think he totally understood, but he was willing to acknowledge that creators might keep queer elements to the subtext of a narrative for marketability and plausible deniability in a largely homophobic culture. It’s the small things, I guess.

Most of the examples provided by participants and given this code showed the tutor focusing on confronting racism (8) with their clients, while others addressed classism (2), sexism (3), transgender-based hate (1), heterosexism (like in the example above; 4), or unspecified injustices (2). A couple of the examples showed tutors being expressly intersectional in their approach to tackling bias (2)—by addressing the connections between race and class and the ways in which sexuality intersects with a person’s other identities.

The next most common code was “help students gain confidence (specifically in language ability) and/or develop strategies for self-advocacy.” This code includes confidence gained as a result of, in the case of ELLs, learning rules of English grammar. Responses with this code were, indeed, mostly about tutoring non-native English speaking international or ELL students. Respondents indicated that by supporting and motivating students through their struggles with language acquisition, they were doing social justice work. That work frequently included helping clients to release some of their feelings of linguistic inadequacy, especially in their interactions with their professors, through the confirmation that language acquisition is a long and difficult process. As mentioned previously, not all of participants’ responses to this question clearly portrayed acts of social justice, at least not from my interpretation, and this code provides another example. When ELLs are forced to assimilate into American culture and the English language, a “helpful” tutor may be just another oppressor.

The other two codes that were applied to the data during analysis, of which there were far fewer instances, were “help students improve writing (grammar, structure, argument) to better convey message of justice” and “report faculty member for intolerance.” The former has some overlap with the second most common code (“help students gain confidence...”) and reflects respondents’ position that focusing on helping clients to improve their writing when the writing

already has a message of social justice is one way to support the mission of social justice. The latter code was applied to one specific example of a tutor who reported a professor for religious intolerance after seeing his prompts and emails to the student client—with, the participant made it sound like, direct repercussions for that professor.

It's worth mentioning that a few of the respondents for this question indicated that the previous survey question, about the hypothetical tutoring scenario, influenced their answer to question 21, too. For instance, one participant begins, "Like the mentioned scenario, I have had international students who came in asking me how to write like an American..." If social justice tutoring is not a concept that participants had spent much time thinking about previously, they may have been overly attached to the one example that I prompted them to consider in question 20 rather than thinking of other possibilities for what tutoring for social justice could look like. In *Strategies for Empirical Research in Writing*, Mary Sue McNealy suggests that researchers place "general questions before specific questions" in a survey to prevent the "specific questions from influencing the answer to the more general question" (160, 159). Retrospectively, I could have avoided this measurement error had I simply reversed the order of these two questions; doing so may have led to more varied responses to the question about examples of tutoring for social justice.

Another interesting finding from responses to item 21 is that although they weren't explicitly prompted to do so, a few of the respondents mentioned that their attempts to tutor for social justice were unsuccessful. One participant, for example, reported the client being unreceptive to a discussion of their mistake in arguing that a regional HIV outbreak resulted from homosexual behaviors, when needle sharing was the actual primary culprit. The participant states, "[The client] did not change their essay. I was concerned about this, but wasn't sure what

my responsibility was in the situation.” Attention to clients’ reluctance to take on tutors’ social justice perspective reflects some participants’ assumption that students should immediately change their beliefs when confronted with such a point of view. But this raises the question, can you be a tutor for social justice if your attempt to sway a client to a more just understanding of an issue is ultimately unsuccessful? Is the attempt what matters, the thought that counts? Or does tutoring for social justice depend on real results? Might it be that the client needs an incubation period or time to reflect on ideas presented by the tutor? Furthermore, what would a scenario look like in which social justice isn’t a thing held by the tutor and handed down to the student in a writing center session, but worked toward collaboratively, both tutor and student sharing ideas and imagining a more just world?

These questions are important to the tasks of defining what it means to tutor for social justice and measuring the success of a tutoring interaction motivated by social justice. This line of thought also points to a need to follow up with student clients who have been engaged in such an interaction, which I do in interviews with student clients during the case study research. To summarize the main findings and takeaways from question 21, though, responses have indicated that

- 1) Tutors participating in this survey may not act upon their critical consciousness in the service of social justice in their tutoring as frequently as I would have hoped, or they don’t recognize or know how to describe it if they do;
- 2) For those who do tutor for social justice, they are most likely to recount instances in which they engage clients in discussions to foster open-mindedness and reduce their clients’ biases, followed by instances in which they motivate and support students, especially those who struggle with English language acquisition difficulties;
- 3) And, to determine the consequences of tutoring for social justice for writing center clients, I need to track and analyze students’ immediate and delayed responses to their tutors’ attempts at tutoring for social justice in the case study portion of the research.

## Short Responses: Tutor Education and Critical Consciousness Scores

As with participant demographics, discussed earlier in this chapter, tutors' writing center training/preparation/education is another factor that may influence their development of critical consciousness. Therefore, in the survey, I asked participants to explain, in an open-ended response, what their tutor education backgrounds were. Because the question was open-ended, there is a self-selection bias in participants' responses to it; they have recalled aspects of their tutor education selectively rather than comprehensively. For instance, a tutor may have marked that they took a for-credit course, but neglected to mention that they also read writing center scholarship and did mock sessions as part of that course. Therefore, the data illustrated and discussed in this section is not wholly accurate, although it shows what participants have remembered and thought to report.

Table 7

Survey Item 22

*Item 22: Please describe the tutor education you received/participated in for your job as a tutor in your institution's writing center. (What form did it take, e.g. a for credit course, a period of apprenticeship, periodic tutor meetings, an individual reading program, etc.? What content and material was covered? What information or activity made the biggest impact on you as a tutor?)*

When looking at the data for item 22, the 57 participants who responded talked about both the methods for their tutor education and topics covered in it. The bar graph below shows the methods for tutor education in which participants reported having been engaged, as well as the number of reports each method received. Note that some respondents reported multiple methods of tutor education (e.g. a participant may have taken a for credit course, conducted observations of sessions, and continued learning via a reading agenda), so the total number of reports of different methods adds up to more than 57.

## Tutor Education Methods

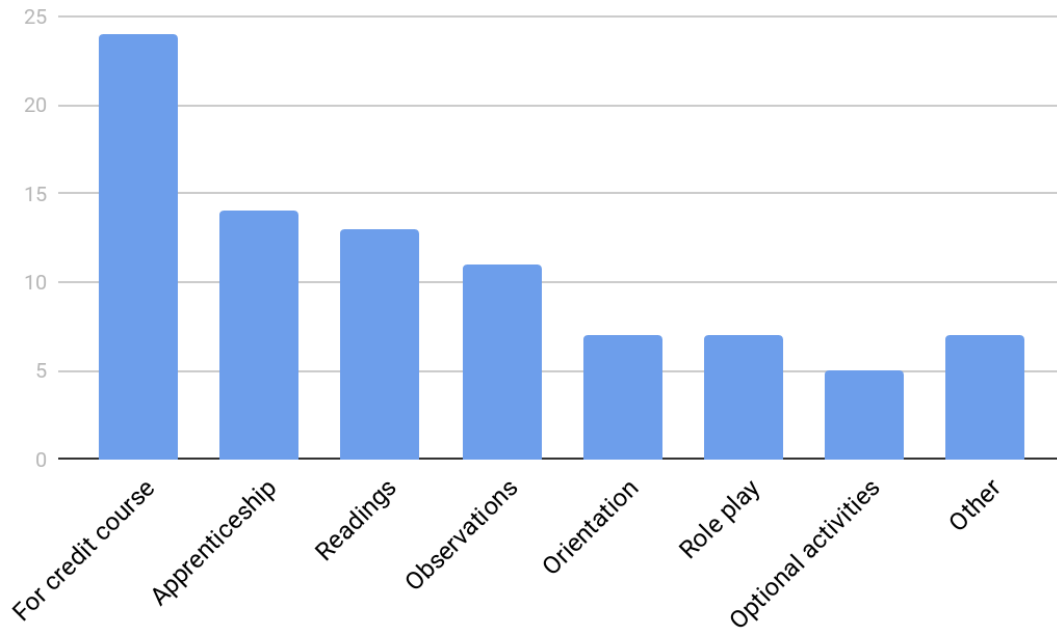


Figure 13. Participant Reported Methods of Tutor Education

In my analysis of this question, I also examined differences in how the top third, middle third, and bottom third critical consciousness groups responded. The most common reported method was for tutors to have taken a for credit course. Some participants explained that they had to apply, interview, or be nominated to take the course, and these courses were worth varying amounts of credit hours (1, 3, and 4). More participants in the top third and middle third critical consciousness groups—ten in each—reported taking a for credit course than did those in the bottom third group—only four.

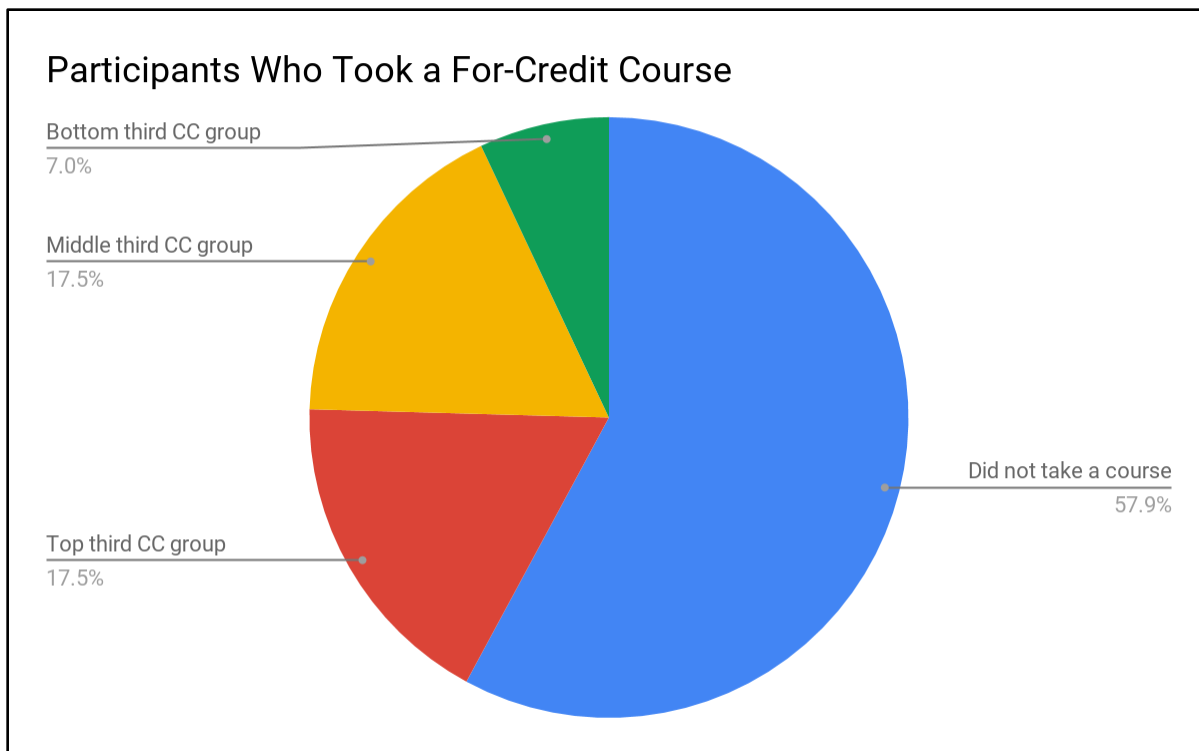


Figure 14. Percent of Participants Who Reported Taking a For-Credit Course by Critical Consciousness Category

Several participants also reported going through a period of apprenticeship, internship, or mentorship; reading articles or books related to tutoring and reflecting on and discussing those readings; and observing a number of sessions involving experienced tutors. Like with the “for credit course” method, the bottom third critical consciousness group was the least likely of the three groups (top, middle, bottom) to report these three methods as part of their tutor education—with the exception of the observation method, where both the top and bottom critical consciousness groups were represented by two members each, compared to seven members from the middle group. Interestingly, only one participant from the bottom third critical consciousness group reported readings as a method of their tutor education.

## Methods of Tutor Education by Critical Consciousness Groups

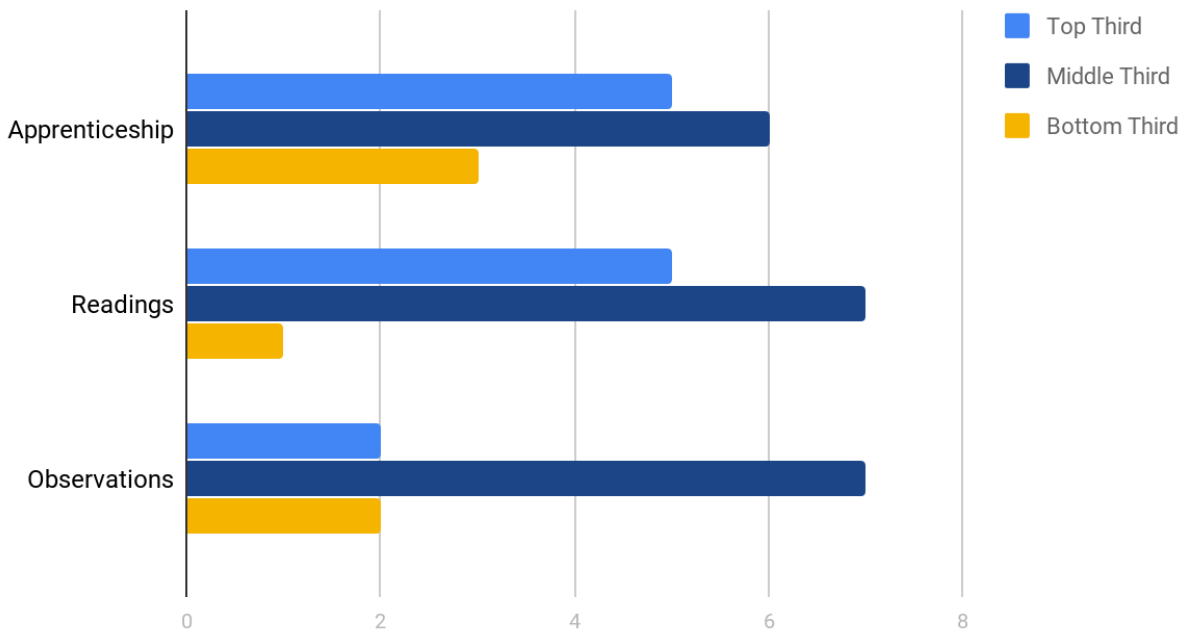


Figure 15. Methods of Tutor Education (Apprenticeship, Readings, and Observations) by Critical Consciousness Category

The next two most likely methods of tutor education that participants reported, although actual numbers may be higher, were training sessions or an orientation, which participants indicated could last from a few hours to three days, and role play/mock sessions or responding to hypothetical tutoring scenarios. The training session or orientation method was much less commonly reported, being mentioned only seven times by respondents, than the for credit course method, which was mentioned 24 times, the former having roughly equal distribution among critical consciousness score groups. The role play method was most common for the middle third critical consciousness group (at five, compared to one each for the top and bottom groups). When participants discussed in their responses to this question that part of their tutor education activity was in some way self-motivated or non-mandatory, I labeled them as an “optional activities” method. For instance, one tutor explained that social justice training was not a part of

their writing center’s tutor development program, but they felt compelled to build up that aspect of their tutoring on their own. The majority of participants who reported engaging in the “optional activities” method of tutor education were from the top critical consciousness group (at four, compared to none in the middle group and one in the bottom group).

### Methods of Tutor Education by Critical Consciousness Group (Cont.)

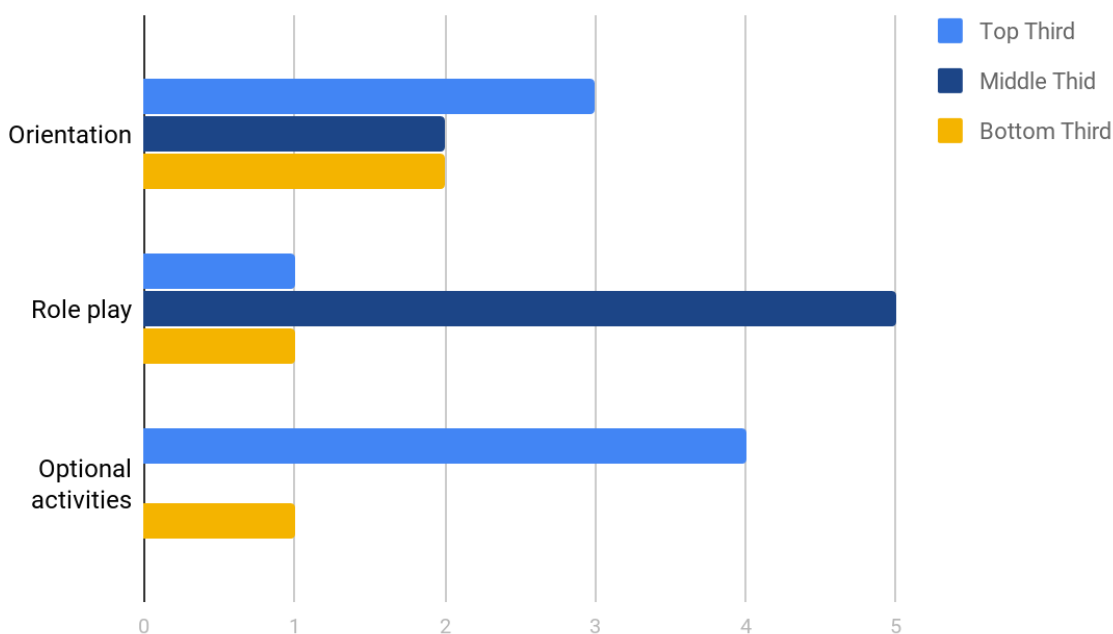


Figure 16. Methods of Tutor Education (Orientation, Role Play, and Optional Activities) by Critical Consciousness Category

The “Other” label in this chart includes the following methods in the list below. They were grouped together primarily as a result of their infrequency in the data.

- On-the-job training or learn by doing (found twice in responses to question 22, representing both the middle and bottom critical consciousness groups)
- Participation in a writing center conference (found twice, representing only the top third group)
- Participation in Safe Zone training (found twice, representing the top third group)
- Doing a research writing project on a writing center issue as part of the for credit course (found once, representing the middle group)

Participants also discussed in their responses a range of topics that were covered in their tutor education programs, topics that I grouped into a smaller number of categories that can be viewed in the bar graph below. The most common one of these categories is “tutoring strategies,” but that includes also attention to interpersonal interactions, navigating cultural differences between tutor and tutee, and general styles for tutoring. Basically this category deals with the human-to-human element of tutoring and the development of a tutorly persona. One participant, from the bottom critical consciousness group, commented, “We are taught to always be respectful and welcoming to everyone; a term we use is radical hospitality.”

### Topics Covered in Tutor Education

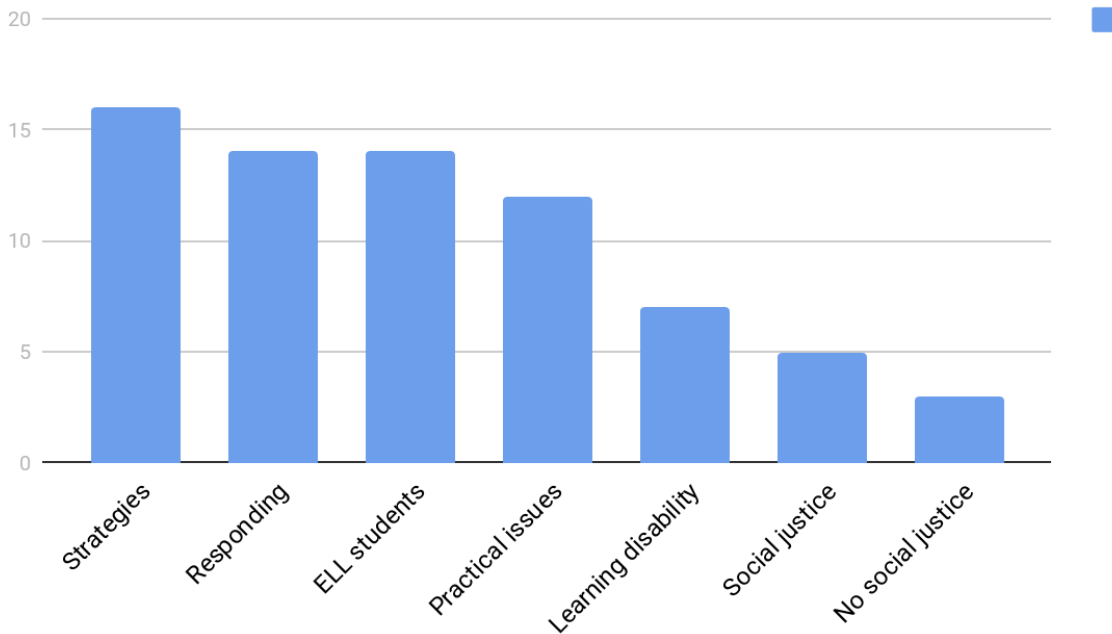


Figure 17. Topics Survey Participants Reported Being Covered in Tutor Education

The next two most common topics covered were responding to student writing, which was included in the education program, according to some tutors, by practicing with sample student papers; and tutoring international students and/or English language learning (ELL)

students. For the latter, some participants mentioned discussions about Standard Academic English being part of that topic. The breakdown of numbers from the critical consciousness score groups for these two categories is not particularly noteworthy, but the bottom third group has the fewest instances of both compared to the other two groups.

The “practical issues” group follows in frequency. This category covers a wide variety of topics, such as using the online scheduling system, addressing common problems in tutoring, going through the “nuts and bolts” of an appointment or parts of a session, and learning how to offer help with citations. Only two participants from the top third critical consciousness group, gave responses to this question that were marked as “practical issues,” compared to six participants from the middle third and four participants from the bottom third. (It was relatively typical for the middle group to have the highest number of representatives for a given category in the analysis of responses for this question, indicating that this group was more likely to answer this question or answer it in more detail than the other two groups.) Seven respondents also mentioned that their tutor education covered tutoring students with disabilities as a topic.

### Tutor Education Topics by Critical Consciousness Group

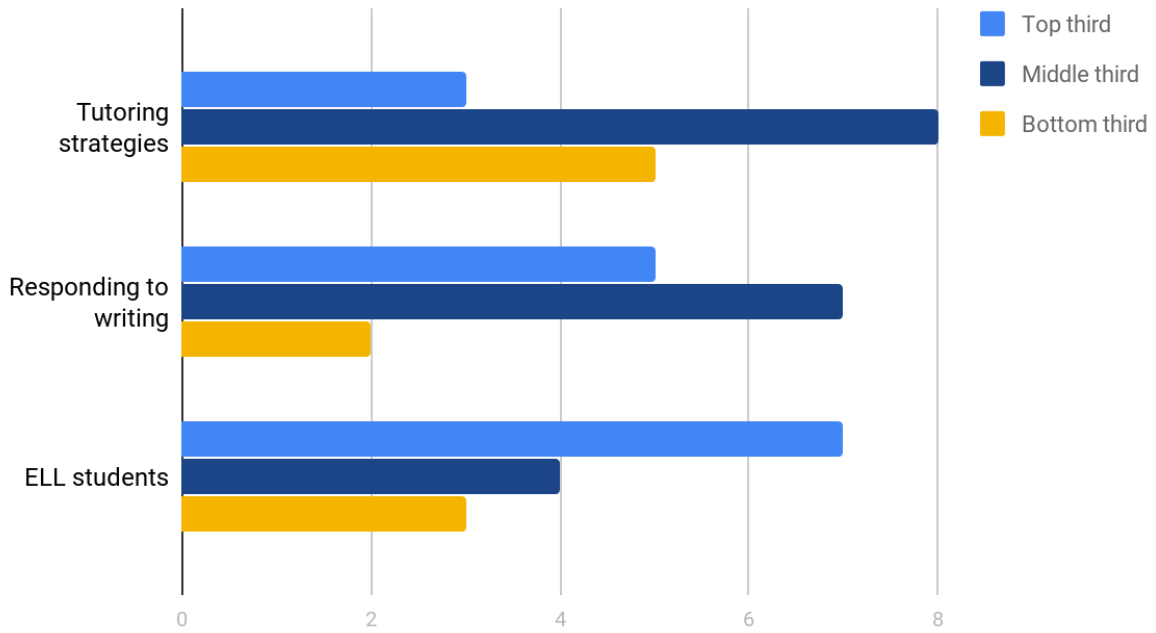


Figure 18. Most Frequently Reported Topics in Tutor Education by Critical Consciousness Category

### Tutor Education Topics by Critical Consciousness Group (Cont.)

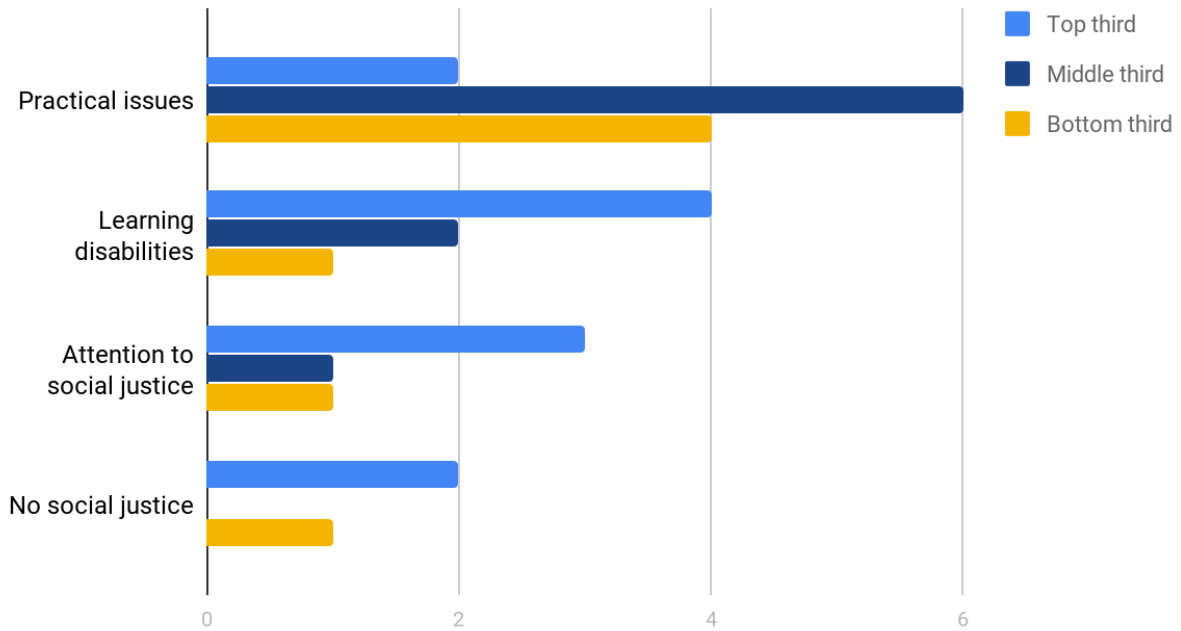


Figure 19. Other Reported Topics in Tutor Education by Critical Consciousness Category

Item 22 did not ask participants specifically about whether their tutor education included attention to issues of social justice, but several respondents addressed this anyway, saying that either it did or didn't. Their choice to do so is likely a result of influence from the previous question, which asked them to tell a story about a time they were a tutor for social justice. Five participants stated or implied that the topics covered in tutor education did attend to social justice issues (more from the top critical consciousness group: three compared to one each from the other two groups), while three participants indicated that their tutor education did *not* attend to social justice issues.

From the respondents whose tutor education included topics for social justice, one participant gave a specific example: "The most impactful discussion we had occurred after the November election as we discussed how to advocate for inclusivity in the Writing Center and in the campus community, especially for international students and marginalized groups like black students and LGBTQ students." Another discusses their response to a tutor education agenda that urged tutors to use their position to work toward social justice:

I remember feeling surprised when I was informed that as writing tutors, we are encouraged to interfere with racist thoughts/ideas we see in others' writing... The thought made me feel overwhelmed. However, I do know that doing so will help reduce discrimination and promote social justice in higher education, and that made me feel lucky because I have the chance to do so. (Survey participant response)

I imagine it is difficult to recall and summarize the many topics covered and ways of learning in a tutor education program. Hearing from the participants who answered this question in my survey gave me an idea, a starting point, about what tutor education in the East Central region might look like. I cannot draw firm conclusions about which tutor education practices directly lead to higher levels of critical consciousness in tutors because of the survey's small sample size and the many other factors that also influence tutors' levels of critical consciousness.

However, I did find it noteworthy that the group of participants in the bottom third critical consciousness group (from survey scores) also tended to have the least representation among all the categories for responses to this question—with the exception of the “practical issues” and “tutoring strategies” categories for topics covered in tutor education. Are they less likely to answer this question because they find less value in the survey over all? Do they have difficulty remembering their tutor education because it wasn’t meaningful to them? Further research would need to be done to explain how and why a tutor education program might impact one tutor in a different way than another.

### **Survey Takeaways and Moving Forward**

The survey findings have provided me with the start of an answer to the research question, “To what extent are writing center tutors in the East Central region of the U.S. critically conscious, and how do they perceive their level of critical consciousness to influence their tutoring?” I have found that tutors in this region, at least those who participated in the survey, have, over all, somewhat high levels of critical consciousness based on the concentration of their scores, although their results have not been compared to the general population or tutors in other geographic regions. Despite this, a significant number of survey responses were disappointing for their correlation to low levels of critical consciousness. They indicate that tutors may have difficulty translating an awareness of oppression into taking action against it, particularly in the writing center context. Furthermore, even when tutors see themselves as progressive because they value diversity, they may continue to participate in the subtleties of systemic oppression—for instance, if they believe, even a little bit, in reverse racism or if they think that affirmative action is an unfair practice for the people who do not benefit from it.

In *Writing Centers and the New Racism*, Victor Villanueva builds the case that “today’s racism, though very clearly having material, economic effects, is... steeped in the rhetorical, though now containing the sedimentations of the theological, geographical, biological, and the like” (18). After discussing some of the history of racism and the ways in which it has developed, Villanueva describes racism in its contemporary form. He borrows from Eduardo Bonilla-Silva when claiming that “college students and others continue to betray racist conceptions through their talk,” which relies on the following rhetorical tropes: abstract liberalism (a disregard for race-related inequities, i.e. “color-blindness”), naturalization (“just the way things are” as an excuse), cultural racism or the biologization of racism (belief that race determines ability or lifestyle), and minimization (the belief that although racism still exists, it is not as bad as it once was and continues to diminish) (30). At least a couple of these tropes, abstract liberalism and minimization, have shown up in my survey responses. Villanueva ends his chapter by pointing out that today’s current events that betray racism at work are dismissed by reporters and politicians as “aberration[s],” and he cautions that the color-blindness indicative of a “post-racial era” following the election of the first black president “threatens to silence the racism that still exists (31).

This *new* racism is a dangerous one because of its subtlety, for sure. However, five years after the publication of this book, we’ve seen the election of a new president, who Leon Botstein of *Time* argues was able to win because of “targeted resentment against the recent history of success by Americans of color.” Barack Obama’s success, in particular, “has fueled the resurgence of intolerance and anti-immigration sentiment.” Furthermore, Chris Crandall’s research on prejudice and free speech has shown that because Trump faced no serious social repercussions for his misogynistic and racist rhetoric—and was, in fact, still elected president

despite it—people who harbor similar beliefs feel emboldened to stop censoring themselves (in *Hidden Brain*). This situation has led to recent events displaying overt racism, such as the white supremacist rally in Charlottesville, which resulted in the murder of a counter protester.<sup>5</sup> At present, then, both overt and subtle forms of oppression threaten our society.

The survey results suggest that we need to do better when it comes to fighting racism, sexism, heterosexism, classism, and other types of oppression. Writing center directors, too, need to attend to the development of tutors' critical consciousness—with respect to both awareness and action, including all forms of oppression, and particularly in the writing center context—so that we limit the harm we may do to writing center clients. The survey does not show us what we should do, although it suggests that hiring tutors with minority identities could be beneficial because they may have higher levels of critical consciousness and be able to share their perspectives and influence their colleagues, as well as work with clients in ways that treat them fairly. In *Good Intentions*, Grimm makes this case:

Writing centers can work more effectively to close [the] gap [between theory and practice] if we accept the notion that institutional practices are not fair. Rather than continuing to hold students individually responsible for their work, writing center workers need to hold themselves responsible not only for granting students membership to the academic literacy club but also for changing the gates of that

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<sup>5</sup> If the success of President Obama played a role in the increase of racist and nationalist expression, imagine what the repercussions of President Trump's time in office could be. Trump's success may have emboldened white nationalists, but it has also sparked action against hate groups, e.g. the Women's March. In another recent episode of the *Hidden Brain* podcast ("Why Now?"), Vedantam explores a possible explanation for why the recent #MeToo movement has been so successful at exposing the widespread problem of sexual harassment: "Why are women being heard in a way they were not heard before?" One of his guests, an associate professor of women's studies, suggests that "the election of Donald Trump has served as a trigger, and it has provoked a great deal of fury and impatience because he represents, for many people, the ultimate unpunished predator... It feels very, very important in this moment to topple those perpetrators who are within reach because, at this moment, Trump remains unreachable" (Tambe). One of the victims of sexual harassment Vedantam spoke to agrees, "I think it's Trump... It's such a huge deal for your leader, the leader of the free world to not care about women" (Ermansons). If the election of a black man was a catalyst for racist sentiment, then it might be that the election of a man who brags about sexually exploiting women, among other things, is a catalyst for women and other victims of sexual harassment to demand that people get woke to their experiences and finally hold perpetrators accountable.

club when change is necessary. (102-103)

With such intentions, directors can both be intentional in their hiring practices and attend to issues of social justice in their tutor education programs, especially if they have difficulty with the first endeavor.

Even armed with critical awareness and a commitment to social justice, it can be difficult for tutors to determine what that should look like in a writing center tutorial. It may also feel frustrating for tutors, at times, not to know the extent to which their work matters. After telling her story of tutoring for social justice, one of the participants, conceded, “It’s the small things, I guess.” Tutoring interactions are typically one-on-one, and clients who may be confronting their own privilege, biases, and prejudices for the first time will require a period of incubation. Tutors may not see the changes they incite immediately, and their work may feel excruciatingly incremental—a slow, slow burn. Yet, many of them remain committed to their efforts to chip away at oppression, to contribute to social change. These “small things” matter and they ultimately can motivate us. The case study portion of the research, discussed in the following chapter, has allowed me to collect more detailed data, which includes some specific strategies for tutors and directors, and to follow up with participants to verify my interpretations of that data.

Before moving on to case study findings, I provide a quick explanation of how the survey results have also helped me to select a case study site. I considered several factors when making this decision. Knowing that the purpose of the case study is to examine in depth a center employing tutors who have higher reported levels of critical consciousness in comparison to other tutors in the same region, the two main criteria I considered were that the institution had a comparatively high number of respondents and that the critical consciousness scores from the institution were higher for both individual respondents and on average. I also considered whether

the respondents from those institutions with several respondents and higher critical consciousness scores showed diversity in their reported demographics and mentioned active tutor education programs. For practical reasons, I had to eliminate an institution that was not easily drivable for me from the top contenders. Permission from the writing center director was another critical factor influencing the case study location, and there was one director who chose to withhold that permission, for reasons related to imminent radical changes to occur at her center, while still indicating her support for the project. Fortunately, the institution that has ultimately been selected for the case study site, undergoing a change in leadership at the time, also met all of the important criteria, including permission for study granted from the incoming director. Research for the case study began early in the fall 2017 semester, after gaining clearance from the institution's IRB office.

## **Chapter Four: Case Study Findings**

I collected data for the case study during the first six weeks of the 2017 fall semester. This included attending the first tutor meeting of the semester, where I introduced my project to the tutors and solicited their consent to participate; observing eight tutoring sessions (with eight different tutors and eight different clients), based primarily on their timing, considering I could only travel to the site on certain days, and not on the profiles of the tutors or clients (e.g. with respect to level of tutoring experience, gender, race, major, etc.), which I hoped would allow me to observe a variety of types of tutors, clients, and sessions; conducting follow up interviews with all of the clients and six of the tutors (two tutors chose not to schedule interviews); interviewing the current director, the former interim director, and the former long-term director; and collecting information about the tutor preparation course and the ongoing tutor development meetings. Although all of the tutors had given their consent to participate in the study at the first staff meeting of the semester, I also had to recruit student clients before being able to observe any sessions. In the few minutes before a selected session began, I confirmed the tutor's consent and approached the client to introduce myself and my project and ask for their consent to participate, too.

### **Profile of Case Study Site**

The writing center that I chose to study is housed in the English department of a private, Midwestern university with fewer than 5,000 students. The institution is situated in a nice area of a large city. The writing center is under new leadership, having hired a new director for the 2017-2018 academic year. It staffs about twenty tutors, mostly undergraduate students from a wide variety of disciplines and three graduate assistants from the creative writing MFA program. The writing center has a good reputation across campus with faculty and students, all three

directors informed me during our interviews. When I interviewed the current director, Haley (pseudonyms have been used for all participants to protect their identities), she told with pride that in the two weeks that the writing center had been open so far that semester, they had already done 117 appointments. All of the appointments are face-to-face, but the director mentioned at a tutor meeting that they would consider adding online, synchronous appointments at a later time. (Because there is not a large distance learning population at this campus, there is not a great demand for online appointments.)

The writing center is in an open room with large windows across the hall from the main English office. It has movable partitions to offer some privacy, although it still gets loud in the space when there are multiple sessions happening at once. The director has a separate enclosed office in the writing center where she often meets with students from her developmental writing course. When I first visited the site, there was a lot of “visiting writers” flyers framed on the walls. As my case study research progressed, the tutors were taking down a lot of the decor that had been there for many years, including the books on the bookshelves. Haley explained to me that they were redecorating to make the space feel more inviting and less intimidating to student writers. The writing center also offers free beverages and snacks (Keurig drinks and pretzels, cookies, etc., for example) to tutors and clients, and the director brings her small dog in with her regularly. I heard many tutors refer to it as a “therapy” dog.

### **Overview of Findings**

One of my overarching research questions for this project that the case study was meant to help me answer is *what are the characteristics of writing center sessions at a site where tutors have reportedly high levels of critical consciousness?* I wanted to find out what tutoring practices might look like when tutors are critically conscious, assuming that their critical consciousness

would impact how they tutor. It's possible that the strategies they used would be transferable to other writing center sites, or that other tutors might be able to develop critical consciousness by engaging in certain practices. Because language diversity is a trending topic in writing center studies, as discussed in the first chapter of this dissertation, I was hoping, even expecting, to observe sessions that involved participants with differing backgrounds in and beliefs about language practices, which would require them to explicitly discuss the issue of language diversity. However, one thing that I did not find in the sessions I observed was any kind of attention to or negotiation about language diversity. This may indicate the possibility of a disconnect between current scholarship in the field and the lived experience of tutors, at least at this institution.

I did find, however, that tutors frequently used strategies for a student-centered approach to tutoring, which they understood as acts of social justice, and that all student papers in this sample dealt with a social justice or ethics topic of some sort, but the degree to which tutors engaged students in conversations about those topics, and not just the writing, varied, suggesting that tutors' concern for "niceness" in peer interactions may inhibit them from engaging in difficult conversations for social change.

The other question that case study research helped me answer was what does tutor education at that site look like, and what role might it play, as just one factor, in developing and encouraging tutors' critical consciousness? If the tutor education program at this site appeared to have had a direct impact on tutors' critical consciousness, difficult to measure as that is, other writing centers might also be able to make use of the curriculum after tailoring it for their particular institutions. The newness of the director made this question tricky to answer, considering that she had not been the one to prepare any of the current tutors for their positions

in the writing center, so I could not fully connect her agenda for tutor education to my participants' tutoring practices or levels of critical consciousness. To compensate for this problem, however, I collected information about tutor education from the former interim director<sup>6</sup> and the former long-term director who had recently retired, as well.

I found that, based on what they reported about their approach to tutor education, both Julia, the former long-term director, and Haley, the new director, have used or will use the tutor preparation course 1) to encourage the students to see themselves as writers so they may better empathize with writing center clients and 2) to offer guidance about working with diverse student populations, especially “ESL”<sup>7</sup> students and students who are differently abled, on their texts written for a variety of disciplines. Haley emphasized the practicum component of the course she will teach, while Julia focused on the benefits of service learning. The majority of the tutors I interviewed stated that the tutor education course they took was “influential to their tutoring practice.”

Cyclical coding was the primary method I used for coming to the themes discussed in this chapter. In addition to taking double-entry observational notes, I audio recorded all of the sessions I observed and interviews I conducted and transcribed the recordings. I transcribed recordings of sessions before scheduling follow up interviews with tutors, and I read through my observational notes and the transcripts, highlighting noteworthy sections to help me generate the questions I wanted to ask tutors. After I had finished collecting data, I did two rounds of coding for my notes, the transcriptions, and the materials I had collected (clients' writing and tutor

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<sup>6</sup> I have not mentioned Matt's (the interim director's) thoughts on tutor education here in this introduction because Julia was his mentor and he stated to me that when he was filling in he simply wanted “to make sure that... all the good things that [she] was doing were perpetuated,” but I will discuss more from his interview later in the chapter.

<sup>7</sup> The term “ESL” is in quotations because, although both Julia and Haley have used it, I would use ELL, or English Language Learning. ELL indicates that language acquisition is still in progress, as well as accounts for the possibility that the student learning English may already know two or more languages other than English.

education documents). The first, provisional round focused on identifying and annotating sections of the transcriptions that were most relevant to my guiding research questions. The second round of coding was used to note patterns in those sections and the annotations I had made across various data points, to categorize them and give each group a more concise code. I also did a third round of coding for the transcriptions of tutoring sessions alone, looking at the conversational behaviors surrounding the moments in which tutors engaged in or avoided engaging in explicit discourse on social justice issues.

The next section in this chapter, “Language Uniformity, Unfortunately,” reports on what I did not find during my case study research and if that might signify a disconnect between scholarship and reality. The section after that, “Tutor Education Promotes Awareness of Difference and Empathetic Tutoring,” discusses tutor education and its possible/potential for impact at the case study site. The final two sections, “Student-Centered Tutoring and Critical Pedagogy” and “‘Social Camaraderie’ Means Social Justice in Writing, Not Conversation,” discuss my findings about the characteristics of writing center sessions at the case study site.

### **Language Uniformity, Unfortunately**

One recent trend in writing center research and scholarship, as noted in my review of the literature, focuses on issues in language variety and language difference in writing. For instance, Vershawn Young argues that students should have the right to make choices about how they use language(s), rather than having the language of privilege, Standard American English, forced on them—a move that would affirm, even celebrate, diverse identities and cultures, manifested in language. Asao Inoue, likewise, suggests that SAE is a problem when it is used to discriminate against people with other language cultures and traditions, and Nancy Wilson provides evidence that this kind of language-based discrimination is happening in institutions of higher education,

even in writing centers, even when tutors believe themselves to be inclusive. Recent scholarship in the area of translingual theory and pedagogy (Canagarajah; Lu and Horner), as well, supports a progressive view of language: that because language continuously changes, responds to context, reflects the speaker/writer (who has a responsibility to be purposeful about language use), and has material consequences in the world, it benefits us to be flexible in how we choose to use it.

Because this trend promotes justice for, especially, students who speak nonstandard dialects or home languages other than English, I was interested in observing sessions at the case study site that confronted language difference or that involved negotiations about language diversity in students' writing to see how tutors would approach that. Unfortunately, this did not occur in any of the eight sessions. The lack of linguistic diversity in clients and attention to language issues from tutors can, in part, be explained by the student demographics of the institution. Haley explained to me that the majority of students are white and come from affluent families. (The student participants did not disclose their families' financial statuses to me, though a couple of them did talk about the student population, generally, being privileged.) They are educationally and linguistically privileged. It is true that one client from the sessions I observed had an hispanic accent, and she told me during her interview that she is Puerto Rican, but this did not seem to have an impact on the session in any obvious way.

Haley confirmed, during my interview with her, that the university "tends to have a fairly homogenous student body... We [do] see students of minority races that get sent here sometimes reflecting racism perhaps on the part of the faculty." The tutor population is even less diverse than the clients who visit the writing center at this institution. All three directors I interviewed mentioned that the tutors are diverse in their majors, but not so much in other aspects of their

identities, such as race and ability. Haley commented, too, that she wants to see more representation going forward in her role as director. The reason for the lack of diversity in the tutor group could be that new tutors are recommended to the director by professors of the first year seminar courses, and those professors may be more likely to identify “good writers” as students with strong academic preparation and grasp of SAE (read: as students for whom higher education was designed).

Knowing that I was interested in the issue of language diversity, Haley elaborated on the problem of homogeneity in the student population as a whole at the university:

I don't think you're gonna see a lot of examples of different vernaculars and things like that. These are kids that have grown up in- they're not first generation college, by any means, for the most part. I'm sure that tutors are not even aware that there are differences in language use. I mean to them [SAE] is normal... They don't think about the privilege that comes from having that grasp of the language of power.

Haley teaches the developmental writing course at this institution, in addition to directing the writing center, and she noted that there is a disproportionate number of minority students (e.g. students who speak non-standard English dialects, who are English language learners, or who have learning disabilities that impact their language use and communication skills) placed in this course, which wasn't surprising to hear as this tends to be the case with developmental writing in general. I was unable to observe sessions with these specific students, though, because I chose not to control for such variables when I designed the case study research, hoping instead to get a broad picture of tutoring in writing at the site.

My conversations with tutors, following my observations of their sessions, seemed to confirm Haley's point that they are largely unaware of language difference. One of the questions I asked tutors was whether and how they thought social justice played a role in their tutoring practice. Some of the practices tutors mentioned in their affirmative responses to this question

were creating a welcoming environment, ensuring students have agency to make decisions about their writing, confronting bias in students' writing, and working with different populations of student writers. Only two of the tutors said something that was relevant to the topic of clients' language: they mentioned that their tutor preparation had discussed working with "ESL students." They did not, however, elaborate on the nature of that discussion, so the degree to which it prepared them to contribute to justice efforts for clients learning the English language, if at all, is undetermined. Furthermore, both of these tutors grouped ESL students and students with learning disabilities together when they mentioned them, indicating they may think of language learners as having some sort of cognitive deficiency.

Another tutor, Anna May, talked to me about her take on social justice—in general, not just in the area of language difference—in tutoring. She explained that the reason that social justice isn't a prevalent feature of writing center tutoring at this institution is because so few students experience injustices (—this she believes, despite being a gender studies minor).

Anna May: Typically with [this university], it's typically a relatively privileged background that people are coming from, so in order to break down those social justice barriers, it's difficult to do so when those barriers are so strong, if that makes sense. There's not really an opportunity to do so because there is social injustice [here]...

Me: So because the institution's student population is pretty privileged, they're not coming from minority populations where tensions from injustice are inherent?

Anna May: Exactly... There's very rarely individuals who I get to interact with at the center that are suffering from that injustice.

Me: Because if you're not already struggling with it, it's not ready at the surface?

Anna May: Exactly...

Anna May and the director, Haley, both seem to correlate a lack of diversity in the student population with lack of awareness of and attention to issues of injustice in the writing

center tutoring context. This sounds similar to the point I made in the previous chapter that the more privilege a person has, the less time they are forced to spend thinking about oppression. García, in his article complicating the antiracist agenda of writing centers, addresses this same barrier to social justice: “Some might say: ‘my writing center does not have students from the Valley,’” and his response to them is, “You will,” which suggests a need to be proactive and prepared (51).

Furthermore, Peggy McIntosh, in her seminal work on white privilege, asserts, “Many, perhaps most, of our white students in the United States think that racism doesn’t affect them because they are not people of color; they do not see ‘whiteness’ as a racial identity” (4). It may indeed be the case that students at the case study institution on the whole personally experience very little oppression in their lives, but that doesn’t mean, as García points out, that oppression doesn’t exist in the world or that they should be excused from developing and making use of a critical consciousness. Haley takes a similar stance:

I feel like I have an ethical obligation to introduce those ideas [related to difference and equality] if they haven’t had them introduced before. . . . You’ve gotta<sup>8</sup> recognize that other people are not ignorant, they’re just different and they haven’t had these privileges that you have had, and part of that is language and power and to talk about the exclusivity of Standard Edited American English and what it’s like to be a child who’s raised in a home that’s highly literate where this language feels natural to you, there’s no interrupt between you at home and you at school. . . . I think that has to be confronted and what better place to do it than for people who are gonna be working with language.

However, the two-part, optional series of tutor education meetings that Haley developed about tutoring ESL clients seems not to go as far as it could have in the direction of introducing

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<sup>8</sup> Because I did not conduct a linguistic analysis, my method for transcribing participants’ dialogue focused simply on capturing in writing the words they spoke without attending to any special linguistic or conversational features—with the exception of those that would help the reader imagine the conversation as it happened, e.g. laughter or a pause in the talking. However, I did choose to maintain linguistic reductions (“gotta,” “gonna,” etc.) as much as possible in the transcription so as not to unnecessarily standardize participants’ language.

tutors to the idea of language-based discrimination and how they might disrupt it. Despite the fact that at least some of the tutors had already received training on working with ESL students, Haley told me they still “really [did] not feel prepared [to] handl[e]” this kind of tutoring situation. This, and the recent “influx” of ESL students on campus and in the center (according to Haley<sup>9</sup>), motivated her to offer these meetings. The series, as it was designed, at least, seems to focus only on international students, and not speakers of nonstandard English dialects from the U.S.

The first part of the series, titled “The Challenges (and Rewards) of Linguistic and Cultural Diversity,” does appear to make an effort to frame linguistic diversity in a positive light, as well as connect language to culture, although the focus on challenges *over* rewards (in the title) may slightly detract from that message. I was unable to attend this meeting, but an excerpt from the synopsis Haley gave to tutors reads, “We will fearlessly confront the challenges of linguistic and cultural diversity in the one-on-one, individualized teaching situation of the Writing Center session. This will be an opportunity to discuss challenges, share strategies, and develop a set of ‘best practices’ for working with ESL/ELL writers.” She asked tutors attending the meeting to read two articles from the *Writing Lab Newsletter*: “Tutoring ESL Students: A Different Kind of Session” and “Misinterpretation vs. Misunderstanding: A Look at ESL Students.”

The second staff meeting in this series focused on balancing discussion of higher and lower order concerns in sessions with ESL writers and how to address grammatical issues in this

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<sup>9</sup> Statistics provided by the university actually show that the international student population, which I recognize isn't the same as the “ESL” student population, was lower in 2016 than it was in 2007 and 2008, but higher than it was from 2009 to 2015—only by a maximum difference of 29 students. I do not have numerical data about the number of these students or students who identify themselves as “ESL” who visit the writing center to corroborate Haley's claim about an “influx,” which may, in fact, only be her perception.

context. While Haley expressed awareness that tutors have a gap in their knowledge about working with clients from diverse language backgrounds and she made moves to address that gap, rather than excusing it based on the lack of diversity in the student body at this institution, it might be that the tutor education curriculum could do more to raise tutors' critical consciousness on this issue, as I will discuss further in the final chapter. The following section in this chapter provides more insight into what tutor education has and will look like at the case study site and how it might contribute to helping tutors develop and apply critical consciousness.

### **Tutor Education Promotes Awareness of Difference and Empathetic Tutoring**

Tutors at the case study site take a three credit hours course labeled as “advanced topics in composition.” I heard about only one tutor during my research who did not take the course prior to tutoring, possibly because of a scheduling conflict or a situation that led the writing center to be understaffed. Under the new director's leadership, tutors also have the option<sup>10</sup> to participate in ongoing tutor development via meetings offered approximately once a month. I should note that all of my data about tutor education has come from what the directors and tutors remembered and reported in their interviews with me, as well as some emails to tutors about tutor development meetings in which Haley included me. This means I am providing a picture of tutor education that is, ultimately, incomplete, much as was the case in the previous chapter when it came to discussing participants' tutor education. Nevertheless, what follows is an overview of the information the directors (former, interim, and current) gave me about their approach to tutor education.

The former long-term director's approach to tutor education was motivated by her dual role as the Writing Across the Curriculum administrator, her investment in a service learning program (in which many tutors were involved) that contributed to literacy learning for kids in

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<sup>10</sup> The Title IX training session was not optional.

local schools, and her husband's job as a civil rights lawyer. This is some of what she had to say about service learning, in particular:

The mission of the writing center in its very first inception, which was called internally to participate in writing across the curriculum, creative writing, service learning projects, as well as tutoring.... [And] University students are required to take a [community engagement] course... that the university has tried to broaden their experience and contextualize what it means to live in a city and see the various constituencies out there other than their contemporaries... [The program] involve[d] teaching writing, mentoring students, and the City public school setting, middle and high school students... The administration and the school system [is] really always on the brink of financial collapse... Most of them came in with no knowledge of this, they don't come from urban public school settings, so they were quite, much better informed when they left and they couldn't possibly have gained as much without that context... So there was a context for, if you will, social consciousness, that was kept alive through these various endeavors. (Julia)

According to Bruce Herzberg, service or community-based learning can help raise students' critical consciousness, as long as it's structured in such a way as to move students beyond their personal responses and emotions, which are limited by their ideological assumptions, toward an understanding of large scale social problems and "responsibility for communal welfare" (146).

Julia also used tutor education to teach tutors about writing so they would see themselves as developing writers and be able to make the writing process visible to clients. She told me that one of the first changes she made when she took on the director position was to "[stop] just handpicking [the] favorite students who already could write," to employ as tutors, "distinguishing obviously the ability to write with the ability to tutor others or mentor others in writing" (Julia). She also fostered tutors' empathy for clients—their ability to "step into somebody else's life" —and their understanding that "[tutoring is not] remediation." She taught tutors how to work with students from diverse populations (e.g. ESL students, students with disabilities, LGBTQ students, students of color, and first generation college students) and provided them "with a repertoire of how to address certain situations." She sometimes enlisted

graduate student tutors to facilitate ongoing education, in part, to give them teaching experience because “they needed that experience for their resumé.” Near the end of our interview, Julia told me that directing the writing center was “one of the best jobs ever” and that it was “a privilege to work with all these very fine students and to see them grow up and have their own struggles and to see them mature also in making it about, always about someone else. And giving them permission to do that and do well at that.”

Matt, who was the interim director for a period after Julia retired, took a similar approach to tutor education as Julia because she was “a mentor to [him]” when he was a graduate student tutor and working on his MFA at the same institution (Matt). He used the *St. Martin’s Sourcebook for Writing Tutors* as a course text, and he confessed to me that he learned a lot about the field of writing centers from teaching the tutor education course. In his interview, he emphasized “peer” collaboration between tutors and clients, as well as a sense of community in the writing center. He experienced the center as a “place where tutors, even when they weren’t working, they kind of all came and they hung out... All the tutors were friendly with each other, [they] all bounced ideas off of each other,” and he wanted to maintain that “collaborative spirit” during his administration.

Because of his experience with the same service learning program that Julia had discussed with me, Matt also focused on teaching the tutors about education privilege. He told me he brought some of the readings for that service course into the tutor education course curriculum: “How sort of the language of standardized tests tends to be a little bit tilted in favor of those who are privileged and have things and have access to tutors and better community schools... That was something we talked about.” Furthermore, his class attended to social

justice, he said, in part because the course took place the semester after Trump was elected president:

Quite frankly, I think we came into that semester at a time when I think there was more attention paid to social justice following the election in the fall... I think we've gotten to this place in our discourse where we're more open about talking about these issues of acceptance, of inclusion, all of these things and so, I mean it was a really receptive group. (Matt)

Haley, the new/current director, told me that her tutor education course in the spring<sup>11</sup> will emphasize the practicum component:

I like the practicum model where you have maybe an hour and a half of classroom instruction per week where you've got everybody together but then they're spending significant time in the studio, they're observing experienced tutors and then when they start to feel ready and I feel like they're ready they start taking on some of their own clients while an experienced tutor sits and observes or I sit and observe... I like for tutors... to actually record and analyze one of their own sessions, and then from that to develop some research questions that leads them into the scholarship of the field, which is what they do their major research project on.

She also plans to give tutors an overview of different kinds of tutoring situations they might encounter, such as working with clients who are writing in unfamiliar disciplines. Haley plans, similarly to Julia, to teach tutors about writing processes (to “mak[e them] aware of what they do as writers”) so they can help students be better writers. She said, “They have to figure out that a lot of tutoring is making that thought process visible to the student and engaging the student or the client in that thought process.”

Furthermore, Haley stated a desire to introduce tutors to critical pedagogy and the idea of language diversity and to develop their capacity to value difference in others because “as a tutor you're sitting down as one human being across a table from another human being and there may be huge divides between your experiences,” but you'll still have to work together. Haley plans to use a tutor training anthology and Harry Denny's *Facing the Center* as course texts for the tutor

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<sup>11</sup> Haley had not yet completed the syllabus for this course at the time I was collecting case study data.

education course. For the ongoing, (mostly) optional staff meetings in the fall semester, Haley focused two on working with ESL writers, one on Title IX and a discussion of emotion in tutoring sessions, and a final one on working with differently abled writers. Most of these meetings were designed and facilitated by Haley, but the institution's Title IX Coordinator came in for the mandatory Title IX training, and a tutor volunteered to collaborate with someone from the institution's Office of Disability Services to lead the last one.

Additionally, four of the six tutors I interviewed (Marie, Steven, Laura, and Erin; not Anna May or Beth) mentioned the tutor preparation course they took as being influential to their tutoring practice. Erin, who took the class with Matt, said that before she took the class she had a faulty assumption that the writing center was a fix-it shop—just “helping people with line editing.” “[Matt] totally opened my eyes to that it's the complete opposite of that, we wanna make better writers and have deep influential conversations with each student” (Erin). Some of what they recalled from the course included attention to social justice (generally); discussions about how to work with clients who are language learners, have disabilities, or are from working class backgrounds; an emphasis on the goal of tutoring to make better writers (as expressed in the quote from Erin, above); and a case to focus on higher order concerns before lower order concerns in students' writing. What tutors said and what directors said about tutor education align fairly well with one another.

However, tutors talked about factors other than the tutor education course that have influenced their tutoring practices, as well. Those factors include the following, as depicted in the list below with quotes from tutors' interviews:

- Marie: “All of my education classes, I think, in some way, shape, or form, reflect social justice in a way. I mean, it's our world... Really any class, whether you realize it or not, has ties to social justice.”

- Steven: “Any personal interaction in my entire life, in a way, shapes how I go about interacting with anyone. That goes for tutoring just as much as it would hanging out with friends... And I think each tutoring session adds on itself in a way. Or like I’m almost informed by what I just did the session before as I go into the next session.”
- Laura: “The most influential thing for me being a writing center tutor is having been a speakers’ lab tutor... It’s basically the same thing but we work with oral presentations. I’ve been working there for over a year now.”
- Anna May: “I had to have a tutor when I was younger, and I hated it... It made me feel like someone was just teaching me how to do one specific problem and then I was on my own... Which is why I wanted to be a good tutor... [Also] I’ve worked with individuals who have disabilities or diverse abilities. So that has heavily impacted how I go about tutoring because I try to be inclusive. And then my psychology major, my sociology major. I have a gender studies minor, so that goes into it, as well... It’s incredibly important to me that women feel confident in their voice and expressing their voice because I know a lot of times that’s something that gets silenced or spoken over... [And] maybe my upbringing, like my family, like my mom and granny always raised me, like the number one thing they told me that ‘you’ve been given better opportunities and made different choices than other people, but you’re never better than anyone else under any circumstance.’ So that’s kind of how I went into being a tutor... I’m just a helper.”
- Beth: “I observe Haley a lot, eavesdrop on her. I like her manner, I like how she, and she’s obviously been doing this for years, but I find myself using a lot of her techniques that she uses. [For example,] she taught me... to be like more relatable... [which] makes [clients] feel less judged.”
- Erin: “I was always very keen on grammar, at least in writing. When I speak I just stumble over everything. But when I write, I dunno how I was taught, because I looked at my peers from high school who were in the same exact classes as I was and they weren’t, they didn’t get like Oxford commas and just little things like that.”

This data is worth mentioning to point out that tutor education is clearly important to writing center tutors’ work, but it is, in the end, only one factor among many others that have contributed to tutors’ worldviews, in general, and their perspectives on tutoring, in particular. Still, tutor education matters. If critical consciousness is the capacity to critique systems/structures and ideologies that contribute to social injustice, to imagine alternatives that would decrease injustice, and to take action toward that goal, then, the question is, in what ways might these directors’ agendas for tutor education help to develop tutors’ critical consciousness?

Two aspects of the directors' approaches, which they seem to have in common with each other, that stand out to me for their potential to raise critical consciousness are increasing awareness of difference and developing tutors' empathy for clients.

Some of the things directors state they do to increase awareness of difference is educate tutors about different kinds of populations they may encounter as clients in the writing center, such as (and especially) ESL students and students with disabilities; educate them about their own privilege, especially in terms of education and language background; and introduce them to identity politics (with Denny's *Facing the Center*). Julia and Matt mentioned that several of the tutors also participate in the service learning program that partners with a local middle school (although none of the tutors mentioned it to me in their interviews), even though it is extracurricular to their tutor education. Julia calls the experience "a real eye opener for students" because the urban schools they volunteer in are so different from the kinds of schools in which the tutors, typically, were educated.

Empathy for clients builds on awareness of difference. Developing tutors' capacity for empathy can help them understand the significance of clients' personal histories to their present situations. The main way Julia and Haley attempt to do this, based on our conversations, is to get tutors to see themselves as writers, also, and writers who are still learning to write, at that. In her interview with me, Haley told me that she hopes tutors at the case study site will be, at some point in their tutoring practice, confronted with a session that makes them think to themselves, "Holy shit, what do I do?"—because those are the kind of moments from which they will really learn something about working with others who are different from them. Having a framework of empathy to guide their tutoring practices can help tutors navigate situations made difficult by difference. Increasing tutors' awareness of difference and developing their capacity to empathize

with others (/Others) are good goals, I believe, for tutor education, but the scholarship shows, as I will discuss further in the concluding chapter, that those are not simple tasks and should not be approached in a simplistic way.

### **Student-Centered Tutoring and Critical Pedagogy**

One of the characteristics of tutoring that tutor education at this site did contribute to, if not challenging language-based discrimination (at least, in the sessions I observed), was a student-centered approach, often a feature writing center work and reminiscent of a critical pedagogy—in which, as mentioned in the review of the literature, critical consciousness has its roots. One client, Christina, told me during her interview that “the whole environment of the [writing center] and the idea of it is just kind of to help you get better... It’s kind of embarrassing to come in with a paper you’re not comfortable with, but they understand that you wanna change it.” A student-centered approach to tutoring meets the student where they are, providing accommodations and individualized strategies.

Although many scholars have written about and have different takes on critical pedagogy and what it looks like, I find Paulo Freire’s and Ira Shor’s perspectives especially compelling and accessible. Some features of critical pedagogy, according to these two, are that it requires the teacher to share authority with students; it uses a dialogic approach to learning, emphasizing understanding over memorization; and it engages students in critique of harmful social conditions as they begin to change them, thereby developing their critical consciousness. The first two features in this list were observed to a much greater extent than the latter, as discussed in this section and the next will illustrate.

Because it works differently than the kind of education students may be used to, it challenges them by requiring them to make decisions and take agency in their learning, students

often resist teachers who enact a critical pedagogy. Ira Shor discusses students' resistance to education extensively in *When Students Have Power*. He names that resistance the "Siberian Syndrome," denoting the way in which students sit as far from the front of the room and the teacher as they can. This move is meant to indicate their simultaneous rejection of authority and submission to it (Shor 12). Haley, the director, must be familiar with Shor's perspective of critical pedagogy because, when I asked her a question during our interview that was related to resistance from writing center clients, she brought up that critical pedagogy could be the solution for—and not just the cause of—that resistance. I asked her what she thought about tutors feeling like their sessions were unsuccessful if their clients aren't immediately open to tutors asking them to consider alternative ideas, for instance, if they brought in a piece of writing that reflects a racist perspective: "What do you think about that in terms of, what if students push back? What if they're unreceptive?"

Haley told me that she wants to introduce the tutors to critical pedagogy because it may be helpful to them as they consider how to effectively navigate discussions with people who have divergent ideologies. She explains:

If you slam up against somebody's belief system too hard, they just dig in and entrench because it's part of their identity. Nobody wants to think of themselves as racist, sexist, homophobic... It's not just about telling someone, "Those ideas don't have any place here so either be silent or adopt a way of thinking, a way of speaking that you really don't believe in." That's not actual social change. I think the results of the latest election showed us that is not actual social change. That's just telling a whole bunch of people, "You can't talk..." That dam breaks and you have these voices come back into the mainstream that you thought had been pushed to the fringes. And so I want tutors to understand that changing our positions, our beliefs, it's not a one and done kind of process. This is something that maybe the student has never thought about before. They're gonna resist... So it's more about intervening in a process that is not going to be started or ended within the writing center session.

Haley sees writing center sessions as just one piece in the puzzle of students' development of critical consciousness, but tutors can play a role in that development by helping to raise clients' awareness of issues of injustice—at the same time that their own critical consciousness is developing.

As mentioned previously, I asked tutors during their interviews to tell me about the role they believe social justice—an outcome that critical consciousness works toward—plays in their tutoring practice. Instead of talking about doing their part to change clients' prejudiced beliefs, like Haley did, a few of them discussed approaches to tutoring that I would classify as student-centered. For instance, Beth spoke about cultivating a comfortable environment so that students could feel safe opening up about the stress they're feeling if they want to:

I do think it's important, especially in college, that kids know that there's people they can talk to, and I think Haley wants the Writing Center to be that kind of a place. I know she, in addition to the dog, she got bean bag chairs and we're gonna get some aromatherapy, and we're gonna do something with the light and the windows to try to make it be more of a home feeling as opposed to like classroom feeling.

Furthermore, Anna May told me that empathy is her “number one concern. Not only in tutoring, but in life. Empathy equals understanding... and I think understanding someone is the best way to help them.” Similarly, Steven said a strategy he uses in his tutoring is “just to listen... to let [clients] share [their] stories and *encourage* [them] to share” (emphasis added). Anna May and Steven suggest that it is important for tutors to recognize their clients as individuals, which can be accomplished, in part, by listening and trying to understand.

Tutors extended this idea of getting to know students and their experiences when they pointed out that a result of doing so is being able to accommodate students' needs in sessions. Laura, for example, pointed out that tutors work with all different kinds of students and must keep in mind that “everyone is coming from a different background and may not have had the

same access or have the same confidences and abilities.” There certainly were several clients just from the sessions I observed that were first-year students feeling uncertain about their ability to write up to the standard in higher education. Anna May told me about a couple of strategies she uses to be inclusive of people with “different abilities”: giving them the option to read their paper aloud or not and using the whiteboard when it would be helpful.

Because one of the clients I interviewed, Carolina, had some interesting stickers on her computer (one that said, “Sorry for the inconvenience; we’re trying to change the world,” for example), I also asked her what she thought a writing center, having only visited this one and only one time, could do to change the world. Her uncle is a successful poet whose writing reflects a desire for justice for Puerto Ricans. Carolina believes, “Writing can change the world... And having people to analyze your writing like they do in the writing center, [to] challenge you,” can enhance your message and strengthen your voice. “Anything’s possible” (Carolina). This is a sentiment that two of the anonymous participants from my survey research also put forward: that by helping a writer figure out how to convey their message to a (mostly academic) audience more effectively, they were doing social justice work.<sup>12</sup> According to these participants, in other words, working sincerely with a client, whatever their background or ability, to meet their writing goals is a contribution to social justice.

I have shared what the participants said about how they tutor for social justice, and the rest of this section will describe what I actually observed them doing in their sessions. First, I’ve provided a reference table that summarizes each of the sessions, numbered according to the chronological order in which they occurred. I was able to interview all of the clients from these

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<sup>12</sup> These participants’ responses to the item that asked them how they had tutored for social justice were coded as “help students improve writing (grammar, structure, argument) to better convey message of justice.” See previous chapter for more on this.

sessions, but I only interviewed the tutors from the first six sessions because Blake and Seth, the tutors from the final two sessions, did not respond to my email requests.

Table 8

Synopses of Sessions Observed

Session #	Synopsis
Session 1	The tutor, <b>Marie</b> , works with <b>Peyton</b> , whom she already knows as a sorority sister, on a two paragraph summary of a news article for an international studies class. Peyton wants to get a “great” instead of a “good” mark from her professor on this one. The session is only about 15 minutes long, the tutor mostly gives suggestions about focus and organization, and the client seems pleased with her help.
Session 2	The tutor, <b>Steven</b> , works with <b>Kyle</b> on a paper for his first-year-seminar class. Kyle is required to visit, although he sees himself as a good writer, except for sometimes struggling to have enough to say. He and Steven decide on a prompt, brainstorm ideas, and form an outline together.
Session 3	The tutor, <b>Laura</b> , works with <b>Christina</b> , who has a cold, on a paper for her first-year seminar class. Christina wants to make sure the paper makes sense and get some suggestions about how to expand on it; Laura comes to the conclusion that she should shift her focus to the present and future parts of her narrative instead of the past.
Session 4	This session is similar to Session 2, in that the client, <b>Sarah</b> , is working on the same paper as Kyle, and she also didn’t have anything already written at the start of the session, except for a working thesis. <b>Anna May</b> , the tutor, helps her to extend her ideas, think of examples, and use the whiteboard to develop an outline. Sarah is reserved in their conversation, unlike Kyle, causing Anna May to doubt the client’s satisfaction.
Session 5	The tutor, <b>Beth</b> , a graduate student, works with <b>Rebekah</b> , a first-year student, to reassure her that what she has written for her paper so far is “on track.” Early in the session, Beth misunderstands Rebekah’s thesis and tells her that she is summarizing instead of arguing. She corrects her mistake later in the session. Then she gives advice about what to include in and how to organize an analysis, and she also grants the client permission to use an additional source. The session lasts about 25 minutes.
Session 6	The tutor, <b>Erin</b> , works with <b>Whitney</b> to do some final editing of paper for a business marketing class. Whitney is concerned because she heard the professor is a tough grader. Erin is unfamiliar with this genre of writing (analysis of a business ethics issue) and defers to Whitney’s expertise often, even when she offers suggestions. They focus mostly on the paper’s cohesion and sentence-level clarity.
Session 7	The tutor, <b>Blake</b> , works with <b>Elise</b> <sup>13</sup> to revise a paper based on feedback she received

<sup>13</sup> This is the first session I observed that included a participant, the client, who was noticeably a person of color. Elise appears to be Asian American. I did not collect demographic information from the case study participants, however, and my interpretation of their appearances may be faulty. The client in the final session, Carolina, disclosed to me during our interview that she is Puerto Rican. It may be of interest that neither of the tutors from sessions 7 and 8, the only two sessions with clients who are clearly people of color, scheduled follow-up interviews with me. Beth, the tutor from session 5, is a non-traditional

	from her instructor. Blake and Elise are friends and frequently find themselves off-topic during this session. Elise is self-denigrating about her writing in this paper, and she also seems uncomfortable sharing her perspective on the paper's topic, emergency contraception, with Blake. The tutor focuses on helping her understand and revise based on the professor's comments.
Session 8	The tutor, <b>Seth</b> , works with <b>Carolina</b> on her analysis of a poem by John Donne. She wants to make sure her interpretation makes sense and she is incorporating quotes from the poem effectively. The tutor pushes her to reconsider her interpretation of the second stanza. He tells her to trust her ideas and have courage in her writing, and he offers to meet with her again outside of his tutoring schedule before the paper is due.

The list below states and describes the student-centered tutoring procedures or strategies that I frequently saw tutors using in the sessions I observed. Not all tutors used each of the strategies, and some tutors used them more effectively than others.

*Tutors get background information about the writing prompt and the class in which it was assigned.* Tutors ask to see the prompt or, at least, hear about it from the client at the beginning of a session, and they may reference it multiple times throughout a session. Sometimes they also talk about the professor of the class (e.g. they're cool, funny, a hard grader, etc.), especially if both tutor and client have had that professor before. The seventh session I observed, with Seth and Carolina, offers an example of participants discussing a professor:

Carolina: Keep in mind he wants to be convinced, he made that very important, like when he was talking to us, he's like "convince me, convince," so like-

Seth: And that's why I'm focusing so hard on the flea thing and your interpretation of it 'cause I know how Hughes is.

Carolina: Yeah.

Seth: And he just lives and breathes this stuff. [laughs]

Carolina: Yes, I know.

Seth: Just thank God that you're not in his Shakespeare class.

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student (in her 40s, I would estimate), in an MFA program. None of the other clients or tutors that I observed portrayed obvious minority identities or discussed invisible minority identities belonging to them with each other or with me.

Carolina: He made us go around the room yesterday and everybody said one line just randomly and we had to make an entire class poem 'cause he had nothing else to talk about the last ten minutes.

Seth: That's kinda cool.

Carolina: So we made the class poem. It was pretty funny.

Seth: He's a funny guy.

Carolina: When you can understand him.

Getting this background information gives context to the writing and can also build affiliation between the tutor and the client.

*Tutors learn some personal information about clients to get to know them.* Sometimes getting background information from the client turns into chatting about some of their personal details, such as their major and where they're from. Two sessions, the third and the fifth sessions that I observed, made use of this strategy as the participants waited on the clients' papers to print. Here is an excerpt from the third session, with Laura and Christina, to illustrate:

Laura: So what's your major?

Christina: Health sciences.

Laura: Health sciences? That's exciting.

Christina: I wanna be a PA.

Laura: A PA?

Christina: Mhm.

Laura: So you brought this little notecard in, what's-?

Christina: Oh, that's from my, well I was just at my like health care class.

Laura: Oh, okay!

Christina: We're just supposed to write a notecard about your personal goals for [inaudible]. [laughs]

Laura: Oh. I didn't mean to encroach on that. I didn't know if it was related to this or not.

Christina: No. [laughs]

Laura: Okay... So where are you from?

Christina: City, State,<sup>14</sup> you probably have no idea. If you were from Other State, I would say like if you knew where Other City, Other State is, I've skated there.

Laura: Oh really? Ice skated?

Christina: Yeah.

Laura: Oh that's really interesting.

Christina: So what's your major?

Laura: [inaudible: other sessions in the space are also happening, loudly] -like relational type stuff.

Christina: That's cool.

Laura: But also it's a lot about like leadership, fellowship, like you learn about working with a team and for a person, and like common goals. I dunno, it's a lot of soft skills stuff. It's really, I enjoy it a lot, but it's not for everyone... So what brought you to University?

Christina: Um, well, I was looking at schools that had PA programs that I could go into afterwards, and that's kind of why I started looking at this school. Then I visited [inaudible] in October, and I just really loved it when I came. I didn't look anywhere else.

Laura: Awesome. Okay. Are you ready to read through this?

*Tutors ask clients about their writing concerns and what they want help with.* All of the sessions involved clients making feedback requests, although a few of them did it before even

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<sup>14</sup> I have not included the actual names of places in this conversation to further protect participants' anonymity.

being prompted by the tutor. Here is an example of a typical “feedback request” exchange, excerpted from Session 6:

Whitney: So I’m pretty much done. I just wanna make sure it all flows okay and the beginning and the end are probably my weakest parts.

[Short break in conversation while the tutor retrieves the client’s paper from the printer.]

Erin: So, all right, so we’re focusing on flow, and beginning and ending. So are there any other major concerns other than the introduction and the...

Whitney: Um, no. Just grammar, making sure it all makes sense. And the citations, making sure I did ‘em right.

Erin: Okay.

Tutors typically ask clients about their concerns at the beginning of the sessions, although they might ask them multiple times at different stages of the tutorial, including during the wrap up near the end. Asking the client about their concerns gives the writer control and the session a focus.

*Tutors negotiate with clients on how to proceed in a session.* Not only do tutors try to discover what writing issues the clients want to address during their sessions, but they also try to find out *how* the clients want to address them. For instance, several tutors ask their clients if they have a preference about who will read the paper aloud and some discuss with clients how they should approach responding to the client’s feedback request, for example, by discussing their ideas and developing an outline (as in Session 4). Negotiating this aspect of the session with clients helps tutors make appropriate accommodations, such as to use the whiteboard to display and organize the client’s ideas (again, Session 4). Here is an example, from the sixth session, of a tutor negotiating with a client how they should approach reading the paper:

Erin: All right, so yeah, I’ll just read the prompt, and then, I know I am an auditory/visual learner so seeing it and hearing it helps me comprehend it, but-

Whitney: Okay.

Erin: If you like to read it silently, we can do whatever you want to do.

Whitney: I'm fine with whatever.

Erin: Okay, so. Would you rather me read it out loud or do you wanna read it out loud?

Whitney: You can if you don't mind. (laughs)

Erin: Okay. All right.

Whitney: If not, I can.

*Tutors explicitly address clients' stated concerns or point them toward other resources, such as their professors, for additional help.* Although tutors might address some writing issues in addition to the ones with which the clients have asked help, they also consistently, at least in the sessions I observed, address those issues that are important to the clients. The client from Session 3, for example, told me in her follow up interview, "It was just nice that [Laura] pointed out where I was contradicting myself, and some grammar issues, and where I was kinda talking too much, or where I need to reword stuff 'cause I was trying to do that myself but I knew I didn't really know all that much and she was a lot more experienced in that area" (Christina).

Sometimes tutors use resources, such as a style manual or the Purdue OWL website, to help them answer clients' questions, and if the question is too specific for them to answer, they suggest that the client email their professor about it instead. As an example, early in Session 6, Erin and Whitney consult a handbook to look up how to format the punctuation for in-text citations in APA style. Later in the same session, a question came up about whether the client should use first person pronouns in the paper. In this instance, Erin does not suggest that the client ask her professor for clarification because the client has already done so, but has not yet

received a response; instead, Erin reasons through the issue with Whitney. However, Whitney let me know in her follow-up interview that the professor did eventually respond to her email and told her the opposite of the decision that Whitney and Erin had reached, so it was good that she asked.

Whitney: Yeah, 'cause it was- In like her overall directions for the case study, she's like, "this is not a reflection, do not use 'I,'" but then in the question it was like, "What would you do in this situation?"

Erin: Oh, okay. So that's kind of-

Whitney: Yeah, and I emailed her just to double check, and she didn't reply, but I assume I can use "I" since it specifically asks-

Erin: I figured if it's in the prompt, yeah, I'd say so. Okay.

*Tutors explain the suggestions they make—to “make better writers.”* Writing center theory has privileged the change that happens in student writers over the change that happens in their papers since Steven North's landmark essay, "The Idea of a Writing Center," was published in 1984. Some of the tutors whom I spoke with mentioned this value during their interviews. For example, Anna May said, "I'm... a big fan of looking at the big picture and seeing like well how is this person gonna continue in the future? ... Like writing in general, are they [gonna] become a better writer from the session, not I just fix their paper?" It may be for this reason that tutors at the case study site make an effort to explain their suggestions to clients during the sessions. For instance, at several points in his session with Elise, Blake not only explains the suggestions he makes, but he uses sports journalism examples to do so because he knows the client is a fan of basketball. In one such moment from their session, Blake explains how to use brackets to clarify the name of something in a vague quotation: "Like if you were quoting a player, right, and that player says, 'Coach Mike said blah blah blah,' so you'd put in brackets 'D'Antoni' to specify that's who they're talking about, not Coach Mike Brown 'cause they both got fired."

*Tutors make use of instructional materials.* Two of the tutors I observed (Marie and Anna May) made use of the whiteboards for note-taking during their sessions, and Seth, from the seventh session, used the client's colorful pen when marking on her paper.

Carolina: Will you write that down on there?

Seth: Yeah.

Carolina: 'Cause I know I'll forget. Just "put the quote on the paper."

Seth: Um, I'm sorry that I'm using a gray pen.

Carolina: I have different colors.

Seth: Oh, could I have... Your favorite color?

Carolina: The first one that came up.

Seth: Good. Thank you.

Sarah, the client from Session 4, told me in her interview that she liked the use of the whiteboard because it helped her focus during her session; she took a picture of it at the end of the session: "I liked how she used the white board and kinda just wrote it all out instead of just talking, having me writing it out 'cause then I feel like I'm not really paying attention to what she's saying, more just like writing it down. I feel like that helped a lot." And Peyton, from Session 1, said, "Yes, use the boooard. Love it," when Marie began to use it to help her visually portray what she was saying about the organization of the client's paper. The writing center also offers tissues for sick or upset clients (as in Session 3 with Christina, who said she was "so deathly ill") and snacks and beverages for tutors and clients who may be distracted by their hunger. These tutoring strategies place the student at the center of the session by responding to their physiological and cognitive needs.

*Tutors ask the clients questions to get them to explain their ideas or think through their options.* When a tutor is unsure about the meaning of a section of the student's writing, when they need more information during the brainstorming stage of the writing process, or when they want the student to consider the consequences of choosing one writing option over another, they ask them questions. Steven, the tutor from the second session, provided an especially good example of a tutor who uses questions effectively to engage clients. The nature of his session, which was to help the client brainstorm ideas for a paper over a book that the tutor had not read, likely contributed to this. Steven also spoke to me during his interview about learning from his clients, which is an important component of peer collaboration. Here is an example of a moment from the session in which Steven used questioning effectively to prompt substantial input from the client, Kyle:

Steven: Does she feel like cheated when all the things start happening to her? Or does the doctor like end up explaining more?

Kyle: I think so. It doesn't ever say that he explains more, but I think she didn't know what to expect and then she feels bad for crying during the treatments 'cause she feels like she's not strong enough, and I feel like if someone explained to her that it's chemo and it sucks that she might feel more comfortable with...

Steven: Yeah, I gotcha. So, what would you say would be successful features of a doctor/patient relationship?

Kyle: Uh, communication, and just like the trust that comes with it 'cause it's just like such a big part, especially with chemo, you know the doctor's potentially saving her life and stuff, and I feel like you kind of need bedside manner, which is kind of what he's lacking.

As mentioned previously, these themes don't apply to all the sessions I observed, at least not to the same degree. For example, Seth, the tutor from the eighth session, as opposed to Steven, sometimes asked Carolina questions that he already had an answer to. For example, he asked her, "Which stanzas do you feel stronger about and which ones do you feel weaker

about?” She starts to reply, “Umm,” before being cut off by him: “Because I got the impression that the second one you felt a little bit weaker about.” This demonstrates that some questions do not accomplish getting clients to think and engage in the discussion. The kinds of questions, as well as what the tutor does after having asked them, matter.

*Tutors listen to clients’ ideas, questions, and doubts.* Tutors working from a student-centered approach leave space in the session for clients to contribute their thoughts and express their concerns. They also show they are listening by selectively restating what the clients have said and responding in a variety of ways as appropriate. The table below portrays four separate moments from Session 2 in which Steven makes space for Kyle to weigh in with his ideas, questions, and doubts.

Table 9

Scenes from Session 2: The Tutor Listens to the Client

<p>Scene 1</p>	<p>Kyle: This [prompt option], I think it draws me in the most. I’m not exactly sure why. Just something to do with ethics, all that kind of stuff. I think it’s interesting. But, again, she has like three doctors, and I don’t know if I can elaborate for that many pages on it.</p> <p>Steven: Yeah, I gotcha. The third one sounds kind of interesting, too, in that you get to explain yourself, like what you think a successful doctor/patient relationship would be, and then you kind of use your own idea of it, too. Kind of like look at how it is shown in the book. Okay, so it sounds like you’d probably be more inclined to do the second or the third.</p> <p>Kyle: Yeah, I’m more inclined to do the third, just don’t want to take on the third without thinking it through, and then write two pages and be stuck.</p> <p>Steven: Yeah, no, I gotcha. Well, obviously it doesn’t have to be a final decision, but we can go with the third right now and just kind of hash out some ideas.</p>
<p>Scene 2</p>	<p>Steven: Trying to think about how exactly this paper would look now that we have these different parts...</p> <p>Kyle: So would I like... I dunno- I don’t struggle with organizing essays and stuff, but I kind of do it- I don’t feel like I do it smoothly enough. I just kind of do it like a math major.</p> <p>Steven: Okay. [laughs] Yeah, sure.</p>

	<p>Kyle: This paragraph's about this, this paragraph's about this. And I always kind of feel like I struggle with tying it together.</p> <p>Steven: Sure.</p> <p>Kyle: So how is one way I could go about- like should my first paragraph be about what I think a successful relationship is like, and then my first could be the first dentist and then how he struggles and it sets up for the...</p> <p>Steven: Yeah, yeah. And I'll kind of hash this out loud, just as much as, we'll kind of figure this out right now.</p>
Scene 3	<p>Steven: So I think in the first portion, however long that ends up being, I would address your thoughts on why their relationship should be as you said it was.</p> <p>Kyle: Do you think I should bring in, not other sources, but like one other source or something with statistics on how, and prove bedside manner is [inaudible] or do you think that'd be too-</p> <p>Steven: Yeah, yeah. No, I think that would be good.</p>
Scene 4	<p>Steven: ... And, I guess, [your professors] says a counterargument.</p> <p>Kyle: I think for the counterargument, I just go into how no matter what his bedside manner was, he was effective. I mean she got the treatment and didn't have cancer anymore, I think.</p> <p>Steven: Yeah.</p> <p>Kyle: So whether it was uncomfortable or not, she doesn't have cancer anymore.</p> <p>Steven: Yeah, no, that's true. So you could bring that in. And you could maybe even bring in the point, he chose not to mention some of the side effects because he knew it would already be trying enough on her and he didn't wanna worry her beforehand. Okay, so I think that'd be a good counterargument. That'd be natural to bring in. So how would you counter the counterargument?</p> <p>Kyle: [laughs] I got you.</p>

However, not all of the tutors I observed responded to their clients' expressed concerns as effectively as Steven did. In fact, Beth's (Session 5) direct approach seemed to inhibit her client from even voicing a concern when Beth misinterpreted a key element of the paper:

Beth: So, your thesis to me reads like a summary.

Rebekah: Okay.

Beth: Right? Of kind of what this is, right? It's almost like you've summarized that and what he's actually asking is, he wants you to compare, like, present day society about monogamy versus what he said.

Rebekah: Okay.

Beth: Right? So I don't think he wants you to just summarize what Huxley said about it.

Rebekah: Yeah, I was trying not to. [laughs]

Beth: Yeah.

Rebekah: 'Cause I was trying to talk about. I dunno. I don't know what I'm gonna do.

It's not for another three minutes, approximately, that the tutor realizes that Rebekah actually was making an argument in her thesis and corrects herself, allowing Rebekah to finally state the skepticism she had felt about Beth's judgment: "Okay. That's like the part that I thought I was, like, I don't know if I'm summarizing there."

*Tutors check in with clients to make sure they understand and are comfortable with the session's progression.* Tutors pause frequently throughout their sessions to ask clients questions like, "Is this making sense?" Most of the "check ins" require minimal input from clients. They also sometimes check to make sure the client is getting something useful from the session, in case they need to change directions in topic or approach. Anna May's session features a high number of check ins because the client seems reserved and difficult to read. This excerpt from nearer the beginning of the session illustrates one such moment:

Anna May: Do you want to work on your main points and see if we can get some subsections in there to help you format your paper a little bit kinda like an outline?

Sarah: Yeah.

Anna May: Would that help?

Sarah: Yeah.

Anna May: Okay. Or is there something else that you had in mind that you'd feel more comfortable with?

Sarah: I don't think so.

*Tutors affirm clients' agency as the writer.* There are many ways in which tutors signal to clients that they have power in the writing center session and final authority over the writing project. One of the most explicit ways is simply to say this to clients, to let them know that they can decide to accept revision suggestions or not. Erin, the tutor from Session 6, uses this strategy on multiple occasions in the session I observed, most likely because she is unfamiliar with the genre and discipline in which the client is writing. At one point, in the midst of offering a revision suggestion, she says to Whitney, "Everything I tell you, you have the authority to accept or deny" (Erin). In her follow up interview with me, Erin said she was proud of herself for doing that and hopes she does it in every session so that clients don't feel "oppressed."

Not all of the tutors I observed were so willing to share authority with their clients. Beth, for instance, perhaps because she is older (and has a child around the same age as many of her clients) and/or because she is a graduate student<sup>15</sup>, dominates the conversation with Rebekah and doesn't hesitate to make judgments or give advice. For example, near the end of their session, Beth suggests that Rebekah include additional information from an outside source in her paper, even though the prompt doesn't ask it of her, and she's not sure if she should:

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<sup>15</sup> Although Beth is a graduate student, she does not, as far as I know, have teaching responsibilities as part of her assistantship. In her interview with me, Julia explained that it is a point of pride for the institution that none of its classes are taught by graduate assistants, although Julia saw this as unfortunate for graduate students who miss out on the opportunity to gain teaching experience that would contribute to their professional marketability. It's possible that this institutional policy has changed since Julia retired or that Beth owns a teaching identity from other work experiences she has had her life; however, because of my like of knowledge about Beth's experience with teaching, I am unable to say whether a teaching identity plays a role in her authoritative disposition toward the writing center client in the session I observed.

Rebekah: Okay. Then I probably will. I was like, I wonder if I can add that, but it's not in the, like [my professor] didn't say to do that, so I didn't know if it would make him mad that I did that-

Beth: No, it won't make him mad at all.

Rebekah: Okay.

Beth: I think it's going above and beyond the assignment.

Rebekah: Okay, awesome. I'll definitely do that....

Beth: And in the report, I'm actually gonna tell him that I went ahead and told you that you could add an outside source-

Rebekah: Okay, awesome.

Beth: Just so that if he's like "what?" that you can at least say, "Well, I got permission, Beth said she thought it was a good idea."

*Tutors express empathy and encouragement in response to clients' insecurities.* Many of the clients in the sessions I observed were first year students, feeling uncertain about the ways in which college writing is different from high school writing. Christina, for instance, tells Laura, "I have, like, first paper anxiety," and Laura reassures her, "Okay, totally normal." Christina told me in her interview that she "fe[lt] more confident" after her session—and she wasn't the only client to say something like that. In her interview, Laura told me that she thinks students like Christina "need a little something extra from a tutor, and [she] think[s] a lot of that just comes from, like, encouragement." In response to clients' insecurities with writing, tutors also use simple, reassuring phrases like "I gotcha" (Steven), and they take care to offer praise in addition to critique.

The procedures/strategies I've listed and described above are, admittedly, typical of writing center work. Still, I found it important to discuss them in this dissertation, to make them visible again, because of the resemblance they bear to critical pedagogy—by valuing talking

through ideas with clients and sharing authority with clients for collaborative learning. They indicate, it seems, that basic tutor practices, in many ways, do reflect both the field's theory and tutor education endeavors specifically related to student-centeredness and collaboration. Even though I did not observe the kind of difficult dialogues in tutoring sessions about social justice and language issues that I was hoping to find in this case study research, I was reminded that some mundane writing center practices, those that are largely invisible at this point to the writing center community, are indeed responsive to social justice goals. The writing center can provide a space for students to have a voice and share their ideas and to receive guidance that will help them navigate and/or resist a challenging academic context. And those are good things to be able to do for student clients. They're practices that, in small ways, do disrupt the traditional power dynamics of academic institutions—in ways that critical pedagogy in the classroom environment cannot (because of, in part, the authority that teachers have in comparison to peer tutors).

Some tutors seem to understand this point, too. Based on what tutor participants told me in their interviews, they do utilize some of these strategies because they believe doing so is an act of social justice. For instance, Steven talked about authentic listening as a social justice strategy in his interview with me. He told me a story about working with a client who had experienced oppression on the basis of his religion, and said he made sure to “be very, I guess, just to listen more. Especially with someone like him, when he was on the side of the person who was oppressed. Just to let him share his story and encourage him to share so people know about those kinds of things.” However, tutors also sometimes explain their motivations for using these strategies as simply a consequence of what they learned about writing center doctrine from their tutor education course. I asked Erin, for example, why she told her client during their session that

she had the authority to take Erin's advice or not when it came to revising, and she said, "I'm proud of myself for saying that 'cause they ingrained that in our brains in class."

One feature I found interesting about the way tutors framed their discussion of tutoring for social justice in their interviews was their passive construction of oppression; they tended to focus on the individual, the person who had experienced oppression, rather than the system that had done the oppression. For instance, Anna May used the phrase "*those who suffer* from injustice" multiple times, and she spoke specifically about women at one point: "I know a lot of times [*women's voices get*] silenced or spoken over... I've been lucky enough to read papers from writers who are talking about *domestic abuse they've faced*" (emphasis added). This passivity, the emphasis on the victim rather than the perpetrator, may be a signal that tutors' awareness of injustice exists primarily on a micro rather than a macro level. Student-centeredness is reinforced in the way tutors talk about social justice, but this seems to come at the expense of attention to large scale causes of oppression, which is also a necessary element of critical consciousness. This may point to the limitations of well-known and utilized tutoring practices in writing center work for achieving social justice. Writing centers today need new paradigms and practices for tackling social justice issues on a systemic level.

The next section examines how tutors talk with clients, or not, about their writing on social justice topics.

### **"Social Camaraderie" Means Social Justice in Writing, Not Conversation**

During my research, I found out from the director that the university's Faculty Senate had recently voted to give certain courses in the core curriculum a designation to indicate they address course objectives aimed at increasing students' awareness of social injustices and preparing them to interact respectfully with people who are different from them. Even though

courses receive this designation selectively and the ones that do receive it have to meet specific stipulations, there is a general push on the campus as a whole to “challeng[e the] students who are from, in many cases, very conservative backgrounds to think about issues of difference and equality” (Haley). Haley told me that, for this reason, the writing center would be seeing a lot of student writers with papers about social justice topics, and many clients would struggle with how to write about them. She told me the story of one client (not one that I observed) whose writing displayed “incipient racism” as an example (Haley). The client wanted to draw a comparison between Frederick Douglass and his white owner in her paper because they both had overcome some difficulties in their lives. The tutor who worked with this client, although taken aback by the client’s argument, defended her to me by saying, “I know she does not consider herself racist. She does not think this paper was racist... I think she probably is a very kind and good person who wants to be kind to everyone.”<sup>16</sup>

Though none were as troublesome as this particular example, I did, indeed find that every client from the sessions I observed brought in papers (or prompts, at least) that dealt with social justice or ethical issues, some more recognizable than others. Because ethics deals with the thought process guiding moral behavior, I see it as related to social justice, which focuses on creating a more equitable society, especially for traditionally disadvantaged persons. Erin, the tutor from Session 6, went so far as to say during her interview with me that, from her perspective, when social justice shows up in the writing center, it’s primarily via the topics

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<sup>16</sup> With my own roots in the South, I tend to think of this as a sort of “Southern charm” defense (similar to “Midwestern hospitality,” which may be more familiar to some readers). Just because a person is kind and offers lemonade or iced tea to anyone who stops by doesn’t mean she’s not also waving a confederate flag over her porch. One has to do more than just be *nice* to people to not be racist, sexist, and so on (as I argue in more detail in other parts of this dissertation); one has to also understand large-scale systems of oppression and take care not to unwittingly participate in them. One has to know that they cannot, in any circumstance, compare a slave’s experience to a slave owner’s experience. The special course designation, I think, will work toward increasing students’ awareness of systems of oppression, so that instances of this kind of “incipient racism” will decrease.

clients are writing about. “I haven’t really had like a heart to heart with anyone or kind of had to redirect them. Not yet,” Erin told me. The table below provides information about clients’ papers and the social justice/ethical issues to which they were connected from each session I observed.

Table 10

Social Justice/Ethical Issues Connected to Clients’ Paper Topics

Session #	Paper Genre and Topic	Social Justice/Ethical Issue
Session 1	A summary of a recent news article (Pope’s response to Trump’s statement on DACA) relevant to international studies	Protections for unauthorized immigrants
Session 2	An argument about the ethics of doctor/patient relationships, based on an autobiographical book about a child with cancer	Fair and ethical treatment of medical patients
Session 3	A personal narrative about the writer’s struggles to decide what to do with her “one wild and precious life”	Exploration of personal options/goals for the future
Session 4	An argument about the ethics of doctor/patient relationships, based on an autobiographical book about a child with cancer (same as session 2)	Fair and ethical treatment of medical patients
Session 5	An analysis of Huxley’s perspective on sexual practices, based on his treatment of them in <i>A Brave New World</i>	Rights to non-normative sexual conduct/expression
Session 6	An analysis of a recent event related to business ethics (the Wells Fargo scandal)	Ethical treatment of employees and consumers
Session 7	An argument about the ethics of emergency contraception and what people should know about it	Reproductive rights for women
Session 8	A literary analysis of the poem “The Flea” by John Donne	Sexual assault and abuse (potentially)

The papers dealing with “ethics” were the ones to engage students most clearly in arguments for justice. For instance, Kyle, from the second session, planned to make the case in his paper that medical practitioners should be transparent with their patients about what to expect from a treatment, and Whitney, from the sixth session, critiqued in her paper the business

practices of a major banking company that had financially harmed millions of customers, as well as professionally harmed employees in the company.

The paper from the third session was difficult to classify in social justice terms for the chart above, but the tutor's take on the assignment, as she explained it in her interview, convinced me that it did involve social justice in that it gave the client the space and opportunity to think about her future in a way that allowed for some messiness and uncertainty:

I feel like that's really important as a first year student, is like what do you wanna do with your life? 'Cause I'm a junior now and I'm doing an internship for a prof. in the communications department and today she asked me, "What are your plans for getting a job after college?"... She asks me every time I meet with her. [laughs] She's like, "So what are your plans?" I'm like, "Please don't ask me." So as a first year student, someone actually asking you and giving you an opportunity to freewrite kind of- not free write, but like openly write about like, "What do you want? What do you want out of life right now?" is so like- I dunno, it's nice for them but I think it's also crucial to get that conversation started so soon 'cause if you're never asked and you're a junior or a senior and people are starting to ask you, so like you've been getting your degree now for two, three years, like what do you wanna do with it? It's so like, "Oh, what do I wanna do with it?" That's like startling to be jolted out of this academic bubble, like I've been living in academia for the past twenty years and you're telling me you're gonna kick me out in two and I have to go get a real job in the real world with real people who aren't my classmates and teachers? It's scary! So I think it's an important conversation to have throughout your college experience. (Laura)

The first and the last sessions, on the other hand, provide examples of papers that don't go as far toward fighting injustice. Although Peyton's paper covered a news article about a topic that negatively affects the vulnerable population of unauthorized child immigrants in the U.S., the assignment did not call on her to discuss the issue, but merely summarize what another had said about it. Still, it may have raised her awareness of the issue. The client from the last session, Carolina, did not actually devote any thought, at least not in discussion with her tutor Seth, to the social justice issue I identified. She had interpreted the poem, as have many others, as humorous in nature because of the ridiculous arguments the narrator makes while attempting to convince

the woman in the poem to have sex with him. Another interpretation would be that coercion, however it is presented, is a serious issue, yet she and the tutor did not address this perspective.

When reflecting on how students write about social justice topics, it's important to consider what professors might intend for students to learn from completing these assignments. During their interviews I asked several of the tutors and some of the clients what they thought the professor might have wanted the student to get from writing their paper. Sarah, who was one of the clients writing about the ethics of doctor/patient relationships, responded, "I think she wants us to realize how awful some doctors can be with their patients and kinda almost take advantage of them for just like doing what they want, not how the patient thinks they should be treated, so it's kinda an eye opener." From engaging with this material, Sarah seems to have gained awareness of the problem that not all doctors treat their patients ethically and some patients are more at risk of mistreatment than others. She also seems to have developed empathy for patients who are mistreated as a result of imagining herself in the same position.

Some of the other participants with whom I spoke struggled more than Sarah did when answering this question. Beth, the tutor from the fifth session, told me she had no clue what the professor wanted his students to learn from the writing assignment. Furthermore, she said, that's hardly ever something she thinks about when tutoring: "I don't really think about that so much... I was not thinking like, 'I wonder if this professor is trying to get this student to dig deeper into their sexuality and their sexual expectations'" (Beth). It may have been because this tutor did not attempt to think about the prompt from the professor's point of view that she failed to point out the client's paper may not have gone far enough in its initial critique of monogamy before arguing against the alternative that Huxley portrays in the novel—which is what the prompt asked her to do, and also something that, if she had done it, may have helped Rebekah to

cultivate the critical perspective of a person who is critically conscious, who interrogates systems and structures in the world and considers how they could be better and what actions can be taken in that direction.

A few of the tutors in the sessions I observed, however, did made attempts to help clients think through the stances they were taking and even consider alternatives. The clients from Sessions 1 and 4 both told me in their interviews that their tutors, through discussion, helped them to understand their own ideas and think about things in a different way, as well. Peyton said, “It’s just really great to have somebody to bounce ideas back and forth with.” A couple of the techniques I observed tutors using to accomplish encouraging clients to consider other perspectives were to appeal to their capacity for empathy and to ask them to define convoluted terms (e.g. “success” and “unethical”) that mean different things to different people. Although I didn’t observe this behavior, one tutor told me in her interview that if she were to encounter a client with prejudices, she would ask them “‘why’ questions” because, she thinks, “it’s easier to help people understand their own perspectives first and then tackle understanding what the other side is thinking... They’re not gonna want to understand someone else’s perspective when theirs is being attacked” (Anna May). According to Anna May, getting people to consider other perspectives involves creating an environment in which they feel receptive to such a task.

Even though some of the tutors occasionally engaged students in complicating the issues they were writing about, they more often focused their discussion on the writing itself and how to express the ideas clients had already put into writing (or planned to put into writing, in the case of brainstorming sessions) clearly and effectively. For example, Elise’s near hysterical laughter at one point during Session 7 signaled her discomfort with Blake, also a friend, reading what she had written about her beliefs on premarital sex. Rather than question her about those

beliefs, he just read through the section, complimented her on the paper's conclusion, and then made a suggestion to de-personalize the personal response so it would better fit with the style of the rest of the paper. The client later told me she appreciated how Blake handled that moment: "He did a really good job of staying on topic" (Elise). There are a number of reasons why tutors may choose to focus on the writing rather than dialogue with their client about a social justice issue, including to set the writer at ease, as Blake did. One reason, in particular, it seems, though, is to perform "niceness."

In "The Trouble with Niceness: How a Preference for Pleasantry Sabotages Culturally Responsive Teacher Preparation," Jeanne Dyches Bissonnette conceptualizes niceness simply as an iteration of Whiteness, and, according to Setha Low, "Whiteness and the privileges accrued are viewed as middle-class privileges and are not restricted to access by color, but also by class, gender, sexual orientation, and place of origin" (Low 81). Both authors suggest that "niceness" is indicative of white, middle class values, and it is used to perpetuate a highly invisible system of advantage and maintain the status quo. Bissonnette discusses the ways in which institutionalized niceness prevents educators from enacting culturally responsive pedagogy because it allows them to stick to safe territory rather than "fostering discussions that provide students with the opportunity to examine and confront the various forms of power, privilege, and marginalization" (12). She explains, educators may fear engaging in critical conversations because they don't want to upset their students or face repercussions from administration (Bissonnette 12). One of the examples Bissonnette provides niceness in teacher preparation is in pre-service teachers (PSTs) themselves: She cites Rios and Stanton (2011) when she writes, "Many PSTs demonstrate a disdain for multicultural courses, voicing their belief that multicultural education should be reserved for students belonging to historically marginalized populations," and the

notion that teacher education should contend with more practical concerns (15). In the concluding chapter, I'll discuss the concept of "niceness" in more depth, including critique and alternatives, but here I show how tutors' tendency for niceness appeared in case study data.

First, Haley, to some degree, seems to understand, even support, tutors' decision to play it safe, so to speak, when it comes to refraining from pushing against clients' prejudices. She recalls that when she was an undergraduate student she was still figuring out what she believed and would not have felt confident enough in those beliefs to challenge someone else's. She also recognizes tutors' intense desire to please the clients who come in to work with them. She relayed to me something she had previously said to the tutors:

You get to decide as a tutor how far do you wanna push this, and you're not responsible for making this student open their eyes and realize they're being sexist or homophobic. The instructor is gonna pick up on that in their writing and that is someone with maybe more, not only more authority from the institutional sense, but less investment in social camaraderie.

This statement reinforces her perspective, mentioned earlier in this chapter, that writing centers can contribute to social justice efforts, but they do so most effectively in conjunction with partners, in and outside of the university.

One of the tutors, Marie, talked to me in her interview about why she did not discuss with her client the social justice issue addressed in her paper (other than to share that it was a major topic of conversation in one of her education courses). She said that even though "the issue of DACA is definitely social justice driven," the client was only summarizing an article and not making an argument about it. "If it's in the assignment," she explained, "yeah, I would definitely be willing to talk about it. But if it's not, it's like, I dunno... I don't wanna offend anyone, I don't wanna cause any debate." I gathered that this client may have benefited from some

discussion to broaden her uncomplicated understanding of the issue.<sup>17</sup> During our interview, she told me that the DACA controversy is “easy to talk about.” I replied, “I wonder if everyone would say that it’s easy to talk about. Like, I wonder if Dreamers think that, too... Maybe not, right?” Peyton said, “Probably not because for them it’s more emotional. Definitely. But as somebody who will never need DACA, I can talk about it, but like, you got me thinking, look at you.” The student appeared open to considering the issue in new ways, making Marie’s concerns seem unwarranted.

Marie elaborated on those concerns with personification: “If Social Justice is sitting across the room, I know it exists. The person I’m with may or may not know it exists, but that doesn’t mean I need to go sit next to it. So. If it was just me in the room, yeah, I’d go sit next to it, but if somebody else is there, too, it’s just hard to read a person.” An emphasis on the social norms of “niceness,” of politeness, and of reassurance in tutoring sessions makes tutors feel disinclined to engage in debate—even if doing so would be beneficial and promote learning for both the tutor and the client.

Another tutor, Anna May, had a different perspective than Marie. As she considered how she would approach a client’s prejudice, she seemed willing to confront tension and conflict:

I love helping people with writing, and I get that, but if I can help someone even start to question maybe a prejudiced position that they have, I feel like that’s more important than if I fix their paper, and I feel like that impacts more people outside of just that person.

What I find reassuring about this statement, amidst so much of the rest of my case study data, is that takes the well-known writing center mantra given to us by Steven North, mentioned earlier

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<sup>17</sup> The “issue” is that President Trump announced in September 2017 plans to end the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, put into place via an executive order from Barack Obama, which grants unauthorized persons who were brought into the U.S. as minors temporary, renewable protections from deportation, as well as work authorization. Ending the program would result in negative consequences for more than 700,000 “Dreamers” (Shoichet, Cullinane, and Kopan).

in this chapter, and moves it into its next evolutionary stage. Writing center professionals don't just make better writing, and we don't just make better writers either; we also make a better world. At least that's the idea that Anna May has suggested. Whether she would implement this idea in practice when it came down to it is another matter.

As I've noted, it is difficult for tutors to talk with their peers about social justice topics. I observed several instances in these sessions in which they either avoided doing so or made light of the social justice issue in question. The rest of this section discusses four specific examples from the observed sessions in which this was the case.

The prompt for the client's paper in Session 5 reads as follows:

Sexual Mores: Huxley argues that a crucial aspect of maintaining social order is consistent access to sexual activity with a variety of partners. On the flipside, a considerable portion of our current relationship to morality relies upon our belief in monogamy. What exactly is Huxley suggesting about monogamy and its ability to frustrate society? Employ multiple passages or quotes from the text and then consider through the lens of our contemporary sexual mores and practices.

After reading the prompt, the tutor, Beth, made a comment indicating her resistance to the topic of non-normative sexual practices: "Okay, I don't remember that at all in the book... [laughs] I must've blocked it."

Beth signals a distaste for non-normative sexual practices when she says she "must've blocked it." The client's argument takes a similar stance, that Huxley's futuristic perspective on sexual practices, which run counter to monogamy, dehumanize the act. Once the tutor discovers that this is the argument the client wants to make, they have no further discussion about possibilities for other arguments she could make. The only questioning of this stance in which the tutor engages Rebekah is to check that she has examples from the text that support it. In her interview with me, Beth said the following:

I do feel like in those sort of papers it's important to understand what [the client] wants to argue and not influence her... I do understand how [monogamy] could be a social justice issue, but I never really thought of it quite as, you know what I mean, it's not the same thing as her saying, you know, that like, um... a paper on race or a paper on transgendered people, or, um, different sexual orientations.

Beth was the tutor who worked with the student who brought in the paper about Frederick Douglass, too, and she did tell that student, rather directly, from what I understand, that she should not compare Douglass to a slave owner because it could be perceived as racist. This shows that some social justice issues are more visible to us, whether because they've had a longer history, affected more people, or affected them in more significant ways. Critical consciousness, though, prepares people with a consistently critical perspective so they might identify injustices, however small, as they encounter them.

In Session 6, the client, Whitney, had written in the paper she brought in that if she had been employed by Wells Fargo during their recent scandal, she would have "quit and [found] another way to report the company behavior outside of the company itself." I was compelled to interrupt<sup>18</sup> the session.

Me: Didn't a lot of employees actually report the situation and then get fired...-

Erin: Oh my god, really?

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<sup>18</sup> A few of the tutor participants invited me to contribute as I wished before their sessions began or used me as a resource during their sessions by asking a specific question on behalf of the client when they didn't know the answer to it. I believe this is because writing center tutors, in general, value collaboration in knowledge construction, and the tutor participants also likely understood that I had more years of experience in writing center work than they did. I was more likely to answer specific questions directed at me than to chime in of my own accord because I did not intend to take on a participant-observer role in the study. Why did I interrupt Session 6, then? I remember feeling hungry and tired during this observation, so perhaps my usual concentration on suppressing my urge to be social and contribute to conversation was diverted to other pressing embodied issues. More importantly, I think, it bothered me that the client had imagined that quitting her job for the sake of justice would be a simple thing to do, and it didn't appear that the tutor intended to challenge her on this point. I chose not to hold myself back from commenting at this point in the session. If this was not a good research practice, it's because I acted inconsistently in my role as researcher. However, no harm came to participants as a result, and, in fact, the client may have benefited from the disruption if my comment influenced her to revise this part of her paper to show more complexity of thought.

Whitney: Yeah, there was an article I read about that. How like a lot of people didn't wanna speak up because people that did speak up, there was like fear of termination and that sort of thing.

Me: And worse. Like they couldn't get another job in finance...

Whitney: Oh, I didn't read about that...

Erin: Wow. Ugh, humanity.

Whitney: [laughs] Like it went on for five years, that's what blows my mind.

Erin: Yeah, that's- and you can even speak to, obviously I don't, I'm not nearly as well versed at all, but like, being a decision maker among other decision makers could essentially be like the black sheep in that kind of situation.

Whitney: Yeah.

Erin: So that's why I say I think you can keep a lot of the same material...

Erin doesn't wholly avoid talking about the social justice issue. She replies to my interjection with a question ("Really?"), which allowed for the conversation to continue. However, she is also the one to put forth a statement that might conclude the conversation on this topic ("Ugh, humanity."), and, after Whitney continues to discuss it, Erin is the one to turn back to the writing by offering a suggestion about how to use the information we discussed in the revision to change this part from an employee's to a manager's point of view. It's clear that a main reason why the tutor did not engage in further discussion about the issue is that she was only just learning about the scandal as a result of reading this client's paper.

In her interview, Erin told me that she gets nervous about tutoring sometimes because "a lot of the stuff these students come in with [she] ha[s] never heard of or know[s] very little about." She stated it bluntly, "I can't come into the studio knowing everything about everything, obviously." This is a point of fact directors often tell tutors to reassure them they don't have to be experts on everything to tutor effectively. At the same time, though, tutors can use their

sessions as opportunities for personal growth, be bold and engage in difficult conversations, and learn from them. Beth, from the scene discussed prior to this one, provides an example of such learning. Even though she was initially reluctant to think of sexual practices as a social justice issue—even expressing frustration about it—she told me at the end of our interview that she felt “woke” to it and would continue to consider it.

The final two examples of a tutor making light of a social justice issue come from Session 7 and feature Blake and Elise joking with each other about topics—drug addiction and sexual consent—that wouldn’t normally be considered funny.

Elise: So just switch “user” to “patient”?

Blake: ‘Cause when you’re talking about drugs, I think “user” is probably not the-

Elise: [laughs] The best...

Blake: I think he just, I don’t think [your professor] likes the drug “user.”

Elise: He doesn’t like the term “user.” [laughs]

Blake: I’m sure he doesn’t like the patient being the drug user... “Gotta get more of that emergency contraception!” [laughs]

Elise: I never considered that. [laughs]

Blake: Okay. This took a turn quickly. [laughs; continues reading the paper]

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Elise: I know that sounds awkward, but I wanna say something along the lines of how, um-

Blake: If you have a baby, the guy should know?...

Elise: No, sort of like before, like, “Hey, I don’t wanna have kids. Let’s stop this.” You know?

Blake: Okay.

Elise: Kind of like one of those things where it's like, hey, you're both informed. Remember, silence is not consent. [laughs]

Blake: No, it's definitely not.

Elise: No, you don't remember that from [inaudible]? Nevermind...

Blake: Oh... Silence is- [laughs] What a horrible message from our chemistry teacher. Yikes. [returns to the paper]

In the first example above, Blake is the one to make the joke, spurred by Elise's word choice in the paper, by impersonating a drug addict feigning for more emergency contraceptive medicine. After they both laugh at the joke, he is the one to refocus the session on the client's writing. In the second example, Elise is the one to recall an inside joke between them, something related to sexual consent. Once Blake understands what she's talking about he laughs, but then he also says it was a "horrible message" and concludes with, "Yikes," before concentrating once more on the client's writing. The tutor and the client in this session were friends with each other, so their session featured more talking at the same time as each other, more off-topic conversational threads, and more laughter than other sessions I observed. Joking around is one method for building and/or representing affiliation in dialogue. The jokes in these two scenes, however, are problematic because they make light of issues that affect people in serious ways. Perhaps the tutor, instead of returning his focus so quickly to Elise's paper in each instance, could have done more to point that out.

## **Conclusion**

After selecting a case study location and before visiting the site, I had assumed that it was possible I would encounter tutors who were very clearly social justice advocates/activists, simply because I had selected the site based on survey results that indicated comparatively high levels of critical consciousness in its tutors. I also anticipated (actually, hoped) I would observe sessions

that gave explicit attention to the issue of language diversity as a social justice topic. I went into the site looking to find out how the writing center director's agenda for tutor education might impact tutor's critical consciousness, as well as how tutors' critical consciousness might impact their tutoring practice. To summarize my takeaways from having collected and analyzed the data, I would say, similarly to survey findings, there are many good things happening in tutoring at the case study site, but there still seems to be much room for improvement in terms of working toward developing tutors' critical consciousness and getting them to use it in their tutoring practices to make the writing center a site of regular, sustained social justice.

First, the issue of language diversity never came up in the sessions I observed. It may be that it does come up in a number of other sessions at this writing center, and I was unfortunate not to select any of those to observe. However, based on what participants, including the director, explained to me in their interviews, it seems more likely that language diversity is not a major social justice concern at this site because of the largely homogenous and (linguistically, at the very least) privileged student/tutor populations. This homogeneity has the unfortunate result of making language diversity somewhat invisible to tutors, except, perhaps, when it comes to tutoring "ESL" and international students. Tutor education that addressed how to work with this population of clients primarily framed them/the situation as a "challenge" to face.

Tutor education at this site, in general, does take on an agenda of developing tutors' awareness of difference—particularly by exposing them to the various types of clients they might encounter in their sessions—and their empathy for clients, especially as writers. Developing awareness of other people's experiences and problems in society is a crucial element of critical consciousness. Situating individuals in a complex web of power-laden systems and structures, as well as viewing difference as positive and avoiding essentializing people based on

an identity they hold, are key to cultivating critical awareness of difference. The literature has shown (Wilson and Fitzgerald) that developing empathy in tutors is also a complicated matter. The extent to which tutor education, specifically, as only one factor influencing tutors' critical consciousness, met its goals at this site was difficult to measure with accuracy because the data I collected in this area was limited and the writing center had recently had a change in leadership.

I did discover, though, that tutors frequently use student-centered strategies for tutoring, which is similar to at least some aspects of critical pedagogy in that it requires them to share authority with clients and take a dialogic approach to learning. Although tutors sometimes understand these student-centered strategies as furthering an agenda of social justice because they benefit the individual clients, I would argue that they do not pay enough attention to the oppressive systems that have worked upon those individuals over time. For instance, why is it that some clients need their tutors to let them know that *they* have ultimate authority and ownership over their writing?

Finally, although social justice and ethics topics were consistently a part of (or a potential part of) clients' papers, tutors frequently made conversational moves to keep the session focused on clients' viewpoints and their writing rather than a nuanced discussion of those topics (or other social justice issues that might come up during a session, unrelated to the paper's topic). This tended to be the case because the tutor wanted to make the client feel comfortable, they wanted to respect the client's perspective, or they didn't have enough awareness of the topic to engage in a critical discussion about it. The tendency toward "niceness" in tutoring practice, in particular, may have negative implications for writing centers as sites of progressive social change.

The concluding chapter will discuss in greater depth the problematic patterns I observed in the data that seem to have inhibited writing center tutors in this region, and especially at the

case study location, from contributing to shaping writing centers into sites of meaningful social change for equity and inclusion, as so much of the recent scholarship beckons us to do.

## Chapter Five: Conclusion

The scholarship in the field of writing centers paints a picture of writing centers as sites of transformation, playing a role in the fight for social justice. The traits of wokeness and critical consciousness—which both include awareness of systemic oppression and active participation in service of change for fairness and equality—make a person primed to contribute to social justice endeavors. My experience working in and researching writing centers had led me to believe that writing center tutors are mostly concerned with “practical” issues over theoretical issues, such as antiracism, in their tutoring practice, perhaps because they are easier to understand and strategize. Furthermore, to date, I know of no other research that empirically studies tutors’ critical consciousness and how it actually influences their approach to tutoring. This dissertation was an attempt to begin to fill that gap in writing center studies. With the knowledge gained from the study, writing center professionals have some insight into the state of this study’s participants’ critical consciousness, including the areas they are less woke to, the factors that could hinder tutors’ development of critical consciousness and their ability to take up actions informed by critical consciousness, particularly in the writing center context, and avenues/approaches that could be attended to in tutor education. Of course, because findings are not generalizable for all tutors in all areas, I hope the study also offers to writing center professionals a way of understanding the important role critical consciousness can play in writing center tutoring and how to go about studying/assessing it within a local context and making use of findings. This understanding, along with a dedication to social justice in writing centers, can help professionals bring tutoring practice closer into alignment with the stated values of the field in its scholarship.

Findings from this study have shown that the writing center tutors in the east central region who took my survey fall mostly on the upper end of the critical consciousness spectrum, yet there are enough participants who selected options that indicate ignorance and/or prejudice to warrant concern. Those responses on the lower end of the critical consciousness scale suggest, to provide a few examples, a “bootstraps” mentality coupled with a belief in education as the great equalizer (i.e. that if they work hard in school, anyone can be successful); a rejection or lack of awareness of white privilege, and, in addition to that, a belief that white people can experience racism in the same way as people of color; little to no engagement in political activity (e.g. petitions, meetings, protests, etc.); and, perhaps most disturbingly for this study, the belief that oppression does not manifest in writing centers and tutoring is or should be apolitical. Tutors seem to be the most woke to sexuality-based discrimination compared to other types of oppression, and tutors who reported facing discrimination in multiple areas (e.g. race *and* gender) tended to have higher levels of critical consciousness compared to respondents with more majority identities. Tutors’ responses indicated lower critical consciousness on questions specific to the writing center context than they did on the survey overall, and 57% of them reported not being able to think of a time when they were a tutor for social justice. However, survey findings are not generalizable, and I have no data from tutors in other regions or countries for comparison.

After studying in depth a writing center that employs several tutors with comparatively high levels of critical consciousness, I found that, despite the institution’s and the directors’ efforts to teach tutors and students about social justice and diversity, one of the main factors that participants reported inhibiting them from tutoring for social justice was the lack of diversity in the student population at the site, indicating an assumption that tutoring for social justice is only

applicable/necessary when working with minorities. In fact, language diversity, which I was especially hoping to encounter when I initially designed this study, was not explicitly treated as an issue in any of the sessions I observed, although, based on the fact that the director led two staff meetings on working with ESL clients in the center, it seems to be somewhat of a concern for tutors, at least inasmuch as they work with some clients whose native language is not English. Another factor I perceived to inhibit extended or uncomfortable discussion related to social justice issues in the tutoring sessions I observed was tutors' tendency toward "niceness" and making the session feel comfortable. However, when social justice did come up in the tutoring sessions it was because many clients were writing papers that specifically addressed social justice or ethics topics. Furthermore, I observed tutors using student-centered tutoring strategies, which can be interpreted as a move for social justice, although social justice was not always tutors' reported motivation for using those strategies.

Findings appear to indicate that tutors from the study may have a general awareness of oppression in society, but they have trouble identifying oppression in the writing center context, as well as moving from awareness to action (i.e. tutoring for social justice). I suggest that tutor education could be one avenue for more fully developing tutors' critical consciousness and helping them find ways to exhibit bravery and act from critical consciousness while tutoring.

Is it fair, though, returning to Grimm's call for tutors to change the gates of the academic literacy club, to demand so much and place such a burden on tutors? Do tutors even have the power to do this? What can directors realistically expect their tutors to be able to do in the face of systemic oppression? This study has shown that despite the scholarship that positions writing centers as central to a fight for social justice, that's not how tutoring practice actually seems to be playing out (at least not consistently), and it has offered possible explanations for the

phenomenon. Although data has not provided concrete examples for ways to help tutors take action for social justice based on their critical consciousness, it has shown that this is an area that needs further study. Tutors cannot be expected to solve the problem of systemic injustices on their own, but they can play an important role effecting change. Consider the impact high school-aged activists are having on the gun debate in politics after the school shooting in Parkland, Florida earlier this year. Although this concluding chapter does not offer a step-by-step agenda for writing center directors and tutors (because that isn't where the data led me), it does offer ways to think about the findings, summarized above, and discuss their significance.

### **The Value of Critical Consciousness for Tutors**

To begin, I want to reiterate the potential value of critical consciousness to positively impact tutors' practice, if their awareness of systemic oppression is raised and they understand the ways in which writing centers can participate, intentionally or not, in systems of oppression. Currently, based on my findings, it seems to be the case that tutors' critical consciousness is not well-developed with respect to the writing center context and they tend to avoid engaging in difficult conversations about social justice issues with clients (and they engage in student advocacy and the celebration of diversity even less).

In the case study chapter, I explained that students at that university were frequently writing about social justice topics, but their writing tutors often avoided opportunities to discuss those topics with them, focusing instead on only the client's perspective or the writing itself because they prioritized comfort and "niceness" in the sessions. I believe this tendency toward niceness has a connection to the view that a writing center should be a "safe" space for clients. I was forced to ask myself, to what extent is social justice work really in the purview of writing centers, and especially in a writing center that doesn't see much diversity in its clients? While

tutors in this case study, to varying degrees, demonstrated a student-centered approach to learning reminiscent of a couple of the tenets of critical pedagogy, and many of them were able to tell me about some of the ways in which social justice plays a role in their tutoring practice, there were also a few who expressed the belief that it is not relevant or appropriate to use writing center tutoring sessions as a platform for social justice efforts.

Laura, for instance, expressed some internal struggle she experienced about this during her session with Christina that I observed:

[The paper's topic] was like your passion in life and like all this- 'cause college is such, it's a time where all that stuff changes, and so to actually have to see that out on paper and try to keep an objective mindframe when I really just wanted to like, I dunno, I wanted to talk to her, but then I was like, I don't think that's why I'm here. I feel like I had to really try and focus on her paper, but it was hard because I didn't wanna touch any sensitive subjects with her seeming so, like, torn.

The client from Session 6, Whitney, likewise articulated a belief that it should be on the student writer to do the research and apply it in their writing (or come up with the ideas and arguments for the paper), and tutors should just help them “word it properly and make sure [the] message [they're] trying to convey comes across clearly.”

The tutor from Session 6, Erin, confessed that, because she is not a “conflict-seeking person,” if she encountered a client with “cultural differences,” she would talk to them about why they think certain things to gain a better understanding for herself, but she would never tell them they were wrong about something. And from Session 1, Marie said to me while being interviewed, “It's hard to incorporate a specific action for social justice in a tutoring sessions... Like, [in the session you observed] ‘Yeah, DACA's a big deal, woo-hoo, we both agree.’ Now what? I don't know how, I just feel there's a gap that has to be bridged for that next conversation to happen and I don't know if a tutoring session of 40 minutes is necessarily the time or the place

for that.” Altogether, these participants convey the perspective that writing tutors should stick to helping writers with their writing, not spend time discussing controversial issues or working through value-laden ideas and ideologies, as though the two (writing and ideas) were simple to separate.

Social “niceness” can be seen in this avoidance of controversy and focus on clients’ perspectives and their writing. Scholars have critiqued niceness, however, as a way of performing whiteness and middle class values and maintaining the dominant culture, for instance when discussing housing communities and teacher education programs. Low’s article explains how “‘nice’ people... participate in maintaining whiteness” and controlling the environment of gated communities (79): “Wanting to live in a nice house, with nice neighbors, in a nice neighborhood where your home values and environment are stable are simply another way of rationalizing the desire to maintain whiteness” (90). Bissonnette argues that a preference for niceness prevents new teachers from developing a culturally responsive pedagogy (11). She argues that niceness is a way of masking privilege and the benefits received from privilege. Bissonnette also offers suggestions for how teacher educators can “push back against a culture of niceness that would have us avoid critical examinations of self” (20), and she encourages new teachers to develop “instruction to promote equity in their classrooms” (23). With advice that writing center tutors might also find applicable, even empowering, Bissonnette says, when it comes to “equity-minded beliefs,” don’t concern yourself with niceness; instead be brave and “Impose, impose, impose” (24).

So. I return again to the idea Anna May put forward during our interview: that writing centers might play some part in making a better world.

In a recent interview with Rose Jacobs (*The Chronicle of Higher Education*), Lori Salem, discussing her research (which won the International Writing Centers Association award for best article, 2017), claims, “Writing centers have the idea that they are transformative... This is not a place where transformation is likely to happen.” My research, unfortunately, would seem to support Salem’s statement. From the findings of her study, she posits that writing centers are doing good work to help students integrate into the university, and they should celebrate that and develop pedagogies to serve it (Salem). I, however, remain committed to the idea that writing centers could still do more to work toward transformative social justice, not simply the kind that helps students integrate into an educational system that they will find oppressive. This isn’t a new way of envisioning writing center work, as indicated by the review of the literature in this dissertation, although it may still be revolutionary.

Beth Godbee’s article, “Toward Explaining the Transformative Power of Talk about, around, and for Writing,” presents evidence of collaborative writing talk that is transformative and that “challeng[es] dominant systems within academia” (181). As a way of introducing her empirical study, she concedes that often when writing center scholars suggest that writing centers are transformative, they do not explain “*why, how, or when* transformations come about” (Godbee 174). With an applied Conversation Analysis method, Godbee identifies moments in a tutoring session that underlie three kinds of transformation, one of which is “raising critical consciousness” (172). The two participants she discusses in the article work together in multiple sessions over time, focusing on the client’s graduate research project. Through their talk about her research topic, the tutor’s awareness of and concern for a particular social problem is raised. Godbee explains, “this case study helps to illustrate how relationship-building is wound up with critical consciousness, new commitments, and even the ability to change asymmetrical power

relations” (181). She further argues that “the writers’ willingness to sustain difficult discussions, to share personal experiences, to build relationships, and to challenge institutional structures” contribute to transformations, and that transformations may also emerge as a result of the understanding that “talk about writing can (or even should) [at times] diverge from ‘business as usual’” (186).

Godbee’s attention to the impact of engaging in “difficult discussions,” especially, suggests the need for writing center tutors to give up some “niceness” in favor of transformation. Likewise, the editors of a recent special issue of *The Peer Review* on “Writing Centers as Brave/r Spaces,” Rebecca Hallman Martini and Travis Webster, recommend a stance of bravery in tutoring when it could contribute to social change. They lament that so many writing center professionals (WCPs) continue to pretend that identity issues don’t exist in writing center spaces and that those spaces are not politically charged. These WCPs reassure themselves that they’re doing good work by “focus[ing] on the writing” and encouraging clients to consider their audience when they have written something racist (Hallman Martini and Webster). If they were being realistic, though, the editors argue, they would recognize that writing centers, too, are threatened by the post-2016 election political climate—“through the lived experiences of tutors, writers, and administrators; through student writing; through informal chatter; and through tumultuous circumstances” (Hallman Martini and Webster). Furthermore, they suggest that ignoring difference isn’t a neutral act; in fact, it equates to supporting “power structures that privilege white, straight, male, middle-class ways of being” (Hallman Martini and Webster).

The special issue of the journal posits that writing centers must do more than be “safe” spaces because safe spaces imply comfort, but learning involves risk and the possibility of change, which can be painful. Therefore, writing centers must become brave/r spaces, where the

“/r” implies an ongoing process. A brave approach to writing center work would ““help students better understand—and rise to—the challenges of genuine dialogue on diversity and social justice issues”” (Arao and Clemens p. 136, qtd. in Hallman Martini and Webster). According to the contributing authors in this issue of the journal, writing center work *is* social justice work. The institution at which I conducted case study research would likely support such a perspective, considering its commitment to “social justice and diversity” in the curriculum. The tutors’ own critical consciousness, however, seems to be in development, which limits their capacity to contribute to social justice efforts.

A criticism of the brave space paradigm, however, might be that bravery is an easier stance to take for a person with privilege. Caroline Paul, former firefighter and author of *Gutsy Girl*, argues that girls are socially conditioned to care about being pretty, nice, and perfect, but not confident or adventurous, while boys are conditioned to be brave and take risks (in “Turning Kids”). “Bravery,” Paul says, “is not considered a feminine trait in our culture... but it’s a trait that all kids need.” This is because, Paul argues from research, cultivating bravery in children connects to their ability as an adult to handle important aspects of their lives, such as fighting for pay parity or getting respect in relationships. If bravery is a social trait more highly valued in boys than girls, it might follow that women tutors have a more difficult time overcoming this norm to take on a brave stance in their writing center work. As another hypothetical example illustrating the connection between identity and bravery, consider whether it would be fair to ask a black tutor to bravely confront a white client about their racist paper if they perceive that doing so would put them in danger. While the bravery framework encourages tutors not to avoid conflict related to diversity and issues of social justice with their clients, it should be

acknowledged that being brave may be more difficult for some than others because it requires a certain amount of privilege.

Critical consciousness, though, may offer all tutors an avenue for enacting bravery, as well as motivate people with the most privilege to harness their privileged positions to get woke and do social justice work on behalf of others. One of the most important aspects (and consequences) of assuming a critically conscious perspective is the ability to bring the invisible to light and critique it—to critique everything, really, and find value in such a practice. Even if tutors are still becoming aware of social justice issues, as we all are to varying degrees, a capacity to engage in critique would benefit their tutoring, for example, because they would be able to work with clients writing about controversial topics to understand and consider the various perspectives people might have on the topic. This is not the same as talking about “both sides to an issue,” which constructs a false binary in many cases, as well as contributes to the partisan mentality of conservative versus liberal politics. It’s also not the same as simply urging clients to take the most progressive stance on an issue, although they may end up there after having considered multiple perspectives. Critical consciousness involves continual skepticism. If one system is replaced with another system as a result of social action for justice, the new system continues to be worthy of critique with an eye toward further improvement. Critical consciousness necessitates the perspective that reality is always in transition, never finished.

To make the concept more concrete, we can consider how Session 5 might have been improved if the tutor, Beth, had been more open to considering multiple perspectives on the issue Rebekah was writing about, sexual monogamy. Throughout the session, Beth exhibited a preference for monogamy and distaste for Huxley’s imagined alternative to monogamy in *A Brave New World*. In her interview with me, she rationalized this behavior as a decision to honor

the client's ideas; Rebekah was arguing that it was a bad thing to remove emotion from sex because it dehumanized the act. However, the assignment prompt was primarily asking students to understand and explain Huxley's critique of monogamy and, only after that, to examine that perspective through the lens of contemporary sexual norms. Based on the prompt, as well as Beth's recollection that the professor is a "really big feminist," I imagine he views sexuality as a social justice issue and intended for students responding to this prompt to use Huxley's book as a starting point for engaging in critique of normative practices of sexuality, which limit and constrain sexual behavior, which oppress people whose sexuality is non-conforming. Beth did not seem to recognize that intention, nor did she encourage the client to consider other perspectives on the issue rather than settling for one that affirmed monogamy as best, as most "human." If she had done those things, the student's paper may have ended up more "on topic" and, more importantly, she might have gained a greater understanding of different ways of being in the world.

Considering multiple perspectives on an issue is one way tutors can utilize critical consciousness. It seems clear from survey and case study findings, though, that tutor education could go further in raising tutors' awareness systemic oppression and the ways in which writing centers, specifically, are, at times, implicated in those systems. In the previous chapter, I mentioned briefly that tutors' emphasis on student-centeredness equates to a focus on the decontextualized individual rather than on an individual within a system or on a system acting upon individuals. Recently, a similar point has been made about the way our society talks about the issue of sexual assault. Jackson Katz, cultural theorist and co-founder of the organization Mentors in Violence Prevention, explained the idea in a TED Talk (2012) that suggests that sexual violence is ultimately a men's issue:

In domestic and sexual violence... men have been largely erased from so much of the conversation about a subject that is centrally about men... The way that we think, literally the way that we use language conspires to keep our attention off of men... Our cognitive structure is set up to blame victims... to ask questions about women and women's choices and what they're doing, thinking, wearing... We have to ask a different set of questions... like "why does John beat Mary? Why is domestic violence still a big problem in the US and all over the world?... What's going on with men?"... This isn't about individual perpetrators. That's a naive way to understanding what is a much deeper and more systematic social problem.

It's good when tutors like Anna May, who spoke of helping "those who suffer," can recognize that the clients they work with have experienced injustice. It's better if they're able to name the system (e.g. sexism) that has caused that injustice. And better still if they're able to chip away at that system with critically conscious tutoring.

To be sure, and I think my research illustrates this point well, critical consciousness and social justice are difficult concepts to pinpoint in practice, much like critical pedagogy, which scholars have argued is difficult to define and to make concrete (Breuing; Thomson-Bunn). But, Breuing points out in defense of messiness (citing Lather, 1998), attempting to make critical pedagogy tangible is a symptom of reductionist thinking (19). I think it makes sense to put critical consciousness to use primarily as a lens or a heuristic for tutoring, not as a set of steps to take or rules to follow. Looking at specific examples tutors might encounter in their writing center sessions and asking them to imagine ways to put their critical consciousness to work in response to those scenarios (as an activity for tutor education) could help them envision possibilities for building a critical tutoring praxis. Suhr-Sytsma and Brown, mentioned in the review of the literature, offer a good example of tutor education that identifies and pushes back against oppression that exists in the writing center context, specifically in its discursive practices.

It also seems important to be transparent with tutors who hope to implement critical consciousness about the reality that not all clients will be immediately receptive to having their

beliefs challenged. Clients may require a period of incubation, or they may remain resistant, but that is not a good reason for tutors to avoid moments of “bravery,” and it doesn’t necessarily mean the session is unsuccessful. Furthermore, tutors, as people who are still developing critical consciousness, who are on a path toward woke-ness, should remain open to having their own beliefs challenged by the clients they work with.

### **Other Thoughts on Tutor Education**

Thus far in the conclusion, I have advocated for the value of developing tutors’ critical consciousness in tutor education so they can use it as a way to make sense of the work they do in writing centers and respond appropriately (for social justice) to the experiences they encounter in that work. Teaching diversity and empathy, as Haley intends to do in her approach to tutor education, can contribute to the mission of developing tutors’ critical consciousness, as long as it is done in a careful and nuanced way. I would also suggest teaching tutors about translingual theory, mostly because it would encourage them to view all language use as both dependent on the author’s choice and having consequences, even (/especially) when the language being used is Standard Edited Academic English. The rest of this conclusion explains these two points further.

To educate tutors about some issues of diversity, Haley planned staff meetings about working with ESL clients and differently abled clients in the writing center during the semester that I conducted case study research. Discussions of “difference,” to be effective at raising tutors’ critical consciousness, should avoid essentialism, which reduces a person by some aspect of their identity to a set of non-negotiable traits. Instead, discussions should account for personal and contextual differences within a population, as well as the effects of intersectionality, in which the multiple identities a person has overlap with one another. Harry Denny’s book, *Facing the Center*, which Haley plans to use in the tutor practicum course, is a good resource for examining

difference in a nuanced way. According to Beth Godbee, a writing center professional and scholar who reviewed the book, Denny “highlights the social change possibilities in writing centers, [where] identity politics are enacted, contested, and subverted on an everyday basis” (141). Denny makes a case in the book that tutors can play an important role for clients as they decide how to navigate the rhetorical expectations that are placed on them in higher education—assimilate, oppose, or subvert. (The first step in that process is recognizing that they do, in fact, have options other than assimilation.)

In his interview, Matt, the former interim director who taught the tutor education course that most of my tutor participants had taken, spoke briefly about difference, accommodation, and social justice:

How do we create a welcoming space for students of all different kinds of backgrounds, and how can we do more to celebrate the separate discourse communities that they’re coming from and integrate them into the academic discourse community?... Seeing if we can accommodate them and catch them back up as sort of an act of social justice, doing all that we can to make sure they get to stick around and sort of get the fruits of being at [this institution].

The first part of his statement, about celebrating and integrating diversity, seems to serve justice efforts, but the second half equates difference to some failure in the student, a substandard disposition. It’s the argument that writing centers should help students in their efforts to assimilate so they can more fully become members of the academy—the thing that Salem claims writing centers do well, as well as the very perspective that Nancy Grimm effectively deconstructs in *Good Intentions*. Rather than inhabiting a “white savior” mentality in their tutoring, tutors could do more to critique and subvert the educational institution that would force minority students to assimilate before being, to some degree, “integrated,” “celebrated,” etc.

Developing a capacity to feel empathy for clients is one way tutors might be able to, potentially, avoid taking on a tutor-knows-best mentality when confronted with difference. Julia,

the former long-term director, and Haley primarily developed tutors' empathy by developing their identities as writers, same as their clients, with more to learn still about writing. Oweidat and McDermott in the article "Neither Brave Nor Safe: Interventions in Empathy for Tutor Training" (also from the special issue of *The Peer Review* discussed above), suggest that teaching empathy as a skill in tutor education could be the factor that helps tutors transfer their understanding of writing center theory to the daily practice of tutoring for social change.

The tutors in the study they conducted, according to the researchers, expressed simplistic understandings of empathy that involved "absorbing difference" and "alleviating discomfort—"which sounds like what I categorized earlier as performing "niceness"—sometimes leading them to "retreat to an emphasis on local writing problems" when confronted with difference (Oweidat and McDermott). According to the authors, the tutors also associated empathy with a need for identification. For instance when they discussed English Language Learning (ELL) students, they often talked about their own experiences with language acquisition, but this "does not take into account the power dynamics of dominant and nondominant languages" or the "cultural negotiations of meaning making for multilingual students who are navigating the privileged discourse and dominant culture on campus, as well as the stigma associated with seeking help" (Oweidat and McDermott).

In the article's conclusion, Oweidat and McDermott argue for the teaching of a more nuanced understanding of empathy in tutor education, the kind that is discussed in Wilson and Fitzgerald's *WLN* article from 2012. Empathy, in their view, depends on a recognition of biases and a "constant search for shared meanings and common understandings" (Rifkin, qtd. in Wilson and Fitzgerald).

I recognize what I've said so far about teaching diversity and empathy in tutor education seems to assume that clients are "diverse" and tutors are not. To be clear, I don't believe that should be the case at all. Survey findings indicate that tutors with multiple minority identities tend to have a more developed critical consciousness than those who have fewer or no minority identities, likely because they have personally encountered discrimination and been able to (forced to) view the world through a non-normative lens. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, Haley recognizes the need to recruit more diverse tutors for their writing center's staff. It's important that the tutor population be representative of an institution's general student population. If the tutoring staff is diverse, tutors can assist with tutor education, teach and learn from one another, because they have a variety of perspectives and experiences to draw from. It could help tutors with mostly majority identities learn to recognize and understand the everyday, unearned privileges they receive. If nothing else, the presence of diversity amongst tutors might encourage mainstream tutors to think a little more before saying something offensive; it might make (what could be) a normative space feel less "safe" for the representation and perpetuation of the kind of mainstream values that can be oppressive.

One aspect of Haley's approach to tutor education, related to the initiative of raising tutors' awareness of the kinds of diverse clients with whom they might work, came across as slightly concerning to me because of the way it was presented.<sup>19</sup> First, the two part series of staff meetings about tutoring "ESL" clients emphasized the *challenges* tutors would face when working with this population over the rewards they would receive, and, second, it didn't take into account any other kinds of students with linguistic diversity, such as speakers of nonstandard dialects, e.g. Black English. I worry that the kind of approach to tutor education that focuses on

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<sup>19</sup> Readers should remember I was unable to attend these staff meetings. I'm responding here only to the text from the email announcing these staff meetings to tutors, meaning that my understanding of the message that ultimately came across at the meetings is incomplete.

“challenging” populations of writing center clientele, such as students who are in the process of acquiring the English language or students who need instructional accommodations because of their diverse learning abilities, sets tutors up to view them as problems to face. (It might also unintentionally essentialize those populations, inhibiting tutors’ ability to account for individual difference within a population, as well as discount the possibility that tutors, not just students, have minority identities.)

Obviously, tutors will have some difficulty working with clients who are different from them as there exists tension at the site of contact zones, and they will need to have an understanding of the kinds of difference they might encounter and strategies for making those sessions productive. However, we might frame tutor education that touches on topics of difference, instead of talking about how to “deal with” it, in such a way as to highlight the benefits of encountering and engaging with difference.

Translingualism provides one example of a positive frame for viewing language difference. It emphasizes that all writers should think through the language choices they have in a given writing situation and recognize the consequences of making one choice over another. This is true for students who are comfortable with the conventions of Standard American English (SAE) as much as it is true for students whose home language is Spanish or Black English, for instance. Writing tutors can help bring these choices and potential consequences to the surface in their conversations with clients, even, or maybe especially, with clients who use SAE with ease. Translingualism makes the case that we all participate in shaping cultural language practices, and we can choose to participate in a way that challenges practices that oppress speakers/writers of non-standard dialects and non-normative languages. So, while the sessions I observed during case study research did not address diversity in language, I imagine that it would still benefit

tutors (and subsequently students), even at institutions that have little diversity on the whole, to be aware of the ways in which language-based discrimination exists and the writer's role in using language to counter injustices.

One final point I would make about tutor education, based on my research findings, is that it should be designed, at least in part, in response to local assessment that measures the needs of tutors at a particular institution. Assessment should identify the barriers tutors encounter on their journey toward developing critical consciousness, to getting woke (in the most authentic sense of the word), barriers that may exist as a result of the local sociopolitical climate or the demographics of the study body, for example. Tutor education can then be designed in response to assessment and take steps toward breaking down the barriers and effectively developing tutors' critical consciousness.

For instance, Haley seemed to have a general understanding that the "whiteness" of her tutors and the student population overall at the case study institution meant she needed to raise their awareness about diversity. However, I don't think she realized the extent to which tutors thought that being on a campus with so little diversity should lessen their responsibility to promote social justice. If she knew this, she might devote more space in tutor education to the idea that social justice is good for all people, including the majority (even if it feels threatening), not just minorities. It's like Katz says at the end of his TED Talk, "We need more [courageous] men... to stand with women... We owe it to women... But we also owe it to our sons [and] to young men who are growing up all over the world in situations where they didn't make the choice to be a man in a culture that tells them that manhood is a certain way... We can do better."

Writing centers, we can do better.

## Future Research

To conclude, I propose some directions for further study that, along with this project, might contribute to social justice efforts in writing centers. One thing this study has made me realize we need is a better understanding of tutors' critical consciousness. The survey instrument that I used could be refined and used in other geographic regions, or writing center professionals could consider other ways to study and measure tutors' critical consciousness. It would be good to be able to compare different groups of tutors to each other, when examining their critical consciousness, to identify factors that promote or inhibit the development of critical consciousness. Studying tutors' critical consciousness should include attention to its connection to the enactment of social justice in the writing center. Furthermore, case study research looking into tutors' application of critical consciousness and/or tutor education programs designed to develop their critical consciousness should be conducted at other types of institutions than the one I studied, as well as at more institutions like the one I studied, again for greater understanding and comparison.

Action research, or measuring the outcomes of an intervention that responds to this dissertation's suggestion—to design locally-responsive tutor education that explicitly develops tutors' critical consciousness and capacity to act bravely as a tutor in ways that contribute to social justice—is another avenue for future research. This kind of research could be especially useful for the field in figuring out how to bring theory to practice because of its pragmatic orientation.

It also seems important to study the impact of tutoring for social justice on *clients* over time, which, of course, would require tutors to be doing social justice work first, and in a sustainable way. Finally, because tutoring is not the only way in which social justice might be

achieved in writing centers, research should be conducted about the non-tutoring methods (e.g. organized events, faculty development, wait area interactions, promotional materials, etc.) for working toward social justice that writing centers (can) regularly engage in, as well. Social justice is necessary to pursue, yet complicated to study; writing center professionals should engage in research that has the potential to contribute to the field's social justice goals.

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## APPENDIX Survey

*Items 1, 21, 22, 23, and 24 are not scored. All scored items are worth up to six points. Items, such as item 2, with four response choices are worth 1.5, 3, 4.5, or 6 points in ascending order (a, b, c, d). Items, such as item 6, with six response choices are worth 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6 points, also in ascending order. Items 12, 13, and 14 should be reverse scored, i.e. the first choice is worth 6 points, and they proceed in descending order.*

1. [Consent to participate]
2. Select one item from this set that is most true for you.
  - a) I don't see much oppression in this country.
  - b) I feel hopeless and overwhelmed when I think about oppression in this country.
  - c) I feel like oppression in this country is less than in the past and will continue to change.
  - d) I actively work to support organizations that help people who are oppressed.
3. Select one item from this set that is most true for you.
  - a) I don't notice when people make prejudiced comments.
  - b) I notice when people make prejudiced comments and it hurts me.
  - c) It hurts me when people make prejudiced comments, but I am able to move on.
  - d) When someone makes a prejudiced comment, I tell them what they said is hurtful.
4. Select one item from this set that is most true for you.
  - a) I think that education gives everyone an equal chance to do well.
  - b) I think that education gives everyone who works hard an equal chance.
  - c) I think that the educational system is unequal.
  - d) I think the educational system needs to be changed in order for everyone to have an equal chance.
5. Select one item from this set that is most true for you.
  - a) Issues of oppression do not come up in writing center tutoring; it is apolitical work.
  - b) I sometimes identify opportunities to fight oppression in my work as a writing center tutor, but rarely or never address them because it makes me or uncomfortable or I think other writing issues are more important.
  - c) I find and also respond to opportunities to fight racism, classism, and/or sexism in my work as a writing center tutor.
  - d) I frequently endeavor to fight oppression in my work as a writing center tutor, and I encourage other tutors to, as well.
6. Rate the following statement on a scale of agreement.  
All white people receive unearned privileges in U.S. society.
  - a) Strongly disagree
  - b) Disagree
  - c) Slightly disagree
  - d) Slightly agree

- e) Agree
- f) Strongly agree

7. Rate the following statement on a scale of agreement.

More racial and ethnic diversity in colleges and universities should be a national priority.

- a) Strongly disagree
- b) Disagree
- c) Slightly disagree
- d) Slightly agree
- e) Agree
- f) Strongly agree

8. Rate the following statement on a scale of agreement.

Discrimination against gay persons is still a significant problem in the U.S.

- a) Strongly disagree
- b) Disagree
- c) Slightly disagree
- d) Slightly agree
- e) Agree
- f) Strongly agree

9. Rate the following statement on a scale of agreement.

I support including sexual orientation in nondiscrimination legislature.

- a) Strongly disagree
- b) Disagree
- c) Slightly disagree
- d) Slightly agree
- e) Agree
- f) Strongly agree

10. Rate the following statement on a scale of agreement.

Women have fewer chances than men to get good jobs.

- a) Strongly disagree
- b) Disagree
- c) Slightly disagree
- d) Slightly agree
- e) Agree
- f) Strongly agree

11. Rate the following statement on a scale of agreement.

Writing centers should empower individuals, challenge the status quo, and increase social justice for all student writers.

- a) Strongly disagree
- b) Disagree
- c) Slightly disagree
- d) Slightly agree

- e) Agree
- f) Strongly agree

12. Rate the following statement on a scale of agreement.

Reverse racism against white people is just as harmful as traditional racism.

- a) Strongly disagree
- b) Disagree
- c) Slightly disagree
- d) Slightly agree
- e) Agree
- f) Strongly agree

13. Rate the following statement on a scale of agreement.

Social welfare programs provide poor people with an excuse not to work.

- a) Strongly disagree
- b) Disagree
- c) Slightly disagree
- d) Slightly agree
- e) Agree
- f) Strongly agree

14. Rate the following statement on a scale of agreement.

Preferential treatment (e.g. financial aid, admissions) to college students that come from poor families is unfair to those who come from middle or upper class families.

- a) Strongly disagree
- b) Disagree
- c) Slightly disagree
- d) Slightly agree
- e) Agree
- f) Strongly agree

15. Rate the following statement according to how often you engage in the activity.

Participated in a discussion about a social or political issue.

- a) Never did this
- b) Have done once or twice
- c) Once every few months
- d) At least once a month
- e) At least once a week
- f) Almost daily

16. Rate the following statement according to how often you engage in the activity.

Signed an email or written petition about a social or political issue.

- a) Never did this
- b) Have done once or twice
- c) Once every few months
- d) At least once a month

- e) At least once a week
- f) Almost daily

17. Rate the following statement according to how often you engage in the activity.

Contacted a public official by phone, mail, or email to tell them how you felt about a social or political issue.

- a) Never did this
- b) Have done once or twice
- c) Once every few months
- d) At least once a month
- e) At least once a week
- f) Almost daily

18. Rate the following statement according to how often you engage in the activity.

Joined in a protest march, political demonstration, or political meeting.

- a) Never did this
- b) Have done once or twice
- c) Once every few months
- d) At least once a month
- e) At least once a week
- f) Almost daily

19. Rate the following statement according to how often you engage in the activity.

Participated in a human rights, gay rights, or women's rights organization or group.

- a) Never did this
- b) Have done once or twice
- c) Once every few months
- d) At least once a month
- e) At least once a week
- f) Almost daily

20. How would you respond to the following hypothetical scenario?

An international student client explains at the beginning of her tutoring session with you that she wants help making her writing sound "more American." She's upset that she keeps making bad grades on her papers because, according to her professor, she needs to work on her "grammar and syntax."

- a) I would help her edit her paper so that it sounded more like a native English speaker wrote it so that the student could get a better grade in this professor's class.
- b) I would identify some of the most common or most obtrusive mistakes in grammar in syntax the student was making, and teach her how to fix them and avoid making them again.
- c) I would engage the student in a discussion about the process of English language acquisition and her professor's potentially unfair expectations for her writing so that she might better advocate for herself.
- d) I would do both b) and c).
- e) Other: \_\_\_\_\_

21. (Open-ended response)

Please give a specific example or tell a story about a time in which you were a tutor for social justice in some way.

a) I cannot think of a time in which this happened.

b) \_\_\_\_\_

22. (Open-ended response)

Please describe the tutor education you received/participated in for your job as a tutor in your institution's writing center. (What form did it take, e.g. a for credit course, a period of apprenticeship, periodic tutor meetings, an individual reading program, etc.? What content and material was covered? What information or activity made the biggest impact on you as a tutor?)

\_\_\_\_\_

23. (Open-ended response)

Please tell me about the demographic parts of your identity (e.g. nationality, sexual orientation, gender, ethnicity, age, ability, class, etc.) that matter most to you and that you feel comfortable disclosing.

\_\_\_\_\_

24. (Open-ended response)

What is the name of the higher education institution at which you work as a writing center tutor?

\_\_\_\_\_