

WRITING CENTER TUTOR TRAINING: AN EXAMINATION OF EMPHASIS ON
CRITICAL PEDAGOGY IN TUTOR TRAINING HANDBOOKS

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ABSTRACT

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Writing center theory has not always emphasized critical pedagogy as part of writing center pedagogy. However, with scholars' applications of critical lenses such as postmodernism and postcolonialism to critique writing center practice, critical pedagogy has found its way into writing center practices. Self-critical awareness is one key element of critical pedagogy, and through the dialogic application of critical pedagogy in writing center sessions, students can be made aware of the hegemonic nature of academic discourse and why institution and discipline-valued writing is expected over other kinds of writing. Because critical pedagogy has value in writing center contexts, both for the writing tutor and tutee, for this project I analyzed five writing center tutor training handbooks to examine how and/or whether critical pedagogy is emphasized in tutor training. One handbook is a mass-marketed text while the other four are institution-specific texts representative to their particular writing center. I used five search terms for textual analyses to detect explicit or implicit references to critical pedagogy: *critical pedagogy*, *critical*, *pedagogy*, *philosophy*, and *theory*. My findings strongly suggest that critical pedagogy is not adequately stressed in writing center tutor training handbooks, even though multiple writing center scholars have called attention for the need to

implement critical pedagogy in writing center pedagogy. As a result of the discrepancy between writing center theory and critical pedagogical theory application in writing center pedagogy, I argue that critical pedagogy should be emphasized and made explicit in writing center tutor training curricula, including tutor training handbooks.

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INTRODUCTION

*“But what if I don’t know how to write?
 “You know more than you realize.”
 “But what if I do it wrong?”
 “Wrong is relative. We’ll figure it out.”
 “But when I write, it doesn’t come out like I want it to.”
 “That’s normal.
 “But what if I mess up?
 “You will. And it will be okay.”
 “But my teachers told me I was a bad writer.”
 “They were wrong.”*

*-Tiffany Rousculp, Rhetoric of Respect: Recognizing Change at a
 Community Writing Center*

Numerous writing center scholars have taken up topics in writing center pedagogy, particularly since Stephen North’s famous 1984 article “The Idea of a Writing Center.” One topic that has been enjoying increased attention is critical pedagogy in writing center scholarship: (Bawarshi and Pelkowski, 1999; Boquet and Lerner, 2008; Denny, 2010; Greenfield and Rowan, 2011; Grimm, 1992, 1996, 1999, 2011). North’s “Idea” was not about critical pedagogy, but as the title suggests, it addresses notions of what a writing center is—both from the point of view of people on the inside looking out as well as those on the outside looking in. North also emphasizes “a” writing center pedagogy— in which he claims the crux of tutoring depends on dialogue (443) and works through dialogue between tutor and student writer—the student writer will, hopefully, become a better writer while understanding that writing is a process (438), which requires multiple revisions before turning in the polished submission draft. While that is a writing

center pedagogy, it is *not* critical pedagogy. However, Henry Giroux sheds light on what critical pedagogy does, which can work as part of writing center pedagogy:

The principles guiding my work on critical pedagogy are grounded in critique as a mode of analysis that interrogates texts, institutions, social relations, and ideologies as part of the script of official power. Simply put, critique focuses largely on how domination manifests as both a symbolic and an institutional force and the ways in which it impacts on all levels of society. (*On Critical Pedagogy*, 4)

He further adds, “I use critical pedagogy to examine the various ways in which classrooms too often function as modes of social, political, and cultural reproduction” (5). While writing centers are not classrooms, at least in the traditional sense, they help students negotiate writing assignments that initiate inside traditional classrooms. Where Giroux applies critical pedagogy to classroom functions, I am applying critical pedagogy to writing center functions. Possessing critical awareness is a key attribute of critical pedagogy. A writing tutor who is critically aware of ideological and political forces that influence and possibly motivate writing assignments is a writing tutor who is better equipped to ask the writer problem-posing questions that call attention to the nature of the relationship of the assignment to the writer while promoting critical consciousness and without undermining the authority of the student’s lecturer or professor.

Recent writing center scholarship argues that writing centers are not ideologically and politically neutral places within their institutions. In fact, the opposite is true: writing centers are places fraught with reified effects of cultural, ideological, and political

ramifications that find their ways into the university from the outside and continue to be perpetuated from the inside.

In this project, I took up an examination of critical pedagogical emphasis in writing center tutor training by analyzing writing center tutor training handbooks in order to get an idea of how—if at all—critical pedagogy is valued in writing center tutor training. Textual analyses writing center tutor training handbooks suggests that, in spite of numerous writing center scholars' call for critical pedagogy to be practiced in everyday writing center consultations, a disconnect exists. Results from my findings suggest the emphasis that writing center scholars place on critical pedagogy, as being a vital element in writing center theory, is either not being reflected at all or is unsatisfactorily reflected in tutor training. I conducted this work by selecting five tutor training handbooks. First, I chose a market-based handbook that is commonly used for writing center tutor training: *The Bedford Guide for Writing Center Tutors 6th Edition*. Second, I wanted four institution-specific handbooks of writing centers in public, four-year universities with similar student diversity demographics to those of Humboldt State University. Eventually, I settled on Sacramento State University's *The Tutoring Book*, Eastern Oregon University's *Writing Tutor Guide to Professionalism and Policies*, Elizabeth City State University's *The QEP Writing Studio Tutor Handbook*, and University of Illinois, Chicago's *Working with Writers: UIC Writing Center Handbook*. Third, in order to detect possible references of critical pedagogy, I analyzed the handbooks by coding for occurrences of these terms: *critical pedagogy*, *critical*, *pedagogy*, *philosophy*, and *theory*. When I located these terms, I examined them in

context in order to discern how they were being used. Through this analysis, my findings suggest that the majority of occurrences do not point to critical pedagogy but instead point to other aspects of writing center tutoring strategies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Understanding writing centers as places and spaces where meaning is constructed, made sense of, and negotiated also allows for understanding the meaning of writing centers. Writing centers are conceived differently, depending on the individual and her or his position and function in the writing center's institution. For example, one instructor *might* think of the writing center as a place where tutors intervene too much into a student's paper. Another instructor *might* believe like the writing center so much that they urge their students to schedule appointments, so a tutor can give feedback on argument and paragraph organization. A student *might* choose to visit because the center represents a space where they can talk through their ideas for a paper without fear of being judged. An administrator *might* think of the center only in terms of learning outcomes and funding. Tim Cresswell, critical geographer and author of *Place: A Short Introduction*, claims, "Place . . . is both simple (and that is part of its appeal) and complicated" (1); places are "spaces which people have made meaningful" and therefore "meaningful location[s]" (7). Writing centers are complex places in terms of meaning and representation, but despite of their complexities, they are meaningful locations within the institutions to which they belong.

Beginning with Stephen North's famous "The Idea of a Writing Center" helps to

shed light on writing centers as locations of multiple, subjective, and contested meaning. North's "Idea" also aids in establishing a timeline of writing center scholarship, theory, and pedagogy from 1984 forward, as well as to articulate various topics taken up by various respected writing center scholars. In this chapter, I attempt to show that any writing center's function and identity are not easily definable; the two terms are so enmeshed with one another that they are not separable, and metaphors and similes have been used to figuratively conceive of writing centers' function and identity. I also set out to show that critical pedagogy has found its way into writing center scholarship and theory. Critical pedagogy has no single definition; it acts as an umbrella term for multiple pedagogies, and one of its main elements is self-critical awareness. Critical self-awareness is advantageous for professors and students alike while performing critiques in areas such as classism, feminism, gender/sexism, postcolonialism, postmodernism, and racism. Although critical pedagogy is multifaceted, it does possess a core essence. For example, Henry Giroux, a prominent name in critical pedagogy continues to theorize in the spirit of Paulo Freire, whose name is virtually synonymous with critical pedagogy. In *On Critical Pedagogy*, Giroux proclaims:

Critical pedagogy is not about an a priori method that simply can be applied regardless of context. It is the outcome of particular struggles and is always related to the specificity of particular contexts, students, communities, and available resources. It draws attention to the ways in which knowledge, power, desire, and experience are produced under specific basic conditions of learning and illuminates the role that pedagogy

plays as part of a struggle over assigned meanings, modes of expression, and directions of desire, particularly as these bear on the formation of the multiple and ever-contradictory versions of the 'self' and its relationship to the larger society. (4)

The crux of Giroux's critical pedagogy deals with critical consciousness, self-identity, and self-agency in relation to the hegemonies of power in specific, historically-situated contexts. Another reason critical pedagogy cannot have just one definition is because its application varies, depending on the person engaging in it. Academic scholar and experienced teacher bell hooks has also been influenced by Freire, but in contrast to Giroux, her focus is on the pedagogical facility of community-building. In her often-cited and celebrated book *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*, she asserts, "Working with a critical pedagogy based on my understanding of Freire's teaching, I enter the classroom with the assumption that we must build 'community' in order to create a climate of openness and intellectual rigor" (40). Finally, in *Connecting Writing Centers Across Borders*, a blog sponsored *WLN: A Journal of Writing Center Scholarship*, Laura Greenfield, coeditor of and contributor to *Writing Centers and the New Racism: A Call for Sustainable Dialogue and Change*, provides a quick, working definition of critical pedagogy. While speaking about founding the Transformative Speaking Program, she states that "the transformative aim of our speaking program is enacted through a commitment to 'critical pedagogy,' which is a philosophy and practice of teaching that works from the premise that education is never 'neutral,' that injustice is never 'natural,' that oppressive systems can be changed, and that students (and faculty

and staff) can be change agents” (“Transforming”). The gist of critical pedagogy is discernable in what Giroux, hooks, and Greenfield say about it: critical pedagogy is dialogic, community oriented, historically situated, never neutral, and liberation motivated—all with a critically-developed (or burgeoning) consciousness. Because writing center pedagogy and critical pedagogy have begun to entangle, returning to a foundational text on writing center theory is necessary.

Stephen North’s article, written in 1984, “The Idea of a Writing Center” is cited regularly across writing center scholarship. One reason for its significance is that North provides both a reason and defense for the existence of writing centers due to confusion associated with writing center function within the institutions in which they exist. In his opening sentence to the introductory paragraph, he states, “This is an essay that began out of frustration” (433). His frustration stems from this question: What is a writing center’s purpose or identity? North defines his frustration: “Ignorance: the members of my profession, my colleagues. . . do not understand what I do. They do not understand what does happen, what can happen, in a writing center.” So, two questions arise from North’s statement: 1) What does happen in a writing center? and 2) What can happen in a writing center? Depending on whom one asks, answers to those questions will vary—and potentially significantly so.

To address the first question of what *does* happen in a writing center, North claims that some faculty members and administrators believe that the function of a writing center is correcting sentence-level errors on students’ papers, which puts emphasis specifically on the product itself. He lists “skills,” “fundamentals,” and rather

bluntly, “**GRAMMAR**” [emphasis North’s] as issues that are presumed the writing center’s responsibility to address (433). North gives as an example of when a “new faculty member in [a] writing-across-the-curriculum program, who sends his students to get their papers ‘cleaned up’ in the Writing Center before they hand them in.” Writing center tutors do, in fact, provide help with those things. When a student comes in for a consultation and tells the tutor that they are there because their professor told them to get help with grammar, then to satisfy the request, the tutor will help them with their grammar; however, writing center pedagogy seeks to address much more than grammar.

To address the second question of what *can* happen in a writing center, North believes that emphasis placed solely on the finished product is not ideal writing center pedagogy. North insists that “writing is most usefully viewed as a process” (438). Emphasis on process does not ignore the importance of the finished product, but instead values more “the process by which [the product] is produced.” Through the process of a paper’s beginning to its submission, the writer learns whatever things along the way, and “in a writing center the object is to make sure that writers, and not necessarily their texts, are what get changed.” Further, North asserts that the writing center’s “job is to produce better writers, not better writing.” North acknowledges the vagueness of the term “process,” electing to define it simply as “a” process (439). As long as the writer is actively working towards the final draft, then that is what counts.

Although not explicitly mentioning Stephen North, Andrea Lunsford (1991) has a different idea of a writing center in article “Collaboration, Control, and the Idea of a

Writing Center.” In her article, she problematizes the idea of *collaboration*. When elaborating on the article’s title, she states that control is part of the title “[b]ecause as the latest pedagogical bandwagon, collaboration often masquerades as democracy when it in fact practices the same old authoritarian control” (3, 4). Lunsford believes the reason collaboration, implemented as pedagogical method, came about due to the way meaning-making is conceptualized. She calls the popularization of collaboration a “shift” (4), further insisting that “[t]he shift involves a move from viewing knowledge and reality as things exterior to or outside of us, as immediately accessible . . . to viewing knowledge and reality as mediated by or constructed through language . . . as socially constructed, contextualized . . . in short, the product of *collaboration* [emphasis Lunsford’s].”

Lunsford uses two similes, “The Center as Storehouse” of knowledge and “The Center as Garret” to describe how notions of collaboration are problematic—even a “threat”—when collaboration is conceived of as an element “to one particular idea of a writing center” and by extension writing center pedagogy.

The first simile, the storehouse suggests, the writing center is viewed as place where information (exterior to the student writer) is accessed by the writer by going there: the “information station” (4). What this strongly suggests is that if collaboration is valued in writing center pedagogy, then there is a problem. If the writing center is the place where student writers go to find exterior intellectual capital—tools to help them in their writing—the metaphorical tools that are handed out by the tutor, collaboration is not likely to occur.

The second simile, the writing center as garret space (such as an attic), Lunsford claims could easily evoke images of the “individual ‘genius’” (4); if/when that is the case, then collaboration is not likely to occur in this scenario as well. If the writer thinks of her or himself as a genius needing help, then visiting the writing center could be regarded as a waste of time. Moreover, she claims, “Unlike Storehouse Centers, Garret Centers don’t view knowledge as exterior. . . . Rather they see knowledge as interior, as inside the student, and the writing center’s job as helping students get in touch with this knowledge, as a way to find their unique voices, their individual and unique powers” (5)—all of which bear the earmarks of expressivism.

While collaboration in these two types of writing centers *might* occur, Lunsford warns that control/power dynamics should be noted. For the Storehouse, perpetuating the status quo through the power dynamic of the top-down nature of tutor (the one with the knowledge) in relation to the student writer (the one needing the knowledge), a scenario, in which whatever degree of collaboration occurs, could more closely be defined as a one-to-one dialogic lecture than true collaboration (7). Lunsford goes on to assert that the Garret could lose its collaborative power, which is student-centered, to that of the student’s professor later in the assignment.

Finally, Lunsford illustrates her idea of ideal writing centers by using a metaphor: “Burkean Parlor Centers” (7). She believes that real, effectual collaboration can happen in a Burkean Parlor Center more so than in Storehouses and Garrets: “I am advocating a third alternative idea of a writing center In spite of the very real risks involved, we need to embrace the idea of writing centers as Burkean Parlors, as centers for

collaboration” (8). This is the scenario that she links back to the second half of the quote on page four of the article: “knowledge and reality as mediated by or constructed through language . . . as socially constructed, contextualized.” She insists that this idea of a writing center “is informed by a theory of knowledge as socially constructed, of power and control as constantly negotiated and shared” and “poses a threat as well as a challenge to the status quo in higher education” (9). A Burkean Parlor writing center would both acknowledge real collaboration and function in the spirit of collaboration regardless of the many ideological, pedagogical, and political forces that seek to influence it, either covertly or overtly.

The ideological, pedagogical, and political forces that can constrain writing center work take the forefront for Nancy Grimm (1992) as she furthers North’s “Idea” in her article in the *Writing Lab Newsletter* titled “Contesting ‘The Idea of a Writing Center’: The Politics of Writing Center Research.” Her opening line credits North’s 1984 article, calling it “[o]ne of the most positive influences on the professional lives of writing center workers in the last decade” and that she “still find[s] inspiration” by reading it again and again (5). She recognizes the importance of North’s “Idea” by acknowledging it was a “much needed [source of] self-validation” for those involved in writing center work (6). Grimm, however, takes issue with two elements of the “Idea.” Of the first point of contention, she claims that “Writing Center work is much more politically and ideologically charged than [his] essay indicates” (5). Where North insists that one of the most important functions of a writing center is to be a space in which writers talk about writing, Grimm problematizes what *talk* means in relation to the relationship of students

to the institution and the institution's relationship to the conventions of academic discourse. In other words, what happens in a writing center is not merely a tutor and tutee sitting down and discussing the tutee's prose. She emphasizes "that writing centers are institutional mechanisms, or what Foucault would call disciplinary mechanisms for helping students write and speak correctly, effectively, and according to discourse conventions"; this is, of course, bears witness to writing centers' role of acculturation into the realms of academia. The second point of contention that Grimm disagrees with North on deals with curricula: "one of North's key arguments is that writing centers do not exist 'to serve, supplement, back up, reinforce, or otherwise be defined by any curriculum'"; however, writing centers already have an unescapable relationship with curricula because students regularly come to writing centers wanting "help interpreting the curriculum" and writing assignments of which they are expected to successfully negotiate—and most certainly *how* they are expected to discursively negotiate them.

More than two decades after North wrote "The Idea of a Writing Center" Elizabeth Boquet and Neal Lerner (2008) revisit it with a close reading in "After 'The Idea of a Writing Center'." They acknowledge North's contribution: "In our estimation as the 2002-2008 editors of *The Writing Center Journal*, no article about writing centers has been invoked more frequently to identify, justify, and legitimize the work that writing centers do (or hope to do) in their institutions" (171). Boquet and Lerner, however, are concerned that, since North's article has been so influential, it "has become an intellectual position that often substitutes for . . . rigorous scholarship." Additionally, they assert that the intellectual position invokes a sense of "power" and "identity" for writing

center workers, which is beneficial, but feeling empowered along with a sense of identity by themselves do not extend writing center research. Boquet and Lerner extend ideas of a writing center, pairing lack of serious writing center research with the lack of composition studies research as well as its outcomes and assessments. They further claim that North's assertion, which in their view has become writing center "lore," that a writing center is supposed help the writer be a better writer not necessarily producing better writing is "prescient, if not a bit oversimplified" (184). Additionally, the convenience of the lore as a use for what could be considered as a defense for writing center workers neither promotes tutoring "critical reflection" nor sufficiently provides an articulation for tutoring theory.

When North's "Idea" was published, it can be thought of the watershed event, causing more scholars to get involved with writing center identity and scholarship in both coming to terms with and moving beyond the remedial and student-marking history of writing center function. Anis Bawarshi and Stephanie Pelkowski (1999) coauthored "Postcolonialism and the Idea of a Writing Center." They provide a rather pointed statement about writing center history:

Beginning in the 1920s and 1970s respectively, remediation and Basic Writing emerges as preemptive strikes . . . to initiate under-prepared students into the ways of the university and to protect the university from the threat posed by the racial, rural, immigrant, underprivileged, under-prepared Other. Their purpose: to acculturate students who speak, read, and write Other dialects, Other languages, Other discourses, and initiate

them into academic discourses. (42)

This is directly linked to writing center identity as an instrument of the university's regulatory power over the type of writing valued in Western academia. In other words, the writing center functions as a space of instruction as well as a space where Other students learn to *put on* linguistic academic culture. In order to further examine the hegemonic nature of academic discourse, I will visit this article again later in this literature review.

Boquet (1999) also links writing center identity with its history—as well as to composition: “‘Our little Secret’: A History of Writing Centers, Pre- to Post-Open Admissions.” She also states that in the 1920s, “the writing lab was most recognizably a method of instruction” (467). She also hints at questionable writing center identity arising before 1940: a “tension” between its regulatory function and “individual pedagogies enacted” there. Nevertheless, the writing lab remained one way that the institution could “track students according to ability.”

Boquet claims that writing center identity changed again shortly into the 1940s. Writing labs began to implement a psychotherapeutic technique, borrowed from psychology, which mimicked the psychologist-patient model (469, 470). The tutor assumed the role of the doctor while the student assumed the role of the patient. During a metaphorical psychotherapeutic appointment, the tutor would ask heuristic, nondirective questions to the student about whatever the assignment, and the student could feel more at ease at expressing their “thoughts and ideas, as they would in a therapist’s office.” Hence, the writing lab began to be called the writing clinic. Boquet goes on to state that

this was a point when writing centers began “to engage in some version of counter-hegemonic work,” but the institution’s “goals [for writing clinics were] clearly linked to [address] remediation.” Hence, even though the friendly-sounding writing *clinic* might have possessed a more comfortable ambiance where tutor and tutee talk freely about writing, its essence—as far as identity is concerned—remained a space for the other-ized student, and other metaphors, in addition to *clinic*, began to manifest, all of which foisted varying identities onto writing centers and by extension to student writing and students themselves. A critical pedagogical approach to tutoring in the *clinic* would have—through tutor and tutee dialogue—called attention to the hegemony of academic discourse, placing the problem there instead of in the student writer. The writing center as clinic metaphor is but one of several condescending metaphors used to label writing centers.

Simpson (2010) explores some of these writing center metaphors in “Whose Idea of a Writing Center is This Anyway?.” Her opening paragraph speaks of what the writing center *might* represent according to varying positions within its institution: for professors, an “editing service”; for students, a “sanctuary” or “fix-it shop”; for administrators, “as part of retention programs or as an element of their CYA [Cover Your Ass] strategies” (1). She also offers a simile that is akin to other metaphors for writing centers: “the writing center is like a carwash with a detailing service.” Simpson insists that exploring how various entities view the writing center is worthwhile because its identity is in constant flux. As for promoting the writing center, Simpson agrees that when a writing center staff member does a class visit, it can yield positive results, but she prefers when

students who have had good experiences in the writing center are the ones doing the promoting: “When it’s good, we let the student sell the center as much as we can” (2). Such a strategy puts a positive light on writing center identity from student perspective, which can also influence professor perspective. Simpson concludes with a remainder that “[c]linging to a fixed idea of a writing center . . . shuts off opportunities,” and that writing center workers “need to understand that we can only influence, not control, the way others see our missions, goals, and methods” (4). In the same way that a tutor needs to be flexible during a session, so the writing center should be in its daily functioning.

Michael Pimberton (1992) also incorporates figurative language to illustrate how writing center work sometimes appears in the provocatively titled article “The Prison, the Hospital, and the Madhouse: Redefining Metaphors for the Writing Center.” He uses three metaphors to describe how his writing center sometimes feels *like* it functions. He begins with three scenarios that occurred in a University of Illinois Writer’s Workshop, which is their title for their Writing Center. The first scenario is about a student in a first-year composition (FYC) course, told by her instructor to go to the Workshop: “Take this paper to the writing lab and get the tutor to help you rewrite it” (11). Pimberton says that the student’s paper was “literally dripping with red lines, red circles, and red marginalia” by the professor. The second scenario is about a disgruntled student also told by his professor to go to the “writing clinic” because his “writing was ‘pretty bad’—focusing particularly on the writer’s ‘wordiness’.” The third scenario is about an angry and frustrated professor, “storm[ing] into the Workshop with student in tow,” saying that he was “beginning to think that she’s [the student] hopeless.” Pimberton then writes that he

“think[s] these incidents are illustrative of three particular points of view that students and instructors often share about the purpose or place or mission which writing centers have in educational institutions.” He goes on to link the three above-mentioned scenarios to three metaphors used for writing centers by individuals who have unclear notions of writing center functions. As the title of the essay suggests, those metaphors are “the Writing Center as Prison, the Writing Center as Hospital, and the Writing Center as Madhouse,” further insisting that such metaphors denigrate writing center pedagogy as well as misrepresent writing centers workers (12).

In scenario one, a student in her FYC course, Pemberton’s assigned metaphor is the writing center is a prison because the writing center is viewed or treated “as a place of punishment” where students must go because they have been “caught by their instructors . . . committing linguistic crimes, and are sentenced to the [writing] center for correction.” The judges are instructors, and writing center workers, usually peer tutors, are the corrections officers. Pemberton adds that students can become embittered at both instructors and tutors—and sadly themselves for failing to live up to literacy standards. Scenario two is the writing center is a hospital (or a clinic). Pemberton asserts that the hospital metaphor works like this: Writing that is deemed *bad* by an instructor is “[p]ieces of written text reveal patterns of illness, the symptoms of linguistic disease, not unlike smallpox or measles with break out in visible marks on a patient’s skin” (13). Finally, scenario three is writing center is a madhouse. Pemberton claims that the madhouse metaphor “is representative of the view that the writing center is a kind of mental institution for the linguistically insane, a dumping ground for those who are truly

beyond help,” insisting the roles involved are both “depressing” and “harmful” (14).

Pemberton concludes his essay emphasizing the need to replace harmful metaphors with positive one like “a ‘workshop’ or a ‘studio’” (15). Lastly, he writes that if instructors were to become better acquainted with writing center pedagogy, then that would greatly improve writing center identity outside of writing center space within the institution as well as helping those who work in writing centers to not think of themselves as corrections officers, doctors and nurses, and/or mental institution staff.

Grimm (1996) agrees with Pemberton—that writing center pedagogy is oftentimes laden with confusion for those who do not work in one are familiar with the complexities of tutor-tutee session dynamics in relation to pedagogy. In “Rearticulating the Work of the Writing Center,” she even mentions “the laundry metaphor,” a label to which writing center workers are generally averse (523). However, earlier in the same paragraph, she also begins to pick up where she left off in “Contesting ‘The Idea of a Writing Center’: The Politics of Writing Center Research,” published four years prior, but she affirms the intimate relationship that writing centers share with college composition, which, by necessity fuses the hegemonic nature of academic discourse in that relationship: “A lack of dialogue between writing center workers and composition teachers maintains the *status quo*. Composition scholars theorize about difference, but the social differences that discursive practices create and maintain are contained and silenced in the writing center” (524). She goes on the offensive by stating “[f]or far too long, writing centers have worked to please other at the expense of defining a clear mission,” thus considering that “writing centers are in the subordinate position” before providing

“four self-help axioms to move writing centers into dialogue with composition”: “give up protection of old beliefs, understand history, focus change on the self, and share more” (527, 528). The obvious questions are: What do these axioms mean? And how would they work?

To “give up protection of old beliefs” means to critique traditional thinking because such thinking might be a hindrance, and how it might work could be developing new or improved networks. Grimm links the axiom to notions of community. She claims that the ideas and feelings that arise when one thinks about a community such as a sense of belonging and being treated with dignity, for example, do not necessarily transfer to the real, lived experience of being (or attempting to be) in the academic community. She states that “[a]s composition theorists have pointed out, the term community offers little acknowledgement or regard for communities other than the academic one” (529). Hence, while the community metaphor might work well theoretically, it falls short in practice in that the academic community offers little to no comfort for students trying to learn how to speak its language. Grimm believes that when writing centers rethink their position between the student, what the student is supposed to learn, and the student’s professor, then writing centers can be places where the tension between the student’s community and the academic community with its expectations can be explored.

The second axiom “understand history” means just that: be aware of writing center history. How it could work could be an ever-present flashing warning sign to not remake old mistakes. Grimm reminds the reader of some unsavory elements of writing center history. As previously cited, this is the same history that Bawarshi and Pelkowski

mention in “Postcolonialism and the Idea of a Writing Center” and Boquet in “After ‘The Idea of a Writing Center’.” Grimm claims that it is a “sticky history of remediation. . . . rooted in a time when ‘underprepared’ students began coming to college and writing centers were created to offer these unfamiliar students one last chance to remove traces of the educational and cultural backgrounds” (530). She highlights that one way writing centers attempted to save face was by adopting buzzwords that came with the process movement in composition, such as collaboration and student-centered; such were terms “suitably neutral vocabulary to describe their work” (532). She admonishes writing center workers to acknowledge writing center history—as unsavory as it might be—but come to terms with the reality of it in ways that inspire positive change both for being a site in which students and tutors alike to be critically reflective thinkers as well as for furthering writing center scholarship.

What “focus change on the self,” means is to stay focused on the tasks of writing center work, and how could work would be honing writing center pedagogy. Grimm acknowledges writing centers have been in precarious positions in the past, but she warns against altering writing center practices because of internal institution pressures. She claims that writing centers “are accustomed to frequently checking to see how they are regarded by others and adjusting their behavior and adapting their services to improve this regard” (534). She reminds the reader of Vygotskian pedagogy and writing center pedagogy are in agreement in that “intellect develops as a result of interaction with others, [and that] justifies writing center practice more powerfully than a list of multiple services provided” (535); context for those serviced provided are understood to be the

services changed in order to pacify powers that be involved in institutional changes.

While what she has articulated up to this point positions in which the writing center self are more geared toward *not* changing, she provides an example of when change is in order, emphatically asserting:

Writing centers are not immune from the distortions in communication that occur because of social conditions, but because of the more intimate relational nature of their work, they are better positioned to understand the ways that cultural assumptions embedded in educational discursive practices affect performance by positioning some students more favorably than others. (537)

Grimm is alluding to the tarnished history of higher education: open admissions and students whose cultural, ethnic, and linguistic history did not fall in line with institutional expectations and values—the students whom writing centers were borne to help inculturate into the academic world.

Finally, Grimm’s axiom of “share more” means not keeping new knowledge sequestered to within writing center space, and how it could work would a practice in democracy. Grimm stresses that writing centers are in a prime position to meet students where they are culturally, ethnically, and linguistically, and writing centers can learn from such students as well. She claims that “writing centers need to ‘share more’ of what they learn from the students who reveal the invisible borders to discourse communities, students whose lived experience reveals the contradictions in our democratic discourse about literacy” (539). She later adds, “[t]he ability of writing centers to explain [and

share] their understandings is limited by the language of power, the discursive hegemony” (541), “[a] writing center that emphasizes articulatory practice seeks to maintain openness” (545). In other words, in spite of obvious limitations, writing centers should, nevertheless, explore ways to share more, which could include furthering scholarship, networking within and from individual institutions with faculty, administration, students whenever the occasion presents itself, making the writing center a more democratic space, where voices that were once disregarded—or even worse, silenced—are now heard in the process.

Ellen Mohr (1999) published "The Writing Center: An Opportunity in Democracy" in *Teaching English in the Two-Year College* (TETYC). In the article, she asserts that when a writing center is “functionally healthy, [it] provides a dynamic setting where diverse voices can be heard, various perspectives explored, and myths about discourse and writing dispelled” (419). Two themes, which she links to notions of democracy in writing center context, recur throughout her article: Paulo Freire’s approach to pedagogy to which she applies to peer tutoring. Rather quickly (in the third paragraph), she introduces Freire, his view of education, and the banking model of education metaphor, applying it to the college and/or university institutional setting: professor as the one with the knowledge (intellectual capital), depositing into the student to eventually figuratively withdraw it by way of quizzes and/or exams. She states, “In this metaphor, the writing center might be the receptacle through which the treasure is poured of considered just another depositor.” An important distinction is *through which* is not

necessarily the same as *into which*; *through* indicates an in-out flow while *into* implies a true container with a bottom. Mohr, though, states that the writing center could be both.

She goes on to mention that Freire “would love the ideal of a writing center” (419), highlighting a key component of Freire’s critical pedagogy as well as echoing North’s “Idea” by claiming “the primary service of the writing center [is]—dialoguing with students about assignments” (420). Through dialogue, a tutor helps tutees find and assert their voices in addition to helping them make connections, and the result is “writing becomes the vehicle to self-awareness” (421). Where Grimm is skeptical of notions of community in “Rearticulating the Work of the Writing Center,” ultimately finding the term problematic with what can be misleading connotations, Mohr embraces ideas of community. She recognizes the writing center as possessing specific jargon and therefore claims that a writing center represents a discourse community, insisting “[a]s a discourse community—one where language is at the root of what occurs—tutors seek a common or universal language which will set their students at ease rather than marginalize them.” Apparently, this universal language—whatever that is—provides a pleasant deviation from communicating within the constraints of academic discourse. Here, she invokes Freire’s critical pedagogy again: “Freire says that some students (the oppressed) are marginalized by their inability to connect to the academic world, to fit-in, to ‘talk the talk’ of academia” (424). Marginalized and/or pejoratively labeled students should be able to identify the writing center as a safe haven in which they can talk to tutors about their writing. With democratic notions of a writing center, Mohr claims, “Nowhere in academia is a setting more open for honest discourse than in a writing

center” (422). Ultimately, Mohr positions the writing center, along with its democratic-ness and adherence to protocol hierarchy process—“purpose of assignment,” “focus,” “organization and development,” “paragraphing, sentence construction, word choice, and style” (423)—as a space for student acculturation for the benefit of its institution. She maintains that the above-mentioned process “makes the writing center successful and unifies the institution’s attitude toward the need for writing practice in all classes.” She further contends that “writing center tutors attempt to socialize the language misfits—the ones whose writing has made them feel less than adequate in the classroom or in the community.” According to Mohr, this type of writing center is a writing center practicing democracy. Not all writing center scholars would agree with Mohr’s idea of democracy in writing center context, however.

Shannon Carter (2009) problematizes the notion of democracy as it pertains to writing centers in “The Writing Center Paradox: Talk about Legitimacy and the Problem of Institutional Change.” She draws from the scholarship of “feminist political theorist, Chantal Mouffe, [that] neither absolute equality nor plurality are possible in any democratic system” (133). In light of this, Mouffe coins the phrase “‘the democratic paradox’ and insists [it] is the essence of a ‘well-functioning democracy’ that supports pluralistic goals’.” Carter applies Mouffe’s democratic paradox to writing center work, relabeling as “the writing center paradox.” Because a democracy involves people, a majority and at least one minority, it involves varying opinions, tensions and therefore issues of power—to which Carter superimposes into academic settings with the function(s) of the writing center. She affirms that “all pedagogical issues are

simultaneously political ones . . . [and that] social, ethical, and political issues are at stake” (135). A writing center is a rhetorical space, and part of what goes on in a writing center is conversation; some, at the *very* least, deal with the hegemonic nature of academic discourse in their various assignments from various professors who varying discipline-specific ideas of how they want their students to conform to the various hegemonic constraints. In the reality of this scenario, Carter concisely articulates the complexity of writing center work: “We represent the student, not the teacher. We represent the system, not the student. We represent neither, and we represent both” (136). Also, this scenario serves as the springboard into Carter’s critique of the writing center paradox.

Due to the dialogic nature of writing center work, it is no surprise that Carter references Stephen North’s “Idea” and his emphasis on tutors talking to student writers. North states, “The essence of the Writing center method . . . is talking” (443), further adding in the same paragraph that the effectiveness of writing center tutorials “is our style of live intervention, our talk in all its forms.” Carter, agree with North regarding the importance of dialogue, but she also makes a departure:

[U]nlike North, I argue that embedded in that “talk” is the democratic paradox inasmuch as the writing center functions as a democratic institution representing both our students and the literacy demands of the academy, especially as we resist the autonomous model of literacy dominating most rhetorical spaces over which we are not in control. I call this the “writing center paradox” and contend that the problem with

articulations of value is that most attempt to reconcile this paradox by either offering equity as the most valuable identification for writing center work or plurality as the primary goal. (138)

Carter does not attempt to solve this paradox, nor does she “defend writing centers” (139) although she does speculate that “[w]riting center legitimacy may well rest in this paradox—of literacy, of democracy, or writing center identity”; instead, she “investigate[s] the rhetorical construction of writing centers as ‘valuable’ and the consequences—and possibilities—in that construction.” She explores how the paradox can be rhetorically beneficial in five concentrations.

The first concentration is “Talk about Equity (and Assimilation)” (139) in which she invokes, among others, Nancy Grimm’s scholarship, namely from *Good Intentions: Writing Center Work for Postmodern Times* (which is included next in this literature review) that both equity and assimilation are terms drenched in ideology—both in and out of academia (140), but Carter finds herself “at odds with” (146) Grimm’s pluralistic theory, finding it too structurally difficult to implement. Second is “Talk about Diversity” (142) in which she writes of her aspirations as the director a writing center from a *tenure-track* (emphasis mine) position point of view: “I began the process of shifting the Center from what I perceived to be a program that emphasized the way a writer approached his or her individual writing process to one more invested in the way the writer approaches academic literacy as a cultural construct” (143). Third is “Talk about Choice,” and here, she revisits the writing center paradox, meshing it in with notions of democracy—that due to the nature of how a democracy functions, “a collective identity” (146) manifests

by necessity. She insists that “if difference is not an a priori condition but a politicized one, ‘everyone’ simply *can’t* [emphasis hers] be afforded equal representation . . . at the same time and all the time.” Fourth is “Talk about Compromise” (149) in which she reminds the reader of Mouffe’s scholarship. Carter agrees that compromise is a necessary element of a functional democracy—but also warns against creating an us-versus-them mentality; in taking up such a construction, the likelihood is high that meaningful dialogue will wane. Finally, the fifth concentration is “Keep Talking” (149) in which she claims, “The validation systems we’ve used to legitimize writing center ‘talk’—at least since North’s ‘Idea’—may be understood as either ‘moral-universalistic’ or ‘ethical-particularistic’. (149, 150). The moral-universalistic system is the approach to viewing democracy in the us-versus-them mindset; in this binary, the collective majority regards itself as the morally *right* group while the collective minority is regarded by the collective majority as the morally *wrong* group. However, “the ethical-particularistic validation system looks to the ways in which the current hegemonic order may be unethical in that it endorses a particular worldview and a particular literacy and excludes all others” (150). Carter holds that writing center should uphold both systems because doing so perpetuates the writing center health value. To clarify, in the next paragraph, Carter states that “we may allow ourselves to articulate in moral-universalistic terms when (as we must attempt to validate the writing center in terms the current system may value), while at the same time adhering to ethical-particularistic principles in those spaces where doing so is possible (and profitable),” which would then mean that close attention must be paid to ever-shifting rhetorical circumstances.

For Grimm (1999), in *Good Intentions: Writing Center Work for Postmodern Times*, the writing center has a moral obligation to recognize the deception of the literacy myth and the harm that this myth can inflict on students. She quickly stresses her stance on the complicated relationship that a writing center has between literacy learning and the institution in which it is learned. She insists that “[L]iteracy is supposed to guarantee access to education and jobs, [but] at the same time it works as a gatekeeper, preventing access and demanding submission to a standard in exchange for a passage” (xii). She is speaking of the hegemonic nature of academic discourse as well as the merit fallacy which, as it applies to students, purports that if the student studies hard enough, gains access through the academic gate thereby succeeding, then that student’s future is favorable.

Grimm expounds on the merit-based notion of guaranteed success in the second chapter: “Literacy Learning in Postmodern Times: Coming to Terms with a loss of Innocence” (27). She states, “The common assumption is that the more a student thinks, talks, writes, reads, and values like the dominant culture, the more rewards he or she will reap” (29), and she goes on rather quickly to link that ideology with the deficit model pedagogy.

I believe writing centers can do a better job of supporting students if we stop locating literacy problems in individuals and instead locate them in cultural constructions. But the dimensions of this argument are complex. To locate literacy problems in cultural constructions, we must abandon positions of innocence guaranteed by the literacy myth and come to terms

with the political implications of writing center work. (29)

Furthermore, because literacy education is not politically neutral, she insists that literacy be approached ideologically.

She crafts this argument by drawing from scholarship of Brian Street, a literacy researcher, who claims there are two models of literacy learning: “autonomous and ideological” (30). The autonomous model teaches literacy as, “culturally neutral, individually acquired and context-free.” The ideological model, however, “recognizes that literacy has political significance, that the teaching of literacy is caught up in stratified social structures, and that forms of literacy . . . cannot be isolated and taught as neutral and separate skills” (31). Grimm does not subscribe to the autonomous model, linking it to current, mainstream literacy education in the U.S., preferring the ideological model because, at least in part, it educates the learner beyond mere literacy skills and into educating them why *things* are the way that they are—and the powers involved into keep *things* the way they are. Fortunately, writing center workers are in a favorable position to practice the ideological model—and tutors can be “more *direct* about academic expectations [with their tutees] without being *directive* [emphases Grimm’s]” (34). In other words, there is no wrongdoing when a tutor directly sheds light on why academic discourse is hegemonic, and the tutor can do so without usurping the writer’s assignment.

To revisit "Postcolonialism And the Idea of a Writing Center," Bawarshi and Pelkowski also take up academic literacy and its association with ideology, echoing both Grimm’s stance in “Contesting ‘The Idea of a Writing Center’: The Politics of Writing Center Research,” (1992) and *Good Intentions* (1999). They draw from Edward Said’s

postcolonial scholarship asserting (in the academic sense), “that hegemony succeeds when it convinces members of a culture that its affiliative structures—for example, the Eurocentric literary canon it privileges and teaches in the university at the expense of other, non-Eurocentric texts—are legitimate representations of natural, filial systems,” and (in the cultural sense) is seemingly inseparable from its educational practices so that “dominate culture becomes legitimized when it is made to appear as if it were based on certain, natural, commonsensical principles” (43). To obtain a clearer picture of what these mean, three terms that Said uses need qualified: filial and affiliative structures, and acculturation. Filial structures deal with how people interact and “construct personal relationships” with each other. Affiliative structures deal with “the means by which knowledge, power, consciousness and ideology are reproduced and maintained within a culture.” Acculturation is a means “of validating the academic culture to itself” by and through its “rhetoric of belonging.” Hence, it should be no surprise when students, who are marked as Other, have problems acculturating into academic discourse. A critical consciousness is needed but developing one does not merely manifest; it needs taught, built upon, and nurtured.

Bawarshi and Pelkowski argue for a writing center critical pedagogy that takes into account the importance of tutors developing a critical consciousness to better serve their tutees. They “propose a writing center strategy in which under-represented students, especially those marginalized by race, class, and ethnicity, are encouraged to adopt critical consciousness as a means of functioning within the university and its discourses” (43). From this point onward, the authors critique North’s “Idea” in the postcolonial vein.

For example, they claim that the means by which North describes the role of the tutor to help produce a change in the writer without critical awareness of *what* the change means is colonialist rhetoric (45), especially in terms of conforming to academic discourse in general (46). Furthermore, they contend that “the ‘old’ current-traditional and ‘new’ process-oriented versions of the writing center as described by North are ultimately in the business of acculturation,” that “the idea is the same: the change is meant to transform the student and his or her text into the acceptable standard of the university.” While helping the writer negotiate the demands of academic discourse—with the goal that the writer become self-efficacious—in her or his academic endeavors is a worthwhile thing to do, doing so without a critical consciousness merely keeps the status quo. Bawarshi and Pelkowski insist, “A primary goal of the postcolonial writing center . . . is to teach students how to retrace the formal and textual effects of academic discourses to their rhetorical and social sources. . . . Marginalized students—actually, students in general—are rarely if ever exposed to this kind of explicit instruction” (54), and when this type of critical literacy is practiced, students who visit the writing center are at least introduced to how writing works in different academic conventions (55). The authors believe that this aspect of critical pedagogy should occur in writing center pedagogy, which promotes critical consciousness in the writer as well.

Laura Greenfield (2011) takes a critical look at racism reified linguistically in *Writing Centers and The New Racism* in the chapter titled “The ‘Standard English’ Fairy Tale: A Rhetorical Analysis of Racist Pedagogies and Commonplace Assumptions about Language Diversity.” She insists that “teachers and tutors should ultimately be concerned

with helping [students] develop a critical consciousness . . . cultivating in them a sense of agency in combating, linguistically and otherwise, the injustices they encounter,” and that “until our institutionalized racism is eradicated, practices that advocate the reaching of any privileged language will be—by definition—contributing to a system of inequity” (58). Greenfield attacks the notion of Standard English, pointing out that languages change over time, and “linguists reject the idea that languages can be arranged in any sort of hierarchy of intelligence,” (35) even though people tend to maintain that “correctness” (in this case Standard English) resides in one language but not the others. Her stance is that, since this flawed idea of properness in one language versus improperness of others exists in White, social class structures and therefore institutionally-preferred academic language, racism exists alive and well linguistically. She claims, “It is no coincidence that the languages spoken by racially oppressed people are considered to be inferior in every respect to the languages spoken predominantly by those who wield systemic power: namely, middle- and upper-class white people” (36). She also supports that claim using as an example “Hawaiian Creole English (also known as Pidgin English)” (37) is a language whose origins come from American colonialism, and despite being labeled as “broken English,” it “is in fact highly governed by logical rules.” Hence, some languages die, but a language that is alive is a language that changes over time. Because languages evolve, Greenfield proclaims, “Living languages cannot be standardized,” (39) and therefore Standard English cannot exist; however, that does not register with most people, and even if it does, they tend to disregard such reasoning in order to cling to their belief that both Standard English actually exists and is superior.

The Standard English fallacy is fused to a belief in merit-based success. Recall that Grimm (1999) in *Good Intentions* as well as Barwrshi, and Pelkowski (1999) in "Postcolonialism And the Idea of a Writing Center" also call attention to the literacy myth. According to Greenfield:

[T]he idea of a standard language as an equal-opportunity tool for advancement works as a perfect foil for the institutionalized racism actually to blame for contemporary racial inequalities. As a rhetorical tool, the evocation of a "Standard English" and all of its corollary linguistic impossibilities gives the false impression that the language practices of individual people of color, rather than the racist practices of American institutions, are responsible for these inequalities. (39)

To restate, for the institution to pontificate that there is Standard English and demand its usage, when in reality there is not, is both a lie and hegemonic, is racist, and places the problem in its students.

One way that the Standard English myth, along with the racism that is linked to it, is perpetuated through language is by constructing a fear of miscommunication. Speaking about the use of Ebonics, Greenfield holds, "When the threat of 'miscommunication' is used as a scapegoat for enforcing racist attitudes about a speaker and her [or his] perfectly comprehensible differences in speech, racism is perpetuated" (48, 49). She goes on to say that she does not think the speaking of Ebonics, or any of its variants, that is the real issue; it is the fact that Ebonics is primarily spoken by African Americans—that the

language is associated with marked, stigmatized bodies whose histories have been de/undervalued (50).

Numerous problems exist by maintaining that there is such an English as Standard English. Racism is perpetuated; voices are dismissed and silenced; students are told that learning it will give them upward class mobility because it is a neutral tool, when it clearly is not neutral. However, “evidence continues to suggest that people’s prejudices towards certain speakers carry more weight than the speakers’ facility with language itself” (54). These are some of the reasons Greenfield urges for conversations centered around these points “become part of the curriculum, so that students’ choices about language are based on their own critical thinking, not on the instructors’ personal biases” (58), and because writing center work is a convergence point where multiple assignments originate from multiple instructors from multiple disciplines, writing tutors regularly encounter students’ language choices.

Harry Denny (2010), in *Facing the Center: Toward an Identity Politics of One-to-One Mentoring* is also concerned with elitist attitudes about supposed proper academic prose. Where Greenfield argues from a race standpoint, Denny argues from a class standpoint, which also includes race. He states, “a humanities crisis grew in the late 1960s as students came to see coursework increasingly irrelevant to their own experiences and needs, and professors came to view the humanities as intellectually dead” (66). Why? The reason, at least to some degree, is because more and more working-class students enrolled in universities. As of the time Denny’s book was published, 2010, he claims, “First-generation students, academics, and administrators

represent nearly three generations of formerly excluded people now gaining wide access to education,” and because of this, “[a]dvocates of ‘maintaining’ standards fear the prestige of college education will be soiled, its gatekeeping role to greater earning power and job security diminished and downgraded” (63). Some of that fear stems from numerous educators’ adherence to the belief that Standard English exists.

As Greenfield previously pointed out, Denny reiterates it in his own way. He states, “As any linguistic historian of English will confirm, the language is elastic and evolving, so for anyone to posit any common use of it as static is foolish; to teach any group of students . . . that in order to be successful they must surrender whatever Englishes they possess for some transitory ‘standard’ version is wrong and unethical” (73), yet that is what many students are continuously required to do, and many of those same students find themselves in the writing center trying to make their professors happy with their various discipline-specific assignments; each of which comes with its own discipline-specific expected writing conventions.

Denny supports the fact that there is “potential [both] for activism and transformation through pedagogy exists in helping students . . . become aware of both the practices of domination . . . and the possibilities for opposition and resistance” (72). Becoming aware of how domination manifests and perceiving ways in which to combat it requires developing critical consciousness. In addition to that he “is in favor of “advocating attention to the ‘reality’ that institutions that we participate in are committed to and structured for manufacturing difference and policing it, just as we who mentor must work to counter and mitigate it” (70). In other words, he supports weaving critical

pedagogy into writing center pedagogy.

Lori Salem (2016) conducted a critical analysis on why some students choose not to visit the writing center in “Decisions...Decisions: Who Chooses to Use the Writing Center?”; in it she affirms that “[w]riting centers are one of the few places where college students have the opportunity to choose the type and amount of writing instruction they will receive, [and] their choices can reveal how society shapes understandings of implicit ideas about writers, writing, and writing instruction in higher education” (150). Salem understands, that from a student’s point of view, their motivation for going to the writing center might be solely for the hope of getting a better grade on her or his paper, or that they might choose not to visit because due to the remedial stigma that continues to haunt writing centers. (151). However, from a director’s point of view, “[s]tudents’ choice to visit . . . is also understood as an endorsement of the writing center itself, [which] can be seen in the market-based logic of evaluating the writing center bases on usage.” She mentions North’s “Idea”—that some students are required to visit, which North argued against. Addressing instructors, he said, “You should not scrawl at the bottom of a failing paper, ‘Go to the Writing Center.’ [Y]ou are essentially out of line” (440) because, Salem interprets “they were trampling on the writing center director’s efforts to promote a more positive version of the writing center” (152). This type of situation, of course, sends the remedial message to the student and does not aid in distancing the writing center from a history that it had rather not continue to be associated with, so she asks a valid question, one that has been asked repeatedly by numerous writing center workers: “[W]hy do we still regularly encounter faculty, students, and administrators who have ‘incorrect’ views

about the writing center?" (153)—to which she states that articulating what a writing center *does* is easier than articulating “what visiting a writing center *means* [emphases Salem’s].” Recall Shannon Carter’s statement in "The Writing Center Paradox: Talk About Legitimacy and the Problem of Institutional Change": “We represent the student, not the teacher. We represent the system, not the student. We represent neither, and we represent both” (136). Salem’s claim is eerily similar to it in that multiple possibilities of identity are in view, and in this case, ideas of choice are involved.

Salem conducted research using data collected from 4,204 incoming, first-year students at Temple University in 2009. She states that the data “included information about students’ prior academic performance, financial status, beliefs and preferences, and demographics. The over the next four years, I noted which of these students came to the writing center and which did not. In the end, 22% . . . visited the writing enter at least once, while . . . 78% did not” (154). Her interpretation of the data suggests:

that students’ decisions about seeking tutoring were in place *before* [emphasis Salem’s] they come to the university. . . . All of those “correct” messages that we give, and all of the “incorrect” messages that worry about, do not determine students’ choices about the writing center. This is not to say that we have no influence at all on the decision, But the roots of this decision . . . were based on students’ lives and experiences before college. (155)

Salem does acknowledge that this research and her conclusions deal with only this

dataset and only at Temple, but they are provocative. She goes on to expound on students' experiences prior to enrolling in the university.

Students' choices to visit the writing center involve multiple factors. One factor is self-confidence. For example, generally, if students performed poorly on the SAT, then they are more likely to choose to go to the writing center—especially when the low score is “combined with less privileged identities” (158). She adds that, while choosing the visit the center is a personal choice, it is likely that the choice “is rooted in deeper social factors such that not everyone is equally likely to ‘want’ to visit. . . [and that] the choice to use the writing center is raced, classed, gendered, and shaped by linguistic hierarchies” (160, 161), and Grimm, Denny, and Greenfield would certainly agree.

The implications of such conclusions point to ongoing, systemic issues that in U.S. academia. As Bawarshi and Pelkowski (1999) pointed out, these issues have been present since at least the 1920s; as Grimm and Denny pointed out, socioeconomic class disparagements have not been resolved; and as Greenfield pointed out, biasness and racism march onward linguistically. Salem emphasizes that the data in her study “show us that the inequality that stubbornly pervades the rest of the American education system also shapes writing center work” (161). Writing center scholarship has come a long way since North's “Idea.” Scholars have problematized what *talk* means in one-to-one tutoring context. They have questioned what a change in the writer could/should mean. Writing center identity has gone from a gatekeeping, marginal-student tracking and *fixing* entity toward a more critically conscious, counter hegemonic entity, whose praxis leans more toward critical pedagogy.

In “Chickens, Eggs, and the Composition Practicum,” Anne Trubek (2005) illuminates the tension between pedagogical theory and practice—as they pertain to composition practicum in relation to writing center tutor training. As an aide to help the reader understand this tension, she gives new life to a dead metaphor, which in this case functions rather well. She states, “The syllabus . . . lies between the abstraction of theory (and scholarly essays) and practice (teaching tutors, tutors tutoring. And that is the cause of my chicken/egg dilemma” (162). In this metaphor, chickens are theories, and eggs are practices. In other words, the question of *which came first, the chicken or the egg?* becomes *which comes first, theory or practice in writing center tutor training?* I am taking the position that prospective tutors should be introduced to theory first in order for them to begin to have an idea of how to practice tutoring. Additionally, whatever texts are used by tutors should be explicitly linked to the theories informing them.

Trubek presents an issue closely related my current research in writing center theory. My research question is this: “How much emphasis is placed on critical pedagogy in writing center tutor training handbooks?” From the outset, my current stance is that critical pedagogy is not adequately emphasized in them. I realize *adequately* in this context is nebulous. Nevertheless, therein lies my wiggle room for arguing that critical pedagogy must be implemented and explicitly emphasized in writing center tutor training.

In order to understand the extent to which critical pedagogy is stressed in texts that are meant to train writing center tutors, I now turn to an analysis of tutor training handbooks: one market-based and used in multiple countries and four institution-specific.

In the following chapter, I describe why I chose these five handbooks and not other ones. I also provide student demographics of the four, four-year institutions whose writing centers made their institution-specific writing center tutor handbooks available online to the public. Additionally, I provide material taken directly from each of the four writing center's mission statements.

METHODOLOGY

My research question for this project stems from my experiences and reflections as a writing center peer tutor: To what extent is critical pedagogy emphasized in writing center tutor training handbooks? My work as a peer tutor began at College of the Redwoods, a community college, in the spring of 2011. The tutor training course required successfully satisfying both lecture and lab elements. The lecture element included reading and in-class discussions of various scholarly articles in addition to *The Bedford Guide for Writing Tutors* (fifth edition), whereas the lab element was actual tutoring in the writing center. During the next six semesters, which includes summer terms, my affinity for writing center work turned into a passion. After graduating from College of the Redwoods in 2013, I transferred to Humboldt State University. In the fall of 2014, I was elated to be offered a peer tutor job in the University's Writing Center (although its official name now is the cozy-sounding Writing Studio). I successfully satisfied all academic requirements for earning a Bachelor of Arts degree in English with an emphasis in Writing Practices and a minor in English Literature at the end fall 2015. Envisioning life as being markedly dull separated from writing studio work, I began graduate school in the 2016 spring semester in the endeavor to earn a Master of Arts degree in English with an emphasis in Composition Studies and Pedagogy. As a graduate student, I continued to work in the HSU Writing Studio.

In the spring of 2017, I was assigned to read *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* by Paulo

Freire, which served as my initial introduction to critical pedagogy. I began to notice that there are similarities between critical pedagogy and my work in the Writing Studio. Shortly after we had finished reading *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, the professor instructed everyone to find a scholarly article, having to do with some kind of reading or writing education, and post it in the class' online forum so that everyone could read it and then discuss it in a future class meeting. I chose Shannon Carter's "The Writing Center Paradox: Talk About Legitimacy and the Problem of Institutional Change" article, which served as the exigence that caused me to re-conceptualize writing center work in general and my relationship to it in particular.

I say "in particular" because, while on the job, I was beginning to see students' writing assignments in various disciplines as genres in which students struggled to write in expected academic voices; some grappled with discipline-specific academic discourses more than other students. I also noticed that I could recall that none of my writing center training at College of the Redwoods of Humboldt State included an emphasis on critical pedagogy. This led me to investigate the extent to which critical pedagogy is infused in writing center tutor training, policy, and work. As I read more deeply in Carter's article, I began to understand that notions of identity were at the heart of Humboldt State's Writing Studio's position within the university, and the Studio's identity subjectively depends on who conceptualizes the Studio's function. Because I worked there, what was my own identity as a writing consultant? I experienced somewhat of a personal-fused-with-work identity crisis. This led me to consider whether writing center tutor training handbooks included critical pedagogical emphasis. From that point on, I decided to embark upon a

deep, serious, and deeply-serious study on writing center scholarship.

At the outset of all of the reading I knew I had to do in order to become current with writing center scholarship, I found Stephen North's "Idea of a Writing Center." I asked our Writing Studio director if she had heard of Stephen North, and her reaction to that question confirmed how little I knew about writing center scholarship. From North's "Idea," I found read closely every article that I could find about scholars' responses and to North's article. Eventually, I branched away from articles about the "Idea" and into books about writing center pedagogy written single and multiple authors. Because I had a lot of catching up to do on critical pedagogy scholarship, I began reading texts from scholars in that field as well. While I was sorting through all of this new (for me) information, I was agreeing with the writing center scholars whom I had after: critical pedagogy should most definitely enjoy a seat of honor in writing center theory. The question I needed to find the answer to is "Is critical pedagogy reflected in writing center tutor training?"

In order to answer my question, I turned to writing center tutor training handbooks. To understand the extent to which tutor training handbooks emphasized (or not) critical pedagogy, I examined five specific texts: *The Bedford Guide for Writing Tutors* (sixth edition), *The Tutoring Book* (Spring 2015 Edition) from California State University Sacramento, the *Writing Tutor Guide to Professionalism and Policies* (revised March 2013 edition) from Eastern Oregon University, *The QEP Writing Studio Tutor Handbook* (2012-2013 edition) from Elizabeth City State University, and the *Working with Writers: UIC Writing Center Handbook* (2107 edition) from University of Illinois,

Chicago. The *Bedford* is the newest edition on the market, and the institution-specific handbooks are texts the most recent ones posted on the web. The four institution-specific handbooks were downloaded as pdf documents.

I chose the *Bedford* as the more generally used tutor training textbook because it is not an institution-specific text but is broadly used across various institutions with writing centers, both nationally and internationally. As I mentioned previously, *Bedford's* fifth edition was the market-based handbook that my professor required for my tutor training course at College for the Redwoods. Additionally, in the "Preface for Writing Center Directors" of the sixth edition of the *Bedford*, Leigh Ryan confirms *Bedford's* common usage: "[T]his book is used widely in a range of schools and countries" (xi). However, because initial analysis of the *Bedford* provided limited information to aid me in answering my research question, I also turned to institution-specific handbooks to see how local contexts took up critical pedagogy in tutor training.

There were thousands of colleges and institutions that I could have looked at for handbooks for their writing centers, community colleges included. I narrowed my search to four-year public universities that have similar populations to Humboldt State University to see if they had a writing center, and then to see if they had a posted digital copy of a tutor training handbook. Because I have been a writing tutor in HSU's Writing Studio, I am invested in the student population and demographics of this type of institution. Additionally, HSU's Writing Studio does not have its own handbook, and it was useful for my writing center research, as well as my tutoring praxis, to look at handbooks at institutions with similar size and demographics. Most initial passes revealed

that institutions of similar size demographics had writing centers but no posted handbook. I then began to broaden my search to look at bigger institutions with larger student populations, doing the same search for writing centers that had their own posted handbook. As I began to find posted handbooks online at various institutions, I narrowed to choose institutions with posted handbooks that served students who are similar to HSU's student population: students who are categorized as underrepresented, minority, multilingual, and/or first-generation.

I organized my collection of handbooks in such a way that would, hopefully, allow me to obtain the clearest glimpse of critical pedagogy emphasis in writing center tutor training from coast to coast—while acknowledging the limitations of posted tutor training handbooks for four-year public universities. For example, one tutor training handbook in this analysis comes from Sacramento State University. SSU is quite a bit larger than Humboldt State University, but both institutions are linked together by being in the California State University system. The three remaining handbooks were chosen because they represent public four-year institutions in the West, Midwest, and East of the United States. Each of these schools have somewhat similar student demographic profiles to that of Humboldt State. For example, even though Elizabeth City State University's student population was markedly small to that of Humboldt State's student population, ECSU's African American population was 976 while Humboldt State's was 282. While these four institutions differ in size and total student population, there were enough similarities between them that they shaped a useful data set.

In order to gain a frame of reference for the demographics of the four selected

institutions compared to the demographics of HSU, I have included them for the 2017 fall semester. The demographics for the four selected institutions, however, are what have been listed for the 2016 fall semester. The one-year difference should not make a considerable difference for the purposes of this project.

Humboldt State University's student population for fall 2017 was 8,347 ("Enrolled"). The first sentence of HSU's Writing Studio's webpage states, "The Writing Studio provides free writing support for HSU students at any stage of the writing process. Writers at all skill levels and in all majors can benefit from visiting the Writing Studio" ("Learning Center").

Sacramento State University's total student population, according to "The Fall 2016 Sac State Students" form, was 30,510. According to "What is the University Reading and Writing Center?" page, their center's mantra is similar to HSU's: "In a collaborative and supportive environment, our peer tutors offer help with reading and writing at all points in the process, from initial planning and organizing through developing and revising a paper or understanding difficult texts" ("Writing Center").

Eastern Oregon University's total student population, according to the "2016 University Evaluation: Eastern Oregon University," by the Higher Education Coordinating Commission, the student population totaled 3,176 for the Fall 2016 term. EOU's writing center's mission statement is, "The mission of the EOU Writing Center is to promote students' confidence in their practice of writing processes and critical thinking, and to support faculty across the university in teaching writing in their disciplines" ("EOU Writing Center").

Elizabeth City State University's total enrollment for fall 2016, according to their "By the Numbers" page was 1357. When one goes to the ECSU Writing Studio webpage, one is presented with a list of frequently asked questions ("FAQ"), ten of them. The question whose answer most closely resembles statements from Humboldt, Sacramento, and Eastern Oregon is "**Why should I go to the writing center?**": "Revision and peer editing are essential to developing a successful draft. The writing studio provides students with a safe environment to receive feedback on a draft, ask questions, and correct major issues before turning in the assignment for a grade. It is a unique opportunity for students to learn from their mistakes with the support of a community of writers" ("Frequently").

University of Illinois in Chicago, according to National Center for Education Statistics Institute of Education Sciences, the fall 2016 total enrollment was 29,120. As for their Writing Center, when one views their webpage, the viewer/reader is asked a similar question to that of ECSU: "What can I expect when I come?" ("Writing"). The answer is also similar to that of ECSU: "You and the tutor will begin by choosing priorities. You can expect tutors to treat your questions with care and respect. Tutors provide options, resources, and support for making improvements. Of course, the final responsibility for revising assignments remains with you.

Table 1. University demographics (by number or percentage)

Humboldt State University (by number)	Sacramento State University (by number)	Eastern Oregon University (by number)	Elizabeth City State University (by number)	University of Illinois, Chicago (by percentage)
American Indian (97)	African American (1,719)	Non-Resident Alien (45)	Black (976)	American Indian or Alaskan Native (0.1%)
African American (282)	American Indian (103)	American Indian/Alaska Native (68)	White (234)	Asian (22.1%)
Hispanic/Latino (2,814)	Asian (6,141)	Asian (55)	Asian (6)	Black or African American (8.2%)
Asian American (248)	Latino (8,983)	Black Non-Hispanic (78)	American Indian (6)	Hispanic/Latino (30.7%)
Pacific Islander (17)	Pacific Islander (223)	Hispanic (213)	Hispanic (34)	Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander (0.1%)
Two or More Races (580)	Foreign (1,012)	Pacific Islander (41)	Nonresident Alien (2)	White (32.0%)
White (3,569)	Multiracial (1,891)	Two or more races, Underrepresented Minorities (107)	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (1)	Two or more races (3.1%)
Unknown (595)	Other (1,819)	Two or more races not Underrepresented Minorities (23)	Two of More Races (16)	Race/ethnicity unknown (0.8%)
Nonresident Alien (145)	White (8,619)	White Non-Hispanic (2,393)	Unknown (85)	Non-resident alien (3.2%)
		Unknown (153)		

I conducted a thorough analysis of each of the five handbooks, coding systematically for words that either directly—or potentially indirectly—provide an answer to my research question. I looked specifically for the term *critical pedagogy* in these handbooks because my research question is concerned with critical pedagogy as

part of writing center tutor training. I do, however, realize that critical pedagogy is sometimes insinuated by using other words, so I also looked connected terms. I conducted my analysis by looking at all part of these handbooks, and (if included) the Table of Contents, Works Cited list, and/or Index. My secondary search terms were *critical*, *pedagogy*, *philosophy*, and *theory*. I should also note that I added derivatives of the terms in my findings. For example, when I found *theoretical* or *theoretically*, likewise for the other three terms, I included them. On the one hand, all four terms potentially signify critical pedagogy. However, on the other hand, they might not signify critical pedagogy, but might act as signs for a different writing center/tutoring strategy of some kind, even one that has nothing to do with critical pedagogy. Hence, when those terms appeared, I examined them in context. Additionally, while a more comprehensive textual analysis of more market-based, as well as more institution-specific handbooks, would have likely been extremely personally fulfilling, I neither have the credentials, nor the funding and time to conduct such a study. Hence, I should note that I selected only these five search terms and only these five texts to keep the scope of this project to a feasible and manageable level.

FINDINGS

While I am not performing a genre analysis on the five tutor training handbooks, mentioning similarities and differences between the five texts is appropriate. The *Bedford Guide for Writing Tutors 6th edition* is mass marketed, reaching an extremely broad audience: writing center directors and staff who work in a multiplicity of writing centers on a global scale. The handbook includes suggestions on topics such as tutor etiquette, advice on how to conduct writing center research, submitting conference proposals, as well as providing tutor exercises for on-the-job scenarios. Each of the four institution-specific handbooks is unique to its institution—not for sale on the market—presumably written by professionals and students who work in that writing center/studio. The similarities with the *Bedford Guide for Writing Tutors 6th edition*, *The Writing Tutor Guide to Professionalism and Policies*, *The QEP Writing Studio Tutor Handbook*, and *Working with Writers: UIC Writing Center Handbook* contain information on tutor ethics, responsibilities, and administrative policies. Each text can be thought of as a kind of institution-specific writing center manifesto.

In the table below are the results of my findings for my coding terms, according to the methodology described in the previous chapter. Below the table are my comments regarding the analysis of the search terms in context.

Language of Critical Pedagogy: Findings from *The Bedford Guide for Writing Tutors 6th edition*

Critical Pedagogy	Critical	Pedagogy	Philosophy	Theory
Page # (occurrences):				
	XV (1)	111 (1)	XV (1)	111 (1)
	16 (1)	115 (1)	75 (1)	112 (1)
	20 (1)		128 (3)	113 (2)
	21 (1)		129 (1)	119 (1)
	22 (2)		154 (1)	123 (1)
	25 (1)		155 (1)	124 (1)
	113 (1)			127 (1)
	116 (1)			129 (3)
	123 (2)			
	153 (1)			
	154 (1)			
Total: 0	Total: 13	Total: 2	Total: 8	Total: 11

Analysis of *The Bedford Guide for Writing Tutors 6th edition*

In the *Bedford*, which is a commonly used tutor training handbook, *critical pedagogy* as an entire term does not appear. This is interesting because it implies that in the United States and other countries writing center tutors-in-training are not being introduced to critical pedagogy. However, *critical* appears more than any other search term. Upon closer examination, though, these occurrences do not point to critical

pedagogy. One example is when one looks up critical in the Index: “critical awareness, developing, 22” is listed (153); once there, the researcher will find that *critical awareness*, as authors Leigh Ryan and Lisa Zimmerelli qualify the term, deals with audience and textual awareness, not the critical self-awareness that critical pedagogy calls for. A snippet from a mock consultation titled “Chat Example: Developing Critical Awareness” is provided: “**Javier** [the tutor and bold in original] **says:** You indicate that the word *Nobody* is important in the poem. Why would that be so? **Jane** [the tutee and bold in original] **says:** Well, it’s connected to the feeling of loneliness. Actually, now that I think about it, I think it’s tied to sadness, too.” The hypothetical dialogue between Javier and Jane continue under chat example “Refocusing” and “Prompting” (23), and Javier’s questions do not deviate from prompting Jane’s critical audience and textual awareness. This finding shows how tutor critical awareness is not used in a critical pedagogical sense.

Another example is a bit more encouraging because it at least has the nuance of critical pedagogy. It is found in “Exercise 4C: Reflecting on Tutoring Techniques,”:

Reflect on your experiences tutoring writers who have writing anxieties or learning disabilities or who are multilingual writers, basic writers, or adult learners. Make two lists: one of approaches or techniques that you have found especially useful and a second of those that you have found less helpful. Share your lists with other tutors, and discuss why some techniques were more effective than others. (71)

Exercise 4C does, indeed, offer sound advice that should help prospective tutors be aware

that one student writer might respond to one strategy differently than another student writer, but there is also a problem: it is *only* tutor-centered. What Exercise 4C does not do is encourage the tutor to question *why* some students have writing anxieties, *where* did those anxieties originate, and *what* were the catalysts at the time of origination. Simply stated, what pedagogies inform the helpful and less-than-helpful session outcomes? Without a basic introduction to critical pedagogy, the tutor is left with trying to make sense of her or his experiences minus the theoretical tools needed for deeper analysis. If the tutor-in-training has never heard of critical pedagogy and/or does not know what critical pedagogy means, she or he is limited to basic tutoring techniques.

I have listed Sacramento State's *The Tutoring Book* analysis second because, like Humboldt State University, Sacramento State University, is part of the California State University system. *The Tutoring Book* contains 219 pages, and it represents a pronounced difference from the *Bedford* and the other three handbooks. It is an institution-specific anthology made up of tutor-written essays, no more than ten pages each, and it contains no mission statement of information on writing center protocols or policies. Each essay's audience appears to be fellow tutors since all essays discuss general and specific tutoring techniques. Combined, the anthology introduces new tutors to various strategies that more experienced tutors have learned and practiced. Essentially, *The Tutoring Book* is a writing center worker's reference manual, written by tutors who have worked there. The following chart shows the degree to which coded terms appeared in Sacramento State's *The Tutoring Book*.

Language of Critical Pedagogy: Findings from Sacramento State University: *The Tutor Book*

Critical Pedagogy	Critical	Pedagogy	Philosophy	Theory
Page #	Page #	Page #	Page #	Page #
(occurrences):	(occurrences):	(occurrences):	(occurrences):	(occurrences):
	11 (2)	45 (1)	13 (1)	3 (2)
	15 (2)	69 (1)	22 (1)	5 (1)
	16 (1)	131 (1)	66 (1)	23 (1)
	29 (2)	171 (1)	125 (2)	27 (1)
	34 (1)	174 (2)	126 (1)	57 (1)
	37 (1)	175 (1)	145 (2)	59 (1)
	45 (1)	213 (1)	193 (10)	61 (1)
	47 (1)	215 (1)	215 (1)	67 (3)
	57 (1)			68 (1)
	58 (5)			97 (1)
	73 (1)			105 (1)
	97 (2)			112 (1)
	101 (1)			131 (1)
	108 (1)			137 (3)
	109 (1)			150 (1)
	112 (2)			171 (1)
	113 (3)			172 (1)
	128 (1)			173 (2)
	140 (1)			174 (3)
	148 (1)			211 (6)
	151 (2)			215 (1)

Critical Pedagogy	Critical	Pedagogy	Philosophy	Theory
	166 (1)			
	180 (1)			
	182 (1)			
	195 (1)			
	202 (1)			
	214 (3)			
	219 (4)			
Total: 0	Total: 45	Total: 9	Total: 10	Total: 34

Analysis of *The Tutoring Book*

Analysis for *The Tutoring Book* yielded zero occurrences for *critical pedagogy* as an entire term. The absence of this search term is telling because this handbook contains the most pages of any of other handbook choices for this study. However, analysis does indicate three secondary terms, *critical*, *pedagogy*, and *theory*, occur more often between pages 211 to 219 than anywhere else in the anthology. *Critical* is used there seven times; *pedagogy*, twice; *theory*, seven times. A look at the Table of Contents, provides the answer: Those pages are the only pages under the “Theory” section; and in this section are student essays titled “Social Constructivism in Action” by Leslie Anglesey; “Situated Acts of Writing and Tutoring” by Heather Sula; and “The Birth of the Author: Encouraging an Identity Conducive to the Construction of Subject Positions” by Rebecca Roehr. Below are examples of how each essay applies theory to writing center tutorials.

In “Social Constructivism in Action,” Anglesey writes *theory* five times and

theoretical once. No other secondary terms are used anywhere in the essay. As the title of her essay suggests, it is about implementing social constructivism in tutoring sessions. She relies on scholarship from Andrea Lunsford's "Collaboration, Control, and the Idea of the Writing Center" essay, included in my literature review, to theoretically underpin an example session that occurred in their writing center. The scenario included creatively intervening into the text of a Lord Byron poem as a way to explore power dynamics through tutor and student writer collaboration. In the spirit of Lunsford's article, Anglesey states, "Rather than dispense an analysis of the poem (which would reinforce the early model of the writing center as a Storehouse of Knowledge, and this model's inherent hierarchy of power), we began to negotiate the meaning of the poem through several practices that reinforce social constructivist theory" (211). When Anglesey mentions "this model's inherent hierarchy of power," she is alluding to the top-down authoritative nature of the Writing Center as Storehouse simile, where knowledge holders of intellectual capital (teachers) make deposits of knowledge in empty vessels (students), and the interest of the deposit is reflected in the form of quizzes and/or exams. In this way, Anglesey's essay possesses elements of critical pedagogy as part of tutor training.

In "Situated Acts of Writing and Tutoring" by Heather Sula, *pedagogy* occurs once on page 213; *critical* or *critically* occurs twice on page 214. Sula uses *pedagogy* to relate writing center tutoring to arguments in an article by Lee-Ann Kastman Breuch (2002) about "post-process pedagogy," which according to Sula, deals with looking at writing through a postmodern lens as "situated." Sula goes on to stress the importance of asking writer center clients cultural-historical, heuristic questions that can help them with

some writing assignments. She mentions both Paulo Freire and the importance of problem-posing heuristics as part of writing center work: “Freirean, open-ended problem-posing questions, in particular, can be applied to almost any writing situation with deconstructive and demystifying results: why, what, when, for whom, and how? Asking these questions encourages writers to both examine and question the conventions of the writing tasks assigned” (214). On a basic level, Sula promotes what Freire calls *conscientização*: “the deepening attitude of awareness characteristic of all emergence” (109). Stated more simply, the why, what, when, for whom, and how questions help the writer develop their critical conscious. In fact, one of the instances where *critical* is found is in the phrase “critical consciousness” (214). Sula states that when a writer learns to question the contexts for writing assignments and their relationships to them, that “is one way to encourage critical consciousness.” This I essay, too, therefore places emphasis on critical pedagogy as part of tutor training.

Rebecca Roehr’s contribution Sacramento State’s *The Tutoring Book* is “The Birth of the Author: Encouraging an Identity Conducive to the Construction of Subject Positions.” Roehr takes up the topic of student writer identity in relation to the constraints of academic discourse. She cites David Bartholomae’s “Inventing the University” (2009) to point out that the double-identity Bartholomae insists students must learn to negotiate in writing assignments is problematic to their identity construction. Bartholomae asserts that students must write like they are already versed in academic discourse, when the reality is that they most often lack fluency in both academic discourse and discipline-specific conventions—students “must dare to speak [and write] it or carry off the bluff”

(606)—which bears witness a double-identity: a novice writer attempting to be expert writer. Roehr claims, “This is a cruel Catch-22 wherein students must somehow proceed as both ‘student’ and ‘expert’ at once” and “[t]he demands of negotiating this double-identity make it difficult for students to imagine other possible identities” (216). She further adds, “Perhaps the most frustrating component of this problem is that the bizarre double-identity demand on university students is rarely, if ever, made visible to them.” In other words, student writers need to develop a critical consciousness. According to Roehr, constraints of academic discourse can also serve as a constraint on personal identity, or possibly stated more bluntly, *hegemonic* to other identities. Roehr’s essay emphasizes a critical approach in writing center sessions in ways that foster student identity, which reflects critical pedagogy, in relationship to academic discourse.

Although the University of Illinois at Chicago’s *Working with Writers: UIC Writing Center Handbook* is ordered last in handbooks analyzed, it is both longer page-wise and reflects critical pedagogy, whereas the two remaining handbooks have fewer pages and do not emphasize critical pedagogy. For those reasons, I am placing its coding findings and analysis here as opposed to last. Hence, *The Writing Tutor Guide to Professionalism and Policies* from Eastern Oregon University and *The QEP Writing Studio Tutor Handbook* from Elizabeth City State University appear last in the list. The following table shows the coding results for *Working with Writers*.

University of Illinois at Chicago: *Working with Writers: UIC Writing Center Handbook*

Critical Pedagogy	Critical	Pedagogy	Philosophy	Theory
Page # (occurrences):				
	10 (1)	3 (1)	21 (1)	2 (1)
	13 (2)	10 (1)	25 (1)	3 (2)
	24 (1)	13 (8)	27 (1)	10 (6)
	39 (1)	14 (1)	35 (1)	11 (7)
		20 (1)		14 (8)
		44 (2)		15 (7)
				16 (3)
				23 (1)
				46 (1)
Total: 0	Total: 5	Total: 14	Total: 4	Total: 36

Analysis of *Working with Writers*

Analysis of *Working with Writers* indicated zero instances of *critical pedagogy* as an entire search term. This is particularly interesting because the University of Illinois, Chicago represents the research institution and the non-California State University system institution with the largest student population of universities selected for this study. While the search term *critical pedagogy* was not found in *Working with Writers*,

theory occurred 36 times, and the most pronounced concentration of 31 instances was found between pages 10 to 20. Not surprisingly, this section of the handbook is titled “The Role of Theory”; in this section are topics such as “Race,” Feminist Pedagogy,” Queer Theory, and “Grammar and Linguistics” (Aleksa, Vainis et al. 3). In the opening paragraph to the section is a statement that proclaims their writing center’s emphasis on theory in relation to writing center pedagogy:

“Writing center theory combines ideas and observations of many fields and disciplines, for example, pedagogical theory about educational practices, social theory about the interaction of race, class, gender, and culture, or cognitive theory about how the brain learns. Theories can be used as a set of guiding principles used to make decisions about tutoring practice” (10).

Placing value on these theories as “guiding principles” also places value on tutor critical consciousness, and when tutors are critically self-aware, then they are more likely to approach their consultations critical pedagogically.

The *Writing Tutor Guide to Professionalism and Policies* from Eastern Oregon University contains only 16 pages. As the title suggests, this handbook describes how tutors are expected to conduct themselves, and tutors are given administrative-types of information to which they are expected to adhere.

Eastern Oregon University: *Writing Tutor Guide to Professionalism and Policies*

Critical Pedagogy	Critical	Pedagogy	Philosophy	Theory
Page # (occurrences):	Page # (occurrences): 5 (1)	Page # (occurrences):	Page # (occurrences):	Page # (occurrences): 13 (2) 14 (2)
Total: 0	Total: 1	Total: 0	Total: 0	Total: 4

The QEP Writing Studio Tutor Handbook from Elizabeth City State University contains 23 pages. Similar to EOU's handbook, this handbook instructs tutors how they are expected to act professionally as well as ethically to students who visit there.

Elizabeth City State University: *The QEP Writing Studio Tutor Handbook*

Critical Pedagogy	Critical	Pedagogy	Philosophy	Theory
Page # (occurrences):	Page # (occurrences): 3 (1) 21 (1) 23 (1)	Page # (occurrences): 3 (2) 4 (1) 5 (2) 6 (1) 16 (1) 22 (3) 23 (1)	Page # (occurrences): 2 (1) 3 (2) 4 (1) 5 (1) 22 (1)	Page # (occurrences): 6 (2) 17 (1)

Critical Pedagogy	Critical	Pedagogy	Philosophy	Theory
Total: 0	Total: 3	Total: 11	Total: 6	Total: 3

Analyses of *the Writing Tutor Guide to Professionalism and Policies* and *The QEP Writing Studio Tutor Handbook*

In this paragraph, I am combining my analyses of both Eastern Oregon University’s *Writing Tutor Guide to Professionalism and Policies* and Elizabeth City State University’s *The QEP Writing Studio Tutor Handbook* due to their similar page lengths and fewer search term occurrences. Analyses for these two handbooks yielded zero occurrences of *critical pedagogy* as an entire term; this is interesting because both institutions have the smallest student populations of the five universities—and I chose them as non-California State University system west and east coast representations. Eastern Oregon University’s *Writing Tutor Guide to Professionalism and Policies* mentions *critical* one time, found their “MISSION”: “The mission of the EOU Writing Center is to promote students’ confidence in their practice of writing processes and critical thinking” (Evans 5). All four occurrences of theory have to do with a tutoring course. Here is one example: “Writing Tutors are expected to help students at all stages of the writing process, applying the theory and practice studied in their Methods of Tutoring course” (13). Specifics of the training course are not mentioned. Similar to *QEP Writing Studio Tutor Handbook*, *critical* is not used in ways that emphasize critical pedagogy in Elizabeth City State University’s *The QEP Writing Studio Tutor Handbook*. For example, “providing

critical support for students . . . making the transition to academic writing” (Gavaskar 3); “a writing center is sometimes critical work” (21); and “critical stage of a session” (23) are not in the context of critical pedagogy. Instead, they emphasize, “The central activity of tutoring is supported with thoughtful preparation, and with the study of scholarly articles, essays, tutor-oriented blogs and listservs” (3). Their Studio also values tutoring “[b]ased on best practices” (3), of supporting writing, which are described as “organization, understanding of the assignment, cohesiveness of the central idea, and so on, especially in the initial stages of the writing process (4), and for their overarching philosophy, they subscribe to North’s “Idea”: “Stephen North sums up the philosophy we hold here at the QEP Writing Studio when he says that “. . . in a writing center the object is to make sure that writers, and not necessarily their texts, are what get changed by instruction. In axiom form it goes like this: Our job is to produce better writers, not better writing” (4). While they do value providing a meaningful experience for the students who come to their center, all search term instances in both handbooks do not signify an emphasis on critical pedagogy in writing center tutor training.

DISCUSSION

Since critical pedagogy is not adequately stressed in writing center tutor training handbooks, a logical thing to do is to argue that a change should occur in training curricula in order to hopefully correct the discrepancy. A plausible way to accomplish the task is to include critical pedagogy content in the curricula so that prospective tutors will at least know something about critical pedagogy—before they begin tutoring. My claim here recalls Trubek’s chicken and egg metaphor. She asserts, “I believe theory to be crucial to reflective practice. What I didn’t consider is whether theory need be assigned to undergraduate tutors-in-training” (169). However, my stance is not whether theory should be assigned to undergraduate tutors-in-training, but *where* tutors should be introduced to critical pedagogical theory as an application of writing center pedagogy.

Tutors-in-training can encounter and grapple with critical pedagogy sufficiently enough—without getting lost in theory. This can add a dimension to tutoring that goes deeper than only tackling issues of why tutees come to the writing center in the first place, and this needs to originate in the curriculum. While it is true that schools are controlled by economic, material reality constraints, they are also controlled by ideology. Curriculum specialist Michael Apple (2004) insists that “[t]he control of schools, knowledge and everyday life can be, and is, more subtle for it takes in even seemingly inconsequential moments” (4). Some of those seemingly inconsequential moments are the choices made by a person or persons in power in what to include and exclude in a writing center course syllabus or tutor training handbooks.

By incorporating critical pedagogy content in the curriculum, prospective tutors would learn that, when working in the writing center, their identity immediately becomes more complex. They are no longer *merely* fellow students and peer tutors; they have multiple representations foisted upon them from multiple places. Grimm (1999) claims that “[t]heorizing . . . is an activity that offers a heightened sense of position, a keener awareness of where the writing center is in relationship to other social systems and ideas” (xi). She believes that theory is a means to gain a richer perspective of why things are the way that they are, where they are, and potentially what keeps those things the way that they are. In other words, theory reifies, which is what future tutors need before they begin tutoring. Grimm later goes on to proclaim:

[T]utor and teacher development programs need to work especially hard to cultivate the psychic space that encourages tutors to turn away from the institutional gaze, to question institutional interpellation, to develop awareness of the ways they have internalized the belief that a particular form of discourse is “right” or “natural” or “better,” and that those who depart from the form are “wrong” or “not normal” or “culturally deprived.” (67)

Unless critical pedagogy is given status in the curriculum, how else are the tutors-in-training supposed to develop the “keener awareness” that Grimm speaks of? Two possible scenarios could promote developing keener awareness: one, on the job actually tutoring and almost certainly over multiple semesters of purposeful reflection; two, through research in ongoing professional development or through professional

development by supplemental reading required by the writing center director. Apart from those hopeful scenarios, tutor keener awareness, at best, occurring to a lesser degree—almost by accident—or, at worst, not occurring at all.

However, what will almost certainly occur is that tutors will unknowingly—yet willingly—be participants in the reproduction of the various hegemonies that they are attempting to help their tutees deal with. If that occurs, tutors are also reproducing the conditions for more and future writing anxieties that will in turn cause the same student to come back to the writing center—where the cycle repeats itself. On the one hand, even if the tutor has been introduced to the basics of critical pedagogy and helps their tutee glimpse the bigger picture, that alone is not going to magically cause the writer's anxiety to cease. On the other hand, when the tutor knows and articulates that information to the tutee, the tutee can leave the writing center with the knowledge that they are not the “bad writer,” which they might have been hegemonically indoctrinated to see themselves as, and they can succeed in academia as they learn how to play the academic game.

Despite multiple pedagogies to which students are subjected, the writing center is an ideal space in which peer writing tutors can participate with tutees in social activism, motivated by problem-posing dialogue between tutor and tutee. For example, students are regularly assigned essays in which they are to analyze and craft arguments dealing with social inequalities. At the same time activism occurs, dynamics that produce changes in the writer—while the writer is conscious of why those changes need to be enacted—can also be realized. Ira Shor (1987) states in *A Pedagogy for Liberation*, “I understand critical consciousness as gaining reflective distance on your own thought, action, and

society. This distance is a metaphor for separating your consciousness from the dominant ideology socializing us in mass culture, daily life, and school. These are places where we internalize racism, sexism, and such values as self-doubt and love of the rich and powerful, which help wed us to the system” (167). I argue that sessions conducted in the writing center are instances where critical pedagogical action can take place. Academic discourses are hegemonic to other discourses and can negatively affect students’ personal identities. However, critical pedagogical practices emphasize fostering critical self-awareness while critiquing existing power structures, which will not render void academic discourse constraints but will locate the problem not in the student but in the genre conventions in which the student has to negotiate. Hence, critical pedagogy should be introduced in writing center tutor training curricula, handbooks, and continuing to be emphasized as one aspect of tutor professional development.

When a writing center tutor is introduced to the basics of critical pedagogy, such as authoritatively top-down pedagogy versus Freire’s problem-posing pedagogy in which critical consciousness and learning to identify hegemonic tendencies of the institution are promoted, then he or she is a tutor who is better equipped to understand why certain writing is valued while other writing is devalued, to state it bluntly—*unacceptable* by some academic standards. Including critical works written by writing center and critical pedagogy scholars is one way to introduce tutors-in-training to critical pedagogy essential elements. Additionally, inserting key portions of scholarly writing in training handbooks is not out of the question. Ellen Mohr insists, “If functioning healthy, the writing center provides a dynamic setting where voices can be heard, varied perspectives explored, and

myths about discourse and writing dispelled” (“The Writing Center” 419). Students are often subjected to myths about discourse and writing; they have been indoctrinated in those myths from an early age—in high school before they even get to community college or university. The myths that Mohr speaks of have to do with the long-established notion that academic prose has to read a certain way—be a certain way—otherwise it is bad writing. Since writing is an extension of its author, the person who is told that their writing is *bad* oftentimes views themselves as bad, remedial, or deficient—unworthy to be in their institution, an imposter while studying to earn their desired degree. Furthermore, writing center tutors are also students, which means that they, too, have been indoctrinated in institution-valued writing discourses just as the writers who come to the center for assistance.

If ideologies had colors, then seeing them would not be a problem. However, ideologies are both invisible and pervasive; they reify around us in material reality, and, if we are not cautious and informed, they are reified *by* us. Everyone is subjected to multiple ideologies without always realizing it, which is the hegemonic nature of them, but when a person is made aware of ideologies, what they mean, where they come from, why they still exist, and who benefits from their existences, then the person should be able to navigate life with keener discernment—a critical consciousness. Joe Kincheloe (2007), a critical pedagogy scholar, beautifully illustrates the importance of critical awareness in *Critical Pedagogy: Where are We Now?* in the chapter titled “Critical Pedagogy in the Twenty-first Century: Evolution for Survival.” Kincheloe emphasizes that “[a]n evolving critical pedagogy produces conscious individuals who are aware of

their self-production and the social conditions under which they live. . . . [C]ritical pedagogy is concerned not just with how individuals experience social reality but how they often operate in circumstances that they don't understand. A critical consciousness is aware of these dynamics" (37). Operating in circumstances that one does not understand—or is possibly even not aware of—is a reasonably good indication that hegemony is involved because the nature of hegemony promotes the flawed logic that the way things are is natural and normal. Writing center spaces are no different from other academic spaces; hegemonies operating within academia can also reify in the writing center. With a critical consciousness, however, individuals can better understand the ideological and political dynamics of and in their surroundings. Writing center tutors need to understand, preferably *before* they actually begin tutoring, that their jobs as tutors are politically and ideologically charged. Bekisizwe Ndimande's opening sentence in the chapter "Critical Theory as Social Justice Pedagogy" in *In Social Justice Pedagogy Across the Curriculum: The Practice of Freedom* stresses that "[e]ducation is not a neutral phenomenon that takes place in an ideological vacuum. Rather, education is characterized by social and political contestations that have led to educational inequalities, especially among marginalized communities" (89). Students need to be cognizant of the non-neutral reality of higher education, especially higher education's relationship to academic discourse.

Writing centers are locations within their institutions where students who visit them should be made aware that the types of academic discourses that they are expected—required—to write in act as non-neutral gatekeepers. But they are not

insurmountable gatekeepers. Also, *In Social Justice Pedagogy Across the Curriculum: The Practice of Freedom*, Chapman and Hobbel (2010) stress, “If we wish to move into solidarity with each other to confront injustice, we must not only understand our own places and histories, but we must also understand ourselves as living within contexts and affected by structures. It is this sort of understanding from which springs the capacity to build coalition across lines of difference” (243). Writing center spaces are spaces in which coalitions can begin, solidarity can occur, and an already extant critical consciousness can be honed and made keener. If writing centers, such as the one Shannon Carter envisions are to exist, ones that recognize and celebrate cultural and individual diversity and promote social justice, then an ideal place to begin is to construct tutor training in ways that place emphasis on critical pedagogy as a vital element of writing center pedagogy.

CONCLUSION

This project began with the question with looking for mentions of critical pedagogy in writing center scholarship. Critical pedagogy is, in fact, both mentioned and stressed by writing center scholars dating back at least to the early 1990s. Over the last twenty-five or so years, calls for critical pedagogy as a regular attribute of writing center practice have become more numerous and intensified. According to my findings in analyzing five writing center tutor training handbooks, however, critical pedagogy remains more is more established and situated in writing center theory than in writing center pedagogical practice. A way to address this disconnect is to give critical pedagogy prominence in writing center tutor training handbooks and curricula. Admittedly, to keep this project manageable, only five tutor training handbooks could be critiqued, and conducting a more thorough study of many more handbooks would yield more rounded results. For example, there are other handbooks for sale on the market than the one that I chose. Other institution-specific handbooks are accessible online, and tutor handbooks from both community colleges as well as private universities could be included. Additionally, obtaining funding for and launching a more multifaceted study, one in which analyses are performed on writing center sessions, in real time, conducted by tutors who have been introduced to critical pedagogy in their training curriculum could potentially shed light on how critical pedagogy is reified in writing center tutor practice. The first step, though, in seeing critical pedagogy implemented in tutoring scenarios is to make sure that tutors-in-training are introduced to and have a basic knowledge of critical

pedagogy before they begin working in their institution's writing center.

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