ONE TABOO CONVERSATION AT A TIME: EMPLOYING WRITING CENTERS

IN DISMANTLING WHITE PRIVILEGE

by

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my late Aunt Lorraine Snodgrass who taught me the importance of standing up for my beliefs, regardless of what others have to say. She was fierce in her love and encouragement of me, and I wouldn't be who I am today without her. I love you, beautiful.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

I started graduate school like most individuals. I had a goal in mind and a simple plan to meet that goal, all based on previous life experiences and the knowledge and wisdom I had accumulated thus far. I wanted to specialize in rhetoric and composition studies so that I could open writing centers in high schools. I saw first hand as a tutor the benefits of writing centers for students. I wanted to recreate those benefits in the secondary setting to better equip students to face the challenges of college, to encourage some to apply to college. But as with most learning experiences, my goals and vision changed. When I was afforded the opportunity to explore, grapple with, and deconstruct the writing center, I rediscovered it as a site of vital and on-going work in the development of social justice.

I did not magically come to this realization, though. In my first spring semester of graduate school, I enrolled in an African American literature course in the hopes of learning more about a population of students with whom I would possibly work in the future. Through my exploration of African American literature, I felt the fervor of my career goal diminishing with each week that passed; I realized that my goal was founded on a basic understanding of how I could help students and of writing centers' potential. This basic understanding included helping students differentiate between a complete sentence and a fragment, incorrect and correct comma placement, and passive and active voice. I did not understand the implications of language use or its ability to affect social justice endeavors. In conjunction with my composition theory course and the Ferguson riots occurring near my hometown of St. Louis, Missouri, my literature course helped me

to realize that if I really wanted to create spaces for valuable discussions to promote growth, then I would have to dig deep into the concept of writing centers as an agent of social change. If I truly wanted to help students become equipped to tackle the obstacles that college presents, then it was imperative that I first look at the role that writing centers play in the perpetuation of them, and the role writing centers might play in addressing those obstacles. I realized that I had to grow my understanding of writing centers to include all of its nuances and powers; I had to explore antiracist work within writing centers.

Why We Need Antiracism in Our Lives

I was sitting in Bible class one Sunday, listening to an exchange between the Young Adult Pastor and an older member about a local eatery and whether or not this establishment should be the meeting place for the following week. The pastor was explaining that this local diner gave the class an entire room to themselves the last time they went there for Bible class. The member, a man who looked to be of Mexican descent, shouted out, "That's because y'all are white!" Quite a few people laughed at his remark, and in response, the pastor unthinkingly replied with, "White lives matter, too!" A few seconds later, the pastor quietly said, "Yes. I just said that." The pastor's last remark could have been in response to feeling guilty for what he had said or because he wanted to truly own the words he spoke. Regardless of his reasoning, the young adults sitting closest to the pastor giggled. Perhaps the exchange was forgotten about by most, but I could not let it go. I replayed that scenario in my mind multiple times, and I kept coming back to one conclusion: white privilege. Historically, it has been well established that white lives matter. But appropriating an African American protest platform against

racism is no laughing matter. Having had the chance to interact with the pastor on multiple occasions in different situations, I can confidently say that I believe his heart was in the right place; he simply spoke from a position that comes naturally to him as a white, U.S. male, a place of uncontested power, a place of white privilege. And that is the point.

Many individuals fall into white privilege without knowing or meaning to do so. But even so, this does not acquit them of their responsibility of having unthinkingly enacted white privilege. They should not be given a free pass for their actions. For example, when a police officer pulls over a driver for an infraction, the officer may say, "Ignorance of the law is not an excuse for breaking it." Similarly, ignorance of how white privilege benefits certain individuals does not justify a person's use of it.

But believing and repeating regularly the belief that people are responsible for their actions is not enough. Critical dialogue is a necessity when it comes to creating self-awareness of white privilege and how it manifests itself within our education system and world at large. This means that individuals and institutions must be willing to step into the realm of discomfort, to talk about topics that society labels as taboo, to open their eyes to the daily realities of all Americans, and whites part in creating those realities.

The need for self-awareness of white privilege gained through antiracism efforts that focus on continuous, critical dialogue are apparent in today's news reports, social media posts, and topics of conversation. Recent events that have made national news, such as the Ferguson riots, the Black Lives Matter movement, the controversy surrounding Beyoncé's newest visual album *Lemonade*, and the response of "hands up" to police brutality, have highlighted the necessity of talking about race, racism, and

privileges in general and white privilege in particular. Held in writing centers, such discussions may be a means of understanding competing ideologies and the results of those conflicts. Inclusion of these discussions creates awareness of invisible and detrimental power forces that hold some people back while promoting others. If one of the goals of education is to expose students to various and differing viewpoints to help facilitate critical and ethical thinking as a means of advancement in society, then it is vital that explicit discussions of white privilege be included in writing centers. This will, hopefully, help to cultivate an understanding of the role that language and attitudes about language play in perpetuating injustice and writing centers' complicity in it. Education should be a driving force in helping students engage in real world contexts and conflicts by forearming them with the knowledge and viable means of entering into important conversations within their everyday lives.

Writing Centers' Roles in Antiracism

Writing centers hold myriads of potential for everyone who has the opportunity and the will to visit them. Much has been written on the positive effects writing centers have on student writing and thinking: writing centers assist with writing and, as a result, help students develop new ways of seeing and thinking about the world (see Bruffee; Grimm). For this to become reality, however, a certain level of vulnerability must be embraced in the writer and the tutor. For people to allow others to read their work that is not its absolute, polished best takes courage. It takes humility to say, "Here is what I have written, or at the very least, hope to have written. Will you please help me make it more clear, more succinct, more organized, more impactful?" This ability to humble oneself is not weakness; it means the very opposite—it means that writers see their limited views

and are open to seeing their work from another's perspective—a hallmark of good writing. Likewise, tutors must also be open to their own vulnerability and limitations. They must be willing to accept challenges to their own understandings of the world as they interact with writers of all levels and backgrounds—ethnic, economic, religious, and social. When tutors and writers come together for the common goal of learning and thinking critical about language, then writing centers are working at their fullest potential. It is this collaborative atmosphere outside of the classroom setting that makes writing centers ideal places to foster antiracist work in education, but I am not the first person to realize the potential of writing centers.

Various scholars have explored how writing centers' atmosphere and antiracist work can be combined to create a site of social change. One such person is Frankie Condon, a leading scholar in antiracist work. Condon argues for and explicates the ways that antiracist work is both a collaborative and personal effort. According to Condon, everyone should be involved in antiracist efforts; there is no single group of people who is responsible for shouldering the responsibility of this work. But simultaneously, white individuals must also realize that they are handicapped, in a manner of speaking, because of their complicity in racism. As a result, antiracist whites must continuously "decenter" themselves in the midst of antiracist work (33). As Condon powerfully points out, "there is no antiracism without deliberation, without reflection, without self-examination and critique" (10). In other words, decentering encourages antiracist workers to see a situation from multiple perspectives, takes those perspectives into account while also analyzing the emotions and resistance that the worker feels when racism is the topic of conversation. Decentering oneself is a continuous and recursive process that allows for the ability to

deconstruct and restructure ways of thinking, seeing, and knowing the world in effort to view the world as it is and not as it is hoped to be.

Statement of Problem and Purpose

But there is one problem I see in the antiracist scholarship: the lack of explicit discussion of white privilege and its role in racism, even though many well known scholars have written works concerning the effects of white privilege without naming it as the cause. One such scholar is Peggy McIntosh. In her working paper "White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming to See Correspondence Through Work in Women's Studies," McIntosh describes white privilege as "an invisible package of unearned assets that I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was 'meant' to remain oblivious. White privilege is like an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools, and blank checks" (3-4). And while this analogy rings to true for whites, I argue that the knapsack should indeed be heavy in awareness, not out of guilt or shame but because awareness of white privilege is key in the effort to dismantle it.

One possible reason for the lack of explicit discussion of white privilege in the scholarship is that antiracist workers automatically assume that white privilege is an integral part of racism and henceforth self-evident. And while white privilege is inextricably intertwined with racism, there is still value in explicitly talking about it, especially in spaces that already deal with race and language education (i.e. writing centers). Additionally, the lack of apparent discussion may be because no one can prove white privilege exists. Instead, people are only able to talk about it an elusory way. In other words, white privilege is fully understood by people of color—victims of white

privilege—and an intangible concept for those who enact it. White privilege is intangible, is invisible, for whites because they have never known what it means to live without white privilege in a society that deems whiteness as superior.

Because of this socially constructed system, it is difficult to point out the advantages that whites have without strong resistance. I am further arguing that white privilege is difficult to discuss because of the structure of the current conversation surrounding race and white privilege. That is, simply saying whether or not white privilege exists and responding only from emotion never creates meaningful and intelligent dialogue. This is one of the very reasons why writing center directors should be steadfast in their approach of helping students become self-aware of white privilege as a means of combating racism, particularly as it occurs in attitudes about language, approaches to language instruction (tutoring), and actual language practices.

To address this scholarship gap in antiracist work, my thesis will extend Condon's and others' work by developing theoretically-sound pedagogical choices for writing center tutor education programs that help to create critical and intelligent dialogue about white privilege and its effects on racism. This discussion is based on two underlying assumptions—one, white privilege does indeed exist, and two, it is an unchallenged, naturalized system in American society that promulgates racist attitudes and ideologies. Writing centers have the ability and the power to host critical discussions about this uncomfortable, challenging topic in a way that neither vilifies nor pacifies anyone, and my thesis will explore how this can be done.

In an attempt to fill this void in the scholarship, I will address the following research questions in my thesis:

1. Why are explicit discussions of white privilege necessary in antiracist work?

2. Why should writing centers engage in explicit discussions of white privilege?

3. What theoretically-sound pedagogical strategies can be instituted in tutor education programs to create self-awareness of white privilege in service to antiracist work among writing center tutors?

As my research questions make clear, I am not attempting to answer the *why* of racism but instead the *how* as it relates to combating racism through the dismantling of white privilege by advocating for specific pedagogical approaches in tutor education. As mentioned before, the answer(s) to the question of how are based on the assumptions that white privilege exists and is alive and well in American society, which is a fundamental understanding in the development of my proposed pedagogical choices and an acceptance of antiracist work in general but especially within writing centers.

Methodology

The methodological approach for my thesis is to use already existing scholarship concerning antiracist work in rhetoric and composition studies and scholarship about white privilege as a framework for my argument that we need explicit discussion of white privilege in antiracist work within writing centers. I will begin by arguing that white privilege cannot simply be an implication or seen as a given within antiracist work. If white privilege is seen as a footnote, then antiracism is perpetuating white privilege's invisibility and, hence, its indelible mark on the way writing centers function.

The next step will be to create theoretically-sound pedagogical choices for tutor education programs that incorporate the discussion of white privilege in conjunction with the dialogue that is already fostered in tutor education programs about racism. My thesis

will do much more than simply rest on arguments that others have advanced for tutor education programs. Rather, I will be offering new approaches that take into consideration the underlying assumptions about racism and, in turn, make them explicit for tutors. I will develop my thesis's pedagogical choices upon a variety of theories from rhetoric and composition, writing center, antiracism, and education scholarship to help create tutor education programs that confront and equip tutors with the knowledge and experience to dismantle racism in the moment.

Many scholars have expressed the veracity and insidiousness of racism and its place in academe. Now is the time to extend this conversation to investigate ways that writers and those of us who work with writers can enter into the conversation about race and leave feeling empowered to interact with this culturally taboo topic.

Biases

As a twenty-six-year-old, white, middle class, female, monolingual, U.S. citizen, it is easy to hypothesize how my everyday experiences drastically differ from those who consistently suffer from racism and are oppressed based on their ethnicity or race. In fact, I have perpetuated racist ideas for most of my life without even knowing it, such as believing that having friends who are also people of color marks me as non-racist; I am not innocent in the behavior that I call out in my thesis. But even though I am white and undeservingly privileged, I can use my privilege for the advancement and betterment of others instead of myself. I have the power to acknowledge or ignore, to deflect or submit, to prevent or to perpetuate. The crux of the matter is that because of my social standing and my race, I have the power of choice. And through my thesis, I am choosing to advocate for self-awareness of an enervating aspect to our society—white privilege—in

the hopes of constructing spaces that allow others endowed with the power of choice to decide how they too can affect positive change.

Intended Audience(s) and Argument Caveats

Before sharing my argument, I must make clear here that my audience is for previous, current, and future people within the field of writing center studies (tutors and directors), and unfortunately as statistics show, quite a few of these individuals are white (and female). As a result, when I use the terms "director," it refers to white directors because of the slim number of writing center directors of color. I am a firm believer in the idea that people of color are *not* responsible for educating whites about their white privilege, but I do hope that everyone involved, directors, tutors, people of color, and white people, will participate in these pedagogical choices to continue creating a stronger community within the field. And as such, when I use the word "we" it may refer to whites and our actions or everyone as an antiracist collective, whites *and* people of color.

Chapter Overview

My second chapter offers an extended review of literature. In it, I explore antiracist work and how the rhetoric and composition field and specifically writing centers are already researching and conducting antiracist work, albeit with a lack of explicit discussion of white privilege in the work itself and the implications that grow from this.

Once the foundation of my thesis's argument has been established in chapter two, I focus in the third chapter on my argument for explicit discussion of white privilege and the development of theoretically-sound pedagogical choices that writing center directors

can include in tutor education to involve their students in critical, ongoing, and reflective dialogue about white privilege and its part in racism.

To close, in the fourth chapter I explore the various implications for this research within the writing center studies field. For example, since my thesis does not investigate empirical data, I discuss the need for pilot studies.

Additionally, my thesis work is timely and relevant for current events, and I account for this by discussing possible applications outside of academe. Since this topic is one that can cause conflict, I discuss the possible repercussions for writing center directors and tutors who choose to engage in this dialogue. Overall, my thesis will take an in-depth look into the antiracist scholarship of the composition field and writing centers studies in order to argue the importance for intelligent, critical, on-going, and recursive discussion about white privilege and its relationship to racism, while providing theoretically-sound pedagogical strategies for directors to use in their tutor education programs.

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

"White people are in a position of power in [the United States] because of racism. The question is: Are they brave enough to use that power to speak against the system that gave it to them?" -John Metta

I was talking with a friend recently, and he described to me a situation in which he was talking to another white, male student. The student wanted to know what he could do to make himself more marketable for graduate school. My friend asked him about any published pieces he (the student) had, and the student responded by saying he had written a book and planned to self-publish it. My friend's interest was piqued, so he inquired about the book. The student stated that his book revolved around "the myth of white privilege." Being the inquisitive person that my friend is, he then asked the student if he meant myth as in the Greek denotation, as if he meant myth as storytelling, in which the student responded with, "No. I just don't think white privilege exists."

Much like the epigraph notes, the student from my anecdote has been granted power because of white supremacy. For him, this power affords him the ability to discredit white privilege's existence, and in doing so, disregard the racism that those who are marked as "Other" face on a daily basis.

As a means of resisting ignorance about socially structured privilege, this chapter will discuss the literature relevant to my research questions and will explore antiracist work in the academy. Before I move forward with my literature review, it is important to make clear that many authors have already written about how racism has become

institutionalized in higher education and the effects of it (Villanueva, Greenfield, Bona-Silva, Condon, Simpson, etc.). As Frankie Condon asserts,

> there is sufficient evidence across a wide range of social, political, and economic contexts within the United States . . . to conclude that while race may be a social construct, race matters, and racism. . . is real—has material effects that work to privilege whites and to disadvantage, marginalize, or exclude peoples of color. (22)

Furthermore, Jennifer Simpson argues, "racism is still present in higher education" and "understandings of race are centrally important to what we know and how we teach and produce knowledge" (4). For those of us who are invested in education and others, Condon and Simpson's arguments should be disconcerting, but should also energize us to action.

Because of the vast scholarship that already exists concerning racism in general and how higher education institutions are implicit in its perpetuation, this literature review will focus specifically on antiracism scholarship within writing center studies and the lack of active and explicit discussion of white privilege within this scholarship. Even though antiracist work, especially in writing centers, is structured to help antiracist workers create transparency and self-awareness of their complicity in racism and their relation to it (also one of the goals of understanding white privilege), I am arguing that the lack of *explicit* discussion of white privilege and its role in racism in institutions and our personal lives in fact perpetuates and strengthens white privilege's invisible and unchallenged power dynamic. This deficiency is in direct opposition to the very core of

antiracist work, critical self-reflection, hence the importance of discussing white privilege in tutor education programs.

Antiracism in Higher Education

Any movement, whether educational, social, or political, has theoretical underpinnings that support its existence alongside and (possibly) against already established frameworks of understanding and praxis. And antiracist work is no different. This section of the literature review will cover current conversations about antiracism in higher education and its work in dislodging deeply held beliefs about education within higher education.

As mentioned previously, Frankie Condon has written extensively about antiracism in the academy, as her book *I Hope I Join the Band: Narrative, Affiliation, and Antiraciset Rhetoric* demonstrates. Condon firmly situates her perspective within the field of rhetoric and composition when she describes the work of antiracism as working toward "naming, resisting, countering, and transforming the everyday force of racism" (5) since this type of work mimics rhetoric and composition studies' goals in helping students become aware of and proficient in using rhetoric. Furthermore, Condon states that

> [a]ntiracist discourses are frequently tricky, taking up familiar ideas, practices, tropes, even genres, and turning them to counterpurposes, thereby exposing and exploiting their internal contradictions or reclaiming principles or spiritual traditions from their imbrication within racist systems of thought. (5)

In other words, racism is imbedded in discourse, in the language we use, and language can cunningly propagate unquestioned racist rhetoric. I argue further that racist rhetoric is protected and hidden by white privilege, which is why it is vital to cultivate explicit dialogue about white privilege.

In accordance with her definition of antiracist work, Condon argues that by joining personal reflection and professional experiences, antiracist academics "need to stop minimizing the complexity and significance of narrative, stop depoliticizing the personal, and start studying the rich epistemological and rhetorical traditions that inform the narratives of peoples of color" (33). In other words, this means that those who are dedicated to antiracist ideals need to view the stories and experiences of people of color as valid and legitimate sites of analysis. In doing so, Condon highlights the necessity of always striving to "decenter" oneself (33). Decentering is a process in which antiracist workers are constantly and consistently wrestling with their implicit assumptions about any situation, but more specifically about situations involving race and the myriad of discussions, denials, and affirmations that are attached to it. Another way of comprehending the process of decentering is to understand Condon's assertion: "there is no antiracism without deliberation, without reflection, without self-examination and critique" (10). Condon's concept of decentering argues for self-awareness of personal and professional beliefs, privileges, and choices and how these aspects affect antiracist academics' ability to help others achieve.

Furthermore, Condon's theoretical framework of decentering—and all of the nuances it entails—should not be seen as "an extraordinary epistemological and/or rhetorical practice of inquiry" but instead "as a daily discipline" (83). Condon continues

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by positing that making decentering a habit means "working toward an everyday consciousness of the degree to which our representations of others and of self might be conditioned by learned and habitual ways of being and doing that are products of our own racialization" (83). That is, decentering means forcing ourselves to not only realize that we enact cultural and personal assumptions, but to also examine how and why we do.

Condon provides an example of her own efforts to decenter in the last chapter of her book. In it, Condon shares letters exchanged with Vershawn Ashanti Young in which both academics work toward a deeper understanding of themselves and the relationships they have with and in the world. These letters are the type of communication "that stop you in your tracks and make you think long and hard about what you are doing and how and why" (146). For instance, Condon writes to Young about a statement he once shared that made Condon realize that she was an active agent in her brother's experiences of being a marginalized "Other." (Condon's parents adopted her brother from a Sioux reservation in the 1960s.) Condon tells Young that she played an active role in producing [her brother's] pain and enforcing his liminality" (150) and explains that it has been an agonizing realization. This type of honest self-reflection is what it means to decenter oneself. It means lifting off the cloak of ignorance and poking at tender spots in our memories, beliefs, and actions to continue growing in our antiracist efforts.

Moreover, Condon succinctly points out, "neither the why nor the how of antiracism conceived as praxis (as philosophy and practice) is self-evident" (19). Decentering and antiracist work writ large is a dialogical and reflective process that must consistently be practiced if it is be effective because "we will have to acknowledge that we have a lot to learn. We need to study hard; we need to try and fail and learn from our

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failures; and we need to recognize . . . that there will be no end to the necessity for this learning" (19). Of course, this type of self-reflective effort is important to Condon as a rhetoric and composition scholar–-as it should be for writing center studies—because it allows faculty, colleagues, tutors, and students to "gather in solidarity, with joy and determination, with intentionality, openness, and mind*full*ness in the struggle against racism" (2, italics in original). That is, antiracist work engenders the same mission and goals of higher education: intelligent and critical collaboration to create a better tomorrow.

The Writing Center's Role in Antiracism

Writing centers are dynamic places in a variety of ways. For instance, within the physical walls of writing centers, students, faculty, tutors, and administrators have the opportunity to collaborate without regard to the hierarchy that is apparent outside of the writing center. But even so, writing centers are also implicated in the systemic racism that exists in higher education as well. This section of the literature review will explore the ways in which writing centers engage in racist processes and writing centers' attempts at combating these processes.

Writing Centers as Sites of Language Instruction (Or is Language Oppression?)

Many writing center scholars have highlighted the need for antiracism within their work because they understand and accept the fact that writing centers are implicit in institutional mandates, and henceforth, systemic hidden racism. Even so, it must first be established that "racism in our writing centers . . . is not a series of aberrations, but the everyday manifestation of deeply embedded logics and patterns" (Geller et al. 87). The

argument of racism's existence and pervasive power, as discussed previously, is well established. To deny the existence of racism, I argue, is to create a blind spot in praxis both inside and outside of the educational sphere. Hence, an important strand of the conversation surrounding antiracist work in higher education is the use of language. If we choose to acknowledge the fact that higher education is complicit in systemic racism, then we, as writing center people, must also assume the responsibility of hidden injustices concerning language instruction, language use, and attitudes about both in our tutoring practices. I argue that part of the reason these injustices are hidden is because of the lack of explicit and ongoing dialogue about white privilege and its role in perpetuating systemic racism.

In response to writing centers' complicity in attitudes about language and its use, Laura Greenfield argues in her work "The 'Standard English' Fairy Tale: A Rhetorical Analysis of Racist Pedagogies and Commonplace Assumptions about Language Diversity" that there is no such thing as a standard English dialect, which is further supported by Victoria Cliett's article "The Expanding Frontier of World Englishes: A New Perspective for Teachers of English." Cliett argues that the concept of "Standard English" is more complex than many English teachers' traditional notion of "correct and incorrect language" (67). This correct versus incorrect concept of language is founded in the idea that "Standard English" is the form of language that affords its users the greatest success in their endeavors. In fact, Greenfield argues that the belief of a "Standard English" existence has been created to maintain the privileges of those in power: white people. She bases her argument on Villanueva's concept of "new racism" which is "entrenched in our discourses about language" (34). Essentially, Greenfield argues that

our general understanding of linguistics in America is founded upon the racist ideals that still exist in today's society, albeit covertly, instead of the theoretical and scientific explorations that detail how languages work.

Moreover, in composition classrooms and writing centers, the concept of a "Standard English" results in the reinforcement of hidden racist norms. The manifestation of racist understandings of language is most prevalent when it "has been used to justify pedagogies that insist upon the teaching of only 'Standard English' in writing classrooms and writing centers (and indeed across the curriculum)" (Greenfield 28). Greenfield argues that this type of privileging leads to a "racist view of history rather than an intellectually sound understanding of linguistic phenomena" (38).

Furthermore, the biggest point of opposition that Greenfield dismantles is the idea of how "Standard English" is the "right" way to write because it produces the most easily understood and effective communication when in reality the promotion of this dialect of English is actually privileging certain people over others since others' native dialect differs from "Standard English." I argue that this act of privileging is systemic (not to mention, historically, the enforcement of "Standard English" was explicitly discriminate); if writing center directors were to have explicit discussions with tutors about white privilege, and henceforth the enforcement of white norms about language use, then a space to critically analyze the unquestioned norms that dictate "good"/"standard" and "bad"/"non-standard" writing would be a consequence of those types of discussions. This understanding will, hopefully, then allow tutors and directors to change the way they interact with students who want to write in "Standard English" to include a more rhetorical understanding of writing. That is, tutors should be able to help writers see their

rhetorical options in choosing what dialect to use. Tutors and directors need to understand that "Standard English" is analogous to white privilege and that reinforcing its use acts a gatekeeper to monitor who is allowed to succeed within higher education. Once they do, they then can engage in antiracist efforts against language oppression because until tutors and directors thoughtfully discuss white privilege and its effects, writing centers will remain complicit in higher education instilling societal ideas that create an unequal system for students through language use and attitudes about it.

To highlight the racist factors at play, Vershawn Ashanti Young advances Greenfield's argument. In "Should Writers Use They Own Language?," Young mixes "Standard English" with the rule-bound African American Vernacular English (AAVE) dialect to make a poignant argument: "Standard English" is not inherently better, more clear, or more easily understood than other dialects or languages. Throughout the piece, Young builds his argument by combining the two dialects in the same sentence, which creates a dynamic voice, and explicates his argument that language should be taught descriptively and not prescriptively (65). Young claims for multiplicity of form, for code meshing, when it comes to writing academically, and that students should be recognized for their work at establishing and maintaining their own voice.

Furthermore, Young maintains that most educators have misapplied code switching—that students talk one way at home and another, more "proper," way at school—so he argues for the use of code meshing, which he asserts is a naturally occurring mixing of "dialects, international languages, local idioms, chat-room lingo, and the rhetorical styles of various ethnic and cultural groups in both formal and informal speech acts" (67). To further develop his argument, Young provides real life examples of

professionals who code mesh to create rhetorically effective and accessible statements, solidifying the idea that dialects and languages other than English are just as valid and important. I argue that Young's core belief of language marries composition pedagogy and antiracist work through the attempt to validate and encourage students in sharing their experiences through the language that best expresses who they are as people. The problem lies in the fact that some composition students are not being assessed for their ability to best express who they are as individuals, but instead how well they employ "Standard English."

Other Forms of Oppression

Language use and attitudes concerning language are not the only ways invisible racist ideals are reinforced within higher education. The current conversation surrounding antiracist work within writing centers also highlights other factors such as the rhetorical space of a writing center. The construction of these spaces matter because they also have the power to significantly contribute to the invisiblility of racism (as does tutor education, and tutoring strategies), and, while one can argue that antiracist work delves into the emotions, reactions, thoughts, and deeds of people, the analysis of the construction of writing center spaces should be another avenue in which antiracist work is enacted. Jackie Grutsch McKinney in her book chapter entitled "Writing Centers are Cozy Homes" works to understand then deconstruct the overarching narrative of writing centers as welcoming places, as a space that is "cozy" or "homey." She argues that not everyone will understand or relate to the particular "home-like" feel we often strive to create in writing centers—comfortable seating, free coffee, and helpful worksheets. Instead of feeling safe in our assumptions about home, we should be asking questions

such as, "whose home?" and "for whom is it comfortable?" (McKinney 25). McKinney

mentions that we must be cognizant of the fact that some students use school, and by

extension the writing center, as an "escape from home" for a variety of reasons—abusive

home life, messiness of house, and/or the need for quiet and space not found at home

(26). This complicates the idea of writing centers being places in which students can feel

at home and comfortable.

Furthermore, McKinney makes the very poignant case that these ideas of home

are "culturally marked," and essentially fulfill the privileged view of home, which is only

reinforced by the use of the word "comfortable" because, as Nancy Maloney Grimm

argues in her book *Good Intentions: Writing Center Work for Postmodern Times*, this

word "is frequently associated with America's vast middle class" (115). This description

becomes problematic when the student population does not entirely consist of white,

middle class Americans or those whose "home" spaces may be anything but comfortable.

McKinney goes on to argue that critical approaches to understanding how people

"read" writing center spaces is an important factor when considering the narrative of

writing centers. McKinney argues that one way to help broaden directors' and tutors'

understanding of their writing center space is to stop blindly accepting and promulgating

the grand narrative of writing centers equaling a cozy, home-like atmosphere. McKinney

suggests "that the need to tell a story compatible with the writing center grand narrative

leads writing center scholars to talk about their centers in terms of home rather than in

some other way" (28). Essentially, subscribing to the already established understanding

of writing centers as homey places only reinforces people's inclination to perpetuate this

perception. McKinney calls for a look past this easily held understanding and points out

the problems of why continuing to cling to this narrative may, and most likely does, create serious problems for writing centers, especially in terms of a large international student population since cultural norms dictate how the concepts of home and cozy are defined.

I argue, to refrain—whether unintentionally or not—from purposefully taking into consideration the rhetoric of writing center spaces (whatever it may be) is to enact white privilege and perpetuate racism because white privilege thrives on people's lack of awareness of it. That is not to say there is one correct way to rhetorically develop a writing center. What I do argue, however, is that having a complete disregard of the rhetoric of these spaces opens the door for institutionalized racism to creep in and make itself at home without our consent.

Additionally, McKinney's argument is particularly important in that it reflects Condon's belief in decentering. Both scholars are arguing for a view of education and its physical space other than the one that has been put forward by the powers that be, if you will. We—whites and people of color—as an antiracist collective must set aside our own understandings of how *we* want to transmit knowledge to students and truly work to understand their needs in their pursuit of education. This type of critical assessment and self-awareness, Condon argues, is uncomfortable, uneasy, and foundation crumbling, but to effectively include antiracist work in writing center praxis, directors, tutors, and student writers must be willing to be vulnerable to change and, sometimes painful, growth.

Similar to McKinney's assertion that there is a lack of rhetorical awareness of writing center spaces, a lack of rhetorical awareness of gaps within writing center

pedagogy also exists. Anne Ellen Geller, Michele Eodice, Frankie Condon, Meg Carroll, and Elizabeth Boquet in their chapter entitled "Everyday Racism: Anti-Racism Work and Writing Center Practice" argue that materials used in tutor education do not reflect the understanding that race is a social construct. As a result, the majority of writers who tutors read are white, which helps to maintain "the artificial containment of racism" (Geller et al. 97), compounding the problem of the invisibility of white privilege. In other words, the materials used to educate writing center tutors, and one can argue, by extension, the reading material in composition classrooms, uphold the (white) norms of society. Nancy Maloney Grimm sums up the reinforcing mindset behind this idea in her book entitled *Good Intentions: Writing Center Work for Postmodern Times* by saying that "as long as teachers and tutors are sure that they are already doing the 'right' thing, they are unlikely to change; who willingly wants to trade innocence for implication in unjust practices?" (33). To combat this, Geller et al. advocate that tutors read work by an array of scholars, especially people of color. These authors also encourage writing center directors to include an inventory adapted from McIntosh's "Unpacking the Invisible Backpack" as a way to "begin confronting white privilege" (99).

In furthering their argument, Geller and her colleagues suggest including tutors' own experiences and backgrounds into the conversation in conjunction with readings by scholars of color as a means of creating opportunities for meaningful dialogue to explore race, racism, and their influence on tutoring. Essentially, the authors' argument is for tutors and directors to be in dialogue with one another and authors of chosen texts to allow tutors and directors the opportunity to confront aspects of racism that have gone previously unrecognized. To do anything else, I argue, would be a repression of voices,

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both authors' and tutors', who can provide new ways of seeing and understanding the world. The very fact that directors do not see exclusion of these authors in tutor education programs as a problem represents how white privilege manifest itself: in the mundane, day-to-day decisions that seemingly do not have a large impact. The only way to become aware of detrimental and invisible power forces is to shine a light on the dusty corners of our consciences and examine how our privileges influence the way we think, even in the ordinary details.

Antiracist Efforts in Composition Classrooms and Writing Centers

Another layer to the current conversation concerns the broad based antiracist efforts that occur in composition classrooms and writing centers in response to the understanding that these spaces are implicit in institutionalized racism. These efforts have resulted in scholarship that focuses on pedagogical choices that encourage and help directors, students and administrators to further promote equality and social justice in writing center praxis.

One scholar who combines her work in composition classrooms with her research interests in race studies is Nancy Effinger Wilson. In her work titled "Coming in from the (Binary) Code: Deconstruction in the Composition Classroom," Wilson argues for the implementation of Derrida's deconstruction theory to help white students understand that race, gender, and sex are all societal constructions, and henceforth provide students the ability to resist taking on the important understanding of how these constructions bestow positions of power to these students through white privilege. Wilson argues that some of her students believe that since they are not racist or sexist or homophobic, that racism, sexism, and homophobia do not exist.

To help students begin to understand and analyze social constructs, Wilson argues for the use of lesson plans that provide exercises that deconstruct the idea of binary opposition through a three step process in which students: "detect binary oppositions that privilege one group at the expense of another" (39), "trouble the binary" (42), and "clarify why steps one and two matter" (44). These lesson plans then lead to an expository essay that allows students to explore an aspect of society that they can deconstruct following the same steps they applied in previous classes. This approach embodies antiracist goals, I argue, because in calling for a deconstruction of the binary, there is a possibility of students dismantling myths concerning racism and white privilege, while realizing where they stand in relation to these power structures (which is alluded to in an excerpt from a student's essay within Wilson's article). This is the very work that antiracism scholarship calls for, as Condon's work explicates.

In addition to composition educators' efforts in critical work against racism, many writing centers are already engaging in the dynamic and important work of antiracist pedagogy. One example is Moira Ozias and Beth Godbee's argument that the inclusion of antiracist work within writing centers and requires organizing, similar to labor unions. In "Organizing for Antiracism in Writing Centers: Principles for Enacting Social Change," Ozias and Godbee focus on how to effectively organize writing centers to engage in and promote change within their own spaces and the university writ large. In doing so, these scholars promote the cultivation of avenues for tutors, directors, students, and administration to question and challenge understandings about tutoring practices and institutional beliefs.

One important principle of organizing that the authors make clear is that antiracist work must be cultivated according to the institution's mission statement, the goals of the writing center, and the overall culture of the institution. When these objectives conflict with the goals of antiracism is when writing centers have the capacity to be agents of change in their community (Ozias and Godbee 151). In other words, "[o]rganizing, like leadership itself, offers all of us in writing centers—directors, tutors, staff members, and writers who visit our centers—the potential for working against oppression and contributing to a just and equitable world, in and out of the writing center" (155).

The authors also argue for three frameworks in which antiracist work can be conducted in writing centers: "direct action organizing," "a balance of strategies and tactics," and "a dialectic approach" (152). The first framework "works well for addressing overt racism" (157), but as Victor Villanueva and Eduardo Bona-Silva argue, "new racism" is covert and hard to explicate. Ozias and Godbe agree with this assertion by pointing out that this framework does not effectively combat a "university culture infused with whiteness and white supremacy that operate in often covert and implicit ways" (157). And as I have discussed earlier, simply pointing out that white privilege exists does not help to dismantle it.

The authors' second recommended framework, "a balance of strategies and tactics," (158) is essentially the promotion of an effective working relationship between goals developed from collective beliefs and the actualization of those goals. Ozias and Godbe argue that this manifests itself as a way "to conduct organizing through a combined approach of collaboratively planning long-term, structural change as well as watching for daily, unexpected opportunities" (160), which is reminiscent of other

arguements that antiracist work must be grounded the day-to-day happenings in the writing center.

Furthermore, the idea of a dialectical approach to antiracist work in writing centers means that directors and tutors must be vulnerable to existing tensions, or "the dialectic framework emphasizes the paradoxical nature of both means and ends, which are inextricably linked within dialectic organizing" (Ozias and Godbee 162). In conjunction with the other two frameworks, Ozias and Godbee's argument culminates into the use of participatory action research, which is "both a qualitative research method and a theoretical perspective that has historically developed adjacent to community organizing" (171). In applying this approach, writing center directors would be giving their attention to the unique situations within their own centers instead of using a one-size-fits-all method, while also participating in collaboration across disciplines to create opportunities for growth and change during the process of learning (173).

Moreover, many writing center directors already choose to engage in important writing center work, theoretical and practical, that addresses race within education but that may not necessarily be labeled as antiracism. For instance, in her piece titled "Retheorizing Writing Center Work to Transform a System of Advantage Based on Race," Nancy Maloney Grimm works to push writing center directors and staff toward a more social approach for the structure of writing centers using Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger's social theory of learning. Essentially, Grimm (along with many others, such as Bonilla-Silva) argues that the basic component of American education—individualism—is a hindrance to the actualization of a more sincerely inclusive learning environment, especially within writing centers. The foundational concepts found in most writing

centers, "A good tutor makes the student do all of the work," "The ultimate aim of a tutorial is an independent writer," and "Our job is to produce better writers, not better writing" (Grimm 81), are the precepts that can cause writing centers to exclude students because they are based on individualism (81), and I would further argue, (white) attitudes about language use. This is not to say that these precepts are inherently bad, but it is important to remember Villanueva's argument about bootstraps: you can only pull yourself up by your bootstraps if you have them. Or in other words, the concept of individualism as the driving force of success applies only to those who have the means to succeed.

Rather than continuing on this path, Grimm argues for the inclusion of Lave and Wenger's social theory of learning. This theory explicates the need for learning communities to remain open and welcoming to newcomers so that their communities do not become closed off and marginalizing. For Wenger's theory to take hold in writing centers, the ways in which tutors and directors interact with student writers have to change. This means a move away from focusing on the minute help that students need, such as correct grammar and usage, and instead "focus[ing] on extending membership, which requires analyzing and articulating implicit relations, tacit conventions, subtle cues, and so forth" to students who frequent the writing center (Grimm 94). In other words, writing centers have to "promote identities of participation" (95) for all students involved within the writing center tutoring process instead of marginalizing those who do not fit the white, American, privileged idea of a college student. In doing this, directors and tutors are promoting and engaging in interactions with writers that are not based on

race or privileged assumptions; instead, writers, tutors, and directors are a part of a community that grows and learns together for the betterment of all involved.

Grimm also argues for writing centers' need to reflect on the work that these communities are trying to accomplish. This means that if diversity is a priority, then directors, staff, and tutors should reflect true diversity, racially, academically, social-economically, and ethnically. Furthermore, this social learning community idea also propels writing centers to more expansively define literacy so that it breaks down the idea of a monolithic "right" way to write, just as Greenfield and Young argue in their pieces, and allows for the inclusion of the wide array of dialects and cultural communication that exist in the world (Grimm 92).

Difficulties in Instituting Antiracist Work

Even with these antiracist efforts and theories, there are still hurdles to face when instituting antiracist efforts in writing centers. These obstacles are varied and also impact how tutors understand and interact with writers and one another. An important thread in the current conversation within writing center studies about antiracist efforts focuses on obstacles such as the structure of tutor education, directors' unwillingness to engage in antiracism, minority students' embodiment of racist tropes, and white student resistance to antiracist efforts.

One obstacle that directors and tutors face is the structure of tutor education. That is, care must be taken in how tutor education is designed so as to not minimize the understanding of how race impacts higher education. In "Beyond the 'Week Twelve Approach': Toward a Critical Pedagogy for Antiracist Tutor Education," Laura Greenfield and Karen Rowan assert that "writing center directors must look critically at

how we have been designing and executing our tutor education courses" (126) because "writing centers are already raced" (124) and that "to question the work of tutor education is to question writing centers writ large" (125). Through their exploration of how the structure of tutor education affects writing centers, Greenfield and Rowan argue that writing centers are places of engagement and change, both politically and institutionally and as such should reflect this potential within tutor education pedagogy.

These scholars argue against what they call "the week twelve approach," or the remote discussion of "race, multiculturalism, or, at its most vague culture at an isolated moment" (Greenfield and Rowan 132) within writing center pedagogy that is not connected to daily experiences of tutors, directors or writers. Instead, these authors argue for "a critical pedagogy" (136) in which students (tutors and writers alike) have the ability to question, analyze, and begin to understand whatever students are facing— experiences, discussions, materials, behavior, etc.—that may be perpetuating a privileged view of education and experiences of individuals of color. In using this approach, writing center directors and tutors have the chance to work toward no longer promoting a biased understanding of writing center praxis as is influenced by institutional power. Instead, tutors and directors have the opportunity to create their own critical and intelligent understandings of the world around them and "come to recognize their own agency in shaping their own work" (136), a fundamental goal of antiracist work. I argue that (re)examining the structure of tutor education also provides all writing center people the opportunity to include vital and explicit discussions of white privilege because, as has already been established, white privilege is a central component in the perpetuation of racism within higher education.

More importantly, though, Greenfield and Rowan argue that an inoculation approach to race, the enacting of the "week twelve approach" and its surrounding problems is "inefficient in creating institutional change" (127). When antiracist work is not grounded in the everyday and in critical awareness, as many scholars postulate, it loses is effect because some tutors may be ill-equipped and underprepared to deal with racism when they are faced with it inside and outside of the writing center (129). As a resolution to this, Greenfield and Rowan argue for a sustained and critical inclusion of discussion of race and racism within writing center practices.

Even though antiracist work merges quite well into writing center praxis, Greenfield and Rowan argue that writing center directors nonetheless often ignore antiracist education. For one, some directors do not see a need to talk about race within writing centers, especially if the majority of the student population is made up of white students. Alternatively, if the student population is predominately made up of minority students, directors may believe that talking about race is unnecessary because they believe these institutions are "race neutral" (Greenfield and Rowan 129). Furthermore, writing center directors believe that they have a choice in whether or not to address racism within their writing centers. Geller and her colleagues argue that the very idea that directors believe that they have choice in talking out against racial inequalities is in fact a result of the directors' privilege (91). I argue that when writing center people take a critical and intelligent in depth look at their practices and beliefs about what makes up tutor education, they have the opportunity to create a more nuanced and expansive pedagogy that addresses systemic racism as perpetuated by white privilege, and by default, writing centers' complicity in it.

As research shows, another problem that results in the continuation of systemic racism as supported by white privilege is how students of color themselves come to embody the racist ideals that are ever-present within higher education. Aja Martinez constructs in her article "'The American Way': Resisting the Empire of Force and Color-Blind Racism" the argument that her Chican@ students invoke the racist ideals that uphold what Eduardo Bonilla-Silva calls "color-blind racism" (Bonilla-Silva 14).

Bonilla-Silva asserts that there are four premises that whites engage in to perpetuate color-blind racism: "abstract liberalism, naturalization, cultural racism, and minimization of racism" (69). Martinez succinctly describes abstract liberalism as "the frame that involves the use of ideas associated with political liberalism such as choice and individualism. These ideas are applied in an abstract manner to explain racial matters such as opposition to affirmative action policies" (588). This can take the form whites or people of color saying that affirmative action is reverse racism. She continues by recounting naturalization as the ability of the "dominant culture to explain away racial phenomena by suggesting that they are natural occurrences. For example, groups can claim segregation is natural because people from all backgrounds gravitate toward likeness; it is 'just the way things are'" (588). Furthermore, "Cultural racism . . . relies on culturally based arguments such as 'Mexicans do not value education' or 'Blacks are violent people' to explain the standing of people of color in society" (588). And as its moniker suggests, the minimization of racism is when whites argue that race is no longer an issue; it does not matter. Even though these are the recursive tools that whites use to reinforce racism (usually subconsciously), the permeation of racism in

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higher education has encouraged, if not coerced, students of color to also enact these premises, which is evident in their composition work.

Through her analysis, Martinez finds that her first generation Chican@ college students

> rely on rhetoric that they likely view as necessary to college-level academic personal writing. They employ what they consciously or unconsciously view as the academic voice in higher education or what could be argued as a "white voice." As a result, their narratives are entrenched in color-blind racist ideology. (593)

Because racialized norms dictate what is appropriate behavior and acceptable language use, students, faculty, and writing center staff all are beholden to the racist ideals inherent in higher education, whether they intend to be or not. In response to this, I argue that antiracist work that insists and enacts active, critical, and on-going discussions of white privilege within writing centers has the capability to highlight the tropes and frames that whites and people of color use to reinforce color-blind racism.

Another difficulty in instituting antiracism within tutor education is student resistance. Research, and common sense, shows that there is opposition from white students in acknowledging white privilege's existence and how it benefits them in the educational setting. Even so, Jennifer Seibel Trainor in her article "'My Ancestors Didn't Own Slaves': Understanding White Talk about Race" argues for a more in-depth understanding of "white talk about race" as a means of presenting a more context rich view of the "emotional dimensions and hence its persuasive appeal for White students" (140). Essentially, Trainor argues that we cannot simply dismiss student responses that

are blatantly racist *just* as racist remarks; instead, Trainor calls us to be cognizant of the fact that "such discourses also contain complex emotional resonances" (146). She continues by stating,

> discourses such as "my ancestors didn't own slaves," analyzed with an eye toward the messages of racism embedded in White talk about race, appear to abdicate responsibility for racism and forward a view of Whites as innocent of racism. . . . [However,] students explained that the claim that their ancestors were innocent of racism was a way of connecting with people of color, a way of expressing, ironically, racial solidarity, by suggesting that they are on the "right" side. (146)

In other words, to take white students' racist comments at face value leaves layers of complexity untouched, resulting in unperturbed racist views.

Additionally, Trainor argues that using only the lens of Critical Discourse Analysis results in a failure "to understand [racist language's] persuasive appeal for individuals" (142) because "racist language functions metaphorically. That is, it acts as a rhetorical bridge between unlike domains: the affective domain of feeling, on the one hand, and the political domain of racial belief and identity, on the other" (141). As an answer to this dilemma, Trainor emphasizes the need for "courses that engage [educators] in analysis of their own identities and language practices, as well as opportunities to think through the political, pedagogical, and affective dimensions of what students say and write" (163). This may mean that educators This view mirrors Condon's argument that decentering provides invaluable opportunities for directors and educators to view the world, the university setting, through a different set of lenses that are critical of personal

and institutional assumptions and practices that go unquestioned even when they result in unequal power dynamics and the perpetuation of racism.

What is Missing?

Each piece of scholarship discussed so far brings to the table real problems and viable solutions to racism's power of denigrating individuals, especially their educational experiences. And many authors within antiracist scholarship have either directly mentioned white privilege a few times or alluded to it within their work, but as I have argued, this is not enough. If we are to truly engage in the work that Condon calls for, to be comfortable with introspection of our responses to people of color's exclusion from fully participating in all aspects of higher education, then it is imperative that white individuals also intelligently recognize and partake in critical conversations about white privilege. If writing center directors, staff, and tutors are open to understanding and exploring the phenomenon of how many people subconsciously promote racist ideals in their interactions with others, regardless of intention, then antiracist workers may be able to enact effective change.

From this antiracism scholarship, sustainable theoretical pedagogies that possibly promote self-awareness of white privilege are missing. As antiracist educators, we must develop pedagogies that cut right to the heart of the matter, while also attempting to address the repercussions of racism. As it stands now, as Ricky Lee Allen and Augusto Rossatto have argued in their article entitled "Does Critical Pedagogy Work with Privileged Students?" critical pedagogy fails to effectively reach privileged students because of a variety of factors: teachers are afraid to call into question the students' privilege, students feel that the label of "oppressor" does not apply to them, the language

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of privilege is offensive, or they feel as if educators are making them out to be the "bad guy." Because of these beliefs, Allen and Rossatto believe that the current structure and theory of critical pedagogy needs to include a "refinement of critical pedagogy that deals more explicitly with students from oppressor groups and, to a lesser extent, those in oppressed groups who have internalized the discourse of the oppressor" (165). This approach helps to alleviate the unfair responsibility of the oppressed having to educate oppressors about their privileges, while simultaneously helping those who are labeled as oppressors to realize how their lives differ from the oppressed. To make this assertion a reality, antiracist workers must be comfortable with feeling uncomfortable; they must be willing to discuss the taboo topic of white privilege and its effects.

By no means am I attempting to lay blame on anyone, although there are scholars who believe that whites must be the ones to meet people of color more than half way (see Roy). Instead, I am calling for theoretically pedagogical choices in tutor education programs that effectively generate and sustain critical dialogue about white privilege's role in racism. As of right now, the antiracism scholarship explicates work conducted by *directors* that scrutinizes, dissects, and calls into question the perpetuation of racism and white privilege's connection to it. In other words, the antiracist scholarship that exists is focused on directors as an audience and not necessarily tutors. The scholarhip is lacking how explicit discussions of white privilege can be included in tutor education programs.

In an attempt to fill this gap, my next chapter will provide a four-pronged approach of interconnected pedagogical options based in writing center studies, composition, and educational theory and practice to educate writing center tutors and directors in effectively engaging in analytical, intelligent, and on-going discussions of

white privilege to develop self-awareness of this unwarranted and unequal social

dynamic.

CHAPTER III

Pedagogical Choices for Tutor Education

Through exploration of antiracist scholarship, I have identified a gap concerning explicit discussions of white privilege in tutor education. This gap is detrimental to the integrity of the field of writing center studies because it allows, unintentionally or not, white privilege to go unchecked, which leads to the perpetuation of racist practices. As I have argued, many scholars have already undertaken the task of explicating how writing centers are implicit in higher education's perpetuation of systemic racism and the need to fight to create true equality and inclusion in these spaces. Even so, the lack of explicit discussions of white privilege preserves its insidious power dynamics. We must first acknowledge the existence of a problem before we can successfully find a solution, which is why I argue that including discussions of white privilege and its effects within tutor education is key to antiracist work.

As a means of implementing my argument, this chapter will focus on theoretically-sound pedagogical choices following a four-pronged approach that directors can include in their tutor education programs. Of course, every writing center is uniquely situated within the environment of their institution, so these strategies are not a "one size fits all" approach. Instead, directors can mix and match, if you will, these approaches to create an effective engagement between themselves and tutors in their exploration of antiracism and white privilege.

Why We Need to Make White Privilege Explicit in Antiracist Work

The problem of white privilege is that, as Woody Doane argues, "white Americans have a lower degree of self-awareness about race and their own racial identity

than members of other racial-ethnic groups" (6-7). When groups of people, especially those who are in a position of power, are never questioned as to how they came into that power, unequal, unfair, and harmful practices, protocols, and thinking go unexamined, such as whites accusing people of color "playing the race card." Another way of understanding this concept is to realize that "[a]s long as race is something only applied to non-white peoples, as long as white people are not racially seen and named, they/we function as a human norm. Other people are raced, we [whites] are just people" (Dyer 10). As a result, people of color are forced to daily confront the fact that their identity is inextricably tied to their race and hence are seen as "Other." Whites, on the other hand, are usually not forced to carry the burden of having to account for the actions of people who look like them. For instance, Donald Trump has made a variety of racist, sexist, and other divisive comments during his political campaigns, such as his remarks against Mexicans and Mexican Americans. Even so, whites most likely will not hear how all white people are as evil/close-minded/hateful/vile/etc. as Trump. But when the tables are turned, whites have no problem vilifying African Americans, Mexicans, Mexican Americans, Iraqis, Syrians, or any other group of people by charging all members of a race or culture as guilty for the actions of a few. This is white privilege.

Moreover, whites also enact white privilege when they think that they do not actually have to call white privilege out for what it actually is—an underlying instigator of racist behavior within higher education, as my discussion of white norms of language use has explicated; instead, some whites acknowledge its existence and then leave the sleeping dog lie. Indeed, the very action needed is to not only acknowledge, but also understand and resist their white privilege as a means of dismantling racism. This means

that whites recognize how their emotional resistance to discussions of white privilege and racism is not an indicator of being right; being offended does not equate to being right. Instead, whites must be open to learning how white privilege is engrained in U.S. history, politics, and education and willing to work toward changing this fact.

My argument is that if white privilege were discussed openly and without finger pointing or the "blame game," then serious intellectual dialogue could be a result. White people are not at fault for being white, just as blacks and other races are not at fault, either. The problem lies in whites' inability or unwillingness to recognize this *universal* fact. White privilege rears its ugly head when whites are seen falling into the four tropes that Bona-Silva argues are the means that keeps white privilege and racism alive in today's culture. In other words, when we engage in racist rhetoric, we are in fact denying the truths of others' existences. Ethically, we do not have the right to do so, but we apparently do have the privilege. Furthermore, by continuously choosing to remain silent about white privilege, but not necessarily racism, we are trying to fix the effects without ever touching the cause. To me, that is the same as taking Pepto-Bismol for a stomachache while never addressing the fact that the stomachache occurred because of eating too much food. In other words, it is illogical. To address the cause, we must have explicit discussions of white privilege to expose how deceptive and deep-seated it is within higher education.

Writing Centers as Ideal Spaces

As argued earlier, writing centers are ideal and logical places to explicit and critical discussions of white privilege they are integral in supporting students, faculty, and staff in engaging in what is being taught and promoted within their institutions. As Sarah

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Dees, Beth Godbee, and Moira Ozias so eloquently point out, "Writing centers are places where different dialogues meet, where we challenge our own assumptions, and where we ultimately work to change them. By conditioning ourselves to talk about racism, we will be able to ask difficult questions and pursue conversations with students who come into the center." For me, "talking about racism" means talking clearly and explicitly about white privilege. This then "can influence the work students do across campus, in courses, and within disciplines" (Dees, Godbee, and Ozias). In other words, writing centers are uniquely situated to cultivate and foster explicit discussions of white privilege, while having the power to reach out to other campus entities and engage in conversation with them as well.

It is now time to include antiracist discussions of white privilege in our daily endeavors.

As a means of engaging in writing centers' potential, I will explicate theoretically-sound pedagogical choices for tutor education programs using theories from rhetoric and composition, writing center, antiracism, and education scholarship. With all of this in mind, I propose the following model of antiracist work to use within tutor education programs to help create self-awareness of white privilege in tutors:

1. Defining white privilege

2. Recognizing white privilege in tutor practices and student work

3. Dealing with resistance in tutors' comprehension of white privilege

3. Moving toward action to dismantle white privilege

Defining White Privilege

One of the first steps in any solution is to first clearly define the problem at hand. It is no different when it comes to dealing with white privilege. To help tutors to define

white privilege, they first need to understand how white privilege was created and is sustained. That is, tutors and directors must first understand how America embodies white supremacy, white domination. As Jesse Benn points out in his political blog post for *Huffington Post*,

> White supremacy refers to a racial hierarchy in which whiteness sits atop of. The United States was founded on a system—legally, culturally, economically, and politically—of white male upper class supremacy . . . white privilege, on the other hand, is a reference to the myriad of benefits bestowed on white people stemming from the aforementioned system of white supremacy.

In helping tutors understand the underlying support structures of white privilege that are embedded within American culture and systems, tutors will have a better grasp of how white privilege persists. When entire generations deny and deflect the existence of white privilege, people begin believing the lie that white privilege does not exist. One way to combat this willful ignorance is to show real life examples that highlight how white privilege manifests and shape shifts to benefits whites over everyone else in America.

A specific tutor educational approach to help tutors come to this realization is what is called the "Privilege Walk." Many college campuses' residential and housing departments use a variant of this activity to help students connect with one another based on life experiences and to create awareness of privileges. In one form of this activity, a large space is cleared of all furniture so that tutors have room to move. All tutors are asked to form a straight line and hold hands, and when the director or chosen activity leader shares statements that represent instances of privilege (e.g., "English is my first

language," "I always knew that I would attend college," etc.), tutors move forward a step if they feel that the statement applies to them. After all of the statements are shared, depending on the make-up of the tutor population, there may be multiple "levels" of privilege based on where students are standing. This strategy is a powerful visual representation of the detrimental effects of white privilege. As Adrienne Maree Brown points out, "The traditional 'Privilege Walk' exercise helps unveil the distance between those who have privilege and those who don't." However, Brown incisively remarks, "[t]hat visible gap shows the work that must be done within the privileged group, but often still keeps the focus on privilege, relegating those who have less to the back." Of course, if writing centers are to truly engage in work that helps to create equality, directors and tutors must have meaningful discussions about the shortcomings of this activity. In doing so, a standard of interaction will be established. That is, tutors will be expected to resist shying away from uncomfortable topics or confusing ones.

Additionally, this activity should be used only after trust has been established among writing center staff and administration because it takes great vulnerability for tutors and directors to open themselves up to the type of self-scrutiny that this activity promotes. Even though it may create discomfort or initial resistance, this pedagogical choice for tutor education has the capacity to energize tutors to fully engage in critical and explicit discussions of white privilege.

Recognizing White Privilege

After tutors have effectively defined white privilege—for the moment—the next step would be to help them to identify white privilege enacted in writing center sessions (e.g., tutoring practices and student work. One way to engage tutors in this awareness is

to introduce them to writers of color, such as Gloria Anzaldúa, Vershawn Ashanti Young, and Geneva Smitherman, among many others. This will be beneficial because these authors have expressed the psychological, educational, and deeply personal consequences of being victims of racism. More specifically, directors can assign excerpts from Gloria Anzaldúa's book *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, especially her chapter entitled "How to Tame a Wild Tongue" in which Anzaldúa discusses how her identity is inextricably tied to her linguistic choices, or as she eloquently states, "Ethnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity—I am my language" (81). This reading will help tutors understand the consequences of enforcing "Standard" English for non-native English speakers, which is an enactment of white privilege, and possibly detrimental to students' identity formation, because the use of "Standard" English, as explained previously, implies that there is only one right way to write: the white way. Overall, tutors need to be aware of the consequences of linguistic decisions and help writers to understand that they have choices in how they want to write, such as code meshing (see Young). If tutors are a part of learning culture environment and read works from authors of color with an open mind, then there is the possibility of them understanding that the way they see the world is limiting others' perspectives and experiences.

It is important to note, however, that becoming aware of white privilege and how it represses any dialect other than "Standard" English is not a simple process. In fact, tutors are placed in a difficult position when writers come to the writing center to receive help with "fixing" their paper so that it adheres to the expectations of a "Standard" English driven institution. This difficulty lies in the fact that tutors may battle with balancing the many roles they embody as writing center tutors: student, peer, coach,

representative of an institution, and fellow human being but not an authority figure. Additionally, some white tutors have never had to overtly struggle with learning how to write in "Standard" English; they have not been deemed somehow lesser because of their language use. As a result, tutors may struggle with supporting students in, what the Conference on College Composition has called, "students' right to their own language" (709), which means it is important for directors and tutors to understand how writing centers are implicit in language oppression and the effects of it.

In addition to understanding that writing centers are complicit in institutionalized racism, tutors also need self-awareness of their tutor practices—what they say, model, and do, consciously and unconsciously—so that they are not unintentionally enacting white privilege. A beginning exercise that will directly connect tutor experiences with different perspectives of tutoring practices is to have all tutors and directors write about their first or most memorable experience with race using all five senses to describe it. Tutors and directors should be given time to write down notes with the explicit understanding that they will be encouraged to share their experiences, while respecting each person's narrative. After directors and tutors share their memories, they should try to complicate their understanding of that memory; that is, they should try and imagine ways in which white privilege may have been present. (A great example of this activity is called "Taco Night" by Paul C. Gorski, which can be found at EdChange.org. In it, Gorski highlights how the addition of a "Taco Night" event is not equitable to promoting inclusion.) This activity will allow everyone to witness that interacting with race is undeniable. Everyone deals with race in some manner, even if some whites do not automatically have to identify themselves through race. In other words, or more

specifically, Frankie Condon's words, this activity, in conjunction with readings from authors of color, will help tutors and directors with "naming the differences" between how whites and people of color experience and deal with race (Condon 11). Of course, this helps tutors and directors understand that "the nature of the antiracist work that can and must be done by peoples of color and by whites is also different" (11). The realization that whites and people of color may engage in antiracist efforts differently helps to justify the need for self-awareness of white privilege while simultaneously helping to make it explicit for tutors and directors.

Moreover, this activity will provide directors opportunities to incorporate tutor experiences into later discussions, when appropriate, as a means of connecting lived experiences with the readings that tutors will be assigned. In first establishing a sense of community beyond simply being a group of tutors, directors will help create safe spaces for tutors to share real concerns, doubts, and (mis)understandings of the world.

Another means to ensure that tutors are consistently engaging in the reflective practices needed to recognize white privilege and antiracist work is for directors to revise session report forms (or create them) to include questions that help tutors reflect on institutional racist and/or marginalizing practices that may be present in tutoring sessions. Of course, these questions will look different for every institution based on its culture and environment, but they should all have a foundational mission of helping tutors "see" how their advice and tutoring practices are not developed in a bubble but rather in the midst of the institution's agenda. Possible questions could be:

In your session, were there any instances in which your understanding of writing or societal norms were challenged? How so? How did you respond? Why?

In what ways did you communicate differences to your writer (in ideas, linguistic

choices, organizational strategies, etc.) as a reader? Provide specific

examples.

Did you engage in wait time to critically think about your responses before

answering the writers' questions or before sharing advice? If yes, what was the

effect? If no, why?

Based on this session, what do you think you can do to better help your writers

when it comes to difficult topics, such as language use or attitudes concerning

language use?

These questions are broad enough to allow tutors creative license, but also critical enough

to encourage them to investigate their tutoring practices and how what they convey to

writers may or may not be reifying hegemonic and racist beliefs. Moreover, including

these kinds of questions provides directors qualitative data to use as a tool to assess the

effectiveness of the writing center's antiracist efforts.

To help tutors become aware of racist or marginalizing rhetoric that is empowered

by white privilege, directors can point to specific linguistic decisions that may arise in

writing or talking and allow tutors to role play in different scenarios. For example, tutors

may work with a writer who engages in stereotypes to describe people or overarching

generalizations, such as "All/most black people." Of course, as writing center people, we

encourage writers to be exact in their language, but the consequences of stereotypes are

more harmful than simply being inexact with language. As Patrick Gerster points out,

Stereotypes are mental overstatements of difference, *preconceived* beliefs

about classes of people, images that are sustained precisely because they

contain an image, but never the essence, of truth. Stereotypes are, in this

sense, *mental portraits drawn from a modicum of fact, exaggerated and*

simplified—yet in the end, mental clichés. (170-71, emphasis added)

In other words, stereotypes make it easy to promote racist beliefs because they are

essentially a neatly packaged half-truth; stereotypes resist critical thinking. The fact that

those who are endowed with white privilege are usually not challenged when they use

stereotypes complicates the situation further, which is why tutors need to be self-aware of

white privilege and help writers understand how their rhetorical choices may, and most

likely are, influenced by society. Providing tutors the opportunity to grapple with these

difficult scenarios as part of their tutor education will equip them with the knowledge,

and hopefully the confidence, to engage writers in serious discussions about racism.

Another means of helping tutors become aware of racist rhetoric, intentional or

not, would be for tutors to apply Bonilla-Silva's explicates the four ways that Americans

reinforce color-blind racism to assigned readings. Directors and tutors can work as a

group to begin identifying these tropes in pieces from a variety of writers, not just white

authors because, as Martinez argues, writers of color also (unintentionally) enact these

tropes that perpetuate and strengthen color-blind racism. After tutors feel assured about

what it is they are exploring, directors may have them pair up and role play a writing

center session to, once again, provide them with practice to develop the language to talk

about racist rhetoric. Likewise, a variant of this approach could be that tutors are given

case studies that show these tropes being enacted; tutors would need to identify and

respond to their use.

Even after these scenarios have been shared, some tutors may find it difficult to discuss writing that embodies privileged or racist rhetoric because they may fear confrontation, but a sure way to approach stereotypes and generalizations is to help tutors express that no one can prove that an entire group of people embodies a particular mannerism or characteristic. This leads to a discussion of thinking and writing processes, not a personal confrontation of beliefs. Furthermore, tutors can discuss with writers how stereotypes and marginalizing comments affect the rhetoric of their writing. For example, racist rhetoric will limit the audience of the work because only a select group of people will agree with the stereotypes present in the writing (Garza). Since audience awareness is a pillar of rhetorical theory, tutors can approach the discussion with an antiracist tutor mindset that is focused on developing writers instead of trying to change people's worldview. However, these types of conversations between tutors and writers should occur organically and will be most effective when tutors feel supported and encouraged by their director team and fellow tutors.

Yet another specific pedagogical activity to help tutors recognize white privilege as it manifests in tutoring sessions is to have them keep reflective journals. As John Dewey points out, "reflection is the '*Active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends*'" (qtd. in Yancey 9, italics in original). Or in other words, reflection "relies on a dialogue among multiple perspectives, as the learner contrasts the believed and the known with presuppositions and necessary conclusions" (9). This concept can be translated for writing center tutors to include weekly reflections of interactions with tutoring sessions and how the tutor perceived what happened,

regardless if tutors conducted sessions or not because they can critically think about previous reflections, while simultaneously looking at alternate ways of viewing the experience.

It is important to note, though, that this work should be done without tutors absolving themselves of responsibility for what occurred in the session. This type of work can, and should, be undertaken through conversations with the directors or with other tutors (ideally at the end of the tutor's shift) because as Yancey notes, "we learn to understand ourselves through explaining ourselves to others. To do this, we rely on a reflection that involves a *checking* against, a *confirming*, and a *balancing* of self with others" (11, italics in original). This also includes reflection that involves tutors "checking their privilege," too.

The benefit of reflective journaling is self-awareness of tutor practices and a deepening understanding of how writers engage in racist rhetoric. As Nancy Effinger Wilson and Keri Fitzgerald share in their article, one of their tutors' reflective journaling "led to an internal paradigm shift," resulting in the tutor "'examin[ing] and alter[ing] [her] prejudices'" (13). This example, and the concept of reflective journaling as a whole, enacts Condon's theory of decentering because tutors will engage in critical work because "[r]esearch shows that tutors who look back on their sessions can learn a lot about the knowledge and skills they need to improve" (Rafoth 66). Reflective practices will aid tutors in attempting to view an idea from multiple perspectives, while being constantly self-aware of how lived experiences, societal expectations, and white privilege influence their understanding of the idea.

It is important to remember, though, that reflection "is habitual and learned" (Yancey 9). This means that tutors will not magically know how to critically analyze their experiences and how they may be enacting white privilege, which is why antiracist work is a collective effort, as many scholars argue. Tutors and directors must be in constant dialogue about what is happening and tutors' responses to it. This is where directors and tutors can question motives and how they came to those motives; that is, tutors and directors should be encouraged to ask themselves "what underlying or hidden privileges are allowing me to act/speak/see/think in this way?" This is doubly beneficial for tutors because tutors will more deeply engage in reflective practices while also having a model to follow when working with writers. If directors are asking tutors questions that engage them in critical thinking about white privilege, then tutors can (and should) employ that strategy in tutoring sessions to help writers do the same. Writing center work in general and antiracist work in particular are especially built to engender recursive and reflective practices, and as such, are capable of handling difficult and explicit discussions of white privilege.

This second step is where directors may face feelings of guilt and blame in tutors. But as Geller et al. point out, directors and tutors must engage in "transformational change" that "engages other ways of thinking and acting. It is collaborative, process-oriented, holistic in the sense that it requires an attentiveness to the systemic and institutional context from which conflict emerges" (104). If the focus is on the systemic racism and enacting of white privilege, it allows tutors to understand that we are influenced by social constructs, such as race, which help to shape our understandings and

interactions with others. This focus also opens up spaces to question and challenge institutional practices that may reinforce systemic racism.

Dealing with Resistance

To effectively dismantle white privilege, and in conjunction racism, as enacted within writing centers, administration and tutors first need to accept that it exists, understand how it manifests itself, and they have to be willing to take responsibility for their (unintended) racist actions. As a result, they then will be able to move forward in working to dismantle, through self-awareness, white privilege. After defining and recognizing white privilege in writing center sessions, the third step in this process for tutors and administrators is to deal with the affective domain, or the emotions that are inevitable in these types of discussions.

One of the resulting emotions is resistance. Even so, this emotional response is rife with complexity. Hence, it is important to remember, as Jennifer Seibel Trainor points out, when tutors make a statement to the effect of "my ancestors didn't own slaves" (146, "My Ancestors"), they are not simply writing off racism as whole. Instead, tutors are trying to "[connect] with people of color" by attempting to show "racial solidarity" (Trainor 146). When directors respond defensively to tutors' defensive, and seemingly racist, answers, directors are failing to recognize these attempts at racial solidarity. This is not to say that every racist comment is a statement of support, but it is important for directors and tutors to understand and work toward delineating between solidarity and racism. If we do not attempt to understand the emotional resistance to discussions of white privilege and racism, then there will be no effective—long lasting— antiracist work completed. The discussions will simply revolve around finger pointing

and blaming one another for, ironically, not understanding where we each are coming from emotionally and politically.

One means of understanding how to maneuver past finger pointing is to understand why some tutors may feel guilt. Trainor in her article "Critical Pedagogy's 'Other': Construction of Whiteness in Education for Social Change" highlights the fact that some students are unable "to articulate an antiessentialist white identity" (644). That is to say, white students cannot find a palatable identity within readings or discussions because they feel as if authors are saying white privilege is their fault, or as Simpson reports a student saying, whites end up "being the bad guys" (643). And this can lead to an inability to engage in "critical reflection" (644). If students feel at fault or as if they are being blamed for systemic racism, then attempts at trying to read literature from authors of color or cultivating discussions of white privilege may run the risk of "promoting . . . the development of a conscious, essentialized, and angry white identity predicated on reactionary political values" (647). This is the exact opposite response that we want to engender in antiracist work.

In the same vein, white guilt sometimes "attempts to diminish the spotlight aimed at issues germane to marginalized groups and redirects the focus to a wasteful plane of apologetics and ineffective assessment" (Kirabo). This is just as problematic as defensive responses from students because the real issue is not acknowledged or discussed. (Not to mention it also embodies the racist trope of minimization.) This is why strategies that account for and deal with the affective domain of tutors are so important in antiracist work. The goal of antiracist work is to engender a more nuanced understanding of race, not reify already monolithically established identities.

To help tutors work through their possible guilt, directors might help them develop a more expansive outlook of how white privilege is woven into the fabric of higher education. One way to help tutors understand this would be to explicate how racism is systemic and the very real consequences of denying this fact. Directors can show their tutors the eight-part video series entitled "What is Systemic Racism?" produced by Race Forward, the Center for Racial Justice Innovation. In this series, the videos, which are each approximately a minute long, center around various aspects that reflect systemic racism, such as incarceration and the wage gap. This video series can be explored in tandem with excerpts of Eduardo Bonilla-Silva's book *Racism without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in America,* especially Chapter Three in which Bonilla-Silva discusses the four tropes that Americans use to perpetuate color-blind racism. Of course simply watching these videos will not assuage any tutors guilt or defensive position, but they will allow for open and reflective discussions of how white people singularly are not to blame for racism, but they are responsible for their actions. These kinds of conversations will naturally lead to questions of "Why?" and "How do I recognize my privilege?" These are the types of questions that will help propel tutor education programs toward reflective praxis.

It is important to note here that white tutors are not the only individuals who may subscribe to the values that are inherent in white thought. For instance, if tutors of color embody the racist tropes of color-blind racism in the same ways that Martinez's composition students do in their writing, then these tutors may also feel attacked because they are simply trying to be accepted by an institution that values different rhetorical choices than the tutors' culture(s) promote, even if they are privileged in other ways, such

as gender or class. As Paulo Friere argues, "In their alienation, the oppressed want at any cost to resemble the oppressors, to imitate them, to follow them" (62). It is important for writing center directors and tutors to recognize all of the emotional responses that tutors may express so critical and on-going discussions of white privilege can occur.

Another specific pedagogical activity to help tutors and directors handle the affective domain, or to feel like they are a part of a community instead of being a defender of their race, is to have tutors as a collective create and agree on a list of rules that will guide behavior when discussing race, whether it be conversations of white privilege or readings from authors of color. As Jonathan C. Erwin points out,

> If the teacher engages the students in developing clear behavioral guidelines that the students see as adding quality to their school lives, the relationship between the students and the teacher is enhanced. What's more, students will be much less likely to disrupt the learning environment, which in turn increases the likelihood that students will achieve quality work. (102)

This approach can also be adapted for tutor education programs and will help directors and tutors deal with the affective domain because it directly addressing the concept of the "us versus them" mentality. Tutors are not tackling difficult subject matter alone; instead, they are a part of a larger community that wants everyone to be successful. For true success though, tutors need to be willing to understand how external influences shape the way they (possibly) perceive the success of people based on their race.

Additionally, buy-in from tutors may lead to more productivity and less possibility for breakdown in following the tutor-created rules. This cooperation will be

crucial when tutors engage in difficult conversations about race and white privilege. This community building activity will also allow for directors and tutors to hold one another accountable for their actions. Responsibility for the words spoken and actions taken is key when delving into antiracist education; the end goal of antiracist work in general is taking responsibility for personal actions, so this activity initiates the process of meeting that end goal.

Move Toward Action

The last step in addressing the lack of awareness of white privilege in writing centers is to help tutors move toward action as a means of reaching out and impacting their surrounding communities. For this to be effective, tutors must first become critically conscious or as Freire calls it, achieving "*conscientização,*" which "refers to learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality" (35, italics in original). For writing centers currently, this means that tutors could be questioning the disparities that may exist between the ethnic make-up of the student body compared to the ethnic make-up of the writing center staff. It means actively involving themselves in outreach programs that fight against racism, sexism, privileging attitudes, and any other noble cause that tutors believe are important. Having *conscientização* means that tutors stand up and name white privilege and racism for what they are because "[i]f it is in speaking their word that people, by naming the world, transform it, dialogue imposes itself as the way by which they achieve significance as human beings" (Freire 88). Those who do not have a voice, by extension, do not have significance as human beings. In other words, tutors must become self-aware

of white privilege and take a stand against its inherent ability to absolve whites from their actions, more specifically, the silencing of voices of individuals who are not white.

To reach this antiracist metacognition, though, tutors "must perceive the reality of oppression not as a closed world from which there is no exit, but as a limiting situation which can they can transform" (Freire 49). This is addressed in all four steps of this process because tutors collaboratively work to find ways to critically analyze and discuss white privilege. This allows tutor the ability to "perceive critically *the way they exist* in the world *with which* and *in which* they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation" (83, italics in original). In having this mindset, the next logical step is to then move outward and provide others the opportunity to also engage in developing reflective self-awareness of white privilege.

Approaches to action could be as simple as tutors proposing panel sessions at IWCA or other conferences that provide an opportunity to speak about writing centers' responsibility to respond to white privilege's detrimental power. Tutors may also coauthor articles about discussing white privilege or responding to it in writing center sessions to publish in writing center journals such as *Praxis: A Writing Center Journal* or *WLN: A Journal of Writing Center Scholarship*. Other strategies may include more local efforts, such as interviewing faculty members to gauge the university's perception of writing center's work in antiracist efforts or creating a speaker series that invites to campus scholars who research race and ethnicity in higher education. Regardless of the strategy, a move toward action allows tutors to do more than just identify privileging and racist, but also allows tutors to engage in creating real change in their communities.

A more in-depth and organically developed strategy would be to engage in project-based learning. This method includes a tutor-driven attempt at finding a real world solution to a pertinent problem while directors act as mentors throughout the process (Helle, Tynjälä, and Olkinuora 288). Additionally, tutors will learn and adapt their solutions as the project progresses, ensuring that their solutions are viable for their particular problem. There is no singular correct way to apply project-based learning because each project is uniquely situated to the environment. This fact reinforces fundamental concepts of antiracist work: every worker will have to develop decentering practices and antiracist efforts that develop from their own personal situations. Equally important, this approach also engages tutors in work that extends beyond the space of the writing center and instead reaches out to various communities across campus. This type of collaborative labor is key to creating sustained and successful antiracist efforts.

One caveat to this four-pronged approach is that directors need to realize that preconceived notions or expectations may hinder growth because people do not know each other's racial experiences and trying to evoke a certain answer may derail progress. But instead of seeing the need of no expectations as a negative, directors and tutors can see it as an opportunity to allow conversations to naturally grow from their lived experiences, which is a more powerful and meaningful approach to explicit discussions of white privilege. On the other hand, it is also impossible to have absolutely no expectations when embarking on any learning journey. As a result, it is imperative that directors confront their expectations of these pedagogical choices for their tutor education programs to create space for further critical analysis and engagement in what they see as valuable in tutor education.

A second caveat is that there is no set way to use these pedagogical choices or activities. The flexibility of action is vital because every institution is different and will have various cultural values, so the action that tutors partake in will necessarily have to be rooted in their environment. Much like Greenfield and Rowan argue that antiracist tutor education cannot be an isolated module approach, we also cannot dictate the form in which directors and tutors learn about themselves, others, and the world in which they live. That being said, if directors and tutors feel it more beneficial to start with a project-based learning approach and then add readings from authors of color as a means of searching for solutions, then they should do so. Attempting to prescribe a fix-all cure for writing centers that are as different as snowflakes is to embody the exact rhetoric that I am arguing against. The existence of white privilege and racism is a universal fact, but there is no universal answer of how to deconstruct and combat them.

Regardless of how directors choose to apply these pedagogical choices, we should expect this type of work to be substantial and sustained. We cannot create tutor education programs based on the idea that antiracist work, that critical discussions of white privilege, can be fully had in a week's time. If anything, this important work needs to be front and center in writing center praxis because of the myriad ways that writing centers are already entrenched in the topic—complicity in language oppression and enactment of white privilege through subscribing to the grand narrative of writing centers. If we cannot hold all writing centers to the same pedagogical structure because of differences in institutional culture (which, as argued, we should not), then we should hold all of them that engage in antiracism to the expectation of consistent and ever deepening engagement in antiracist theory, research, and practices.

However, and most importantly, directors and tutors must remember that "[t]he correct method lies in dialogue" (Freire 67) because "[o]nly through communication can human life hold meaning" (77). Society as a whole may sway the way we internalize social constructs such as race, but we have the right, ability, and power to change the way we understand these constructs through communicating with people who are alike and different from us, while intelligently and critically analyzing our responses to others' perspectives.

In all, it is important to remember that "talking about race across races is still very hard . . . when we do try to express the very complex things we experience about race relations, the language allowed us is constrained by politeness, diluted by confusion, weakened by the infrequency with which we engage the conversation" (Roy 3). This is why it is imperative that directors and tutors engage in antiracist efforts in dismantling white privilege consistently with a committed dedication to create lasting change. We cannot afford to take an inoculation, one-and-done, approach to this important work.

With this in mind, the next chapter of my thesis will address the implications of this type of work, what this work means for writing center practices, research approaches, and broader social concerns as a means of a conclusion.

CHAPTER IV

Implications

"Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better."

-Maya Angelou

My thesis's argument echoes the late Maya Angelou's assertion presented in the epigraph because, as members of higher education, we can longer hide behind the lies that we do not know how white privilege affects others or that we are not complicit in its destructive power. Current events will not allow it. Instead, we must be willing to dig deep and engage in practices that will undoubtedly unsettle our worldview and challenge our belief systems. What does this mean for writing center directors and tutors? What changes should occur in writing center studies' praxis? As I have argued in my thesis, my answer to these questions is to include active, sustained, and critical dialogue about white privilege and its manifestations within writing centers. As such, I will explore in this chapter the implications of including explicit, recursive, and on-going discussions of white privilege in tutor education programs. More specifically, I will look at how the type of work that I have argued for within my thesis can, and most likely will, affect writing center administrators, tutors, and other areas outside of academe.

Implications for Administrators

For the inclusion of antiracist work that includes explicit discussions of white privilege to be effectively integrated in the larger conversations of the field, writing centers must exemplify a "learning culture" environment (Geller et al. 90). Directors and tutors alike have to live out the same mentality they hope writers who visit the writing center embody: a gracious willingness to accept being wrong, a dedicated willingness to

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collaborate to find solutions, an open willingness to learn for others and themselves. It is with this mindset that explicit discussions of white privilege hold the most potential because tutors and directors are embracing antiracist values, paving the way for the success of the strategies that I argue for in my thesis.

Additionally, I would be remiss if I did not address the fact that directors and tutors are almost certain to deal with resistance from other non-campus entities, on-campus communities, or possibly administration when they choose to commit to antiracist work. Unfortunately, this is unavoidable because "[w]hen you're accustomed to privilege, equality feels like oppression" (The Boeskool). As argued earlier in my thesis, white privilege acts as its own enforcer; whites are able to deny having white privilege because they are privileged for being white, which only perpetuates the invisible insidiousness of white privilege.

Even so, we must remember that antiracist work is worth every setback or disappointment. It would be unhealthy to believe that a single person will be able to make lasting changes in an institution. A more fruitful approach would be to embody Geller et al.'s idea of transformational change: engage with others who are like-minded *and* who think differently to hear multiple perspectives when discussing racism. We must connect with communities of color, not to be an ally but an accomplice. If we act as allies, we still have the chance to bow out without too many battle wounds (Martinez, "Counterstory"). Choosing to be an accomplice, however, means that we full-heartedly stand with others in consistently and continuously fighting against racism in all of its forms.

Antiracist work is not easy; it is challenging, time consuming, and possibly disruptive to job security when we truly commit to embodying its ideals. There is no

doubt that we will become fatigued, but we cannot give up on striving to create a better educational system for future students because if we do, then we have not only failed ourselves but others as well.

Implications for Tutors

A second implication of including explicit discussions in tutor education is engaging tutors in the development of the field. In other words, for antiracism values to take hold and prosper in writing centers, tutors must be included in the expansion of writing center studies' research, theory, and practices. Melissa Ianetta and Lauren Fitzgerald argue that doing so leads to learning "about tutors' informed and informing perspectives on the conversation of writing center studies; about what tutors believe should be next for the field and for the practices of writing centers . . . and, most importantly, about what their fellow student writers need" (10-11). That is, the field should be just as dependent on tutors' intellectual input as we are well-known theorists and scholars because tutors are daily immersed in the very topics of conversation that the field of writing center studies explores and the questions it attempts to answer. Tutors' insights are invaluable because "there are no conversations in writing center studies that peer tutors cannot fruitfully address" (11). I would argue this is true because of the intersectionality inherent in tutor's positions, as I discussed earlier. Tutors are in key position to engage in various perspectives on a topic because of the multiplicity in being a tutor. And it is our responsibility as writing center studies scholars to include them in the research and conversations that decide the direction of the field, and one of these directions is the need for self-awareness of white privilege.

Furthermore, the need to include tutors in our research and theory development means that we see them as legitimate knowledge makers, not simply subjects to be studied. We can no longer following the banking concept, as Freire calls it, in our tutor education programs. Tutors are not individuals who should simply learn how to tutor other writers; they are valuable co-researchers who deserve to engage in important research that matters to them. As Lauren Fitzgerald points out, tutors naturally engage in research work because, as she quotes DelliCarpini and Crimmins as arguing, the experiences individuals have as tutors avail them to naturally asking questions of the field as part of "disciplinary research" (23). In other words, we cannot ask tutors to commit to antiracist work and not include them in antiracist research or expect them to not question, challenge, and refute institutional and societal practices. Indeed, this investigative inquiry should be encouraged and supported because we want tutors to start with their own responses to racism and white privilege and gradually move outward as their metacognition grows. That is, we should mimic the ripples made in a pond when a stone is skipped. If we are truly guiding tutors to practice antiracism, then the pedagogical strategies I argue for in my thesis should affect not just tutors or their writers, but ever increasing populations.

Implications for Research

A third implication is a needed expansion in the research conducted by the field, specifically from an antiracist orientation. Because racism and the effects of white privilege are so personal and varied, we must include more qualitative data in our research that specifically pinpoints how white privilege manifests in our tutoring practices and sessions, while exploring possibilities for viable solutions. Please let me be

clear. I am not arguing for a simplistic collection of stories and opinions but an adherence to empirical RAD scholarship. Richard Haswell states that RAD research equates to "replicable, aggregable, and data-supported research" (McKinney, *Strategies* 9). This means that researchers, of all levels, would follow the same methodology as the quintessential quantitative empirical research. If we are to truly scrutinize and improve our tutoring practices and interactions with one another, then we must have data to analyze to create a foundational understanding of our behavior and choices as they are influenced by society and our own worldviews.

Since my thesis is grounded in theory and not primary research, there is a need for pilot studies using the pedagogical choices I argue for in my thesis. Much as I argued for the need of RAD research, we cannot rest on theoretical ideas alone when engaging in antiracism. By no means is there one correct way to "do" antiracism, but there is a correct way to engage in disciplinary research that positively impacts the field of writing center studies: generating sound theories and implementing them using RAD research to explicate ways that theories can be improved and adapted to meet the specific needs of writing centers. Essentially, this means that my thesis is just the beginning step to the in depth process of including explicit and recursive discussions of white privilege in tutor education programs.

Implications for the World Outside of Academe

In the past couple of years, many individuals of color have made a vocal stand against racism as it manifest in various forms, mainly police brutality. As a result, social movements for equality such as #BlackLivesMatter have been created. Of course, these movements have not been without outright challenge, with the majority of protestors

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being white. The irony of this fact is the same as presented earlier in my thesis: whites have to enact white privilege to argue that it does not exist so that they can then turn around and demean and disparage people of color from a place of privilege. This is usually done by whites labeling people of color as "race baiters" or as "playing the race card" as a means of complaining about the quality of their lives. The most poignant racist response to the #BlackLivesMatter movement is to scream that all lives matter. Logically speaking, if that were true, then there would be no need for blacks to fight for their humanity. This is where antiracist efforts that include explicit and on-going discussions of white privilege hold invaluable power because these discussions allow for critical dialogue within higher education about systemic social issues. Of course, these types of discussions are already being conducted in classrooms across campus, but, as I have argued, writing centers are ideal sites for this work for a variety of reasons. Instead of legitimate and effective efforts for equality stemming from social movements alone, discussions of white privilege in writing centers will allow for solidarity between higher education and those who participate in social movements, creating a wider engagement in vital discussions of white privilege and its ability to deter equality.

Furthermore, many in academe are frustrated with the concept of what is deemed as the "ivory tower" of higher education, or in other words, the idea that "[t]he academy is often imagined as an idyllic place, neutral and untarnished by the ugly inequalities that mar the 'outside world'" (Stockdill and Danico 1). Publications such as *Transforming the Ivory Tower: Challenging Racism, Sexism, and Homophobia in the Academy*, edited by Brett C. Stockdill and Mary Yu Danico, show that educators in higher education do not want to be set apart from the everyday occurrences of people. Instead, these educators

and scholars want to merge their social justice interests, which inherently include people from all backgrounds, with higher education to disrupt, complicate, and dismantle social injustices that plague individuals inside and outside of academe. I posit that including the pedagogical choices for tutor education programs that I argue for in my thesis is another means of reaching this goal. There is much potential for the concept of explicit, recursive, and sustained dialogue being included within higher education, regardless of the topic. Students, educators, and administrators would be able to have impactful dialogue about current social issues such as, gun laws, rape culture, and media's impact, and writing centers have the potential to pave the way for this to occur.

Another way to see the opportunities inherent in the juxtaposition of critical discussions in tutor education, established social movements, and the desire to breakdown the ivory tower is to apply Malcolm Gladwell's theory of the tipping point. Essentially, Gladwell argues that there are "three characteristics—one contagiousness; two, the fact that little causes can have big effects, and three, that change happens not gradually but at one dramatic moment" are what create the tipping point of any epidemic or social change (9). This can be applied to current events and the ways in which people have rallied for changes in how suspects are treated by police. Multiple people have joined forces across social media, protests—peaceful and otherwise—and social movements for equality, essentially engaging in contagious behavior among those who truly want equality to be constantly front and center. Of course, it has been years that communities of color and accomplices have worked toward changes in laws and behavior to instill equality in a society that supposedly promotes it, and I believe that discussions of white privilege in writing center tutor education will help stimulate the behavior that

will lead to the necessary landslide for real and lasting change to finally takes place. To be clear, I am arguing that, in conjunction with new and established legislation, multiple social movements, educational outreach programs, and antiracist work, the inclusion of explicit discussions of white privilege in tutor education has the potential to propel the fight for equality forward.

Essentially, my thesis argues for the development of self-reflective antiracist practitioners, and one of the truly astonishing factors about writing centers is how they help develop tutors who then become writers, veterinarians, educators, architects, historians, automobile mechanics, pilots, career veterans, and members of a host of other vocations. As Hughes, Gillispie, and Kail point out,

> When undergraduate writing tutors and fellows participate in challenging and sustained staff education, and when they interact closely with other student writers and with other peer tutors through our writing centers and writing fellows programs, they develop in profound ways both intellectually and academically. This developmental experience . . . helps to shape and sometimes transform them personally, educationally, and professionally. (13)

If we tap into this power and wisely utilize it in the fight against racism, then we would have engaged in effective antiracist work that expands across more environments than just the writing center or higher education. As writing center people, if we implement the pedagogical choices I have argued for, then we would indeed mimic the ripples from that skipped stone; our work could reach across oceans in our attempts to bring people together in equality.

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