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Peer Writing Tutors in Community: Relational and Reflective Collaborations in the Writing Center

Marcelene Maria Senese
Indiana University of Pennsylvania

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PEER WRITING TUTORS IN COMMUNITY:
RELATIONAL AND REFLECTIVE COLLABORATIONS IN THE WRITING CENTER

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

Marcelene M. Senese

Indiana University of Pennsylvania

December 2011

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Indiana University of Pennsylvania
The School of Graduate Studies and Research
Department of English

We hereby approve the dissertation of

Marcelene M. Senese

Candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Ben Rafoth, Ed.D.
University Professor, Advisor

Nancy Hayward, Ph.D.
University Professor

Carol Peterson Haviland, Ph.D.
Professor of English
California State University,
San Bernardino

ACCEPTED

Timothy P. Mack, Ph.D.
Dean
School of Graduate Studies and Research

Title: Peer Writing Tutors in Community: Relational and Reflective Collaborations in the Writing Center

Author: Marcelene M. Senese

Dissertation Chair: Dr. Ben Rafoth

Dissertation Committee: Dr. Nancy Hayward
Dr. Carol Peterson Haviland

This study investigate how a learning culture was created and sustained among the peer writing tutors of a small liberal arts college for women. Through observation of the reflective, relational, and intellectual components of tutors' interactions with each other and with students, this study theorizes how a community of practice cohered among the tutors and its influence on their interactions in the tutorial. Tutors' tendency to used shared public spaces such as dialogic journals and staff meetings to support each other and share stories about positive or problematic tutoring sessions was particularly apparent in recurring sessions, which became the focus of this study. A total of 260 sessions took place during the semester in which this study was conducted. Nine tutors wrote dialogic journals for each of these sessions, all of which were examined for this study. Eight of the nine tutors agreed to participate in the study, and six of them participated in interviews with the researcher. Seven of the participating tutors recorded 72 sessions, which were transcribed and reviewed. The final data set of fourteen recurring sessions with eight tutors and five students, along with their accompanying journals and available recordings, are examined in detail. This study reveals how the tutors' desire to maintain relational connections among themselves sometimes conflicts with reflective activities that may challenge not only their shared

practices, but their cohesion as a group. The primary contribution of this study is to acknowledge the significant connection between relational and reflective activities for peer writing tutors, both for the benefit of the tutor community and the benefit of the student writer.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Introduction and Purpose Statement

The writing center literature regularly interrogates the complexities of the collaborations between peer writing tutors and students within the tutorial. But how do tutors negotiate this complexity among themselves, as they struggle to enact their shifting roles? The dynamic nature of the tutorial requires that tutors act sometimes as status equals and sometimes as reflective practitioners who facilitate student writing through deliberate strategies. The inevitable sense of community that forms among peer writing tutors as they enact and reflect upon their varied roles and shared practices offers the possibility of enriching their self-awareness and their tutoring. However, community formation among tutors has its own set of complexities that have been minimally explored in the writing center literature.

In my 15 years as director of a writing center at a small liberal arts institution, I observed how tutors interact with each other in ways that significantly impact their learning, their sense of cohesion, and the choices they make in the tutorial. I came to appreciate the strong sense of community that developed among the tutors themselves, but I struggled to understand how this sense of community impacted not only their personal and intellectual development but their tutoring practices. Particular collaborative practices of this Writing Center that I helped to implement – such as dialogic journaling – seemed to contribute significantly to cohesion among the tutors, but how such cohesion translated into improved tutorial strategies was not always clear.

The impetus for this research came from my desire to investigate how a learning culture was created and sustained among the tutors, primarily facilitated by their shared practices within the writing center, but also influenced by my deliberate choices as director to foster such an environment. This study offers a grounded analysis of peer writing tutors' daily interactions in the writing center I directed. Through observation of the reflective, relational, and intellectual components of tutors' relationships with each other and with students, I seek to understand how a community of practice cohered among the tutors and its influence on their interactions in the tutorial. I discovered how complex the dynamic of community formation among tutors can be in the intimate environment of a small liberal arts college for women. My study reveals how the tutors' desire to maintain relational connections among themselves may sometimes be in conflict with reflective activities that challenge not only their shared practices, but their cohesion as a group.

Significance of the Study and Research Questions

While the writing center literature provides many ways in which to consider a tutor's role in the tutorial, it offers very little theorizing about the intensity of the bond formed among the tutors themselves due to their shared practices – that is, the sense of community within the writing center itself as tutors engage with each other in tutorial practices. As I began to consider how tutors are learning from each other about tutoring, several research questions came to mind:

- 1) What are the particular practices that promote or limit community (and therefore learning) among tutors in a writing center?

2) Conversely, what are the effects of community formation on tutor practices?

Specifically, what effect does this “culture of learning” have on the dynamics of the tutorial itself?

3) What is the role of the director in promoting and sustaining a culture of learning among peer writing tutors?

The first and third research questions are addressed in Chapter 4, “Contextualizing the Study,” in which I describe the nature of the shared practices that writing tutors share, and how my role as director helped to shape those practices. By placing these practices in the context of the small liberal arts college for women in which this study takes place, this chapter also provides a way to understand how the institutional setting creates particular expectations for collaboration among the Writing Center tutors. To address the second research question, I undertake an extended analysis of recurring tutorials in Chapter 5 (“Analysis”). Tutors’ tendency to use shared public spaces such as dialogic journals and staff meetings to support each other and share stories about positive or problematic tutoring sessions was particularly apparent in recurring sessions, and served to enhance cohesion among them. However, my analysis also revealed many missed opportunities by the tutors for using these same shared spaces to reflect and share on their tutorial strategies, and to mine the tutor community for ways to help students improve their writing.

Thus, my research questions and the way my data serves to respond to them have significance for writing center practices in general, not only for understanding the particular dynamics of the writing center I directed. If tutors’ learning is enhanced when a sense of community is created among them, creating a learning-focused

environment for tutors should influence how writing center directors design the organizational structure and daily activities of their centers, how they educate tutors, and how they educate students who come to the writing center. In addition, the ways in which tutors may fail to perceive how reflective activities can not only enhance their tutoring practices but contribute to cohesion among the group is an important area for writing center directors to address. Helping tutors to make the connection between relational and reflective activities, both for the benefit of the tutor community and the benefit of the student writer, is a key point revealed by this study. By investigating and understanding the influences revealed in this study that enhance and limit community formation among tutors, I hope to offer a better understanding of the complexity of communities of practice within writing centers, and their importance for the philosophical and practical foundations of writing center practice.

Rationale: Tutors in Collaboration

As a fledgling writing center director at Hollins University, I took seriously the idea of collaboration as foundational to all writing center work. That is, I considered it a concept that should undergird my relationships with tutors, the tutors' relationships with each other, and the tutors' relationships with students. I inherited this idea from the writing center director that I succeeded, who had put in place a collaborative administration structure that involved tutors in every aspect of the Writing Center's daily administration and hiring tasks. In fact, I had been a graduate student tutor for one semester prior to accepting the position as director, so I had participated personally in some aspects of the Hollins Writing Center's practices. The peer writing tutors already in place expected to be included in decision-making as well as theorizing about

their writing center practices, and they expected me as their new director to embrace this approach to daily life in the Writing Center.

Yet, as I began to immerse myself in writing center scholarship through journals, conferences, professional organizations and list-serves, I was unable to find any discussion of the collaborative environment that we sought to create in the writing center among the tutors, and between tutors and the director. Without a professional context to guide me, I nevertheless negotiated with the tutors themselves the administrative and educational structures that framed our work together, and made decisions about sustaining this collaborative environment based on the localized context of our small liberal arts institution for women.

This study has allowed me to conduct a systematic investigation into the writing center literature to describe more precisely the nature of the gap I had perceived over my many years as a writing center director. While the literature unfailingly interrogates the kinds of collaborations that may or may not be possible between tutors and students in the tutorial, I found little mention of the ways in which tutors are constantly collaborating with each other. My decision to investigate the Hollins Writing Center as a community of practice occurred almost simultaneously with the publication of the first intensive scholarly treatment of writing centers within this theoretical framework, *The Everyday Writing Center: A Community of Practice* (Geller et al. 2007). A book-length manuscript authored by five writing center scholar/practitioners, this text explicitly explores community formation among tutors as a community of practice and constructs the tutors as co-learners engaged in a learning culture within the writing center. In order to understand the ways in which *The Everyday Writing Center* presents tutor

learning in ways that are significantly different, we must look at how the writing center literature constructed the role of tutors prior to its publication. While a more thorough literature review will be undertaken in Chapter 2, a brief overview of the way in which the tutor's role has evolved in the literature over the last 27 years will provide an appropriate introduction to this study.

The role of the peer writing tutor in the writing center literature has been explored primarily in terms of the tutor-student relationship in the tutorial. Kenneth Bruffee first articulated this relationship as a conversation between "status equals," with an emphasis on the co-learning that takes place for both tutor and student (1984, p. 8). Bruffee's scholarly interest in collaborative learning principles caused him to theorize this relationship in terms of social constructivist principles, with an emphasis on the tutorial as "a particular kind of social context for conversation, a particular kind of community" that allows tutors and students to rehearse and become familiar with academic discourse (p. 7). Learning, in Bruffee's terms, is a process of creating knowledge through collective negotiation among those who share "interests, values, language and paradigms of perception and thought" (p. 12). Both the tutor and the student learn in Bruffee's model. While the nature of the community that forms among tutors was not Bruffee's explicit interest at this time, his emphasis on collaborative learning acknowledges the possibility for learning to also take place among tutors.

It is significant that 23 years after Bruffee's "Conversation of Mankind" article appeared, his keynote address to the National Conference on Peer Tutoring in Writing articulated more clearly this idea that the personal relationships among tutors and between peer tutors and students is central to collaborative learning in the writing

center. Focusing on the term “interdependence” to describe the ways in which tutors and students interact, Bruffee (2008) describes peer tutoring as a “productive relationship among human beings” and “a helpful, care-taking engagement” (p. 5-6). Bruffee’s emphasis on the connection between relational and intellectual engagement is significant for this study, which reveals through a grounded analysis that intellectual engagement is indeed enhanced by the development of ongoing relationships between tutors and students.

Significantly, Thom Hawkins (1980), a contemporary of Bruffee’s, ascribed considerable importance to the idea that writing tutorials between peers depends on the social interaction between them for effective intellectual engagement. Based on his examination of hundreds of tutor journals, Hawkins suggests that the personal relationship that develops between tutor and student is not only a natural result of their peer relationship, but a necessary component in creating the kind of intellectual community that Bruffee envisions. This relational aspect of tutor-student interaction in the tutorial is a theme that recurs throughout the writing center literature, complicating and extending Bruffee’s ideas about the nature of the collaborative learning dynamic in the writing center tutorial. This study contributes to that conversation by offering specific examples of how relationships among tutors and between tutors and students affect the intellectual engagement and reflective activities of the writing center environment.

Bruffee’s conception of the tutorial was further elaborated upon and even challenged as writing center scholars like Harvey Kail and John Trimbur began to explore the political implications of collaborative learning for the tutor. Kail and

Trimbur reconsidered the tutor's role in several articles that they wrote individually and collaboratively, discussing how collaborative learning between tutor and student may be perceived as threatening by faculty (Kail, 1983), how curricular-based tutoring programs may undermine the collaborative nature of voluntary peer tutoring programs (Kail & Trimbur, 1987), and how the "peerness" of the tutor may be compromised by the tutor's successful participation in the academic structure (Trimbur, 1987).

Like Bruffee, Kail and Trimbur believed that collaborative learning between tutor and student was foundational to understanding tutorial interaction. However, their theorizing gave a political and social context to Bruffee's views that resonated with later writing center scholars like Nancy Grimm (1996, 1999), Marilyn Cooper (1994) and Nancy Welch (1993). This cluster of theorists re-cast the tutor's role exclusively in political terms. Grimm (1996b) typifies the perspective of these scholars when she suggests that "we might gain from situating writing center work within an ideological model of literacy and an articulatory model of social change" (p. 6). In this model, the tutor's role is one of cultural change agent; according to Grimm (1999), the "primary goal" of the tutorial would be "academic change, student advocacy that arises from everyday knowledge, and a questioning of orthodoxy that addresses the writing center's relationship with literacy" (p. 23). In Grimm's model, the tutor no longer simply enters the academic conversation as a co-learner with the student, as Bruffee suggests, but is now seeking to change the nature of the conversation itself and the values upon which it is based.

While theorists like Grimm and Bruffee differ in the way they construct the tutor's role, they both emphasize the tutorial as a relational interaction in which tutors

should participate actively and reflectively. These two themes, along with an emphasis on intellectual engagement as central to the tutor's purpose, emerge regularly in the writing center literature. Yet, neither Grimm nor Bruffee, nor the scholars associated with their theoretical perspectives, investigate the tutorial directly through systematic research.

Another group of writing center scholars focuses on tutors as facilitators of student writing, giving attention to these same themes – relational awareness, reflective activity and intellectual engagement – by actively investigating tutorial conversation. The scholars who represent this third strand in the literature investigate transcripts of tutorials, tutor journals, and interviews with tutors and students to define the tutor's role in terms of actual tutorial practices. No single conclusion defines this research. Rather, the tutor's role is described in a variety of ways, not only in Bruffee's terms as a collaborator, or Grimm's terms as a change agent, but shifting roles within and between tutorials to respond to particular contexts. The tutor may bring specialized knowledge of the writing process to the tutorial (Harris, 1995), or the tutor may need to carefully negotiate the authority that is an inevitable part of her role to allow the student a voice (Gillam et al., 1994). Theorists like Severino (1992) acknowledge the many interpersonal and situational factors that influence the ways in which tutors and students collaborate. Others note that a tutor's role may shift between that of an expert and that of uninformed reader, even within the same session (S. Murphy, 2006). At times, writing center scholars have utilized linguistic methods for analyzing tutorial transcripts, providing more grounded evidence for the complex nature of the relationship between tutor and student (Blau et al., 1998; Thonus, 2001). Most of these theorists suggest that

the tutor's reflection on her practices is key to making informed decisions about her role in the tutorial, and most acknowledge the highly relational nature of the tutorial.

The construction of tutors as reflective practitioners is a theme that is in fact common to theorists in all three paradigms I have suggested here: tutors as collaborative learners, tutors as agents for cultural change, and tutors as writing facilitators. Bruffee (1984), Kail (1983) and Trimbur (1987) refer indirectly to this aspect of the tutor's role when they suggest that the tutor is capable of helping the student construct new knowledge in the tutorial, a task which can only take place with significant self-awareness on the part of the tutor. Nancy Grimm (1999) and Nancy Welch (1993) more explicitly reference the tutor's thoughtful participation in the tutorial as a necessary component for their cultural change agenda. Researchers like Gillam et al. (1994) regularly incorporate tutor journals into their research, suggesting that tutors' reflections on their own practices provide important insights into the tutorial relationship.

Despite this valuing of tutor reflection that is woven throughout the writing center literature, most specific references to the reflective activity of tutors occurs in the context of tutor training, whether in manuals like Paula Gillespie and Neal Lerner's (2000) *Allyn & Bacon Guide to Peer Tutoring* or in scholarly articles such as those by Kathleen Yancey (2002) and Nancy Welch (2002). Yancey offers a detailed look at how a variety of reflective activities incorporated into a tutor education course can help tutors to re-evaluate their tutorial strategies over time, while Welch suggests that tutors use a narrative approach to writing and rewriting the "stories" of the tutorial to allow evolving perspectives on the tutor-student dynamic. Only one study by James Bell

(2001) undertakes the more difficult task of connecting reflective activity to actual changes in practices. Bell's disappointing conclusion, that guided reflection did not seem to have a consistent effect on actual tutorial strategies, is a reminder of the need for further research into the uses of reflective activities for tutors.

In this study, the powerful ways in which shared reflective practices (such as the dialogic journaling used by tutors in the Writing Center in this research) influence community formation among tutors as well as changes in tutorial strategies is a new area of investigation in the writing center literature. The sometimes conflicted ways that the tutors in this study were observed to utilize journaling practices gives needed insight into the complexity of incorporating reflective activity into the daily shared practices of writing center tutors.

The publication of *The Everyday Writing Center* (Geller et al. 2007) signals a significant change in the construction of peer writing tutors' roles in the writing center literature. As previously noted, it is the first instance in the literature to consider the writing center as a community of practice, and the tutors' relationships among themselves as foundational to the cultivation of that community. The authors align themselves with the theorizing of Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger (1991), learning theorists who first coined the term "communities of practice" to describe the learning dynamic among peers in apprenticeship settings. The writing center, the authors argue, should be "designed for learning" and tutors should be seen as "learners on common ground" with both students and directors (Geller et al., 2007, p. 7). Despite giving students equal emphasis in the introduction to their text, the authors focus primarily on the way learning takes place among tutors and between tutors and directors, exploring

through the lens of Lave & Wenger's theorizing the characteristics of a writing center community of practice and its effect on tutors' learning identities.

The authors suggest that learning for tutors occurs through reflective activities focused on their shared practices in the writing center, facilitated by a writing center director who serves as a "functional leader," someone who does not merely fulfill the job description, but "assume[s] a leadership role out of a sense of mission...and who require[s] the participation of others to accomplish this purpose" (Geller et al., p. 11). Through the use of anecdotes derived from the authors' varied experiences in writing centers, the authors demonstrate how Lave and Wenger's framework can construct tutor relationships with each other as highly relational and reflective, focused on the intellectual activity of the tutorial.

The authors of *The Everyday Writing Center* suggest a focus on peer writing tutors' daily practices in the writing center as a way of understanding how learning takes place, yet the theoretical nature of their approach does not allow for a systematic investigation into these practices. The authors echo some of the most significant principles of writing center scholarship initially presented in Bruffee's work: understanding learning as a social activity rooted in conversation, and the connections between reflective thought, conversation and the written word. Yet, like Bruffee, without a methodology that grounds this analysis in an examination of the tutors' actual practices, the role that the authors have constructed for tutors cannot be fully evaluated. This study seeks to provide such a grounded analysis, through an examination of tutors' interactions with each other and with students during one semester in the Hollins Writing Center.

Research Approach

In order to capture the ways in which peer writing tutors in this study interact with each other to build community, I sought data sources that reflected tutors' own perspectives on their shared practices. I conceived of this research as a case study using qualitative research methods in a naturalistic setting. Multiple sources of data were important for capturing the complex nature of tutors' shared practices: I analyze tutors' dialogic journals created in response to their tutorials, as well as transcripts of tutorial sessions; I consider notes I took based on my observations of tutors' daily interactions in the writing center and at weekly staff meetings; I incorporate transcriptions from my interviews with tutors conducted at the end of the semester in which data was collected. All of these methods allow me to give voice to the tutors themselves and their reflections on their interactions with each other and with students. This approach also allows me to identify emergent themes based on the tutors' own interpretation of their activities, allowing a grounded analysis of recurring tutorial sessions that became the focus of my data analysis.

A total of 260 sessions took place during the semester in which this study was conducted. Nine tutors wrote dialogic journals for each of these sessions, all of which were examined for this study. Eight of the nine tutors agreed to participate in the study, and six of them participated in interviews with the researcher. Seven of the participating tutors recorded 72 sessions, which were transcribed and reviewed. The final data set of fourteen recurring sessions with eight tutors and five students, along with their accompanying journals and available recordings, are examined in detail in the analysis portion of this study (Chapter 5).

The three themes I identified from this data – *relational awareness*, *reflective action* and *intellectual engagement* – highlight the ways in which the peer writing tutors in this writing center create a particular kind of community of practice that is highly contextualized within the personal relationships tutors develop with each other and with students. I also recognized that these themes recurred in the writing center literature, although in the literature they focused on tutor-student interaction primarily. While at times the strong sense of community among tutors in this study allowed them to intensify their learning about tutorial practices, at other times my study reveals the ways in which tutors' learning became limited by the very practices that enhance their cohesion as a group.

It was in my analysis of recurring sessions in the writing center that the my method for data analysis came into focus. Of the 260 sessions that took place during the semester in which this study was conducted, 189 sessions (or 73%) took place with students who returned two or more times. The ways in which tutors engage repeatedly with the same students offer the possibility for shared reflection among the tutors about those students, especially given the collaborative and reflective practices that are an essential part of the structure of the writing center in this study (see Chapter 4 for a description of these structures). It was through an analysis of these recurring sessions that the emergent themes became apparent: relational awareness, reflective activity and intellectual engagement. These sessions reveal how tutors in this writing center place a high value on their relationships with each other, and tend to base their interpretations of tutorial interaction with students on relational and interpersonal factors. Reflective

activity and a serious level of intellectual engagement are also characteristic of tutors' engagement in journals and staff meetings about these recurring sessions.

Yet, my analysis also revealed the ways in which community formation among tutors is simultaneously enhanced and limited by recurring visits. The ways in which tutors utilize dialogic journals varied, as tutors sometimes reflected on the strategies used in the tutorial and other times simply affirmed their own practices or described difficulties in the sessions. I discerned particular patterns of journal use that seemed to depend on whether the tutorials were required or voluntary, and whether or not the tutor saw the same student repeatedly or not. At times shared practices among tutors such as journaling and staff meetings enhanced community formation, and at other times it did not. Sometimes the relational awareness of tutors allowed the student's needs to be apprehended by the tutors, and other times it did not. The ways in which problematic sessions create a particular kind of dynamic among the tutors became apparent, sometimes enhancing community formation but not always furthering the goals of the session. Thus, while the writing center under consideration in this study revealed many points of connection with the positive aspects of the community of practice concept as forwarded by the authors of *The Everyday Writing Center*, my analysis also reveals the complexity of such communities and the ways in which a grounded analysis can complicate our understanding of this theoretical framework.

Study Overview and Contribution

This study begins with an overview of the writing center literature. While the literature does not offer an extended analysis of community formation among tutors, it does offer a varied and rich focus on the interaction between tutor and student in the

tutorial. As already discussed, in order to understand how tutors learn from each other to enact their roles in the tutorial, the literature review I've undertaken for this study focuses primarily on the ways in which the writing center literature has constructed the role of co-learning and collaboration for the tutor. Only one text, *The Everyday Writing Center* (Geller et al., 2007), explicitly explores community formation among tutors as a community of practice, and hence it is discussed in detail in the literature review.

Borrowing heavily from the community of practice learning theory developed by Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger as well as similar management theories, *The Everyday Writing Center* offers a model for creating a learning environment that engages tutors in all aspects of the center's identity: tutorial conversations, scholarly work, administrative practices, and educational opportunities. The way in which the authors of *The Everyday Writing Center* contextualize the theoretical framework of Lave and Wenger in writing center practices is introduced in the literature review and serves as the theoretical framework for my study as well.

This study continues by describing data collection strategies in detail (Chapter 3, "Methodology") with particular attention to the positionality of the researcher, since I was director of the writing center at the time this study was conducted. In Chapter 4, "Contextualizing the Study," I consider the complexity of the research site by describing both the institutional and writing center settings of the study, and how they create a particular context for the emergent themes and theoretical framework of the study. The research on how an institution's small size and all-female student body may contribute to community formation among tutors are considered in this chapter. I also consider the administrative design of the writing center in this study and how its

structure encouraged a particularly collaborative approach among tutors in their daily work. The emergent themes of the study and the context in which they were observed are also presented, within the theoretical framework of Lave and Wenger's communities of practice research.

Chapter 5 comprises the data analysis portion of this study. In this chapter, I look closely at particular examples of recurring sessions between students and tutors, exploring the ways in which community formation among tutors is affected by tutors' attempts to communicate with each other about these recurring sessions in the context of the emergent themes. This chapter is at the heart of this study, as it weaves together the theoretical underpinnings of the community of practice framework with the writing center literature and the tutors' own interpretations of their practices as revealed in their journals and interviews.

In my concluding chapter to this research (Chapter 6), I consider the ways in which my study offers new ways to look at interaction among peer writing tutors, and the implications for further research that this study suggests.

While the significance of this study must necessarily be limited by its narrow scope, it is nevertheless the first study of its kind that attempts to document the formation of community among peer writing tutors in a systematic fashion. My focus on the interaction among the tutors themselves, and the ways in which they learn from each other, offers a compelling scenario for understanding the dynamics of a writing center from a new perspective. But my research also reveals the conflicting ways in which community formation occurs, as tutors often use their shared practices to

promote community among themselves but less frequently to reflect collaboratively upon their tutorial strategies. The community of practice framework offered by Lave & Wenger allows us to consider how an environment like a writing center, which is designed for learning, enacts shared practices among its participants, sometimes in ways that enhance the learning of both tutors and students, and sometimes in ways that limit their learning. My findings suggest that writing center practitioners must be more cognizant of the dynamics of community formation, and the ways in which shared practices among tutors are implemented and perceived by the tutors themselves.

The role of the tutor as co-learner with other tutors as conceived in a community of practice framework thus has significant implications for tutor education and the analysis of tutors' interactions in the tutorial. It is my hope that this study offers a way to consider the material realities of an active writing center that seeks to create a community of practice among tutors, so that writing center practitioners may consider the practical and philosophical implications of this new construction of tutors' roles.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

As noted in the introduction to this study, the central focus of the writing center literature is the collaborative interaction between peer writing tutors and students within the tutorial. Writing center scholars have constructed this interaction in a variety of ways, but considering the community of tutors as co-learners, as this study does, adds an additional dimension to the idea of collaboration and community within the writing center. That is, this study extends the concept of collaboration to show how tutors learn from each other, and the possibilities and limitations of tutor community for improving interaction with students in the writing center tutorial.

The tension between shared practices that emphasize relational awareness among tutors, and shared practices that engage in reflection that challenges tutorial strategies, is central to the findings of this study. In this literature review, I will consider how writing center scholarship has constructed the role of collaboration, reflection and relationships in the tutorial, as a starting point for the analysis of tutors' co-learning that is central to the concerns of this study.

The writing center literature reviewed here reveals how considerable attention has been given to the concept of collaboration in the tutorial, and offers complex considerations of how tutors enact their roles. However, the literature does not interrogate fully how the relationships that tutors build with one another and with students affect tutorial interaction. In addition, the literature does not delve deeply enough into the role reflection plays in affecting tutors' tutorial strategies. Most

importantly, the literature does not consider how shared engagement in reflective and relational activities among tutors affects writing center dynamics.

The theoretical framework of communities of practice offers new ways to consider how learning may take place among tutors, but this framework is currently considered in only one full-length manuscript in the writing center literature, co-written by five writing center scholars: *The Everyday Writing Center* (Geller et al., 2007). Because of its centrality to the literature on community of practice in writing centers, *The Everyday Writing Center* will be discussed at some length in this literature review. However, while this text is significant in the way that it reframes tutors' interaction among themselves within the dynamics of community formation, its theorizing lacks support in any systematic observation of writing center practices. My study seeks to fill this gap, by providing a grounded analysis of community formation among tutors through specific observations of their shared practices. (see Chapter 5, "Analysis").

Peer Writing Tutors in the Tutorial

The focus of this study is community formation among tutors and the shared practices that make such a community possible. Tutoring is the central shared practice of tutors within a writing center, and the activity on which their shared learning is focused. While the writing center literature offers a limited focus on the learning shared among peer tutors, the theoretical underpinnings of the tutorial provide insight into the collaborative learning environment that can be created between tutors and students, and how the tutor's role is constructed within that interaction. Understanding how the literature constructs the ways tutors engage in the tutorial can provide insight into the

ways tutors learn from each other how to enact those roles, and how this interaction among tutors affects community formation among them.

The writing center literature has focused to an overwhelming degree on the collaboration between tutors and students in the tutorial, analyzing a variety of ways in which the dynamic of the tutorial can be understood. For the purposes of this study, the way in which the writing center scholarship has constructed the tutor's role is of primary interest. By examining in this literature review how the concepts of co-learning and collaboration are applied to the interaction between tutor and student, I will consider how these frameworks can shed light on similar interactions among tutors that effect community formation. With this goal in mind, I have categorized the literature about the tutorial within three overlapping theoretical frameworks: Tutors as Collaborative Learners, Tutors as Cultural Change Agents, and Tutors as Writing Facilitators. While all of these frameworks offer valuable ways to think about the tutorial, little attention has been given to how tutors share knowledge among themselves to learn how to participate in and reflect on tutorial conversation. The ways in which the community of tutors creates a particular kind of learning frame in which the tutorial takes place is therefore not usually considered by writing center scholars in their analysis of tutorial practices. Gaps in the literature are clearly revealed by this study, since the literature usually analyzes each tutorial in isolation rather than as a series of repeated instances of practice that tutors learn to engage in through communication with each other in highly contextualized ways.

Tutors as Collaborative Learners

One of the most contested principles in writing center scholarship is the concept of collaboration. While it is often characterized as foundational for understanding the tutorial, it has also been described as contradictory, politicized, and problematic. The complex nature of the relationship between tutor and student is the source of these conflicting descriptions of tutorial interaction. While some scholars, like Kenneth Bruffee (1984, 2008), affirm the positive benefits for both tutor and student in the tutorial, others, like John Trimbur (1987) and Harvey Kail (1983), continue to caution against a simplistic understanding of this dynamic. Despite these varied descriptions, scholars who describe tutors as being engaged in a collaborative enterprise affirm the highly relational nature of tutorial interaction. In this theoretical perspective, tutors are learning as much from the tutorial as the student. By conceiving of the tutor as a co-learner in the tutorial, this theoretical framework implicitly and at times explicitly acknowledges the ways in which tutors may also be learning from each other.

In tracing the history of collaborative learning as a foundational concept in writing center scholarship, Kenneth Bruffee's article, "Peer Tutoring and the 'Conversation of Mankind,'" provided writing center scholarship with a theoretical basis it had been previously lacking. Hobson (1994) notes that in Bruffee's "Conversation" article he applies theories of social constructionist concepts directly to writing center interactions, integrating them with the social learning theories of key educators and thinkers of the time like Stanley Fish (1980), Richard Rorty (1979) and Thomas Kuhn (1970). Conversation, the medium through which tutors and students communicate in the tutorial, is seen by Bruffee as central to the learning that takes place

in the writing center. Bruffee (1984) suggests that through interaction in the tutorial, tutors and students maintain “the social contexts, the sorts of community life, that foster the kinds of conversations we [academics] value” (p. 6). The “communities of knowledgeable peers” that Bruffee suggests are created by such conversations and which form around shared interests are a re-casting of Fish’s “interpretive communities” (p. 6). Not only does Bruffee suggest that these communities are the source of meaning for its members, he also suggests they may be “in large measure the source of what we regard as our very selves” (p. 6). Thus, learning for Bruffee is intimately connected with language and conversation, and the writing center tutorial is a particular example of this kind of collaborative learning.

While Kenneth Bruffee’s “Conversation” article has justifiably been described as “the synthesizer the writing center community needed at an historical moment in its development” (Hobson, 1994, p. 5), it is worth noting that Bruffee became influential in writing center scholarship almost a decade earlier with the publication of *A Short Course in Writing*, a text focused primarily on collaborative learning but which also contained the first published model for training peer writing tutors. As Harvey Kail (2008) and Ron Maxwell (2008) remind us, Bruffee was extensively involved throughout the 1970’s and 80’s in promoting peer writing tutors through publications, faculty workshops, and keynote addresses at the National Conference in Peer Tutoring in Writing (NCPTW). Bruffee was also the founder and director of The Brooklyn College Summer Institute in Training Peer Writing Tutors from 1980-81, through which he influenced many writing teachers and future writing center directors.

Bruffee's interest in writing centers developed simultaneously with his interest in collaborative learning principles that offer "alternatives to the traditional classroom" (1984, p. 4). He recognizes peer tutoring as one of these alternatives, but his primary interest has always been in how to implement collaborative learning principles into the classroom to replace traditional, more hierarchical pedagogies. Gary Olson (1984), editor of the collection in which Bruffee's article appears, refers to Bruffee in his introduction as "the father of collaborative learning," acknowledging the primary focus of Bruffee's work throughout his scholarly career (p. 3).

Because of Bruffee's commitment to exploring collaborative learning principles, his emphasis in writing center scholarship is understandably on the learning that takes place for both student and tutor, noting that peer tutoring "did not seem to change what people learned but, rather, the social context in which they learned it" (1984, p. 4). This social context, Bruffee argues, allows students to learn from tutors, tutors to learn from students, and tutors to "learn from the activity of tutoring itself" (p. 4).

Bruffee's emphasis on the learning that takes place among tutors continues in his current work, as evidenced in his 2007 keynote address to NCPTW, in which he reminded the peer writing tutors in the audience: "you learn from the writing peer tutors you work with, and they learn from you," asserting further that "As an experienced peer tutor, you learn even more by handing on the skills of the craft to others, helping them learn how to go about it." (2008, p. 5-6). Bruffee's emphasis on the tutorial as an essentially relational activity rooted in the collaborative learning among peer tutors as well as between tutor and student continue to be the hallmarks of his writing center scholarship. Bruffee's awareness of the personal and intellectual nature

of the tutorial is recognizable later in the same speech when he characterizes peer tutoring as “a helpful, care-taking engagement” and “a personally engaging social activity” (p.6- 8). While Bruffee has never engaged in an in-depth analysis of the collaborative learning that takes place among peer writing tutors, it is nonetheless notable that he is the only writing center scholar who recognizes the connections between collaborative learning and tutor community early in the writing center literature, and that he continues to emphasize it in his current work.

Bruffee’s emphasis on collaborative learning and the co-learning that takes place for both tutors and students affirms certain concepts of peer tutoring that continue to echo throughout the writing center literature, more than 25 years later: the relational nature of the tutorial; the power of collaboration among peers to foster learning; the construction of communities that foster particular types of learning; and the connections between reflective thought, conversation and the written word. Bruffee thus suggests that the relationships established in the writing center have implications far beyond the tutorial, if we truly understand that it is through “communities of knowledgeable peers” that we construct all kinds of knowledge and create identities for ourselves (1984, p. 6). As we shall see later in this literature review, these concepts of social learning within communities of like-minded participants re-enter the conversation of writing center scholars in the 21st century through the notions of communities of practice, a theoretical concept which is foundational to this study.

The significance of tutorial interaction as a moment of social as well as intellectual engagement between tutor and student is a theme that Thom Hawkins (1980), a contemporary of Bruffee’s, has explored in some depth based on hundreds of

tutor journals he examined from the writing center he directed at the University of California, Berkley. Hawkins' emphasis is on the particular kind of learning environment that peer writing tutors can provide, and on how effective intellectual engagement between tutor and student depends to a significant degree on the personal relationship they develop between them. The intellectual engagement that Hawkins discusses shares many of the same themes we see in Bruffee: tutors act as co-learners who offer students a conversation between "insiders" that helps demystify academic discourse. While the intimacy of the personal relationship that Hawkins found evidence for in tutor journals is something not explicitly discussed by Bruffee, Hawkins believes it is precisely this "intensely personal" relationship between tutor and student that allows intellectual engagement to take place (p. 64). He further suggests that this personal, supportive relationship is what gives students the confidence for risk-taking in revision: "Tasks are accomplished because there is a mutual effort between friends, a situation of closeness, not distance, that fosters a sense of community in which the language learner *can take risks without fear of penalty*" (emphasis original, p. 66).

Critiquing Hawkins, Gillam (1994) characterizes his reference to the shared status of tutor and student in their common academic experience as simply a matter of identification, and notes the limits of such a relationship. Gillam (1994) suggests that it would be "naïve to assume that student status alone will enable students to establish a trusting, reciprocal relationship" and instead offers factors such as gender, class and "shared investment in academic success" as points of connection for tutors and students (p. 50). Hawkins' concern, however, is much more personal than Gillam's critique implies. Hawkins' reference to a "mutual effort between friends" is a more relational

version of the “community of knowledge peers” that Bruffee later identifies. For Hawkins, the tutorial must be deeply rooted in the personal to be academically successful: “Tutors concentrate on the writing task, but unless they put intimacy together with work there is not a real intellectual community” (p. 66).

Framing the tutorial as a personal interaction is a theme reiterated by Christina Murphy (2008) in her ruminative and essayistic article, “Freud in the Writing Center: The Psychoanalytics of Tutoring Well.” Like Bruffee, Murphy suggests that the tutorial offers a different kind of interaction than what is possible between teacher and student. Murphy’s emphasis is on the teacher’s role in the classroom, which she argues must necessarily be instructional in nature with attention to the entire class, not individual students. In contrast, Murphy suggests that “the tutor’s role often is primarily supportive and affective, secondarily instructional, and always directed to each student as an individual in a unique, one-to-one interpersonal relationship” (p. 96). Murphy concludes that the complex work of the tutor “requires...a sensitivity to the affective and intellectual dimension of the student’s personality,” in order to achieve the interpretive and analytical goals of the tutorial (p. 98-99). Murphy’s suggestions here seem to be based on her extensive experience with peer writing tutors, with no reference to particular tutor-student interactions.

Despite the insightful recognition that Hawkins and Murphy offer on how the success of the tutorial is intimately related to the relational nature of the tutor-student connection, neither of these scholars engage in systematic research on the intersection of personal relationships and intellectual engagement that they describe. In contrast to Bruffee and Murphy, Terese Thonus (2008) offers a linguistic analysis of tutorial

interaction that affirms some of their experiential claims. Thonus suggests that tutorials with a component of friendship, or what she defines as “familiarity” or a tendency to engage in “self disclosure,” exhibit more frequent coordinated laughter between tutor and student (p. 338). Thonus suggests that the positive dynamic implied by such shared laughter offers the possibility of a more “successful” tutorial, although she rightly notes that the connection between a successful tutorial and the nature of subsequent revision has yet to be definitively determined in the literature. Nevertheless, the connection that Thonus has made between a positive personal relationship between tutor and student and effective intellectual engagement is significant, and adds the weight of empirical research to the less systematic investigations of theorists like Hawkins and Murphy. My study attempts to build on more grounded studies like Thonus’s by observing how tutors in the Hollins Writing Center engage in recurring sessions with students, which offer opportunities both for relational engagement between tutor and student and shared reflection among tutors.

Among the participants of Bruffee’s 1980-81 Brooklyn College Summer Institute were Harvey Kail and John Trimbur, writing teachers who soon came to engage in writing center scholarship in influential ways as a result of Bruffee’s influence. As Harvey Kail notes, the participants of the institute “were at the beginnings of our career or at the points of transition in more established careers, and the Brooklyn Institute served a number of formative functions for us” (2008, p. 47). Twenty-five years later, Kail describes the experience of working closely with Bruffee and other fledgling composition teachers taking part in the Institute as foundational to their teaching of writing and tutor training: “The social dynamics of group life around peer influence

and mutual aid that was built into the very structure and ideology of the Institute itself proved to be both transformative and enduring” (2008, p. 48). Significantly, the Institute participants learned more than just how to train peer tutors in writing centers; they learned how principles of collaborative learning could be applied in every aspect of their scholarly lives – in the classroom and in their relationships with other scholars. Kail’s and Trimbur’s scholarship of the 1980’s both affirm and complicate Bruffee’s notion of collaborative learning in the tutorial, and arise as a response to the collaborative learning model that Bruffee asked the Institute’s participants to engage in. As we shall see, despite the substantive and significant critiques that Kail and Trimbur offer of Bruffee’s collaborative learning concepts and of peer tutoring, they nevertheless affirm the foundational nature of collaborative learning principles in the tutorial.

Harvey Kail’s 1983 article, “Collaborative Learning in Context: The Problem with Peer Tutoring,” problematizes the role of the tutor as co-learner in the tutorial, but still recognizes collaborative learning as the primary goal of the tutorial. Kail’s article is one of the earliest scholarly treatments of collaboration in writing centers, predating Bruffee’s “Conversation” article of 1984. Published in *College English*, Kail’s audience is not other writing center directors, but other college English professors. His primary concern is the epistemological positioning of the tutor in the learning environment. Kail argues that the permanent inclusion of student tutors “as part of the official audience of other students’ writing... fundamentally change[s]...our ideas of what teaching and learning writing actually involves” (p. 599), presenting problems of authority for faculty members and, more widely, for the discipline of teaching writing. Kail suggests that this “problem” of peer tutoring can be an opportunity for students and faculty to

understand “how students and teachers learn when their writing environment is organized to include collaborative learning in the form of formal peer tutoring programs” (p. 599). Kail’s wide-angle view of the tutorial connects peer tutoring with social and institutional concerns in significant ways, and signals the beginning of a theme that is traceable throughout writing center scholarship: questions of peer tutor authority and the institutional relationships of tutors in academia.

Kail and Trimbur explored these themes further in their article “The Politics of Peer Tutoring” (1987), which considers the ideological differences between course tutoring programs and tutoring based in writing centers. Kail and Trimbur point out that course tutoring programs incorporate tutoring into the curricular requirements of the academy, altering “the powers ascribed to and internalized by tutors and tutees” and making tutors “an extension of the faculty” (p. 8). By requiring students to participate in course tutoring, such programs stand in stark contrast to the collaborative interaction allowed by the writing center model, which is based on the “voluntary association of peers” that the authors argue is a natural dynamic of student life (pg. 9). The authors’ emphasis on the political implications of the tutor’s role for faculty is significant, given that Kail and Trimbur’s audience for this article is not writing center practitioners, but administrators and faculty (the article was published in the professional journal for writing program administrators). Their critique of course tutoring programs reaffirms the value of the collaborative learning model in the writing center tutorial and its benefits for both student and tutor, warning against similar models that detract from the essential relationship of the tutorial, based on the notion of peership and co-learning.

While the scholarship of Kail and Trimbur is speculative rather than empirical in nature, it nevertheless provides an important theoretical foundation for my study. That is, the construction of the tutorial in particular and the writing center in general as learning environments for both tutor and student are central to the understanding of how tutors learn from each other, and how they effect community formation among themselves. Kail and Trimbur's emphasis on the relational aspects of the tutorial, and the notion that voluntary association between peers is essential to the development of that relationship, also ties directly to the findings of this study. Recurring mandatory vs. voluntary visits in this study reveal a distinct difference in the ways in which relationships develop between tutors and students and among tutors; mandatory visits decrease the possibility that positive personal relationships will develop, while voluntary visits increase that possibility. Thus, Kail and Trimbur evidence profound insight into the dynamics of the writing center, despite their lack of empirical data.

The concerns of Kail and Trimbur for the ways in which the institutional positioning of writing center tutors affects the collaborative interaction of the tutorial becomes more pointed in Trimbur's highly anthologized article, "Peer Tutoring: A Contradiction in Terms?" (1987). Here Trimbur suggests that institutional hierarchies make it difficult initially for tutors to act as "status equals" with student, the relationship that Bruffee suggests is necessary for a collaborative learning experience in the writing center tutorial. As Trimbur argues, "the words 'peer' and 'tutor' appear to be a contradiction in terms" because tutors, as successful students, "have been rewarded by the traditional structures of teaching and learning," which is often hierarchical rather than collaborative (p. 22-23). Trimbur echoes the concerns he

expressed with Kail in their critique of course tutoring programs when he argues that tutors “have often internalized [the] values and standards” of the academy, and thus will naturally tend to align themselves with faculty in the tutorial rather than with their peers (p. 23). In doing so, tutors will not be able to engage in the kind of collaborative learning with students that Bruffee, Kail and Trimbur all see as foundational to the dynamic of the writing center tutorial. To mitigate this tendency, Trimbur argues that tutors must be trained with the same emphasis as given in Bruffee’s Brooklyn Plan, “with its focus on the dynamics of collaborative learning and on the peer tutors’ activity as writers and readers” (p. 25). Trimbur emphasizes Bruffee’s recognition of the value of the tutorial as a site for collaborative learning, and “the way it redefines learning as an event produced by the social interaction of the learners” (p. 23). Such a focus allows tutors to rely on their experience as writers and tutors to develop knowledge of how to tutor, rather than on the more conventional, hierarchical assessments they experience in the classroom. Trimbur’s problematizing of the tutor-student relationship is astute, allowing for both the possibility of collaborative learning in the tutorial with appropriate tutor training while simultaneously acknowledging how institutional forces inevitably impact the peer writing tutor and threaten to undermine tutorial interaction.

The idea that appropriate tutor training can prevent the tutorial from lapsing into more hierarchical forms of interaction was also noted by Bruffee (1984), who suggests that “the many possible negative effects of peer group influence: conformity, anti-intellectualism, intimidation, and the leveling of quality” (p. 14) can be solved through “an effective peer tutor training course based on collaborative learning” (p. 14).

However, Trimbur and others have argued that Bruffee's concept of collaboration does not go far enough, and fails to acknowledge the ways in which writing center tutorials may replicate problematic institutional and academic hierarchies, similar to those recognized by Kail & Trimbur.

In a later essay, Trimbur (1989) engages in a more substantive critique aimed specifically at the arguments of Bruffee and the role of consensus in collaborative learning. Trimbur's central argument is that consensus in a collaborative environment should not be seen as an attempt to reconcile differences but rather to acknowledge difference (p. 615). In doing so, Trimbur suggests that consensus "can be a powerful instrument for students to generate differences, to identify the systems of authority that organize these differences, and to transform the relations of power that determine who may speak and what counts as a meaningful statement" (p. 603). While Trimbur does not specifically discuss writing centers in this article, his heightened awareness of the institutional and cultural forces that impact a collaborative learning environment are themes that have continued to resonate throughout the writing center literature over the 25 years since this article was written. Specifically, Trimbur argues for "a critical version of collaborative learning" that does not simply "demystify the authority of knowledge by revealing its social character" but actively works to transform the system which produces those authoritative structures (p. 612). This larger cultural critique of collaborative learning principles becomes a dominant theme in writing center scholarship, a theme which emphasizes the role of the tutor as an agent for change in the highly politicized and hierarchical environment of academia.

Tutors as Cultural Change Agents

As writing center theorists over the last 15 years have built on the concepts presented by Bruffee, Kail and Trimbur, increased attention has been given to the political implications of the goals of the tutorial, and the ways in which collaboration within the writing center can serve to reinforce hierarchical attitudes towards learning and knowledge. A cluster of theorists (Grimm 1996, 1999; Welch 1993, Cooper 1994) have consistently examined writing center work within this larger framework. The resulting emphasis on the tutor's ethical responsibility to aid in the resistance of academic discourse in the tutorial has politicized the role of the peer writing tutor in significant ways. The way in which the tutor's role is enacted within this paradigm is quite different from Bruffee's view of the tutor as both a co-learner and a sort of shepherd for students seeking to enter the academic fold of "the conversation of mankind." Instead, these theorists suggest a cultural critique model that either implicates the tutor in furthering hegemonic discourse within the academy, or positions the tutor as capable of transforming academic discourse one student at a time. This constitutes a distinct shift in the conception of the tutor as a "status equal" in the tutorial, instead positioning the tutor as capable of changing the parameters of learning in which tutor and student are engaged.

The theoretical stance taken by Grimm (1996, 1999), Welch (1993), Cooper (1994) and others that represent a cultural critique approach to writing center collaboration is based upon two related theoretical trends in composition studies which gained prominence in the 80's and 90's: the cultural studies approach and the critical pedagogy approach (D. George & Trimbur, 2001). The aim of critical pedagogy can be described as

“engaging students in analysis of the unequal power relations that produce and are produced by cultural practices and institutions (including schools)” and it is often described as “overlap[ing] with cultural studies” (A. George, 2001, p. 92). Similarly, the cultural studies approach in composition utilizes texts from popular culture (often both visual and print-based) to encourage students to interrogate the ways in race, class, gender and other socio-cultural variables affect their lives (D. George & Trimbur, 2001). These two theoretical approaches have had a significant influence on the ways in which the writing center tutorial has been theorized, developing as they did during the same period that Bruffee’s collaborative learning principles were being explored and challenged in the writing center literature.

The breadth of Grimm’s cultural critique agenda for writing centers is significant, and is the hallmark of theorizing collaboration in the writing center tutorial as cultural critique. Grimm and theorists like her conceive of collaboration in the tutorial as a way of transforming the institution by transforming students, echoing the tenets of the cultural studies and critical pedagogy paradigms. Grimm’s commitment to theorizing the writing center in terms of social justice, cultural critique and literacy studies is evident in all of her scholarly work. Grimm’s “The Regulatory Role of the Writing Center: Coming to Terms with a Loss of Innocence,” is one of her early works, in which she implicates writing centers in “the ways that literacy practices reproduce the social order and regulate access and subjectivity” (1996b, p. 5). Similarly, in Grimm’s “Rearticulating the Work of the Writing Center,” she argues that “writing centers are the handmaidens of autonomous literacy – a value-free, culturally neutral notion of literacy – which although extensively challenged theoretically is still strongly at work in

the academy" (1996a, p. 524). Grimm's critiques suggest that writing centers are capable of challenging these entrenched notions of literacy, of becoming "genuine spaces where students negotiate conflicts and where knowledge about the conflict among literacies can be generated and shared" (1996a, p. 530).

Grimm sees the tutor's interaction with the student in the tutorial as the key to implementing broad-based cultural and institutional changes in literacy practices. To some degree, Grimm's argument acknowledges the problematized position she constructs for the tutor as an agent for change, in terms of both opportunity and positionality: "writing center tutors rarely have time to analyze the conflicts that underlie the writing struggles that bring students to the writing center in the first place, nor are they institutionally positioned to have anything to say about these conflicts" (1996b, p. 7). However, despite Grimm's seeming willingness to recognize tutors' limited political power, she nevertheless claims that writing center directors must provide tutors the opportunity to resist the dominant academic ideologies, and give them the theoretical knowledge necessary to do so. Grimm argues that "The naïve and childlike subjectivity [writing center directors] have constructed for [tutors] is the chief barrier to their participation in theoretical discussions and institutional change" (1996a, p. 546). Nancy Welch, like Grimm, also constructs an active role for tutors in enacting change, suggesting that writing center tutors should resist "uncritically joining and reproducing the norms of a particular discourse community" (1993, p. 13). Welch suggests that tutors and students "converse with, question and rework the conflicting, often unsettling, always potentially creative other voices in their work" (1993, p. 13). However, neither Welch nor Grimm fully acknowledge how the role of the tutor that

they construct is conflicted. This is particularly apparent in Grimm's work, since she simultaneously affirms the difficulty of tutors effecting change given their institutional positioning and the need for writing center directors to be responsible for engaging tutors in scholarly conversations that would supposedly allow them to effect such change.

Within the continued emphasis on larger cultural forces that informs a view of writing centers as sites of cultural critique is an important acknowledgement of the personal nature of the tutorial. Grimm (1996, 1999), Cooper (1994) and Welch (1993) all suggest that tutors engage in thoughtful conversation with students to question the way in which knowledge is constructed in the academy. Cooper echoes this in her suggestion that "Rather than 'always focusing on the paper at hand' tutors [should] build personal relationships with their students and come to understand how their students' lives and experiences shape their writing practices" (1994, p. 347). Grimm describes the way in which tutors can enact the personal within the cultural critique paradigm when she suggests that the change writing centers can initiate is not revolutionary or all-at-once, but rather occurs at "nodal points," where tutors can "nibble away" at the hierarchy in their conversations with students (1996, p. 21-22).

Cooper, Grimm and Welch thus allow space for the personal within the political, emphasizing the relational and intellectual nature of the tutorial that in fact connects their theorizing in important ways to Bruffee, Kail and Trimbur's construction of the tutor's role as a co-learner. In my study, we see evidence that in fact these relational aspects of the tutorial are often more important to the tutors themselves than the considerations of cultural critique that are so dear to the heart of theorists like Grimm.

The attention to the personal, reflective elements of the tutorial that Grimm, Cooper and Welch imbed within their notion of the tutorial as a site for cultural critique remind us that a category such as “Tutors as Cultural Change Agents” cannot fully describe the complex ways writing center theorists conceive of collaboration in the tutorial. Nonetheless, while such a construction of the tutor’s role positions the tutor as something of a co-learner with the student, the politicized nature of the tutor’s role is still paramount, shifting the focus for the tutor away from her own learning and onto the responsibility of changing the cultural and institutional contexts in which both tutor and student are engaged. Grimm and the theorists who share her vision of writing centers as a site of cultural critique have thus had an important impact on writing center scholarship, insisting that writing center work be evaluated in terms of its ability to reinforce or resist existing academic and social hierarchies, effectively denying the possibility that writing center collaborations can ever be politically neutral.

Tutors as Writing Facilitators

While the influence of scholars like Grimm is notable, many writing center researchers approach an analysis of the tutorial from a very different angle, one that focuses on the tutor’s role in helping the writer rather than on the institutional and social politics in which tutorials are imbedded. Unlike those scholars aligned with Bruffee or those who approach the tutorial as in need of cultural critique, these writing center scholars focus on the tutorial itself and suggest that theorizing on the nature of collaborative interaction should begin with observation of actual tutorial practices. With few exceptions, most scholars in this category are grounding their theorizing in the use of transcripts of audio and visual recordings of sessions, triangulating them with

questionnaires, interviews and/or journals of tutors. This methodology, whose theorizing is grounded in empirical evidence, creates a very rich analysis of the tutorial and a complex view of how collaboration is enacted. Because of its grounded nature, this research has particular significance for my study, which seeks to find evidence of tutors' relational and reflective roles within the data of their shared practices. In this section, I will consider how writing center scholars have used a range of methodologies to examine collaboration within the tutorial and to construct particular roles for the tutor as a writing facilitator.

The work of Muriel ("Mickey") Harris has dominated the writing center research that focuses closely on the tutorial. As the founding editor of *The Writing Lab Newsletter* in 1976 and the influential tutor handbook *Teaching One-To-One: The Writing Conference* (1986), Harris has published extensively in writing center and composition journals (e.g., 1980, 1990, 1992, 1995), usually focusing on the characteristics of effective tutorial interaction. While Harris has not incorporated analysis of tutorial transcripts into her research, she often incorporates tutor interviews, tutor journals, and student evaluations of writing center interactions. Harris invariably focuses on the unique contribution that peer writing tutors can make to the teaching of writing. Her article "Talking in the Middle" utilizes writer's comments on their tutorials, giving us important insight into how students perceive their writing center interactions. Based on these comments, Harris notes that in a peer-to-peer tutorial "writers gain kinds of knowledge about their writing and about themselves that are not possible in other institutionalized settings" (1995, p. 27). Harris argues that this occurs because tutors do not work "in the confines of a teacher/student relationship where there are penalties for

asking what [students] perceive as 'dumb' questions" (1995, p. 28). In Harris's model, the tutor offers a safe place for the student to explore her questions, as well as specialized knowledge of how to write a paper and how to interpret various kinds of academic discourse. Harris also emphasizes the interpersonal and individual attention that a tutor can provide a student, offering students a place to voice affective concerns that they may not feel comfortable expressing with teachers.

Although Harris's emphasis on the tutorial as an alternative learning environment to the classroom is similar to Bruffee, Kail and Trimbur's approach, the tutor's role in Harris's model is most often constructed as a guide with specialized knowledge whose primary responsibility is "to help the writer improve her own abilities and produce her own text" (1992, p. 2). Harris does not typically construct the tutor's role as that of a co-learner, but she does recognize the tutor as a reflective practitioner who makes sophisticated decisions about tutorial strategies, based on a combination of experience and training.

Harris's research frequently affirms the tutor's ability to recognize the range of collaborative approaches that may be appropriate in the tutorial, and to choose which strategy is most useful in a particular tutorial context. One example of Harris's perspective on the tutor as a reflective practitioner occurs in her discussion of directiveness, a recurring concern in the literature as writing center theorists seek to understand the balance of authority in the tutorial as tutors attempt to collaborate with students. Harris acknowledges this complexity when she states, "Certainly its not clear as to the degree with which we want tutors to be directive or nondirective" (2006, p. 302). Harris suggests that the tutor can learn through education and experience how to

make informed choices that are particular to a specific tutorial context: “The *complete tutor*...knows theory, isn’t constrained by guidelines of exactly what to do and when to do it, and has the strategic knowledge to turn theory into practice” (2006, p. 303). This willingness on Harris’s part to pay attention to the ways in which writing center theorizing can be extended and complicated by tutors through awareness of their tutorial practices is a hallmark of her work. The implication that tutors reflect on their tutoring to make informed choices is also an important aspect of Harris’s view of the tutor’s role. As I will show in the analysis of recurring sessions that are central to this study, the ways in which tutors reflect on their practices has a significant effect on the ways in which they form community among themselves, as well as on the way they alter or maintain their strategies in the tutorial.

While Harris is known for her emphasis on the tutorial rather than on institutional and political contexts, I want to avoid a simplistic summarizing of her scholarship. That is, Harris (and other scholars with similar research interests) are not necessarily unconcerned with or unaware of the significance of larger social contexts, but choose to focus primarily on the tutorial itself. Grimm, for example, notes Harris’s “insistence on connecting the local with the global, her habit of paying close, detailed attention to social issues” (2003, p. 55), which points to the complexity of Harris’s contributions and the danger of a reductive view of her scholarship.

Other writing center researchers have give attention to collaboration in the tutorial in ways similar to Harris, but with more systematic use of tutorial transcripts, tutor journals and tutor interviews. In doing so, such scholars give voice to tutors’ own perceptions of the tutorial, and affirm the role of the tutor as a reflective co-learner in

the complex and highly relational context of the tutorial. Two scholars in particular, Alice Gillam and Carol Severino, are representative of scholarship focused on various aspects of collaboration in the tutorial. Both Gillam and Severino combine a close analysis of tutorial conversation with analysis of tutor journals and/or tutor interviews, identifying characteristics of collaboration with reference to specific observations while acknowledging concerns with larger socio-cultural issues that shape tutorial interaction. Their methodologies explicitly construct the tutor as a reflective participant in facilitating the writer's learning, extending the idea of tutor as co-learner beyond Harris's model through their more systematic use of tutor voices when interpreting tutorial strategies. Both Gillam and Severino acknowledge the ways in which the highly contextualized nature of the tutorial affects the ways in which tutors enact their roles.

In an article exploring authority in the tutorial and tutors' roles, Gillam and her co-authors consider how Bruffee's construction of the tutor suggests a dual role, both as "status equals of the students they tutor" and as a "more capable peer" who can "draw on experience and training to manage the conversation in ways that promote intellectual growth in general and academic ways of thinking, conversing and writing in particular" (Gillam et al., 1994, p. 163-164). Through an analysis of tutorial conversations, interviews with tutors and students, and tutor journals, the authors discover that tutors have tremendous difficulty negotiating these conflicting roles. Gillam et al. note that an "impasse" can occur "from [the tutor's] refusal to acknowledge her ties to institutional authority," which is necessary for the tutor "in order to gain the writer's confidence and respect" (p. 194). While acknowledging the need for tutors to be cautious about exercising authority in the tutorial, Gillam et al.

(1994) also notes that “traditional forms and definitions of role and authority” are always present in the tutorial, and “to pretend [they] are not operative is to ignore the cultural assumptions both tutor and writer bring to the conversation” (p. 195).

Gillam et al.’s (1994) analysis of Bruffee’s role for the tutor, based on a grounded methodology that gives voice to the tutors and their perceptions, builds a bridge to the abstract theorizing of both Bruffee and the cultural critiques of Grimm, Cooper and Welch. Rather than simply affirming Bruffee’s construction of the tutor as a co-learner, or Grimm’s construction of the tutor as a cultural change agent, Gillam and her co-authors create a more fluid, shifting role for the tutor based on the choices made by the tutor in a particular tutorial context.

Gillam et al.’s focus on the tutor’s role as a reflective practitioner in the tutorial is evidenced not only through its research methodologies, in which the authors utilize tutors’ reflective journals, but in the authors’ insistence that writing center directors actively guide the tutor to reflect on the individual nature of each tutorial: “We need to ask tutors to reflect continually on how theory translates into practice in the context of particular tutorial relationships” (Gillam et al., 1994, p. 195). This emphasis on reflection re-emphasizes the tutor as co-learner that Bruffee, Kail and Trimbur have foregrounded in the writing center literature. Each tutorial will have different goals and will require the tutor to enact a slightly different role. Tutors can learn to recognize and consider each tutorial as a unique context based on a variety of questions such as those that Gillam et al. pose: “What constitutes a successful tutorial relationship? The quality of the peer bond? Changes in the writer’s attitude, writing process, or text? The tutor’s increased self-awareness or successful use of various tutoring strategies?” (p. 196).

There is no single answer to the authors' question about "a successful tutorial relationship"; rather, there are highly contextualized answers that tutors must develop for themselves, based on their own experiences in the tutorial. As the authors note, the tutorial is a "richly complex activity...[which] requires every tutor and writer to somehow negotiate...contradiction[s] anew" (p. 196). Thus, Gillam's recognition of the complexity of the tutorial relationship, the personal nature of the interaction between tutor and student, and the need for reflection on the part of the tutor are all themes that connect to this study's assertion that when tutors engage among themselves in reflective dialogue, opportunities for learning-grounded-in-practice can more effectively take place.

Carol Severino (1992) builds on Gillam's idea of the range of collaborations possible in the tutorial by developing a list of rhetorical characteristics that affect tutorial interaction. Severino's (1992) important article, "Rhetorically Analyzing Collaborations," suggests 18 possible features for analyzing collaboration between tutor and student. Notably, these not only include linguistic features such as "length of contributions to discussion (number of words and number of sentences each speaks)," but characteristics of the speakers themselves such as age, gender, ethnicity and "experience and attitude of writer [and tutor] toward writing" (p. 56). Severino states that her analysis of transcriptions from tutorial sessions "helped [her] inductively identify key features of situational and interpersonal dynamics that affect the nature of collaboration" (p. 54). By including situational and interpersonal features as significant factors in analyzing the tutorial, Severino constructs the tutorial as both a relational and

an intellectual space in which tutor and student negotiate in different ways depending on the intersection of these many complex variables.

Like Gillam, Severino (1992) builds on Ede & Lunsford's (1990) analysis of collaboration as "dialogic" or "hierarchical," in which they suggest that there are many different types of collaboration that may be considered effective and appropriate. Severino suggests that "a more fine-grained rhetorical analysis" is needed than that offered by Ede and Lunsford, one which will "result in richer and more precise descriptions and avoid hardbound categories and stereotypes" (p. 54). Like Gillam, Severino notes that writing center research questions should be framed in terms of what makes "one session a *better* collaboration than another," recognizing "situational and interpersonal features to describe and analyze richly and rhetorically the variety of collaboration(s)" that are possible (1992, p. 62-63). Severino's ability to acknowledge the way rhetorical features of the tutorial are affected by both situational and relational features (such as the stage of the text and the student's willingness) echo the intellectual and relational themes that emerged in this study.

The emphasis on the range of collaborations taking place in the tutorial has taken a specific turn in the last decade, with an increase in writing center scholarship that focuses on the language of the tutorial using language analysis techniques borrowed from linguistics. While researchers like Gillam (1994) use a modified version of some of these techniques, linguistic methodologies have been more explicitly invoked in certain examples of writing center scholarship. Such research allows us to examine with more rigorous methodologies the actual conversation of tutors and students in the tutorial, creating a more detailed look at the variety of collaborations that occur within writing

center tutorials. However, what is missing in these analyses is the voices of the tutors as they reflect on their practices, a gap which my research attempts to fill by utilizing dialogic tutor journals as a central part of my data analysis. Interpretation of tutorial interaction through an analysis of transcripts alone is limited, and removes the tutor from the tutorial interaction as reflective practitioner. This section will focus on those writing center studies that rely on explicit use of linguistic conventions, theories and analysis to conduct their research, considering both the contributions and the gaps of these methodologies in their contribution to constructing tutors as writing facilitators.

Madeleine Gilewicz and Terese Thonus (2003) argue that while writing center scholarship over the last twenty years at times employed the use of transcripts to analyze the language of the tutorial, Susan Blau, John Hall and Tracy Strauss (1998) were the first to “purposefully advocat[e] the importance of accurate linguistic transcription in writing center research” (p. 26). Blau et al. (1988) make a significant contribution to writing center research methodologies in their coding of tutorial transcripts for certain linguistic features, such as questioning techniques, echoing of words and phrases by both tutor and student, and use of qualifiers. Their methodology also included collecting questionnaires from tutors and students about each tutorial, and asking tutors to analyze their strengths and weaknesses in each tutorial, focusing specifically on whether or not they believed they were collaborative or directive in their approaches. Yet, their application of these methodologies in this particular article leads to a somewhat simplistic conclusion, that non-directive strategies should be used for writing process issues and directive strategies for issues of content. Perhaps because of the authors’ clearly stated intention to focus on the language of the tutorial, no mention

is made of the tutors' self-analysis of their sessions, and how this contributed to the authors' conclusions. The complex decisions that tutors make in the tutorial about the ways in which they exercise their authority acknowledge and reinforce the researchers' suggestion that we "build theories in our field from what we actually do in our writing centers" (Blau et al., 1988, p. 39). While Blau et al. ultimately question whether collaboration as described by Bruffee ("a conversation...among a community of knowledgeable peers") is possible given the professionalization of tutors, their failure to include the voices of tutors in their analysis is a significant oversight, and in fact signals a trend in research that focuses primarily on language analysis in the tutorial.

Terese Thonus (2001), a linguist whose research clusters around bilingualism, ESL and writing centers, brings her considerable expertise in linguistics to bear in her article examining how the language of the tutorial can shed light on how the perception of the tutor's role is shaped by the relationship between tutor, tutee and instructor. Based on her analysis, Thonus (2001) argues that "the roles of the writing center tutor are heavily contextualized, and self- and other-definitions divorced from the institutional contexts are inherently flawed" (p. 59), suggesting that tutors will always have difficulty negotiating their authority, given their institutionally sanctioned position. Despite Thonus's reference to "institutional contexts," which implies a cultural critique model of analysis, the definition of "context" that Thonus employs has more to do with the uniqueness of each tutorial situation, and the ways in which "tutors engage in ongoing struggles with issues of authority and directness" in each tutorial (2001, p. 77). Thonus (2001) concludes that "the results of this study... corroborate anecdotal observations by writing center personnel and researchers that the tutor's role must be

redefined and renegotiated in each interaction" (p. 77). Thonus (2001) notes that writing center research needs more such "contextualized investigations" (p. 77) that will shed light on "the relationship between tutoring and teaching," which she claims is "a far more vexed one than is portrayed in tutoring manuals and writing center research" (p. 77-78). Thonus stresses the need for such research, so that "theories will correspond more closely to evidence, not anecdote, and to what the practice of tutoring *is* rather than what it *should be*" (2001, p. 78). My study, which presents an often conflicted view of how tutors negotiate relational and reflective activity with each other and in the tutorial, confirms the complexity of writing center interactions as Thonus describes them, and offers the kind of grounded analysis that Thonus suggests is sorely needed in writing center studies.

In her conclusions, Thonus echoes what other writing center researchers like Gillam (1994) have claimed, who describe tutoring as a "richly complex activity...[which] requires every tutor and writer to somehow negotiate this contradiction anew" (p. 196). Thonus's linkage between close observations of tutorial sessions with linguistic methods of analysis certainly provides us with a new way to investigate the complexity of tutorial interaction, reinforcing what scholars like Gillam have suggested about the shifting nature of the tutor's role. Nevertheless, while Thonus calls for "contextualized investigations" that acknowledge the individual nature of each tutorial, she neglects to integrate her interviews with tutors into her conclusions, to understand tutors' perspectives on why they employ certain strategies. Again, this signals an important aspect of tutorial context that is neglected by Thonus and other researchers who draw conclusions from language analysis techniques in seeming

isolation from other research methodologies. By doing so, the tutorial becomes an artifact under the examination of the researcher, constructing the tutor not as a co-learner or knowledgeable practitioner in the writing center but as an object of the researcher's investigation.

Susan Wolff Murphy's (2006) analysis of tutors' nondirective pedagogies in the tutorial employs even more complex methodologies than either Blau et al. or Thonus, but Murphy, too, neglects to give voice to tutors in her research conclusions. This is particularly disturbing since Murphy's study suggests a particular perspective on tutor's roles that is even more fluid than Thonus and others have suggested, arguing that tutor roles shift within a single tutorial as well as between different tutorials. Through an analysis of tutorial transcripts, observation, interviews, and questionnaires, Murphy seeks to understand "how in practice being nondirective moves irregularly and sometimes recursively along a continuum as a session progresses" (p. 63). Murphy's observation of three sessions for each of eight tutors led her to conclude that collaboration within the tutorial is a complex phenomenon, particularly with regard to the ways in which "consultants will shift positions of power with student writers [within sessions] as they seek to achieve particular goals" (p. 63). Murphy (2006) argues that despite the recurring emphasis on what she considers over-simplified notions of non-directive tutoring strategies in tutor training manuals (e.g., Gillespie & Lerner 2000, Ryan 2001, Harris 1986), her research points to "how complicated and dynamic 'being non-directive' is in practice" (p. 65). Murphy seeks to consider "the ways in which power is enacted by language in conjunction with other social/cultural realities: gender,

age, education, class, etc.” (p. 79), but she does so without giving voice to tutors’ perspectives on their own choices in the tutorial.

Murphy’s methodology combines language analysis with tutor interviews, allowing the possibility of a more complex construction of the tutor’s role and acknowledging the wide range of variables that influence the choices that tutors make. Murphy explicitly emphasizes the ways in which tutors learn from their tutorial practices, and the need for reflection on those practices: “consultants should be trained to be self-reflective practitioners so they can use their judgment effectively while in sessions...building knowledge from actual writing center practice and how it does or does not enact writing center theory” (p. 79-80). Yet, Murphy does not give the tutors an opportunity to voice their reflections in her own research. It is not enough to simply ask tutors to reflect on their practices. In order to acknowledge the tutor’s role as a reflective practitioner, researchers must incorporate tutors’ reflections into their analysis. I have made a conscious decision to do so in my research, placing the tutors’ dialogic journals at the center of my analysis, and utilizing my interviews with tutors to shed further light on their reflections on their practices.

The research of Blau et al. (1998), Thonus (2001), and Murphy (2006) reveals the trend in writing center scholarship of increased theorizing about tutorial discourse through a close analysis of writing center transcripts, and its value for understanding the many ways in which collaboration is enacted in the tutorial. Murphy in particular demonstrates how triangulating language analysis techniques with other research methods (such as tutor interviews) can give more insight into the tutor-student relationship. Yet, close attention to the language of the tutorial combined with more

ethnographic research methods that situate the language and social practices of tutors within the writing center as a community have yet to surface at this stage in the writing center literature. My study marks the beginnings of such a contribution to writing center research.

Peer Writing Tutors in Reflection

The idea that peer writing tutors can and should reflect thoughtfully on their practices is a theme that recurs throughout the writing center literature, regardless of whether the tutor's role is constructed as that of a collaborative learner, an agent for cultural change, or a writing facilitator. Bruffee (1984), Kail (1983) and Trimbur's (1987) descriptions of tutors as learners who have the capacity to change the ways in which learning is understood in academia implies a reflective, thoughtful engagement by the tutor in the tutorial, despite the lack of specific references by these authors to reflective activities. Other writing center researchers more explicitly invoke tutor reflection as a practice in which tutors can and should regularly engage. Harris (e.g., 1995, 2006), for example, constructs tutors as thoughtful practitioners, repeatedly suggesting that tutors have strategic knowledge of tutoring acquired through experience that they can apply in sophisticated ways to particular tutorial contexts. Other researchers, like Gillam et al. (1994), suggest that we "ask tutors to reflect continually" on their practices because of the complex and shifting nature of tutorial relationships (p. 195). Tutor journals are often used in writing center research methodologies, suggesting that tutors' thinking about their sessions does indeed impact their tutorial practices (e.g., Gillam et al. 1994, S. Murphy, 2006). But despite these implied and explicit conclusions and admonitions, most extended references to tutor reflection in the writing center literature only

consider its role in tutor training, rather than the ways in which ongoing tutor reflection may impact tutorial practices. In this study, my examination of the role of shared reflection among tutors and its influence on the dynamics of the tutorial are an important addition to the research currently available in writing center studies.

The practice of self-assessment and reflective journal-keeping for tutors is regularly recommended in tutor training manuals. One of the most representative and popular of these manuals is *The Longman Guide to Peer Tutoring*, in which Paula Gillespie and Neal Lerner (2008) offer a series of "Tutoring Self-Assessment Questions" based on suggestions by writing center scholars Peter Carino (1989) and Jon Olson (1998) in previously published articles. These questions ask tutors to consider the tutorial from a wide variety of perspectives, such as rapport-building, the proportion of tutor talk vs. student talk, and the attitude of the student towards the instructor and the assignment (Gillespie & Lerner, p. 96). Gillespie and Lerner also devote several pages to the topic "Have I Talked Too Much?", offering tutors a variety of ways to reflect on their conversational strategies to ensure that they are fully engaging students in the tutorial (p. 99-101). The emphasis that Gillespie and Lerner place on the tutor's responsibility for self-assessment and reflection construct the tutor as an active, thoughtful practitioner and learner in the tutorial. The authors seem to imply that such activities should be an ongoing part of a tutor's writing center practices, not simply part of initial tutor training.

Despite this emphasis on reflection in readily available training materials for peer writing tutors, only a few full-length articles have been written on the use of reflection in tutor education. Kathleen Yancey (2002) and Nancy Welch (2002) offer

detailed descriptions of how they incorporate tutor journals into preparation courses for tutors; both authors utilize multiple examples from tutor journals to indicate how reflective practices allow tutors to question and complicate theory based on its relation to their actual practices in the tutorial.

Kathleen Yancey (2002) suggests that a variety of reflective activities conducted both individually and dialogically will “provide multiple contexts that themselves encourage insight” (p. 191) for peer writing tutors. Yancey engages tutors in emails shared on a group list-serve to reflect on practices, in various types of informal journals and letters produced individually, and in formal writing assignments that build on reflective activities. Yancey claims that through these reflective activities tutors learn “to make their own sense of what a tutor is...and to combine those [ideas] with their experience to create their own theorized practice” (p. 192). Yancey’s evidence of this learning is the ways in which tutors write about tutoring in increasingly thoughtful and theorized ways in their formal papers for the tutor course.

In contrast to Yancey, Nancy Welch (2002) considers a narrative approach to tutor journals as a valuable way of revealing how tutoring practices do not always conform with “official tutoring tales” (p. 206). In Welch’s use of journals, tutors describe and re-describe their sessions at various times throughout the semester, sharing their descriptions with each other and considering the different ways in which their tutorials may be analyzed. Welch suggests that “this work of writing out, interpreting, complicating, and rewriting stories of tutoring engaged [tutors] in ...the difficult ongoing work of revisiting the generalizations we constantly, necessarily make” about writing center practices (p. 215). Welch also claims that that “the official stories of

collaboration and peer relationship” are complicated and expanded through the use of reflective re-telling of tutors’ writing center experiences, allowing tutors to consider new ways of interacting with students in the tutorial.

While the tutor journals included in both Yancey’s and Welch’s research are compelling in their thoughtfulness and awareness of the complexities of a tutor’s role, neither author considers whether tutors’ reflections actually impact their tutorial practices. The only scholarly article that attempts to do so is Jim Bell’s (2001) “Tutor Training and Reflection on Practice.” Bell’s central research question is: “Would systematic reflection on practice help tutors conduct sessions where students were active and learning more?” (p. 81). Bell notes that while the literature on reflection in composition studies is common, empirical studies that address whether or not reflection is effective is almost completely lacking. In the writing center literature, Bell cites only one example (Okawa et al.) of such an empirical study. Bell notes that the literature on reflection in writing centers (and seemingly in composition studies) simply assumes that “changes in thinking will lead to changes in behavior” (p. 82). Bell’s research design is thus meant to determine whether tutors’ thinking as well as their tutorial strategies are affected by their reflective activities.

The reflective activities that Bell (2001) designed were numerous and complex, engaging tutors individually, with each other and with Bell in considering their own and other’s tutorial strategies. Bell asked tutors to utilize tape recordings of sessions, the observations of other tutors, and student evaluations to construct their reflections. Tutors were also asked to reflect on particular sessions several times during the semester, to provide tutors with different perspectives over time on their sessions. Bell

collected tutors' reflections during their semester of training, and used these reflections to analyze tutors' actual tutorial strategies in the following semester.

Bell's analysis shows that tutor reflection seemed to have little effect on tutor practices according to the measures that Bell had devised. That is, Bell's hope was that tutors would use reflection to enact more student-centered conferences, with less talk by the tutor and more engagement by the student. Bell concluded that tutors were likely to continue using the same tutorial strategies regardless of the changes in thinking shown in their reflective practices, but he was cautious about why this seemed to be true. He acknowledges the relatively short period of time in which tutors engaged in reflection (about 10 hours during training), and that "tutors cannot change that fast," making immediate changes in tutorial strategies an inappropriate expectation (p. 89). Interestingly, rather than concluding that a possible solution is to extend reflective practices into tutors' daily activities rather than restricting them only to periods of training, Bell states that he will not continue to use reflective practices in training, since such practices "do not foster tutoring that will meet my goal of 'a better writer, not just a better paper'" (p. 90). This is despite the fact that "tutors respond positively to the reflection in practice program" and stated "unanimously" that "it should remain part of tutor training" (p. 90). It is interesting that Bell does not see a place for reflection as a part of tutors' daily activities, especially given the complexity of the reasons he cites for its seeming failure.

Bell's desire to demonstrate a clear connection between reflection and changes in tutorial practices reveals a gap in the writing center literature that this study begins to address. Despite the claims of writing center scholars like Yancey (2002) that

“reflection-in-action” by tutors will “aid the tutorial as it helps determine both the shape and substance of it,” and that reflection, practice and theory are “three linked frames” (p. 191), there is little empirical evidence to support these claims. In addition, shared reflection that tutors engage in with each other is similarly neglected in the literature. While the communities of practice framework to be discussed in the next section recommends this strategy as a part of ongoing tutor education, systematic observations of how reflection effects tutorial practices, whether undertaken individually or within the community of tutors, does not exist. My study begins to fill this gap, by considering not only tutors’ individual reflections on their tutorials, but how dialogic journals allow tutors to share with each other their insights into tutorial dynamics.

Peer Writing Tutors and Gender

Before moving to a discussion of the writing center literature on communities of practice which is central to the analysis of this study, I would like to consider the role that gender has played in writing center research. This study was conducted in an undergraduate liberal arts institution for women, so a consideration of how the literature portrays gender’s role in writing centers is worthwhile. What my review of the writing center research reveals is a focus on the difference/dominance paradigm that sociolinguists and other researchers have replaced with the more complex framework of communities of practice (e.g., Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1992, 1995, 2003). I concur with those researchers that a communities of practice framework is more useful for understanding the complex dynamics of writing center interactions among tutors, even within a single-gender context such as Hollins University. Nevertheless,

uncovering the implied values that the writing center research applies to a gendered analysis of tutorials is illustrative. My discussion of the ways in which the writing center research tends to essentialize gendered interactions will serve as an appropriate contrast to the more complex theoretical framework of communities of practice discussed in the next section of this literature review.

The current writing center literature on gender differences explores interaction in the tutorial in one of two ways:

- 1) an emphasis on the cultural forces at work in shaping gender identity, positing a dominating, male-gendered academic discourse which feminist, more collaborative writing center discourse and practices must resist (e.g., Woolbright 1992, Traschel 1995, Bean 1999, Lutes 2002); or,
- 2) an emphasis on male-gendered behaviors in individuals that must be unlearned in tutor training (e.g., Birnbaum 1995, Hunzer 1997, Rafoth et al. 1999).

Both of these approaches utilize the difference/dominance paradigm described by sociolinguists as inadequate for understanding gender as a “complex configuration of individuals acting in part together and in part separately” (Bucholtz, 1999, p. 8). That is, sociolinguists have demonstrated that individual behavior is influenced not just by gender, but by social hierarchies, class and other factors that signal simultaneous membership in a variety of sometimes conflicting group identities.

Writing center theorists that analyze gender differences by focusing on larger cultural forces at work in the institution subscribe to the feminist interpretation that “disciplinary knowledge within academic institutions is often perceived in gendered

terms" (Lutes, 2002, p. 236). Such a framework supports the corollary that "writing center discourse reflects feminine approaches to language and resists the dominant discourse of the university" (Bean, 1999, p. 128), which is enacted through "the direct, authoritative, assertive discourse of most classrooms" (Bean, 1999, p. 132). Writing center researchers who subscribe to this model explore these assumptions through theorizing (often with explicit connections to feminist composition theories) and through analysis of tutorial interaction.

Barbara Cambridge (1993) articulates some of the earliest connections between feminism and writing centers. Central to Cambridge's (1993) argument is her description of the "labor" of writing center tutors as a product of their role as "midwife-teachers whose work is essential for supporting nascent writers" (p. 77). While Cambridge (1993) does not cite particular writing center scholars to support her characterization of writing center work as "motherly," she claims that writing centers have forwarded an implicit feminist agenda, an argument which recurs in the work of other writing center scholars in the cultural critique of gender paradigm that I am identifying. Cambridge's influence has been significant; she is repeatedly cited in writing center literature, despite the fact that she fails to explicitly reveal the ways in which writing centers enact the feminist practices she describes.

Mary Traschel (1995) builds significantly on Cambridge's concepts of feminist pedagogies in writing centers in her article "Nurturant Ethics and Academic Ideals: Convergence in The Writing Center," summarizing the implicit and explicit ways in which writing center scholarship has enacted feminist "ways of being." Through a feminist theoretical analysis of writing centers that is devoid of any analysis of tutorial

interaction, Traschel (1995) argues that “writing centers are often *socially constructed* as feminine sites where something like the domestic, care-giving service of the academic community is carried out” (emphasis original, p. 27).

Implicit in Traschel’s argument is the assumption that effective writing center collaboration is characterized by nurturant qualities. While it would certainly seem undesirable to suggest that writing center tutors should employ manipulative or domineering pedagogical practices, the complexity of the types of collaboration that could be deemed “effective” within a writing center tutorial are not necessarily revealed by an emphasis on practices that can be identified as “nurturing.” Traschel’s assumptions, and those of other writing center scholars like her, have nevertheless had a significant effect on the ways in which the role of the tutor in the tutorial is constructed, with nurturing and non-directive practices often categorized as feminist and therefore effective, and directive practices as masculinist and non-effective. This is despite the substantial scholarship in the writing center literature that constructs effective collaboration as varied, complex, and often legitimately directive (e.g., Shamon & Burns 1995, Carino 2003, Severino 1992, Gillam 1994, Gillam et al. 1994).

In contrast to scholars like Traschel (1995) and Cambridge (1993), some feminist writing center researchers combine a cultural critique of gender with analysis of tutorial interaction. Like Traschel, these scholars investigate gender differences within a cultural critique model, assuming a masculinized dominant discourse within the university and a resistant, feminist discourse within the writing center. Their research is distinguished by their attention to tutorial interaction rather than a sole reliance on

theoretical and deductive argumentation strategies like Traschel's (1995) and Cambridge's (1993).

Meg Woolbright's (1992) and Janet Bean's (1999) studies are notable for their methodologies focused on tutorial talk, as both scholars record and analyze the language of tutorial sessions and draw conclusions based on their feminist theoretical stance. But despite Woolbright's and Bean's attempts to ground their conclusions in actual tutorial discourse, their research continues to offer interpretations of tutorial interaction based on a difference/dominance paradigm of gender that offers a limited way of understanding writing center dynamics.

Woolbright's (1992) conclusions about the particular tutor she observed are based on the premise that both writing center scholars and feminists "advocate teaching methods that are non-hierarchical, cooperative, interactive ventures...conversations between equals" (p. 18). Woolbright's characterization of the session as "failed" are based on what she sees as an overly directive tutoring style on the part of the tutor.

In a similar fashion, Janet Bean (1999) echoes the concerns of Traschel (1995), Cambridge (1993) and Woolbright (1992) when she argues that "writing center discourse reflects feminine approaches to language and resists the dominant discourses of the university" (p. 128). However, Bean's methodological approach for investigating these differences in terms of gender is quite different from the other researchers discussed here so far. Through an analysis of tape-recorded tutorials and interviews with tutors, Bean develops a language-based interpretation of the tutorial, which measures "interruptions, amount of talk and topic selection" by both tutor and student to indicate the "balance in the power relations of the participants" (p. 135-136).

However, these characteristics are part of the “feminine discourse” that Bean (1999) assumes in advance of her data collection, characteristics which “value cooperation over competition, emotions as well as intellect, connectedness, and flexibility” (p. 130). Bean’s conclusions are, not surprisingly, polarized in terms of gendered behaviors. Bean’s tendency to essentialize gendered behaviors, assigning collaborative abilities to female tutors and directive tendencies to male tutors, causes her to conclude that there is a “need for greater linguistic flexibility in writing center consultants” (p. 142), particularly males.

Neither Bean’s nor Woolbright’s polarized assumptions about the characteristics of effective writing center talk as “feminist” in nature are grounded in previous research. The work of Gillam (1994), Severino (1992), Gillam et al. (1994), and particularly Blau et al. (1998), would have been particularly useful to Bean and Woolbright in creating a more complex notion of the varied characteristics of effective collaboration. While Bean utilized transcription analysis techniques similar to those used by sociolinguists, her bibliography reveals a lack of depth in her references to sociolinguistic research available at this time, ignoring some of the work of Penelope Eckert & Sally McConnell-Ginet (1995, 1992) and relying rather heavily on the typical oversimplifications in the difference/dominance paradigm often ascribed to sociolinguist Robin Lakoff’s (1975) earliest work.

In contrast to the literature just reviewed, which contextualizes gender differences based on cultural constructs of gender, another body of writing center research focuses more on the behaviors and attitudes of tutors and students within the tutorial. This research explores the individual practices of male or female tutors and

recommends that (particularly male) tutors learn to modify practices that are identified as masculinist and therefore undesirable. Consisting of only a handful of articles, this literature explores the perceptions of gender differences by tutors, students and faculty. The focus in these articles is on how writing center directors should help tutors and students become more aware of such stereotyping through improved training and open discussion of differences.

The ways in which students perceive gender differences can have a significant impact on their experience in the writing center. The research of Kathleen Hunzer (1997) and Margaret Tipper (1999) focuses almost exclusively on students' perceptions, Hunzer in a mixed-gender college writing center and Tipper in an all-male high school. Hunzer (1997) notes that "students... attached a judgment about each tutor that was dependent upon the gender of the student" (p. 9), characterizing tutors in stereotypical terms, such as "males are analytical, [and] females are more expressive" (p. 10). Hunzer concludes that if such stereotypes are affecting students' attitudes towards tutoring, then they are likely to be affecting tutors' perceptions of their own tutoring styles and abilities.

Tipper (1999), like Hunzer, is concerned with students' perceptions of gender, and how these perceptions may keep them from having an effective session, or perhaps prevent them from coming to the writing center in the first place. However, Tipper's (1999) overall analysis is weakened by her failure to contextualize her study in a more complex understanding of the social construction of gender. She has missed an important opportunity to consider how the single-gender nature of her institution has created a particular community of practice with particular expectations by dismissing

sociolinguistic research that might have shed considerable light on her research.

Tipper's (1999) statement, "I do not like stereotypes. I am not a sociologist who talks about people as groups" (p. 33), indicates a rather limited understanding of the research on language and gender and its usefulness.

While Tipper (1999) and Hunzer (1997) gave most of their attention to students' perceptions of gender, Rafoth et al. (1999) expand the focus to include tutors' perceptions of how gender differences affect the tutorial. Within the limited study undertaken by Rafoth et al., their conclusions are similar to Hunzer's: stereotyped ideas about gender differences seem to influence tutors' perceptions of their tutoring styles. However, Rafoth et al. make an important distinction between perceptions and behavior that did not enter into Hunzer and Tipper's analyses: "just because someone may be aware of gender does not necessarily mean they are behaving differently as a result" (p. 3). While acknowledging the influence that gender has on perceptions, the authors also make the point that "one always has the power to change the status quo in a communicative event. And, where possible, they can teach writers the same lesson if given the opportunity" (Rafoth et al. 1995, p. 5). But like Hunzer and Tipper, Rafoth et al. (1999) acknowledge the importance of gender perceptions, regardless of their source: "whether gender differences in tutorial interactions emanate from learned rituals or deeply felt needs, differences are something we have to deal with" (p. 3).

Contextualizing the perceptions of gender by peer writing tutors in this study within the literature just reviewed yields some important insights. As revealed by interviews with the tutors in this study, their overall perception is that a single-gender context matters in their interactions with each other and with students, and in their

opportunities for personal and intellectual development. The tutors also recognize that the small size of the institution contributes in significant ways to their interactions and learning opportunities. This awareness of the tutors of how gender intersects with size and the expectations for collaboration in a single-sex institution coincides with what the literature on women's education has suggested (e.g., Kinzie et al., 2007). That is, while a single-gender status has been found to produce a certain kind of learning environment for students, it is difficult to separate the influence of gender from other variables that shape the learning environment, especially the particular expectations that female students have for an all-female undergraduate experience.

This acknowledgement of the influence of expectations in the literature on women's colleges highlights the importance of perception in the study of gender. Significant portions of the writing center literature on gender also emphasize the importance of perceptions, for tutors and students, when analyzing the role of gender in tutorial interaction. However, this emphasis in the writing center literature has led to polarized ideas about behavior for male and female students, offering a limited analysis of how writing center tutorials are enacted. The writing center literature that focuses on a cultural critique of writing center discourse offers the possibility of a more complex view of gender, but to date this research has been limited to abstract theorizing, without grounding in analysis of tutorial interaction. Thus, the writing center literature is mostly limited to a difference/dominance paradigm that has little insight to offer into the complex workings of gender.

In contrast, the sociolinguistic literature offers a much more complex view of gender. Researchers like Eckert & McConnell-Ginet (1992, 1995, 2003) examine the

intersection of gender with issues of class, race, and ethnicity, seeking to understand how these variables influence smaller groups within a communities of practice framework. Such research complicates investigations into the influence of gender, suggesting the need for more attention to examining gender within the context of communities, rather than as an isolated variable.

My decision to ground the current study in a communities of practice framework, as theorized by the authors of *The Everyday Writing Center*, allows me to engage the complexities of community formation in a single-gender setting, rather than focusing on the stereotypical notions of gender construction offered by the writing center literature I have reviewed here.

Peer Writing Tutors in Communities of Practice

As we have seen up to this point in my review of the writing center literature, tutors' roles in the tutorial have been constructed in a variety of ways. I have demonstrated how tutors have been conceived as "status equals" collaborating with students (Bruffee 1984), as change agents who use the tutorial to investigate new models of literacy and academic knowledge (e.g., Grimm 1996, Cooper 1994), or as writing facilitators who enact a more complex role, sometimes as knowledgeable guides (e.g., Harris 1995) and sometimes as shifting between roles (e.g., Gillam et al. 1994, Severino 1992, S. Murphy 2006). Most of these latter models present the tutor as a reflective, knowledgeable practitioner whose perspective informs the research conclusions, but others examine the tutorial conversation as a primarily a linguistic artifact to be analyzed without reference to tutors' reflections on their own practice (e.g., Blau et al. 1998, Thonus 2001). I have also discussed how a gendered analysis of tutor

interaction as given by the current writing center literature is limited in its ability to illuminate how tutors form community among themselves.

Until the publication of *The Everyday Writing Center* in 2007 (Geller et al.), the writing center literature had not theorized how community formation among tutors affects writing center practices. Only a handful of articles even explores relationships among tutors, usually in narrative form (e.g., Bouquet 2002). Alternatively, writing centers have been described as a “site for academic culture” (Wingate 2001) or as an “essential community” of the academy (C. Murphy 2008), as writing center scholars considered the relational aspects of tutors’ work within the larger context of academia. However, none of the writing center literature until *The Everyday Writing Center* explores the dynamic of community formation among tutors and how this might encourage tutors to create knowledge among themselves about tutorial interaction. Hence, *The Everyday Writing Center* serves as the foundation for this portion of the literature review, with particular attention to how the learning theories of Lave & Wenger on communities of practice serve as the text’s primary theoretical framework.

The authors of *The Everyday Writing Center* argue that the most effective design for writing centers is one which maximizes learning for tutors, students directors, and all those who come in contact with the center. Borrowing from learning theorists Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger (1991), the authors suggest that writing centers focused on learning demonstrate the characteristics of a “community of practice,” a term Lave and Wenger use to describe apprentice-like settings in which participants developed shared practices towards a common goal. The authors agree with Wenger’s claim that learning is central to the community of practice created within a writing center, which ideally

fosters tutors “as participants in those communities...not only in formal staff education courses, but in everyday interactions” (Geller et al., p. 11-12).

While writing center theorists have explored the complexities of collaboration between tutors and students for decades, the concept of writing centers as communities of practice forces us to examine collaboration beyond the tutorial as it occurs in relationships among tutors. As I’ve noted, the authors of *The Everyday Writing Center* suggest that writing centers should function as a learning culture for all participants, including students. Nevertheless, the focus of the book is primarily on the learning culture formed among the tutors themselves and the role of the director in promoting such a culture. The authors’ emphasis is clear when they refer to the chapters which they see as “the heart of the writing center,” chapters with the subtitles “Tutors as Learners” and “Tutors as Writers” (Geller et al., p. 13). Three out of seven chapters of the book focus almost exclusively on tutor-tutor interaction, describing various scenarios from the five writing centers in which the authors participate and attempting to give “theoretical explorations [that are] woven into descriptions of life on the ground in the writing center” (Geller et al., p. 9). Significant portions of the text also focus on the director’s role in fostering a community of practice in the writing center; this role is discussed in terms of leadership theory, with an implied emphasis on collaborative administration practices between directors and tutors. While students are not missing from this analysis (for example, an entire chapter is dedicated to racism in the center, and how tutor and director perceptions can affect student participation), the primary emphasis in *The Everyday Writing Center* is on the practices that promote community formation and learning among the tutors themselves.

One of the important distinctions the authors make in tutor learning is between education and training, following closely the distinction that Wenger makes between activities that promote or limit the formation of a community of practice. The authors resist the “neatly-packaged representation of our rich, multi-layered everyday writing center lives” that they argue occurs in most tutor manuals and text books (Geller et al., p. 8). Instead, the authors suggest that writing centers focus on learning as it occurs among the participants of the community, the tutors themselves. The authors quote Wenger, who notes: “whereas training aims to create an inbound trajectory targeted at competence in a specific practice, education must strive to open new dimensions for the negotiation of self” (qtd in Geller et al., p. 8). The authors emphasize their interest in promoting this kind of learning among tutors, which they characterize as “a praxis compellingly situated in the relational” (Geller et al., p. 9). Throughout *The Everyday Writing Center*, the authors emphasize the tutors’ actual experiences in the tutorial as the basis for a highly reflective learning environment shaped by the director in which tutors participate together.

While the authors of *The Everyday Writing Center* are not engaged in a systematic evaluation of practices that they have used to promote a learning culture within their writing centers, they nevertheless give anecdotal examples from their centers of how tutors interact with each other to promote learning. Some of these examples – such as learning how to create jewelry together to encourage a “beginner’s mind” – are not directly related to writing center practices. While such playful activities among tutors can certainly be construed as relevant learning activities, the story-like descriptions do not offer enough concrete information to evaluate their usefulness either to enhancing

community among tutors or influencing their tutorial practices. However, the authors discuss two particular kinds of reflective learning experiences among tutors that clearly focus on writing center practices: the use of staff meeting conversations to understand tutorial interactions, and the use of dialogic journals among tutors to communicate insights into shared practices.

In the author's most extended discussion of how staff meetings can enhance tutor communication, they note how tutors often discuss the same assignment being tutored by different tutors. As tutors describe and interrogate the nature of the assignment and the response that students have to it, the authors note how such discussions "broaden tutors' conceptions of their own writing and tutoring choices" (Geller et al., p. 82). In the example given by the authors, tutors consider why the faculty member constructed the assignment in a particular way, and what learning advantages it may have for the student. Tutors also discuss how they themselves might respond to such a writing assignment, emphasizing their role as co-learners in the tutorial and in the academic environment. The authors emphasize how these conversations among tutors provide them with a "self-examination of their experiences as writers and tutors" as they engage in a staff meeting that is designed as a highly "reflective practice" (p. 82). In one of the authors' few references to specific writing center literature, they affirm Kathleen Yancey's characterization of reflection as a "checking against, a confirming and a balancing of self with others" (Yancey qtd in Geller et al., p. 82). It is the sharing of perspectives among the tutors themselves, not reflecting in isolation, that provides the insights made possible by this type of staff meeting conversation.

This construction of the tutor as engaged in the act of reflection *with other tutors* is key to the authors' conception of the writing center as a community of practice, and connects directly to the data gathered in my study. That is, the ways in which tutors engage in shared reflection through staff meetings is one of the key characteristics of the community of tutors in this study. In contrast to *The Everyday Writing Center's* narrative approach, my data offers a number of specific examples of how tutors' engagement in staff meetings responds to and affects their interactions in tutorials.

Tutors engaged in collaborative reflection is the focus of the authors' discussion of dialogic journals as well. The authors describe a journaling practice in one of their writing centers in which tutors are required to make weekly entries in a shared document. Tutors use the journals to respond in general ways to their tutorial experiences, rather than making an entry after each student they tutor. The authors describe these journals as opportunities for tutors to "write for each other" in order to "receive and reflect upon feedback from their peers" (Geller et al., p. 84-85). The authors acknowledge that while at times the journals reflect "slapstick silliness," their predominant characteristic is an interrogation of tutors' daily practices, creating a conversation among them that leads to "discover[y] [of] the meanings that attend to and emerge from the practice of writing" (p. 85-86). Once again, these descriptions are predominantly anecdotal in nature; while they are useful as examples of actual practices implemented by the authors, they are not extended or detailed enough to serve as more than snapshots of how tutors might interact among themselves to build a community of practice. The analysis of dialogic journals that are central to my study offer an opportunity to interrogate the assumptions of *The Everyday Writing Center's*

authors, as I explore how at times dialogic journals can enhance community formation among tutors while at the same time impeding tutors' needed reflection to change their tutorial strategies.

Because of the centrality of Lave & Wenger's community of practice framework to the theorizing of the authors of *The Everyday Writing Center*, it is useful here to consider in more depth how Lave & Wenger describe the significance of shared interactions such as dialogic tutor journals. Lave & Wenger (1991) argue that uses of language within a community of practice "may well have more to do with legitimacy of participation... than they do with knowledge transmission" (p. 105). In this study, the data reveals that the ways in which tutors use dialogic journal to communicate their status as participants in the community is in fact as important for building community as using the journals to share specific tutoring strategies. Lave & Wenger (1991) note that the "use of language, not itself the discourse of practice, creates a new linguistic practice, which has an existence of its own" (p. 108). Thus, the journals serve two key functions in Lave & Wenger's framework: 1) to communicate knowledge of specific tutoring strategies, or the "shared repertoire" that Wenger refers to as a characteristic of a community of practice, and to reflect on these practices; 2) to demonstrate *how* to talk as a tutor, sharing both positive and negative feelings in the linguistic environment of the dialogic journals and engaging in communication meant only for "insiders," or other tutors.

These two categories are distinguished by Lave and Wenger (1991) as "talking about" shared practices and "talking within" the practices themselves. Wenger defines "talking about" as the sharing of "stories, community lore" which is necessary for

“supporting communal forms of memory” (p. 109). These stories, usually about tutorial sessions, describe the particular personal experiences and feelings of tutors. “Talking within” is the more practical use of language as “exchanging information necessary to the progress of ongoing activities,” and would include the explicit sharing of strategies that tutors use in tutorials as well as their reflection on those strategies (p. 109). Both kinds of “talk” can be observed within the dialogic journals of this study.

In addition to constructing the tutor’s role as a learner and writer with other tutors, the authors of *The Everyday Writing Center* discuss the director’s role in creating an environment that makes such learning possible. The primary role of the director is described as “the leaderful, learningful stewardship of a dynamic learning and writing culture and community” (Geller et al., p. 14). The authors elaborate on the idea of a writing center director as a “functional leader” in a “learning paradigm” using educator John Tagg’s theoretical framework for administrators in academia. The authors offer Tagg’s model of a functional leader – one who “requires the participation of others to accomplish [his/her] purpose” – as the appropriate paradigm for a writing center director who wishes to encourage the formation of a community of learners among tutors (p. 11). The authors connect Tagg’s model with Marcia Conner’s Learning Audit, a self-evaluation instrument originally developed for business managers, to suggest ways in which writing center directors can enact their functional leadership by sharing decision-making authority with tutors to enhance tutor learning and community formation (p. 50-52).

Again, the concept of collaborative administration undertaken between the director and tutors is discussed by the authors in a theoretical and generalized manner rather

than through a grounded analysis of what such practices look like in an actual writing center. Nevertheless, the authors offer the first such discussion in the writing center literature of the relationship between the director's deliberate choices in structuring decision-making and tutor education and the creation of a learning culture among tutors. As the authors note, it is "the writing center director's ability to develop, nurture and sustain a learning culture" that ultimately determines whether such an environment will thrive (Geller et al., p. 70). My own analysis of the collaborative administration structures that I helped to establish in the writing center in this study affirms the authors' claim that cohesion among the tutors is enhanced by such shared opportunities for decision-making. Yet, my study also shows the varied ways in which tutors enact community within this collaborative structure, and how recurring sessions, mandatory visits, student writing ability and other factors complicate our understanding of community formation among tutors.

While a number of different theoretical frameworks are used within *The Everyday Writing Center*, its most significant contribution is the way in which it contextualizes the work of learning theorists Lave & Wenger in writing center practices. The theorizing of Lave and Wenger are the authors' stated framework for the book, and is consciously woven throughout. By doing so, the authors lay the groundwork for more contextualized examples of writing centers as communities of practice, such as the work I am presenting in this study. Particularly useful are the ways in which the authors distill from Wenger the characteristics that they believe describe a community of practice within a writing center, and the effects on the tutors as participants in such a community.

There are three central concepts that the authors derive from Wenger as a framework for describing a writing center community of practice, concepts which the authors believe construct the tutor community as “strategy-driven” rather than driven by the lock-step training methods that the authors believe are the norm in most writing centers (Geller et al., p. 53). These strategies are based on Wenger’s concepts of mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire. According to the authors, a writing center community of practice should:

- 1) Allow tutors to experience “evolving forms of mutual engagement” focused on their shared tutoring practices. In doing so, tutors “discover ...how to engage” in effective tutorial practices, “what helps and what hinders” (Wenger qtd in Geller et al., p. 53). This is the essence of learning through practice that the authors have culled from Wenger. It is through the evolving experience of tutoring itself that tutors learn and share their learning with each other.
- 2) Involve tutors in “understanding and tuning their [joint] enterprise” of tutoring, including “struggling to define the enterprise and reconciling conflicting interpretations of what the enterprise is about” (Wenger qtd in Geller et al., p. 53). This particular aspect of community formation requires an understanding of how tutors themselves interpret the learning they are experiencing through their shared practices, and how they negotiate what they learn with each other.
- 3) Help tutors in “developing their repertoire, styles and discourses,” including “telling and retelling stories” of tutoring experiences (Wenger qtd in Geller et al., p. 53). A writing center community of practice must encourage tutors to engage in sharing and reflecting on their experiences in the tutorial, both in terms of

specific tutorial strategies and in terms of their affective responses to their shared practices.

The authors use these three characteristics as touchstones throughout *The Everyday Writing Center*, drawing on examples from the five writing centers which the authors direct to illustrate the ways in which they have implemented these strategies to create communities of practice among their tutors.

Drawing once more from Wenger, the authors also discuss the particular effects they hope this community of practice will have on the peer writing tutors, all of which are focused on learning. Wenger describes three key principles of learning within a community of practice, most of which Geller et al. have incorporated into their analysis: 1) learning in practice, or practice as learning; 2) identity change as learning; and 3) levels of participation, or different trajectories of learning for different participants. The authors describe Wenger's concepts in terms of specific writing center practices:

1) Learning in practice can take place when the writing center is acknowledged as "a group of diverse people who make meaning together by sharing their experiences and who learn from one another so that no one is expected to know everything about the practice" (Geller et al., p. 50). The ways in which tutors share their learning, and the kind of environment that encourages such exchanges, is thus a central focus of the authors' descriptions of an ideal writing center.

2) In Wenger's conception, learning involves changes in identity. The authors acknowledge that in a writing center community of practice "members can see the impact of the learning community on their own identities" and reflect on these changes

(Geller et al., p. 50-51). Allowing tutors opportunities for reflection on their practices is an integral part of the ideal writing center that Geller et al. construct. As we have seen from the literature review, tutors as reflective practitioners is an ongoing theme in the literature; the authors create a bridge between the practice of reflection as usually conceived and reflection as Wenger presents it, as an essential way of understanding the identity changes that are a part of learning in a community of practice.

3) The differences in the ways participants learn and engage in the community is what Wenger defines as “levels of participation.” The authors do not discuss this characteristic directly. Rather, they focus on tutor education as something integral to daily life in the writing center that takes place over time. The authors simply note the changes that take place in tutors’ learning over the two to four years that most tutors are part of a writing center (p. 69-70), implying differences in “learning trajectories,” as Wenger calls them, but not interrogating these differences. Nevertheless, the authors’ acknowledgement of tutor learning as gradual and tied to the learning of other tutors within a community is unique in the writing center literature.

The ways in which the authors of *The Everyday Writing Center* construct the tutor’s role in terms of learning within the community of tutors in the writing center indicates a significant shift in the literature. The authors reinforce foundational concepts that can be traced in the literature, such as a focus on reflection and relational awareness—both among tutors and between tutors and students. But their recasting of these concepts in terms of collaborative learning among tutors offers a new way to understand tutor learning, and the effects of their learning on tutorial interaction.

The use of Lave & Wenger's communities of practice theories to understand the dynamics of writing centers has been thoughtfully critiqued by Neal Lerner (2007), a well-respected researcher in writing center scholarship. Lerner notes that "communities of practice is...a key term for theorists in situated learning" (p. 56), but that some important distinctions can be made between situated learning and communities of practice. Specifically, Lerner agrees with James Gee that a communities of practice model suggests "implied cohesion" (Gee qtd in Lerner, p. 56) among the group, a cohesion that may not be identifiable in a writing center setting. How does the researcher determine who is "in" and who is "out" of the group? Lerner also notes that students who come to the writing center only infrequently "complicate ideas of 'communities of practice'" or situated learning (p. 70). In fact, whether or not students actually become participants in the writing center community is one of the key questions that the authors of *The Everyday Writing Center* do not investigate fully.

The distinctions that Lerner makes between situated learning and communities of practice are noteworthy, especially given the ways in which *The Everyday Writing Center* focuses more on community formation among tutors than on community formation between tutors and students. However, for the purposes of this research, the communities of practice framework is appropriate, given its focus on the community of tutors. The narrow focus of this study reveals identifiable shared practices of the tutors that clarify their varying levels of membership in the writing center community, solving the problem that Gee and Lerner identify. The issue of students' participation in the community is more complex, and beyond the scope of this study.

Despite its intended emphasis on tutors, *The Everyday Writing Center* is nonetheless limited in its ability to reveal the nature of daily shared practices, given its unsystematic examination of tutor interactions. The authors' weaving together of theory and practice in "story" form reflects their explicitly stated intention to resist codification of writing center theory and practice. While such an approach has its value, such a structure replicates the lack of systematic research into writing center settings sorely needed in the field.

My research attempts to provide a deliberate investigation into the daily practices of tutors within a writing center that evolved into a learning culture, a culture that *The Everyday Writing Center* describes only indirectly and incompletely given its narrative structure. In the chapters that follow, I will describe the methodology used in designing this study (Chapter 3), and contextualize the institutional and writing center settings for the study within the theoretical framework of Lave and Wenger (Chapter 4).

Connecting the communities of practice framework to the emergent themes already mentioned throughout this literature review – reflective activity, relational awareness, and intellectual engagement – and analyzing specific tutorial interactions within the intersection of theory and themes will comprise the data analysis section of this study (Chapter 5). It is my hope that this study will offer a concrete example of the kind of learning culture that the authors of *The Everyday Writing Center* describe: a community of tutors engaged in learning through shared practices focused on the tutoring of writing.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Design

The purpose of this study is to investigate community formation among peer writing tutors within an active writing center. This project is conceived as a case study, focusing on a writing center within a small liberal arts college for women which I directed for 15 years. A naturalistic approach using qualitative research methods was thus the appropriate choice, allowing for observations of everyday work habits and interactions among tutors as well as emergent design and analysis. Although interviews with tutors were conducted as part of the data collection process, all other sources were naturally occurring. That is, the tutorial sessions and dialogic journals I examined were regular practices of the peer writing tutors in this study, and my observations as the researcher were conducted at staff meetings and during regularly occurring daily activities.

Confidentiality of both students and tutors was an important consideration for this study. All tutors and students participated voluntarily and signed consent forms if they agreed to take part in this study. Tutor consent forms allowed the use of transcriptions of recorded sessions, dialogic tutor journals, observations of the researcher, and tutor interviews. Student consent forms allowed the use of transcriptions of recorded sessions (see Appendices 1, 2 and 3 for samples). Because the tutors' dialogic journals are uncensored and written about specific students in very personal ways, in-house confidentiality measures are essential and ongoing. Only tutors and the director can access the shared drive where the tutor journals are stored. The

dialogic journal is removed from the shared drive at the end of each academic year and archived on CD-ROM to protect the confidentiality of the entries. Tutors can only access the journal for the current year in which they are working as tutors. Neither non-tutor students nor faculty have access to the journals. Tutors sign a confidentiality form at the beginning of each academic year to ensure that whatever personal information they learn about other tutors or the students they tutor, either through the tutoring sessions themselves or through the journals, remains confidential. All names of tutors and students in this study have been altered, to protect individual identities.

Positionality of the Researcher

Writing center scholarship has indirectly supported the idea of writing centers as locally defined communities of practice by privileging the study of local settings. Thus, investigating the writing center which I directed seemed like a natural choice, given my constant access to its environment that allowed a natural interaction with tutors with a minimum of disruption to the writing center's daily routines. Taking a role as a participant-observer in my own research certainly has precedence in writing center scholarship, as noted by Alice Gillam in her brief history of writing center research (2002). Gillam describes this trend in writing center research by noting that writing center practitioners have usually engaged in practitioner-based, empirical research, and notes that this practice reflects a paradigm shift in composition studies, which re-situated the position of the researcher from that of a "disinterested observer" to the idea of "the researcher as an interested observer who selectively gathers data and subjectively interprets it according to various terministic screens" (2002, p. xx).

Writing center scholarship has thus supported the idea of writing centers as locally defined communities of practice by privileging the study of local settings. However, Gillam also acknowledges the ambivalence that many writing center scholars have had towards such research, which has been characterized as writing center “lore” rather than as legitimate methodologies. Gillam concludes by suggesting that we move towards more complex ways of theorizing that do not preclude the study of local settings, but that embrace methodological pluralism in research design and critical self-reflection on the part of the researcher to balance the limitations of research conducted within localized settings.

Gillam’s caution that participant-observers engage in critical reflection is one that I considered carefully when engaging in this study. Beverly Moss (1992) echoes these concerns in her essay “Ethnography and Composition.” Moss discusses in some detail the ways in which the researcher’s membership within the community being studied (such as a teacher observing her own classroom, or, in the case of this study, a writing center director observing her own tutors) poses particular concerns. Moss notes that a “preexisting relationship with the members of the community sets up, rightly or not, expectations for both the researcher and community” (p. 162). In addition, Moss argues, the researcher’s role as a member of the community may cause her to “make assumptions about what certain behaviors signify or how meaning is established in the community based on previous knowledge [rather than] on the actual data collected” (p. 163).

At the same time, feminist researchers like Gesa Kirsch have suggested that attempts to be “objective and distanced” may in fact distort the data if the researchers

does not come to know the participants “in the contexts of their daily lives” (1999, p. 13). In fact, Kirsch suggests instead that “interactive, collaborative relations between researchers and participants...can work to produce better, more detailed empirical data” (p. 13). As I progressed through various stages of data collection and analysis for this study, I have attempted to acknowledge the ways in which my position as a researcher is affected by my simultaneous position as director of the writing center I am studying. I hope that my intense personal knowledge of the tutors’ personal and intellectual lives in this study has not distorted my analysis of the data, but rather served to enrich it.

Choice of Setting

While my choice of setting was influenced in part by my sense of positionality within the writing center and the advantages of being an “insider” as the director, I also considered the fact that Hollins, as a residential, small, liberal arts college, represents a particular kind of community found on only a small number of campuses. In a special issue of *Composition Studies* devoted to the small college, co-editors Hanstedt and Amorose (2004) note that “the language of the small college empahsiz[es] close community ... [in which] students are not just passive recipients of knowledge but active participants in the day-to-day mechanisms of the institutions” (p. 21). In their analysis of the unique culture of the small college (which they define loosely as having a student body of under 2-3,000), Hanstedt and Amorose acknowledge that small size “allows for a strong sense of community...the language used to refer to the institution [in college mission statements] inscribes community as an ethos of the institution...this

ethos – again, for better or for worse – shapes relationships between and among students, faculty and administration” (p. 22).

Thus, the culture of community is an inherent part of the Hollins identity because of its size, and is a key factor in the kind of relationships that tutors develop with each other. It seemed to me that community formation among tutors in this particular setting would thus be particularly observable. In Chapter 4 of this study, I describe in more detail how the intersection of small size and an all-female student population create a particular kind of context for the Hollins Writing Center that is significant for this study. The particular administrative structures of the Hollins Writing Center that encourage a learning culture among tutors are also described in more detail in Chapter 4, to provide a context for the site selection of this study.

Data Collection

In order to increase the credibility of the study, multiple methods of data collection were used: transcriptions of recorded sessions, dialogic tutor journals, my observations as the researcher, and transcriptions of my interviews with tutors. In Janet Bean’s (1999) attempt to link sociolinguistic methodologies with her study of gender and language in the writing center, she notes that a narrow focus on language will yield limited understanding of writing center tutorials. Bean’s (1999) research revealed that “the study of isolated linguistic variables couldn’t adequately explain the complexity of the discourse [she] encountered” (p. 129). Bean goes on to argue for more contextualized, ethnographic research to capture the complexity of writing center interactions. I believe that the methodologies I’ve chosen provide an appropriate framework for the type of research that Bean suggests is necessary when studying

community formation in writing centers. While my transcriptions and analysis of tutorials were vital data sources, my goal in this research has been to maintain an awareness of the context in which I worked with the tutors: a small liberal arts institution for women. Through multiple methods of data collection, I hope to avoid the narrow interpretations that might otherwise result from studying the language of the tutorial in isolation. My hope was to capture the tutors' own perceptions of their interactions with each other and with students by including tutor journals and interviews as part of the data collection process.

Recorded Sessions

This study was conducted during the Spring semester of 2007. During that time, 260 tutorial sessions took place. Of these, 72 sessions were recorded. Recordings were of necessity done randomly, based on the tutor's and student's willingness to record the session. Prior to beginning sessions during the period of data collection for this study, tutors were instructed to ask each student if she would be willing to participate in the study by having the tutorial recorded. Predictably, tutors were uneven in remembering to record sessions, with only seven of the eight participating tutors actually recording sessions. These seven tutors recorded at least three sessions each, with an average of 10 sessions per tutor. Consent forms were signed prior to the start of the session, if the student was willing. Recording sessions was an ongoing practice in this writing center, for the purposes of tutor training, so neither tutors nor students were unfamiliar with the presence of recorders in the session or the use of consent forms.

About half of the journals were transcribed by me, and about half were transcribed by a peer writing tutor hired as a research assistant during the summer of

2007. I reviewed all of the transcriptions made by my research assistant for consistency in transcription conventions and accuracy, making additions, changes or deletions as needed (see Appendix D for transcription conventions).

Dialogic Tutor Journals

The nine peer writing tutors in the Hollins Writing Center wrote dialogic journals for all 260 sessions that occurred during the period of data gathering. Regular journaling after each session was already in place as a part of daily practices in the Hollins Writing Center for 14 years prior to this study. Tutors routinely create dialogic journals after each session they tutor, and these journals are shared with and read by other tutors through a simple networked computer system. About 192 single-spaced pages of entries were made by the tutors in the journals during this period. Entries were usually a 4-5 sentence paragraph, but some were as short as a few sentences or as long as a half-page. Eight of the nine tutors agreed to participate in this study; the journals of the non-participating tutor were not included in this analysis.

In Chapter 4 of this study, I discuss in detail the history and implementation of dialogic journals in the writing center of this study as part of my description of the research setting, and in the context of the various shared practices in which the peer writing tutors engaged with each other.

Tutor Interviews

Interviews were conducted with the six of the eight tutors participating in this study, including the tutor who had failed to make any recordings of her sessions. Ideally, all tutors would be interviewed, but personal schedules and availability prevented this. Nevertheless, the tutor interviews I obtained helped to enrich my

understanding of how tutors perceived their roles in the tutorial, and their interaction with each other.

Three of the tutors interviewed were exiting senior tutors, two of whom had been tutoring for three years and one of whom had been tutoring for two years. Two of the remaining tutors interviewed were juniors who had just completed their first year of tutoring, and the final tutor interviewed was a junior who had just completed her second year of tutoring. All interviews were conducted at the end of the semester. Questions were intended to be open-ended, exploring the tutor's perceptions of her role as a peer writing tutor, the student's role, her philosophy of tutoring, and the significance of the single-gender context to her experience at Hollins in general and tutoring in the Writing Center in particular (see Appendix E for questions). All interviews were recorded and transcribed by me.

Observations of the Researcher

As director of the Hollins Writing Center at the time of this study, my positionality is that of a participant-observer in this research, as previously discussed. I hire the tutors, design and teach the course used to train them, observe them in training and afterward, meet weekly with them in staff meetings, interact with them on a daily basis in the Writing Center, and read the dialogic journals several times weekly. As a result, my knowledge of their individual tutoring styles and their personal strengths and weaknesses is quite detailed. The level of trust that I have developed with the tutors as a result of this regular interaction has a great deal to do with the honesty that I have come to expect in tutors' conversations with me and in their tutor journals, and the validity that tutors' comments and the journals themselves acquire as a result. My

presence in the writing center on a regular basis to conduct routine supervisory activities and engage in informal conversation with tutors were often the basis for my field notes. I also took notes at weekly staff meetings and maintained an informal journal in which I recorded my thoughts during the period when the study was conducted and during the several years since that I have been engaged in writing this study.

Sampling Techniques

My decision about which data to focus on and how to analyze it grew out of an awareness of the emergent themes of this study – relational awareness, intellectual engagement, and reflective activity – which will be discussed in more detail in the *Data Analysis* section that follows. These themes became particularly apparent as I noticed that 73% of the session conducted during the period of data gathering in this study took place between students who returned two or more times to the Hollins Writing Center, meeting with the same or different tutors. These recurring sessions thus became the focus of my analysis in this study.

My decision to focus on an analysis of recurring sessions is an example of purposive sampling, as defined by Joseph A. Maxwell (2005). As Maxwell notes, qualitative research designs typically depend upon purposive sampling in order to select particular types of data according to particular criteria that cannot be achieved from different choices (p. 88). For this study, I chose to focus on recurring sessions between peer writing and tutors for two of the reasons that Maxwell cites as valid (p. 88-89). First of all, since 73% of the sessions conducted for this study were recurring sessions, they are representative of typical activities between tutors and students in this

writing center. Secondly, recurring sessions allow for the kind of ongoing communication and sharing of practices among tutors that can reveal community formation among them, which is the central focus of this study. This intersection of typicality and relevance to the study guided my decision to focus on recurring sessions for my analysis.

Data Analysis

Research Questions and Emergent Themes

In keeping with the process most fundamental to naturalistic design, the research questions for this project resolved into a different shape at the end of the process than they had at the beginning. Initially, I sought to investigate how the single-gender nature of the Hollins Writing Center affected community formation, with particular attention to tutorial conversations between tutors and students. But, as I delved more deeply into the community of practice learning theories of Lave and Wenger (1991), I found that the ways in which tutors interacted with each other did not seem to be tied to gender so much as to the highly relational environment in which they interacted. The ways tutors learned from each other within the dynamics of a small community became increasingly compelling for me, based particularly on my daily observations and on the dialogic tutor journals. The focus of the study gradually shifted away from language analysis, and I became more interested in the ways in which tutors construct their identity, share tutoring strategies and information about students, and build a sense of community in the writing center through their various shared practices. My research questions reflect these interests:

- 1) What are the particular practices that promote or limit community (and therefore learning) among tutors in a writing center?
- 2) Conversely, what are the effects of community formation on tutor practices? Specifically, what effect does this “culture of learning” have on the dynamics of the tutorial itself?
- 3) What is the role of the director in promoting and sustaining a culture of learning among peer writing tutors?

Once I made the decision to focus on tutor community, I searched for emergent themes tied to community formation. Since interactions in the tutorial are the primary shared activity among tutors, I focused first on the different ways in which the dialogic journal might reveal thematic ideas, while also re-reading transcripts for the recorded sessions that were available. I eventually realized that there were three overarching categories that I kept returning to: *relational awareness* (tutors’ heightened sense of their relationships with each other and with students in the tutorial, and how relationships shaped the tutorial itself—sessions between friends, or between tutors, or recurring sessions with the same or different tutors); *intellectual engagement* (the effect of disciplinary knowledge on the tutorial, how tutors discussed writing process in the tutorial, etc.); and *reflective activity* (the intensity of reflection in tutor journals and how that varied among the tutors; the ways in which tutors revealed reflective tendencies in staff meetings and in their interviews with me, how reflective activity affected tutorial practices). These three categories thus became my emergent themes, simultaneously with my realization that 73% or 189 of the 260 sessions took place with students who returned to the Hollins Writing Center two or more times.

Reading the tutor journals for recurring sessions was an essential component of my search for emergent themes. In addition, my notes on weekly staff meetings in which I discuss current tutorials with tutors gave me another way in which to observe how tutors describe their interactions and how they interact with each other. The tutor interviews were yet another important factor in determining the emergent themes. Through all of these data sources, I sought to identify themes that reflected what tutors themselves value in their writing center practices, rather than imposing a framework of my own construction on their perceptions. The ways in which the emergent themes are connected to particular instances of tutors' activities and their interviews are described in more detail in Chapter 5, in which I contextualize the emergent themes within the theoretical framework of communities of practice offered by Lave and Wenger (1991).

Categories and Methods of Analysis

As already noted, 189 sessions, or 73% of the total sessions, consisted of recurring visits. My choice of which of these recurring sessions to analyze grew out of my interest in how the emergent themes shed light on the ways tutors made intellectual and relational connections with each other in the sessions, and the ways in which they reflected on these connections in their journals, in staff meetings, in daily interactions and in their interviews with me. I began to see differences between the ways in which tutors communicated about voluntary recurring sessions vs. mandatory recurring sessions, and so this became the main sub-division of my analysis. Within these two categories, I looked for examples of sessions that recurred multiple times between the same tutor and student, and sessions in which the student met with a different tutor each time.

My final choices about which sessions to analyze were based on a desire to find ways in which tutors' practices both enhanced and limited community formation among them, and to allow representation of as many of the tutors as possible. Seventeen of the recurring sessions occurred voluntarily among experienced tutors; I have chosen not to examine these sessions since the dynamic was significantly different than between tutor and student, and so not representative of usual tutorial practices. All eight tutors participating in this study were included to some degree in this analysis, allowing a range of interactions to be examined. I chose to look at a total of 17 sessions in some detail, ten of which were voluntary recurring sessions and seven of which were mandatory.

Voluntary sessions recurring with the same tutor represented 27 sessions, or 10.4% of the total sessions for the semester, while voluntary sessions with different tutors represented 83 sessions, or 32% of total sessions (see Appendix F). The ten voluntary recurring sessions in this analysis include one session out of nine in a long-term tutoring relationship between a first-year international student and a first-year tutor. The other voluntary sessions include a series of visits between a senior tutor and a senior student, and a series of sessions between one student and four different tutors.

The mandatory sessions during the period of data gathering consisted of 62 visits from students in the same class, or 24% of total visits for the semester. I chose to focus on a sampling of seven sessions from this category, both to contrast voluntary and mandatory recurring sessions and to highlight the particular dynamic that developed among the tutors because of the unusually high number of visits from the same class.

Included in this analysis is a series of sessions that one of these students had with three different tutors, and sessions with two tutors who met with their students several times.

My method of analysis was to examine tutorial transcripts, tutor journals, tutor interviews, and staff meeting notes for each group of sessions analyzed. The ways in which tutors communicate with each other through the dialogic journals and staff meetings was particularly useful in considering how they used these practices to share tutorial strategies, explore difficult sessions, share personal information about students, and discuss disciplinary and curricular demands. My interviews with the tutors were useful for understanding how tutors see their role in the tutorial, and how they describe the dynamic among themselves. Through this analysis I came to recognize differences in the ways tutors reflected on their sessions in the dialogic journals and in staff meetings, and the ways in which voluntary and mandatory sessions affected both reflection and the dynamic among tutors. Community formation was significantly affected by tutors' abilities to reflect on their particular tutorial strategies in the journals and in staff meetings. However, at times tutors did not reflect significantly on their strategies but rather affirmed their own practices or engaged in critiques of difficult tutorials. These kinds of reflections also enhanced community formation but did not seem to effect changes in tutorial strategies.

While in the current chapter I present the details of my data collection strategies and overall research design, in the following chapter I contextualize the site and setting of this study in more detail. Both the institutional site, Hollins University, and the research setting, the Hollins University Writing Center, have particular characteristics that are relevant to the research questions I have developed. Because of the detailed and

particular nature of both the site and setting for this study, I have chosen to present those descriptions in a separate chapter. In combination with the current chapter, these contextualized descriptions in Chapter 4 of Hollins University and the Writing Center complete the methodological analysis of this study.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONTEXTUALIZING THE STUDY: SETTING AND EMERGENT THEMES

Introduction

In order to understand the conflicted way in which this study's themes of relational awareness, reflective activity and intellectual engagement are enacted in practice, the complex context in which these themes emerged must be examined. The three aspects of context which are relevant to this study are its small size, the single-gender nature of the institution, and the administrative structure of the writing center. In the first section of this chapter, I will endeavor to show how these aspects of the institutional and writing center contexts suggest particular ways in which community formation among tutors might take shape. In the second half of the chapter, I will contrast these descriptions with the more complex reality shown by the emergent themes of this study.

The Small College Context

As a small, residential campus, Hollins University provides particular kinds of opportunities for collaboration and community among its students. While research on the effects of college size on student dynamics is limited, particularly in the area of teaching and learning about writing, the research reviewed here suggests that frequent personal interaction among students is common to the ethos of a small college. Such contact suggests that collaboration may occur naturally and with more ease than on larger campuses, although the data I will offer from this study suggests that many factors complicate that possibility.

Writing center research has not often considered how the culture of a small residential college provides a certain kind of context for student interaction. As Byron Stay (2006) notes in his article, "Writing Centers in the Small College," only a handful of articles explore the issue of institutional size and writing centers, and these articles focus narrowly on problems that directors of small colleges writing centers may experience due to the fiscal and professional limitations of small institutions. While Stay attempts to rectify this problem by addressing some of the ways in which writing center directors can find advantages within a small college context, the scope of his article does not allow consideration of how such a context affects tutors in the writing center.

In a special issue of *Composition Studies* devoted to small colleges and universities, co-editors Paul Hanstedt and Tom Amorose (2004) explore the culture of size in their article, "The Idea of a Small School." In Hanstedt and Amorose's terms, a school can be defined as "small" if the student population is under 2-3,000 and if "the small number of students is seen as one of the school's strengths rather than a weakness" (p. 21). Hollins University certainly falls in this category, with a student population that can only be classified as very small (800 undergraduate students), a mission statement that boasts a faculty/student ratio of 1:11, and an average class size of 13 students. In addition, 55% of Hollins students live on campus, adding to the intimacy of the campus environment. Very simply, as Hanstedt and Amorose note, the small size of such a campus "allows for a strong sense of community... [and] shapes relationships between and among students, faculty and administration" (p. 22). The authors note that "the language of the small college" emphasizes "close community," in

which “students are not just passive recipients of knowledge but active participants in the day-to-day mechanisms of the institution” (p. 21).

In this study, the significance for the way Hollins’ size affects relationships in the Writing Center, both among tutors and between tutors and students, becomes evident when we consider how frequently students come in contact with each other on a small campus, and how personal relationships and a sense of community are a natural part of the institutional culture. Again, Hanstedt and Amorose (2004) provide insight into this phenomenon:

At a small school...students often feel as though they know their classmates, if not by name, then by face, passing most of them – literally – on a daily basis as they walk to class. Community – a sense of belonging, of being recognized as an individual and recognizing others as such – already exists. (p. 16)

In this kind of atmosphere, the high percentage of students who voluntarily return to the Writing Center multiple times during the semester in which this study was conducted (42%) is not surprising. The relationships that students build with tutors through the recurring visits that are the focus of this study seem to occur more naturally in a small college setting; the single-gender nature of Hollins also contributes to this phenomenon of relationship-building, as I will discuss in the following section.

However, because the focus of Hanstedt and Amorose’s article is primarily on the way in which compositionists at small colleges will experience scholarship and teaching differently than faculty at larger schools, their discussion does not engage the complex ways in which personal relationships and small size can complicate interactions between students, particularly in the “up close and personal” setting of the writing

center. The emergent themes of these study reveal how, in a small college writing center, intimacy can be the flip side of insularity, and the desire to maintain harmony within a small community can obscure the need for reflection on tutorial practices.

The Women's Institution Context

Complicating the influence of small size on the formation of community among tutors is the all-female institution in which this study takes place. As discussed in the literature review (Chap. 2), writing center scholarship has given a significant amount of attention to the perceptions of tutors and students on the effects of gender on tutorial interaction (Hunzer 1997, Tipper 1999, Rafoth et al. 1999). While this research is limited, its primary conclusion is worth reiterating: students' and tutors' perceptions of gender tend to be polarized yet influential, affecting both their experiences in the tutorial and their perceptions of tutoring styles.

The ways in which perceptions of gender relate to behavior are the primary basis for the research on women's institutions as well. My review of the literature on women's colleges that follows reinforces the significance of students' perceptions, revealing how students describe their own positive behaviors in an all-female context in a way that is tied to their perceptions of the highly positive environment created by that environment. In this study, it seems plausible to suggest that Hollins' small size and all-female context work together with the collaborative nature of the writing center's structure to reinforce certain attitudes towards collaborative interactions among tutors and the valuing of personal relationships.

For decades, proponents of single-sex education for women have asserted that the environment provided by such institutions offers unique learning opportunities for

its students. Given that only 68 such institutions remain in the United States from a high of 281 in 1966, critics of single-sex education for women often call into question their relevance (Women's College Coalition). However, the most recent study of women students' experiences at single-sex institutions confirms that the particular environment an all-female campus provides is significantly different than the environment at a co-educational institution. Using data from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), a group of faculty members working in conjunction with the Center for Postsecondary Research at Indiana University of Bloomington published their findings in *The Journal of College Student Development* (Kinzie et al.). Their study compares the experiences of female students at 26 women's colleges in the United States with those of female students at 264 co-ed institutions and concludes that "such institutions offer female students a challenging, supportive and developmentally powerful learning environment" (p. 163).

The significance of this most recent research for this study lies in the researchers' conclusion that particular characteristics of an all-female environment were found to contribute to the ways in which women students participated in collaborative learning and reflective activities. The data shows that women's colleges provide significant opportunities in the "nature and frequency of ...educationally purposeful activities" (p. 159), both in and outside the classroom. As a result, students are more likely to "participate...actively in class, collaborate with their classmates more frequently in and outside of class, and tutor other students more than women at co-educational institutions" (Kinzie et al. p 160). Not only are students more likely to collaborate with each other as a natural part of their daily life at all-female institutions, but these female

students internalize their understanding of these activities in ways that are different from women at co-ed institutions. Specifically, the research shows that, compared to women at co-ed colleges, students at all-female institutions “report greater gains in self-understanding, including learning effectively on one’s own and working effectively with others” (Kinzie et al. p 160).

Kinzie et al. also conclude that students at women’s colleges reflect upon their educational experiences more thoughtfully, “synthesizing information with prior learning” in ways that are significantly different from their co-ed counterparts (p. 159). One particularly noteworthy conclusion of the Kinzie et al. research is the “women’s colleges seem to foster an environment that fuels women’s understanding of self and others” (p. 160). This particular ability of women’s college students to reflect more deeply on their experiences than their co-ed counterparts was shown by the researchers to result in the perception of more effective learning, whether students are on their own or learning with others.

While the research of Kinzie et al. paints an extremely positive picture for all-female institutions, it does so based on the self-reported experiences of the students themselves, which is the nature of NSSE data. Not surprisingly, then, these variables coincide with the perceptions of the peer writing tutors in this study, all of whom commented in various ways on the personal and intellectual gains they experience as a result of their Hollins education. Yet, the authors acknowledge the limitations of their study, stating that it is difficult to determine exactly how gender functions to create this particular kind of environment based on self-perceptions alone, which may be the result of a self-selecting bias. That is, young women may choose a single-sex institution

because it is perceived to provide a particular kind of environment: “Perhaps the women who choose women’s colleges are more disposed than women who matriculate to other types of institutions to ...engag[e] in collaborative learning” (p. 161). This self-selecting process may create a student body that is more likely to engage in the kinds of collaborative activities that are seemingly tied to gender.

The researchers further acknowledge that while students’ perceptions of the gains they experience can be captured and evaluated as significant, the causes of these positive experiences cannot necessarily be attributed to gender alone. As Kinzie et al. (2007) note, women’s colleges develop “programs, policies and practices that... engage their students at high levels in educationally purposeful activities” and are thus “models of effective educational practices” (p. 162-163). These comments suggest that it is not just an all-female atmosphere that creates the positive gains for students noted by the researchers, but rather some combination of gender with the purposeful design of the institutions’ academic and co-curricular programs.

This research on all-female institutions presents a more complex picture than is usually offered by the public relations departments of women’s institutions. That is, determining how the single-gender nature of a college like Hollins affects the interpersonal and intellectual dynamics of student interaction is not an easy task. Data based on self-perception does not acknowledge how the valuing of collaborative principles enacted in the educational structures of a women’s college contributes to the benefits that students claim to experience. The intersection of single-gender and small size, which is common to all-female institutions, is also not considered in this research. What this research does suggest is that a single-gender context interacts in complex

ways with student expectations, in conjunction with certain educational and administrative practices that are common to all-female institutions. In the following section, I will consider how the design of the writing center at Hollins enacts such educational and administrative practices, and contributes to a particular kind of environment in which the emergent themes of this study could be observed.

The Writing Center Context

The ways in which the Hollins University Writing Center and its staff are organized provide important insight into this study, which seeks to explore the dynamics of community formation among peer writing tutors. While the scope of this study does not allow exploration of all these organizational characteristics, an understanding of the most significant practices of the Writing Center will provide a helpful context for the more in-depth analysis of certain aspects in the chapters that follow. In this chapter, I will provide an overview of three components of the center's organization which are particularly relevant to this study: the tutoring experience and academic interests of the peer writing tutors, the tutorial practices in which tutors regularly engage, and the collaborative administration structure in which tutors participate.

Introduction to the Peer Writing Tutors

At the time of this study, there were nine peer writing tutors, eight of whom participated fully in the study (one tutor asked not to be included for personal reasons). Of those tutors participating, two were seniors in their third year of tutoring, four were juniors and seniors in their second year of tutoring, and two were juniors in their first year of tutoring. Students may begin tutoring in the fall of their sophomore year, but

some do not begin until their junior year. This means that at any given time the writing center may have tutors who are in their first, second or third year of tutoring. About half of the tutors begin tutoring as sophomores; regardless of when they begin tutoring, all of them retain their appointment until they graduate. This hiring trajectory creates an environment in which at least half of the staff is returning each year, creating a combined sense of continuity and infusion of new perspectives.

The majors and interests of the tutors at the time of this study were diverse. Three of the eight tutors participating had double majors, and while six of the tutors had one or more majors in English, a variety of other disciplines were also represented: Women's Studies, History, Studio Art, Religious Studies and Political Science. In addition, two students had minor areas of study in Communication Studies and Mathematics. English is the most popular major at Hollins, and the English department is particularly known for its creative writing program. However, like many small colleges, Hollins does not have a distinct expository writing program; instead, writing requirement courses are taught across the disciplines and in discipline-specific first-year seminars. The diversity of majors of the tutors was a particular strength of the Writing Center at the time of this study, given the institutional focus on writing across the curriculum. The tutors' diverse academic interests and intense engagement with their studies also contributed significantly to their valuing of intellectual engagement with each other and with students in the tutorial.

Tutorial Practices: Being a Tutor

In the Hollins University Writing Center, the duties which are required of tutors are by nature collaborative. That is, all tutors are required to tutor, to engage in dialogic

journaling in response to their tutoring, and to attend weekly staff meetings with the director and other tutors where they discuss their tutoring. These activities require that tutors communicate with each other regularly, through conversation and in writing. The culture of communication in which tutors are expected to participate contributes to the formation of community among them, as does their expected participation in key administrative practices (which will be discussed separately).

Lave (1996) argues that such activities, which are “interdependent,” and in which participants engage in “for substantial periods of time, day by day,” are essential characteristics for learning within a community of practice (p. 150). Wenger (1998) characterizes these ongoing activities as evidence of “mutual engagement,” a necessary characteristic of a community of practice (p. 73). The presence and nature of these interdependent, regularly recurring activities centered on the tutorial, and their effects on the tutors themselves, are crucial for understanding the community of practice formed among the tutors in this study.

During the semester when this study was conducted, approximately 270 tutorial sessions were conducted. With nine tutors on staff, that means that tutors participated in about 30 sessions each. The peer writing tutors in this study are required to work a minimum of seven hours per week, in shifts of two or more. Tutoring in shifts was an important factor in building rapport among the tutors: they deliberately schedule themselves to be with other tutors with whom they were particularly compatible. Even when this wasn't possible, it became evident that those tutors who shared shifts began to bond with each other in significant ways, adding to the overall cohesiveness of the center.

The physical layout of the writing center also contributed significantly to the ways in which tutors interacted on their shifts. The writing center in this study had an open layout, with several tables positioned within one room. When tutors were not actively tutoring, they could easily overhear each other's sessions. The tutors often commented on the usefulness of this design, because they could step in and help one another if a tutor seemed to need help, or a tutor could easily ask for help when needed. Quite often, the tutors report that the "eavesdropping" that took place in this open space facilitated conversation among them afterward about the dynamics of a particular session.

The valuing of harmony among the tutors can be contributed in part to the intimacy of the physical space in which they worked, and the small number of tutors on the staff. Nine tutors were on staff during the period of data gathering for this study, which was typical for this writing center.

The dialogic journals created by tutors in a shared electronic environment in this study are a key factor in building tutors' sense of community. Tutors routinely create dialogic journals after each session they tutor, and these journals are shared with and read by other tutors through a simple networked computer system. Tutors use the journals in a variety of complex ways: to share specific tutorial strategies; to share personal information about students that provides insight into their personal and intellectual needs; to share "insider" talk among themselves to support each other; and to question and reflect on their experiences in the tutorial. As this study will show, the ways in which tutors use the dialogic journals to strengthen community formation among them differs widely, based on a variety of factors.

The one-hour weekly staff meetings which all tutors in this study were required to attend provided another significant point of personal contact for the tutors as a group, adding considerably to the sense of cohesion among them. While the stated purpose of these meetings was to focus on tutorials and administrative tasks, they nevertheless took on a strong sense of social importance for the tutors and were never lacking in laughter and personal exchanges. Staff meetings took place outside the writing center, in a social room comfortably equipped with sofas and a coffee machine. The atmosphere was generally relaxed and conversational. Two general subject areas were recurring each week: discussion of tutorial sessions from the previous week, and administrative tasks (the administrative component of staff meetings will be discussed in a separate section).

The discussion of tutorials at the staff meetings centers on the dialogic journals of the previous week. All the journals are printed out and brought to the meetings as a jumping off point for conversation about the sessions. Most of the tutors read all the journals, not just the ones they write, and they have conversed among themselves and sometimes with me about the sessions prior to the staff meeting. Re-describing sessions for the tutors who were not involved in these previous exchanges allows tutors to re-enter their tutorial experiences and describe their salient characteristics. Such exchanges are key opportunities for tutors to enhance the sense of cohesion among themselves.

Administrative Practices: Being a Stakeholder

In addition to sharing tutorial practices, tutors share participation in the administrative decision-making of the Writing Center, positioning them as stakeholders in the daily life of the Center. Community formation among tutors in this study seems

to have been significantly affected by the collaborative administration practices initiated by me as the director and shaped by the tutors themselves over a period of years. Such practices involve the tutors in decisions that configure the writing center environment in significant ways, from daily administrative decisions to hiring procedures that bring new tutors into the writing center community.

In Lave and Wenger's (1991) discussion of "master/ apprentice" relationships in a community of practice, they suggest that a community of practice framework recognizes learning as a function of the "intricate structuring of a community's learning resources," with an emphasis on the apprentices/learners and their community rather than on the "master," or in this case, the writing center director (p. 94). Further elaborating on Lave and Wenger's master/apprentice relationships in terms of director/tutor relationships allows us to recognize how "tak[ing] a decentered view of [tutor-director] relations leads to an understanding that mastery resides not in the [director] but in the organization of the community of practice of which the [director] is a part" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 94).

Over the 15 years that I directed the writing center in this study, I made a series of deliberate choices to incorporate the tutors' participation in the running of the Writing Center. The most significant of these will be described here: the daily environment in which the tutors work without constant supervision; the staff meetings in which tutors participate to negotiate administrative decisions; and the hiring procedures in which tutors are intimately involved.

The daily environment of the Writing Center was managed primarily by the peer writing tutors, with the help of a part-time work-study student who answered the

telephone and helped with photocopying and filing. My office as director was in another building and, while I spent a significant number of hours per week in the Writing Center, I had no permanent work space established there. The office procedures, appointment procedures, and structure of the Writing Center's operations were negotiated by me with the tutors in staff meetings, and of course certain procedures simply carried themselves forward from year to year. All tutors were expected to answer the phone, make appointments, and field questions from students and faculty to the best of their ability. The overall effect of this design was a sense of autonomy on the part of the tutors and the need for them to be engaged fully in the operation of the Writing Center, not just in tutoring.

As previously noted, staff meetings were used to negotiate administrative procedures that affected tutors, such as policies for scheduling (how far apart sessions should be scheduled, how many sessions per week and per day students should be allowed to schedule, etc.), design of handouts, staffing hours, etc. Often, suggestions for changes in policy came directly from tutors.

Geller et al. (2007) suggest in their Writing Center Learning Audit that "Hiring practice[s] and decisions are a shared responsibility" in a pro-learning culture (p. 52). The hiring process developed in the writing center in this study reveals such shared responsibility. In the procedure in place at the time of this study, all applicants are interviewed individually by the director and by the tutors in small groups of two or three tutors. The teams of tutor interviewers then report back to the whole staff, including the director, in a hiring meeting set up for this purpose. Applications with writing sample are requested from all applicants and are read and evaluated by all

tutors using an evaluation instrument developed collaboratively by the director and the tutors. The tutors bring their individual evaluations of all applicants, as well as their notes from group tutor interviews, to the hiring meeting. With this combined information from the tutors' evaluation of the application and the tutors' interview notes, the applicants' qualifications are discussed. The director's interviews occur before this meeting whenever possible, and her assessment of the candidates is a part of this conversation as well. The director makes the final decision about hiring informed by the wealth of complex and varied input from the tutors, as individuals and as interview teams, provided through this meeting.

Wenger (1998) notes that communities of practice "will become places of identity" (p. 214). That is, the learning that takes place in such a community inevitably changes participants and their sense of identity. Wenger argues that in fact if learning does not take place at this deep level, then the group is not functioning as a true community of practice. One important way that Wenger offers to facilitate this identity-formation process is to "open...trajectories of participation that place engagement in its practice in the context of a valued future" (p. 215). Inviting the peer writing tutors in this study to participate in a substantive way in the hiring process offers them just such a trajectory. Tutors thus become participating members with a stake in the future of the writing center. Their input into nominations of prospective tutors, the questions they formulate for group interviews, their participation in the interviews themselves, their individual assessment of each application, and the whole-group discussion of applicants' qualifications allows them multiple avenues for engagement in this mutual enterprise within the community of peer writing tutors.

The approach I developed with tutors that resulted in shared administrative decisions on a daily basis, in staff meetings and in hiring is one that I developed gradually over a period of years; I came to define my role as a facilitator rather than a director. The gradual giving up of my administrative “power” to a more collaborative approach to decision-making became an important way for tutors to strengthen their engagement within the community of tutors.

Emergent Themes

The small size and single gender of the institution, as well as the collaborative nature of the writing center environment, encouraged the formation of community among tutors, as revealed by the emergent themes of this study: *relational awareness*, *reflective action* and *intellectual engagement*. However, each theme suggests a range of interactions among tutors that contribute in different and sometimes conflicting ways to the cohesiveness among the tutors.

While analysis of the data reveals how each of these themes reflects some positive interaction among tutors that strengthen their sense of community, the data also reveals how these themes intersect with each other in ways that sometimes limit how tutors advance their learning within the community of the Writing Center. For example, the high value that tutors place on harmonious relationships among themselves may at times prevent them from clear reflection on their own or other tutors’ practices because such reflection may be perceived as jeopardizing that relational harmony. In other instances, the reflective activities tutors engage in together serve to merely reinforce each other’s perceptions and practices, increasing their sense of harmony but limiting the ways in which they might create change in their practices.

I'll first summarize for each theme both the positive and the conflicting ways in which cohesion among tutors occurs through their shared practices, before I go into more detailed descriptions of how these themes became apparent in this study.

-Relational awareness: The peer writing tutors in this study gave significant attention in their tutorials, journals, staff meetings and interviews to the personal and intellectual needs of other tutors and of students. Tutors regularly expressed understanding of other tutors' strengths and weaknesses, supported each other when they needed help in the tutorial, and engaged with each other in ways they characterized as "friendship." This valuing of relational connections usually carried over into tutors' discussions about students, where the tutors (in journals, in session transcripts, and in staff meeting transcripts) could often be seen giving attention to students' interpersonal and intellectual needs. Yet, I also observed that valuing harmonious relationships above all else at times has a backlash effect, preventing tutors from engaging in other activities with each other that would strengthen their bond in different ways, through changes in identity and learning practices. Often, the journals and meetings become a place for tutors to engage *relationally* rather than *reflectively*; that is, tutors frequently bonded over shared responses to tutorials and supported each other's actions in ways that weren't particularly reflective, but that had personal value for the tutors. Such interaction contributed to relational cohesiveness among the tutors, but not to their reflective engagement with tutorial practices.

-Reflective action: Tutors could be seen to reflect on their tutorial practices with each other, in casual conversations among themselves and within the organized structures of staff meetings and tutor journals. This reflective response to their

experiences also surfaced in my interviews with tutors, where our conversations revealed the many complex ways in which tutors consider their tutoring decisions and strategies. However, despite the evidence that tutors do reflect critically on their practices with each other, this study also reveals that there are many times when opportunities are missed for *shared* reflection in staff meetings and dialogic journals. The data reveals a tension between tutors' tendencies to use the journals to express support for one another and for the problems they encountered in the tutorials (a *relational* activity), and the use of tutor journals to reflect critically on their own practices (a *reflective* activity). These two ways of using the journals – supportive, story-telling support of their own and others' practices, vs. reflective writing that questioned their decisions as tutors – do not always seem compatible. As a result, sometimes tutors engaged in complex activities in the tutorial that they not describe or reflect upon in their journals, making it impossible for them to share their insights with other tutors.

-Intellectual engagement: The kind of intellectual engagement evidenced among tutors themselves and between tutors and students in the tutorial was a significant characteristic of the writing center in this study. In the tutorials and in journals, tutors engaged in the subject matter of their tutorial sessions, analyzed assignments, and assessed students' writing abilities and their responses to disciplinary contexts and requirements. Tutors' descriptions during their interviews of the kinds of learning they were experiencing as writers and individuals also evidenced the intense intellectual engagement of their practices, particularly as it related to their interaction with other tutors. The area of tension in this particular theme became evident when mandatory visits or limitations in the student's writing ability or personal behavior made it difficult

for tutors to engage intellectually in tutorials, and in their discussion of those tutorials with each other.

Relational Awareness

As noted above, the peer writing tutors evidenced a consistent attentiveness to the personal and intellectual needs of other tutors and of students, a characteristic which I have termed *relational awareness*.

In my interviews with eight of the nine peer writing tutors, tutors repeatedly expressed the theme of relational awareness in terms of friendship and community among themselves. Lynne's comments were typical when she said, "I really enjoy the fact that all the tutors are friends, that we can all communicate with each other." Lynne went on to comment on the "atmosphere of encouragement" in the writing center; she noted that "Everybody's real sensitive towards everybody else. They're not going to belittle their interests or belittle their tutoring style." The importance of friendship and the support of other tutors was echoed by Stacey: "We're all friends, we help each other, and I think that helps with our tutoring, too, because if we weren't friends, I wouldn't feel like saying ...can you help me with this." Here Stacey refers to the "eavesdropping" phenomenon mentioned previously; that is, the open floor plan of the writing center allows tutors to overhear each other and offer help when needed.

Several tutors commented on how they were able to achieve this sense of community despite the diversity of interests and backgrounds the various tutors represented. Lynne's comments were typical when she said, "I think it's impressive that we can have ten or eleven different personalities in there, because we've got different interests and characteristics, and there's no tension." Stacey noted that while other clubs

or communities on campus often evidenced disagreements and tension, “there’s no drama and no backbiting” among the writing center tutors.

This atmosphere of friendship had intense personal meaning for several of the tutors, some of whom noted that it was the most important community for them on campus. Moira captured this sentiment when she said, “I think for me, if I had not had the Writing Center, I think I would have been lost...I wouldn’t have had the idea of this close environment...we all know each other, we all come in, and we talk about classes and we talk about our life.”

The tutors’ dialogic journals were another place in which tutors evidenced their *relational awareness* of each other and of the students they tutored. Tutors usually did this by sharing their affective responses about their own personal lives or the lives of their students in the journals. This is the characteristic of journals that Wenger describes as “talking about” a community’s practices, sharing affective and narrative information to reinforce the common experiences of community members.

When tutors allow themselves to be vulnerable to each other by sharing their personal feelings, they strengthen their sense of community. One way in which tutors did this was to share the mental and physical exhaustion they sometimes felt during their shifts. “I’m so uninspired,” writes Moira after describing being overwhelmed by her own work. Claudia attributes what she sees as her ineffectiveness in a session to her caffeine consumption: “I’ve had either too little or too much coffee,” she writes in her journal. It is not uncommon in the journals for tutors to respond to one another’s comments, sometimes with a simple statement such as “Me, too!” and at other times with descriptions of their own stressors. The way in which tutors in this writing center

have used the journals to express their connections to each other and reveal their feelings offers important evidence for relational awareness as a theme in tutors' interactions with each other.

At other times tutors' attention to relational aspects of their sessions occurs when they share personal details about their students' problems in the tutor journals. Lynne writes about her session with Kim: "...she has a lot on her plate and has no idea where to start. She has been out of school sick for several weeks and is trying desperately to catch up...I think she felt a lot better after we were done, which is what I'm here for." Expressing sympathy for students in dialogic journals is not uncommon in this writing center.

Staff meetings also evidenced this theme of relational awareness, as tutors often express concern for difficulties that students have in a session that seem related to personal or psychological problems. Often these issues are mentioned briefly in a tutor journal, and then discussed more fully among the tutors at a staff meeting. Tutors often contextualize the interactions of other tutors with students in the Writing Center by describing their own interactions with them in classroom and social situations. During the semester during which this study was conducted, four or five students fell into this category, and these students were regular topics of discussion in staff meetings as tutors tried to help each other understand these students' behaviors. Such exchanges were particularly important when discussing recurring visits, which are common in this Writing Center. Tutors often ask questions or comment on a student in their journal or in staff meetings precisely because they want

to engage other tutors in a discussion about what they know about that particular student.

The sharing of various affective responses to students' and tutors' personal lives in the dialogic journals and staff meetings is part of the language of being a tutor in this particular environment. That is, it is a linguistic practice that tutors have established as legitimate within their community. This practice is particularly important when tutors need to discuss the difficulties that arise in tutoring. As Wenger (1998) notes, "apprenticeship learning [within a community of practice] is supported by conversations and stories about problematic and especially difficult cases" (p. 108). Even more importantly, Wenger argues that stories, or "talking about" shared practices, "play a major role in decision making" as participants continually learn how to become more fully participating members of that community, in this case the community of tutors (p. 108).

It is evident from the data gathered in this study that this particular group of tutors bonded with each other and developed a strong sense of friendship that effects the ways in which they enact their writing center practices. However, it is useful to consider that Lave and Wenger do not consider personal friendship a necessary component of a community of practice; in fact, they suggest that the naturally occurring positive and negative aspects of human relationships are present in communities of practice and do not necessarily prohibit them from cohering (Wenger, 1998, p. 76-77). Wenger (1998) suggests that we should be able to observe a range of behaviors in a community of practice that include both "trust and suspicion, friendship and hatred" (p. 77). The absence of these dichotomies among the peer writing tutors in this study is

well worth considering. As I have already suggested, the strong commitment to friendship and harmony that tutors evidenced among themselves contributes to their community's cohesiveness, but it may do so at the expense of their ability to help each other reflect critically on their tutoring practices.

Reflective Action

The theme of *reflective action* is meant to describe the ways in which tutors reflect on their tutorial practices, something which I saw occur regularly in informal conversations in the writing center, in staff meetings, and in tutor journals. Tutors also displayed this trait consistently during my interviews with them, sharing their thoughts on how to engage reluctant students, how to use questioning techniques, how to recognize appropriate vs. inappropriate directive tutorial strategies, etc. This characteristic, which Wenger refers to as "talking within" shared practices, reveals how tutors share explicit tutoring strategies with each other.

In their interviews, tutors spoke often and quite specifically about how they tutor, continually questioning themselves about the effectiveness of their approaches. For example, several tutors struggled in their interviews with how to define directiveness, noting that the use of questions as a way to guide a student is directive in some ways, because the tutor knows where the questions are going. Yet, as Moira notes, this use of questions is helpful to the student, and is a technique she has come to use quite often: "It's almost like I have that lens to find what they're looking for, and not to give it to them, but to guide them, to see that it's there, and to illuminate it." Other tutors discussed collaborative building of ideas with a student, not knowing how to categorize that rhetorical strategy, but wondering if in fact they had been too

“directive” by providing ideas of their own. As Sue said in her interview about sharing ideas with a student, “It wasn’t really directiveness, it was a completely different tutoring.” Sue went on to note that this strategy works with an experienced writer, who can engage in this kind of conversation without “latching on” (Sue’s words) indiscriminately to the tutor’s ideas.

The sharing of explicit knowledge about tutoring strategies occurs in tutors’ journals as they explore through reflection whether or not particular practices work well for them; sharing these ideas within their journals can be considered an example of Wenger’s “talking within,” or the sharing of particular practices within the community. This tendency has particular significance for this study, since the dialogic nature of the journals suggests that by sharing tutorial strategies tutors increase the cohesiveness of their community and perhaps alter their strategies in response to what they learn in the journals.

One of the ways in which tutors use dialogic journals is to affirm their practices with one another. One tutor, Theresa, wrote a lengthy entry about why she is “such a fan of having students read their work” out loud. Theresa offered what she called her “theories” about why she thinks it is more effective for students to read than for her to read for them. Through her own experiences, Theresa expands on the writing center literature regarding reading aloud, asserting that “it makes [students] feel like they have more power to make changes...since they have control of the reading pace.” In a similar approach, another tutor, Sue, shares in her journal a strategy she learned at a conference, reinforcing not only the particular technique (using a thesaurus in sessions with ESL students) but the idea of participation in a conference as a source of new

knowledge. Sharing one's strategies, or even questioning them, is a recurring thread in the tutors' journal entries. It is interesting to note that in doing so tutors do not set themselves up as experts, but rather share strategies that are working for them in a particular context. Tutors frequently use phrases like "I hope" or "I think so" in their journals, indicating a degree of uncertainty about their tutoring practices and thus allowing each other to be seen as constantly learning, always "becoming," rather than as experts.

These complex ways that tutors develop for sharing strategies among themselves, and understanding each other's strengths and drawing on them, evidence the way tutors are negotiating new identities for themselves through the use of reflection in the journals. Wenger (1998) notes that "the combination of engagement and imagination results in reflective practice" (p. 217). Wenger argues that such reflection allows participants in a community of practice, in this case the tutors, to absorb the changes in identity that are taking place. This study reveals that tutors' participation in the dialogic journals is one of the significant practices that facilitate identity changes in tutors that are central to learning. In fact, the need for sites of reflection that are directly connected to practice are crucial, according to Wenger: "Our communities must have a place...that does justice to the transformations of identity that reflection...can produce" (p. 217). The informal, dialogic reflection of the journals coupled with the conversational reflections occurring in staff meetings and daily interactions allow tutors to enact these kinds of "identity transformations."

Yet, the missed opportunities for reflection that were also part of my observations in this study cannot be ignored. Tutors sometimes fail to read each other's

journals about recurring student visitors, thus missing opportunities for learning from each other. Or, tutors engage in recurring sessions that evidence complex tutoring strategies and evolving personal relationships between tutor and student, but these interactions are not always described fully in dialogic journals or staff meetings. Even more problematic is tracing the trajectory from tutor reflection to tutor action – that is, as James Bell (2001) pointed out in his study, determining whether tutors are actually implementing the insights revealed in their reflections is difficult to do, given the complexities of such interactions and the learning curve over time that tutors require to change their tutorial practices.

Intellectual Engagement

Throughout this study, the peer writing tutors revealed their intense and ongoing intellectual engagement with writing center practices. My interviews with tutors and the tutors' journals frequently evidenced how tutors valued the writing center context as an intellectually significant experience. However, it is important to note that tutors varied in the intensity of their intellectual engagement, a characteristic that can be understood through Lave and Wenger's discussion of varying "levels of participation" and the "trajectory" of learning among participants in any community of practice.

When I asked tutors in their interviews what they valued about their writing center experiences, the ways in which they valued intellectual engagement with students became apparent. Kristy described in her interview how satisfying she found the challenge of working with students in the tutorial:

I really like working with tutees, you know, it's like there's something really awesome to be able to sit down with someone and you only have forty-five minutes and you have to be able to talk about your paper and you have to talk about ideas and really get into it with them, really finding ways to make that connection happen so that conversation goes more easily.

Kristy's emphasis on "ideas" and the need to "really get into it" with the student show an active engagement in the tutorial, not simply a desire to meet the needs of the assignment or the perceived demands of her job as a tutor. Kristy's desire to "find...ways to make that connection happen" is both a relational and an intellectual framework for the tutorial that is frequently emphasized by the tutors in this study. Theresa, another tutor, echoes the sentiment of several tutors who were interviewed when she uses the phrase "sense of purpose" to describe her engagement in tutorials. Theresa comments, "you care about what you're doing...you want to do it well." Stacey also expresses this sense of purpose in her interview as she describes how exposure to a variety of assignments and disciplinary contexts allows her to build rapport with writers:

"It [tutoring] just opens you up to different kinds of talking...it just really changes how you think about paper-writing and the process of writing. Instead of just seeing like this final product, you see what goes into it, you see the thought that goes into it, and that's really beneficial to understanding and talking to people about their writing."

Stacey sees the variety of paper styles she's exposed to as a particular kind of intellectual experience she cannot find anywhere else on campus: "That's part of being,

wanting to be, a tutor is wanting to read all these different papers... It's really a learning opportunity that's too hard to pass it up." Kristy in particular believes that her experience as a writing center tutor has been one of the most significant of her academic life:

"I really think of [being a tutor] as the apex of my education, because it's been awesome to be able to feel like you're a part of a community and sharing ideas, but really learning how to be attentive to other people, talk about our ideas with conviction, talk about writing...it's a really potent kind of educational experience... I really feel like the Writing Center...has really been invaluable to my growth academically."

Tutors' journals also revealed the emergent theme of *intellectual engagement*. Two ways in which these theme became apparent is when tutors attempt to engage students more deeply in the ideas behind their papers, and when tutors become personally interested in the topics their tutees are addressing. There are many examples in the tutor journals when tutors recognize how a student writer can engage more deeply with their topic; sometimes tutors believe they are successful in helping a student become more analytical, and sometimes they cannot seem to facilitate this kind of learning. Regardless of the tutors' success in engaging the student's analytical skills, their desire to do so evidences their intellectual engagement in the session.

In one journal entry, Stacey expresses her frustration with a tutee with whom she has worked before, and whom she perceives as thoughtful but not quite able to reach the level of analysis that Stacey believes she is capable of. Stacey's journals shows her recognition of both the student's abilities and her limitations: "We did talk some about

summary versus analysis – I wish she would go a little more in-depth about her topic sometimes, she really knows quite a bit about what she’s talking about.” Stacey goes on in her journal to discuss her attempts to engage the student in such discussions in previous sessions, and her hope that in time the student will recognize her own knowledge and incorporate it more effectively into her writing.

Theresa, another tutor, comments on her success in deepening a student’s analysis, although doing so is seen by Theresa as a complex negotiation to ensure that the student is not simply appropriating Theresa’s own analysis:

“The ideas and the literature written about lesbian film are hard to grasp... Although I felt like I was being a little directive, Alex was asking me specific questions and when I suggested things for her to think about and how she could write to frame her examples, it seemed to start to click, without her wanting to write down my ideas as her own.”

Here, Theresa’s engagement with the subject matter of lesbian film is obvious, as is her engagement with the content of Alex’s paper. Both Stacey’s and Theresa’s intense interest in their students’ writing, whether they are successful or not in engaging the writers’ best efforts, is typical of the tutor journals in this study.

While this intense degree of intellectual engagement is typical of tutors in this study, it nonetheless remains true that tutors vary in the ways they become intellectually invested in their writing center practices. This study reveals the many complex factors that effect a tutor’s level of intellectual engagement: the ability level of students, the complexity of the assignment, whether the session is voluntary or

required, knowledge of the subject matter on the part of the tutor, and the desire of the tutor to learn and change through shared reflection with other tutors.

All three emergent themes described in this chapter – *relational awareness*, *reflective action* and *intellectual engagement* – effect the cohesion of the tutor community to different degrees, depending on the level of participation of the tutors themselves. Thus, the community of practice among the tutors is not a static entity, but one which is constantly shifting, dependent on the participation and engagement of the tutors in their shared practices. By exploring tutor interaction in the following chapter through the data I have collected, I propose to offer a grounded analysis of how this context shapes the community of tutors in this study.

CHAPTER FIVE

ANALYSIS OF RECURRING TUTORIALS

Overview

While the data gathered for this study offer many possible ways to examine the shared practices of peer writing tutors and the changes in their learning as a result of those shared practices, recurring tutorials offer a particularly useful way to examine the dynamics of a tutor community. That is, tutors engaging repeatedly with the same students offer the possibility for observing the limits and possibilities of relational awareness and shared reflection among the tutors, especially given the collaborative and reflective practices that are an essential part of the structure of the writing center in this study (see Chapter 4). Of the 260 writing center sessions that took place during the semester of data gathering for this study, 72 sessions by seven tutors were transcribed and reviewed. Dialogic journals were created by nine tutors for all 260 sessions were also examined. The final data set was chosen from a total of 189 recurring sessions (73% of total visits): fourteen recurring sessions with eight tutors and five students, along with their accompanying journals and available recordings (See Appendix F). These fourteen recurring sessions are examined in detail in this chapter.

Community formation among tutors in this study depends to a significant degree on the value that tutors place upon maintaining cohesiveness among the group, and how tutors utilize dialogic journals and staff meetings to engage in reflective and relational activities. Tutors use the shared space of journals and staff meetings both to make relational connections among themselves and to share specific tutorial strategies. Community formation in this study depends to a significant degree on the ways in

which tutors engage in these activities, and on the ability of the tutor to reflect on tutorial strategies in the dialogic journals. Recurring sessions with the same tutor allow increased intellectual engagement between tutors and students, but do not always result in shared reflection through journals and staff meetings. Problematic sessions – either due to factors such as the student’s weak writing ability or resistance on the part of the student due to required visits – were also found to affect the ways in which tutors reflect in their journals and engage with each other about tutorials.

Specifically, the sessions I’ve chosen to analyze in this chapter will reveal the ways in which shared reflective and relational activities among tutors may or may not enhance community formation; how community formation among tutors can at times be enhanced even when the student’s needs are not fully apprehended by the tutors; and how problematic sessions create a particular kind of dynamic among the tutors, enhancing community formation but not always furthering the goals of the session.

I am defining recurring tutorials as sessions which occur when a student returns two or more times to the Writing Center during the semester in which this data was gathered. In this chapter, I will consider how the three emergent themes of this study arise in two different types of recurring sessions: mandatory and voluntary. Whether or not these recurring visits occur with the same tutor or among different tutors will also be an important part of this analysis. Because of the high incidence of recurring sessions in this study, they offer the possibility of considering all three themes in a grounded analysis of community formation among tutors: how tutors engage relationally with each other and with the students being tutored (*relational awareness*); how tutors reflect individually and among themselves about these recurring sessions (*reflective action*); and

the degree to which tutors become intellectually engaged in the subject matter and intellectual lives of the students being tutored (*intellectual engagement*).

As already noted, 73% or 189 of the total 260 visits were from students who returned for tutoring two or more times. This included 17 visits from tutors working with each other which will *not* be analyzed here, due to the unique features that characterize tutor-tutor interaction in the tutorial. Rather, I will analyze a sample of more typical recurring sessions, between tutors and non-tutors, for voluntary and mandatory recurring sessions.

Voluntary Recurring Sessions

During the period of data gathering for this study, 27 sessions occurred in which students voluntarily returned two or more times to see the same tutor. Eight students engaged in recurring visits of this type, with two tutors conducting 20 of the 27 visits.

Recurring sessions with the same tutor contribute to some degree of community formation among tutors simply through the bond created between tutors and students, making tutors themselves feel valuable and in turn making all tutors feel valuable through their shared journals and subsequent conversations in staff meetings. While recurring sessions with the same tutor did not always result in shared tutorial strategies, these sessions reveal the strong relationship that can develop between tutors and students over time. This valuing of relationships by tutors reveals the ethos of care that the peer writing tutors in this study value and thus contributes to the cohesiveness of the tutor community. While such relationships often enhance intellectual engagement between tutor and student, they can also make it difficult for the tutor to see clearly what the student needs to improve her writing. These multi-faceted aspects of

relationship-building were revealed in dialogic journals and staff meetings when tutors shared their awareness of this bond and their support of the student.

The potential for an increase in community formation among tutors occurs when these recurring sessions yield new insights into tutor practices that are subsequently shared with other tutors through dialogic journals and staff meetings. When this occurs, tutors may offer valuable lessons for other tutors about their learning, and contribute significantly to the sense of “mutual engagement” and “shared repertoire” that Wenger (1998) describes as central to a community of practice.

However, in this study it became apparent that tutors must be capable of reflecting on their recurring sessions in a way that can be articulated in journals and staff meetings, in order to share their insights effectively with other tutors. This study also showed that when self-awareness on the part of the tutor is unarticulated in these shared environments, tutors can only share with each other in a limited way their experiences in the tutorials.

Working with the Same Tutor

Of the three tutors who engaged with students in voluntary recurring sessions, two of them, Kristy and Stacey, did most of the tutoring (20 of 27 sessions). Focusing on Kristy and Stacey is useful not only because of the number of recurring sessions in which they were engaged, but also because there was a notable contrast in the way in which they used dialogic journals and staff meetings to articulate their experiences in recurring sessions. These differences between Kristy and Stacey thus suggest the degree to which community formation among the larger group of tutors is affected by what

Wenger calls the “levels of engagement” of individual members of the tutor community.

Kristy and Katy

Overview

While recurring sessions with the same tutor often result in heightened levels of intellectual and relational engagement, the ways in which tutors reflect on their practices in shared environments do not always allow other tutors to benefit from the knowledge that such recurring sessions can provide. The first set of recurring sessions that I will analyze occurs between Kristy, a senior in her third year as a peer writing tutor, and Katy, a senior English major, and is an example of this type of session. Their interaction reveals a high degree of intellectual engagement, and evidences the kind of dynamic between “co-learners” that Bruffee (1984) and Trimbur (1987) suggest is central to collaborative learning in tutorials. That is, Kristy engages Katy in complex ways by helping her to develop and build upon her ideas, and by consciously de-centering her authority to allow Katy to make her own decisions about the paper. However, while Kristy reflects deeply on her strategies during her interview with me at the end of the semester, she does not express this same level of self-awareness in the dialogic journals she writes immediately after her sessions with Katy. The awareness that Kristy seems to acquire of how recurring sessions with the same student can allow certain kinds of intellectual engagement to take place is not an awareness that she shares with other tutors in any detail. Thus, the sessions between Kristy and Katy represent a missed opportunity for enhancing community formation among tutors through sharing of successful tutorial strategies.

Analysis

Kristy and Katy meet four times during the semester in which this study took place, and all the sessions focus on papers Katy is writing for her lesbian film class. Katy had never been to the writing center before her first meeting with Kristy in February at the beginning of the semester, and she chooses to continue meeting with Kristy for all but one of the four additional tutoring sessions she has that semester. This analysis will focus on the second and third sessions Kristy and Katy have together, in which they discuss Katy's final paper for the same film class that they worked on together in February. These sessions are of particular interest to this analysis because of the way in which Kristy constructs herself as a co-learner with Katy, helping her to discover and build upon ideas that support her central thesis. The significance of these complex strategies that Kristy engages in with Katy for community formation among tutors can be traced to the way in which Kristy describes or fails to describes these strategies in her dialogic journal, and how this contrasts with the high degree of reflection she evidences in her interview at the end of the semester.

The central concern of Katy's second session with Kristy is her desire to discuss the director's intent for the film, which she sees as tainted by racial and classist stereotypes revealed in an interview that Katy saw with the director that was not part of the film. While Katy considers the question of the director's intent as central to an interpretation of the film as a valid example of queer cinema, she wonders if her professor will agree. Kristy and Katy's discussion about these issues in this session reveals how Kristy helps Katy interrogate her own ideas through Kristy's genuine questions about the film. In doing so, Kristy helps Katy develop a new focus for the

paper. Kristy thus constructs herself as a co-learner with Katy and demonstrates the features of a truly collaborative tutorial, a characteristic that we see again in third session they have together.

At the beginning of their second session together, Katy describes her state of ambivalence about discussing the director's intent as a state of "crisis" which makes her feel that she doesn't "have an argument" in her current draft. Rather than avoid the issue and write what Katy describes as a "cop-out paper," Katy wants to write something that genuinely reflects her opinions and concerns. However, she has yet to find a way to make an academic argument based on her analysis thus far. In Katy's exchanges with her professor, which she shares with Kristy, the professor is ambivalent about the director's intent, stating, according to Katy, that the film is either "a really amazing step forward or totally horrible and racist." Kristy and Katy are left to decide for themselves whether Katy's analysis is substantive and appropriate, which is the topic of the remainder of their session.

Kristy's response to Katy's concerns is exploratory rather than didactic. She avoids explicating "rules" for writing a film analysis, and instead asks Katy for clarification about how the film reveals the intentions that Katy has assigned to the director. For example, Kristy asks if the director indulges in "racial stereotypes" and if "class identification is more prevalent than race." Kristy asks detailed and complex questions, telling Katy that she has not seen the film and saying, "I'm trying to make sense of [your ideas]." After about ten minutes of discussion about the plot and themes of the movie, Kristy tells Katy that a focus on the director does not make Katy's analysis

“void,” but rather “makes it interesting.” Kristy also tells Katy, “sometimes you have to raise more questions than you answer, and that is really good analysis.”

The way in which Kristy focuses on substantive content issues of Katy’s paper is characterized by Carol Severino (1992) as a significant rhetorical feature of writing center tutorials. The kind of tutorial conversation that Severino posits is most effective is the kind that involves “Rhetorical tasks such as imagining effects of a passage on a reader and whole discourse tasks such as generating ideas for a paper,” rather than “linguistic tasks such as wording passages or connecting one idea to the next” (p. 62). Significantly, Severino suggests that “the chance for a more equal exchange is liable to increase” when the student and the tutor “put aside the local issues of text, when physically they stop looking at the student’s paper, put down their pens, and start looking at each other and conversing about global, rhetorical issues” (p. 62). Thus Severino concludes that “whole discourse tasks such as generating ideas for a paper might make for a more balanced exchange” than tasks that are linguistic in nature, such as “organization, phrasing, syntax, mechanics” (p. 75). The way in which Kristy and Katy focus on whole discourse topics, building on ideas for the paper together, seems to support Severino’s claim. Both tutor and student participate fully in these sessions, and their discussion about the complex ideas within Katy’s paper is crucial to the construction of their relationship as co-learners.

After their discussion about the validity of discussing the director’s intent, Kristy suggests that they look at the paper itself to see how Katy has approached these issues, but Katy is reluctant to actually share her draft with Kristy. They have the following exchange:

Kristy: Let me ask you. What's your level of commitment to this paper?

Katy: I feel like it needs to be completely trashed and start over. This is like paper round two. I feel like I just need to throw it away and start over.

M: What would be different?

Kristy displays here a tutoring approach that recurs frequently in her sessions with

Katy: a willingness to adjust to the student's intellectual needs, affirming the student's own instincts about what is best for her paper. Rather than pushing Katy to look at the draft she has brought with her, Kristy is willing to simply keep talking about the paper that Katy still has in her head.

At this point in the session, Katy begins to articulate what she believes to be her new focus, "why this [particular film] is new queer cinema," and how the issues of race and class make the film a problematic example of this genre. Following up on Katy's tentative thesis, Kristy asks: "What are the qualities of new queer cinema that you feel are part of this?" As Katy fleshes out her ideas, Kristy continues to pay close attention to Katy's arguments, following up her thoughts by restating Katy's points and asking questions to help Katy develop her ideas further. After a long discussion about a minor character who is cast as black, Kristy says, "That's really interesting. Especially given the fact that she is not [a] developed [character]. You said earlier that there was a blunt view of queer culture. What do you mean by that?"

Questions like these show how Kristy continues to bring Katy back to the overarching idea that Katy herself has identified as central to her thesis: the nature of queer cinema and queer culture. Kristy is also evidencing a particular role for herself that Susan Murphy (2006) calls the "educated but confused" tutor. That is, Kristy is

“giving the client [student] the authority to define the meaning of her words and to own her writing by explaining it” to tutor (S. Murphy, p. 71). At the same time, Kristy is evidencing her intellectual engagement by offering “educated” questions that speak to the student’s main concerns about the text.

Kristy’s use of questions in her session with Katy also demonstrate how she attempts to de-center her authority in the session. As Kristy strives to understand the characters, plot and myriad themes of a movie she has not seen, she continually questions aloud her own interpretations because of her lack of direct knowledge about the film. By offering apologies several times during the session, Kristy expresses concern that she may be appropriating Katy’s ideas as she strives to understand them. By questioning herself aloud, Kristy repeatedly returns the decision-making about the film’s interpretation to Katy, decentering her own position as an expert or authority.

The following comment by Kristy demonstrates this dynamic:

Kristy: Something about this privileging of class is interesting. I’m sorry,
Katy, I’m--

Kristy apologizes again in another, similar exchange, in which she is attempting to restate and build on Katy’s ideas:

Kristy: If new queer cinema is already this iconoclastic thing, you wonder how much it has to be, I don’t know what. If you have to tweak some other part of the identity--I’m sorry, I’m really thinking about this.

Katy responds to Kristy’s apologies in ways that indicate she appreciates Kristy’s attempts to clarify her ideas, for example:

Katy : No, its so overwhelming. It’s so layered. There’s a certain amount of guessing.

Severino's idea of whole-discourse and generating ideas are not quite sufficient to analyze this complex exchange between Kristy and Katy. Rather than simply generating ideas together, Kristy and Katy are building on each other's ideas, a process that writing center researchers Susan Blau et al. (1988) define as "modification," or the ways in which "the client and student build on each other's ideas until they formulate...a concept that [is] satisfactory to both" (p. 39). Kristy's apologies to Katy seem to be a deliberate attempt to de-center herself as an authority in the tutorial while she simultaneously builds upon ideas that Katy has suggested. This complex combination of generating ideas, building ideas, and de-centering authority that Kristy engages contribute significantly to the collaborative dynamic in this session.

In the journal that Kristy wrote immediately after this session, she reveals at least in part her awareness of the deliberate choices she makes in offering help to Katy, but she does not discuss her strategies specifically in terms of sharing authority or building ideas with Katy. Kristy simply writes: "I felt as if a lot of it [the session] was me trying to figure out the appropriate response/questions for her." Kristy also comments in her journal on the difficulty of helping Katy integrate her perspective into the thesis of the paper: "The obvious advice is to tell her to work [her] concern into her paper's analysis, but that proved to be trickier than I'd thought." Kristy's journal shows that she realizes Katy needs to engage with the material in certain ways to achieve the level of analysis that both she and Kristy believe are needed in the paper, and she concludes, "I think this session was productive in that it got Katy making connections between the spirit of New Queer Cinema and the desire to blur subjectivities in a way that is potentially offensive. Hard stuff."

While Kristy's journal shows some reflective qualities, it is not detailed enough to reveal the complexity of her interactions with Katy. Kristy's ability to articulate what she did and how she did it within her journal would provide knowledge for the other tutors reading her journal and offers the possibility of discussing Kristy's strategies in staff meeting. But given the limited nature of Kristy's journal, and the absence of my notes on staff meetings immediately following the sessions with Katy, it is difficult to determine if Kristy was able to convey to the other tutors what she learned in her sessions with Katy.

In contrast to the level of reflection in her journal, Kristy's interview with me at the end of the semester reveals how conscious she is of the strategies she employs with Katy, openly discussing her concern with being seen as the authority in a tutoring session. Kristy says, "One of the things that I've grappled with the most is being seen as this kind of expert or smart person who has all the answers." Kristy goes on to discuss in her interview how she uses questioning strategies to "find a balance of power, to find where [the tutor and tutee] can come at it as equals." Kristy describes how she looks for connections in a student's paper that the student herself has not yet made, noting that sometimes she sees the connection "really obviously in their text, and they just haven't made the connection." But other times Kristy is genuinely unsure of what the connection is: "I don't want to get too presumptuous, you know. I don't want to say, well clearly this is happening." Kristy's thoughtful reflection in her interview on the connection between her questioning strategies and her desire to avoid being "the smart person who has all the answers" is shown in action in her session with Katy, although it remains unarticulated in her journal.

Kathleen Yancey (2008) offers some ways to analyze the quality of the reflection in which tutors engage based on the reflective activities Yancey observes in her tutors during their required course. Yancey terms reflection on a particular session as “reflection-in-action” and reflection that transfers to contexts beyond the session as “constructive reflection” (p. 191). Both are necessary, Yancey believes, for the tutor to “help...others while learning oneself” (p. 192). For Kristy, “reflection in action” as revealed in her journal is minimal. But, Kristy is able to engage in constructive reflection in her interview when she recognizes the goal of encouraging the student to think for herself and not simply assume that Kristy “has all the answers.”

Yancey (2008) offers some additional theorizing about the ways in which reflection works over time that help clarify why Kristy may not have been immediately able to write a more detailed reflection on her session with Katy. Yancey states that “reflection seems to entail a notion of time, time afterward, time recursive” (p. 194). That is, Kristy’s (and other tutors’) immediate reflections on a session will yield different, and perhaps less thoughtful, reflections than those engaged in at a later date. Thus, Kristy is able in her interview with me at the end of the semester to articulate a detailed consideration of how she constructs her role in the tutorial simply because she has had more time to think about it. Yancey notes that the reflection her tutors engage in a month or more after the initial sessions are “more detailed, more complex, more theoretical” (p. 194), in ways similar to Kristy’s reflection in her interview. The limitations of reflection in journals produced immediately after a session may explain why tutors’ dialogic journals in this study do not often offer a detailed analysis of tutorial strategies. Yancey’s theory may also explain why staff meetings, which take

place several days after most sessions have occurred, become a particularly important place for reflection on sessions, since they offer more time for sessions to “percolate” in tutors’ consciousness.

Katy returns the very next day for her fourth and last session with Kristy on this paper. Kristy puts the session squarely in Katy’s hands from the beginning of the session. First, she asks Katy to restate her thesis aloud, without looking at the paper; she takes notes while Katy speaks. After she reads back to Katy what she’s written, she compliments her, saying “That’s a really good articulation of all that weird stuff we slogged through last night.” Kristy continues to let Katy be in charge of the session by asking, “What do you want the focus of this session to be?” Katy returns to the central idea they discussed the day before, which is how her analysis of the film relates to the genre of queer cinema. Katy says: “I don’t know if I explain that well enough.” Katy also wants to “expand more on the idea [that] it’s based on the director’s life.”

Following Katy’s lead, Kristy asks for clarity of Katy’s ideas throughout the session, continuing to use the thoughtful questioning strategies she demonstrated in their session the day before. In the following exchange, Kristy attempts to restate and build on Katy’s ideas, yet she questions Katy about whether her interpretations “make sense” and whether she is understanding Katy’s “really complex ideas”:

Kristy: I couldn’t even have this thought last night. To be a minority is not a universal thing. There are certain things tied to specific cultures. It’s wrong to say there are no similarities, but it’s wrong to assume. I think that to me that’s what you’re talking about, homogenizing cultures, being a minority is not like one particular identity. Does that make sense? I feel like I’m still trying to make sense of your really complex ideas.

Kristy is evidencing here that she shares an understanding of the subject matter with Katy, but that she is also struggling, as Katy is, to articulate the meaning of her “complex ideas,” a term she also used in their previous session together. In doing so, Kristy has constructed herself as a “co-learner,” which in Trimbur’s terms (1987) is essential to the experience of collaborative learning. Alice Gillam (1994) suggests that Trimbur, like other collaborative learning theorists, offer a particular way of looking at relationships within the tutorials, as “a transaction between status equals, two students” (p. 42). But Trimbur (1987) suggests that achieving a conversation between “status equals” requires that learning is “produced by the social interaction of the learners – and not a body of information passed down from an expert to a novice” (p. 23). As Kristy attempts through her high level of intellectual engagement to build consensus with Katy about the meaning of her text, she enacts the kind of interactive conversation that Trimbur, Gillam and others suggest is central to collaborative learning in the tutorial.

As the session progresses, Kristy’s understanding of Katy’s argument seems to become more clear, and she begins to point out specific places where Katy can develop her analysis. At one point, Katy offers ideas verbally that are not in the paper, and Kristy points this out to her: “There’s something you’re saying to me right now that’s not in this paragraph.” Kristy also notices gaps in Katy’s analysis that she points out to her: “All I’m really saying is that you might need to work in a bit of analysis in this section.” Several times, Kristy uses language that repeats back what Katy is saying:

Kristy: Is that the connection you’re trying to [make]?

Katy: I’m trying to say the characters are not really thought out within the boundaries of new queer cinema.

Kristy: You can make a more distinct link between [those ideas], either to this paragraph, or the ways it's kind of OK to be not lesbian.

As we saw in the last session, even though Kristy is taking a deliberately thoughtful approach to elaborating on or analyzing Katy's ideas, she continues to question herself aloud during the session, seemingly as a way to check in with Katy about her interpretations and her tutoring strategies. At one point, Kristy describes herself as being too "chatty" in the session, although Katy does not seem to respond to her in this way:

Kristy: I feel like I've never been so chatty as I've been in this session. It's amazing.

Katy: I really, really appreciate it.

Kristy: I do think when you talk about the author's intention, you can bring up-- she is really privileging the experience. I need to shut up.

Katy: No, no.

Kristy's reflective approach within the session is obvious, as she regularly lets Katy know that she is questioning her own interpretation of Katy's text, thus allowing Katy to assert her own opinions and retain ownership of the paper. However, the dynamic that Kristy creates with Katy, a cycling back and forth between explicit reflection on her own strategies and questioning Katy for affirmation of her own ideas, is not specifically mentioned in her journal. Instead, Kristy primarily uses the journal to affirm that she and Katy had a good follow-up session. In fact, it is significant that Kristy's reflection in her journal on this long, complex session is really rather brief. Once again, while Kristy's interview reveals that she is conscious of the questioning strategies she employs in her tutorials and the reasons behind them, these insights are not present in her journal. Here is Kristy's journal for this session in its entirety:

The other day Moira said “don’t you just love it when someone comes in after you’ve met with them and their paper is totally reworked and a lot better?” I sort of felt like I had never really had that experience...until now! Katy and I had a really long, conceptual session last night and today she brought in a paper and she really had constructed our ramblings into a cohesive, strong thesis. Hurray! We talked through her paper and this time focused on clarity and organization. I feel really good.

We can see from this entry that once again the complex negotiations that Kristy engages in with Katy during their session are not explicitly described, but rather hinted at. The question arises, if Kristy is not explicitly sharing her strategies in her journal, can the community of tutors still benefit from her knowledge? Without more data from staff meeting interactions following Kristy and Katy’s sessions, or notes on conversations that took place in the writing center between Kristy and other tutors, it is difficult to trace how Kristy’s successful sessions may have been communicated to other tutors.

To some extent, Kristy will naturally share with other tutors what she has *become* as a tutor, even if she does not overtly share specific strategies in her journal or in staff meetings. In Lave and Wenger’s (1991) terms, Kristy’s identity as a tutor is changing as a result of the reflective practices she revealed in her interview, and the community of tutors will thus inevitably be effected by the changes in her engagement with them about writing center practices that result. But this analysis shows how tracing this trajectory of learning, identity change and community formation is difficult for this particular series of sessions, given Kristy’s limited journal reflections and the lack of staff meeting notes.

Stacey and Elisa

Overview

While tutors' dialogic journals do not always provide in-depth reflection on successful tutorial strategies, as we saw in Kristy's sessions with Katy, tutors can nevertheless successfully use the journals to build community among themselves by affirming the relationships they are creating with students and by processing their difficulties with tutoring. Cohesiveness among tutors in this study was considerably enhanced by demonstrations of an ethos of care that was regularly observable in tutors' journals, as tutors expressed support for students and for each other. Staff meetings provide another arena for tutors to support each other and to express concern for the students they tutor.

As we shall see in this analysis, Stacey's journals and her interactions with tutors in staff meetings contribute to a stronger sense of community among the tutors as a result of her recurring sessions with Elisa. The complexity of Stacey and Elisa's relationship reveals how tutors can model intense personal commitment to students in a way that contributes significantly to the ethos of the tutor community. In addition, the long-term relationship between Stacey and Elisa facilitates their intellectual engagement, a quality that is evident in Stacey's dialogic journals. Stacey also enacts a complex negotiation of her role during her sessions with Elisa, sometimes acting as a "status equal," in Bruffee's (1984) terms, and sometimes in more directive, teacherly ways. However, while Stacey's journals and her interactions in staff meetings reveal how she affirms her relationship with Elisa and how it enhances their intellectual engagement, there is no evidence that Stacey shares the complexities of her sessions or

her tutoring strategies with other tutors. While Stacey demonstrates significant reflection on her tutoring strategies with Elisa in her interviews and correspondence with me, these reflections do not appear in her dialogic journals with tutors. Ultimately, Stacey's recurring sessions with the same tutor represent a missed opportunity for sharing the complexities of her tutorial strategies with other tutors.

Background: Stacey and Elisa's Ongoing Tutoring Relationship

Before I look closely at one of the sessions between Stacey and Elisa, it will be useful to provide a context for the ongoing relationship that had already developed between them prior to this study. While the sessions being analyzed were recorded in the Spring semester, Stacey and Elisa had been meeting together regularly since the Fall semester on a voluntary basis. They met approximately eight times during the Fall, and all of the tutors in the writing center became aware of their relationship as a result of Stacey's enthusiastic tutor journals and conversations during staff meetings about Elisa.

Stacey's comments in staff meeting and in her journals reveal the way she sees herself in the role of mentor for this student; she is fond of Elisa, convinced of her intellectual strengths, and committed to helping her succeed academically. Evidence of Stacey's commitment to Elisa and her enthusiasm for her intellectual abilities is evident in Stacey's first journal for the Spring semester, in which she introduces Elisa to the tutors in training who will be reading the journals that term:

"HOORAY! For those of you just joining us, Elisa was one of my favorite tutees from last semester. She's an ESL student from Bosnia, really bright, friendly...a really talented writer."

Any analysis of the interactions between Stacey and Elisa must take into account Stacey's consistent enthusiasm for Elisa's abilities as expressed in her dialogic journals with other tutors. As Severino (1992) suggests, writing center researchers must utilize "situational and interpersonal features to describe and analyze richly and rhetorically the variety of collaboration(s)" that occur in a tutorial (p. 63). Severino poses important questions about the complexities of peer relationships in the writing center, and how interpersonal dynamics intersect with the conflicts tutors experience in their roles as expressed by writing center scholars such as Gillam et al. (1994) and Trimbur (1987). As I will demonstrate in my analysis of Stacey and Elisa's tutorial sessions, attention to these interpersonal features allows us to consider how their relationship impacts the way Stacey constructs her role with Elisa and Stacey's ability to reflect on her tutorial strategies.

Analysis

Stacey, a junior in her second semester of tutoring, and Elisa, a second semester first-year student from Bosnia, had nine sessions together during the spring semester of data collection for this study, seven of which were recorded. Of these seven, I've chosen one particular session that evidences most clearly the emergent themes of intellectual engagement, relational awareness and reflective activity. In this session, Stacey and Elisa discuss the comments on Elisa's paper written by a substitute professor from another institution who recently took over the class when the full-time Hollins professor was hospitalized. Because the permanent professor's health issues will prevent her from returning before the end of the semester, Stacey and Elisa must

respond to the substitute professor's assessment of the paper, even though the assignment was originally designed by the permanent professor.

This difficult situation stimulates important conversation between Stacey and Elisa as they discuss what the substitute professor meant, whether or not his comments are fair, and how his comments can be incorporated into a rewrite. As Stacey struggles to help Elisa improve her paper based on the professor's comments, she shifts back and forth between a role that she herself defines as "a writing teacher" and the more supportive, less directive role of a "status equal," in Bruffee's (1984) terms. However, it is Stacey's affirmation of her relationship with Elisa that is evident in her dialogic journals, rather than her reflections or observations of the way in which she negotiates her role with Elisa.

As Stacey and Elisa work together in this particularly difficult situation, we see the intense personal commitment that Stacey has to this tutoring relationship, and how she feels responsible for helping Elisa create a paper that reflects what Stacey sees as Elisa's considerable ability as a thinker and writer. We can also see through this session how Stacey's tendency to shift into an editorial style of tutoring may be driven in part by her desire to help Elisa create an effective student persona that will satisfy this new professor, who neither of them either knows or trusts. However, we shall also see that Stacey's reflections in her private correspondence with me construct her own tutoring strategies very differently, seeing them as necessary for Elisa's improvement as a writer.

Elisa begins the session by telling Stacey that she got a "C" on her "Hindu Temple" paper, a response paper that describes Elisa's visit to a Hindu temple which she and Stacey worked on together twice about a month earlier. They are both upset by

the grade, and Elisa dismisses the substitute professor by saying, “We have a new professor who doesn’t even understand what metaphor is” (we learn later in the session that the professor had not understood a metaphor that Elisa had used in the paper). Both Stacey and Elisa are annoyed by the comments, believing that this substitute professor does not understand the assignment or Elisa’s particular writing strengths and weaknesses. Stacey is intensely sympathetic about the grade, which they both obviously see as unacceptable. Stacey says, “That’s too bad...That’s really troublesome.” Elisa states, “I’m gonna fight for this grade, because I know that my paper is good.” Stacey acknowledges Elisa’s feelings, saying “I know how much work you put into this, and I know how much of your soul you put into this, and it’s really frustrating to see someone not get it like that.” Despite Elisa’s disappointment in the grade, she expresses confidence in her abilities in this exchange with Stacey:

Stacey: You should definitely stand up for yourself if you believe that this is a good paper.

Elisa: I know it is.

Stacey: I know it is, too.

In the environment of the tutor dialogic journals, Stacey’s frustrations are expressed more directly. In the journal written after this session, Stacey takes the substitute professor to task for not “paying attention” to his students, and declares that “he just can’t open his mind to different sentence structure/ phrasing.” Stacey describes Elisa’s paper in her journal as “really good, passionate, [and] well-structured,” and makes her anger known by using all capital letters in much of her journal: “THE POINT OF THE ASSIGNMENT AND THE ENTIRE CLASS IS TO PROVOKE GENERAL REFLECTIONS ON RELIGION, LIKE ELISA DID WONDERFULLY IN THIS PAPER.”

She ends her journal by saying “We’re going to work on diagramming sentences,” clearly seeing Elisa’s sentence-level issues as the core of the problem that the professor has with her paper. This journal entry evidences Stacey’s intellectual engagement with Elisa, but it also evidences her emotional involvement with the student and the paper. By taking Elisa’s side in the public space of the dialogic journals, Stacey is reaffirming her stance as Elisa’s advocate, and modeling for the other tutors the ways in which tutors can help students who are struggling with academic discourse.

As noted in Chapter 4, the use of the dialogic journals as a way of affirming relationships with students is a way of “talking about” shared practices that Wenger suggests is a crucial activity for members of a community of practice, particularly when such narratives describe difficulties that arise within the community. This is very different than what Wenger (1998) describes as “talking within,” or explicit discussion of shared practices that also serves to bind community members together. While Wenger’s valuing of either kind of talk is tied to community cohesiveness, writing center scholars like Yancey (2008) see the role of sharing tutorial strategies as reflective in nature, offering an opportunity for tutors to interrogate their practices in explicit terms. In *The Everyday Writing Center*, Geller et al. (2007) suggest that “as the tutors become increasingly responsible for constructing rather than simply receiving knowledge,” they can create journals that function more like Wenger’s “talking about”; that is, the journals “incorporate and often celebrate the tutors’ life experiences, their conflicts, their failures, their successes,” and are organic in nature (p. 84-85). As this occurs, Geller et al. see the audience for tutors’ journals shifting from the director to other tutors: “Tutors write for each other. About whatever they want” (p. 84).

The increase in cohesiveness among tutors through the kind of journaling described by Geller et al. and Wenger seems apparent simply through the openness of responses like Stacey's. Writing in a forum that remains unedited and uncommented upon by me as the director, tutors can use the dialogic journals to express the kind of frustration that Stacey feels towards Elisa's professor, and *the* commitment that Stacey feels as Elisa's advocate. While specific tutorial strategies have not been shared in Stacey's journal, Stacey has re-affirmed the ethos of care for students that is characteristic of most tutor journals in this study, thus contributing to the cohesiveness of the community of tutors in this writing center. This is an example of how tutors may use dialogic journals to increase relational awareness of student needs among the tutor community, rather than using journals as reflective tools for developing particular tutorial strategies.

Stacey next turns to the issue of Elisa's voice in the paper, saying, "I hate this, but we have to make it a little more American-sounding to get him to understand it." But almost immediately, as they start reading the paper aloud, Stacey retracts this statement, saying, "I hate...taking your, you know, not your accent exactly, but your point of view out of it, your point of view as an English as a Second Language student... [Editing] just kind of takes away from your writing rather than adds to it." Stacey's concern about erasing Elisa's personal writing style in attempt to make it "more American-sounding" shows a deep respect for Elisa as a person and a writer. Stacey has commented frequently in previous journals about the uniqueness of Elisa's writing style. After their first session on the Hindu Temple paper, Stacey says in her journal: "...it's really interesting to see how she phrases things, how she turns a phrase

in her own syntax." It is this unique voice that Stacey wants to preserve, and yet she believes that part of the professor's problem with the paper lies in this unusual syntax. This obviously creates a tremendous conflict for Stacey, and during this session she responds to Elisa's style at one point by saying, "I really like how you say this, and I don't think you should change it." Stacey wants Elisa to realize that her style has intrinsic value, and she compliments her very specifically: "I really like that, and I don't think that just because it's not standard English." Elisa is appreciative, saying "Thank you."

The conflict that Stacey and Elisa are experiencing here can be tied to a familiar discussion in the writing center literature about how the concept of teacher authority can influence the tutorial dynamic. Harvey Kail and John Trimbur (1987) suggest that there is a "crisis of authority" (p. 10-11) that occurs in the tutorial when the faculty as an authority figure is absent and the tutor refuses to assume that authority herself. Kail and Trimbur suggest that under these circumstances there is an opportunity for the tutor to engage in a new kind of learning with the tutor, and that such a crisis is indeed necessary for "co-learning" between tutor and student, what they see as the goal of the tutorial, to take place. When Stacey chooses not to agree with the professor's assessment of Elisa's writing, and even suggests that Elisa refrain from editing her "voice" out of her paper, she has created an opportunity for Elisa to consider herself as "an active agent [in constructing knowledge] rather than as [a] passive object of transmission," as Kail and Trimbur suggest (p. 12). The extended relationship that Stacey and Elisa have developed may also be an important contributing factor to the way in which they are able to engage in challenging the professor's authority and affirming Elisa's agency. As

Brian Fallon (2010) suggests in his observations of how friendships between tutors and students contribute to the tutorial dynamic, a certain “level of familiarity ... can get [tutors and students] not only to question traditional authoritative norms but also to simply not care about the repercussions when skirting those norms” (p. 171). When Stacey refrains from affirming the faculty member as the “transmitter” of knowledge in the public space of the dialogic journal, she also engages other tutors in a conversation about this complex dynamic between tutor, student and faculty member. Stacey’s conversations with Elisa on the issue of authority thus demonstrate significant ways in which Stacey evidences shared reflective awareness in her dialogic journal entries, as well as a high level of intellectual engagement with what she believes are Elisa’s strengths as a writer.

However, Stacey’s role as a co-learner who is resistant to the faculty member’s authority is not static in this session. Stacey is challenged by Elisa to assert herself as a language expert and to make editorial suggestions to make the language more clear. For example, Elisa asks, “Do you have some order in a sentence structure?” Elisa is specifically asking for a set of rules to clarify the suggestions Stacey has made about Elisa’s syntax. Stacey does not answer Elisa’s question, but instead suggests they diagram some sentences together. But Stacey’s attempt to locate a book on diagramming in the writing center is not successful, and so she suggests to Elisa that they schedule a separate session on this topic. Stacey obviously feels uncertain about her ability to discuss grammar rules, telling Elisa she needs to “bone up on my grammar and make sure that I know what I’m doing, and figure out a way to explain

sentence structure.” She assures Elisa that they will have a session later that is a “sentence boot camp” where they will focus just on grammar issues.

This uncertainty of Stacey’s about her own editorial abilities probably explains her tendency in the rest of the session to simply correct many of Elisa’s sentence structure problems. Stacey seems to feel under pressure to help Elisa produce a better paper; while she does not know how to teach Elisa the rules she needs, she does know how to edit it to make the paper better. She is demonstrating her caring for Elisa, but in a way that does not seem to allow Elisa to participate in the editing process. In this session, Stacey gives Elisa more directives than she has in their previous sessions, seemingly in response to Stacey’s sense of responsibility for helping Elisa get a better grade. Stacey uses phrases like “Here I want you to add...” or “Cut this out,” giving Elisa explicit instructions on phrasing to include or omit. Sometimes Stacey’s directions are phrased as questions, as when she says, “What if you just made this a new paragraph?” but even in these instances she does not engage Elisa in a discussion about her suggestions.

In talking with Stacey about her work with Elisa, it became clear to me that Stacey had reflected quite deeply on what could at times be characterized as a highly directive approach to tutoring Elisa in this session. Stacey articulated a difference between “teaching” and “tutoring” in her work with Elisa, and she commented on these differences in a memo she wrote after meeting with me: “My role as a writing teacher was much more active [with Elisa] than I usually see it. Typically, I see myself as something of an active listener, a collaborator, in my role as a tutor, and there is that

facet in my relationship with Elisa in the way we discuss ideas. But I am also actively teaching her how to construct and wield the English language on paper.”

Stacey’s construction of herself as a “writing teacher” in her sessions with Elisa is notable. The role of “writing teacher” is very different that the role of “co-learner” or “collaborator” that Stacey has described as characteristic of other aspects of her work with Elisa and that we can see evidenced in some aspects of this tutorial. Stacey’s analysis of the differences between working with Elisa, an ESL student, and native English-speaking students corresponds with some of the literature that Stacey read during our tutor training class, specifically Judith Powers’ (1991) assertion of the value of using a more directive strategy when working with ESL students. The difficulty in assessing Stacey’s tutoring style simply from the transcripts and Stacey’s journals is that we cannot look directly at the drafts being produced, tutored, and re-drafted. Even Elisa’s degree of participation in the session is not easy to characterize. As Stacey notes in her memo to me, at times Elisa “speaks less, because we both have a copy and she can make marks on her copy after my... demonstrations.” Without access to these marked copies, or a video of the session to determine how Elisa is responding to Stacey’s rewrites, it is difficult to determine the effectiveness of Stacey’s techniques. While scholarly research on ESL writers that has occurred since Judith Powers’ influential article suggests that student participation in the session is key to learning and revision (e.g., Cogie 2006), Stacey is suggesting that participation may not be fully described by the student’s verbalizing in the session, and that Elisa’s notetaking on her own copy of the paper was a form of active participation not captured by the recording of the session.

Another way of analyzing Stacey's shift into a more directive mode in this tutorial is to reconsider the kind of authority exercised by teachers that tutors can easily take on because it is familiar to both tutor and student. When Stacey resists this authoritative role in her discussion with Elisa about her unique voice in the paper, she helps to provide the environment for co-learning that Kail and Trimbур describe. When Stacey later enacts this authority as an editor of Elisa's work, she has instead affirmed "the power and persistence of traditional assumptions about teaching and learning" that Gillam et al. (1994) suggests is common for tutors to embrace (p. 194-195). This is evident in the way that Stacey describes her role with Elisa as appropriately being at times a "writing teacher" rather than "an active listener or collaborator." While Gillam et al. (1994), Carino (1995, 2003) and others suggest that it is not possible to eliminate the sense of authority that tutors naturally wield in a session, we can teach tutors to increase their reflective awareness in complex sessions such as these, so that tutors use their authority in ways that are empowering to the writer.

Stacey obviously engages in significant reflections in her correspondence with me about the nature of her role in the tutorial with Elisa. However, if Stacey were able to express the complex negotiations of her role as a tutor more explicitly in her dialogic journal, she would open up the possibility of discussing this with the community of tutors, something that did not happen during the period of this study. Instead, Stacey tends to use the journals to affirm Elisa's abilities or to comment on their developing relationship (or, as we've seen in the current session, to take the professor to task). As already noted, the journals are functioning for Stacey as a place to "talk about" her practices, or to share the "stories [and] community lore" that Wenger (1998) describes as

necessary for “supporting communal forms of memory” (p. 109). Stacey does not usually use her journals as a place to “talk within” her writing center practices, or to share explicit tutoring strategies and reflect on their effectiveness. Nevertheless, Stacey’s use of the journals to “talk about” writing center practices affirms the other tutors as her primary audience, as Geller et al. suggest. Stacey use of the journals in this way allows her to describe how she is bonding with Elisa, and demonstrates an ethic of care for Elisa’s academic abilities, all of which contributes to the cohesiveness of the tutor community.

An exception to Stacey’s use of her journal to connect with the community of tutors through sharing stories rather than reflecting on her tutoring strategies occurs in her journal of April 18th after a session with Elisa. In this journal, Stacey seems to be having a crisis of confidence about her tutoring abilities in general. Stacey is very critical of herself in this particular journal because she was unable to work with Elisa on sentence diagramming as she had promised. Stacey found that sentence diagramming was too difficult for her to grasp spontaneously, and she had not really studied the sentence diagramming text in advance of her session with Elisa. After abandoning the idea of discussing diagramming, Stacey and Elisa go on to discuss the ideas for Elisa’s next paper in a way that Stacey describes in her journal as productive. Nevertheless, the overall tone of Stacey’s journal is very self-critical. She describes herself in these terms:

“I’ve been feeling a little down about the way I’ve been tutoring lately, and this session was no exception. I just don’t fee like my head’s in the game, I feel like I’m out of it, I’m disorganized, I’m not helping the students access their potential.”

Stacey's self-critical tone stems primarily from reading a new tutor's assessment of her tutoring style that suggests Stacey was "handing the tutee their thesis" (as Stacey quotes in her journal). While Stacey does not explain this comment any further, I learned upon further conversation with the tutors that Stacey's comment stemmed from her observation of a session in which the new tutor, Joan, came to the writing center for help on a paper she was writing for the tutor class about one of Stacey's sessions. The transcript of Joan's session reveals her critique of Stacey's approach. Joan describes Stacey as "forcing results" and "[having] been too generous in giving material to use." Joan also asserts that Stacey is "doing more" of the work for the student than she should. The transcript also reveals how Stacey acknowledges Joan's critique, saying: "It's OK. I think you're right." Stacey has an intense personal response to Joan's comments, which she writes in her journal "keeps reverberating" in her mind, and really "shook me up."

It is significant that the tone of Joan's comments is very different from that of the dialogic tutor journals because of its critical nature. Given this tone, it is difficult to say whether Stacey's attempt to reflect on her tutorial strategies has any positive effects for her. None of the remaining journals during this semester that Stacey wrote engaged in reflection about her tutorial strategies, and this particular journal elicited a great deal of sympathetic response from tutors in the subsequent staff meeting. That is, tutors reassured Stacey that everyone is "off their game" now and then, and that Stacey need not feel ineffective as a tutor if she is not always fully engaged in a session. The response of the tutors to Stacey's self-criticism is typical of this community of tutors. They do not engage in critiques of each other's tutoring style, instead functioning more

as cheerleaders for each other. The new tutor's critique of Stacey in her paper was atypical in the supportive dynamic that tutors had created for each other, and the experienced tutors did not echo that strategy or engage with Stacey in a follow-up critique of her tutoring style.

In analyzing the dynamic between Stacey and Elisa, it is important to consider the ways in which tutors in this Writing Center tend to bond with student with whom they meet repeatedly. In this study, an acute awareness of interpersonal issues and an intense intellectual engagement with students' academic progress are often observable responses in tutors when students voluntarily return repeatedly to work with them. The tutors have even developed a term, "groupies," to describe those students who choose to work with the same tutor over and over again. Having a student choose a tutor to work with regularly is seen as a high compliment to the tutor, and as a result the tutors approach these repeat visitors with even more seriousness than their other tutees.

With an ESL student like Elisa, Stacey and the other tutors become even more sympathetic as they try to help the student navigate the difficulties of the English language while simultaneously trying to understand the writing demands of American academic culture. As Hawkins (1980) suggests, tutors "become concerned, even preoccupied, with the welfare of their students, especially with the student's struggle to master academic language" (p. 64). Hawkins further suggests that not only is such personal concern for students common among tutors, but it is in fact essential for establishing "real intellectual community" (p. 66). Thus, the personal and intellectual engagement that Stacey demonstrates with Elisa offers the possibility of intense learning for both tutor and student.

Nevertheless, this study reveals that the closeness that tutors feel towards these repeat visitors can be a two-edged sword: while on the one hand repeat visits allow the tutor to work with students over time in the development of their writing abilities and to become familiar with their strengths and weaknesses, the personal relationship that develops between tutor and student can become of over-riding importance to the tutor. That is, tutors can become so close to the student that they do not carefully interrogate their own tutoring strategies to see if they are indeed effective, or they can fail to clearly analyze the student's strengths and needs. Joseph Janangelo (1988) suggests that in relationships like the one that has developed between Stacey and Elisa "meaning can be submerged" because of their personal connection, preventing the tutor (or, in Janangelo's observations, the teacher) from fully apprehending the student's needs (p. 35). Stacey's closeness to Elisa calls into question whether her personal relationship with Elisa is clouding her ability to be objective in assessing what kind of help Elisa may need, thus limiting the ways in which Stacey can benefit from reflection on her strategies with other tutors.

The tutor journals, which are meant, at least in part, to be a place for reflection on tutor strategies, can simply become a place where the tutor's personal connection to the student is affirmed, as we see in Stacey's journals about Elisa. When that occurs, a tutor's journal is still an important place for her to communicate to other tutors the commitment she feels as a result of recurring sessions, but it no longer serve the reflective purpose that can actually stimulate a discussion of tutoring strategies with the community of tutors. Some of these difficulties can be observed in the sessions between Stacey and Elisa, and serve as a reminder that while recurring sessions can build

community among tutors through sharing of stories, such sessions do not always fulfill their potential for changes in tutorial strategies that more reflective journal entries provide.

Working with Different Tutors

Another type of voluntary recurring visit in this study occur when students do not attempt to meet with the same tutor repeatedly. This category comprised about 83 visits during the semester of data gathering for this study, or 32% of the total visits. About 31 students participated in these types of visits; all of the tutors participated in these sessions, with varying degrees of frequency.

Recurring sessions with different tutors allow the possibility for tutors to use the dialogic journals and staff meetings to share tutorial strategies and knowledge about the student's writing abilities. However, this did not occur consistently for most of the sessions of this type in this study; that is, tutors may or may not take advantage of knowledge shared by other tutors when students return repeatedly to the writing center. In the analysis of Jenny's visits that follows, we shall see that the journals and staff meetings were more often used to help tutors process Jenny's behavior in the tutorial, rather than to reflect on tutorial strategies among themselves. My analysis of Jenny's sessions reveals my observation of what seems to be a typically complex use of the journals and staff meetings to build community among tutors for recurring visits, as we saw in Stacey and Kristy's journals. That is, journals are sometimes used by tutors to build community through personal sharing about students, but not always to engage in reflective activity about tutorial strategies.

Jenny with four different tutors

Overview

Jenny, a first-year student, met with four different tutors during the period of data-gathering for this study: Moira, Abby, Claudia and Theresa. While none of Jenny's sessions were recorded, the tutors' dialogic journals for each of these sessions and my notes on staff meeting interactions and tutor interviews offer valuable ways to consider how tutors use – or miss – the opportunity of recurring visits to interact and perhaps learn from each other. Specifically, Jenny's interaction with four different tutors evidences contradictory ways in which community among tutors can be enhanced. The first three tutors who worked with Jenny communicated with each other through dialogic journals and staff meetings about Jenny's problematic behavior and weak writing ability, but these communications did not reveal any attempts among the tutors to brainstorm particular strategies for helping Jenny. Their complaints about Jenny's behavior created a sense of cohesiveness among the tutors, but did not serve to help Jenny. In contrast, the fourth tutor, Theresa, used tutors' previous communications to consider what wasn't working for Jenny, and to develop an alternative strategy that was in fact the opposite of what the previous tutors had done. Theresa's ability to reflect on previous tutor journals and on staff meeting interactions show the possibilities for using the tutor community to affect tutorial practices; Moira, Abby and Claudia evidence how those same possibilities were missed.

Analysis

In Jenny's first session, which took place with Moira, we can observe Moira sharing personal information about Jenny in her dialogic journal, information that

creates a significant context for the writing problems Jenny is experiencing. However, we do not see that Moira's journal generates any reflection by other tutors who work with Jenny later, and who may have been able to benefit from some of Moira's observation.

Jenny brings to her session with Moira a previously submitted paper with the professor's comments and a draft of her most current paper. Jenny wanted to be sure she understands and incorporates the professor's suggestions into her current draft. Moira describes the session as "very brief," and the journal itself is correspondingly brief. According to Moira's journal entry, the session focused in part on academic style as Moira and Jenny "worked to identify and correct casual language," per the professor's comments. Moira also comments in her journal that they considered "how sentences relate to each other," but whether they were discussing the content of sentences or their syntactical relationship is not clear. Moira says the session ended with "a little WC therapy" as she and Jenny discussed "friend-making strategies," after Jenny revealed to Moira that she is a commuter student who skipped her last year of high school to attend Hollins.

In terms of the emergent themes for this study, Moira's journal reveals a degree of relational awareness, as she tries to help Jenny with what seems to be a difficult adjustment for her as a non-residential student who is slightly younger than others in her first-year class. The other two emergent themes of this study are not discernable in this journal entry. It is difficult to determine Moira's degree of intellectual engagement in the session given the brief nature of the journal, and Moira offers no real reflection on whether she believes the work she and Jenny did together was satisfactory to either or

both of them. Nevertheless, the mention of Jenny's commuter status and her difficulty in making friends is significant personal information shared by Moira in this public space of the dialogic journal. This is a typical strategy for tutors in this study, when personal information seems to shed light on the ways in which a student is engaging with her academic work. Jenny's inexperience and youth should in fact be a significant consideration in future tutors' engagement with her, but as we shall see other factors dominate the journal responses of tutors who later worked with Jenny, and they are unable to take advantage of Moira's insights..

Jenny's second and third sessions are more problematic for the tutors, and their journals are more detailed. Abby tutors Jenny the second time about two weeks after her session with Moira, and Claudia tutors Jenny the third time about two weeks after Abby's session. Both Abby and Claudia display a significant degree of impatience with Jenny. While the journals only reveal the ways in which Abby and Claudia describe Jenny's difficulty in understanding academic writing, and even basic concepts such as contractions, the staff meetings that occurred during this time reveal that Jenny's behavior in her tutorials was problematic as well. In staff meetings, Abby and Claudia both reveal that Jenny sends and receives text messages during her sessions. The tension created for Abby and Claudia by Jenny's texting behaviors combined with her weak writing ability make it difficult for them to relate to Jenny as a struggling writer who may be experiencing social anxiety with her slightly-older college "peers." Despite opportunities for using shared environments like the dialogic journals to brainstorm how to help Jenny, Abby and Claudia use the journals only to emphasize the difficulties they experience in their sessions with Jenny.

In Abby's session with Jenny, she complains in her journal that Jenny "did not get it" when she tried to help her understand the professor's comments, even when the comment was something as simple as "don't use contractions." Abby notes that Jenny asked her "what she should replace [the contraction] with," and Abby writes in an exasperated tone: "I had to explain **contractions** to her!" (Abby's emphasis). But Jenny's problems seem to run much deeper than this, as Abby goes on to explain in her journal: "[Jenny] just kept telling me that she was no good at writing papers, she didn't understand how to be aggressive, and she didn't understand how to argue a point." While these comments by Jenny point to a student who is lacking in self-confidence as well as lacking in experience at making academic arguments, Abby does not express any sympathy or understanding of her predicament. Instead, she says, "I don't understand how this girl got into college early." Abby describes her feelings by the end of the session as "totally and completely drained" by her unsuccessful efforts to explain what she considered "the most basic terms" in academic writing to Jenny.

Claudia's session with Jenny occurred a month later, and her journal reveals a similar degree of impatience with Jenny, although with more of a tendency to reflect on the session and empathize with Jenny. Claudia describes her session with Jenny as one of "my worst sessions ever" as she "tri[ed] most tactics [Claudia] knew to get her to understand the difference between summary and analysis." Once again, we see that Jenny is struggling with issues that are not uncommon for first-year writers, although Claudia described Jenny's inability to understand her explanations as particularly problematic. Claudia did not believe Jenny was comprehending her explanations, "even though we talked about it and wrote it out a couple of times." Claudia eventually asks

Sue, another tutor, to step in and help her out. Sue's strategy is to actually write the argument for Jenny, which Claudia believes to have been a good approach since nothing else was working. Claudia reflects briefly but significantly at the end of this session, suggesting that perhaps she "kept wanting [Jenny] to do more than she really could." Claudia also empathizes with Jenny when she notes that Jenny was "pretty upset/ discouraged about the assignment since she hadn't done well on others in this class."

It is significant that neither Claudia nor Abby overtly consider in their journals how Jenny's status as a young first-year student who skipped her senior year in high school and is living off-campus may be affecting her writing abilities and her self-esteem, despite the fact that Moira mentions these issues in the journal she wrote after Jenny's first session in the writing center. It becomes clear in staff meetings that Abby and Claudia are struggling with Jenny's texting behavior as a primary obstacle to a successful session. Abby and Claudia focus on what they perceive as Jenny's emotional immaturity combined with her immaturity as a writer, and find it difficult to empathize with her and to engage with her effectively.

Because none of the sessions between Jenny, Claudia and Abby were recorded, it is not possible to evaluate Jenny's engagement in the session. But as Nancy Welch (2008) notes, tutors naturally describe tutorials from their own limited perspective. In order to help tutors re-envision how the student is experiencing their session, Welch asks tutors to rewrite their journals several times during the semester, seeking different points of view on their tutorial interactions. In doing so, Welch seeks to reveal the often hidden story of the student's experience within the tutor's narrative: "Any story holds

within it a silence, a suppression, a contradiction, another story that could be told out of conversation with that silence, that contradiction” (p. 217). As Welch’s tutors engaged in this rewriting of the story of the tutorial, Welch observed how they were able to express “discomfort with the authority to name and judge fellow students as uninterested, unmotivated, difficult” once they were able to re-envision the tutorial from the student’s perspective (p. 216). For example, a student that one tutor had initially labeled as “uninterested” was re-described in a later narrative in terms of her behavior: “This student is fidgeting and looking at the clock. Why might that be?” (p. 216).

Welch’s understanding of journals as a form of story-telling from the tutor’s perspective is instructive when interpreting Abby and Claudia’s description of Jenny’s behavior. Jenny’s story is not being told here; we are hearing Abby and Claudia’s perspective exclusively through their voices in the dialogic journals. Abby and Claudia have not reached a level of understanding about Jenny that goes beyond their own experiences, although Claudia is beginning to do so when she states, “I kept wanting her to do more than she [Jenny] could.” As Kathleen Yancey (2008) notes in her commentary about tutor reflection, tutors “have to be able to separate, to see and appreciate the *other* in our students; that difference is what enables us to bring to them what *they* need” (p. 200). Welch’s strategy of having tutors rewrite their journals/stories is particularly effective in helping tutors achieve the kind of separation that Yancey suggests, particularly since the tutors in Welch’s writing center share the initial stories and the process of rewriting with each. This collaborative engagement among tutors to understand student perspectives in the tutorial is a significant component of Welch’s

strategy. While Claudia and Abby could have engaged in this kind of collaborative reframing of Jenny's experiences through the dialogic journals, they were not able to take advantage of that opportunity. In contrast, Theresa, the fourth tutor who works with Jenny, reflects and acts upon the observations of Claudia and Abby, with more positive results for Jenny.

Jenny's final session of the semester took place with Theresa, the very next day after Jenny's session with Claudia. This particular session was recorded, allowing us to get a sense of Jenny's side of the story. Theresa's journal shows that she has read the journals written by Claudia and Abby, and that she has absorbed the discussion in staff meetings about Jenny's text messaging habits in the tutorial. Nevertheless, Theresa does not focus her journal on these issues, but rather focuses on the nature of the assignment and Jenny's insecurity about her own writing abilities. Theresa also engages in a new strategy with Jenny, after concluding that writing portions of the paper for Jenny, the approach taken by Claudia (with help from Sue), was not helpful. The highly reflective tone of Theresa's journal, combined with her engagement both personally and intellectually in the session, reveal the most positive aspects of the emergent themes for this study. Theresa's enactment of these themes reveal how she engages with and responds to the community of tutors, and how the engagement of other tutors has affected her practices. Theresa is able to focus on Jenny's writing, and make specific suggestions to her and to the other tutors of how to support Jenny in her efforts to join the academic discourse community.

A closer look at Theresa's journal reveals these patterns. Theresa's first observation in her journal is, "This session went much better than [Jenny's] last session,

but I wonder how much of that had to do with the assignment.” Theresa goes on to describe the assignment as a “book report,” which Jenny claimed required mostly summary and little analysis. While Theresa wonders in her journal whether or not Jenny is correctly describing the assignment, her willingness to accept Jenny’s definition of the assignment explains some of the tension between Claudia and Jenny in her previous session. That is, while Claudia characterized Jenny in her journal as not comprehending the distinction between summary and analysis, Theresa suggests that Jenny understand the concepts and is simply writing the assignment as she perceives it.

Theresa briefly mentions that “there was still text messaging going on” by Jenny in the session; however, she is more forgiving of this behavior, noting that “[Jenny] did recognize that it was really distracting her from working eventually and she stopped.” Theresa displays understanding for the student in this particular part of her journal, and she also demonstrates a mature attitude toward letting Jenny herself decide not to continue text messaging during the session, because it was “distracting her from working.”

But Theresa’s primary concern in the journal, on which she spends about two-thirds of her writing time, is on how to model good writing for Jenny without doing it for her. Theresa notes that she “really didn’t want to write the sentences for [Jenny],” and instead encouraged her to have confidence in her ability to write the paper herself: “I told [Jenny] that I could tell that she was really capable of writing it.” Theresa explicitly cautions other tutors against writing for Jenny; instead, she makes alternative suggestions based on her own strategies with Jenny: “I think it would be good if we could encourage her to really free write on her own, whether it is in the writing center

or at home, and also to take some notes while she talks since it is hard for her to remember them when she starts putting pen to paper.”

Theresa here is demonstrating a sophisticated understanding of how to engage the student actively in the session, despite the student’s reluctance or lack of confidence. This not only shows a reflective quality in Theresa’s assessment of her own strategies as it compares with the strategies of other tutors who worked with Jenny, it also reveals Theresa’s intellectual engagement with writing center practices and her desire to create a genuine learning environment for Jenny. Theresa uses “we” when she makes suggestions about how to work with Jenny, demonstrating her awareness that other tutors will read her journal and her hopefulness that other tutors will engage with Jenny differently based on her suggestions.

Theresa’s journal evidences several characteristics that Kathleen Yancey (2008) argues are evidence of a tutor’s effective use of reflection. Yancey suggests that when we can see “the tutor framing the tutorial in larger, multiple ways,” it suggests the tutor recognizes how an individual session relates to overall goals for the student that go beyond the parameters of a particular session (p. 194). Theresa uses her journal in this way when she discusses the kinds of “textual and strategic” reflection on the student’s text that Yancey suggests are crucial (p. 194): Theresa encourages the student to freewrite, both at home and in the session. This strategy also evidences what Yancey describes as “allowing the student control,” and recognizing how this strategy empowers the student beyond the current session (p. 194). Theresa’s concern for the writer’s confidence, when she tells Jenny she is “capable” of writing the paper, also demonstrates her concern for Jenny beyond the needs of the current session. Theresa’s

journal exhibits both kinds of reflection that Yancey deems necessary for tutors' development: reflection-in-action, in which the tutor is able to recognize how to help the student in the current session; and constructive reflection, in which the tutor is able to expand her reflection to consider how her strategies might help the student's long-term goals.

Yancey's concept of how the ability to reflect must develop over time is evidenced in my interview with Theresa at the end of the semester. In our conversation, Theresa voices a commitment to the personal growth of students in the writing center that is mirrored in the way she participates in this session with Jenny. Theresa discusses how her experiences as a writing tutor affect the way she sees the students she works with, and the change that she has noticed in her attitude towards students after two years of being a tutor: "I care more about people, their own growth." Theresa sees it as part of her role to "help [students] get there," that is, to help students achieve academic success as writers. Theresa's commitment to an intellectual and personal engagement with students as revealed in this interview is a more developed or "constructive" reflection of the "reflection-in-action" that she displays in her journal response to the session with Jenny.

As previously noted, Jenny's session is only one example of the 83 voluntary recurring sessions that occurred between the same student and different tutors. My reading of all the journals for these sessions and the available transcripts reveals a range of interactions among tutors for these kinds of sessions. That is, sometimes tutors use journals reflectively to build on each other's strategies when the same student returns, and sometimes they are unable to take advantage of the knowledge created by previous

tutors as displayed in their journals. Journals and staff meetings are also used at times to share tutors' relational awareness of students in positive ways, but at other times this information is not utilized to help the student.

Jenny's sessions reveal the variety of ways in which tutors are using dialogic journals and staff meetings, sometimes building community among themselves through shared "griping" about a problematic student, and sometimes using those same shared interactions to develop new strategies for helping students. The uneven way in which tutors utilize dialogic journals and staff meetings to learn from each other how best to support the student not only suggests the complexities of community formation among tutors, but the difficulties inherent in repeated visits by a student with different tutors.

Mandatory Recurring Sessions

The difficulties that tutors have in communicating with each other when a student returns repeatedly but sees different tutors become more complex when the student does not come to the writing center voluntarily. Because of the problematic nature of these required visits, the relational awareness of the peer writing tutors often becomes focused primarily on their own sense of frustration and powerlessness rather than on the student's needs in that particular session. The sense of frustration that tutors express towards most of these required visits has a predictably significant impact on their intellectual engagement, and becomes the focus of much of their journal and staff meeting discussions. While tutors can be said to "bond" over these difficult sessions through their shared frustration in journals and staff meetings, the intense emotional response that tutors have to most of these sessions and their interactions with

each other in both journals and staff meetings often prevent them from sharing strategies for dealing with this difficult situation.

There were nevertheless a significant number of positive sessions that were also evidenced in the journals for mandatory sessions with different tutors. One example of this occurred when Theresa considered in her journal how a student interacted positively with her despite what the student had described as negative experiences with writing in high school. Theresa wrote hopefully about this student's ability to engage in future tutorials: "I think her attitude will change in subsequent sessions, because she was eager to talk about her examples." Other tutors also used positive phrases to describe their interaction with these students, saying the sessions were "pretty good," or even "really great." One tutor enthusiastically described "an awesome thesis statement" written by one of her tutees from the required visits. Significantly, however, these positive sessions are rarely brought up by the tutors in staff meetings; rather the tendency is for tutors to focus in on the resistance that students and the tutors themselves are experiencing towards these sessions.

Notably, when students return to see the same tutor, some of this dynamic of resistance is mitigated, and we see how relationship-building between tutor and student not only improves the session for the student, but increases the possibility that tutors will share successful tutorial strategies with each other. Thus, the complexity of the tutors' responses to these particular required visits not only reveals the ways in which community formation among tutors affects tutor practices, it offers an additional perspective on how required visits in general affect tutors and students, and how relational aspects of the tutorial intersect with reflective and intellectual engagement.

The unusual circumstances surrounding the required visits for this particular class played an important role in the way students' visits were perceived by the tutors, and the way in which they interacted among themselves in journals and staff meetings about the requirements of the class. The professor for this first-year writing class required all students to visit the writing center with a complete draft for each of three major papers. There were 20 students in the class, and the requirements resulted in 62 visits, or almost one-fourth of all visits for the semester. While the writing center in this study had experienced required visits in the past, we had never experienced such a high volume of visits from one class. The problem was exacerbated because the requirement asked for students to bring a complete draft to the writing center; predictably, students did not produce a full draft until close to the assignment date, causing most of the visits to be grouped together within a day or two of the due date. This onslaught of visits, 20 students within two days on the same assignment, caused tremendous problems for the tutors. The predictable resistance of students to required sessions and the repetitiveness of tutoring similar papers put a strain on the tutors that was expressed repeatedly in their journals and in staff meetings.

Working with Different Tutors

Brina with three different tutors

Overview

The series of sessions that I will focus on here with Brina and three different tutors reveals some of the complexities of mandatory visits. This analysis shows how the student herself seems to progress in her ability to engage in the tutorial sessions, but her tutors are not able to respond to her effectively. The journals reveal one of the tutors

sharing her strategies and her “writerly” approach to her session with Brina. Yet, the two tutors who meet subsequently with Brina fail to take advantage of the first tutor’s perspective and can only use the journals to connect with each other’s frustration over the repeated visits. While tutor community is enhanced to some degree both by sharing frustrations as well as tutorial strategies, the student’s needs in these sessions are obscured by the tutors’ primary use of the journals as way to engage with each other relationally rather than reflectively. Ultimately, in this example the tutors fail to utilize the opportunity of dialogic journals and staff meetings to share tutorial strategies with each other and focus on Brina’s individual writing needs, despite the increasing level of engagement that Brina seems to demonstrate.

Analysis

In Brina’s first visit to the writing center she works with Lynne, bringing a draft of her first paper for the semester. Lynne’s journal response is conspicuously lacking in any of the negative rhetoric that tutors had already demonstrated in their journals for these mandatory sessions, even at this early stage in the semester. Through an examination of Lynne’s journal about the session, we can see evidence of all three emergent themes in this study: Lynne’s use of the journal to engage in a high degree of reflectiveness about her tutorial strategies; Lynne’s intellectual engagement with the student’s writing process; and Lynne’s relational awareness of Brina, expressed through her acknowledgement both of the student’s personal difficulties with the session and the potential for an improvement in her future sessions. Lynne’s journal thus sets up a positive dynamic for other tutors to build on in their sessions with Brina. But as we shall see, the dynamic of these mandatory sessions make it difficult for tutors to take

advantage of the opportunity to use the journals as a reflective tool for sharing tutorial strategies.

According to Lynne's journal, Brina was reticent to participate in the session, although she had a rather well-developed draft. Lynne struggles in her journal with the idea of directiveness, which she finds difficult to avoid given Brina's passivity. Lynne begins her journal by reflecting on what she sees as her tendency to be directive, and her deliberate attempt not to interact in this way with Brina. Lynne writes:

"I've really been trying not to be too directive, because I notice when I get into a paper and see stuff wrong with it, I automatically want to correct it without getting the tutee to think about it."

However, in Lynne's words, Brina was not "a great participator in this session," thus making it hard for Lynne to enact more collaborative strategies. Lynne comments that Brina spoke very little: "I did get her to talk to me about what she felt her main ideas were, but that was about it."

Lynne's deliberate reflection on her tutorial strategies, and her attempts to get Brina to engage actively in the session, mirror her concerns with student participation that she expresses in her interview with me at the end of the semester. In Lynne's interview, she noted how her tutoring style had evolved into a more collaborative approach as a result of being tutored frequently herself the previous semester in recurring sessions with another tutor, Sue. In our interview, Lynne notes, "I think in some ways I've picked up on a lot of the techniques that Sue uses. I ask a lot more questions now...letting the tutee work that out themselves." It is obvious from Lynne's journal that she is troubled by the fact that she could not implement this strategy very

effectively with Brina. Lynne's ability to stay focused in the session and in her journal on her tutorial strategies despite the negative atmosphere surrounding these mandatory visits is noteworthy, especially given that the other tutors who work subsequently with Brina are not able to do the same.

Despite Brina's reticence, Lynne attempts to engage in substantive ways with Brina, as evidenced by her positive comments about Brina's paper: "She did have a solid thesis, and her organization was good, so she had most of the big picture stuff taken care of." Lynne's concern that Brina will take something away from the session is evident in the remainder of Lynne's journal as well. She gives Brina specific suggestions about how to improve her paper: "cut down the fluff" and develop her argument more clearly; "break up [long] paragraphs," and "balance" her argument by presenting an equal number of points to support both sides of her critique. Lynne notes that she believes the session improved as it went along, stating that "Toward the end of the session [Brina] started to write down the things I was telling her." Lynne ends her journal as she began it, with concern for Brina's lack of participation in the session, stating "hopefully the reason she was so passive is because this was her first time in the WC."

Lynne's journal and interview reveal many of the aspects of effective reflection that Yancey (2008) describes. Yancey suggests that an ideal reflective activity describes "the process represented as well as the problems addressed" (p. 193). We see this in Lynne's journal as she combines a discussion of her tendency to be directive and how she sees herself as only moderately successful in changing this tendency in her session. This approach also demonstrates how Lynne is engaged in the kind of "reflection-in-

action” that Yancey encourages, as she analyzes her own tutorial strategies in the context of this particular session. Lynne’s’ descriptions of Brina’s writing shows what Yancey further describes as “a use of language that characterizes good practice” – that is, Lynne’s language within her journal evidences the “good practices” of tutorial strategies that show effective reflection (p. 193). Specifically, Lynne acknowledges her awareness of how Brina’s draft already reflects basic standards for academic writing when she notes that Brina had “a solid thesis” and “good organization,” and she demonstrates for Brina how to “cut down the fluff” and develop her argument more thoroughly. While one could argue with Lynne’s technique, which seems to involve describing and pointing out Brina’s problems rather than asking her to discover them herself, Lynne’s decision to directly facilitate Brina’s revisions seem appropriate given Brina’s passive stance in the session. Finally, Lynne’s interview reveals her to be capable of engaging in Yancey’s “constructive reflection,” or reflection that takes into account how Lynne’s tutorial strategies are expressed over a variety of sessions.

Lynne’s highly reflective journal optimistically suggests that Brina seemed increasingly engaged as the session progressed, and that she may in fact be more engaged in future sessions. However, we shall see that for the other tutors who worked with Brina, the dynamic of mandatory sessions created a less than ideal response to Brina’s future efforts.

Brina’s second session took place with Theresa, about a month after her session with Lynne, and evidences a significant level of engagement on Brina’s part. Perhaps as Lynne suggested, Brina’s passivity in her first session was due to her unfamiliarity with the writing center. By examining the transcript of this session between Theresa and

Brina, we can see that Brina attempts to ask substantive questions about her paper, and often figures out for herself what she needs to do to improve a particular passage. Despite these positive instances of engagement that occur throughout the session, and despite Theresa's own level of engagement in the session, Theresa does not respond positively to this session in her journal. Theresa's journal reveals that she is preoccupied throughout the session with her own boredom, and in fact even characterizes Brina as bored, despite Brina's many positive contributions to the session. Instead of building on Lynne's journal reflections to find ways of encouraging Brina's growing assertiveness, Theresa uses her journal to connect with other tutors who are having problems with these mandatory sessions.

The interaction between Brina and Theresa in this session focuses primarily on what kind of information should be included in the introductory and conclusion paragraphs, how each element of the paper should be tied back to the thesis, and clarification of Brina's thesis as it relates to her examples. In the transcript of the session, we can see Theresa asking substantive questions about Brina's paper, and we can also see Brina participating actively, asking questions of her own and responding to questions from Theresa.

An example of the kinds of exchanges that occur between Theresa and Brina happens early in the session, when Theresa questions Brina about what seems to be her assertion that the author should have cut the violent parts from the abridgement of the novel:

Theresa: So you think they should have cut out all the violent parts?

Brina: Uh huh.

Theresa: So why? I think I'm missing in the paper why.

Brina: What I'm trying to say, I think the reason they cut out about the white seal for children is so that it wouldn't be violent, but they left this story with the snakes and Rikki Tikki Tavi. So basically what I'm trying to say is they should have left that story out as well. So I guess I need to reword that.

Theresa's questions and statement "I think I'm missing in the paper why" offer Brina the chance to discover the problem for herself: a lack of analysis of her own conclusions. Here we can see that Brina determines for herself that she needs to "reword" her paragraph to clarify her meaning, following up on Theresa's question without further prompting. Brina shows this kind of engagement later in the session as well, when she responds to Theresa's suggestion that she change the way her thesis is presented in the opening paragraph by saying, "I'm not really sure, how, what the thesis statement, how to introduce that." Brina is offering an implied question here about her thesis statement, which Theresa attempts to answer by offering possible ways to introduce the thesis in the introduction. Later, Brina again evidences her understanding of Theresa's suggestion that she tie back her examples to her thesis when she asks, "...throughout the paper I'm wondering if the argument I'm trying to make really goes along with whether I think it was successful or not. I mean, I guess I'm really not sure." These exchanges show the regular give-and-take in this session between Theresa's questions, Brina's responses, and Brina's questions that follow up on Theresa's suggestions. While Brina often phrases her questions as statements, as when she says "I'm wondering if the argument I'm trying to make really goes along with [this idea]," Theresa is quick to pick up on Brina's meaning, despite her hesitancy, often following up with more questions to clarify Brina's confusion.

This active participation of Brina's in the session is a dynamic that seems to be significantly different from Brina's first session with Lynne; Brina seems to be more engaged, and Theresa responds in kind. Theresa's journal, however, does not reflect on this dynamic. Rather than focusing on the ways in which this session worked well or how it differed from Lynne's session, Theresa writes primarily about how difficult these required sessions are for her. Theresa writes, "I am so bored in every session from [this] class...I don't understand how they can all be writing such similar, surface papers. All the students seem bored too." This comment is particularly telling in light of Brina's active participation in the session – Brina in fact does *not* seem particularly bored. Rather, Theresa's journal echoes the themes of other tutors and responds to the numerous sessions she herself has tutored for this class and this particular assignment; her journal does not function as a response to Brina in particular. In fact, only one sentence of Theresa's journal is devoted to Brina, when Theresa compliments Brina's participation by saying, "She asked some really good questions."

Like most of the other tutors, Theresa's reflective abilities often become focused in these required sessions on the difficulties that she and other tutors have noted with all the assignments for this class, rather than on the student's writing needs. As the tutors' journals reveal, not only were many of the students resistant and passive in the sessions, but the repetitiveness of these tutorials was exacerbated by what the tutors characterized as extremely detailed and narrow assignments. As one tutor noted in her journal, "I think the biggest problem with these...papers is the assignment sheet. The sheet IS SO LONG AND HAS SO MANY QUESTIONS that the students are expected to answer" (emphasis by the tutor). The many questions that students were required to

answer in the assignment narrowed the ways in which they were able to interpret the text, and in fact two of the three assignments required the students to respond to the same texts using a particular line of argument. The tutors regularly commented on how similar papers from this class were to each other. Moira noted in her journal, "All of these...papers are the same. No, really." Another tutor said, "I'm going to echo Moira here: all of these papers are pretty much the same. Really."

Theresa is clearly experiencing this same phenomenon in her session with Brina. This kind of communication among the tutors in their journals contributed significantly to their cohesiveness, but at times made it difficult to see how tutors could learn from each other how to help the students in spite of the limitations of the assignment. As shown in Theresa's session with Brina, such responses can also prevent tutors from recognizing students' active engagement in the session as different from "the usual" seemingly bored student they encounter in these mandatory sessions.

Staff meetings were another forum for tutors to discuss the required visits, and became an additional way in which attitudes about the required visits were reinforced or diffused. Staff meetings take place weekly within this 14-week semester, and required visits for this class took place at three distinct times during this semester, dominating staff meeting discussions during that period. The staff meeting discussions almost always centered on the negative aspects of the assignment design and the resistance of students to required visits, despite the fact that many tutors were having positive experiences with students, as described previously. This dynamic, in which the negative aspects of assignment design and student resistance dominated interactions among tutors, seemed to prevent tutors from recognizing ways in which sessions could

be more productive, particularly when students were seeing different tutors for each visit.

Brina's final session of the semester with Abby about a month later reveals a similar dynamic, in which Abby's ability to interact with Brina is colored by her own negative experiences with other students in the same class, and the negative responses of tutors to these students in journals and staff meetings.

Abby begins her journal about her session with Brina by grouping Brina with other resistant students Abby has heard about or worked with: "Another one who didn't really want to be here," writes Abby. Abby further generalizes about Brina when she writes, "I asked her what about her thesis, her organization, her conclusion – the usual problems that we seem to see a lot of in these Abate papers." Sadly, Abby does not seem to be able to engage with Brina as an individual, with a particular history in her writing center sessions and with particular concerns. Instead, Abby asks about "the usual problems" she expects to see in papers from this class. Abby is able to admit in her journal that she was "less encouraging" and "more directive" than she believes she should have been, as a result of her frustration with the repetitiveness of required sessions from Brina's classmates. While Abby is certainly demonstrating reflective awareness in her journal by considering the context of required visits, and diagnosing her own tutorial strategies in that context, she is not able to take that reflection any further to reconsider what strategies may be useful to the student.

This session was not recorded, so I am unable to analyze Abby's interactions with Brina directly. However, the lack of specifics about Abby's conversation with Brina in her journal suggest that the session was lacking in the kind of depth that both

Theresa and Lynne demonstrated in previous sessions. An opportunity for building on Brina's engagement in her session with Theresa is lost; in fact, because Theresa was unable to reflect fully on her session with Brina, it is not really possible for Abby to know that Brina may have been on an upward trajectory of participation in her sessions with tutors, despite the required nature of her visits.

Because of the way Abby and Theresa's journal echo other tutors' similar responses, it is worth noting some of the particular examples from tutors' journals that demonstrate their own resistance to the required visits, and the resistance they perceive among the students. This journal is typical: "These are the kind of ...papers I hate, where you know the person only came in to get their slip signed." The effect on tutors' intellectual engagement in the sessions, both as a result of the narrow assignments and the students' passivity, was clearly evidenced in the journals, where tutors often complained of being "bored" or having their "worst session ever." As Moira noted in her journal, "I mean, who doesn't prefer sessions with intellectual stimulation? This one had zero." The students' resistance and the similarity of the papers created a sense of ineffectiveness among the tutors; Stacey echoed a common sentiment in her journal when she wrote: "They [the required sessions] were making me question my ability as a tutor."

Wenger (1998) notes that "apprenticeship learning [within a community of practice] is supported by conversations and stories about problematic and especially difficult cases" (p. 108), and this dynamic can certainly be observed in the tutors' exchanges about the difficulties that these mandatory sessions created. Dialogic journal exchanges were often the starting point for conversations in staff meetings in which the

class requirements and assignment design were discussed, and strategies for communicating with the professor were considered. Thus, such journals served an important role in the “apprenticeship learning” that is taking place all the time among tutors in a writing center.

Nevertheless, the tutors’ construction of students as “bored” and resistant was often not complex enough to allow tutors to reflect with each other on how to respond effectively to these sessions. Grimm’s (1999) analysis of the ways institutional discourse constructs literacy practices in writing centers is useful here. While Grimm is concerned with how language creates and replicates particular ideologies in educational institutions, her theorizing also allows us to consider the ways in which the language of tutors constructs students and reinforces entrenched assumptions about student motivations. Using Althusser’s (1971) concept of “discursively constructed subject positions,” Grimm (1999) suggests that “because we [tutors and teachers] see others in the institution respond in similar fashion...and because we are rewarded for assuming certain positions, we come to accept this process as normal” (p. 70). Similarly, when tutors use their journals to describe the ways students engage in mandatory sessions in certain ways, they are “rewarded” for these descriptions when other tutors echo those same descriptions. Thus, tutors construct and reinforce a subject position for themselves as beleaguered by the demands of mandatory sessions in their journals and staff meetings, and similarly construct a monolithic subject position for students as resistant. The journal exchanges reinforce this dynamic, and both students and tutors become, in the terms of post-modern theorists like Grimm, “the constructed effects of [our own] discourse” (p. 70). Tutors thus prevent themselves from becoming facilitators of new

ways of writing for the students through their construction of themselves as overwhelmed and the students as resistant, whether they are or not.

Abby's session with Brina reveals the ways in which Abby is being constructed in significant ways by the journals written by other tutors and by her interpretations of her own experiences: Abby is not able to engage personally and reflectively with Brina in this session because of the way she perceives Brina as a problematic student who fits the profile of other problematic students from this class as already defined by the tutor community. While Abby's journal adds to the consensus among tutors that these sessions are repetitive and difficult for the tutors, her journal also shows the way in which such cohesiveness among the tutors is sometimes gained at the expense of the student.

This analysis reveals how the frequent required visits from this particular class have created a dynamic among the tutors that sometimes masks the individual needs of the students. This dynamic is exacerbated when students see a different tutor each time they come to the Writing Center. While many students were in fact resistant and difficult to work with as a result of the requirement, those students like Brina who were able to rise above the requirement and wanted to engage substantively with tutors were not always able to do so, given the mirrored resistance that the tutors themselves were demonstrating. Exceptions to this occurred most often when students returned to work with the same tutor, as I will discuss in the next section.

Working with the Same Tutor

Relationship-building in the tutorial as a result of recurring visits with the same tutor seems to allow the peer writing tutors in this study to overcome some of the

negative responses to required visits that dominated their interactions in staff meetings and journals during this semester. Overall, the positive comments that tutors made in their journals about mandatory recurring visits became more prevalent when students returned to work with the same tutor more than once. While some of these recurring sessions continue to elicit comments from tutors about the limitations of the assignment and the similarity of the papers students are writing, in general tutors were able to pay attention to the student's writing more consistently when they see the same student more than once. In addition, the relational awareness of tutors towards students increased, evidenced by tutors' increased mention of students' intellectual and personal characteristics in journals and in staff meetings, contributing to cohesiveness among the tutors. Nonetheless, tutors' journals for these sessions did not seem to fully engage reflective activities based on tutorial strategies that could have evolved into more shared practices among the tutors.

Seven different tutors worked with eleven students who returned two or three times for help with the same tutor, for a total of 26 required visits. Two recurring sessions with the same tutor was the norm for this group, because most students from this class only came for the required three visits. Two students met with the same tutor for all three visits, and one of these students knew the tutor as a friend prior to the sessions. While the tutors wrote journals for all of these sessions, only two of the 26 sessions were recorded. The limited number of times students in this group met with tutors and the lack of session recordings limit the generalizations that can be made about these sessions. Nevertheless, the discernible patterns in the tutors' journals give

some insight into how relationship-building can mitigate some of the negative effects of mandatory sessions.

Before looking more closely at two of these recurring sessions, I'd like to offer examples from the journals of several tutors which evidence a relational awareness and intellectual engagement with the student's writing rather than a focus on the exigencies of mandatory sessions, as they often did for non-recurring sessions. Given that students tended to come in large numbers for these required visits within the same day or two, it is not surprising that tutors were able to relate to students more effectively when they could establish some kind of relationship with them and develop some awareness of the student's writing ability over time. Tutors often showed an increased relational awareness of students as a result of these recurring visits, evidenced by a noticeable increase in the expressed comfort level of both tutor and student. Theresa writes in her journal, "Cat was much more comfortable with me in this second session." When Stacey meets with a student for the second time, Stacey comments, "I'm really starting to like [her]." In addition, tutors become intellectually engaged with recurring students in a way that is often absent from non-recurring mandatory sessions. There is an increased focus on the student's writing abilities, as when Kristy writes: "I think that it was a good session...Rebecca has really improved as a writer." Theresa evidences how intellectual engagement with recurring students is an important factor in the tutor's enjoyment of the session: "I love it that we had a long discussion about the thesis before she tried to formulate a new sentence with my help...[it was] extremely satisfying for me." This pattern in the journals about recurring mandatory sessions suggests that

tutors' intellectual engagement with the student naturally increases simultaneously with the relational awareness that recurring visits allow.

Abby and Nancy

Overview

The intersection of personal friendship and mandatory recurring sessions can significantly affect the dynamic of a session. In a series of three such sessions between Abby, the tutor, and Nancy, her friend, Abby's journal entries give insight into how their friendship enhanced their intellectual engagement. Abby's journal entries evidence to some degree all three emergent themes of this study: a relational awareness of Nancy, an intellectual engagement with Nancy's writing, and thoughtful reflection on their interaction in the tutorials. These qualities were usually missing from Abby's journal in her work with students from this class that she did not see more than once, as they were for other tutors. The recurring sessions between Abby and Nancy, combined with their friendship, seemed to allow an integration of relational and intellectual concerns, mitigating the effect of the mandatory visits and allowing Abby to subsequently reflect in more substantive ways in her shared journal with other tutors. Yet, there is still a lack of complexity in Abby's journal entries that reveals a missed opportunity for Abby to share with other tutors what she is learning about how friendship and intellectual engagement combine to effect the dynamics of the tutorial.

Analysis

One of the most notable aspects of the relationship that Abby and Nancy have and that they build on in their sessions together is the relaxed and personal way in which they engage with each other. As Abby notes in her journal, "I love tutoring

Nancy. I know her pretty well outside of the WC, so maybe that's why we work well together." Abby also writes, "I really look forward to my sessions with Nancy," evidencing a personal enjoyment of their relationship that was not observable in Abby's journals about non-recurring visits. This is evident in Abby's first journal entry, in which she writes, "It was a pretty relaxed session and we talked about other general things [in addition to the paper]." Abby uses the same language to describe their second session in her journal: "It was really relaxed and comfortable." An example of the playful way in which Abby and Nancy engage occurs in their third session together, when Abby writes that she "had a lot of fun," when their conversation digressed into a discussion of "tattoos [and] definitions of long words." The ability of Abby and Nancy to talk "off the page" about matters not directly related to the paper evidences their comfort level with each other.

In Laurel Johnson Black's (1998) sociolinguistic analysis of teacher-student conferences, she suggests that conversation that focus on non-discursive topics (that is, topics unrelated to the writing itself) can help students integrate personal and intellectual concerns in a way that enhances learning. Black categorizes such talk as either affective, dealing directly with emotions, or "other," on topics unrelated either to the writing or to emotional responses. Black's discussion of the natural way in which "emotions... mingle with factual knowledge" (p. 121) through conversation illuminates the ways in which teachers often alienate students in one-on-one conferences when they avoid non-discursive talk. This same principle can be applied to tutor-student interactions in the writing center, and points to how genuine engagement between tutor and student on a relational level can improve the tutorial dynamic.

Black's (1998) observations, grounded in her analysis of tape-recorded sessions between teachers and students, acknowledge the difficulty of achieving a balance between affective, discursive, and "other" talk in conferences between teachers and students, because of their unequal power relationship. This conclusion of Black's reaffirm Hawkins' (1980) observations from tutor journals, that "tutors are particularly successful at engaging students in [academic] discourse because of the intensely personal characteristics of the social contract between them and their students" (p. 64). That is, Hawkins sees the relational dimension of tutoring as essential to the success of its intellectual goals, and as something particular to a tutorial between peers. Hawkins defines this "social contract" between tutor and student as "a reciprocal relationship between equals, a sharing of the work of the system (for example, writing papers) between two friends who trust one another" (p. 66). While the language of "equals" that Hawkins uses is reminiscent of Bruffee, Kail and Trimbur's notion of "status equals," Hawkins' allusion to friendship is uncommon in the writing center literature, and suggests an intimacy that does not necessarily occur just because of the shared academic experiences in which peer writing tutors and students are engaged as college students. Hawkins notes that peer writing tutors are predisposed to an intense personal engagement in tutorials, and that the notion of friendship they enact "goes beyond the work, beyond the content of the paper" into the domain of affective or "other" talk that Black describes (p. 66). While a transcript of Abby and Nancy's session together would reveal a detailed view of their conversation, Abby's journal certainly suggests that this interplay of personal and intellectual engagement are essential to what Abby deems a successful tutorial interaction.

While I have attempted to explore the relational aspects of recurring sessions between the same tutor and student in this study, the particular ways that friendship, or what Terese Thonus (2008) has described as “familiarity” or a tendency to engage in “self-disclosure” (p. 338), cannot be explored in detail based only this particular tutorial, nor have the effects of friendship been explored in the writing center literature in general. Nevertheless, as Fallon (2010) noted in his observations about how friendship can influence tutorial dynamics, “a heightened level of comfort can provoke a number of possibilities for learning and writing that happen with greater ease under such conditions” (p. 171). I would argue that the sessions between Abby and Nancy evidence a particular quality that is common to recurring visits with the same tutor, whether voluntary or mandatory; that is, personalized interactions between tutors and students seem to allow a natural increase in tutors’ relational awareness of their students, and thus seem to facilitate their intellectual engagement with each other.

Evidence of the intellectual engagement between Abby and Nancy is shown in Abby’s journal, as it is in other tutors’ journals for recurring sessions with the same tutor. Abby’s journal comments are more focused on Nancy’s writing ability in these sessions than either she or tutors were for non-recurring mandatory visits. Abby makes positive comments in all three of her journals about Nancy’s writing ability and includes more details about Nancy’s papers in her journals than she did when writing about other students from this class. This change in Abby’s journal focus suggests that her friendship with Nancy is one factor that allows her to consider Nancy’s writing abilities in specific terms, rather than seeing her as an example of yet another student satisfying a requirement. For example, after their second session together, Abby writes

that Nancy had written “an incredibly focused paper.” In fact, Abby is so impressed with Nancy’s writing ability that she encourages Nancy to become a peer writing tutor: “...I’m trying to get her to apply for the WC next year. I think she’d be a fantastic tutor.”

Abby’s characterization of Nancy as a skilled writer is significant for considering how their relationship in the tutorial has evolved. As Severino (1992) notes, the disparity between the writing ability of tutor and student is one factor which affects a session’s dynamics. That is, Severino’s research suggests that one of the reasons Abby finds it easier to engage with Nancy as a co-learner is because Nancy’s strong writing skills are more closely aligned with her own. This intersection of personal and intellectual engagement due to shared ability levels and content knowledge is also evident in the recurring sessions between Kristy and Katy, discussed earlier. These complex intersections of friendship, recurring visits, mandatory visits, and shared writing ability are all areas which Abby could reflect upon with other tutors in her dialogic journals; but we shall see that she takes limited advantage of these opportunities for shared reflection.

While Abby comments specifically in all three journals on her friendship with Nancy and how that makes conversation easier between them, in her third journal her reflection goes further to consider how this friendship specifically affects their interactions about Nancy’s writing: “I think the reason I like our sessions so much is that I have a lot of trust in Nancy as a writer. Even if she doesn’t have all of her ideas down, she has them in her head and she’s smart enough to work them out on her own.” Abby is engaging in a level of reflective activity about her sessions with Nancy that she

did not display with other students from this class. Like the other tutors who worked with students more than once in response to the class requirement, Abby's reflective activity and intellectual engagement seem to have increased as a result of the personal relationship she was able to establish with Nancy.

Abby's ability to engage with Nancy in a way that evidences all three emergent themes is obvious throughout her journal entries. She is personally engaged with Nancy as a result of their friendship and recurring visits; she is impressed with Nancy's writing ability and enjoys talking about her paper, evidencing her intellectual engagement; and she is able to reflect about how her friendship with Nancy gives her personal insight into her writing abilities and facilitates their interaction in the session. Abby's ability to engage intellectually and reflectively with Nancy seem to have been positively impacted by the recurring visits, which allowed them to build on their personal friendship in positive ways and move beyond the negative influences of mandatory visits. Abby's journal show her reflecting on the intersection of friendship and intellectual engagement, and engaging in at least a surface discussion of her tutorial strategies.

But once again, as we saw in the recurring sessions between Kristy and Katy, Abby is not sharing with any specificity the strategies that she uses with Nancy. Abby's sharing of her personal connection with Nancy is also not as grounded in intellectual engagement as the comments of Stacey's concerns were about Elisa in Stacey's journal about their recurring sessions. Thus, Abby does not fully make use of the tutor journals to engage either reflectively, as a way of sharing tutorial strategies, or relationally, to bind the tutor community together through a sense of caring about the student. While

Abby may have shared her observations about Nancy during staff meetings, especially given her interest in nominating Nancy as a tutor, I cannot corroborate whether or not this occurred. Despite the interesting and complex issues that are raised in Abby's journal about the intersection of friendship, intellectual engagement and shared levels of writing ability, we are left to wonder whether the other tutors in the writing center benefited from the insights that Abby seemed to gain from her multiple sessions with Nancy.

Kristy and Hannah

Overview

The ways in which relational awareness on the part of the tutor can lead to deeper intellectual engagement in these mandatory sessions was suggested in another set of sessions between Kristy, the tutor, and Hannah, another student who came to the Writing Center from this particular class. While Hannah's first visit to the Writing Center with another tutor, Claudia, reveals her resistance to tutoring, Kristy subsequently works to decrease Hannah's anxiety in their two sessions together. Kristy attempts to establish a relationship with Hannah and keep the focus on her writing appear to allow an intellectual engagement that was missing for Hannah in her previous writing center sessions, both for her mandatory and voluntary visits. Kristy's journal reveals a trajectory of increased engagement for Hannah, and some hint of the particular strategies which Kristy utilizes, but Kristy does not reflect deeply on how her success in establishing the beginnings of a personal relationship with Hannah affected their sessions. Thus, the ways in which tutor community may benefit from Kristy's

awareness of relational and intellectual intersections in the tutorial have again become obscured.

Analysis

Claudia's journal describes Alison's first session in the writing center as "Definitely one of the worst sessions ever." When Claudia noticed Hannah's "deer-in-the-headlights look," she describes how they "had a conversation about how intimidated [Hannah] was by having people read her paper." Claudia describes the focus of the session as being on Hannah's anxieties; Claudia believes she "really didn't do much besides tranquilizing." Here we see how a student's anxiety can effectively halt the progress of a session. This is particularly notable since Hannah has in fact been a frequent visitor to the writing center on a voluntary basis during the period of data gathering for this study and in the previous semester. As I will discuss in a moment, Hannah's interaction with several other tutors prior to her meeting with Claudia evidenced the same level of anxiety and resistance.

When Hannah returns for her second session, this time with Kristy, she still evidences "major writing center anxiety," according to Kristy's journal. In response, Kristy's tactic was to "help her by being jovial and laid back." Kristy notes that Hannah "responded pretty well but never quite seemed fully comfortable." Kristy laments in her journal that Hannah "wasn't really working with me" in this session, and doubts whether or not she was able to alleviate her anxiety or help her writing. No mention is made of the content of Hannah's paper in this session, and it is clear that while Kristy has attempted to establish a personal connection with Hannah she has not gotten very far.

Christina Murphy's (1989) comments on student anxiety in tutorials are instructive here. Murphy suggests that students may "display insecurities about their abilities as writers or even as academic learners," and that such "anxiety, self-doubt, [and] negative cognition" can create tremendous tensions in the tutorial (p. 96). Murphy reiterates the conclusion noted by Laurel Johnson Black (1998) in her research on teacher-student conferences, that "learning is not simply a cognitive process," but is intimately connected with students' affective responses (p. 96). Murphy also suggests that the vulnerability students feel in a tutorial is a particular contributor to their feelings of anxiety, suggesting that the one-on-one context of a writing center tutorial is particularly prone to expose students to "understanding or misunderstanding, judgment or acceptance" (p. 97). Interestingly, Kristy makes a similar observation in her interview at the end of the semester, noting that "There's a certain amount of vulnerability that happens in a session." While Kristy believes that "being tutored by someone of the same gender...makes you a little more comfortable to go there," it does not seem that shared gender status has been enough to allow Hannah to be comfortable in the writing center.

Surprisingly, Hannah chooses to work with Kristy again for her third session. Despite Hannah's multiple visits to the Writing Center for other classes, she had never seen the same tutor more than once until her second session with Kristy. As a result, in this session some kind of personal connection does get established. Kristy writes in her journal, "I like Hannah," and does not mention that Hannah is anxious or resistant. In contrast to her journal from the first session, Kristy stays focused on the paper in her entry, noting that Hannah "had the context...she just needed her own argument."

Kristy' also describes her strategy for helping Hannah to strengthen her paper, which was to "play...a little question and answer...I wrote down her answers to my questions, and I think (hope) it will provide her with some fodder for her own analysis." While Kristy's journal is brief, it is notable for its focus on the writing rather than on Hannah's anxiety, and for Kristy's affirmation of a personal connection with Hannah that was missing in Claudia's journal entry.

As I alluded to previously, there is a larger context of Hannah's participation in the Writing Center that should be considered when analyzing her interactions with Kristy. Hannah was also coming (voluntarily) to the writing center for other classes and had been the topic at several staff meeting conversations because of her ongoing anxiety about the Writing Center. Other tutors who worked with Hannah had not able to engage with her effectively, but at the same time Hannah had not returned to work more than once with any tutor until her sessions with Kristy. While Hannah only met with Kristy twice, this recurring visit with the same tutor still evidenced more continuity in her interactions with tutors than she had demonstrated previously. It was only in their second session together that Kristy was able to establish the beginnings of a personal connection with Hannah that seemed to diffuse her anxiety and allow them to focus on the paper.

While I would not want to overstate the value of a recurring relationship after only two sessions, I would say that given the tutors' previous response to Hannah and what I know about her (Hannah had been a student of mine), Kristy's progress in establishing a relationship with Hannah was notable. While Hannah showed a level of anxiety that was not typical of the students who were required to use the Writing

Center for this class, the way in which her resistance was mitigated by meeting with Kristy more than once seems significant.

Both Kristy and Abby evidence a personal connection with these students that was mostly missing in non-recurring mandatory sessions. Their journals instead evidence a higher degree of relational awareness on the part of the tutors, and suggest how attempts to develop positive, personal relationships with students through repeat visits can lead to deeper intellectual engagement and reflective activity on the part of the tutor, even in the negative climate of mandatory sessions. Both Abby and Kristy use their journals to affirm their personal relationships with the students, contributing to the ethos of care that is valued by this community of tutors. Abby in particular uses her journal to affirm her relationship with Nancy and even suggest that Nancy might be a good candidate for a peer writing tutor, allowing for the same kind of relational emphasis that we saw in Stacey's journals about her recurring visits with Elisa. Nevertheless, neither Kristy nor Abby use their journals to reflect with much depth on their tutorial strategies, despite the implications in their journals that they both engaged in deliberate attempts to engage their students with their writing. Neither do Kristy and Abby consider in their journals or staff meetings how their developing relationships with their students may be facilitating their intellectual engagement.

Conclusions

The voluntary and required sessions analyzed in this chapter, with the same or different tutors, reveal some surprising and significant aspects of community formation among tutors. Dialogic journals and staff meetings afford important opportunities for tutors to engage in shared reflection and intellectual engagement about tutorials, but

the ways in which tutors participate in these activities varies greatly, in turn affecting the ways in which tutor community is shaped. In addition, the dynamic of voluntary and required visits, as well as ongoing relationships that develop between tutors and students, have a significant effect in this study on the ways in which tutors reflect on and share their experiences in the tutorial. After reviewing the way emergent themes intersect with community formation in these recurring sessions, I will consider further how the theoretical framework of Lave & Wenger provide insight into these complex dynamics.

Reflective action as an emergent theme offers important ways to analyze the different ways in which tutors engaged in activities such as journaling and staff meetings for recurring visits in this study. As I've discussed, Wenger offers two distinct ways to analyze how participants in a community of practice reflect on their practices through his concepts of "talking about," or sharing stories and affective responses about practices, and "talking within," or sharing particular strategies about how to enact practices. In this study, we see tutors like Kristy engaging in both types of reflection in their journals to some degree, as she connects with other tutors through affirmation of her feelings as well as some explicit sharing of strategies. However, Kristy's reflections on her tutorials are not deep, and do not give insight into the complex strategies that were revealed by an analysis of the transcript of her sessions with Katy. Kristy's emphasis in her journals was primarily on "talking about" her sessions, affirming the positive aspects of her sessions with Katy rather than reflecting on the complex ways she built on ideas and decentered her authority. Similarly, Stacey demonstrated in her journal a tendency to affirm her strong commitment to her ongoing tutoring

relationship with Elisa. An analysis of session transcripts between Stacey and Elisa also revealed complex negotiations within the tutorial, as Kristy's did. But Stacey's journal and interactions in staff meetings focused on the relational aspects of her interactions with Elisa, rather than on reflective considerations. Other tutors, such as those engaged in mandatory visits, used their journals to process difficult tutorial dynamics rather than to reflect on ways they might alter their tutorial strategies, showing once again the tendency of tutors in this study to use their dialogic journals as a space for "talking about" their shared practices rather than "talking within," or interrogating particular strategies.

While both types of reflection ("talking within" and "talking about") serve to strengthen community among tutors in this study, only direct references to tutorial strategies in journals and in staff meetings provide observable evidence that tutors may be changing their practices as a result of reflection. Interestingly, it is clear from interviews with tutors that reflection is a characteristic of this community that significantly affects their practices and their interactions with each other, but this characteristic is not evident in publicly shared spaces such as dialogic journals and staff meetings.

The *relational awareness* of tutors, both as evidenced in their attunement to each other's interpersonal needs and to the needs of their students, seemed to increase when students returned repeatedly to the writing center. Relationships between tutors and students developed over repeated visits can at times serve to deepen the personal and intellectual engagement of tutors, as seen in Kristy's interaction with Katy, and in Stacey's interactions with Elisa. Yet, such engagement can also occur simultaneously

with a tutor's inability to see the student's needs clearly, as we saw with Stacey in her sessions with Elisa. The tutors' relational awareness of students in this study was significantly affected by the dynamic of required visits; that is, as tutors became overwhelmed by both the volume and the repetitiveness of repeat visits, they became less able to interact with students as individuals with particular personal and intellectual needs. This was evident in the required sessions between Brina and four different tutors, when Brina's attempts to engage with the tutors were not always acknowledged. As we saw with Jenny, the student who engaged in texting during her tutorial, tutors' relational awareness is also affected by a student's personal behaviors in the session. Surprisingly, tutors' journals and staff meeting interactions show how sharing of this relational awareness of students' needs results in increased cohesiveness in the tutor community, whether or not the students' needs were being met.

In this particular community of tutors, awareness of students' and tutors' personal needs is clearly a valued characteristic of writing center practices, one which tutors evidence in their journals, in their staff meeting conversations, and in their interviews with me as the researcher. However, the dialogic journals also revealed that tutors' valuing of the relational aspects of their interaction with students can be obscured by the negative influences of mandatory visits, limited student writing ability, and problematic student behavior.

Intellectual engagement with the student is something that tutors in this study affirmed as vitally important to them. When such engagement is present, either due to shared subject matter interests (such as we saw with Kristy and Katy) or due to genuine interest in a student's writing process (as we saw with Theresa and Jenny), the ability of

the tutor to reflect deeply and care personally about the student increases. Recurring visits between the same student and tutor seem to increase the ability of the tutor to engage intellectually, personally and reflectively with the student. This was evident in all the sessions examined for students returning to see the same tutor: Kristy and Katy, Stacey and Elisa, Abby and Nancy, Kristy and Hannah. Even the difficult circumstances created by required visits can be mitigated to some degree by these recurring visits, as revealed by the tutors' positive comments in their journals about these students.

On the other hand, when recurring visits were mandatory and took place with different tutors, the difficult interpersonal dynamics of required visits seemed to overwhelm the tutors and weaken both their intellectual and reflective engagement, despite the opportunities afforded by the dialogic journals. This was demonstrated in the sessions Brina had with several different tutors, in which the tutors were not able to use the positive experiences of a previous tutor to help Brina in a personal and productive manner. Students like Brina, who engage in required visits and who do not see the same tutor, seemed to experience the most negative effects in this study. The stultifying effects of narrow assignment design and "stacked" visits (visits from the same class occurring within a short period of time) prevented tutors from engaging in the combination of deep intellectual engagement and relational awareness that seem to occur more regularly when students are able to work with the same tutor repeatedly. When students did return repeatedly to see the same tutor for mandatory visits, we see a change in tutors' interpersonal awareness and the possibility for more substantive intellectual engagement (as in the sessions between Abby and Nancy).

In analyzing the three emergent themes and the ways in which they offer insight into community formation among tutors, it became apparent that the peer writing tutors in this study developed ways of interacting among themselves that valued harmony and the giving and receiving of help among themselves as primary virtues. While these values intersect with all three emergent themes, they suggest a foundational mind-set among the tutors for appropriate behavior in this community that underlies the emergent themes. That is, the importance of harmony among the community of tutors, expressed as helpfulness and moral support, was a persistent value expressed by tutors in my interviews with them, and was revealed consistently in tutors' journals and in staff meetings.

Wenger (1998) notes that in a community of practice such as the writing center in this study in which "overlapping forms of competence" exists among members, the members often perceive that "it is more important to know how to give and receive help than to try to know everything yourself" (p. 76). This dynamic may explain why tutors do not interrogate their practices more, and instead engage in supportive activities rather than reflective ones. Wenger (1998) notes the complexity of this dynamic when he notes that "A shared practice...connects participants to each other in ways that are diverse and complex...[and which] are not easily reducible to a single principle such as ...collaboration" (p. 77).

The high value that tutors in this study place on harmonious relationships among themselves may at times prevent them from clear reflection on their own or other tutors' practices, perhaps because they believe such reflection may jeopardize that

relational harmony or perhaps because they don't see it as necessary, since they can rely on each other to "fill in the gaps" of their practices. It is significant that the most common way in which tutors engage with each other through journals and staff meetings serves to reinforce each other's perceptions and practices, increasing their sense of cohesiveness and harmony but limiting the ways in which they might create change in their practices. That is, journals that engage in "talking about" practices, which include storytelling and affective sharing, can strengthen community cohesiveness without any changes in tutor practices.

Repeat visits with the same tutor seem to offer the greatest opportunity for shared reflection on practices. Whole discourse discussions in general seem to occur more readily in recurring sessions with the same tutor, and modification of ideas in particular can be very exciting and productive strategies for tutor and students to engage in. However, successfully sharing these strategies with other tutors seems to depend on the self-awareness of the tutor. That is, when the tutor reflects thoughtfully on her strategies, she can share her insights with other tutors. Discussions about repeat visits in staff meetings and journals certainly contribute to a sense of community, regardless of how much the tutor is learning. But more new knowledge is generated for other tutors when the tutor herself is learning more and is able to reflect effectively on that learning, thus strengthening the community of tutors through shared knowledge.

While a tightly-knit sense of support among tutors strengthens the community's coherence, as Wenger (1998) notes, such coherence "can be both a strength and a weakness" (p. 85). It is evident in the analysis of recurring visits given here that tutors are actively communicating with each other and have achieved the "local coherence"

that Wenger states is necessary for a community of practice (p. 85). The tutors' valuing of their sense of community positions them to support each other in important ways, primarily through the use of the dialogic journals and staff meetings as a place for "talking within" their practices, or sharing stories and expressing feelings about their tutorial experiences. However, in order to go beyond sharing of "lore" in their writing center practices, tutors must be able to interrogate their own and each other's practices. While I was sometimes able to observe reflection based on specific strategies in staff meetings, it seems that the dynamics of this close-knit community of tutors may at times prevent this type of learning from taking place, as tutors tend to affirm each other's perceptions as a way of showing support for the community rather than challenging each other's practices, which may be perceived as unsupportive.

It is useful to consider Wenger's (1998) analysis of the dynamics within a community of practice to understand this particular aspect of tutors' behavior in this study. Wenger (1998) has defined the characteristic of joint enterprise in a community of practice as a network of unspoken guidelines that participants develop and under which they "attempt, neglect or refuse to make sense of events and to seek new meaning" (p. 81). These guidelines are one of the ways in which participants in a community respond in interconnected ways to their circumstances in order to make them "real and livable," not just to accomplish the task at hand (p. 79). While finding ways to codify certain rules and procedures of the task may be part of the community's joint enterprise, unspoken "rules" about appropriate and inappropriate behavior within the community are also part of the structure that participants create together. When participants engage in such behaviors, Wenger suggests that a "regime of mutual

accountability” is created which has important meaning for the participants, often more meaning than the formal rules or policies of the institutional or cultural structures within which their community exists (p. 81).

This idea of joint enterprise as giving rise to complex expectations among participants that have significant, often unarticulated meaning for them is particularly important for understanding some of the dynamics among the peer writing tutors in this study. Recognizing and decoding the tutors’ unspoken rules for behavior is an essential task for understanding the benefits and limitations of the community they have formed among themselves. While tutors readily acknowledge each other’s problematic or positive experiences in the tutorial, it is more difficult for them to acknowledge each other’s problematic practices in the tutorial, since doing so would challenge the unspoken rule of harmony that they cherish as a central characteristic of their community. We see this in the tutors’ response to Stacey’s “sad” journal, in which she questions her ability as a tutor in response to the criticism of a new tutor. Tutors respond by offering her support in the subsequent staff meeting, but do not offer Stacey a means for reflecting on her practices. Understanding the powerful dynamic that this community of tutors creates among themselves, in which maintaining the cohesion of the group is often even more important than helping students improve their writing practices, is an important insight offered by this study.

Finally, it is important to recognize that the writing center is, above all, a learning environment, and that Lave and Wenger have offered writing center scholars a way to theorize learning in writing centers using their concept of communities of practice. As noted before, the central conclusion of Lave & Wenger (1991) is that “learning is an

integral and inseparable aspect of social practice” (p. 31). This study seeks to show the kind of learning that the peer writing tutors facilitate among themselves, and the ways in which the formation of community among them shapes that learning.

Through the analysis of session transcripts, journals and staff meeting interactions offered in this chapter, we can observe the ways in which the peer writing tutors in this study participate with different degrees of awareness and intensity in the practices of their community. Interviews with tutors give further insight into their individual trajectories of learning and participation within the community, and serve to give meaning to Wenger’s (1998) assertion that “learning in practice is negotiating an identity” (p. 157). As Kristy noted in her interview, “I’m always learning with that kind of intellectual community [in the writing center]...I could talk about this forever.”

Theresa comments in her interview that being a tutor has “helped me take initiative...and to want more for myself, to succeed in ways that will make me happy and make me feel like I’m doing something, and definitely helped me to realize that I want to teach.”

Thus, the peer writing tutors in this study, according to their own analysis, have indeed undertaken identity transformations that Lave & Wenger suggest are central to participation in a community of practice. They have done so while enacting a complex response to the unique demands of individual sessions, each of which represents a particular intersection of relational, intellectual and reflective engagement, unique moments in the trajectory of learning for the peer writing tutors within this community of practice.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

Introduction

A significant portion of the writing center literature focuses on the relationship between tutor and student, examining the possibilities and limitations of collaboration in the complex environment of the tutorial. However, the ways in which tutors negotiate their roles by engaging in collaborative learning among themselves has received little attention. An exploration of the dynamic of collaborative learning within a community of tutors is the central contribution of this study, offering important considerations for the ways in which writing center directors structure tutor education and daily activities.

My research reveals that community formation among tutors in this study is influenced by a complex and often conflicted intersection of reflective and relational activities. The opportunities for collaborative learning afforded by a small, single-gender institution and a collaboratively designed writing center contributes significantly to a sense of cohesiveness among the peer writing tutors in this study. This is evidenced by the ways in which tutors exhibit a strong relational connection with each other through shared environments such as dialogic journals and staff meetings. However, tutors did not tend to collaborate on tutorial strategies with any regularity, resulting in inconsistent reflection on their tutorial practices in these shared environments. This study reveals that the high value that tutors place on relational aspects of their community – supporting each other's choices in the tutorial and sharing stories of problematic tutorials – contributes in significant ways to the formation of

community among them. However, their valuing of relational support over reflective activities sometimes prevents them from interrogating their own tutoring strategies with each other and at times even obscures the needs of students. While the highly relational nature of the tutor community in this study offers the possibility of shared reflection to enhance tutorial practices, this potential seems inconsistently realized in practice.

The naturalistic design of this study allows for observations of the tutors' everyday work habits and interactions. Although interviews with tutors were conducted as part of the data collection process, all other sources were naturally occurring. That is, the tutorial sessions and dialogic journals I examined were regular practices of the peer writing tutors in this study, and my observations as the researcher were conducted at staff meetings and during regularly occurring daily activities. The emergent themes of relational awareness, reflective activity and intellectual engagement thus arose out of the everyday, shared practices of the peer writing tutors in this study. The ways in which these themes intersect to both enhance and limit community formation among tutors reveal the key findings of this study.

Research Questions Addressed

My three research questions and the ways in which my data responds to them reveal the central concerns of this study:

1. *What are the particular practice that promote or limit community (and therefore learning) among tutors in a writing center?*

The first area posed by my research questions was the nature of the shared practices in which tutors engage that contribute to the formation of a community of

practice, as defined by Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger (1991). The authors of *The Everyday Writing Center* (2007, Geller et al.) provide insight into theorizing a writing center as a community of practice, and guided some of my thinking in analyzing the tutorial and administrative practices of the writing center in this study. Both the reflective and relational aspects of this tutor community became apparent through my observations and analysis. Through my examination of how tutors' shifts are designed, the layout of the writing center, the dialogic journals created after each session, and the weekly all-staff meetings it became apparent that regular, personal interaction among tutors with an expectation of engaged, thoughtful collaboration among them was part of the ethos of this writing center.

Yet my study also reveals that the strong emphasis tutors give to their personal interactions with each other was often valued more than their shared, articulated reflection on tutorial strategies. My analysis of recurring vs. non-recurring visits demonstrates how relationship-building between tutors and students often creates more complex interactions in the tutorial, but tutors do not regularly reflect on what these recurring sessions teach them with other tutors in the shared environments available to them. When recurring visits were mandatory rather than voluntary, tutors seem to focus more on sharing the problematic aspects of such tutorials rather than on problem-solving together to better serve the student's needs. Thus, while the relational aspects of tutors' interactions serve to enhance tutor community, lack of regular engagement in shared reflective activities were missed opportunities for tutors to further strengthen their cohesiveness.

2) *What are the effects of community formation on tutor practices? Specifically, what effect does this “culture of learning” have on the dynamics of the tutorial itself?*

My second research question sought to address how community formation among tutors actually affected their tutorial practices. This question formed the basis for the analytical portion of my study. The high incidence of recurring visits during the semester in which this study was conducted (73% of all students returned two or more times for tutoring) was a significant characteristic of the data I collected. Recurring contact between tutors and students offered the possibility of shared interaction among tutors about these students, and the ways in which they might learn from each other about these regular visitors to the writing center.

While many of the positive aspects of community formation were indeed revealed by these interactions – for example, a personal sense of engagement with returning students that enhanced intellectual engagement and a more complex approach to tutoring that evolved over repeated visits – many missed opportunities for shared learning among tutors were also part of my observations. As I’ve already noted, the tremendous value that tutors in this study place on relational aspects of the tutor community often interferes with a more reflective and self-critical approach to their tutorial strategies. As a result, the ability of tutors to learn from each other in the shared environments of the dialogic journals and staff meetings was sometimes limited. In addition, the complex intersections of mandatory vs. voluntary recurring visits with student writing ability, assignment design, and the interpersonal dynamics of tutorial sessions revealed how a variety of factors may affect tutors’ ability to share their

practices with each other in ways that both enhance community and actually improve tutorial strategies.

3) *What is the role of the director in promoting and sustaining a culture of learning among peer writing tutors?*

The intersection of tutorial practices with administrative structures shaped my third research question, which addresses how my role as director helped shape the writing center environment. I considered how the administrative practices I designed, often in collaboration with the tutors, included tutors in daily decision-making and in hiring procedures, positioning them as stakeholders in the daily life and ongoing trajectory of the writing center's history. Interviews with tutors reveal their personal investment in their shared writing center experiences, which they articulate as important to them as learners, writers and tutors. The themes that emerged from my examination of these various practices reveal a group of peer writing tutors that engage in reflective activity, both individually and with each other; that value relational awareness of their own and students' interpersonal needs; and that evidence intellectual engagement in their tutorials, journals and interactions with each other.

Yet, as I consider the ways in which tutors' relational and reflective activities were sometimes in conflict with one another in this study, it seems apparent that the director's attention to community formation among tutors must be constantly adjusted to ensure a focus not just on greater cohesiveness in the tutor community, but on developing tutors' ability to reflect constructively together on tutorial strategies. My reading of the writing center literature on reflection also suggests that the link between reflection and actual tutorial practices is sometimes tenuous. Thus, the writing center

director's role is crucial for tutor learning. Directors must not only deliberately cultivate the personal connections that enhance cohesiveness within the community of writing center tutors, but explore ways to engage active, shared reflection among tutors that directly affects tutorial strategies.

Based on these research questions, several overarching and overlapping conclusions can be drawn about community formation among peer writing tutors in this study that emphasize the complex relationship between reflective and relational activities:

Relationship building increases opportunities for tutorial complexity.

When the peer writing tutors in this study met repeatedly with the same student, tutorial strategies increased in complexity. This complexity was demonstrated by a variety of tutorial strategies, such as an increased attention to whole discourse issues rather than sentence level concerns, and a complex negotiation of roles on the part of the tutor. This increased complexity was particularly apparent in the transcripts of the four sessions between the writer, Katy, and her tutor, Kristy. Kristy repositioned herself continually throughout these sessions to support and build upon Katy's ideas, seemingly ever mindful of the need to allow the student control of the session while still making substantive contributions to the paper's content and themes. Another tutor, Stacey, also evidenced complexity in her multiple sessions with a Bosnian student, Elisa. Their long-term relationship (they had been meeting regularly for an entire semester prior to the sessions analyzed for this study) allowed room for Stacey to explore her role as both a tutor and a teacher, particularly because Elisa's needs as an ESL student created unusual demands on their interactions.

The transcripts of Kristy's and Stacey's sessions reveal how relationships with tutees built through recurring tutorials allow the tutors to enact a complexity in their strategies that was not present in sessions when tutors did not meet repeatedly with students. This pattern of increased complexity of tutorial strategies was discernable in the journal responses for all recurring sessions that took place with the same tutor; however, the availability of transcripts from Stacey's and Kristy's sessions were particularly useful in pinpointing more specifically the nature of the tutorial strategies utilized in this particular type of recurring session.

Community formation among tutors is enhanced by relationship-building.

Sessions like Stacey's and Kristy's that represent ongoing relationships between tutors and students reveal how tutors build community among themselves by affirming their ongoing contact with students. A particularly striking example of this is the way Stacey wrote about her sessions with Elisa in her dialogic journal. When Elisa experienced a conflict with her professor, Stacey publicly defended her in the space of the journal. Stacey chided the professor for not understanding Elisa's ESL issues, and took him to task for not "paying attention" to his students. Stacey goes on to describe Elisa's paper in her journal as "really good, passionate, [and] well-structured." This kind of affirmation of Stacey's knowledge of Elisa's abilities and her support of Elisa carried over into staff meetings as well, in which Stacey openly discussed Elisa's writing abilities and her desire to support Elisa's academic development.

Such "conversations," both within the journals and in staff meetings, serve to increase cohesiveness among the tutor community, as tutors sympathize with each other and offer support for the relationship they have built with their students. This

tendency of tutors to use the dialogic journals and staff meetings to support one another was particularly evident when they met repeatedly with the same student, but in fact was a regular characteristic of the journals whether recurring sessions took place with one or many tutors.

Relationship-building does not always result in shared reflective activity.

While relationship-building resulted in increased tutorial complexity and shared support for these relationships among the tutors, recurring tutorials did not always result in a sharing of tutorial strategies so that other tutors could benefit. The lack of such shared reflective activity is particularly striking when recurring sessions occurred with the same tutor. Such sessions revealed a richness of tutorial strategies that tutors were able to develop as a result of regular meetings with the same student, but the opportunity for tutors to share what they learned with others was often missed.

In their recurring sessions with the same students, both Kristy and Stacey demonstrated a variety of complex strategies, but neither of them reflected in substantive ways with other tutors in the shared environment of dialogic journals and staff meetings. Kristy, like Stacey, used dialogic journals and staff meetings more often to affirm her relationship with Katie rather than reflect on particular tutorial strategies. This was particularly notable given that both Kristy and Stacey were able to articulate the nature of their tutorial strategies in their interviews and correspondence with me, but neither of them shared these same insights with other tutors in any discernable way. Kristy, for example, stated in her interview with me that she uses questioning strategies in a tutorial session to “find a balance of power, to find where [the tutor and tutee] can come at it as equals.” This complex use of questioning strategies was evident in the

transcripts of her sessions with Katy. However, in her journal, Kristy describes the dynamic of her sessions with Katy in much more simplistic terms: “I felt as if a lot of it [the session] was me trying to figure out the appropriate response/questions for her.” The richness of Kristy’s conversation with me in the interview, and her insight into the “balance of power” that her questioning strategies represent, were not evident in the dialogic journal she shared with other tutors.

Similarly, in Stacey’s interviews and correspondence with me she showed a keen awareness of the multiple roles she had to enact in her sessions with Elisa, an awareness that was not reflected in her interactions with other tutors. Stacey described for me the dual role of teacher and tutor that she experiences with Elisa: “My role as a writing teacher was much more active [with Elisa] than I usually see it. Typically, I see myself as something of an active listener, a collaborator, in my role as a tutor.” However, in Stacey’s dialogic journals, her emphasis is not on sharing the complex negotiation of roles that she enacts, but rather on her relational connections with Elisa. This journal entry is typical of Stacey’s comments about Elisa: “Elisa was one of my favorite tutees from last semester. She’s an ESL student from Bosnia, really bright, friendly...a really talented writer.”

This disconnect between the complexity of the tutorials that take place in recurring sessions with the same tutor and the over-simplified or relationally-focused nature of the dialogic journals is a key finding of this study. While the data clearly shows the value of relationship-building between the same tutor and student, the tutors in this study did not consistently carry their insights into shared environments with other tutors. As a result, community formation among tutors that could have been

based on shared tutorial strategies via the dialogic journals was not as likely to occur. More common was the way in which tutors built community by using their journals to express support for each other and to process difficult tutorial dynamics. Thus, the tendency of tutors in this study is to use dialogic journals and staff meetings as opportunities for what Lave & Wenger (1991) describes as “talking about” their shared practices rather than “talking within” their practices, or interrogating particular strategies.

These conclusions highlight the complex interaction between reflective and relational activities that occur in the intimate environment of the small college writing center of this study. While the tutors’ valuing of relationships among themselves and with students clearly has value for building cohesiveness in the tutor community, this relational focus does not necessarily increase the kind of reflective activity among tutors that could have resulted in changed tutorial practices.

Reflecting on my role as director in this particular writing center, I see many opportunities to help tutors build on their relationships with each other and with students to engage in reflective activities that could significantly impact the tutorial. That is, I believe that the tutors in this study could have engaged in rewarding reflective activity with each other if they had been guided to do so more intentionally by me. One of the ways I could have done so is by helping tutors develop a more conscious awareness of how effective reflection develops over time. The emphasis in this writing center on dialogic journals created immediately after a session limits the ways in which tutors in this study reflect collaboratively on their sessions. Yancey’s (2008) observation that “reflection seems to entail a notion of time, time afterward, time recursive” (p. 194)

is affirmed in my observation of tutors' more complex reflections in their end-of-the-semester interviews with me. Through more intentional structuring of opportunities for reflection at various times during the semester (particularly at staff meetings, when tutors in this study were meeting together simultaneously), I could have facilitated the kinds of shared reflective activities that this study did not consistently capture.

In conclusion, the ways in which the formation of a community of practice among peer writing tutors enhances cohesiveness in a writing center is complex and nuanced. The intentionally collaborative design of writing center practices and administrative structures can contribute significantly to the cohesiveness of a community of practice among tutors, as this study reveals. Such designs can also be enhanced by particular characteristics of the institutional context, such as the small size and single-gender nature of the writing center in this study. But extending such cohesiveness among tutors to induce collaborative reflection seems to require more intentional structuring of tutor interaction than was found in this study. As writing center directors consider the impact of shared writing center practices on community formation among tutors, tutors' relational interactions can be guided to include more shared reflective activities. This study reveals how community formation among tutors can enhance learning for both tutors and students through a better understanding of the dynamic interaction between reflective and relational activities.

Major Contributions and Questions for Future Research

The emphasis in this study on the collaborative learning that takes place among tutors re-emphasizes Bruffee's idea of co-learning from a new and important perspective. Rather than just examining the dynamics of the tutorial itself to understand

writing center interactions, this study suggests that we must look closely at the opportunities we provide for tutors to interact with each other to fully understand what tutors are learning from each other and how they enact that learning. In addition, this study affirms how learning theories like those of Lave & Wenger, which explore how the dynamics of a community of practice effect both the members of the community and their shared activities, are an essential theoretical framework for understanding the complex ways in which tutors interpret and enact their roles.

It seems clear from the interactions among tutors that I observed in this study that community formation is indeed taking place, and that it has a powerful influence on the ways in which tutors reflect on and engage in tutorial practices. Such an influential dynamic cannot be ignored by writing center directors, who have multiple opportunities for intentionally shaping tutors' interactions with each other in ways that affect changes in tutorial strategies. This study reveals the possibilities for harnessing the natural tendency for peer writing tutors to collectively shape a philosophy and strategy for tutoring writing, a responsibility that writing center directors can undertake intentionally by developing a more finely tuned awareness of how writing centers function as communities of practice.

The findings in this study suggest a multitude of opportunities for future research. Of particular interest are the ways in which the reflective and relational aspects of tutors' interaction with each other enhance community and effect tutorial practices.

As seen from the writing center literature, most of the scholarly articles on tutor reflection focus on tutor education. Kathleen Yancey (2002) suggests that multiple forms

of reflection (formal and informal) engaged in both dialogically and individually by tutors can lead to greater insight into tutorial practices. Yancey also emphasizes the importance of reflection that takes place at various points in time after tutorial interactions. Yet, Jim Bell (2001) concludes that even varied forms of reflection may not yield changes in actual tutorial practices. Given the uneven ways in which tutors engaged in reflection in this study, investigating more systematically the ways in which reflective activities (particularly those which are dialogically focused) could be integrated into tutors' daily activities would be a fruitful area of research. Such research might also consider how to develop collaborative assessment strategies undertaken among tutors, so that tutors themselves can determine how shared reflective activities actually influence their tutorial strategies. Recent theorizing about how students can engage in collaborative writing assessment in the classroom (see Pearlman, 2007) offers possibilities for modeling similar collaborative assessment strategies among tutors in the writing center. Research designs which allow tutors to use the cohesion of their community to help each other interrogate their own and each other's strategies offer rich possibilities for investigating shared reflection among tutors.

The high value that tutors in this study ascribe to the relational aspects of their tutor community and to their recurring relationships with students in the tutorial is an under-researched area in the writing center community. Research that considers the ways in which tutors value personal relationships among themselves, and how this affects their intellectual engagement with each other and with students, would allow us to consider the important connections between the social and intellectual aspects of learning that Thom Hawkins (1980) noted in his research on tutor journals. The ways in

which this study reveals that recurring visits can contribute to stronger interpersonal relationships and greater intellectual engagement also suggests that more research is needed on the value of ongoing relationships between tutors and students.

The role of the director in shaping a writing center designed as a learning culture is another area highlighted in this study. As suggested by the authors of *The Everyday Writing Center* (Geller et al., 2007) and by my own observations in this study, writing center directors can engage tutors in administrative activities through intentionally designed collaborative structures, as well as acknowledge the need for tutor agency in responding to and shaping daily writing center practices. While the administrative practices of writing centers have been examined from the standpoint of institutional politics (e.g., Nelson & Evertz, 2001), collaborative administration practices between directors and tutors has not been considered. Research that undertakes an examination of how administrative practices in writing centers enhance or diminish community formation among tutors, and how such practices in turn affect tutorial strategies, would be a fruitful area of investigation.

One of the areas omitted in this study that needs our attention is how students can be brought into the community of practice created among the tutors in a writing center. The authors of *The Everyday Writing Center* suggest that this can happen naturally, as a result of deliberate design of the center by the director: "Our job as writing center directors is to support [a] learning culture for tutors, thus empowering them to support a learning culture for the writers they meet" (Geller et al., 2007, p. 49). However, the many variables affecting community formation among tutors in this study suggest that creating some kind of parallel culture for students visiting the

writing center is not likely to happen naturally, despite the hopeful suggestion of the authors of *The Everyday Writing Center*. As seen from this study, community formation among tutors occurs as a result of intentional design in writing center practices and administrative design and close attention to the interplay between relational and reflective activities. Encouraging the formation of community among students visiting the writing center will require similar intentional efforts. As Neal Lerner (2007) observes, creating a community of practice for students in the writing center is difficult, given their varying motivations, ability levels and knowledge of writing center practices. Research that investigates students' motivations for using the writing center, the factors that affect their engagement in recurring visits, and their understanding of the philosophy and practices of writing center work would provide insight into how writing centers can be an inclusive environments for students. Given the powerful ways in which tutors create community among themselves, writing centers risk creating insular communities that do not engage students effectively without further investigations into the ways students understand our work.

Finally, this study suggests the need for many more ethnographic examinations of writing center contexts, in a variety of institutional settings. This study suggests how a particular institutional setting and writing center design influences opportunities for community formation among tutors. Different institutional settings are likely to reveal different insights. Complex intersections of race, class, gender, ethnicity, size and regional location will inevitably affect institutional identities, and writing center designs. For example, how might a writing center in an all-male, private military academy in the Northeast differ from a writing center at a historically black college for

women in the deep South? How are writing centers in large public institutions different from those in small liberal arts colleges? That is, do the dynamics of a small college campus significantly effect the ways in which writing centers on those campuses develop, as this study suggests? These questions and many others could be fruitfully investigated by writing center researchers willing to engage in longitudinal studies of tutor learning and community formation within writing centers.

The plan of this study allowed me to examine only one semester in depth out of my 15 years as director of the Hollins University Writing Center. The richness of my interaction with the peer writing tutors over a decade and a half suggests much more than I have been able to capture here about how and why peer writing tutors learn from each other. Yet, it is my hope that this study offers a starting point for other writing center scholars to investigate the complex ways that tutors are always learning, and to undertake with enthusiasm further research that will enable both tutors and students to benefit from the unique collaborative learning opportunities that writing centers have to offer.

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¹ Note on APA Style: I have included first names rather than initials for authors and editors, resisting APA style on this point to give the reader an awareness of authors' and editors' gender identities.

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Appendix A: Informed Consent Form, Tutors

Working title: “Women in the Writing Center: Gender, Language and Community Intersections”

You are invited to participate in this research study. You are eligible to participate in this study because you are a tutor at the Hollins University Writing Center. The following information is provided in order to help you to make an informed decision whether or not to participate. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to ask.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the ways in which gender effects linguistic and social practices in a writing center at an all-female undergraduate institution. Participation in this study will require: a) audio recordings of writing center tutorials you conduct in the writing center; b) access to tutor response journals you write after tutorials; c) interview(s) regarding the sessions you recorded and your perceptions of how gender affects your interactions within tutorials and with other tutors; d) audio recordings of writing center staff meetings in which you participate.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You are free to decide not to participate in this study or to withdraw at any time without adversely affecting your relationship with the investigators or Hollins University. Your decision will not result in any loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Analysis of your participation in tutorials, staff meetings and tutor journals will only be used for the purposes of this study, and NOT to assess your effectiveness in the Writing Center.

If you choose not to participate, you may withdraw at any time by notifying the Project Director. Upon your request to withdraw, all information pertaining to you will be destroyed. In addition, any portion of your participation in recorded staff meetings will not be transcribed. If you choose to participate, all information will be held in strict confidence and will have no bearing on your academic standing or services you receive from the University. Your response will be considered only in combination with those from other participants. The information obtained in the study may be published in scientific journals or presented at scientific meetings but your identity will be kept strictly confidential.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please sign the statement attached.

Project Director:

Marcy Trianosky, PhD Candidate, Indiana University of Pennsylvania
2411 Laburnum Ave.
Roanoke, Virginia 24015
540-985-6246 (home) or 540-362-6576 (Hollins)
mtrianosky@hollins.edu

This project has been approved by the Indiana University of Pennsylvania Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (Phone: 724/357-7730).

Appendix B: Informed Consent Form, Students

Working title: “Women in the Writing Center: Gender, Language and Community Intersections”

You are invited to participate in this research study. You are eligible to participate in this study because you are a student at Hollins University. The following information is provided in order to help you to make an informed decision whether or not to participate. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to ask.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the ways in which gender effects linguistic and social practices in a writing center at an all-female undergraduate institution. Participation in this study will require: a) audio recordings of writing center tutorials in which you participate in the writing center; b) one or more interview(s) regarding the sessions in which you participated and your perceptions of how gender affects your interactions within tutorials.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You are free to decide not to participate in this study or to withdraw at any time without adversely affecting your relationship with the investigators or Hollins University. Your decision will not result in any loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you choose to participate, you may withdraw at any time by notifying the Project Director, Marcy Trianosky. Upon your request to withdraw, all information pertaining to you will be destroyed. If you choose to participate, all information will be held in strict confidence and will have no bearing on your academic standing or services you receive from the University. Your response will be considered only in combination with those from other participants. The information obtained in the study may be published in scientific journals or presented at scientific meetings but your identity will be kept strictly confidential.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please sign the attached statement.

Project Director:

Marcy Trianosky, PhD Candidate, Indiana University of Pennsylvania
2411 Laburnum Ave.
Roanoke, Virginia 24015
540-985-6246 (home) or 540-362-6576 (Hollins)
mtrianosky@hollins.edu

Dissertation Project Director:

Dr. Ben Rafoth
Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Composition & TESOL
111 Leonard Hall
Indiana, PA 15701
brafoth@iup.edu

This project has been approved by the Indiana University of Pennsylvania Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (Phone: 724/357-7730).

Appendix C: Consent Signature Form

VOLUNTARY CONSENT FORM:

I have read and understand the information on the form and I consent to volunteer to be a subject in this study. I understand that my responses are completely confidential and that I have the right to withdraw at any time. I have received an unsigned copy of this informed Consent Form to keep in my possession.

Name (PLEASE PRINT) _____

Signature _____

Date _____

Phone number or location where you can be reached: _____

Best days and times to reach you: _____

I certify that I have explained to the above individual the nature and purpose, the potential benefits, and possible risks associated with participating in this research study, have answered any questions that have been raised, and have witnessed the above signature.

Date

Investigator's Signature (Marcy Trianosky)

Appendix D: Transcription Conventions

CAPS	all caps for emphasis
((cough))	double parens for non-verbal sounds
...	ellipse for slight pause
[...]	ellipse in brackets for omitted material

Appendix E: Interview Questions, Tutors

General questions:

1. What is your year?
2. What is your major/minor?

General questions about attending a single-sex institution:

1. Why did you choose to come to Hollins?
2. How has your attitude toward single-sex education changed since coming to Hollins?

General questions about the Writing Center:

1. How long have you worked in the Writing Center?
2. What do you enjoy most/least about your work in the Writing Center?
3. Do you have a general philosophy about tutoring? That is, do you tend to approach sessions in a particular way?
4. How do you view your role as a tutor?
5. How do you view the student's role?
6. Do you think meeting with female students makes a difference in the kind of sessions you have at the writing center? Why or why not? Do you think you would be equally comfortable with male students? Why or why not?
7. How do you believe the single-sex environment of our writing center affects your interaction with other tutors?

**Appendix F:
Summary of Voluntary and Mandatory Recurring Visits**

Category	# of Visits	% of Total Visits	# Recorded
<i>Voluntary Recurring:</i>			
Same Tutor	27	10.4%	23
Different Tutor	83	32%	12
Tutors w/Tutors	17	6.5%	14
<i>Total Voluntary:</i>	127	49%	49
<i>Mandatory Recurring, One Class:</i>			
Same Tutor	26	10%	2
Different Tutor	36	14%	5
<i>Total Mandatory, One Class:</i>	62	24%	7
TOTAL RECURRING:	189	73%	56
TOTAL NON- RECURRING:	71	27%	16
TOTAL VISITS:	260	100%	72