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"How Do You Feel About This Paper?" A Mixed-Methods Study of How Writing Center Tutors Address Emotion

Jennifer Follett

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“HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THIS PAPER?”
A MIXED-METHODS STUDY OF HOW
WRITING CENTER TUTORS ADDRESS EMOTION

A Dissertation
Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research
in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

Jennifer Follett
Indiana University of Pennsylvania
December 2016

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This study uses the control-value theory of achievement emotions as a framework to examine how writing center peer tutors respond cognitively, affectively and behaviorally to student writers’ negative achievement emotions toward the writing students bring to the writing center. The study is informed by recent scholarship that asserts that sometimes when students visit the writing center, they feel a variety of emotions toward their writing, some of which are negative achievement emotions that can have harmful effects.

The study’s findings come from a survey of 28 undergraduate and graduate level writing center tutors, as well as written reflections, interviews, and audio recordings of tutoring sessions from 3 undergraduate and 4 graduate tutors. Statistical analysis of the survey, and coding of the reflections, interviews, and audio recordings, revealed findings that contribute to writing center and composition studies.

Participating tutors reported significant numbers of tutoring sessions involving students feeling negative emotions, and regularly addressed students’ negative achievement emotions as part of supporting students’ writing. Tutors attributed writers’ negative achievement emotions to lack of confidence in their writing abilities, partially due to ineffective scaffolding of writing assignments and feedback from faculty. Participating tutors made efforts to intervene in the *control* element of the control-value theory, attempting to raise students’ confidence. The tutors believed that immediate decrease in negative emotions was important to a tutoring session’s

success, and rarely acknowledged situations during which degrees of negative emotions might be beneficial in motivating students to strive. Tutors in the study reported little success in mediating *value* elements of students' writing processes, struggling to help students connect assignments to their long-term goals. Despite overall empathy for students, some participating tutors could not reconcile their intellectual understanding of the challenges students face with those tutors' positive feelings toward faculty and academic achievement. Findings from this study complicate some assumptions about the effectiveness of peer writing tutors, and suggest compositionists more closely examine faculty practices in assigning writing that is meaningful to students' long-term goals, and in scaffolding that writing.

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Never have I been more aware of writing as a social, collaborative act as when I was writing this dissertation. Certainly, like any other Ph.D. candidate has experienced, there were late nights when my desk lamp was the only light still on in the neighborhood, and I was wrapped up in the individual scholarly struggle. But, those moments were outweighed by the times when friends, family and colleagues provided the insight, procedural knowledge, motivation, and support I needed.

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INTRODUCTION

WRITERS' EMOTIONS IN THE GRAND NARRATIVE OF WRITING CENTERS

What do peer writing center tutors offer to student writers that those writers cannot get from faculty mentors? While different writing center scholars might answer that question differently, one answer that has perpetuated in how scholars characterize the power of writing centers might be “a safe space” for student writers, staffed by supportive peers. This is evident in McKinney’s (2013) examination of the grand narrative of writing centers, which repeatedly emphasizes the idea of writing centers as “cozy homes,” where students are welcomed by an accepting group of peer tutors. Similarly, Fallon (2010), explored the theme of “comfort, familiarity, and intimacy,” in tutors’ descriptions of their work. A key piece of this narrative of the comfort of writing centers is the role those supportive peer tutors play in ameliorating any negative emotions students might feel toward their writing—a person is not “comfortable” and “safe” when he or she feels anxious, frustrated, angry, hopeless, or bored. In “Talking in the Middle: Why Writers Need Writing Tutors,” Harris (1995) claimed that, “Frequently, students who come in nervous, apprehensive, defeated, or eager to get any help they can emerge from their sessions feeling more positive, more in control of their own writing” (p. 29-30). Harris’ (1995) claim relies on three assumptions: (1.) that some writers seek out the writing center when (and perhaps because) they have negative feelings about their writing, and (2.) that during the course of a successful writing center session, students’ feeling move from negative to positive, and, (3.) that this movement toward positive affect during a writing center session is beneficial to student writers, in that it offers then a stronger sense of “control” of their writing.

This study is designed to discover how examining the experiences of a group of writing center tutors supports, complicates, or contradicts these kinds of claims by asking how writing

center tutors respond when student writers seem to be experiencing anxiety, anger, frustration, hopelessness, or boredom. How do tutors understand what those emotions are, and where they come from? How do tutors feel when a writer's negative emotions about writing surface? What do tutors do in those moments, and how do those choices of tutoring strategies reflect tutors' perceptions of and feelings toward students' negative emotions?

I first began exploring assumptions like Harris' (1995) during a research project I collaborated on with a group of undergraduate tutors in 2010. That group of tutors found that their most challenging moments in the writing center happened when student writers felt badly about their writing. The tutors spoke of vehement expressions of anger toward specific instructors, shouted in our small basement room; tearful moments when students spoke of their fear of losing a scholarship due to a challenging course; and quiet whispers of defeat, murmured with eyes cast down—"I guess I'm just a terrible writer."

Those tutors' stories about distressed writers were poignant, but how much of a concern should they be for writing center scholars? Were there large numbers of writers who feel anxious, frustrated or angry about their writing assignments in writing centers, as tutors seemed to feel there were? Or were tutors' impressions reflecting negativity bias, the tendency to pay more attention to negative experiences than positive ones (Baumeister, et al. 2001)? To uncover the extent to which student writers might be visiting a writing center feeling some level of distress, I developed another research project with an undergraduate tutor, in which we surveyed student users of the writing center that also serves as the site of this dissertation study. Before their writing session, the survey asked participants to assess how strongly they agreed to statements describing their emotional state, statements like, "While I was writing this paper, I felt frustrated," or "I'm worried about how well I will do on this paper." While not all the

participants expressed feeling negative emotions about the writing they brought to the writing center, many of them did—enough to convince me student writers’ emotions about the writing they are doing are a very real part of their writing lives. And since these writers expressed these emotions before their session rather than after, findings of the study suggested that some writers do come into the writer center already feeling negative emotions, as opposed to those emotions only emerging during the course of a writing center session. Tutors need to address anxiety or frustration along with clear thesis statements and APA citation style.

The control-value theory of achievement emotions (Pekrun, 2009) provides a useful framework for exploring the social, dynamic, contextual nature of student writers’ feelings toward their writing. Educational psychologists define a large set of emotions as achievement-related: these are feelings people have when engaged in an achievement task with possible negative and positive outcomes. A person’s achievement emotion toward a task is determined by that person’s perception of their control of the task—their ability to do it—and their perception of the value of the task—how meaningful the consequences are of success or failure. Currently, a good deal of research is being done about achievement emotions among college students, and how those emotions factor into academic achievement, and in college students’ persistence.

I was heartened to find the lens of achievement emotions for understanding the complexities of the affective element of writing in college that seemed accessible to both professional scholars and writing center tutors. While acknowledging how complicated emotional construction is, the theory’s attention to achievement tasks, external evaluation, elements of control and value, and the importance of goals lends a certain clarity to complex, dynamic feelings and expressions. It applies to all student writers, since all students are engaged

in achievement tasks, not just to students whose emotional responses to the demands of academic writing are extreme.

This study maintains that writing centers are a fruitful site in which to explore how tutors think, feel, and act in response to those students' emotions. My own experiences as a writing center administrator and researcher, as well as those of scholars represented in the literature I review in Chapter Two, suggest that writing center tutors have questions and concerns about how they do and how they should respond to writers' negative emotions. What this study reveals about writing center tutors' cognitive, affective, and behavioral responses to student writers' expressions of negative achievement emotions advances our understanding of the importance tutors assign to student writers' self-efficacy, and the challenge of writing assignments that do not align with students' achievement goals. Tutors in this study, like those in my 2010 research, had many stories about students who felt anxious, frustrated, angry, bored or hopeless. Some of what tutors in this study had to say echoed those themes of "safety" or "comfort," and supported Harris' (1995) assumptions. But some findings from this study complicate those assumptions, too, pushing back at what it means to be a peer tutor when it comes to empathizing with student writers, especially when that means siding with students over faculty. My discussion of the findings also raises questions about the limitation the "positive affect" view of writing centers puts on tutors' ability to foster students' long term growth.

CHAPTER ONE

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

This study was designed to consider how writing center tutors respond to writers' negative emotions: how tutors perceive writers' negative achievement emotions, and how those tutors feel and act during tutoring sessions when negative emotions play a role. The lens of the psychological concept of achievement emotions offers the writing center community a way of thinking about how tutors respond when they believe writers feel anxious, angry, frustrated, bored, or hopeless about writing they have brought to the writing center.

Pekrun and Perry (2014) defined achievement emotions as:

An affective arousal that is tied directly to achievement activities (e.g. studying) or achievement outcomes (success and failure). Most emotions pertaining to [academic activities like] studying and to writing tests are seen as achievement emotions, since they relate to activities and outcomes that are typically judged according to competence-based standards (p. 121).

In other words, achievement emotions are emotions a person feels in association with a task or activity that will be evaluated by someone, with outcomes that include degrees of failure or success. Some achievement emotions are associated with the achievement task or activity itself, and are felt before and while the person is engaged in the task (anticipatory), like a student feeling anxious when studying for a high-stakes test, or feeling excited about an argument he or she is making in a paper. Others are associated with the outcome of the task (retrospective), like a student feeling ashamed by a low grade or grateful for the support of a tutor (Pekrun, 2006, p. 3). Both activity-related and outcome-related emotions are shaped by the student's achievement goals (mastery, performance, and performance avoidance), perception of his or her level of

control of the assigned task, and perception of the value of the task and consequences of strong or poor performance on it. Achievement emotions are both individually and socially constructed, since the perceived value of achievement tasks and a learner's goal orientations are complex products of their own experiences and their cultural assumptions and values (Pekrun 2006, p. 14).

In this chapter, I provide a rationale for this study that draws upon literature in the fields of educational psychology, composition studies, and writing center studies. The bodies of literature, and how they contributed to the design of this study, are discussed in more depth in Chapter Two. Following the rationale, I introduce the research questions that frame this study. I then offer an overview of achievement emotions theory as it has been studied among college students, explicating what researchers have learned about learners' perceptions of control and value and how those perceptions prompt emotional responses to learning tasks (including writing) that may have detrimental effects on students. I explore what it might mean for students feeling negative achievement emotions to visit the writing center by considering the connection between control/value elements and the scaffolding learning writing centers provide; examining Harris' (1995) landmark claim that the peeriness of writing center tutors positions writing centers as attractive to students feeling distressed about their writing; and forecasting this study's findings by exploring an example of tutor-writer from previous research. I will conclude the chapter by laying out the design of this study and proposing the study's benefits to writing center and composition scholarship.

Rationale for this Study

The rationale for this study relies on a series of claims about the affective nature of writing, and about how writing center tutors may be positioned to respond to affective elements

of college students' writing efforts. I will summarize each of the claims here, returning to them throughout the rest of the study.

Claim 1: Student writers have emotions about their writing. Studies have demonstrated that students feel a wide array of achievement emotions directly connected to college processes and performances, including writing. Achievement emotions are feelings associated with a task that will be evaluated, and which has possible favorable and unfavorable outcomes. Some achievement emotions are experienced as positive and some negative (Pekrun 2009; Pekrun, Goetz, Frenzel, Barchfield, & Perry, 2011; Pekrun, Goetz, Titz, & Perry, 2002; Pekrun, Maier, & Elliot, 2006).

Claim 2: Some negative emotions can have detrimental effects on student writers' writing processes and performances. Elements of cognition that compose a large part of academic success—memory, assessing information, attention, reading, decision making, social functioning—are heavily influenced by emotions, and can be hampered by some negative emotions (Immordino-Yang & Damasio, 2007; Zambo & Brehm, 2004). Feelings of anger, frustration, sadness, and discouragement inhibit motivation (strongly linked with academic success, and with writing), decision-making, and long-term memory (Dolan, 2002; Immordino-Yang & Damasio, 2007; Jalongo & Hirsh, 2010; Pajares, 2003; Pajares & Valiante, 2006; Zambo & Brehm, 2004). Anxiety, frustration, hopelessness, anger, and boredom are of special interest and concern to researchers who study student achievement emotions, because their effects can be especially damaging to students' academic success (Pekrun 2009; Pekrun, Goetz, Frenzel, Barchfield, & Perry, 2011; Pekrun, Goetz, Titz, & Perry, 2002; Pekrun, Maier, & Elliot, 2006).

Claim 3: Some students who visit writing centers are likely to be feeling negative achievement emotions. Research in writing centers has demonstrated that writing center tutors

are likely to witness the range of these emotions during tutoring sessions (Ariail, 1996; Babcock, Manning, & Rogers, 2013; Follett & Emmons, 2013; Hudson, 2001; Lape, 2008; Mills, 2011). According to some writing center scholars, students' perception of the "peer-ness" of writing tutors attracts students who need support on emotional elements of writing that they would prefer not to reveal to faculty (Harris, 1995).

Claim 4: Addressing student writers' negative emotions can be challenging for tutors.

Like most tutors in writing centers, the tutors at the site of this study do not have formal training in emotional counseling. Recognizing the nature and direction of negative emotions, moderating one's own emotional response to another person's negative emotion, and choosing effective strategies to mediate negative emotions can be challenging. This is especially complicated for writing center peer tutors; their role as both students and employees of the university in an academic support role can make students' negative emotions tricky territory when tutors feel their expertise as insufficient to meet a student's emotional needs (Lape 2008), or when they are asked to side with either students or faculty (Cooper, 1995; Grimm, 1999). Despite not being counselors, writing center tutors need to be able to address affective elements of writing, since successful intervention when emotions hinder a writer can help the writer move forward with their writing and learning processes in more productive ways. Writing center literature, including tutor-written articles in *WLN*, repeatedly raises questions about how tutors should be responding to writers' emotions (Bisson, 2007; Honigs; 2001; Hudson, 2001; Lape, 2008; McInerney, 1998; Mills, 2011).

Much of the literature written by or for writing center tutors establishes that tutors realize that student writers sometimes feel negative emotions, imagine that those negative emotions can have a detrimental effect on students' writing efforts, and want to offer the kind of support in the

writing center that will help those writers (Agostinelli, Poch, & Santoro, 2005; Ariail, 1996; Babcock, Manning, & Rogers, 2012; Bisson, 2007; Bullock, 2012; Honigs, 2001; Lape, 2008; Mills, 2011; Trachsel, 1995). However, only a few studies offer more than anecdotal accounts about tutors' responses to student writers' negative emotions. This study was designed to enter the conversation by examining a group of writing center tutors' cognitive, affective and behavioral responses to writers' negative achievement emotions through analysis of surveys, written reflections, interviews and audio recordings of tutoring sessions, and by offering achievement emotions theory as a useful lens for understanding both student writers' emotions and tutors' responses to those emotions in the context of writing tutorials in a writing center.

Research Questions

This study was framed by the following research questions:

How do writing center tutors respond to student writers' expressions of negative achievement emotions toward the writing they bring to the writing center?

- a) How do tutors respond *cognitively*—in other words, what are their beliefs about the nature and frequency of these emotions and their significance of the emotions to the writer's writing process and the tutoring session?
- b) How do tutors respond *affectively*—how do tutors feel when these emotions emerge during tutoring sessions?
- c) How do tutors respond *behaviorally*—what do tutors do during these sessions in response to those emotions?

As demonstrated by the construction of my research questions, by “response” I do not mean only behavioral responses, or what tutors *do*. This is because I expect that the choices tutors make about how to address writers' negative emotions during tutoring sessions are

informed, both consciously and unconsciously, by what tutors believe and feel about those emotions. This is in keeping with cognitive and affective schema theory, which suggests that to understand human behavior, it is necessary to examine the cognitive and affective frameworks through which the individual makes decisions about actions (Anderson, 1984; Damasio, Everitt, & Bishop, 1996). A tutor's perception of, or cognitive response to, a student's emotions includes how the tutor identifies the discrete emotion (Is it anxiety? Anger? Boredom?), how the tutor thinks the emotion may affect the tutoring session or writer's learning and writing process, and what factors the tutor thinks contribute to the emotion. A tutor's affective response to a writer's emotion includes the tutor's affective assessment of that writer's feeling (Has the tutor felt emotions that make him or her empathize? Or does the tutor feel this emotion is unreasonable or inappropriate?). It also involves the tutor's comfort level with exposure to and engagement with the emotion within the context of the writing center. I am also interested in how tutors behave—how they act and what strategies they employ when emotions become the focus of a tutoring session. Combining observation of actions with consideration of how those actions are guided by the tutors' thoughts and feelings allowed me to develop a more complete picture of what is going on than would observation of tutors' actions alone.

Defining Achievement Emotions: Control, Value and Goals

Achievement emotions theory is among contemporary approaches in educational, affective, and cognitive psychology that have demonstrated the role of emotions in processes traditionally thought of as governed by reason. Recent studies have demonstrated unequivocally that rational and emotional responses are intricately intertwined (Hardiman & Denckla, 2010; Immordino-Yang & Damasio, 2007; Zambo & Brehm, 2004). Any emotion, positive or negative, can distract a student from a writing task, since the emotion itself, rather than the task the student

is engaged with, becomes the focus of the student's conscious attention (Pekrun, 2009). Further, the elements of cognition that compose a large part of academic success—memory, assessing information, attention, reading, decision making, social functioning—particularly involve emotions, and can be hampered by negative emotions (Immordino-Yang & Damasio, 2007; Zambo & Brehm, 2004). Feelings of anger, frustration, sadness, and discouragement inhibit motivation (strongly linked with academic success, and with writing), decision-making, and long-term memory (Dolan, 2002; Immordino-Yang & Damasio, 2007; Jalongo & Hirsh, 2010; Pajares, 2003; Pajares & Valiante, 2006; Zambo & Brehm, 2004).

In this study, I have focused on a group of negative achievement emotions, which researchers have repeatedly studied among college students. Achievement emotions are experienced in conjunction with achievement activities—tasks that have potential successful and unsuccessful results, usually at least in part evaluated by another (Pekrun, 2009; Pekrun, Goetz, Frenzel, Barchfield, & Perry, 2011; Pekrun, Goetz, Titz, & Perry, 2002; Pekrun, Maier, & Elliot, 2006). Achievement emotions are especially interesting to educators because a student's experience of academia is constituted by many activities that can be understood as achievement tasks: studying for exams, participating in class discussions, submitting applications for internships, performing chemistry experiments, taking quizzes, interviewing for scholarships, and—of the most interest to writing center scholars—writing papers of many kinds (Pekrun, 2009; Pekrun, Goetz, Frenzel, Barchfield, & Perry, 2011; Pekrun, Goetz, Titz, & Perry, 2002; Pekrun, Maier, & Elliot, 2006).

Psychologists studying achievement emotions among college students further classify these emotions as ones due to achievement activities—the task itself—and achievement outcomes--the results of performance on the task. Outcome emotions are either anticipatory

(worrying about the potential for a bad grade before receiving it) or retrospective (regretting not having studied more after receiving a bad grade) (Pekrun, 2006, p. 3). Because writing center tutors work with writers primarily before a paper is evaluated (with some exceptions), this study will focus on anticipatory emotions.

Both activity-related and outcome-related emotions are shaped by the student's perception of his or her level of control of the assigned task, perception of the value of the task and consequences of strong or poor performance on it, and the student's achievement goals (Pekrun 2009; Pekrun, Goetz, Frenzel, Barchfield, & Perry, 2011; Pekrun, Goetz, Titz, & Perry, 2002; Pekrun, Maier, & Elliot, 2006). Achievement emotions are both individually and socially constructed, since goal orientation and perceptions of value are constructed through both individual experience and cultural norms, and because a student's perception of controllability is colored by their memories of previous evaluation of attempts at similar tasks (Pekrun 2006, p. 14).

The element of control has to do with the student's perception of how much control he or she has over the outcome or the activity (in this case, writing). Is this an accomplishable task for me? The concept of controllability is similar to concepts in composition and writing center studies that have examined the role motivation plays in student writing. Compositionists have applied Bandura's (1986) highly influential theories about self-efficacy as a factor in human agency to writing studies by identifying self-efficacy as an essential element of motivation. Student writers' perceptions of self-efficacy—the belief that he or she can accomplish a writing task—have been linked to successful use of composing strategies and to the improvement of writing ability across varying student populations in multiple studies (Hidi, & Boscolo, 2006; Pajares, 2003; Pajares & Johnson, 1994; Pajares & Valiante, 2006, Williams & Takaku, 2011).

Whether we use the terms “control,” “self-efficacy,” “confidence,” “agency,” or “empowerment,” writing center scholars have long argued for writing centers as sites where tutors help student writers view their assignments as accomplishable. Writing center administrators teach tutoring methods associated with building writers’ self-efficacy: pointing out strengths and confirming knowledge, allowing writers a safe place to experiment and get feedback, breaking large assignments down into reasonable goals, sharing writing process information, demystifying genre and faculty expectations. These tutoring methods involve *scaffolding* the development of writing, a term first used by Wood, Bruner, and Ross (1976), and now closely associated with Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development (1978). To scaffold a student’s learning means to provide just enough support to facilitate the learner’s active problem solving, then monitor that learner’s attempts to apply problem solving skills in new situations, and gradually reduce support as the learner’s confidence and competence increases (Wood, Bruner, and Ross, 1976). When a tutor scaffolds a writer’s development in a way that confirms that the student writer is making progress on a challenging task, the tutor contributes to an increase in the writer’s perception of his or her control of the writing task.

At work alongside the concept of perceived control in determining a student’s achievement emotions is the concept of perceived value. Value has to do with the student’s assessment of the activity’s value in relation to the student’s goal for the activity, and the worth of a successful or unsuccessful outcome. What am I getting out of writing this? How much does it matter to me if I do well on this assignment? The combination of the student’s perception of control and perception of value predicts which achievement emotion the student is likely to experience. High value task often promote positive emotions, like enjoyment, interest, and pride, and inspire a writer to work longer and harder than they would on a low value task, because

success on the task matters to them. However, if the writer perceives the writing task as high value, like a culminating portfolio for the capstone course in their major, but feels a low level of control of the task, the writer's emotional state may plummet, evoking anxiety, frustration, or hopelessness (Pekrun 2009; Pekrun, Goetz, Frenzel, Barchfield, & Perry, 2011; Pekrun, Goetz, Titz, & Perry, 2002; Pekrun, Maier, & Elliot, 2006).

How students perceive the value of a particular writing task—both how they think they can benefit from engaging with it and how important they gauge the consequences of evaluation of it—is intrinsically linked to their goals for that writing task. For any writing task that brings a student to the writing center, that student might have in mind *mastery goals* that interpret the value of the task in terms of long-term increase in writing abilities that will be relevant to the student beyond completion of this writing task. Or, the student could have *performance goals* for this writing, which would usually involve being evaluated highly by the instructor, particularly as compared to the rest of the class. Or, the writer may have *performance-avoidance goals* for the writing, focusing more on avoiding poor performance or negative consequences than aspiring toward strong performance or beneficial consequences. In the writing center, where most writers are working on projects that have been assigned, writers' goals—and therefore the value they assign writing tasks, and emotions they feel about them—may vary widely.

Student writers' achievement goals are interesting to consider in a writing center context because writing centers have implicit goals for student writers, too, and tutors may be oriented to address goals that seem more like mastery goals above the other two categories of goals. Training for tutors in the writing center that will be the site of this study is guided by the common writing center adage, "We make better writers, not better writing" (North, 1984), in that the center is more focused on helping students develop writing competencies across all their

years at the university rather than solely during the course of one paper or one course. The kind of scaffolding the tutors are taught to do supports mastery goals rather than performance or performance-avoidance goals, in that the tutor hopes the writer can transfer writing skills to future writing situations. Students may not come to the writing center with those kinds of goals in mind, but rather might feel more focused getting an A or avoiding a D. The goal a writer is working toward is intrinsically linked to the kind of emotion they are feeling about both the act of writing and their anticipation of how the final product will be assessed.

College students encounter a range of different writing situations in college, meaning their perceptions of control and value, as well as their writing goals, may vary from assignment to assignment or course to course. Variations in writing contexts mean student writers will feel a wide array of emotions directly connected to college writing (Pekrun 2009; Pekrun, Goetz, Frenzel, Barchfield, & Perry, 2011; Pekrun, Goetz, Titz, & Perry, 2002; Pekrun, Maier, & Elliot, 2006), and research in writing centers has demonstrated that writing center tutors are likely to witness the range of these emotions during tutoring sessions (Ariail, 1996; Babcock, Manning, & Rogers, 2013; Follett & Emmons, 2013; Hudson, 2001; Lape, 2008; Mills, 2011). All of those emotions do not have a detrimental effect on writing processes or performances. Emotions on a positive valence, like enjoyment, interest, or pride, tend to be *activating* (prompting more engagement with the task at hand) and tend to correlate with stronger performance, as long as the emotion is not felt so strongly that it distracts the student's attention away from the task to the experience of the emotion itself (Pekrun, 2009). Some emotions on the negative valence, like anger and anxiety, can sometimes be activating, and sometimes deactivating, depending on the strength and duration of the emotion, and on variations in the student's perception of controllability and value (Pekrun, Maier, & Elliot, 2006). Achievement emotion theory does not

suggest that any instance of a student feeling any negative emotion toward a piece of writing is necessarily detrimental to the student's writing development. There are grounds to suggest that temporary frustration while struggling with a challenging assignment is not necessarily harmful, or that a moderate dose of anger can motivate a person to persist at a difficult task (Pekrun, 2009). This study is not informed by the belief that the only good outcome of a tutoring session involves a writer walking away feeling only positively toward writing. Both findings in the literature and the results of my study suggest, though, that tutors may not be comfortable with the idea of not resolving a writer's negative emotion during the course of a writing center session.

As I acknowledged in my rationale, students experience a wide range of achievement emotions for tutors to respond to. This study will focus on tutors' responses to a set of five achievement emotions: boredom, anger, anxiety, frustration, and hopelessness. I chose these emotions because previous study suggests they regularly occur in college students, and these emotions are likely to have detrimental effects on students' academic performance (Pekrun 2009; Pekrun, Goetz, Frenzel, Barchfield, & Perry, 2011; Pekrun, Goetz, Titz, & Perry, 2002; Pekrun, Maier, & Elliot, 2006). Below, I provide definitions of the five emotions I constructed after reading literature about achievement emotions.

Boredom: Boredom is a lack of interest in engaging in a particular task, which leads to difficulty sustaining attention or concentration on that task. For example, a student might feel bored with a writing assignment if she doesn't see its relevance to herself, if the writing task isn't sufficiently challenging, or if the reward for performance on it is insufficient to overcome a lack of interest in the task itself.

Anger: Anger can range from minor irritation to intense rage. People feel angry when they feel threatened (actually or symbolically), or when they feel that something or someone is unfairly

impeding their needs, goals, plans or desires. Usually, people feel angry at a particular person, object or situation. For example, a student might feel angry at a professor for giving him a low grade, or for not allowing him to write about what he wants to.

Anxiety (or anxiousness): Anxiety is a feeling of worry, nervousness or unease. It is typically associated with an event or activity that has an unknown outcome, including potentially damaging negative outcomes. Sometimes, though not always, a bad experience in the past can make a person feel anxious when approaching similar experiences another time. For example, a student might feel anxious about writing an essay for a class when she has not received feedback from this instructor before, or if she has received negative feedback from this professor (or others) in the past. Or, a student might feel anxious if a writing task counts for a high percentage of the grade for the course, and she can't confidently predict that she will do well on it.

Frustration: A person feels frustration when he or she is unable to complete a task to his or her satisfaction due to an obstacle or obstacles. The obstacle(s) can be internal (like not knowing how to do something) or external (like not being given enough time or resources). For example, a student might feel frustration when she doesn't think she has the skill to write a particular kind of paper, or if she doesn't understand the instructor's directions or requirements. Sometimes, an obstacle is beyond anyone's control or is hard to identify, so instead of being angry at a particular person (For example, angry at a professor for a grade), a student might sometimes feel frustrated instead. For example, a student might feel frustrated because a paper is harder to write than he anticipated, but he isn't sure why; or because he lost a draft of a paper due to a power outage.

Hopelessness: A person feels hopeless when he or she cannot imagine successfully completing a task. For example, a student might feel he will never be able to write a paper well enough to receive a passing grade.

Student Writers' Negative Emotions in Writing Centers

While not all writers who visit writing centers come to the center feeling bored, angry, anxious, frustrated or hopeless, research suggests that some do. Muriel Harris (1995), in her landmark article, "Talking in the Middle: Why Writers Need Writing Tutors," argued for the necessity of peer-staffed writing centers to support students who might be experiencing negative emotions about writing. Harris (1995) noted "assisting with affective concerns" (p. 34) as being among the crucial support for writers that peer tutors can offer more effectively than faculty. Comments Harris (1995) drew from a satisfaction survey, like "I'm trying to overcome my fear of writing, and this is the place to be," and "[The tutor] helped me sort through my lack of confidence," demonstrated moments when writers were motivated to visit the writing center specifically to address negative emotions as part of their writing processes. The focus and intent of this study is different from Harris' (1995). Harris emphasized "*he helped me...*" and "*...this is the place to be*" to argue for the effectiveness of tutoring. In this dissertation, I will examine how tutors' understandings of and feelings about "*...my fear of writing*" and "*...my lack of confidence...*" inform their approach to tutoring. Harris (1995) has not been alone in theorizing that a peer-staffed writing center offers a safer place to go than a classroom or professor's office for writers who may be feeling emotionally vulnerable. I will take a more comprehensive look at the body of literature about writing centers as emotional safe havens, and at literature that troubles this claim, in Chapter Two.

Harris' (1995) article provides an example of how tacit assumptions about students' emotions toward writing suggest that attention to those emotions is an essential part of the role of a writing center tutor. Harris, in a passage that reads like a given, claimed, "no one doubts that student writers often lack confidence in their skills or that they find writing to be an anxiety producing task" (p. 35). This assumption of students' negative feelings carries over into how Harris described the essential responsibilities of tutors, asserting that, "as tutors we are there to help reduce the stress, to overcome the hurdles set up by others..." (p. 29). This soundly places writers' "stress" as an essential element of student writing, therefore an inevitable focus of a tutoring session, alongside questions about citation style or a thesis that is too broad. And note that this is stress that has arisen from "hurdles set up by others"—language that frames writing assignments as achievement tasks, with achievement outcomes (the measure of success or failure of the student's attempt) presumably decided by the "Other" who set up those hurdles in the first place. While scholars of achievement emotions acknowledge that students can set their own "hurdles," in that they may have goals for achievement tasks that go beyond how someone else will evaluate their performance, they emphasize the role a student's perception of how their own achievement tasks will be evaluated plays in what emotion the student experiences in association with that task (Pekrun, 2009; Pekrun, Maier, & Elliot, 2006).

Harris' (1995) arguments were grounded in the results of a study that surveyed student users of a writing center. The results she shared in the article included examples of students who were feeling negative emotions toward writing. Is that typical of the students who visit writing centers? The results of from a recent quantitative study conducted by myself and an undergraduate tutor (Follett & Emmons, 2013) have begun to establish a sense of numbers of writers who feel negative achievement emotions when they come to the writing center,

supporting Harris' contention. This survey-based study demonstrated the presence of negative achievement emotions among users of the writing center that will be the site of this study, and it raised interesting questions about how tutors might perceive and respond to the variety of emotional expressions captured in the survey data.

Among the things the Follett & Emmons (2013) study attempted to measure was the frequency with which student users of the writing center reported experiencing the negative achievement emotions of anger, anxiety, frustration, hopelessness, and boredom in response to the piece of writing they brought to the writing center. One hundred and ten surveys were distributed to students waiting to see a writing center tutor, and 100 of those surveys were completed. The survey asked students to identify how strongly, on a five-point Likert scale, they identified with twelve statements that expressed different negative achievement emotions toward the piece of writing the student brought to the writing center.

Some data from this survey support Harris' (1995) claim that negative emotions are likely to surface in the writing center, which serves as further rationale for this study. Among the 100 students, 46% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed to the statement, "Right now, I am worried about writing this paper" and 62% agreed or strongly agreed to the statement, "Thinking too much about this paper makes me feel anxious or tense." Anxiety and frustration were reported in more participants than other emotions, and students indicated differing degrees of negative feelings, however all five negative achievement emotions were represented among participants' responses, and only 6% of respondents reported that they felt no negative emotion toward the writing at all (Follett & Emmons, 2013).

Both Harris (1995) and Follett & Emmons (2013) make cases that at least some writers in college writing centers are likely to feel negative achievement emotions. Harris (1995) also

argued that peer tutors can mitigate student writers' negative emotions. Harris referred to what sounded like conversion stories of students who came to the writing center feeling upset or discouraged, but through talking with a tutor, found confidence. Missing, though, were stories when the tutor's efforts did not have a positive effect on the student's feelings, or when the student's expression of emotion made the tutor feel *less* sympathetic, rather than more so, or when the student's feelings were so negative that the tutor felt he or she had inadequate resources to respond. It is these kinds of stories that continue to vex the writing center community, and that exemplify objections to Harris' (1995) assumptions about the "peeriness" and empathy of tutors, seen theorized in the arguments of Grimm (1999), arguments I will address in Chapter Two.

In this study, I delved into a group of writing center tutors' experiences of working with student writers who express negative achievement emotions toward their writing to discover how these tutors' actions, as well as their beliefs and feelings about students' negative emotions, fit within the grand narrative of writing centers as safe spaces (McKinney, 2013) occupied by supportive peers (Harris, 1995). Further, by both collecting tutors' memories about working with distressed students and by recording tutoring sessions, I built a picture of what these tutors' interactions with writers looked like when a student writer's negative emotion about writing played a role in the tutoring session.

In the introduction to this study I referred to previous research conducted by a group of my undergraduate tutors (D'Uva, et al., 2010) that inspired my interest in studying writers' negative emotions in the writing centers. That research involved collecting stories from tutors about times they felt they had taken on the role similar to that as a mediator between a student and a faculty member. Stories the tutor-researchers both collected and shared themselves provided my first glimpse at how writing center tutors might understand, feel about, and act in

response to negative achievement emotions, since many of those stories involved students' feelings of anger, anxiety, and frustration. Among the stories the tutor-researchers collected about tutors' experiences with distressed writers was this one, from Siobhan:

One time I had a walk-in session, a freshman girl, who had just received an essay back from her professor with less-than-enthusiastic comments not ten minutes earlier. This girl was heated, offended, and most of all, confused. Once we got past the initial venting session, in which I allowed her to tell me her side of the story, we got down into the text and began to deconstruct the comments. She told me that her professor had commented that she must give her readers a reason to be interested, to care—and didn't I think people would care about the diving competition she wrote about? It was the best thing she had ever done (D'Uva, Follett, Macnamara, Martin, McElhone, & Watson, 2010).

Siobhan's story demonstrates that her understanding of the nature, source, and impact of the writer's emotions determined how she felt her role shift in the session (toward allying with the student), and her tutoring strategies change. Siobhan wrote of "the initial venting session" without drawing attention to it as somehow unusual, surprising, or inappropriate in a writing center session. According to Siobhan, sometimes students vent, and offering empathy is part of a tutor's job. Allowing the student to express the nature and source of the achievement emotion, anger, seemed to Siobhan an effective way to begin to mitigate the effect that anger at an achievement outcome (the instructor's assessment of the paper) was having on the writer's ability to approach revision. In this way, Siobhan's position seems similar to Harris' (1995) argument for the attraction of peer tutors. But, the sympathetic ear the student found in Siobhan was not necessarily due to a shared sense of interest or values, as peers, as Bruffee (1984) characterized collaboration between peer tutors and students. Siobhan theorized that a good deal

of the student's anger was due to feeling the instructor had criticized the value of her experience in suggesting that the story of the diving competition wasn't a good topic for a narrative, making the student feel dismissed or diminished. What Siobhan did not reveal to the student writer was that she agreed with the professor; this was a professor Siobhan respected, and the tutor also thought the content of the narrative was trite, and told me she had to make conscious attempts not to roll her eyes while reading.

However, even if Siobhan did not agree with the writer that her story was compelling, she did understand how it feels to be surprised and undermined by negative feedback. She deemed it important to mediate the writer's feelings of anger and disappointment: "Commiserating with her helped her reclaim her confidence and feel less alone in the matter. I told her about my own struggles with first year writing, and assured her that it wasn't unheard of for this type of thing to happen," Siobhan wrote (D'Uva, et al., 2010). To Siobhan, increasing the writer's confidence to try again was a key goal of the writing center session. Helping the student reframe the moment not just as a personal insult from one individual to another, but rather as an example of how student and faculty expectations often differ allowed the writer a means to analyze and learn from the situation.

In addition, Siobhan reported that with writers like this one, it was important to "proceed with caution," offering more praise than she might otherwise do, framing suggestions as ways to build on strengths rather than ways to address deficiencies, and not expressing agreement with the instructor even while she helped the writer adapt sections with the instructor's expectations in mind (D'Uva, et al., 2010). These are not strategies Siobhan employed with every writer; she sometimes got into spirited debates with student writers when playing devil's advocate seemed a useful way to prompt reflection on their arguments and encourage critical thinking.

Siobhan's story demonstrates what can happen when a writing center tutor identifies how a negative emotion may be disrupting a student's writing process, and adapts her tutoring strategy in order to address that emotion. It also forecasts themes that seemed to inform the experiences, beliefs, and choices of tutors in this study, as well: students' expectation of empathy, the challenge of negotiating anger toward a professor, the sometimes negative impact of faculty feedback practices on student writers, and the tutor's belief in the importance of confidence in student writers' efforts at composition and revision. Siobhan's story brought my attention to how fascinating and complex writing center tutors' interactions with writers feeling negative emotions toward writing can be. In this study, I explore the experiences, beliefs, and choices of other writing center tutors in a more systematic way than I was able to with Siobhan.

Study Design

With this study, I aimed to paint a rich picture of writing center tutors' perceptions of and responses to student writers' negative achievement emotions in the writing center. Tutor participants in the study were recruited from among the staff of a writing center at a large, four-year, urban research institution. Twenty-eight tutors participated in a survey that explored their perceptions about the nature and cause of the emotions student writers present with in the writing center. Seven tutors also participated in written reflections and interviews that solicited reflection about their experiences working with writers feeling negative emotions, and the tutors' own experiences of feeling emotions as college students. I conducted audio recording of six tutors' tutoring sessions during a two-week period to observe examples of tutoring strategies focused on negative emotions that tutors had described in their written reflections and interviews. I analyzed data from the survey using both descriptive and inferential statistical methods. I analyzed data from the written reflections, interviews, and recorded tutoring sessions using a modified version

of Charmaz's (2005) grounded theory approach. Chapter Three provides details about data collection and analysis.

Results from data analysis provided insight into how tutors in the study responded to student writers' negative achievement emotions, exploring how they:

- understood emotions as essential to the writing process,
- conceptualized the causes of student writers' negative achievement emotions concerning writing,
- felt during sessions when negative emotions played a role,
- and developed strategies for increasing writers' perceptions of their control over writing situations drawn from their own experiences as writers and learners.

Tutors in the study reported that at least some writers they had worked with felt negative achievement emotions, particularly anxiety and frustration, so tutors regularly addressed those emotions during writing center sessions. Despite not having formally studied educational psychology or (in some cases) composition pedagogy, tutors demonstrated awareness of the relationship between student writers' negative emotions and their perceptions of the controllability and value of writing tasks. Tutors seemed more successful in their attempts to engage with control factors than they did with value factors of writing assignments. I report the results of the study in detail in Chapter Four, and discuss findings and their implications for composition and writing center studies in Chapter Five.

Benefits of the Study for Tutors and Scholars

Learning more about tutors' perceptions of their work is one of the many ways in which writing center scholars can continue the conversation about the purposes and practices of writing centers, and the complicated position as near-peers tutors occupy. Cooper (1994) and Grimm

(1999) have pushed the writing center community to challenge our givens about writing center work by taking a closer, critical look at our theoretical assumptions and our practices. This includes more closely examining the positions tutors occupy and the roles they enact to paint an honest picture of the work of writing centers. As Fallon (2011) and Fels (2010) have both argued, I believe that much knowledge about how writing centers do and should function is to be found in the stories and lived experiences of writing center tutors.

This study is designed to respond to the need for support for tutors by using the theories informing psychologists' study of achievement emotions to examine writing center tutors' cognitive, affective and behavioral responses to student writers' expressions of negative achievement emotions related to their academic writing. The study had the potential to benefit writing center scholars and tutors by adding to the field's bank of stories in which student writers' emotions became a feature of the tutoring session and by emphasizing how tutors react to those emotions.

By considering achievement emotions theory in a writing center setting, this study offers a new view of the effects of negative achievement emotions on learning and writing in college. Achievement emotions have been studied broadly in university settings, but this is the first study to specifically use the lens to theorize writing center tutors' responses to emotions using the theory. Additionally, Pekrun and Perry (2014) claimed that while psychology and education researchers have completed a good deal of study of outcome-related achievement emotions, like pride or shame at the completion of a task, more work needs to be done studying the emotions students feel during the process of completing achievement tasks, *before* they reach the outcome stage. "Certainly outcome emotions are of critical importance for achievement strivings," (Pekrun & Perry, 2014) assert, "However, we argue that emotions directly pertaining to activities

performed in academic settings are of equal relevance for students' and teachers' achievement strivings" (p. 122). Examining how tutors engage with writers puts writing centers in a position to evaluate our practices, answering the call of educational psychologists who advocate for more attention to the affective needs of students (Immordino-Yang & Damasio, 2007).

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In this study, I explored writing center tutors' responses to student writers' negative achievement emotions. As demonstrated by the construction of my research questions, by "response" I did not mean only behavioral responses—i.e., what tutors *do*. I considered what tutors do during tutoring sessions as choices informed by their perceptions of and feelings about student writers' negative achievement emotions. In this chapter, I review key pieces of literature from the fields of writing center studies, compositions studies, and educational psychology that demonstrate what writing center tutors think and feel about student writers' negative emotions toward the academic writing they bring to the writing center, and what tutors choose to do during tutoring sessions in response to those emotions.

The first section of this chapter explores how the connection between student writers' emotions and their writing has been positioned in writing center literature, particularly within a feminist ethos of caring approach. That positioning resonates with the achievement emotion theory, although writing center scholars have not used that terminology. The second section reviews how tutors classify, define, or describe the negative emotions about writing student writers present or express in the writing center, as represented in literature both about and by writing center tutors. The third section analyzes how, in writing center literature about responding to student writers' emotions, the degree and directionality of the student writers' emotion seems to determine tutors' affective and behavioral responses during the tutoring session. The body of literature represented in this chapter raises questions about how tutors perceive, feel about and act in response to student writers' negative achievement emotions in the writing center. These questions suggest that further research in this area, including this study, is

needed in order to develop a clearer understanding of how tutors respond to writers' emotions, so that writing center professionals will know how best to support tutors' efforts to support student writers, and better understand the emotional experiences of those student writers, themselves.

Much of the literature that represents tutors' responses to writers' emotions has been written by tutors themselves, and has been published in one of the few national publications open to peer tutors, *The Writing Lab Newsletter*. This chapter relies on these tutor-written pieces, in addition to more scholarly treatments on the topic. How tutors construct their beliefs about and practices of tutoring through their own lived experiences as tutors, and how they represent those beliefs and practices in their own words, is of a good deal of interest to some writing center scholars. "[Tutors] employ techniques for helping writers that develop out of their personal experiences, their experiences in school, and their past experiences with other writers," claimed Fallon (2011, p. 185), highlighting the ways in which the actual work of tutoring builds tutors' understandings of and feelings toward what it means to be a tutor. This dissertation study's focus on the experiences of peer tutors and inclusion of literature written by peer tutors responds to Fallon's call to include tutors' voices in writing center scholarship.

Writing Centers and the Importance of Emotion in the Writing Process

Much writing center and composition scholarship shares a set of assumptions about student writers' emotions: that writing in college can be a complicated emotional process for student writers, that some of the emotions student writers experience will be negative, and that negative emotions can have a detrimental effect on students' abilities to develop their writing. As I pointed out in Chapter One, Harris (1995) discussed the appeal of a peer-staffed writing center to student writers feeling discouragement and frustration as if it was a given that student writers would sometimes feel that way. Harris (1995) proposed engaging with writers' emotions in the

writing center, although she did not specify particular tutoring strategies for doing so. But, even scholars who would discourage tutors from engaging directly with student writers' emotions acknowledge the role negative emotion can play in college writing. Hudson (2001), in an article that instructed tutors in methods to divert writers away from expressing emotion, both opened and closed the article by conceding the primacy of students' emotions, particularly negative ones, in both the experiences of student writers and writing center tutors, stating, "Writing is stressful business. Frustration can plague even the most accomplished writer sometimes. . . student writers may not have developed strategies for constructively handling the frustration that accompanies writing" (p. 10).

A key piece of writing center scholarship that used theories from educational psychology, cognitive psychology and neuroscience to frame the connections between student writers' emotions and their writing is Ariail's (1996) dissertation project, *In the Center: Affect and the Writing Process*. Ariail used the term "affect" as synonymous with "emotional state" or "emotions," in keeping with the tendency of many cognitive psychologists, so I do the same when discussing her study. Ariail relied on the definition of affect developed in Alice Brand's (1989) *The Psychology of Writing*: "a complex phenomenon, having experiential qualities and involving heightened perception, bodily changes, and behavior organized either toward approach or withdrawal—and all of these in conjunction with given eliciting conditions" (Brand, 1989, p.58). Despite the age of Brand's definition and Ariail's study, this definition of affect or emotions is still relevant. Experimental research in affective and cognitive psychology has repeatedly confirmed the complex interaction of mental and physiological processes constructing human emotions Brand implied in the definition above and Ariail described in detail in her review of psychological literature on the subject (Damasio, 2004; Izard, 2007).

Ariail (1996) aimed to develop a theory of affect in the writing center that would suggest which tutoring strategies best ameliorated writers' negative emotions. Her analysis of data collected from a set of three case studies of student writers who regularly used the writing center revealed feelings about writing that were dynamic, situational, and grounded in complex memories, experiences and self-perceptions of ability and identity. The theory of affect Ariail developed from her research reads:

Affect is essential to the writing process; affect is never static, but is dynamic, constantly changing; it is multi-dimensional; it is multi-directional; affect toward writing is often not articulated or even brought to the conscious awareness of students; its role in the writing process is influenced by early memories of literacy; and there are no specific strategies that can change or influence affect in the writing process (p. 227).

A few of the claims in Ariail's theory have proven to surface in subsequent research by other writing center scholars: that affect is essential to the writing process, that student writers' emotions are multi-dimensional and multi-directional, and that a set of prescribed tutoring strategies will not ameliorate negative emotions in every writer on every occasion. Because of recurrence of those claims, and because of the rich data her study provided about specific student emotions and Ariail's responses to those emotions as both researcher and tutor, I return both to these claims and to elements of Ariail's study throughout this chapter.

First, I take up her claim that student writers' affect is "dynamic, constantly changing" by framing it in terms related to achievement emotions. Although she did not articulate it in the passage above, Ariail (1996) theorized that students' emotions about writing change, at least in part, in response to a student's perceptions of key factors in the writing context. This is in keeping with achievement emotions theory (Pekrun, 2009). Among the contextual factors, which

are represented broadly in Brand's (1989) definition as "eliciting conditions," are two that educational psychologists have defined as the student's perception of the *controllability* and *value* of the writing task. These two contextual factors play a strong role in determining the kind of achievement emotions a student writer will experience. In turn, the kind of achievement emotion the student writer experiences can either have an *activating* effect on the writer—assisting in the writer's engagement with and performance on the task—or a *deactivating* effect on the writer—hindering the writer's engagement and performance. The concept of activating and deactivating achievement emotions is a specific example of how emotions can prompt, in Brand's (1989) words, "approach or withdrawal" behaviors. In the case of student writers, this means either engaging with the writing task or attempting to avoid it through either conscious or unconscious behaviors. In the next part of this section, I will expand on Chapter One's summary of the control-value factors affecting achievement emotions, and those emotions' effects on writing, so that I can then explore how similar concepts have been represented in writing center studies, and demonstrate how research on achievement emotions provides a useful lens for writing center scholarship that focuses on writers' emotions and/or tutors' responses to them.

Student Writers' Achievement Emotions and Writing Goals

Achievement emotions theory helps psychologists understand complex emotions that arise in response to achievement tasks by analyzing relationships among perceptions of controllability and value, achievement goals, and the emotion felt toward both the task and the anticipated outcome (Pekrun, 2006; Pekrun, 2009; Pekrun, Goetz, Frenzel, Barchfield, & Perry, 2011; Pekrun, Goetz, Titz, & Perry, 2002; Pekrun, Maier, & Elliot, 2006). During the act of writing (and sometimes, preceding it), student writers may feel differently about both the process of writing and the anticipated outcome of that writing due to variations in how *controllable* they

consider the process and how *valuable* they consider a successful or unsuccessful outcome. The degree of success is evaluated according to what the student writer's goal was for the writing task.

Controllability has to do with the student's perception of how much command he or she has over the outcome or activity—in other words, his or her ability to complete the task in a way that satisfies the goals he or she has for the task. Controllability is a concept similar to that of self-efficacy, which I will discuss further in this chapter. Value has to do with the student's assessment of how much successful completion of the task matters to the student, with that success evaluated by how well it addresses the student's goals. The combination of the student's perception of control and value, in part, predicts which achievement emotion the student is likely to experience. A student's perception of control and value is constructed not just in response to the individual task itself, but is influenced by the student's history, personal experiences, cultural identity, and a number of other social factors, sometimes including the “early literacy memories” Ariail (1996) referred to (Pekrun, 2009; Pekrun, Goetz, Frenzel, Barchfield, & Perry, 2011; Pekrun, Goetz, Titz, & Perry, 2002; Pekrun, Maier, & Elliot, 2006).

When students believe an activity to be both controllable and valuable they will usually experience positive activity emotions—like enjoyment and interest—and will be less likely to feel negative activity emotions like anger or boredom. Lack of controllability and value, on the other hand, correlates with anxiety, hopelessness, and/or anger, and when finished—shame or anger. An activity or outcome with perceived low control but high value might make a student feel especially hopeless or anxious, since they anticipate a failure that will have meaningful effects on them (Pekrun, 2009). Certain negative emotions, like boredom, frustration and hopelessness, are called “deactivating” emotions, because they disengage a student from the

achievement ask (in the case of this study, writing), and have been shown in multiple studies to be consistently detrimental to performance. Others, like anxiety and anger, are in some cases deactivating, and in other cases, activating, depending on the degree to which the emotion is felt, the student's goal, and how controllable and valuable the student thinks a positive outcome is (Pekrun, 2009).

Both the level of control and degree of value a student writer perceives are moderated by that student writer's goals for the writing task. Student writers' goals can be classified as mastery goals, performance goals, and performance avoidance goals (Pekrun, 2009; Pekrun, Goetz, Frenzel, Barchfield, & Perry, 2011; Pekrun, Goetz, Titz, & Perry, 2002; Pekrun, Maier, & Elliot, 2006). Mastery goals focus on the writer's long-term development; evaluation by another is not necessarily as important as self-assessment. Performance goals focus on doing well, usually relative to others, on the discrete task at hand, as evaluated by another. Performance avoidance goals focus on just not doing poorly as compared to others, or avoiding negative consequences, rather than necessarily doing well or hoping for good consequences.

For example, a student who feels confident about her ability to write a chemistry lab report, based on successful attempts in the past (high control), and who is enthusiastic about the course because she sees it as essential to her pre-med program (reflecting a mastery goal and high value), and/or who thinks of the professor as an important mentor she wants to impress (reflecting a performance goal and high value), will be more likely to enjoy the act of writing than not to enjoy it, and will probably feel anticipatory joy when thinking about receiving comments and a grade from the professor. But change any of those factors, and different emotions may be in play. If the student feels confident about her ability (high control), but is only taking this course to meet a requirement and does not see this kind of writing as relevant to

her beyond the class, but has the performance goal of doing well in the class in order to maintain a high G.P.A., she may experience some degree of anger or irritation while writing. If she sees no value whatsoever in the task, this may result in both anger and boredom. If the student does not feel confident in her ability (low control), and is aware that her performance in this course will make a difference in whether or not she is accepted into a major she aspires to (high value), she may feel a high degree of anxiety. But, if she perceives low control, but also doesn't much care about her grade for the course, she may feel anxiety still, but to a lesser degree.

Students may feel a wide array of negative emotions directly connected to college writing (Pekrun, 2009; Pekrun, Goetz, Frenzel, Barchfield, & Perry, 2011; Pekrun, Goetz, Titz, & Perry, 2002; Pekrun, Maier, & Elliot, 2006). But, all of those emotions will not have a detrimental effect on writing process or performance. Some emotions on the negative valence, like anger and anxiety, can sometimes be activating, and sometimes deactivating, depending on the strength and duration of the emotion, and on variations in the student's perception of controllability and value (Pekrun, Maier, & Elliot, 2006). Because of differing effects on writing process and performance, some specific achievement emotions are of more pressing interest to researchers. Anxiety, although not always detrimental to writing process and performance, can be, and was the emotion cited most frequently during studies of achievement emotions (Follett & Emmons, 2013; Pekrun, Goetz, Titz, & Perry, 2002; Pekrun, Maier, & Elliot, 2006). Boredom, linked to low value, and hopelessness, linked to low control, are both usually detrimental to academic performance. Due to their potential to disrupt student writers' development, anxiety, boredom and hopelessness are worth further study.

Frustration and anger, too, while they can be activating when felt mildly and for a short duration, are deactivating and detrimental when they are felt to a stronger degree or for a longer

period of time (Pekrun, 2009; Pekrun, Goetz, Titz, & Perry, 2002; Pekrun, Maier, & Elliot, 2006). Psychologists studying these two emotions have seen that when people describe themselves as “angry” there is also usually clear blame attribution—people feel angry at a particular person or organization more often than at a situation, or an unattributed series of events (Gelbrich, 2009). “Frustration,” on the other hand, tends to describe a response to situational impediments, particularly factors the person cannot control or cannot clearly identify (Gelbrich, 2009). Scholars who have studied negative achievement emotions associate frustration more with low-control situations, when the student feels unable to successfully complete a task, while anger may arise in response to either low control or low value situations, or both (Pekrun, 2009). In the survey of student writers previously conducted at the site of this study, positive responses to questions about anger strongly correlated with responses that rated the assignment as boring or unimportant, but did not correlate with the writer’s estimate of the expected result, suggesting that value, more so than control, may indeed be a key factor in anger during writing center sessions (Follett & Emmons, 2013). Frustration and anger are both worth further study due to their potential to disrupt writing development, and due to how variations in the directionality of both determine what kinds of interventions, including interventions of writing center tutors, will be successful in helping the writer moderate his or her emotion. Writing center literature suggests that tutors’ perceptions of an emotion’s directionality plays a large role in how tutors respond affectively and behaviorally to that emotion, and will be discussed later in this chapter.

Interventions that move students toward more positive emotions, more productive engagement with the writing task, and higher writing performance can be focused on controllability and value factors, on writing goals, or on the emotions themselves, as all of these

elements are reciprocal. Problem-focused or context-focused strategies, strategies that focus on changing perceptions of control or value or on the student's goal orientation, can lift the student's mood. But, emotion-focused responses can also often reduce the manifestation of the emotion enough to allow the student to reassess controllability, value, and goals (Miron, Brummet, Ruggles, & Brehn, 2008). Specific examples of tutors' responses to writers' emotions in writing center literature will be addressed in this chapter. First, though, I examine what the literature suggests about how writing center scholars and tutors perceive emotions as related to writing development, due to those emotions' effect on students' self-efficacy and motivation.

Self-Efficacy, Motivation and Emotions in the Writing Center

What researchers of achievement emotions refer to as controllability is similar to a concept seen frequently in literature about writing and motivation: self-efficacy. Literature linking perceptions of self-efficacy, motivation, and writing improvement inform some writing center tutors' practices. A notable tutor-authored article in *The Writing Lab Newsletter* argued that the relationship between self-efficacy and writing improvement necessitates attention to writers' emotions in the writing center. Bullock (2012) drew on Etheride & Wachholz's (1996) and Lavelle & Zuercher's (2001) research on self-efficacy and writing performance to assert that tutors' scaffolding of a student writers' movement from negative feelings and low self-efficacy toward positive feelings and stronger self-efficacy is important to that student's development as a writer.

Bullock (2012) related a piece of her writing center's lore concerning the challenge of working with a student writer overcome by emotion. She then related her own experience of working with such a writer, an experience that complicated the lore version. In the "legend," a student writer dramatically broke down into sobs due to her feeling of hopelessness about a piece

of writing. In Bullock's actual experience, a writer quietly expressed feeling "defeated" by a piece of writing, and hopeless about his ability to develop it adequately. Bullock reflected on the complexity of emotion, emotional expression, and how tutors might understand particular kinds of subtle and indirect presentations of emotion, including when students give tutors the impression that they do not care to actively participate in the tutoring session. Bullock theorized that some students' reluctance to engage actively in a writing center session might be due to effects of high writing apprehension, citing Etheridge & Wachholz's (1996) study that demonstrated that students with high writing apprehension express disbelief in their own ability to improve writing skills and exhibit avoidant behavior. To put that in achievement emotion terminology, the students' low perception of control led to deactivating emotions. These findings are typical of studies in educational, affective, and cognitive psychology that confirm negative emotions can impair students' self-efficacy and motivation (Dolan, 2002; Immordino-Yang & Damasio, 2007; Jalongo & Hirsh, 2010; Pajares, 2003; Pajares & Valiante, 2006; Zambo & Brehm, 2004). Bullock then used literature that revealed the connections among beliefs about self-efficacy, emotions about writing, and writing performance to argue that student writers' negative emotions about their writing should be part of what tutors regularly address in writing center sessions.

Writing Centers as Sites Promoting Positive Affect

The conclusion Bullock (2012) came to in her discussion of self-efficacy and emotion was that since re-orienting writers toward a more positive affect is good for their writing development, writing center tutors should consider attempting to ameliorate negative emotions as part of what it means to support students' writing. The idea that the writing center is a site that offers comfort or succor to writers is not unique to Bullock, but rather appears frequently in

writing center literature (Babcock, Manning & Rogers, 2012). As I discussed in Chapter One, Harris (1995) promoted the idea that peer tutors can, do, and should offer empathetic responses to writers, and that some writers may come to the writing center specifically because of the comfort this offers them. Harris' position is not uncommon in writing center scholarship, and is in keeping with the general correlation, discussed above, of positive affect with successful writing development and negative affect with less successful writing development. Scholars have complicated Harris' position, though, as I will explore in the next section of this chapter.

Trachsel (1995) offered a theoretical framework for tutors' attention to negative emotions. She argued for the strength of feminist writing center pedagogy built on the work of such feminist scholars as Noddings, Ruddick, and Grumet, in which "affect and cognition are equally present and mutually reinforcing" (p. 39). There is reason to believe this vision of writing center pedagogy is shared by some tutors. Trachsel cited Harris and Kinkead's (1990) interview with founding *Writing Center Journal* editor Lil Brannon, during which Brannon offered the perspective of writing center tutors, saying:

Many of our tutors believe we're trying to enact a feminist pedagogy where the model is maternal rather than paternal, that our role is to listen, to nurture, to have a place for ideas that are not ready for public scrutiny but potentially can be—that a student can have a place to explore and develop (Trachsel, 1995, p. 29).

Key to constructing a "place to explore and develop," Trachsel (1995) theorized, was the development of a set of practices that attended to the affective elements of writing. Activities beneficial for writers to engage in, such as exploring new ideas, trying on new ways of writing and new identities as writers (Bruffee, 1984), are activities that can make a writer vulnerable. So,

tutoring practices that are sensitive to students' emotions as part of their writing development is essential to Trachsel's (1995) feminist writing center pedagogy.

Trachsel's (1995) argument for the importance of attending to student writers' emotions by enacting an ethos of caring in writing center pedagogy influenced both Ariail's (1996) study and her tutoring practice. There is evidence, too, that it is an orientation shared by other writing center tutors, and is part of the attraction of the writing center for student writers. Analysis of interviews with tutors and observations of tutoring sessions in Fallon's (2011) dissertation revealed themes of "comfort, familiarity and intimacy" repeatedly informing tutors' perceptions of tutoring practice, and the writing center tutors McInerney (1998) described in her dissertation study frequently expressed a similar orientation.

McInerney (1998) compared tutors' perceptions of writing center work with themes arising in the center's history and in its mission as depicted by administrators. Tutors' perceptions of writing center work described an attention to far more than the texts student writers brought to the center, often including attention to writers' emotions about writing in college. In a passage that closely echoes Brannon's (Trachsel, 1995) above, a tutor in McInerney's (1998) study described a tutor's role as, "not just to improve students' writing processes; we are here to listen, to share, to visit, to celebrate, to explore, to discover and learn, to support, to instruct, to create and to live" (p. 8). In this complex description of what a writing center might mean to student writers and to tutors alike, there are a few key activities—listening, sharing, visiting, celebrating, supporting—that might be understood as ways tutors respond to emotional aspects of student writers' writing development, and ways of creating the ethos of comfort and safety Harris (1995) described.

Thompson's (2009) study of tutor and writer post-tutoring session satisfaction surveys confirmed the importance of comfort to both student writers and tutors. Thompson investigated precepts that have emerged from writing center lore about how peer tutors should collaborate with writers. Analysis of the findings showed that neither tutor nor student satisfaction correlated positively with adherence to any of the practices prescribed by writing center lore *except* practices related to fostering students' feelings of comfort during the session (p. 92). While this study offered empirical evidence for the writing center field to use in examining assumptions about writing center work, including some features of sessions that include attention to emotions, it also raises questions. The study did not gauge student writers' feelings before writing center sessions, so it is not clear if students who described themselves as feeling comfortable in the writing center were responding to specific tutoring strategies employed during tutoring sessions, or if they already felt disposed toward comfort based on previous visits or other factors. And, aside from offering positive feedback, Thompson's (2009) study did not delve into what specific strategies tutors were using in order to foster a feeling of comfort, and what effect discrete strategies had on students' or tutors' satisfaction. The study does demonstrate, though, that at least one way of describing intervening in writers' affective state—making them feel comfortable during the session—is important to both writers and tutors.

Complicating the Ethos of Caring in the Writing Center

The expectation that the writing center is a safe place where writers can go to work through their writing struggles with a tutor invested in promoting the writer's positive affect, as seen in Ariail (1996), Bruffee (1984), Harris (1995), McInerney (1998), Thompson (2009) and Trachsel (1995), is fairly pervasive in writing center literature. However, this expectation is not without complications. McInerney (1998) acknowledged this, despite arguing that, for the most

part, the writing center she studied cultivated the expectation of student comfort and tutors' concern about students' emotions. She referred to concerns raised by Schiffman, North, and DiPardo that writing center administrators and scholars who embrace a pedagogy influenced by an ethos of caring may have cause to worry that colleagues outside the writing center may assume that a practice that nurtures offers little academic challenge to students, therefore is not effective in promoting serious scholarship among students. In McInerney's words—"that 'nice' means 'not rigorous'" (p. 23).

McInerney (1998) narrated a strikingly revealing moment when the director of the writing center she studied was considering how inclusion of concepts connected to an ethos of caring in public representations of the center may be received by the university community. While the director's speech in the writing center was characterized by use of words like "community," "comfort," "nurturing," and "caring," these kinds of terms were noticeably absent from a document she was constructing that described the writing center's contribution to attracting students to the college and to ongoing academic support for those students. McInerney wrote: "I'm a closet nurturer," says the director, looking at the committee report with exasperation, 'I cannot say 'nurturing' because if I do, then we'll attract students [to the college] who are needy'" (p. 91-92). Since the document would not have been seen by prospective "needy" students, it was really her colleagues' perception of the kinds of students attracted by a "nurturing" writing center that troubled the director. The climate at the university did not favor language reflecting an ethos of caring (McInerney, 1998, p. 92-93). McInerney's treatment of administrators' concern about the public image of a writing center seen to be invested in students' comfort raises the question as to what extent some tutors might share this perspective. While tutors may be influenced by writing center professionals' views of the appropriateness and

effectiveness of ameliorating negative emotions, tutors may have strong connections to faculty, programs, and ideologies outside the writing center (Cooper, 1994; Grimm, 1999) and may have internalized this belief that “nice means not rigorous” (McInerney, 1998).

Whether “nice” also can mean “rigorous,” or a writing center be a place where writers are both made comfortable and also challenged academically hinges on what that niceness or comfort looks like in practice. In her discussion of an ethos of caring for writing centers, Trachsel (1995) echoed Susan Miller’s warning to compositionists against practices that seemed to “infantilize” students, practices that equate care with coddling. If tutors or the student writers they work with interpret a comfortable or nurturing environment as one in which all feedback is positive, and the writer will never be asked to attempt activities that he or she perceives as risky or challenging, this concept of comfort seems ill-suited to producing academic rigor. But, it is a concept some tutors or writers might hold, and might have difficulty in reconciling with the idea of the writing center as a site where student writers are challenged to improve. One of the tutors who participated in McInerney’s (1998) study said as much when explaining the complications of comfort: “I try to get the student more involved and try to make the experience as comfortable as possible. . . sometimes those wind up working toward opposite ends” (p. 122). The tutor, Anna, went on to explain that sometimes “comfort,” to a student, might mean not having to take the risk of volunteering ideas, taking the lead during tutoring sessions, or repeatedly reworking his or her writing for tutor feedback. Anna described having to construct a concept of “safety” that still demands active participation on the student’s part.

A concept of a comfortable, yet academically challenging environment that writing centers can foster comes from scholars’ contemporary interpretations of Vygotsky’s treatment of affect, cognition, and the zone of proximal development (Levykh, 2008; Mahn & John-Steiner,

2002). Vygotsky's (1978) theory proposed that significant learning, especially language learning, takes place when the learner is operating, with the help of another person, in a zone just beyond what the learner could accomplish on his or her own; this zone is referred to as the zone of proximal development, or ZPD. In order to make progress, the more knowledgeable other scaffolds the learner's development, so the learner can make progress through a series of observations, emulations, and original constructions moderated by feedback (Vygotsky, 1978). That writing center tutors can provide this scaffolding, thus push student writers to develop language competences those students could not have developed on their own, has been an argument that informs much writing center scholarship (Bruffee 1984; Clark & Healy 1996; Nordlof, 2015; Shamoon & Burns, 1995; Van Horne, 2012). Even though some moments during a session may feel challenging to the student, since the student is moving into new intellectual territory, the overall interaction is still "safe" when the student believes the tutor is invested in his or her success, and that small failures during a session have little to no ill consequences (Harris, 1995).

Where writing center scholarship has not yet made substantial progress is in addressing *how* tutor-provided scaffolding can attend to the affective element of writing while still providing writers with significant, challenging, learning experiences. This may be in part because Vygotsky's ideas about the connections between affect and cognition emerged later in his career and were not yet fully developed in his scholarship (Levykh, 2008). Contemporary psychologists have begun to elucidate how Vygotsky related a learner's increasing confidence (self-efficacy) due to effective scaffolding, to cognitive leaps forward (Levykh, 2008; Mahn & John-Steiner, 2002). Scaffolding, though, is only necessary when the learner's challenge is sufficient to prevent the learner from achieving the task on his or her own. Further, Dweck

(2006, 2015) has introduced the idea of mindset theory, currently popular in educational psychology. According to Dweck (2006, 2015) a *growth mindset*, rather than a *fixed mindset* allows a learner to understand talent and intelligence as cultivated abilities instead of predetermined characteristics. To foster a growth mindset, teachers or tutors should praise students' efforts at persisting through challenges—to do so, the learner must face genuine challenges, and must struggle, at least temporarily. So, how problematic the ethos of writing centers as caring, nurturing or comfortable is depends on whether that ethos is enacted through practices more like the ones Anna described, where the writer is not asked to be actively involved, take risks in any way, or hear criticism (McInerney, 1998), or more like Vygotskian attention to careful scaffolding in order to both provide reasonable challenge and promote confidence.

Engaging student writers in conversations and activities to scaffold their learning might be especially challenging when working with students who do not come in to the writing center convinced by the idea of the center as a safe space. While most student writers in Harris' (1995), Ariail's (1996), Thompson's (2009), and Follett & Emmons (2013) studies expressed that they do see the writing center as safe and tutors as supportive allies concerned about writers' feelings, other tutors in McInerney's study described writers who saw the writing center as a remedial site, and so approached working with a tutor feeling ashamed and anxious, not just about their writing, but also about the tutoring process (p. 25). Student writers who have negative associations with the writing center may be less willing or able to take the risks engaging actively with tutors' attempts at scaffolding entails.

Tutors' Perceptions of Student Writers' Emotions

In agreement with the literature from psychology about achievement emotions discussed above, Hudson (2001) speculated that tutors would encounter in student writers, “all sorts of emotions” (p. 12). A review of how writing center literature reflects tutors' perceptions of students' emotions demonstrates that tutors indeed identify many emotions in student writers. There are a few key negative emotions, though, that repeatedly surface in tutors' assessments of writers' feelings. Tutors' belief that these specific emotions might both be recurrent in writers is substantiated by the research associated with the achievement emotions theory. Tutors in McInerney's (1998) study perceived writers' feelings to range from abject hopelessness to strong confidence (p. 128). All participating tutors agreed that at least some writers felt anxious, defensive, embarrassed, uninterested, or angry.

Findings from Ariail's (1996) and McInerney's (1998) studies mirrored findings from the extensive qualitative studies that provided the basis for the development of achievement emotion theory, and the isolating and measuring of achievement emotions among college students. The series of five studies, through interviews and surveys, asked German and American college students to describe their emotions while engaged in a variety of college-related learning tasks. Researchers found that students experience a very wide range of emotions, both positive and negative (Pekrun, Goetz, Titz & Perry, 2002). The most frequently reported emotion was anxiety, representing 15%-25% of all reported emotions (Pekrun, Goetz, Titz & Perry, 2002). Writing anxiety or apprehension has also been the topic of much research in the fields of composition studies and writing center studies. Despite the prevalence of anxiety among participants in the achievement emotions studies, positive emotions were reported as frequently as negative emotions; individual participants' emotions varied radically, depending on a number

of contextual factors; and participants sometimes expressed emotions that had clear social elements, like gratitude or envy (Pekrun, Goetz, Titz & Perry, 2002).

The richness and variety of college students' emotions, and how tutors might perceive those emotions, is demonstrated in Ariail's (1996) dissertation project, *In the Center: Affect and the Writing Process*, and led to her claims in her theory of affect about both how pervasive emotions are in students' acts of writing, and how "multi-dimensional" those emotions are—in other words, how varied they are in degree and specific nature. One of the three case studies Ariail presented depicted predominantly positive emotional expressions about the act of writing. The other two, though, depicted predominantly negative emotional expressions--sometimes quite strong ones. One participant, Gloria, felt her affective response to her writing struggles so deeply she was convinced that her instructor "hated her" (p. 139). Ariail's participants described feeling frustration, anger, anxiety, fear, confusion, loneliness, boredom, shame, and confusion, all to different degrees or in different combinations, in response to particular writing contexts.

Tutors' Affective Responses to Student Writers' Emotions

Lape (2008) posited that, "Without theories and concrete strategies for responding to emotions in a session, some tutor training manuals employ a rhetoric that may place new tutors in a defensive position—on alert, waiting for the inevitable problem person to arrive" (p. 2). Not a lot of writing center literature is devoted to exploring tutors' affective responses to writers' negative emotions. But, what literature there is demonstrates that, though tutors do anticipate and identify a number of different negative emotions in student writers, tutors' feelings about writers' emotions do seem to reflect such a defensive position.

In an interesting tutor development activity Lape (2008) described, tutors were asked to bring their own writing to the writing center and experience a tutoring session from the writer's

point of view. This experience increased tutors' awareness of how emotions about writing surface during a writing center session, and the effect those emotions had on their engagement with activities and conversation in the session. One tutor wrote in a reflective journal that, while being tutored:

I became more aware of my body language: when I fidgeted, when I wandered, when I paid total attention, when I felt good. If my emotions ran the gamut like this, and I was supposed to know what I was doing, what must people like my one friend, who is terrified of writing, feel? (p. 121).

The tutor development activity that led to this tutor's reflection addressed an aspect of tutor training advocated by Lape (2008). Tutor training, claimed Lape, should be designed to help tutors develop empathy-based principals of emotional intelligence: the ability to accurately identify emotions as expressed by others both verbally and nonverbally, to interpret emotions non-judgmentally, and to moderate one's own reaction to others' emotions.

While I don't doubt that Lape's program of helping tutors develop emotions intelligence enriches those tutors' understand of emotions and their practices as tutors, emotions are complex and socially-situated, therefore training tutors to respond to those emotions is challenging. The tutor above did seem to report developing empathy, but how can we tell that empathy helped the tutor accurately interpret others' emotions or craft responses that would successfully address how those emotions might damage the learning and writing processes? Further, because how people experience and express emotions are influenced by tacit social and cultural norms (Benesch, 2012; MacIntyre, 2002; Pavlenko, 2006; Wierzbicka, 1999), being able to first identify the nuances of an emotion and then invoke empathy for the person feeling it is especially challenging when a writer and tutor come from significantly different cultural or social

backgrounds. Findings from my study demonstrate that, while empathy may be expected by some student writers, and that tutors do often express feeling empathy for writers, complexities of the specific tutoring context sometimes strain a tutor's ability to respond empathetically, including the writer's specific emotion, the directionality of that emotion, and the tutor's own personal history with learning and emotion.

The recurring theme in writing center literature of effectively addressing student writers' emotions in literature written both for and by tutors implicitly reveals at least one affective response tutors seem to have to writers' negative emotions: worry about how to proceed with the session. Bisson's (2007) "Tutor's Column" exemplifies the extent to which this worry might affect a tutor; Bisson confessed feeling "terrified" about making mistakes while tutoring. The author's deeply felt concern that she would not be able to adequately respond to a writer who cried during a tutoring session fueled her research project to learn what other tutors would do. Other literature reports that tutors can find student writers' negative emotions "emotionally exhausting" themselves (Ariail 1996); frustrating, when emotions lead to what reads as resistance to suggestions or tutoring practices (Callaway, 1993; DiPardo, 1992; Hudson, 2001; McInerney, 1998); and saddening when the emotional content of a student's draft is especially poignant (Agostinelli, Poch & Santoro, 2005). A tutor unprepared or unwilling to engage with a writer's emotions might also feel emotions to be a distraction or imposition (Agostinelli, Poch & Santoro, 2005).

Bisson's (2007) essay offered a glimpse at the complexity of tutors' affective responses to student writers' negative emotions when she mused that some responses to writers' negative emotions, while understandable, would be inappropriate for a tutor. "It would not be appropriate for the tutor to laugh nervously, to become irritated with the distressed student, or begin sobbing

hysterically themselves” (p. 14). Why not? Bisson is implicitly referring to the complex social nature of emotions in this assumption; people monitor their emotions, attempting to reject those that they have learned are not considered “appropriate” given the social and cultural contexts and the web of roles and relationships they are operating in. Bisson made this claim as if it were self-evident, suggesting that she has internalized some precepts about the emotional range tutors should allow themselves in response to students. The claim also implies that she assumes others in the writing center community have either internalized or otherwise agreed to similar boundaries. It seems not unlikely that Bisson’s claim reflects the notion discussed earlier in this chapter that it is part of tutors’ jobs to create a comfortable environment for student writers, including not responding to writers’ emotions in ways that make the writer feel in the wrong for having expressed the emotion, or feel that the tutor does not empathize. Findings from my study complicate Bisson’s (2007) assumptions, since some tutors reported not feeling or expressing empathy for some of student writers’ emotions, depending on the specific nature of the emotion and its focus.

Degree, Directionality and Tutors’ Affective and Behavioral Responses

Ariail’s (1996) theory of affect for writing centers acknowledged that student writers’ emotions are multi-directional—that writers might understand and express them as focused toward a variety of targets or in response to varying elements of the writing context. Literature about tutoring strategies tutors deploy in response to writers’ emotions seems to differ according to directionality (Mills, 2011), clustering around four key directions: emotions felt toward and expressed about the content of the writing the student brought to the center, about the writing process, about the writing center itself, and about a faculty member.

Further review of the literature reveals that both how tutors feel and how they behave in response to writers' negative emotions toward writing seem to be determined by factors Ariail (1996) referred to in her theory of affect for the writing center: the degree and duration of the emotion (which Ariail included as among the dimensions an emotion might have) and the directionality of that expression of emotion. There seems to be implicit agreement that there is some threshold of "too much" emotion—a tutor might feel emotionally capable of dealing with a writer's temporary deflation or irritation due to receiving a bad grade, but not long term depression or sustained rage. Much of the literature speculating on what tutors do or should do in response to writers' emotions deals with extremes: the writer who cries, who shouts angrily, or who reveals not just emotions but disabilities or mental disorders with emotional components, like depression or generalized anxiety disorder. Indeed, scenarios in some literature about this topic seem to escalate with lightning speed toward dramatic climaxes, as if the only prompting student writers need to break down emotionally is to be asked how they are feeling about their writing (Bisson, 2007; Honigs, 2001; Hudson, 2001).

This attention only to the extremes of emotions student writers might feel appeared throughout Hudson's (2001) caution against indulging student writers in what she called "emotionality." The article presented tutoring scenarios meant to encourage tutors to divert writer's attempts to introduce talk about their feelings about writing. Hudson (2001) did not acknowledge that some writers might feel a manageable amount of emotion toward their writing, offering only scenarios in which the degree of emotion was strong enough to stymie the tutor. Nor did Hudson make clear or closely examine the term "emotionality," using it seemingly interchangeably with "feeling strong emotion." Emotionality, more precisely defined, involves making decisions or resolving conflict based solely on immediate affective response, and

typically describes an ongoing pattern of decision-making, rather than a single instance of feeling an intense emotion. Encouraging actual emotionality—making decisions based on unexamined, raw emotional moments—by, say, agreeing that a student immediately drop a class, change majors, or leave school in response to feelings about a single assignment, is very different from allowing students to express emotions, though Hudson (2001) did not make this distinction.

Also reflecting an extreme view of student writers' emotions and appropriate tutor responses to those emotions is Honigs' (2001) essay. Among her suggestions for fellow tutors, Honigs (2001), like Bisson (2007), claimed that since tutors aren't counselors, they should offer sympathy but not advice on personal, emotional content that gets revealed during sessions. She did not specify whether this is for the writer's protection, because tutors do not have the training of mental health care workers and so might endanger a student, or if this is for the tutor's protection, to avoid feeling responsible for giving emotion-related advice that might be outside the tutor's comfort zone. But does this mandate against advice include offering advice about techniques to manage anxiety about writing, like setting frequent, easily attainable goals, or journaling about the process of writing when feeling anxious or stuck? Honigs (2001) did not address ways in which advice that has to do with the emotional territory of writing might be well within a tutor's expertise and comfort zone.

When the Focus is the Content

Honigs, (2001) wrote about instances when writers revealed or wanted to reveal, personal, emotional information during sessions. The position she came to during her experiences in the writing center, that sometimes student writers come to the writing center for affective as well as intellectual reasons, seemed to allow for discussing student writers' emotions about writing with them, and for choosing tutoring strategies in response to writer's emotions. In

her advice to other tutors, Honigs did advocate for changing strategies in response to writers' emotions. But, she did not include encouraging conversation about any and all emotions associated with writing as a suggested tutoring strategy. Honigs drew a clear distinction about which emotions it is okay to talk about—the ones that students write about.

Honigs (2001) suggested that a writer who writes about a negative emotional experience and then brings that piece of writing to the writing center may welcome a tutor's comments on the emotional content of the draft, and a tutor should be prepared to give that to the writer. But, a case study in Fallon's (2011) dissertation demonstrated that tutors may not always agree to talk about emotional content of students' work. The case of Rosa and Seth is a case in which the expression of emotion seems to be quietly at work, shaping the session, though that was not central to Fallon's analysis of the case. Rosa had brought to the writing center an essay in which she has been assigned to use a social work theory in order to reflect on a personal experience. Fallon agreed with Harris' (1995), McInerney's (1998), and Thompson's (2009) position that peer tutoring, on the whole, offers an environment attentive to the affective needs of vulnerable writers. Fallon (2011) framed this session as the one among the examples he presents in which there is the least amount of "comfort, familiarity and intimacy" between tutor and writer because Rosa is older than Seth, of a different gender, and from a different home culture, nationality and first language. During the session, Seth read Rosa's draft and responded to errors in grammar and syntax (which she had asked for), resisting Rosa's multiple overtures to directly address both the emotional content of the paper, and her feelings about it being read. Toward the beginning of the session when Seth asked Rosa if the "story" she was relating in the essay was true, and she answered, "Yes, so don't shout" (Fallon, 2011, p. 126). This, as Fallon pointed out, signaled to Seth that Rosa would rather the content not be overheard by others in the writing center, because

it was a very emotional, personal narrative. But, did Seth also take that to mean something else about Rosa's emotional state—that her sensitivity about the content of the paper might mean she was nervous about him reading it? And if he did infer that kind of message, how did his assumption about her possible feeling of anxiety or vulnerability affect the focus of the session or the tutoring strategies he used?

Fallon's take-away from this session had to do with "confidence"—Seth felt more confident talking about Rosa's grammar than her life experiences. But, the case study of Rosa and Seth raises questions about tutors' responses to writer's attempts to engage in conversation about negative emotions. What if Fallon (2011) had asked Seth more about his perception of Rosa's emotions, his level of comfort in talking about emotions, and his sense of how writers' emotions tend to (or don't tend to) influence his tutoring practice? In the summary of the interview Fallon conducted with Seth following the session, Fallon reported that Seth acknowledged that Rosa might have "been very conscious of what she was reading" while he attended to the structure of her sentences (Fallon, 2011, p. 101). By "conscious of" did Seth perhaps mean "anxious about?" Why did Seth decide not to engage with Rosa's attempts to talk about the emotional content of her writing during the session, when Honigs (2001) perhaps would have? If the content of the paper, or his assessment of Rosa's feelings about the content being discussed have been different—say, if he read her as being excited or happy, or even just emotionally neutral, would the focus have shifted occasionally to the development of her content when Rosa invited him to? Or, did Seth not particularly register Rosa's possible emotional state, or did register it, but not consider it necessary to engage with in order for the work of the session to get done? Findings from this study provide more insight into how tutors decide whether to engage with writers' emotions. The tutors in the study, though, did not offer any stories about

experiences working with writers when the content of their writing was the source of the negative emotion, nor did any writers bring drafts that contained emotionally-charged writing during the period I was recording sessions. So, tutors' responses when writers' content as the focus of their negative emotions continues to be an area ripe for future study.

When the Focus is the Writing Process

It's possible also to interpret both an anecdote Honigs (2001) related and Fallon's example of Rosa and Seth (2011) as moments when writers expressed a negative emotion about the writing process, not just about the content of their writing. Rosa's trepidation may not have been so much about the content of her essay as it was about the act of allowing it to be read and presented for potentially critical feedback. Honigs shared the story of "Sue," a writer who had written an essay that contained sensitive emotional material, and was distressed by what seemed like her classmates' lack of engagement with her very personal essay during a peer response session. So, in a way, Sue was distressed by an element of the writing process in college—how readers will or will not be willing to engage with a writer about the writer's content. The response Honigs offered was to help "Sue" speculate about the motives behind the kind of response her readers gave her, a writing practice that has potential to be of use to a college writer in other situations—for example, when reading professors' suggestions for revision. Yet, had "Sue" been anxious about her audience's response to her essay, even if the content of the essay was not emotionally sensitive, would Honigs' (2001) not have felt that anxiety relevant to the tutoring session? Honigs (2001) did not include discussion in her essay of what she has done or what she feels tutors should do if the student writer seems inclined to express emotions about the process or context of a piece of writing—in other words, when the emotion is not the content of the paper, but is felt in response to the act of writing it.

Other literature does directly address tutors' practices for responding to writers' emotions about the writing process. Babcock, Manning, & Rogers (2012) pointed out a common response to a writer's expressions of apprehension or discouragement seen in studies by McInerney and Magnotto. Tutors in both studies expressed to writers that it was "normal" part of writing in college, even for highly successful writers, to feel these feelings, hoping to decrease the students' belief that he or she was especially ill-equipped for writing in college, and perhaps raising the student's perception of controllability or self-efficacy (p. 75-76).

In a tutoring scenario Hudson (2001) presented, a student, Suzie, was moved to tears when talking about written feedback her professor had provided on her essay. Suzie expressed anxiety about being able to perform what seemed to her to be overwhelming revision work, while still maintaining the necessary attention to other coursework. Hudson's criticism of the tutor's response to Suzie was that the tutor "enabled her to release her frustration by asking her why she feels as she does" (p. 11). The "common sense approach that discourages emotionalism" Hudson (2001) suggested in this case, instead of allowing writers to talk about their feelings, was to propose setting reasonable, achievable writing goals and to assure the student that substantive revision is not unusual for college writers. Nearly all the other examples in the literature of either actual tutor practices or advice for tutors included inviting the writer to talk about his or her feelings when the writer was this visibly upset about the writing process (Ariail, 1996; Bisson, 2007; Honigs, 2001; McInerney, 1998; Mills, 2011).

Hudson's (2001) discussion of this tutoring session revealed an assumption about what the goal of a writing tutoring session should be—the words on the page. In discussing the focus of the conversation in the Suzie scenario, Hudson (2001) equated "productivity" in a session with the amount of time focused directly on the draft. Hudson (2001) argued that:

By encouraging [Suzie] to vocalize her feelings about the teacher, the tutor opened the door for the display of emotion. Instead, the tutor should have exhibited interest in the essay *only*. By playing the role of the counselor, the tutor defeats the purpose of the session and essentially sets the tone for the present, and possibly future tutor/tutee relationship. As a result, the focus of Suzie's example session is on the individual, not the writing (p. 11).

Hudson (2001) criticized the tutor's strategy of asking Suzie to talk about her feelings about the instructor's written response to Suzie's draft, stating that the focus of a writing center session should be the writing, not the individual. Tutors, though, might feel this contrasts the adage commonly repeated in writing center scholarship that writing centers pay attention to "writers, not writing" (North 1984). Hudson's (2001) position disallows a tutor from considering and discussing key features of the context of that text's construction and the emotional/cognitive work that will be required to revise it by, admonishing tutors to stick to the text. This stands out as quite contrary to much literature about writing center theory and practice written since North (1984), which, despite pushing back against some positions the theorist took in "The Idea of a Writing Center," wholeheartedly advocate for a writing center pedagogy that attends more to the student's process of learning and writing, rather than to perfecting particular products. Tutors influenced by writing centers' common emphasis on a writer-focus rather than a text-focus might not share Hudson's belief that allowing writers to talk through feelings about their writing process or context would be time spent off-task during a tutoring session.

Ariail's (1996) study also revealed a variety of tutoring strategies deployed in response to writers' negative emotions about the writing process. She described affirming students' expressions of negative emotions about the writing process or previous writing experiences;

reinforcing positive features in students' writing (p. 94); scaffolding revisions for anxious writers using modeling, in order to make those revisions feel more accessible (p. 107); using the writer's own words to describe rhetorical strategies in order to decrease a writer's negative affective response to unfamiliar language about writing (p. 166); and suggesting writers keep informal writing journals in which to write reflectively about their feelings when they felt anxiety, anger, frustration or hopelessness about their composing efforts (p. 187).

Despite Ariail's flexible tutoring strategies, Ariail came to the conclusion seen in her theory of affect that "there are no specific strategies that can change or influence affect in the writing process" (p. 227). What Ariail seemed to mean by that is twofold. First, given how entrenched in a history of writing experiences, beliefs about the self, and powerful socio-cultural influences emotions about academic writing can be, the intervention represented by a strategy used in a single tutoring session is unlikely to have anything but a temporary influence. So, Ariail would suggest, that for temporary feelings about academic writing contexts, the strategies writing tutors use may help ameliorate negative emotions, but for long-term emotional states, it would take a good deal more to substantially influence a writer's deeply held feelings.

Ariail's claim resonates with findings from affective psychology. Especially in the case of strongly felt emotions of long duration and regular frequency, the multiple neurological and physiological processes a person experiences makes it difficult for that person to self-assess and respond to prompts to reframe his or her understanding of the trigger or response (Hardiman & Denckla, 2010; Immordino-Yang & Damasio, 2007; Miron, Brummett, Ruggles, & Brehm, 2008; Zambo & Brehm, 2004). While it is possible to learn techniques to moderate one's own affective or expressive processes, it is challenging, takes time, and adds to both the cognitive load and the stress of the experiencer of the emotion (Suchday, 2002). The three writers in

Ariail's study all consistently had strong feelings (some positive some negative) about writing, but the researcher did not reveal how these writers compare to others who used the writing center. There may be writers experiencing more temporary, situational, and weaker emotional states that would respond more readily to strategies meant to ameliorate the effects of those emotional states.

Ariail's (1996) conclusion also suggests that having a determined set of strategies to deploy will be ineffective. One student feeling anxiety will not respond in the same way to the tutoring strategy as another student also feeling anxiety, due to the multi-dimensionality and multi-directionality of emotion. This is perhaps why it is difficult to find wholly satisfactory suggestions for exactly what tutors should do during emotionally-charged sessions in tutoring handbooks. The behavioral responses, or tutoring strategies, Ariail (1996) recorded in her study were often spontaneous responses to complex stimuli: what the writer was saying, how he or she was saying it, what the writer's body language suggested, where he or she was in the writing process, what kind of information Ariail already knew about the writer, and so on. Since Ariail knew her writer-subjects very well, having worked with each on many occasions, and having interviewed them about their own literacy histories, she was in a position both to witness the depth and complexity of these writers' emotions, and to be able to confidently respond during tutoring sessions with strategies born of ongoing writing mentoring of each writer. This kind of ongoing relationship may be unusual for most writing center tutors, who might only work with a writer once, and whose only point of contact with the writer is that tutoring session.

When the Focus is the Writing Center

In Ariail's (1996) study, as well as in many other pieces of writing center literature, particularly pieces geared toward tutor development, sometimes the trigger for a writer's

negative emotions is being in the writing center. Harris (2005) pointed out, as others have (Gillespie & Lerner, 2008; North, 1984; Ryan & Zimmerelli, 2010) that if a student feels compelled to visit the writing center, the tutor who works with that student may need to be prepared for a degree of anger or frustration, which may come through as resistance to the tutoring session. Harris's (2005) suggestions seem to be typical of literature that addresses this issue: a tutor should empathize about being required to do something he or she has little interest in and set a small, easily attainable goal for the session (p. 27).

Hudson's (2001) example of a tutor faced with the situation of the angry writer who had been compelled to visit the writing center stood out as particularly different from other advice for tutors. In the example, a tutor defused a student's anger about being made to come to the writing center by simply explaining that tutors collaborate with writers rather than editing, thus making the writer feel less like this would be a remedial activity. The tutor challenged the writer to let him see the draft, and if there wasn't a single thing the tutor could point out that the writer might revise, the tutor would agree to end the session right there. The writer agreed, and the session proceeded productively. Hudson (2001) praised the tutor for not acknowledging the emotional content of what the student was saying, but rather deflecting the writer's expressions of anger by continuing to pursue his (the tutor's) agenda for the opening of the session: convincing the writer that tutoring is a good idea. Tutors may or may not be comfortable with this strategy, as it depends on the tutor's ability to issue a face-threatening challenge and also quickly gain buy-in from a writer who seems resistant, two activities that might instinctively seem incompatible. It is possible that some tutors might similarly dodge discussion of a writer's feelings, especially anger about being in the writing center, for other reasons. Tutors might avoid discussing an emotion not because they view it as an effective tutoring strategy, but rather because they are not

comfortable pursuing that particular emotional topic, and would rather “get down to business,” even if they do not feel convinced that the business they get down to will be as fulfilling or effective as it would be with a more engaged writer.

Sometimes a writer’s negative emotions about being in the writing center do not come from resentment at having been compelled to visit, but rather come from how vulnerable it can feel to have one’s writing read and critiqued. Tutors in McInerney’s (1998) study spoke to this, one of them marveling that anyone at all would be brave enough to do something that to her felt so threatening. Ariail’s (1996) study demonstrated strategies that she, and other tutors, might use during sessions where a writer feels anxious and exposed. Ariail described engaging in social talk before looking at the text. She gauged what she perceived as the writer’s level of nervousness during that talk, until that nervousness seemed to decrease. This, according to Ariail, reduced the amount of social distance the writer felt between herself and her tutor (p. 106), allowing the writer to feel less like she was being evaluated, and more like she was collaborating. In essence, the end goal of this strategy seemed to be the same as the goal Hudson’s (2001) tutor was pursuing by explaining tutoring pedagogy, only Ariail’s strategy seemed less like a stock method and more like attention to the writer’s affect in the moment.

Findings from this study demonstrates that tutors are aware of the advantages of social talk at the start of the session as a means of gauging and beginning to intervene in any negative emotions. However, how the findings also suggest that tutors sometimes struggle with how to balance “opening” talk with attention to specific changes in writers’ texts.

When the Focus is the Instructor

Perhaps the scenario that seems trickiest to tutors as represented by writing center literature is that when a writer feels a negative emotion toward an instructor. Some writing center

scholars believe a strength of writing centers staffed by peer tutors is that they foster conversations between relative equals, instead of conversations that just reinforce the academic hierarchy like conversations between instructors and students do (Bruffee, 1984; Kail & Trimbur, 1987). Peer tutors, as students themselves, according to Kail and Trimbur (1987) will be naturally inclined to align with a student writer when that writer is feeling distressed about what he or she perceives as a conflict with an instructor.

Hudson (2001), though, suggested that tutors fight this inclination, and avoid allowing discussion of “personal problems between the student and teacher” (p. 11). Other writing center scholars, on the other hand, have framed students’ emotional responses to instructor feedback as territory in which tutors can teach a valuable lesson about writing in college. Auten and Pasterkiewicz (2007) did so, encouraging tutors to respond to anger, anxiety or sadness at instructor comments by both expressing empathy and engaging in dialogue about how to read such comments. Student writers sometimes interpret a larger number of comments than the student had anticipated, or instructor’s suggestions for revision as simply the instructor “not liking” the paper. Auten and Pasterkiewicz (2007) advocated for writing centers as places where, with a peer tutor, writers can both express their emotional response safely, then learn a new way of reading and responding to comments that ameliorates the harsh emotional effect and allows student writers more of a feeling of self-efficacy. Hudson (2001) did not discuss the possibility that the student writer might learn something valuable about writing in college through talking with a tutor about his or her emotions about feedback.

Despite the potential to scaffold learning about writing in college by talking through affective responses to instructors’ feedback (Auten & Pasterkiewicz, 2007; Bruffee, 1984; Cooper, 1994), this vision of writing center work is troubled by issues of power and authority.

Tutors are not exactly peers but representatives of the university, and faculty presence is felt in the assignments students bring to the writing center and in the expectations about writing that both tutors and students will have (Cooper, 1994; Grimm, 1999; Lunsford, 1991). Supporting a student, while still acting as an employee of the university can be a difficult balancing act for peer tutors, who are students themselves, so may not be willing or prepared to challenge the authority of faculty, or to see teaching practices as problematic (Grimm, 1999). Graduate students tutoring in the writing center, who also identify as instructors themselves, also may not have the natural inclination to align with students that Kail and Trimbur (1987) proposed. Findings from this study confirm that students' negative emotions toward faculty or toward the writing center can be tricky territory for tutors, especially undergraduates, to navigate.

Summary

In this chapter, I have explored how the connection between student writers' emotions and their writing has been positioned in writing center literature, and in the achievement emotions theory in educational psychology. I have considered how tutors' aspirations to ameliorate student writers' negative emotions have been framed in writing center literature by a feminist ethos of caring, and how that ethos can be problematic when it is enacted in ways that offer less challenging and productive learning opportunities than are offered in a Vygotskian approach to scaffolding within a writer's zone of proximal development. I reviewed what the literature illustrates about how tutors describe the emotions student writers bring to the writing center, and what the literature indicates about how the degree and directionality of student writers' emotions seems to determine tutors' affective and behavioral responses during the tutoring session.

Questions raised by limitations in the literature have shaped my research questions and the design of this study, and suggest that conclusions drawn from the study may contribute significantly to the field of writing center studies. While the tutor-authored pieces reviewed in this chapter offer an authentic, important view of how tutors respond to writers' emotions, that view is mostly anecdotal, therefore does not offer the field findings from replicable experimental methods, and may not always be informed by an extensive knowledge about educational psychology, composition studies and writing center studies. More scholarly research like Fallon's (2011) is necessary to put tutors' contributions into context. Using achievement emotions theory as a framework for understanding findings about tutors' responses to writers' emotions provides a way of looking at this issue that supplements findings from studies like McInerney's (1998) and Ariail's (1996), particularly given the connections among factors that affect students' emotions: students' perceptions of control and value, and their goals for writing, and given tutors' ability to scaffold learning that addresses those factors.

While McInerney's (1998) and Ariail's (1996) studies, in particular among the literature, provided rich pictures of what tutors' responses to writers' emotions can look like, both studies had limitations in their design. McInerney's study reported what tutors said during interviews and in written reflections, but did not include observations of tutoring sessions to explore how tutors' beliefs and feelings about writers' emotions influenced their choices to use particular tutoring strategies in actual tutoring sessions. Ariail's study examined the case studies of only three writers, and was limited to observing their interactions with a single tutor, the researcher herself, who, like other tutors in her writing center, was an advanced graduate student who identified as an instructor, rather than a peer tutor. Additions to methods of data collection and expansion of the pool of participants might yield a different view of how tutors respond to

writers' negative emotions. In Chapter Three, I will discuss the design of this study, including site, participants, and methods of data collection. In Chapter Four, I will report results of data analysis. In Chapter Five, I will discuss findings of the study, positioning them within literature discussed in this chapter, and suggesting implications for the fields of writing center scholarship and composition studies.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to use achievement emotions theory, developed by educational psychologists, as a framework for understanding how writing center tutors respond cognitively, affectively, and behaviorally to student writers' negative achievement emotions: in other words, how tutors perceive, feel about and act in response to writers' tacit and explicit expressions of negative emotions. Findings from research in educational psychology, affective psychology, and composition studies have established that there is an affective element to writing in college; some emotions student writers feel will be negative; and some of those negative emotions can impede writing development. Findings from writing center literature suggest that writers experiencing those detrimental negative emotions may visit the writing center, and that writing center tutors will have varied cognitive, affective and behavioral responses to student writers' emotions. The directionality and degree of writers' emotions, in particular, can promote different responses in tutors. Examining how tutors' perceptions of and feelings about writers' emotions influence the tutoring strategies tutors use will allow for applications in tutor training pedagogy that pay attention to those perceptions and feelings instead of just modifying behaviors.

In this chapter, I will provide a quick overview of the study design; describe the research site and participants; explain my processes of data collection and data analysis; and briefly mention the themes that emerged in the data from those processes of analysis. In Chapter Four, I will summarize the results of data collection by providing statistical analysis of quantitative data, and by explaining each of the themes that emerged from the qualitative data. In Chapter Five, I will discuss the findings by exploring how the themes answer the research questions, using

illustrative examples drawn from participants' reflections, interviews, and tutoring sessions. I will consider the implications these findings have for the fields of writing center studies and composition studies.

Study Design

The design of this study was intended to answer the following research questions:

How do tutors respond to student writers' expressions of negative achievement emotions toward their writing?

- a) How do tutors respond *cognitively*—in other words, what are their beliefs about the nature and frequency of these emotions and their significance of the emotions to the writer's writing process and the tutoring session?
- b) How do tutors respond *affectively*—how do tutors feel when these emotions emerge during tutoring sessions?
- c) How do tutors respond *behaviorally*—what do tutors do during these sessions in response to students' emotions?

Tutors from the staff of a writing center at a large, urban four-year research institution were invited to participate in the study. In brief, I gathered data using the following means, each of which will be further explicated in the data collection section of this chapter:

1. A survey, distributed to the full tutoring staff at the site, about tutors' impressions of student writers' negative achievement emotions; (See Appendix A)
2. A guided written reflection, completed by seven tutors at the site, about experiences with student writers' negative emotions; (See Appendix B)
3. Semi-structured interviews with the same seven tutors to follow up on material from the written reflections; (See Appendix C)

4. Audio recordings 20 of tutoring sessions from 6 of the 7 tutors;
5. A survey administered to the student writers whose sessions were recorded, measuring their emotions about the writing they brought to the writing center; (See Appendix D
6. A post-session assessment inventory given to tutors after recorded sessions (See Appendix E).

Table 1 depicts the overall study design, including participants, means of data collection, and connections between each of the research questions and the means of data collection.

Table 1

Relationships Among Research Questions, Participants, and Data Collection

Means of data Collection	Tutor survey	Written reflection	Semi-structured interview	Audio recording	Student writer survey	Post-session assessment
Participants	28 tutors	7 tutors	7 tutors	6 tutors	20 writers	6 tutors
Research questions						
a.) How do tutors respond cognitively to students' negative achievement emotions?	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
b.) How do tutors respond affectively to student writers' negative achievement emotions?		✓	✓			
c.) How do tutors respond behaviorally to student writers' negative achievement emotions?		✓	✓	✓		

Research Site

Participating tutors were recruited from among the staff of a writing center in a large, urban, state-funded research university. Every year, this writing center employs roughly 40 tutors, around half of whom are undergraduate students, and half are Ph.D. candidates. Tutors represent a variety of disciplines, with educational psychology, urban education, history, English (both literature studies and rhetoric and composition), and political science among the more common fields. The writing center, in recent years, has recorded more than 8,000 tutoring sessions per year, which represent roughly 3000 different students, from first year students to PhD candidates working on dissertations. The center is not affiliated with a particular academic department.

The site of the study employs 30-40 undergraduate and graduate tutors, with that number varying slightly semester to semester. At the time of the study, there were 40 tutors.

Participants

Via an email message an administrator at the study site forwarded to the staff listserv, I invited all tutors at the site to participate in the survey of tutors' impressions about student writers' negative achievement emotions. Twenty-eight tutors responded to the survey, making the response rate 70%. Based on information participants shared in the survey, of the 28 survey participants, 50% (14) were undergraduate tutors, 50% (14) were graduate tutors, 32.1% (9) were male, and 67.9% (19) were female. Participants' experience as writing center tutors ranged from a single semester to fourteen semesters.

Table 2 provides an overview of participants in the tutor survey.

Table 2

Tutor Survey Participants

<u>Gender</u>	<u>Academic Level</u>	<u>Experience level</u>
Male: 9	Undergraduate: 14	1-2 semesters: 8
Female: 19	Graduate: 14	3-4 semesters: 11
		5+ semesters: 9

Subgroup of participants in written reflections, interviews, recorded sessions.

Following participants' completion of the survey, I again used an email to the staff Listserv to invite tutors who had participated in the survey to also participate in the written reflections, interviews, and audio recording of tutoring sessions. I received positive response from three undergraduate tutors, three graduate tutors, and one former tutor who had recently become an administrator at the research site. Table 3 represents demographic details about each of my seven subgroup participants, identified by their pseudonyms.

Table 3

Subgroup Participants in Reflection, Interview, and Recorded Sessions

<u>Pseudonym</u>	<u>Academic level</u>	<u>Experience</u>	<u>Gender</u>
Sergei	Undergraduate	2 semesters	Male
Eva	Undergraduate	4 semesters	Female
Madison	Undergraduate	4 semesters	Female
Dawn	Graduate	4 semesters	Female
Tracy	Graduate	6 semesters	Female
Flynn	Graduate	12+ semesters	Male
Katherine	Administrator/ Former Graduate	3 semesters	Female

I had hoped to have more volunteers to participate in the subgroup, so I could select a purposeful sampling for gender and ethnicity. Having only two men represented in this participant population did not seem ideal. However, the ratio of men to women in this group does

reflect the trend at both this site and writing centers in general to be staffed by more female tutors than male. I was disappointed not to be able to recruit any non-white tutors at all, despite the racial diversity of the staff at the research site. In Chapter Five, I will consider the relevance of this participant population, asserting that, although lack of ethnic diversity and gender distribution may be seen as limitations of the study, trends in staffing of university writing centers suggest that this is a representative population of tutors at many institutions.

I have a prior relationship with some of the participating tutors, since I had been employed by this writing center as one of the tutors' three supervisors until 12 months previous to data collection. At the time of the study, I was no longer employed at the site, however, so nothing tutors revealed to me either deliberately or inadvertently about their tutoring practices affected their employment. I conducted the on-site interviews and audio recording of tutoring sessions during hours when the writing center administrators were not in the writing center in order not to disclose who was participating in the study. Some participants chose pseudonyms and others asked me to assign one. I used these pseudonyms when documenting data collection during the study and reporting findings in chapter four.

Data Collection

Survey: Tutors' perceptions of student writers' emotions. At the beginning of the study period, I distributed a Qualtrics survey (found in Appendix A) via email to the 40 tutors at the site. The survey had been piloted with an equivalent population; three former tutors took the survey, then discussed with me how they understood and responded to each question. Wording and order of the questions were adjusted based on that feedback. The pilot participants also indicated that they would be more likely to closely read each definition of emotion if that definition was immediately followed by questions about that emotion, rather than if all

definitions appeared in the opening material on the form, preceding the survey questions. I incorporated this into the survey design.

Twenty-eight tutors completed the survey. The survey was composed of questions that ask the respondents to estimate, based on their experiences as tutors, how frequently they believe student writers come to the writing center feeling angry, frustrated, anxious, bored or hopeless, as well as which aspects of the writing context seem to be the focus of those emotions. It also asked them how detrimental or beneficial they believe negative emotions can be on students' writing processes and performances, based on their work in the writing center with writers experiencing negative emotions.

Written reflections. Three weeks following distribution of the “Tutors’ Perceptions” survey, I created an interactive Word document to collect written reflections from the seven participating tutors. I sent the form to participants via email. The questions and prompts on the written reflection form had also been piloted with an equivalent population. Responses to the pilot led to the development of a list of synonyms for anger, anxiety, boredom, hopelessness, and frustration, which I included on the form as a checklist, so participants would have available a wider range of descriptors for emotional states of writers they have worked with in the writing center. The form can be found in Appendix B.

Unlike the survey, this form asked participants to reflect both on the achievement emotions particularly targeted by the study, and on any negative emotions writers had tacitly or explicitly expressed in the writing center. Previous studies suggest that the emotions I identified as of particular interest in previous chapters—anger, anxiety, hopelessness, boredom, and frustration—are both relevant to students’ composing processes and likely to surface during

writing center sessions (Follett & Emmons 2013, Pekrun, 2009). However, limiting participants to discussing only those emotions could have excluded data that proved to be of interest.

I asked participants to take time to reflect on the prompts and write responses, instead of relying solely on spontaneous responses during interviews. Some participating tutors were thinking back over several years of writing center work, which could represent hundreds of tutoring sessions. Allowing time for participants to remember and write down thoughts about their experiences helped participants recall more sessions than they would have been able to during the course of an interview. It also mitigated the effect of more recent experiences dominating participants' consciousness in a way that elided memory of significant moments in the more distant past. Written reflection, too, allowed participants to make more deliberate choices about the language they used to describe emotions, which was important, given how nuanced both experiences of and descriptions of feelings can be (Damasio, 2004).

Semi-structured interviews. I conducted interviews with the seven subgroup participants following their completion of the written reflections. The three graduate tutors and the former graduate tutor preferred a Skype interview and the three undergraduate tutors preferred that I interview them in person during the period I was recording tutoring sessions. During all interviews, both the participants and I had their answers to the written reflection prompts on hand for reference during our conversations. These interviews ranged in length from 30 minutes to 45 minutes.

The interviews were semi-structured, with some common questions, and other questions spontaneously asked to follow up on themes that began to emerge. This design is particularly useful when respondents are asked to explore their perceptions of ideas and experiences that may be quite complex (Barnball & While, 1994). The combination of set questions and opportunities

for “probing”—eliciting more information or clarification from participants in response to their answers—were key to getting rich, meaningful data from participants. In addition, the language tutors used warranted this flexibility of design since people describe emotions in a variety of ways, making it important I had the option to request clarification (Barnball & While, 1994).

Each interview began with the participant rereading the definition of each achievement emotion, then either acknowledging acceptance of the definitions, suggesting other ways they understand these emotions, or asking me clarifying questions about the definitions. Following this, I asked participants to comment on any ways they might want to add to or revise their reflections. When necessary, I asked questions about their written responses, sometimes to clarify their answers and sometimes to solicit more information about particular memories or tutoring strategies. The interview then turned to a set of common questions all participants were asked to address. These questions appear as Appendix C.

Audio recordings of tutoring sessions. During the last two weeks of the spring semester at the research site, I conducted audio recording of 20 tutoring sessions. I was able to record at least 2 sessions for each of the 6 participants who were tutoring during this stage of the study. The number of sessions I was able to record for each participant differed due to variations in tutors’ schedules (some worked just a few hours during this period, others worked significantly more); the flow of student traffic during each participant’s shift; the length of sessions (since I was able to record more sessions for tutors who had predominantly half hour sessions instead of hour sessions); and the number of student writers working with each tutor who did or did not grant permission to record the session.

I chose the end of the spring semester to conduct audio recordings because this writing center is typically busy then (meaning tutors are likely to have full schedules, so more sessions to

select from), and because the pressure of final deadlines may have increased the frequency of or amplify the strength of students' negative emotions. Planning recording for a more emotionally fraught time was appropriate, since this instrument was not meant to gauge how usual it is for tutors to work with a writer experiencing negative emotions. Results from the Follett & Emmons (2013) study captured the frequency with which writers visit this writing center experiencing negative emotions. Recording of sessions, rather, was meant to observe particular instances of the kinds of responses tutors discussed in their written reflections and interviews, so that they might provide illustrative examples of the perceptions, feelings, and strategies tutors discuss in the survey, reflection, and interview.

Student writers' pre-session survey. Before each recorded tutoring session, I gave a short emotional inventory survey to the student writer. This student survey can be found in Appendix D. Student writers were not participants in my study, but I needed information from them to determine whether the sessions I recorded represented interactions between tutors and writers feeling negative achievement emotions. The survey had been piloted with an equivalent population: writers waiting to see a writing center tutor. The wording and order of questions was adjusted in response to the pilot participants' suggestions.

The pre-session survey asked students to rate the intensity with which they felt particular achievement emotions about the writing they brought to the writing center. It also included one question to measure how negative or positive their overall feelings are about the writing. The scale of intensity of each emotion was influenced by design of the widely used Emotional Intensity Scale (Barchorowski & Braaten, 1994).

Because the focus of this study is not directly on the emotions student writers feel, but rather tutors' responses to their perceptions of students' emotions, I did not analyze data

collected from these pre-session surveys beyond basic description of the frequency with which negative emotions were expressed. Rather, I used them to help determine which of the recorded tutoring sessions to transcribe and analyze. Any strong or moderate agreement responses to questions about particular negative emotions, any strong or moderate disagreement responses to questions about particular positive emotions, or moderately or strongly negative response to the final question about overall positive to negative emotional valence warranted inclusion in the study.

Tutor assessment of writers' emotions. After each session was recorded, the seven participating tutors assessed the student writer's emotions during the session using a simple assessment tool. This can be found in Appendix E. If the tutor believed the writer felt any negative emotion strongly or moderately, regardless of the student writer's response to the pre-session survey, I included the session in the study. Participants in both Ariail's (1996) and McInerney's (1998) studies indicated that degrees of emotion can change quickly during a session, and tutors' responses to emotions that emerge after the session has begun were as interesting to examine as tutors' responses to emotions the writer was experiencing from the beginning of the interaction. If the tutor believed the writer felt the emotion only slightly, but the writer's survey indicated a moderate or strong emotional state, I included the session. Even if the tutor's assessment was inaccurate, the tutor was still responding to his or her perception of the writer's emotion, so how that shaped the tutors' performance in the session was still relevant.

As they were filling in their assessment of writers' emotions, the participating tutors often spoke to me about the session, explaining their own emotional response to the writer's feelings, and discussing their choices of tutoring strategies. I took notes about these conversations. These comments helped me better understand tutors' choices during the sessions. Often, tutors

connected their discussion of the session to things they had written in their reflection or had said during their interview. This was very helpful during my coding process, since tutors' comments frequently confirmed what they found most important to consider about student writers' emotions, allowing me to especially look for these themes while coding the data.

Data Analysis

In order to analyze the data I had collected, I employed descriptive and inferential statistical analyses of the 28 tutors' responses to survey questions, and employed a grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2005) to data from the subgroup of 7 tutors' written reflections, interviews and recorded tutoring sessions. Coding of data from the written reflections, interviews, and recorded sessions, in concert with the results of analysis of the survey, led me to develop seven themes to describe how tutors in the study thought, felt, and acted in response to student writers' negative achievement emotions during writing center tutoring sessions. In the remainder of this chapter, I describe my methods of analyzing all collected data. In Chapter Four, I will share the results of that data analysis. In Chapter Five, I will discuss the results, and will consider implications for composition and writing center studies.

Tutors' perceptions of student writers' emotions survey. Analysis of responses to this survey provided one kind of answer to research question 1a: how do tutors respond cognitively to student writers' negative emotions? It did so by determining tutors' perceptions of the frequency of occurrence of student writers' negative achievement emotions, the focus or directionality of those emotions, and tutors' perceptions of how detrimental or beneficial those emotions usually are on student writing.

Distributing this survey to the whole staff of the writing center, rather than only to the tutors who were participating in the rest of the study, allowed me to do a number of different

analyses that distribution only to the smaller group of ongoing participants would not permit. I used SPSS to provide descriptive analysis of the survey results through tables that depict the frequencies of tutors' answers to survey questions, and the means and modes of responses, where appropriate. Results of this analysis appears in chapter four.

I also used SPSS to run a number of inferential statistical analyses, using non-parametric measures as appropriate to the type of data represented by each survey question (Cronk, 2014), as summarized in Table 4. Non-parametric inferential statistical analysis was preferable to parametric statistical analysis, because of the small sample size of ($n = 28$), the 28 tutors from the staff of roughly 40 who completed the survey; the parametric assumption of normality of distribution is weaker when $n < 30$ (Hoskin, nd).

Table 4

Statistical Tests Used to Analyze Specific Data Points

<u>Statistical test</u>	<u>Data analyzed</u>
Chi-square test for goodness of fit	Frequency of specific emotions of emotions Frequency of disclosure of emotions Detrimental—Beneficial effect of emotions Frequency of each discrete emotion
Chi-square test for independence	Crosstab of demographics and overall +/- characterization of emotions Crosstab of demographics and detrimental— beneficial effect of emotions
Kruskal-Wallis <i>H</i> Test	Crosstab of demographics and frequency of each discrete emotion Crosstab of demographics and frequency of disclosure
Friedman Test	Rankings of directionality of each discrete emotion
Wilcoxon signed-rank test	Rankings of directionality of each discrete emotion

It was necessary to employ the different statistical tests above because the structure of the survey questions varied. There were questions that asked tutors to choose among options on interval scales, scales with response choices that represented consistent internal numerical ranges (like 0-25%, 26-50%, 51-75%, 76-100%); questions with non-interval scales, with response choices that do not represent numerically equivalent differences (like “very detrimental”, “somewhat detrimental”); as well as questions that asked tutors to rank order items. When I had collected survey responses, my first question was to wonder whether there were statistically significant patterns in tutors’ responses to the questions that asked them to estimate the frequency with which they thought student writers in the writing center felt each of the five negative achievement emotions. I used the Chi-square test for goodness of fit to analyze those responses, as well as tutors’ responses to the following questions:

- In general, how negative or positive do you think student users of the writing usually feel about the writing they bring to the writing center?
- How frequently do student writers in the writing center directly disclose their feelings about their writing to you?
- How detrimental or beneficial do you think student writers' negative achievement emotions about their writing are?

The Chi-square test for goodness of fit is a nonparametric statistical analysis test appropriate for analysis of variables that are non-interval. The test measures the likelihood that the data is not the result of random answers (as opposed to genuine answers revealing patterns) by testing the null hypothesis: the assumption that random data will distribute equally across all possible options (Cronk, 2014 p. 93). Running this test allowed me to determine the statistical relevance of respondents' answers both to the interval questions on the survey asking participants to rate the frequency with which student writers feel specific emotions, and to the non-interval survey questions.

In addition to overall statistical significance of tutors' responses, I was interested in determining if there was statistically significant correlation between any of the demographic features of the tutor survey population and their estimates of frequencies of specific emotions or their answers to the above set of questions. In other words, is a tutor more likely to a different estimate of the frequency of anxiety if the tutor is a woman instead of a man? Or did graduate students and undergraduate students assess the detriment of negative emotions differently from each other? To look for correlations between demographic features and survey responses to interval-scale questions, I used the Kruskal-Wallis H Test. This test is a nonparametric statistical analysis test appropriate to compare means of unrelated groups in order to determine statistical

significance. It is the nonparametric equivalent of the parametric one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), which may be familiar to composition researchers (Cronk, 2014 p. 108). To look for correlation between demographic features and tutors answers to questions with non-interval scales, I used the Chi-square test of independence. Like the Kruskal-Wallis *H* Test, the Chi-square test of independence determines whether there is significant correlation between group members and their answers. Unlike the Kruskal-Wallis, it is applicable to non-interval variables.

One group of questions on the survey asked participants to put in rank order how often they thought student writers' specific negative achievement emotions were directed toward four different targets: the writing assignment, the professor, the writing process, and the writing center or tutor. This question was designed to allow me to look for patterns among particular emotions and their directionality. For example, was it statistically significant if tutors thought that when students were angry, the focus was usually the professor? To look for statistically significant patterns in the rank order items, I used the Friedman Test paired with the post hoc Wilcoxon signed-rank test. The Friedman Test is the nonparametric equivalent of the parametric repeated measure ANOVA. It is an appropriate test to run for independent variables that have more than one level, i.e. questions that ask respondents to rank order items (Cronk, 2014 p. 113). The test determines if there is overall significant difference between the mean ranks of related groups. The Wilcoxon signed-rank test helps refine the results of a statistically relevant Friedman test by comparing each possible ranking as a series of pairs. This pinpoints exactly where the significance is. Results of both descriptive and inferential statistical analyses are discussed in detail in Chapter Four.

Written reflections, semi-structured interviews, and recorded sessions. I have chosen to discuss analysis of these three instruments together because my process of analyzing data from

these instruments was integrated. I understood data from one as a continuation of data from the previous one, since they engaged tutors in reflecting on, discussing, and enacting similar ideas. Analysis of the written reflections, semi-structured interviews, and transcripts of recorded sessions provided answers to research questions 1a, 1b, and 1c, as the questions were designed to solicit tutors' understandings about the nature, importance, and frequency of student writers' emotions (cognitive responses), the tutors' affective responses to those emotions, and tutors' behavioral responses (tutoring strategies).

Analysis of both written reflection and interview data relied on Charmaz's (2005) grounded theory approach. This approach was appropriate for a number of reasons. As the data that emerged represented complex perceptions, feelings, and actions (i.e. how tutors respond *cognitively*, *affectively* and *behaviorally* to student writers' negative achievement emotions), the iterative, comparative, and reflexive nature of grounded theory coding helped me interpret participants' responses more perceptively (Charmaz, 2005). I had anticipated the kinds of themes that might be relevant in this study when I chose to use the framework of negative achievement emotions, including control/value properties, as a valuable way of understanding tutors' experiences with student writers' emotions. But, I wanted to remain open to emerging themes instead of using predetermined codes.

A semi-structured interview protocol allows for data that is comparable due to *meaning*, even though that data is not standardized (Denzin, 1989). In a study like this one that explored the complexities within and differences among tutors' experiences and beliefs, this focus on meaning allowed me to develop individual portraits of tutors' experiences, thoughts and beliefs. And since data from interviews were triangulated with other data, including one instrument that

is standardized—the tutor perception survey—I was able to gauge the reliability of interview results by comparing them to results obtained through those other instruments.

After I analyzed the survey results and coded data collected from the reflections and interviews, I reread the transcriptions of and listened to the recordings of tutoring sessions. I noted moments that exemplified themes that had emerged among the other data collection instruments, counting the frequency with which tutors relied on particular strategies they had described in the other data sources. Transcripts of the tutoring sessions provided some interesting illustrative moments that I will share in Chapter Five.

Coding process and emergence of themes. I began the process of coding with tutors' written reflections. These reflections became the data source that offered me the most profound insight during this study. Because I had already read them prior to conducting interviews, looked at them with tutors during those interviews, and then went back to them to begin coding, I examined the reflections more closely and repeatedly than any other source of data. Similarly, participating tutors reported spending a good deal of time thinking about their reflections both before and after writing them, sometimes referring directly to them during interviews and in their comments about recorded sessions. The reflections were the best opportunity for participants to offer thoughtful, edited response to my questions, so relying heavily on them throughout analysis of data seemed appropriate.

Guided by Charmaz's (2005) grounded theory approach, I read and reread the reflections, coding each separately based on what I noticed in the participant's words, then comparing the sets of codes as I read more participants' reflections. This led to a set of 37 codes related to tutors' understandings of writers' emotions, their feelings about working with student writers who expressed negative emotions, their descriptions of and rationale for different tutoring

strategies, and their revelations about their own writing and learning histories. The number of references in the data associated with each code ranged from only one up to twenty. I then began reading the transcripts from my interviews with tutors, coding them using the codes that had emerged during my reading of the reflections, and adding some codes as needed. This stage of coding resulted in a set of 40 codes.

After this initial round of coding, I reviewed the selections from the reflections and interviews I had assigned to each code, looking for similarities that would allow me to merge some codes. I then went back to the literature about achievement emotions, about emotions and writing, and about emotions in the writing center that I addressed in Chapter Two. With ideas from this literature in mind, I reviewed my codes, adapting some to speak to my theoretical lens, adding some based on other researchers' findings, and deleting some as not as interesting for the focus and scope of this study. Finally, I returned to my analysis of the survey results, to explore how it might relate to what I was seeing in the reflections, interviews, and sessions.

To make sense of what these codes might mean when considered together, I followed a strategy of searching for "themes". Rubin & Rubin (2005) defined themes as "summary statements and explanations of what is going on (p. 207)" (Fels, 2010, p. 73). To develop themes, I reread my codes, passages associated with each code, and my coding memos. As I read, I wrote theme memos that reflected on possible relationships I was beginning to see among my codes, and how I might describe that as a theme. During this process, I frequently returned to the literature to see if the themes I was beginning to develop resonated with how other scholars had described similar trends in their data. At the end of this recursive, iterative process, I was able to group 34 codes into seven themes. These themes and the codes and data associated with them are described and discussed in further detail in Chapters Four and Five. In addition, a table outlining

the codes assigned to each of the seven themes is included as Appendix F. The themes are listed in brief here:

Theme 1: Tutors' perceptions of the prevalence and detrimental effects of anxiety and frustration on student writers;

Theme 2: Tutors as confidantes or lay counselors;

Theme 3: The directionality of students' emotions determining tutors' affective responses to student writers' emotions;

Theme 4: Tutors' own challenges as writers as a source of empathy and of tutoring strategies;

Theme 5: Tutor's belief in students' discomfort with or lack of awareness of academic writing processes and genres as a source of anxiety, hopelessness, and frustration;

Theme 6: Tutors' belief that an important goal of tutoring sessions should be to help build writers' confidence;

Theme 7: Tutors' understanding of assignments that do not support students' own goals as a source of boredom and frustration.

In Chapter Four, I will summarize the results of data collection by providing statistical analysis of quantitative data, describing in more detail each of the themes listed above that emerged from the qualitative data.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

This chapter reports the results of a mixed-methods study that used achievement emotions theory (Pekrun, 2006; Pekrun, 2009; Pekrun, Goetz, Frenzel, Barchfield & Perry, 2011; Pekrun, Goetz, Titz & Perry, 2002; Pekrun, Maier & Elliot, 2006), as a framework for understanding how writing center tutors respond to student writers' negative achievement emotions. Achievement emotions, including the emotions specifically explored in this study (anger, frustration, boredom, anxiety, and hopelessness), previously have been studied in university settings (Pekrun, 2006; Pekrun, 2009; Pekrun, Goetz, Frenzel, Barchfield & Perry, 2011; Pekrun, Goetz, Titz & Perry, 2002; Pekrun, Maier & Elliot, 2006), but those studies have focused on students' experiences of them, *not* on peer academic support staff's responses to them. The study is framed around the following research questions:

How do writing center tutors respond to student writers' expressions of negative achievement emotions toward their writing?

- a) How do writing center tutors respond cognitively to student writers' expressions of negative achievement emotions?
- b) How do writing center tutors respond affectively to student writers' expressions of negative achievement emotions?
- c) How do writing center tutors respond behaviorally to student writers' expressions of negative achievement emotions?

This chapter reports the results of my study, including the results of:

- Descriptive and inferential statistical analysis of a survey completed by 28 tutors;
- Qualitative analysis of tutors' written reflections and interviews;

- And qualitative analysis of transcripts from audio recording of tutoring sessions.

In this chapter, I provide a brief overview of my participants, data sources, and processes of analysis. I share the results of analyses of participants' response to the survey about tutors' perceptions of students' emotions. I explore the seven themes I introduced in Chapter Three by summarizing and providing examples from data collected through the written reflections, interviews, and recorded tutoring sessions the subgroup of seven tutors completed.

In Chapter Five, I will discuss how the results I share in this chapter provide answers to my research questions, and suggest implications for scholarship in composition studies and writing centers.

Data Sources

To investigate how writing center tutors understand, feel about and choose tutoring strategies to respond to student writers' negative achievement emotions, I gathered data from four sources: a survey of writing center tutors, tutors' written reflections, interviews that followed up on those reflections, and audio transcripts from tutoring sessions. Two additional sources, a survey distributed to student writers before their sessions were recorded, and an inventory distributed to tutors after each recorded session, were necessary for me to discern which recorded sessions involved student writers who either felt negative achievement emotions and/or who tutors believed felt negative achievement emotions. Table 5 lists each data source, along with each sources' participants, methods of analysis, research questions addressed, and associated themes. The themes were described in Chapter Three, and are more fully addressed later in this chapter.

Table 5

Data Sources and Associated Participants, Data Analysis, Research Questions and Themes

<u>Data Source</u>	<u>Participants</u>	<u>Data Analysis</u>	<u>Research Questions</u>	<u>Themes</u>
Tutor Survey	28 tutors	Descriptive and inferential statistical analyses (details in Table 3.4)	1	1,2
Written Reflection	Subgroup of 7 tutors	Charmaz' (2005) grounded theory	1,2, 3	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
Interview	Subgroup of 7 tutors	Charmaz' grounded theory	1,2,3	1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
Recorded Sessions	Subgroup of 6 tutors	Charmaz' grounded theory	3	5,6
Writer pre-session survey	20 writers	Used to determine which recorded sessions were relevant		
Tutor post-session inventory	Subgroup of 6 tutors	Used to determine which recorded sessions were relevant		

Findings

In the following sections, I present findings from the tutor survey (see Appendix A), audio recordings of tutoring sessions, tutors' written reflections (see Appendix B), and interviews with tutors (see Appendix C). Survey findings include both descriptive and inferential statistical analyses of tutors' responses, as outlined in Chapter Three. Findings from the audio recordings of tutoring sessions, tutors' written reflections, and interviews with tutors are organized according to the seven themes I introduced in Chapter Three. I describe each theme, list the codes associated with each theme, and provide examples from the data to illustrate each theme.

Survey Findings

Detriment or benefit of negative achievement emotions. Analysis of the tutor survey (n=28) demonstrated that, while there was variety in how participating tutors answered questions

about the specific nature and directionality of student writers' emotions, a majority of tutors agreed that negative emotions can have a damaging effect on student writers. In response to a question asking participants to characterize the effect of negative achievement emotions on student writers, 85.7% of respondents (24 out of 28 tutors) characterized those emotions as either very or somewhat detrimental, with 7% (2 tutors) describing them as "neither detrimental nor beneficial," and 7% (2 tutors) describing them as somewhat beneficial. No tutors described negative emotions as "very beneficial". In Chapter Five, I discuss this finding as situated within the literature about the effects of negative emotions on students' writing. I also explore this finding in relation to participating tutors' experiences as writers, and how tutors' belief in the damaging effect of negative emotions may both color their feelings toward working with writers expressing these emotions and inform their tutoring approaches or strategies.

Students' disclosure of emotional state. The survey asked participants how often, in their experience as tutors, student writers directly told tutors about their feelings toward the writing they brought to the writing center. This question was informed by the assumption discussed in Chapter Two that writing centers are places where student writers feel comfortable in disclosing their emotional state, due to the "peerness" of the interaction between tutor and writer (Harris, 1995). Participants' responses to this question also indicated roughly how likely tutors' answers to questions asking them to estimate the frequency and directionality of specific emotions are based on writers' explicit disclosures, rather than tutors' speculation. The question did not indicate a particular time period for respondents, as it would do if worded "How many times during a week" or "How many times in the past week?" So, tutors with more experience will be drawing on a longer period of time than newer tutors.

Figure 1 demonstrates that 64.2% of survey participants (18 out of 28 tutors) felt writers disclosed emotions more frequently than not, with 15 tutors responding that students explicitly revealed their emotions 51-75% of the time, and 3 reporting that writers disclosed their emotions 76-100% of the time. This indicates that most participants could respond to survey questions about specific emotions based on memories about at least some writing center sessions in which writers explicitly disclosed their feelings. Later in this chapter, when analyzing results from written reflections and interviews, I summarize what tutors said about how they intuit writers' emotional states during those sessions when there is not an explicit disclosure. In Chapter Five, I will discuss how this finding about students' disclosure relates to tutor practices, particularly the practice of engaging the writer in talk not immediately related to the text they've brought to the writing center, but rather related to the writer's context, process, and goals.

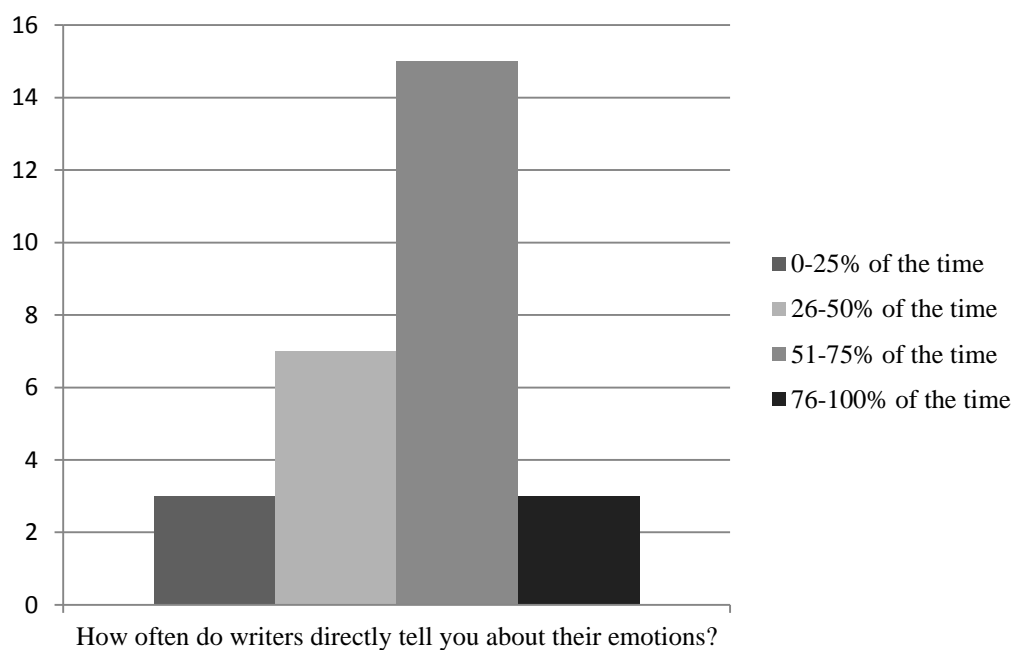


Figure 1. Frequency of student writers' emotional disclosure. Numbers on the Y axis refer to numbers of tutor survey respondents.

Tutors' impressions of student writers' emotions. When asked to describe student writers' general emotional orientation toward the writing they brought to the writing center, 35.7% of participants (10 out of 28 tutors) described student writers they had worked with as feeling "mostly to completely negative", 42.9% (12 out of 28 tutors) described student writers as feeling "neutral", and 21% (6 out of 28 tutors) described writers as feeling "mostly to completely positive". What interested me about "neutral" as a characterization of student writers' emotional orientation is that it does not seem to align with participants' estimates of the frequency of feelings of anxiety, an emotion nearly 90% of participants (indicated student writers in the writing center feel more than half the time.

In addition to an overall characterization of writers' emotions, questions on the survey asked tutors to estimate how frequently, in the tutors' total experience as a writing center tutor, student users of the writing center felt each of the negative achievement emotions toward their writing: anger, anxiety, hopelessness, frustration, and boredom. Preceding each question, I offered a definition of that emotion (as detailed in Chapter One), in an attempt to avoid confusion among or conflation of these different emotions. Figure 2 depicts tutors' responses to the questions, "In your experience, how frequently do student writers in the writing center feel _____ (anxious, frustrated, angry, bored, hopeless) about the writing they brought to the writing center?"

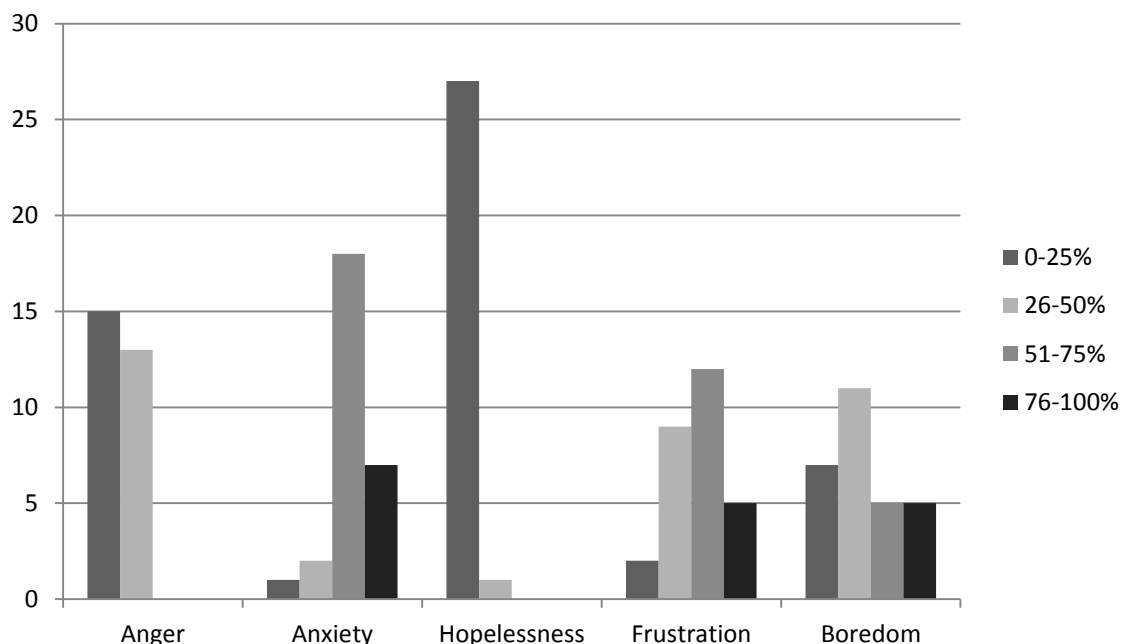


Figure 2. Tutors' estimates of how frequently student writers feel each of the negative achievement emotions. The vertical axis represents number of tutors and the horizontal axis represents their answers. Each bar represents the number of tutors who chose each of the response options (0-25%, 26-50%, 51-75%, 76-100% of the time).

The graph illustrates a few disparities in the distribution of respondents' answers. No tutors estimated that more than 50% of their writing center sessions involved writers feeling angry or hopeless. Anxiety and frustration on the other hand, were reported as occurring more frequently. Boredom is the only emotion that was fairly equally distributed across all four options.

To determine whether tutors' estimates of the frequency of each negative achievement represented statistically significant results, I used the Chi-square test of goodness of fit to analyze respondents' estimates of the frequency of each discrete achievement emotion in the writing center. I found that tutors' answers for anger, hopelessness, anxiety and frustration were statistically significant, but the answers for boredom were not.

In analysis of the anger statistics, the Chi-square test of goodness of fit yielded $\chi^2 = 28.286$, a degree of freedom of 3, and a significance level of .000. This means there was significant deviation from the hypothesized values ($\chi^2 = 28.286$, $p < .05$). That no tutor estimated that student users of the writing center are angry more than 50% of the time is statistically significant. In analysis of the hopelessness statistic, significance was even stronger, with a χ^2 of 76.286, df of 3, and significance level of .000. That 27 tutors estimated that student users of the writing center feel hopeless 0-25% of the time and one tutor estimated users feel hopeless 26-50% of the time is statistically significant. The questions about anxiety and frustration also yielded significant results, while the question about boredom did not. Anxiety yielded $\chi^2 = 26$, df 3, significance level .000. Frustration was slightly less significant with $\chi^2 = 8.286$, df 3, significance level .040. Analysis of the boredom question showed no significant deviation from hypothesized values: $\chi^2 = 3.429$, df 3, significance level .330.

Correlation between demographic features and survey responses. I was interested in determining whether there were any statistically significant correlations between demographic factors and how participants answered survey questions. Determining this would help me consider questions like, are tutors with more experience with academic writing (i.e.—graduate students) less likely to view the sometimes emotional struggle of writing as necessarily detrimental? Or, do female tutors report that writers directly disclose their emotions more often than male tutors report they do? My research questions do not specify any demographic features as variables of interest driving the study, but rather inquire about tutors' experiences and perceptions as a whole. However, if analysis of the data were to yield differences in tutors' responses that correlated with demographic features, it would add complexity to my findings, and might suggest avenues for future research.

To be able to use amount of experience as a variable, I collapsed tutors' experience levels into three groups: tutors with 2 or fewer semesters of experience, tutors with 3-4 semesters of experience, and tutors with 5 or more semesters of experience. This grouping is not arbitrary, but is based on practices at the data collection site. During my tenure as an administrator in this writing center, expectations for tutors' performance and the staff development activities required of them (like observation of tutoring sessions and participation in themed workshops) were scaffolded according to semesters of experience. Administrators based this scaffolding on the assumption that tutors learn on the job, and that the most significant leaps happen during the first few semesters. Similar scaffolding was still in place at the site at the time of this study. While certainly not a perfect way of grouping participants by experience, some collapse of this category was necessary for statistical analysis, and this framework made more sense to me than assigning numerically symmetrical groups (1-5 semesters, 6-10 semesters, and so on).

To determine whether gender, amount of experience, or academic level (undergraduate or graduate) were significant predictors of:

- How frequently tutors estimated student writers felt anxious, frustrated, angry, bored, or hopeless,
- And how frequently tutors said student writers disclosed their emotions,

I ran a Kruskal-Wallis H Test. This test is appropriate to discover correlations between variables when one variable is on an interval scale, in other words, when the difference between values is regular. All tests calculated a p value of $> .05$, which means there was no statistically relevant correlation between any of the demographic features and how frequently tutors estimated student writers feel any of the discrete achievement emotions, or how often tutors said student writers disclosed their emotions.

I also looked for correlations between demographic factors (gender, amount of experience, academic level) and how tutors answered questions asking, in their experience as writing tutors:

- Generally, how negative or positive do you think student users of the writing center usually feel about the writing they bring to the writing center when they visit the center?
- How detrimental or beneficial do you think student writers' negative emotions while in the writing center are to their writing process and/or performance?

I used the Chi-square test of Independence to run this analysis, since it is applicable to variables not measurable on an interval scale, like "very detrimental," "slightly detrimental," etc. All tests calculated a *p* value of $> .05$, which means there was no statistically relevant correlation between any of the demographic features and how generally positive or negative tutors thought student writers felt, or how beneficial or detrimental tutors thought negative emotions were.

Directionality of student writers' emotions. The survey included a series of questions that asked tutors to consider the directionality of student writers' negative-achievement emotions, asking participants to rank the following factors according to how frequently they seem to be the focus of each of the negative achievement emotions: the writing assignment, the instructor, the writing process, and the tutor or writing center. In Chapter Two, I discussed the literature in writing center studies (especially Ariail, 1996 and Honigs, 2001) that informed the factors I chose to ask survey respondents to rank.

Table 6 depicts the frequencies with which participants ranked each direction at each of the 4 possible rank levels (most frequent = 1, least frequent = 4), and provides the mean and mode for each direction associated with each emotion.

Table 6

Tutors' Perceptions of the Directionality of Student Writers' Negative Achievement Emotions, n = 28

Anger											
Assignment mean = 2.10, mode = 2			Instructor mean = 1.54, mode = 1			Process mean = 2.71, mode = 3			Tutor or writing center Mean = 3.64, mode = 4		
<u>Response</u>	<u>frequency</u>	<u>percent</u>	<u>response</u>	<u>frequency</u>	<u>percent</u>	<u>response</u>	<u>frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>response</u>	<u>frequency</u>	<u>percent</u>
Most frequent	6	21.4	Most frequent	19	67.9	Most frequent	0	0	Most frequent	3	10.7
Second	17	60.7	Second	3	10.7	Second	8	28.6	Second	0	0
Third	1	3.6	Third	6	21.4	Third	20	71.4	Third	1	3.6
Least frequent	4	14.3	Least frequent	0	0	Least frequent	0	0	Least frequent	24	85.7
Anxiety											
Assignment Mean = 1.57, mode = 1			Instructor mean = 2.43, mode = 3			Process mean = 2.29, mode = 2			Tutor or writing center Mean = 3.71, mode = 4		
<u>Response</u>	<u>frequency</u>	<u>percent</u>	<u>response</u>	<u>frequency</u>	<u>percent</u>	<u>response</u>	<u>frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>response</u>	<u>frequency</u>	<u>percent</u>
Most frequent	16	57.1	Most frequent	5	17.9	Most frequent	5	17.9	Most frequent	2	39.3
Second	9	32.1	Second	7	25.0	Second	12	42.9	Second	0	0
Third	2	7.1	Third	15	53.6	Third	9	32.1	Third	24	42.9
Least frequent	1	3.6	Least frequent	1	3.6	Least frequent	2	7.1	Least frequent	28	3.6

Table 6 (cont.)

Tutors' Perceptions of the Directionality of Student Writers' Negative Achievement Emotions

Hopelessness											
Assignment mean = 1.82, mode = 2			Instructor mean = 2.39, mode = 3			Process mean = 2.07, mode = 2			Tutor or writing center Mean = 3.71, mode = 4		
<u>response</u>	<u>frequency</u>	<u>percent</u>	<u>response</u>	<u>frequency</u>	<u>percent</u>	<u>response</u>	<u>frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>response</u>	<u>frequency</u>	<u>percent</u>
Most frequent	11	39.3	Most frequent	6	21.4	Most frequent	9	32.1	Most frequent	2	7.1
Second	12	42.9	Second	5	17.9	Second	10	35.7	Second	1	3.6
Third	4	14.3	Third	17	60.7	Third	7	25	Third	0	0
Least frequent	1	3.6	Least frequent	0	0	Least frequent	2	7.1	Least frequent	25	89.3
Frustration											
Assignment Mean = 1.69, mode = 1			Instructor mean = 2.5, mode = 3			Process mean = 2.29, mode = 2			Tutor or writing center Mean = 3.54, mode = 4		
<u>response</u>	<u>frequency</u>	<u>percent</u>	<u>response</u>	<u>frequency</u>	<u>percent</u>	<u>response</u>	<u>frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>response</u>	<u>frequency</u>	<u>percent</u>
Most frequent	17	60.7	Most frequent	4	14.3	Most frequent	4	14.3	Most frequent	3	10.7
Second	6	21.4	Second	8	28.6	Second	14	50	Second	0	0
Third	2	7.1	Third	14	50	Third	8	28.6	Third	4	14.3
Least frequent	3	10.7	Least frequent	2	7.1	Least frequent	2	7.1	Least frequent	21	75
Boredom											
Assignment Mean = 1.57, mode = 1			Instructor mean = 2.68, mode = 3			Process mean = 2.21, mode = 2			Tutor or writing center Mean = 3.54, mode = 4		
<u>response</u>	<u>frequency</u>	<u>percent</u>	<u>response</u>	<u>frequency</u>	<u>percent</u>	<u>response</u>	<u>frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>response</u>	<u>frequency</u>	<u>percent</u>
Most frequent	17	60.7	Most frequent	3	10.7	Most frequent	6	21.4	Most frequent	2	7.1
Second	8	28.6	Second	7	25	Second	11	39.3	Second	2	7.1
Third	1	3.6	Third	14	50	Third	10	35.7	Third	3	10.7
Least frequent	2	7.1	Least frequent	4	14.3	Least frequent	1	3.6	Least frequent	21	75

The table represents a lot of data. To simplify, I compared the means and modes of the participants' ranking of the direction of each emotion in order to determine if participants were associating different emotions with different directions. This simplified order of directionality is depicted in Table 7.

Table 7

Rank Order of Tutors' Perceptions of Directionality of Student Writers' Achievement Emotions

<u>Emotion</u>	<u>1 = Most Frequent Direction</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4 = Least frequent Direction</u>
Anger	Instructor	Assignment	Writing Process	Tutor or writing center
Anxiety	Assignment	Writing Process	Instructor	Tutor or writing center
Hopelessness	Assignment	Writing Process	Instructor	Tutor or writing center
Frustration	Assignment	Writing Process	Instructor	Tutor or writing center
Boredom	Assignment	Writing process	Instructor	Tutor or writing center

This simplified table reveals a few key findings, both of which I will discuss in the context of writing center literature in Chapter Five:

- For all but one emotion (anger), tutors ranked the writing assignment and writing process as the two most frequent targets of student writers' negative emotions. These are the two choices among the possible directions that do not specifically name a person, rather a task or activity.
- Participants ranked the tutor or writing center as the least frequent direction of all negative achievement emotions.

- Anger was the only emotion with a different rank order than all of the other emotions, with the instructor as the most frequent direction.

I confirmed that these rankings are statistically significant by performing a Friedman Test. In all cases, the rankings were significant, ($\chi^2(3) = .000, p < .05$). The Friedman Test confirms that there were significant differences somewhere among the rankings for each emotion, though it does not indicate exactly where. To perform more refined analysis, I ran a post hoc test called the Wilcoxon signed-rank test. This test determines if there is significant difference between each level or ranking for each emotion. For example, it asks if there is significant difference between the #1 and #2 ranking for anger, the #2 and #3 ranking for anger, and so on (Laerd Statistics, nd). When I ran the Wilcoxon signed-rank test, all distinctions between ranks proved to be statistically significant ($p < .05$), except the following:

- For anxiety, there was no significance between ranks 2 (process) and 3(instructor), $p = .618$.
- For hopelessness, there was no significance between ranks 1(assignment) and 2(process), $p = .25$, or between ranks 2(process) and 3(instructor), $p = .231$.
- For frustration, there was no significance between ranks 2(process) and 3(instructor), $p = .435$.
- For boredom, there was no significance between ranks 2(process) and 3(instructor), $p = .105$.

To summarize, the results of the Wilcoxon signed-rank test suggest that it is statistically significant that, for each emotion, the tutors ranked the writing center/writing tutor as least likely to be the cause of a writer's negative achievement emotion. In addition, it was statistically significant that the instructor was the top perceived cause of anger and that the assignment was

the top perceived cause of anxiety, frustration, and boredom. Finally, the #2 and #3 rankings were only significant for anger; for all other emotions, the p value was too high to confirm the distinction between the contribution of the writing process and the writing instructor.

Summary of Key Findings from the Tutor Survey

The tutor survey provided answers to the research question: how do tutors respond cognitively to student writers' negative achievement emotions toward writing? The survey captured data about how often writers directly disclosed negative emotions about their writing to writing tutors, which negative emotions tutors thought student writers they had worked with felt toward their writing, how often tutors thought writers felt negative achievement emotions, what factors in the writing context tutors thought student writers' achievement emotions were directed toward, and what tutors thought about the overall negative or positive impact of negative achievement emotions on students' writing. To summarize key findings from the tutor survey:

- 64.3% (18 out of 28 tutors) of participants reported that in more than half of their writing center sessions since they began tutoring, student writers directly disclosed their feelings about their writing.
- 85.7% of tutors who responded to the survey described negative achievement emotions as either slightly or very harmful to student writers' writing.
- Tutors participating in the survey thought student writers they had worked with in the writing center felt anxious or frustrated about their writing more often than they felt bored, angry, or hopeless.
- There were no statistically significant correlations among tutors' genders, amount of experience as a writing tutor, or academic levels and how tutors answered the survey questions.

- Tutors believed that student writers' anxiety, frustration, and boredom were most frequently directed toward the writing assignment, and student writers' anger was most frequently directed toward the instructor.
- Tutors believed that the tutor or writing center were the least frequent targets of all five negative achievement emotions.

Summary of Audio Recordings

During a two-week period, I recorded 20 sessions. Of those, 12 proved to be relevant to the study. There were not any sessions recorded during which a writer expressed negative emotions, but the tutor did not attribute any negative emotions to the writer. Nor were there any sessions when a writer did not express negative emotions, but the tutor did attribute negative emotions to the writer.

Table 8 provides an overview of the 12 sessions I included in the study, listing the tutor, and noting negative achievement emotions the writer expressed on the Writer Pre-Session Survey and negative achievement emotions the tutor attributed to the writer on the Tutor Post-Session Inventory. The overview of sessions depicted in Table 8 is meant only to offer a glimpse of what the sessions were like, rather than to provide data that can be analyzed. I used the Writer Pre-Session Survey and the Tutor Post-Session Inventory to determine which recorded sessions would be relevant to consider in the study. I did not analyze data gathered through these documents for statistical relevance. The sample size is simply too small. In addition, since the Writer Survey was completed before the session and the Tutor Inventory completed after the session, the two are not comparable. Emotions are dynamic, and a student writer's feelings might change during the session.

Table 8

Recorded Sessions Included in the Study

<u>Session Number</u>	<u>Tutor</u>	Negative Achievement Emotions Indicated <u>by Student</u>	Negative Achievement Emotions <u>Identified by Tutor</u>
1	Sergei	Slightly bored Slightly anxious	Slightly anxious
2	Dawn	Slightly anxious	Moderately anxious
3	Dawn	Slightly frustrated Anxious Bored	Moderately Anxious
4	Flynn	Slightly frustrated Slightly anxious	Moderately anxious
5	Madison	Strongly frustrated Strongly anxious Slightly hopeless	Strongly frustrated Strongly anxious Slightly hopeless
8	Tracy	Slightly frustrated Slightly anxious Slightly hopeless Slightly bored	Slightly anxious
9	Flynn	Slightly anxious Slightly bored	Moderately anxious
10	Sergei	Slightly frustrated Slightly anxious Slightly hopeless Slightly bored	Moderately frustrated Slightly anxious
11	Madison	Frustrated Slightly anxious Slightly hopeless	Moderately anxious
13	Eva	Slightly frustrated Anxious Slightly hopeless Slightly bored	Slightly frustrated Slightly anxious Slightly hopeless
17	Madison	Frustrated Anxious Slightly angry Slightly hopeless	Moderately frustrated Moderately anxious
19	Sergei	Slightly frustrated Slightly anxious Slightly hopeless Bored	Slightly frustrated Moderately bored

Because I am using the recorded sessions as illustrative examples of the kinds of themes that emerged in the written reflections and interviews, I will include details from the results of the recordings in the next section, when I explicate themes that arose in all three of those data sources.

Findings from Written Reflections, Semi-Structured Interviews, and Recorded Sessions

As I established in Chapter Three when I outlined my methods of data collection, this study included a larger participant group for the quantitative method, the survey, and a smaller participant group for the qualitative methods of data collection: written reflections, interviews, and audio recording of tutoring sessions. The survey provided data in response to the research question: how do writing center tutors respond cognitively to student writers' expressions of achievement emotions? Data from the further methods also speak to this question, but additionally provide answers to the other research questions: how do writing center tutors respond affectively and behaviorally to students' expressions of negative achievement emotions? In other words, not only how do tutors understand, characterize or perceive those emotions and their effects on student writers, but also how do tutors feel when working with a student expressing negative emotions, and what do tutors do in those emotionally-charged sessions? The rest of this chapter describes findings from the written reflections, interviews, and recorded tutoring sessions.

Because I considered data from the interviews as a continuation of the data collected in the written reflections and developed a set of codes and themes that applied to both, and because I regarded data collected from recorded sessions to be illustrative examples of those themes and codes, I will present results from all three together in the following sections of the chapter rather than separately by instrument. The findings are organized by the themes that emerged during my

data analysis process. Guided by Charmaz's (2009) approach to grounded theory, I went through a recursive, reflective process of assigning codes to material from participating tutors' written reflections, interviews, and recorded sessions. Then, I developed themes from grouping together codes that seemed to have commonalities. In Chapter Three, I described my process of developing codes and themes in more detail. In the next section I list all the themes, noting how I coded the findings I assigned to each theme. The themes and associated codes also appear as a chart in Appendix F.

Themes and Associated Codes

Theme 1: Tutors' perceptions of the prevalence and detrimental effects of anxiety and frustration on student writers.

Tutors in the study reported believing that students visited the writing center feeling all the studied achievement emotions, but that student writers felt anxious or frustrated by their writing more often than the other emotions. Tutors indicated that negative emotions, especially anxiety and frustration, could have detrimental effects on students' writing processes and products. I developed this theme when I had created the following codes from material from participating tutors' written reflections, interviews, and recorded tutoring sessions:

- Tutors estimating high frequency of emotions
- Tutors understanding negative achievement emotions as distractions from learning
- Tutors attributing procrastination to negative emotions
- Tutors attributing composing problems to negative emotions
- Tutors noticing frustration with the writing center or the process of tutoring
- Tutors using tutoring strategies to respond to anxiety

- Tutors considering positive effects of negative achievement emotions
- Tutors using tutoring strategies to respond to frustration.

Theme 2: Tutors as confidantes or lay counselors.

Tutors reported that writers frequently confided their negative feelings about writing assignments, professors, and writing and learning processes, anticipating that tutors will be empathetic. Tutors had an array of strategies they used to attempt to mediate writers' negative emotions, despite their awareness that they were not mental health counselors. I developed this theme when I had created the following codes from material from participating tutors' written reflections, interviews, and recorded tutoring sessions:

- Students disclosing emotions
- Tutors inferring emotions from indirect cues
- Tutors verbally acknowledging writers' negative emotions
- Students expecting peer tutors' empathy
- Tutors feeling empathy for student writers
- Tutors trying to mediate or ameliorate emotions
- Tutors referring students to counseling services

Theme 3: The directionality of students' emotions determining tutors' affective responses to student writers' emotions.

Tutors' affective responses to writers' emotions were heavily influenced by the directionality of the emotion. I developed this theme when I had created the following codes from material from participating tutors' written reflections, interviews, and recorded tutoring sessions:

- Tutors expressing discomfort at negative emotions directed toward faculty
- Tutors empathizing with negative emotions directed toward the writing process or writing assignments
- Tutors resenting students' feelings of boredom
- Tutors expressing frustration at students' dissatisfaction with writing center processes or procedures.

Theme 4: Tutors' own challenges as writers as a source of empathy and tutoring strategies.

Tutors often related student writers' negative emotions to the tutors' own feelings as writers and learners, and emphasized how their own struggles—even failures—informed their work as tutors. I developed this theme when I had created the following codes from material from participating tutors' written reflections, interviews, and recorded tutoring sessions:

- Tutors expressing empathy with students' anxiety and frustration
- Tutors coping with their own writing anxiety
- Tutors sharing strategies with students that have worked for them as writers
- Tutors having experienced challenges as a tutoring strength.

Theme 5: Tutors' belief in students' lack of preparedness for or awareness of academic writing processes and genres as a source of anxiety, hopelessness, and frustration.

Tutors often attributed students' negative achievement emotions toward their writing to a lack of preparedness for or awareness of academic, disciplinary, and genre expectations, as well as incomplete understanding of their own writing processes. I developed this theme when I had created the following codes from material from participating tutors' written reflections, interviews, and recorded tutoring sessions:

- Students struggling with college life
- Tutors and students engaging in metatalk about writing and writing processes to mediate emotions
- Tutors providing cognitive scaffolding to alleviate anxiety, hopelessness and frustration
- Tutors perceiving faculty's failure to provide sufficient cognitive scaffolding.

Theme 6: Tutors' belief that an important goal of tutoring sessions should be to help build writers' confidence.

Tutors repeatedly returned to the idea of building students' confidence as an important goal for a writing center session. Tutors linked confidence to persisting to attempt a challenging task. Strategies to build confidence often included positive talk and offering choices to writers. I developed this theme when I had created the following codes from material from participating tutors' written reflections, interviews, and recorded tutoring sessions:

- Tutors connecting confidence with persistence
- Tutors feeling troubled by writers' self-deprecating comments
- Tutors offering choices to increase writers' confidence
- Tutors engaging in positive talk with writers.

Theme 7: Tutors' understanding of assignments that do not support students' goals as a source of boredom and frustration.

Tutors described working with student writers who felt bored or frustrated by writing assignments that the writers did not consider important to their own personal, academic, or career goals. I developed this theme when I had created the following codes from material from participating tutors' written reflections, interviews, and recorded tutoring sessions:

- Tutors understanding students' perceptions of value of writing assignments as related to goals
- Tutors trying to connect to students' goals as a tutoring strategy
- Tutors resenting expressions of boredom that seemed to devalue academia.

Summary of Findings Within the Seven Themes

In this section, I summarize the findings within each theme, offering illustrative examples from the tutors' own words where applicable. Discussion in Chapter Five includes further examples, including excerpts from written reflections, interviews, and recorded sessions.

Theme 1: Tutors' perceptions of the prevalence and detrimental effects of anxiety and frustration on student writers. As reported earlier in this chapter, analysis of the survey completed by 28 tutors revealed that in their experience, tutors thought student writers in the writing center felt anxious or frustrated about their writing more than half the time. All tutors who participated in the reflections, interviews, and recording of sessions reported that they believe students feel at least some degree of anxiety around 75% of the time, and frustration more than half the time. So, data from both the survey and interviews suggest that anxiety and frustration are emotions tutors expect to see regularly in the writing center.

From tutors' comments in the reflections and interviews, anxiety seems to be prevalent enough among student writers in the writing center that some tutors anticipate it, and have incorporated strategies to mediate anxiety into their regular tutoring strategies for every session. Dawn's (a graduate tutor) strategies are of note. I will discuss them and will present excerpts from transcripts from her session in Chapter Five.

Tutors frequently spoke or wrote about frustration, as well. Of all the emotions tutors reflected on in their written reflections and interviews, it was the one emotion that they sometimes attributed to writing center processes or procedures, telling stories about when writers' frustration seemed to be directly focused on them, the tutors. I will discuss this directionality both later in this chapter, when explicating theme six, and in Chapter Five. In addition to frustration at the tutoring process, tutors identified frustration as often directed toward the overall learning processes of college life. "I can see them struggling with the college process," said Eva, "The whole transition. It can be hard," (Eva, interview, April 16, 2015). I explore tutors' perceptions of how the transition into academic discourse communities is sometimes a source of frustration—as well as other negative emotions—in theme three.

For the most part, according to what they said and wrote in interviews and written reflections, tutors understood the effects of negative achievement emotions to be detrimental to student writers' writing and learning processes. Tutors referred to those emotions as "distractions" repeatedly, pointing out that students' focus on the emotions themselves rather than the tasks they needed to accomplish was sometimes problematic. Tutors shared that they thought it was important to let writers express those emotions and address them together, but at the same time conveyed concern about tutoring session when they felt addressing the emotion was the only thing accomplished. Flynn, in his written reflection, wrote about a student he had worked with repeatedly. This student was angry at what she perceived as her professor's failure to give her helpful feedback or clear directions. Flynn wrote, "She was so inside her head that I knew if she was going to take anything away from our sessions, it was on me to put it in writing so she could see it and reflect upon it when she was more calm" (Flynn, written reflection, April 2, 2015). Like other tutors in the study, Flynn revealed that he thought it was important to let

writers express those emotions and address them together, but at the same time conveyed concern about tutoring sessions when addressing the emotion was the only thing accomplished.

According to the tutors in the study, in addition to acting as a distraction, negative achievement emotions also could contribute to students' procrastination and inability to organize their thoughts. Tutors mentioned anxiety, frustration, hopelessness, and boredom as reasons student writers delay working on papers and projects. Flynn, speculated that negative emotions—especially anxiety and hopelessness—interfered with students' ability to analyze the content of their writing and subsequently clearly organize that content, and make connections among ideas (Flynn, written reflection, April 2, 2015).

While tutors' assessment of the effect of negative emotions was mostly that these emotions can damage students' writing and learning processes, there were a few times anxiety and frustration—especially frustration—were cast in a more positive light. Some tutors suggested that, because they think writers elect to visit the writing center at least partially motivated by their anxiety about or frustration with their writing efforts, one effect of these emotions is the very positive one of prompting help-seeking behavior. In addition, one undergraduate tutor and one graduate tutors proposed that really good progress on learning and writing can be made when a student is a little bit frustrated, since that means they are being challenged academically. No tutors, however, wrote or said that they would feel completely comfortable with a student leaving the writing center still feeling frustrated. Helping students mitigate frustration at the writing process or writing assignments seemed to be important to tutors' measure of the success of a tutoring session. Tutors both reported in their reflections and interviews, and demonstrated in their recorded tutoring sessions a number of tutoring strategies intended to mediate frustration and anxiety. Because these appeared to be strategies for

scaffolding learning about elements of the writing process or about academic or disciplinary discourses, I have included them in theme five.

Theme 2: Tutors as confidantes or lay counselors. Data gathered from the survey, reflections, interviews and recording of tutoring sessions suggested that student writers have confided in tutors, directly expressing their negative emotions, and disclosing what they felt was causing those emotions. All tutors expressed that it felt typical to them when writers make statements like, “I’m so frustrated by this paper,” “The professor’s comments made me mad,” or “I’m feeling really overwhelmed.” While tutors described writers’ direct emotional disclosures as not unusual, they also explained interpreting less direct indicators of writers’ emotions, like body language, demeanor, tone of voice, and word choices.

Tutors spoke about listening to student writers’ emotional confidences, and responding carefully to them, as an essential part of a tutor’s role. “*Of course* you acknowledge the emotions,” said Tracy, one of the graduate tutors in the study. The certainty of her statement was echoed among all the tutors, though some expressed feeling more prepared than others to do an effective job of that acknowledgement. It would have been interesting, in a study with a larger sample size, or more probing questions about tutors’ identities, to explore whether either the tutor or student’s gender plays a role in how prepared tutors feel to take on conversations about writers’ emotions. Tutors’ shared belief that some negative emotions could have a detrimental effect on students’ writing processes provided the rationale for tutors’ efforts to act as lay counselors and make efforts to mediate emotions they perceived as potentially harmful to student writers.

Five tutors in the study reported that they frequently directly asked students how they felt about a particular writing assignment, the writing process, or a class as a whole. This was regular

practice for them as tutors; they considered it part of the opening conversation when the tutor establishes the context for the piece of writing and the goals for the session. Two tutors, one undergraduate and one graduate, expressed that they didn't regularly solicit emotional disclosures, and didn't always feel comfortable when disclosures did happen. Both, though, conceded that addressing emotions sometimes is important work of a writing center session, and said they didn't resist efforts to "go there," in one tutor's words, when they realized the students' emotional state was impeding that student's ability to engage actively and effectively in the tutoring session.

While direct disclosures—both solicited and unsolicited--were frequent, tutors in the study sometimes also relied on reading tacit cues to discern writers' emotions. Tutors in the study mentioned body language as significant in understanding writers' emotions. Flynn, Sergei and Tracy mentioned interpreting fidgeting as signs of anxiousness; tutors described lack of eye contact or slouching posture as additional indicators. Flynn, in a conversation immediately following a recorded session with writer he has worked with on his dissertation repeatedly across the last couple of years, stated that the writer "gets his concerned face" when Flynn asks him something about his writing or writing process that sparks his anxiety or frustration about successfully completing the project.

When I asked Dawn to tell me about how she knows when writers feel negative emotions, she said:

'I am worried about this assignment.' 'I am frustrated with this assignment.' 'I hate writing.' 'I hate what my professor told me about this.' So, you know, I hear those things all the time. So probably 60 to 70 percent is explicitly stated. [But], 30 to 40 percent, it's body language. Do they come in and slump down in the seat? . . . I remember I had one

[laughs] one writer that I walked up to, and her head was down on the table, like she was leaning into her hand—and putting her head down on the table. You know, it was towards the end of the day, it was a 7:30 appointment. And I said, ‘Wow, it looks like it might have been a rough day for you.’ And she said, ‘I am *so* tired.’ And I said, ‘But you know what? You made it here, and that’s awesome, and we’re gonna bang this out, and you’re gonna feel really good at the end of it.’ (Dawn, interview, April 28, 2015)

Dawn went on to reveal that, in this scenario, the writer went on to share that “tired” meant not only physically tired, but emotionally drained or overwhelmed—i.e., feeling a degree of hopelessness.

As confidantes, tutors in the study repeatedly stressed the importance of empathy—or in some cases, at least the *perception* of empathy. Tutors spoke of student writers’ trust that a peer or near peer could empathize with their struggles as students, and positioned that perception of empathy as central to supporting effective collaboration between tutors and distressed writers. There were many moments in the written reflections and interviews when tutors made compelling statements about their feelings of empathy. I was particularly struck by Eva’s complication of her feelings of empathy, in which she expressed the emotional toll sessions with distressed writers can have on a tutor. This undergraduate tutor stated:

When writers feel hopeless I always respond with empathy and kindness. However, though I try to communicate comfort and support, I often feel uncomfortable on the inside. It’s difficult to walk into a gloomy 20- or 50-minute session without any preparation. I’ve seen hopelessness usually accompanied by dejection and self-doubt, which means that close to nothing can get done. These sessions are taxing and usually leave me feeling inadequate for my failure to turn rain clouds into sunshine--a very

unlikely triumph. (Eva, written reflection, April 7, 2015).

This passage speaks to Eva's lack of emotional distance from the writer or from the tutoring session. I will return to this moment in Chapter Five, as it also speaks to what tutors might understand as success in a writing center session, namely, that both the student feels better than when they came in and that progress is made in developing the writing itself.

Tutors did not always express empathizing with student writers. As I discuss in detail in Chapter Five, students' boredom, possibly because it could imply a low estimate of the value of a writing assignment or of college overall, was more difficult for tutors to empathize with. The directionality of a negative emotion, as I explain in next theme, also sometimes challenged a tutor's ability to empathize.

However, despite tutors' not always actually feeling empathy, participants perceived that student writers usually expected them to empathize. Two tutors in the study, Madison and Sergei—both undergraduates, attributed to this to the near-peerness of the tutor-writer relationship, and expressed frustration at students' assumption that tutors would necessarily side with students when the negative emotion was directed at a professor. I will discuss their comments in my explication of the next theme, which explores directionality, then more extensively in Chapter Five, where I present a portion of the transcript from Madison and Sergei's joint interview.

Tutors reported moments where their role as a tutor seemed to pass from being a sympathetic confidante into territory I have chosen to describe as tutors acting as "lay counselors." I incorporated the term "lay" here due to tutors' own assertions of a lack of professional preparedness to counsel others about emotions. Despite their lack of professional credentials to do so, tutors did report attempts to mediate student writers' emotions. Tutors

appeared to be drawing on a broad range of life experiences to develop their approaches to mediating emotions, very few of which are connected to formal training in educational or cognitive psychology. I discuss these sources of knowledge in more depth in Chapter Five, particularly taking up the question of how tutor training might draw upon and enhance the life knowledge tutors bring to their job.

Theme 3: The directionality of students' emotions determining tutors' affective responses to student writers' emotions. Overall, despite acknowledging that it can be difficult or emotionally draining to work with students feeling extremes of negative emotions, tutors usually expressed either empathizing with or having little emotional response to student writers' anxiety, frustration, and hopelessness. Exceptions to this usually had to do with the directionality of the emotion. When writers expressed negative emotions associated the writing process or with the challenge of writing assignments, tutors generally felt they could empathize, based on their own experiences as students (which I will discuss in theme four). However, tutors were less likely to express empathy when recounting stories about when students directed their emotions, especially anger or frustration, toward faculty. Sergei and Madison, the two undergraduate tutors I mentioned above, expressed this the most strongly. Other tutors in the study expressed discomfort with students criticizing professors and assuming tutors' complicity in this, but did not discuss this at as much length as Sergei and Madison, nor with as much emphasis. It is important also to recall that anger was the one emotion participants in the survey identified as associated more with faculty than any other element of the writing context. Due to tutors' perception that students' anger is usually directed toward faculty instead of assignments, the writing process, or the writing center, in Chapter Five, I will discuss tutors' responses to anger as often associated with their discomfort with faculty as the target of negative emotions.

Negative emotions associated with students' perceptions of low value of writing assignments also provoked negative affective responses in tutors. Tutors expressed feeling empathy or concern—supportive orientations—for students who felt they couldn't accomplish what a writing assignment asked of them. However, when students' frustration, boredom or anger stemmed from their low estimate of the value of a writing assignment instead, tutors in the study typically felt frustrated or affronted.

The direction or target of negative emotions tutors most frequently expressed being most bothered by was the writing center or tutoring process itself. Tutors reported repeatedly resisting writers' attempts to solicit their cooperation in subverting writing center policies and procedures, and feeling angry or resentful when asked to do so. This was especially true of Eva, who tutored outside the writing center's central location. She often worked alone in a conference room in the library as part of an initiative referred to as "The Think Tank". The isolation of this location, Eva thought, made students more likely to ask her to extend session time limits, work with the same writer more than once in a day, or engage in direct line-editing—all requests that violated writing center procedures in ways Eva found troubling to have to cope with. Other tutors also expressed becoming resentful of or frustrated by student writers' complaints about the scope of writing center sessions, or tutors' attempts to carefully scaffold learning instead of providing quick fixes.

Theme 4: Tutors' own challenges as writers as a source of empathy and tutoring strategies. My findings for this theme primarily came from two sources. One prompt on the written reflection directed tutors to, "Think about times when you have felt negative emotions toward academic writing. How did you feel? Why? What were the circumstances?" During the interviews, I asked tutors to tell me about how they learned the strategies they use to address writers' negative achievement emotions. Responses to those two items revealed tutors' own life

experiences—especially, though not exclusively, memories about times they had struggled as learners—played a more significant role in how they responded to student writers’ negative emotions than did any formal training. This was true even of the graduate tutors, Dawn and Tracy, and the former graduate tutor, Katherine, who have had graduate level coursework in composition studies. Each of them acknowledged that in their coursework they had encountered the idea that students’ emotions were important to their learning, and that writing instructors can use techniques like scaffolding and encouragement through formative feedback to at least partially mitigate negative emotions. However, they spoke about that as not being a revelation but rather as an already familiar concept. The detriment of negative emotions, especially anxiety, was something they had each experienced as student writers themselves, and they had developed their own strategies for coping with those emotions. They reported frequently suggesting those very coping strategies to student writers in the writing center. Dawn’s emphasis on helping a writer stay positive, which I associated with theme six (increasing students’ confidence), was drawn from coping strategies she developed to address her own challenges. It was notable for how pervasive it was throughout her responses to the written reflection and interview questions, and in the transcripts of her tutoring sessions. I will offer a closer look at particular moments from her responses and transcripts, discussing them as positioned within writing center and educational psychology literature, in Chapter Five.

Three of the tutors, Dawn, Katherine, and Eva, highlighted their histories of experiencing anxiety, both writing-related and not writing-related, as strengths they felt they brought to writing center tutoring. Eva is an undergraduate tutor who had made a previous attempt at college at another university, but who had been overwhelmed by the social and emotional pressures of college life to the point that she got into academic difficulties and withdrew from

that first university. She attributed her ability to recognize students' negative emotions, her tendency to empathize with them, and her awareness of the effectiveness and importance of strategies to ameliorate negative emotions to that experience: "I think it was actually having failed that made me a better tutor, you know?" (Eva, interview, April 16, 2015).

Theme 5: Tutor's belief in students' discomfort with or lack of awareness of academic writing processes and genres as a source of anxiety, hopelessness, and frustration.

Tutors in the study often attributed student writers' anxiety, hopelessness, and frustration to lack of insight into their writing processes or lack of awareness of disciplinary or genre conventions and college-level expectations for writing. Engaging students in metatalk about their writing processes came up repeatedly in both written reflections and interviews as a way to mediate students' negative emotions. Tutors reported offering different strategies for invention, for reading, for planning, and for revision that they hoped would alleviate students' anxiety, hopelessness and frustration. Offering choices was an idea two of the undergraduate tutors especially reiterated throughout the study. Because this exemplified an attempt to address the control element of the control-value theory of achievement emotions, a key part of the theoretical lens for this study, I will discuss this more thoroughly in Chapter Five.

Even more frequently than lack of insight into their own writing processes, tutors mentioned lack of awareness of disciplinary or genre conventions or college-level writing expectations as sources of a good deal of negative feeling among students writers. The tutors in the study both wrote and spoke about in their reflections and interviews, and demonstrated in their tutoring sessions, that careful cognitive scaffolding offered student writers a means to more complete understanding of academic discourse communities. This more complete understanding, according to tutors, leads to more confidence (discussed further in theme four), and an

amelioration of anxiety, hopelessness, and frustration. Scaffolded learning is at the heart of writing center tutoring, so tutoring strategies intended to scaffold learning are likely to occur in writing center session regardless of the student's emotional state. However, tutors in the study stressed that scaffolding was especially important during sessions with anxious, hopeless or frustrated writers, and that the stronger the negative emotions, the more comprehensive the scaffolding needed to be. "In cases where, it just feels like the session is not going anywhere productive because of something emotional," said Flynn, "I usually, I mean, my usual go to is to ... make things as, sort of, rudimentary as possible," (Flynn, interview, April 3, 2015). He went on to describe a process of asking a student to rehearse what she knew, then asking a series of questions that prompted her to add one small piece of information or analysis at a time, building a far more sophisticated opening paragraph than she'd initially had through a series of very low-level, easily achievable steps. Flynn indicated he might challenge a writer who seemed to feel more confident to think about more than one possible revision at a time, or leave more of the revising for the writer to do later on his or her own rather than accomplishing it during the session.

Sometimes, students' lack of awareness of disciplinary or genre conventions, or—at times—how faculty do or do not make those clear--made participating tutors' work very challenging, and thus becomes a source of tutors' frustration. Sergei talked about a tutoring session during which both he and the writer seemed to be speaking at cross-purposes the whole time, both confused by the assignment. Sergei's understandings of the kind of argument the assignment called for were repeatedly rejected by the student writer as not what the professor wanted. She seemed to become frustrated by their continued negotiation of what the focus of the session should be. Sergei said, "It was also frustrating on my side, too, because I was like, is she

just not getting it, or am *I* not getting it? You know what I mean?” (Sergei & Madison, interview, April 17, 2015). I would suggest that other tutors in the study certainly do know what Sergei means.

Sometimes, tutors in the study attributed students’ lack of genre or disciplinary knowledge to a need for more useful feedback from faculty during the writing process. While one tutor did have a story about feedback from a professor that sounded particularly harsh, most tutors spoke more about faculty feedback as just not being useful enough when it provoked negative emotions, rather than mean-spirited. During these sessions, tutors in the study would attempt to help the writer interpret faculty feedback in order to alleviate frustration, or help the writer prioritize and categorize feedback, in order to relieve hopelessness or anxiety by making the task seem more manageable. The graduate tutors in the study, all of whom have taught classes themselves, spoke more often and at greater length than undergraduates in the study about insufficient or misguided feedback, and about what they perceived as a lack of faculty awareness of what scaffolding might be necessary to help students accomplish challenging writing tasks.

Theme 6: Tutors’ belief that an important goal of tutoring sessions should be to help build writers’ confidence. Tutors in the study offered the idea that confidence is an opposing emotion to hopelessness. Tutors with graduate level coursework in composition studies, Dawn, Tracy, and Katherine, sometimes used it interchangeably with “self-efficacy.” Other tutors sometimes used phrases like “belief in yourself” or writers’ “belief that they can do it”, and, when asked to describe that feeling further, referred to “confidence.” Hopelessness some tutors equated with excessive “self-doubt” or “feeling overwhelmed”. When asked to further explain

those terms, tutors typically would speak of students not feeling they could accomplish something, or not believing in themselves—the opposite of their definitions of confidence.

All tutors in the study wrote or spoke of building writers' confidence as an important goal of writing center tutoring, and reported feeling troubled when students would use self-deprecating language, or otherwise indicate low levels of self-confidence. In fact, tutors' emphasis on increasing confidence as vital to the work of tutoring, framed a writer's increased level of confidence at the end of the session as an indicator to the tutor of whether that session was a success or failure. Tutors repeatedly equated students' confidence that they could accomplish what their writing assignments asked of them with the likelihood that students would persist in their efforts, and continue to revise based on the support they received in the writing center. Because this tendency to attribute successful persistence to confidence seems to align with literature about self-efficacy and academic success, I will discuss the implications of tutors' orientation toward valuing confidence in Chapter Five.

Tutors in the study sometimes associated writers' confidence in their ability to accomplish a difficult writing task to the amount of control they had over not only their ability to accomplish the task, but also to choose different ways to go about accomplishing it. Repeatedly, I read, heard, and observed tutors offering choices to writers. These choices included choices about what to focus on in the session, and in what order, choices about different tutoring strategies ("Do you want to read this aloud, do you want me to, or would you rather read silently?"), choices about what content writers could or could not include, choices about language use, and even choices about whether or not to comply with professors' instructions. When asked about how the strategy of offering choices addressed emotions, tutors sometimes used words like "engagement" (which can be understood as opposed or nearly opposed to

boredom), but also spoke to the relationship between choice and confidence, as if making a series of small decisions empowered students to take on larger ones.

In addition to proposing choices, tutors reported a number of other strategies they used to help build writers' confidence. Among these, all tutors mentioned offering praise for writers' strengths or their determination, and generally maintaining a positive atmosphere through their words and tone. In her reflection, Madison wrote:

In terms of students who are anxious/disheartened/worried/hopeless/etc., I may change my approach by spending a little bit more time pointing out the things they did well in the paper so they don't believe they have to change everything they did or think they are incapable of doing anything right. When they realize they already did a lot of the hard work . . .their anxiety tends to dissipate, (Madison, written reflection, April 6, 2015).

Other tutors shared similar attempts to use praise of writers' strengths, including their willingness to put in effort on challenging assignments, to increase confidence or decrease hopelessness or anxiety.

As I mentioned above, an emphasis on positivity was pervasive in Dawn's responses to the written reflection and interview questions. In her interview, Dawn said:

Whatever session I have, I just try to start out really positive, in a really positive way, because, you know, a lot of the times when writers are coming in, they're anxious about getting it done, or, you know, frustrated with a professor. And so taking, you know, taking some of that weight off right from the start and coming into it with a positive attitude, I think it changes the whole structure of a session, (Dawn, interview, April 28, 2015).

Dawn, and other tutors in the study, maintained positivity through praise, tone of voice, and through affirming or encouraging statements to the writer. In one of Madison's recorded sessions, she repeatedly told the writer, "It's okay" or "You've got this." After the session, she told me she had to suppress the urge to pat the writer's shoulder or give her a hug—physical expressions of encouragement Madison is aware may not always be welcome, and that she compensates for it with repeated verbal expressions.

Theme 7: Tutors' understanding of assignments that do not support students' goals as a source of boredom and frustration. In the survey, as I explained earlier in this chapter, tutors identified writing assignments as the most frequent source of students' anxiety, frustration, hopelessness, and boredom. Tutors' responses to the written reflection and interview questions helped me further refine my understanding of tutors' perceptions of the role writing assignments play in contributing to student writers' frustration and boredom. In theme five, I described tutors' efforts to address the frustration associated with students' lack of preparedness to take on complex academic writing tasks assigned to them. In addition to those stories about students' frustrations, tutors also told me about students who expressed frustration at having to write about subjects and in genres they didn't see as valuable to their intended career path. Students could not imagine those assignments helping them fulfill career-related goals, or even academic-goals, since the assignments seemed distant from the genres necessary to master in their majors. According to the control-value theory of negative achievement emotions, it is typical for people to feel frustrated when they rate the value of a task as low, but the effort needed to achieve it as high.

Tutors also attributed students' boredom to this perceived lack of connection student writers sometimes feel between assigned writing and long-term, career-related goals important to

them. According to the control-value theory of negative achievement emotions, this is typical of people who assign a task a low value, whether the task requires low or high amounts of effort. Tutors recounted making attempts to prompt the writer to reflect on and discover ways to connect writing assignments to their own interests and goals in order to combat boredom. In situations when the attempt to make that kind of connection failed, Flynn and Sergei both described falling back on attempting to engage bored students by emphasizing short term goals with the extrinsic motivator of strong grades. They both conceded that, with students who overtly expressed their boredom or lack of interest with an assignment and who had little interest in actively engaging in the tutoring session, invoking the reward of higher grades or other short term pay-offs rarely worked.

In written reflections and interviews, tutors articulated feeling frustrated, affronted or even angry when student writers expressed boredom due to their low value of writing assignments. Tutors reported expending a good deal of energy in tutoring sessions when they were trying to engage a bored writer, describing these extra efforts as “exhausting.” The writing center tutors at the study site are all academic high achievers; the undergraduates are predominantly drawn from the honors program, and the graduate tutors are pursuing doctoral degrees. When students seemed to devalue learning, some tutors in the study felt affronted, since they valued learning highly. When students’ boredom with a writing assignment extended to look like boredom with the writing center or tutoring process itself, tutors got especially frustrated. As Flynn put it, in response to the reflection question, “How do you feel when students in the writing center feel bored by their writing?”:

The simple answer is annoyed. Sometimes pissed off, though I never let that show. My primary reaction stems from the fact that there are plenty of students who would like to

use our services and my time could be better spent working with them. There is undoubtedly also a measure of resentment stemming from the implication that my knowledge and expertise lacks value to them (Flynn, written reflection, April 2, 2015).

Other tutors expressed similar feelings, suggesting that it is difficult for them not to take it personally when a student appears to be bored.

The results I summarize in this chapter provide insights into how tutors understand, feel about and act in response to students' negative achievement emotions toward their writing. In Chapter Five, I discuss these results in more depth. In particular, Chapter Five takes up discussion of the following ideas mentioned in this chapter:

- Participating tutors' acknowledgement of a variety of writers' emotions, but belief that anxiety and frustration are more prevalent among writers they had worked with in the writing center than other achievement emotions;
- Participating tutors' experiences with direct and indirect indicators of emotions;
- Participating tutors' conviction in the detrimental effect of negative achievement emotions on student writers;
- Participating tutors' associations between specific emotions and different elements of the writing process:
- The range of participating tutors' affective responses to student writers' negative achievement emotions;
- Participating tutors' negative responses to boredom;
- Student writers' expectations of tutors' empathy, and how tutors in the study sometimes, but not always, meet that expectation;

- Participating tutors' feelings when faculty are the targets of student writers' anger and frustration;
- Participating tutors' frustration when the writing center is the focus of negative emotions;
- Participating tutors' anticipation of anxiety influencing their tutoring strategies;
- Participating tutors' emphasis on increasing student writers' positive emotions, especially confidence, during a writing center session;
- Examples from recorded sessions of scaffolded learning and meta-talk about writing;
- Participating tutors offering choices as a strategy to increase control or confidence;
- Participating tutors' life experiences as sources of perceptions about student writers' feelings, and of tutoring strategies.

In Chapter Five, I consider how findings provide answers to my research questions, and situate those answers within literature about the achievement emotion theory, and about writing center theory and practice. I explore implications for composition studies, and writing center studies.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

In this chapter, I discuss the results I reported in Chapter Four, answering my research questions about how the participating writing center tutors respond to student writers' negative achievement emotions concerning the writing those students bring to the writing center. My conclusions were drawn from analysis of data I collected during a mixed methods study involving participants who were undergraduate and graduate level writing center tutors at a writing center in a large, public, urban research university. Twenty-eight of the 40 tutors employed at the site participated in a survey about their perceptions of and experiences with student writers' negative achievement emotions in the writing center. Following the survey, three undergraduate tutors, three graduate tutors, and one former graduate tutor participated in written reflections and interviews. Six tutors participated in audio recording of their writing center sessions. From these data sources, I was able to answer my research questions.

My study provides insight into how participating writing center tutors understand, feel about, and use tutoring strategies to respond to student writers' negative achievement emotions. Findings revealed that tutors at this site encountered student writers who the tutors believed or knew were experiencing anxiety, frustration, hopelessness, anger and boredom. According to participating tutors, some student writers directly confided their feelings toward their writing to those tutors. In addition, participating tutors spoke about methods of "reading" emotions through nonverbal cues. Tutors in the study understood several different detrimental effects of negative achievement emotions, and reported feeling that an important way a writing center tutor can help alleviate those detrimental effects is by boosting the student writer's confidence. Tutors' own affective responses to writers' negative emotions were dominated by empathy, but did vary,

usually due to the directionality of the emotion; students' anger and frustration directed toward faculty, and boredom with writing assignments or writing center practices seemed to be most uncomfortable for tutors in the study. Tutors in the study reported employing a number of tutoring strategies to address writers' negative emotions, some of which demonstrated a tacit understanding of the control-value and goal-orientation elements of negative achievement emotion theory. Participating tutors spoke about how their own emotional experiences as learners influenced their responses to student writers' negative achievement emotions more than did material they learned during tutor training. Each of these insights I will discuss further as I consider how the themes that emerged in my data provide answers to my research questions. Findings from this study concerning tutors' perceptions of the prevalence of negative achievement emotions among their writing center clients, how those emotions can sometimes complicate tutors' work or challenge tutors' identities, and how those tutors believe student writers should feel at the end of a successful writing center session contribute to scholars' understanding of the power and limitations of writing center peer tutoring.

In this chapter, I will review my research questions and discuss how I answer them. Then, I will consider implications of my findings for the fields of composition studies and writing center studies. Finally, I will use both limitations of the study and some of the findings to suggest areas of future research.

Research Questions

This study was designed and implemented in order to answer the following research questions:

How do tutors respond to students' explicit and tacit expressions of negative achievement emotions?

- a) How do tutors respond *cognitively*—in other words, what are their beliefs about the nature and frequency of these emotions and their significance of the emotions to the writer’s writing process and the tutoring session?
- b) How do tutors respond *affectively*—how do tutors feel when these emotions emerge during tutoring sessions?
- c) How do tutors respond *behaviorally*—what do tutors do during these sessions in response to students’ emotions?

In the following sections, I will discuss findings from this study that address each of the research questions by exploring examples from the data and considering the findings within the body of relevant literature. I have included passages from interviews and transcripts of recorded tutoring sessions so that participants’ voices can, in their own words, enter the conversation about students’ emotions, tutors, and the writing center.

Tutors’ Cognitive Responses to Student Writers’

Negative Achievement Emotions

Some questions in the survey, written reflections, and interviews were designed to solicit information about what participating tutors thought about student writers’ negative achievement emotions. I thought it important to explore tutors’ *understanding* of emotions, in other words, how they respond cognitively, because I hypothesized that the cognitive schema they’d constructed about writers’ negative emotions would likely influence how they felt in response to those emotions, and how they acted in response to them. Findings in this section are further broken down into the following categories:

- 1. Characterization and frequency of negative achievement emotions
- 2. Direct and indirect indicators of emotions

3. Detriment or benefit of negative achievement emotions
4. Sources of negative achievement emotions.

Characterization and Frequency of Negative Achievement Emotions

Tutors in the study indicated that it was not unusual, in their experience, for writers in the writing center to feel negative emotions about their writing. Tutors in the study reported having worked with writers experiencing all five of the emotions I investigated: anxiety, frustration, hopelessness, anger, and boredom. Tracy, a graduate tutor, wrote in her reflection, “I have encountered many students who have had negative emotions about their academic writing. Of these negative emotions, I believe that the ones I encounter most frequently are anxiety first, then frustration,” (Tracy, written reflection, April 10, 2015). She went on to explain what she attributed anxiety and frustration to, which I will discuss later in this chapter. Tracy’s assessment was typical of tutors’ responses on the survey, and in written reflections and interviews. Of the achievement emotions, tutors identified anxiety as the one most frequently experienced by writers in the writing center.

Literature suggests that participating tutors were correct in their identification of anxiety as a common emotion in student writers. Studies confirm that anxiety is prevalent among university students, and extends to many achievement tasks, including writing. During the five studies of achievement emotions, the most frequently reported emotion was anxiety, representing 15%-25% of all reported emotions (Pekrun, Goetz, Titz & Perry, 2002). Anxiety was also prevalent among student writers who participated in a previous study at my research site. In a survey-based study previously conducted at this site, 46% of student writers waiting to see writing center tutors either agreed or strongly agreed to the statement, “Right now, I am worried

about writing this paper,” and 62% agreed or strongly agreed to the statement, “Thinking too much about this paper makes me feel anxious or tense” (Follett & Emmons, 2013).

Tutors in this study seemed to be aware that multilingual writers, especially international students, may feel particularly high degrees of anxiety about or frustration with their language performance, a belief confirmed by study of multilingual writers (Pavlenko, 2006). Madison and Sergei, in particular, talked about this in their interview (Sergei & Madison, interview, April 17, 2015). Dawn demonstrated face-saving politeness strategies during sessions with international students in order to avoid increasing the writers’ anxiety or shame (Dawn, session 2, April 21, 2015; Dawn, session 3, April 23, 2015), as Mackiewicz and Thompson (2013) have recommended. Study of affect in multilingual writers, though, suggests that multilingual students’ experiences of emotions while writing in English are not limited to higher degrees of anxiety or frustration. Rather, they are complex, influenced by complicated cultural constructs of identity enacted by the use of their L1 or L2 (Pavlenko, 2006). Tutors in this study, though, did not volunteer any discussion of multilingual writers’ emotions beyond noting L2 writers’ anxiety and frustration.

Among the five negative achievement emotions I studied, hopelessness was the most difficult for most tutors in the study to imagine students in the writing center feeling; After all, some participants suggested, isn’t the act of help-seeking evidence of at least some degree of hope? When participating tutors and I negotiated the definition of hopelessness, we agreed that it was a matter of the construction of the term itself that felt like a stumbling block: the “lessness” in the word felt to tutors like it implied a complete absence of hope in being able to complete a task at all. During interviews, when we read together the definition of hopelessness, “a person feels hopeless when he or she cannot imagine successfully completing a task. For example, a

student might feel he will never be able to write a paper well enough to receive a passing grade,” all of the participating tutors noticed the nuance in that definition of hopelessness implied by the term “successfully”. Like other negative achievement emotions, hopelessness is felt in response to an achievement activity that has possible outcomes a person considers successful or unsuccessful. Being unsuccessful does not necessarily mean completely failing to complete an achievement task, but rather means failing to complete it in a way the person would describe as *successful*.

All tutors in the study said that they had seen that kind of feeling in writers; writers worried they wouldn’t complete an assignment well enough to achieve the grade (or other outcome) they wanted. Most of the tutors suggested they would have described that feeling instead as “feeling overwhelmed.” Knowing how participants were using the term “overwhelmed” in their reflections and interviews allowed me to understand moments when they used that word as moments when they were referring to writers who felt it was unlikely they would be able to achieve what they wanted to with their writing.

Tutors’ identification of specific emotions was facilitated by student writers’ frequent direct disclosure of their emotions, suggesting that, while the emotional intelligence Lape (2008) encourages tutors to develop may be helpful, tutors do not always have to rely on their ability to infer writers’ emotional states from nonverbal cues. In this study, those disclosures were sometimes prompted by the tutor. In Chapter Four, I elucidated what I identified as a theme of “tutors as confidantes or lay counselors.” In the tutoring sessions I recorded, tutors often would include questions like, “So how’re you feeling about this paper” (Sergei, session 1, April 16, 2015; Sergei, session 10, April 21, 2015; Madison, session 5, April 16, 2015) or “How’re you enjoying the class” (Tracy, session 8, April 24, 2015), during the opening conversation during

the session. Even when delivered casually while the tutor and writer were still physically settling into the session (adjusting chairs, retrieving pens, etc.), these questions were invitations to the writer to confide in the tutor. These moments seem in keeping with themes of “comfort, familiarity and intimacy” that have characterized writing center scholars’ dominant narrative about the nature of peer-staffed writing centers, as seen in Harris (1995) and McKinney (2013), and that informed tutors’ perceptions of tutoring practice in Fallon’s (2011) study. The invitation to writers to choose to engage in talk about emotions suggests that, however unconsciously, tutors in this study were adopting Trachsel’s (1995) position that a feminist ethos of care approach to writing center work demands that writers’ emotions be addressed upfront as a significant and regular part of the tutoring session.

Katherine revealed that when she has noticed what felt like a writer’s resistance in the session—rejection of all of her suggestions; responding with terse, one-word answers, or generally failing to visibly engage in the session—she usually has suspected that there may be an underlying emotional factor, and that the emotion was not necessarily directed at her or the writing center:

I would ask, ‘Oh, you know, something seems to be bothering you, is there something bothering you about this assignment? Or is something making you frustrated about this?’ And then usually that would lead to disclosure. ‘Yeah, I just really can’t stand this instructor, and she, you know, said something really mean to me, um, so, I’m afraid of what this paper’s going to be like.’ (Katherine, interview, May 6, 2015)

Katherine’s willingness to read resistance as an effect of a negative emotion, and an effect that can be directly and supportively addressed, is heartening. Moments in writing center literature when tutors have experienced similar kinds of resistance are usually described as

frustrating to tutors, decreasing tutors' believe that the session can move forward in a satisfying way (Callaway, 1993; DiPardo, 1992; Hudson, 2001; McInerney, 1998). These are moments when tutors might feel pushed toward "defensive" tutoring positions if tutors interpret these moments not as instances when a negative emotion is interfering with a writer's ability or willingness to engage because the emotion needs attention first, but rather as instances when writers reject the idea that the session will be of value. Katherine was demonstrating exactly the kind of non-judgmental, exploratory approach to understanding others' emotions that Lape (2008) argued tutors need to learn; Katherine has been able to slow her own emotional response and collect more information before interpreting the writer's actions. Another graduate tutor, Tracy, described a similar understanding that what looks like resistance can be due to anxiety or frustration, and wrote about cultivating emotional distance from these moments (Tracy, written reflection, April 10, 2015). The three undergraduate tutors in the study did not express this understanding of resistance, though, and seemed quicker to take umbrage at students' words or behaviors that seemed to imply a devaluing of the writing center itself. I will explore this more fully when I discuss tutors' emotional responses to student writers' negative achievement emotions, and the importance of directionality in determining those emotional responses.

Both students' tendency to disclose negative emotions to tutors and tutors' abilities to read emotions in nonverbal cues rely on some degree of shared cultural norms. To disclose negative emotions requires the student writer to feel comfortable revealing vulnerability to the tutor. Harris (1995) argued that the "peerness" of the tutor-writer relationship allows this. However, not all students might understand tutors as peers to whom they would feel comfortable revealing emotions. Some multilingual writers, especially international students and recently arrived resident multilingual students, may conceptualize their relationship with a tutor

differently (Nan, 2012; Rafoth, 2015), and not consider emotional disclosure an appropriate interaction. Further, nonverbal displays of emotion—gestures, postures, amount of eye contact—are culturally determined (Pavlenko, 2006; Benesch, 2012). Because tutors in this study, like anyone, interpret emotions through a sociocultural lens, making assumptions about the nature of emotions, the experience of feeling them, and attribution of cause based on tacit cultural beliefs (MacIntyre, 2002; Pavlenko, 2006; Wierzbicka, 1999), participating tutors’ abilities to “read” emotions may not be as accurate when they are working with writers from cultural backgrounds significantly different from their own.

Detriment or Benefit of Negative Achievement Emotions

As I indicated in Chapter Four, participating tutors believed negative achievement emotions to be detrimental to student writers’ writing and learning processes. Tutors referred to the tendency of negative emotions to distract writers from the writing task, to contribute to avoidance or procrastination, and to hamper the kind of cognitive work necessary to synthesize and organize ideas.

Tutors in the study referred to negative emotions as “distractions” repeatedly, pointing out that students’ focus on the emotions themselves rather than the tasks they needed to accomplish was sometimes problematic. Tutors participating in this study did not go as far as Hudson (2001) did in her discussion of a tutoring session in which most of the time in the session was devoted to the writer and tutor talking about the writer’s feelings toward her professor. As I argued in Chapter Two, Hudson’s (2001) discussion of that tutoring session, the Suzie scenario, revealed an assumption about what the goal of a writing tutoring session should be—the words on the page. In discussing the focus of the conversation in the Suzie scenario, Hudson (2001) equated “productivity” in a session with the amount of time focused directly on the draft.

Tutors in this study seem to implicitly reject the idea of “draft *only*” when they shared moments when they helped writers understand how to navigate the faculty-student relationship, consider writing assignments in terms of their larger goals, and engage in metatalk about the writing process. While tutors in this study did refer to the potential for negative emotions to distract a writer from the work of writing, including the work of engaging in a tutoring session, they rarely spoke about trying to avoid conversations about negative emotions, but rather saw those conversations as the thing that has to happen first, but that would be followed by more writing-focused activities during the tutoring session.

In addition to distracting students during tutoring sessions, tutors in the study identified negative emotions as contributing to avoidance behaviors like procrastination. Tutors mentioned anxiety, frustration, hopelessness and boredom as reasons student writers put off working on papers and projects.

Eva: Going from my experience, like if I’m anxious about a paper, I won’t write it [*laughs*] until the last minute. I think . . . those negative emotions play a huge roll in procrastination. Which then brings up more negative emotions, so it’s like a terrible cycle that students trap themselves in. Um, but I also think...the anxiety especially can cause self-doubt and make you feel like you’re not capable of writing certain things. And I think having the idea that you’re a bad writer makes you a bad writer. It’s kind of self-fulfilling prophecy (Eva, interview, April 16, 2015).

Eva’s belief that anxiety can lead to avoiding a task, and that avoidance increases the level of anxiety until a person also feels hopeless, aligns with Pekrun’s (2009) identification of the deactivating potential of some negative achievement emotions. High levels of anxiety during a task a person feels they have little agency to control; boredom due to perceived low value of a

task; and hopelessness at a perceived high value and a low level of control are all conditions that impede the person's ability to attend to the task (Pekrun, 2009). When the cycle Eva describes seems to the student like it is happening over and over, the student may integrate the idea that they are "a bad writer" into their self-perception, significantly harming their self-efficacy, which in turn detracts from their actual ability to perform (Etheride & Wachholz, 1996; Lavelle & Zuercher, 2001; Pajares & Johnson, 1994).

Of the tutors in this study, Eva, Sergei, Madison and Flynn have not studied literature about the effects of self-efficacy on learning (Katherine, Tracy and Dawn have done so), yet they all share the belief that a writer believing he or she is capable of a task is essential to the writer's ability to do that task. To me, this sounds like good news for writing center administrators, particularly in locations where formal study of composition theory or educational psychology is not possible or preferable for tutors working in the writing center. Tutors in this study without that formal learning formed understandings about the detrimental effect of low self-efficacy that were similar to the tutors who did have that formal learning. When I discuss tutors' behavioral responses to writers' negative emotions, I will address what tutors said about where they learned those strategies. Considering the origins of those strategies will shed light on the kinds of experiences tutors have had that help them construct their understanding of the role self-efficacy plays in learner motivation and performance.

The prevalence of participating tutors' insistence on the belief that writers' perceptions of their own abilities affect their performance led me to theme six while analyzing the data: tutors' belief that an important goal of tutoring sessions should be to help build writers' confidence. Katherine and Tracy both used the terms "confidence" and "self-efficacy" interchangeably, when discussing writers' feelings toward their ability to complete a writing task. This seemed to echo

Jones' (2008) definition of self-efficacy: "confidence in the ability to accomplish particular tasks and perform particular skills," as well as, "confidence in self-regulatory strategies to accomplish those tasks" (p. 211). I will discuss how participating tutors have facilitated writers' growth on the second half of that definition, confidence in self-regulation strategies, when I discuss the tutors' strategy of offering choices to writers. Tutors in the study linked confidence to persisting to attempt, then successfully completing, a challenging task. Literature suggests that the tutors who expressed this are on the right track; students experiencing high levels of self-efficacy, or confidence in their abilities and processes, tend to choose more challenging learning options, use appropriate strategies for learning and performing challenging tasks, persist at tasks longer, and feel less inhibited when they do run into temporary frustrations (Bandura, 1995; Jones, 2008; Stewart, Seifert & Rolhesier, 2015).

While most of tutors' comments about the effects of negative achievement emotions concerned how those emotions can be detrimental, there were a few moments when tutors in the study entertained the idea that the effect of negative emotions could sometimes be positive. Some tutors in the study suggested that, because they think writers elect to visit the writing center at least partially motivated by their anxiety about or frustration with their writing efforts, one effect of these emotions is the very positive one of help-seeking behavior. Had students not reached a point of frustration working alone, they would not have had sufficient motivation to seek feedback from tutors, and so would not have pushed themselves as far as writers. This may be especially true of frustration, since frustration, as opposed to anger, tends to describe a response to situational impediments, particularly factors the person cannot control or cannot clearly identify (Gelbrich, 2009). Writer center tutors' efforts to help writers analyze their writing situation and take stock of what they need to do, what they feel confident about, and

what they need to learn how to do might be able to help writers either attain some degree of control or at least identify exactly what feels bad about their immediate writing context.

In addition, one undergraduate tutor and one graduate tutors proposed that really good progress on learning and writing can be made when a student is a slightly frustrated, since that means they are being challenged academically. The idea that some discomfort is potentially useful is confirmed by literature in educational psychology. Low levels of anxiety, frustration or even anger can be activating rather than deactivating, if the student values the task enough to invest extra time and effort into it, and if the student believes that they do ultimately have access to the resources needed to accomplish the task (Pekrun, 2009). Additionally, Dweck (2006; 2015), in her mindset theory, has advocated that challenge and frustration do not always result in learners' disengagement with a learning task. Dweck's studies have shown that learners who have developed a *fixed mindset* view intelligence and talent as innate qualities they cannot change: in other words, the qualities are fixed. Learners with a *growth mindset* view intelligence and talent as characteristics that can be cultivated; what they are able to accomplish can grow. Dweck's suggestions for helping a learner cultivate a growth mindset include offering positive feedback not only for accomplishment, but also for effort. People praised for how they persevered in the face of a challenge have proven to develop a higher tolerance for the frustration of difficult tasks, and tend to persist at challenging tasks longer than people praised for their intelligence or talent (Dweck, 2006). For a learner to be able to engage in praiseworthy effort, the task at hand needs to be sufficiently challenging, suggesting that some level of frustration with or anxiety about a difficult writing task may be necessary in order to nurture students' growth mindset.

Writing centers might be seen as ideal venues in which to foster student writers' growth mindsets. Tutors are in a position to do what Dweck (2015) suggested: acknowledge student writers' level of achievement (including what they haven't gotten right yet), praise the genuine effort they put in to learn something new and challenging, and collaborate on developing different strategies; as Dweck (2015) put it, "Let's talk about what you've tried and what you can try next." Dweck's description of praising, assessing and strategizing is reminiscent of Vygotsky's (1978) description of how learners develop language through formative feedback from a listener, and Vygotsky's view of language learning is a way of theorizing what happens in writing centers (Nordlof, 2016). Indeed, some tutors in the study acknowledged that low levels of some negative achievement emotions could be beneficial when they result in the effort necessary to learn something new. However, no tutors wrote or said that they would feel comfortable with a student *leaving* the writing center still feeling frustrated. This appears to return to participating tutors' emphasis on increasing confidence as a goal of a writing center session, and suggests that tutors in the study expect changes in confidence to be quickly achievable, and clearly evident to the tutor. When tutors in this study have felt they did not contribute to an immediate increase in a writer's confidence, they have not felt the session has been successful. When participating tutors told stories about sessions in which writers felt negative emotions, the tutors would often emphasize an increase in confidence at the end of the story: "And she left feeling like she could do it" (Madison, interview, April 6, 2015). The few stories I heard about writers who left feeling equally or more anxious, frustrated, or hopeless at the end of the session troubled tutors deeply, leading them to question their own abilities as tutors. Tutors in this study are not alone in this feeling; the importance of immediate movement

toward more positive affect, particularly increased confidence, is typical in writing center literature (Babcock, Manning & Rogers, 2012; Bullock, 2012).

The short duration of some participating writing center tutors' relationship with writers makes it understandable that those tutors would feel more satisfied by sessions that end on a more positive note than they started on. A writing tutor's relationship with a student may last only for the duration of a single tutoring session, so the long-term arc of that student's learning is not always in view to the tutor, especially if that tutor has never had the opportunity to observe a learner's long-term growth, as they might if they worked with one writer in the writing center over an extended period of time, or if they have taught a class. When the duration of a tutor's entire relationship with a student lasts only one hour, the affective reward of what feels like a happy ending may, to the tutor, outweigh the reward of seeing a writer engaged in what may eventually turn out to be productive struggle.

However, both participating tutors' conviction that negative emotions are detrimental and participants' discomfort with a session that does not immediately increase a writer's confidence fail to take into account students' long-term development. Visiting the writing center is one step in a student writer's writing process. That a writer feels anxious or frustrated about a piece of writing during the time he or she is in that session or at the end of that session does not mean the writer will continue to feel that way about that piece of writing. Further efforts at revision, feedback from another source, or even changes in the writer's overall emotional orientation, not limited to the writing itself, can change how the writer feels about a draft. Additionally, unless the writer has indicated to the tutor that he or she persistently feels anxious/frustrated/angry/hopeless/bored about writing assignments, the tutor does not have enough information to determine that the negative emotion the writer expresses during a writing

center session is typical of that writer's sense of self-efficacy toward writing, overall. Neither literature about negative achievement emotions nor about self-efficacy suggest that a single incident of failure at an academic task will cause lasting psychological damage to a student. Further, Dweck's (2006, 2015) work has suggested that the student's mindset has an important influence on how he or she responds to negative emotions associated with challenge. It is possible that when tutors in this study have focused on a writer's short-term emotional state in an effort to increase their confidence or self-efficacy, the tutors were not necessarily fostering a growth mindset. To do so, Dweck (2015) argued, means not praising effort for effort itself, nor praising effort without acknowledging how much more the learner needs to achieve. "Effort is a means to an end," Dweck (2015) wrote, "Too often nowadays praise is given to students who are putting forth effort, but *not learning* in order to make them feel good in the moment . . . the growth mindset approach helps children feel good in the short and long terms by helping them thrive on challenges and setbacks on their way to learning."

Sources of Negative Achievement Emotions

On the survey, for all but one emotion (anger), tutors ranked the writing assignment and writing process as the two most frequent targets of student writers' negative emotions. In the survey question about the source of student writers' emotions, writing assignments and the writing process were the two choices among the possible directions that did not specifically name a person, but rather a task or activity. Anger was the only emotion with a different rank order than all of the other emotions, with the instructor as the most frequent direction.

What did participating tutors think faculty are doing that makes student writers angry? In a nutshell, the tutors believed that student writers felt angry when those students felt the faculty member did not fully attend to their side of the student-faculty relationship. Moments during the

written reflections and interviews when tutors identified a writer's emotion as anger directed at a professor had to do with that professor's feedback, or lack of it, during the writing process. Even more specifically, tutors identified writers as angry particularly when they received feedback with an emotional undertone (impatient, disappointed, irritated) and when writers received very little useful feedback on their writing for high stakes assignments. In the following excerpt from Dawn's interview, which was also the only moment during the study when a tutor expressed feeling satisfied by a session that did not focus on text at all, a writer expressed anger at a professor who he felt was letting him down:

His professor gave him negative feedback through an email, but it was just a couple of sentences jotted, and it was vague. And he was frustrated by this information and didn't know what to do with it, and we spent most of the session kind of talking through... I didn't even see very much of his written work. He was explaining to me, what, like, validating his work for me . . . what it finally came down to was, 'I don't understand what this professor said back to me. Why didn't they give me more information? I asked for this, and I didn't get this back. And I was really frustrated and hurt by that, and I haven't looked at this paper for four days because I've been so mad about it.' And, so we spent most of the drop-in session kind of working around that issue. 'Oh, well, okay, maybe it means going and talking to the professor face-to-face so that you can have the conversation.' And we actually listed the questions, the specific questions with specific information that he wanted from that professor, so that he could use them and walk in with them. And that sounds like a ridiculous way to lead a session, but at the end, at the very end of the session, he looked at me and said, 'I don't know that I needed as much

help with my writing today. I think I just needed a little motivation' (Dawn, interview, April 28, 2015).

In the session Dawn described, the student felt the instructor had failed to fulfill his part of the faculty-student relationship. I put in this hard work, he seemed to think, and in return you should give me the kind of feedback I need to move forward. It's important to note three things about the feedback this writer received. It was solely negative or critical, which contradicts tutors' belief in the effectiveness of increasing writers' confidence. It did not offer specific content or procedural details for the student to consider while revising (i.e. "It was vague"), failing to include the scaffolding tutors identified as important, and which I will address momentarily. Finally, the student felt its brevity and generality indicated a lack of interest or investment in his writing (or possibly even in him as a learner), which seemed unfair or insulting to him, given the scope of the student's writing project. The individual attention tutors give writers in the writing center does quite the opposite, conveying interest in student writers' ideas and investment in their writing processes. Examples like this one demonstrate moments similar to the one in Siobhan's story in Chapter One, when tutors in the study identified times when student writers felt angry or frustrated when faculty didn't give them the validation or personal consideration they felt they needed, but they believed the writing center might.

Although the student, in Dawn's words above, said he realized he didn't need help with his writing, but rather needed help getting motivated, I would argue that in his case, increasing motivation actually *was* help with his writing. Dawn offered this writer two things she felt he needed in order to move forward in his writing process. The first was a safe space to vent about a faculty member, and reaffirm in front of a witness his own conviction that his writing efforts had merit. Edlund (1995) pointed out that writing centers frequently operate as "buffer zones"

between students and faculty in the way this session seems to. The second thing Dawn offered this writer was the knowledge that feedback from faculty is part of an ongoing conversation; it is a good idea to identify specific questions he has about the writing project or the professor's feedback, and seek out further conversation with the professor, so the professor knows better how to specifically support this student's writing. This is insider information about writing processes and expectations in academia—a piece of the “really useful knowledge” about academic cultures that Cooper (1995) argued writing centers are in a strong position to provide. Both things Dawn offered this writer—safe space to vent and information from a student's perspective on how to interact with faculty—are things the professor was not in a position to provide. Examples like this one of student anger toward faculty provide a rationale for the importance of peer tutors in mediating the relationships between students and professors.

Tutors repeatedly identified students' apparent lack of awareness of academic writing processes, genres, and expectations as a source of anxiety, hopelessness, and frustration. Tutors sometimes attributed this to faculty members' insufficiently scaffolded assignments, or misperceptions about what their students already knew about writing. In her interview, Tracy recounted a session with a writer who came into the writing center expressing anger at her professor, but who—after the session got underway—broke down in tears when it became evident she couldn't answer Tracy's questions concerning the purpose and conventions of the genre she was meant to write in. The student told Tracy it seemed like the professor assumed the class would know what she meant by the terms on the assignment sheet; the student was ashamed that she did not, so had not asked her professor for clarification. Tracy patiently responded with scaffolding techniques similar to those I will describe later in this chapter, helping the writer understand the assignment. There was a moment toward the end of the session,

when the writer and Tracy were making connections between the thesis, her claims and her evidence when the writer stopped and said, “Wait—is this how all my papers work in this class?” (Tracy, interview, April 23, 2015). The writer’s work with Tracy on this one text enabled her to transfer what she learned by constructing a schema to understand academic argument and recognize when assignments called for it. Tutors’ insights about student writers’ emotional struggles with under-scaffolded assignments echoed those Fels (2010) uncovered in her study of writing tutors’ perceptions of the institutional demands on student’s writing; sometimes those demands are unclear, or how students are supposed to have learned them seems not to have been considered.

Tutors in the study reported feeling frustrated, or even angry, when the element of the writing process that seemed to be stymying the writer was either an assignment or faculty member that did not provide the kind of scaffolding of literacy learning the student writer seemed to need. Frequently, tutors reported using scaffolding strategies intended to increase a student’s sense of confidence or self-efficacy in order to ameliorate a feeling of anxiety, hopelessness, or frustration. I will provide an example of this scaffolding of learning in this chapter when I discuss tutors’ behavioral responses, or tutoring strategies.

In addition to insufficient awareness of writing processes, genres, and expectations for writing, tutors identified writing assignments that students cannot relate to their own academic or professional goals as a source of negative emotions, especially boredom and frustration. Some tutors spoke about attempting to help students make those kinds of connections. One tutor said that when his attempts to encourage a student to think of a meaningful, genuine reason to engage with a writing project fails, he relies on invoking the reward of a strong grade instead, and that this is not particularly motivating, in his experience (Flynn, interview, April 13, 2015). Tutors’

instinct to use writers' own goals as motivating factors in writing center sessions is in keeping with what Pekrun has repeatedly asserted about the relationship between mastery goals and increased perception of value—if a writer sees a task as having a long-term benefit meaningful in his or her own life, that task appears more valuable. That added value leads the writer not only to more sustained engagement with the task, but also a higher tolerance for any negative emotions that may arise during the process (Pekrun, 2006, 2009).

Tutors in this study showed awareness of writers' negative achievement emotions and the importance of addressing those emotions in order to support students' writing processes. The tutors' belief that confidence is important to writers' processes and performances broadly aligns with literature about negative achievement emotions and about self-efficacy. However, tutors in this study were not likely to acknowledge situations during which negative emotions might be useful to students' long term learning, nor to feel a writing center session could be considered successful if a writer left without feeling an increase in confidence. Tutors in this study demonstrated an awareness of the importance of scaffolded learning, sometimes attributing student writers' anger at professors to situations when it appeared professors did not provide the scaffolding the writer thought he or she needed. Tutors in this study did not only engage with student writers' emotions intellectually, though. The following section discusses findings from the data that answer the question, "How do writing center tutors respond *affectively* to student writers' expressions of negative achievement emotions?"

Tutors' Affective Responses to Student Writers'

Negative Achievement Emotions

Handling others' negative emotions can be challenging, and since writing center tutors do not usually have extensive training in counseling or backgrounds in psychology, understanding

how they do feel when faced with students' anxiety, frustration, hopelessness, anger, and boredom will allow writing center administrators to provide appropriate support to their tutoring staff concerning writers' negative emotions, as Lape (2008) suggests we should. Findings in this section are arranged and discussed in the following categories:

1. The range of Tutors' Affective Responses
2. Tutors' Negative Responses to Boredom
3. Empathy and Expectations of Empathy
4. Faculty as Targets of Student Writers' Anger and Frustration
5. When the writing center is the focus.

The Range of Tutors' Affective Responses

Tutors in the study conveyed a number of different affective responses to writers' expressions of negative achievement emotions, ranging from irritation with writers expressing boredom, to nervousness at expressions of anger, to compassion for hopeless writers, and optimism in the face of writers' frustration. Tutors in the study agreed that working with writers who felt or expressed negative achievement emotions could feel emotionally exhausting sometimes. Eva, when describing the tutoring she has done alone in the library Think Tank, described having to work to consciously control the frustration she would feel when a student writer's frustration with the processes of tutoring, the writing process, or an assignment prompted the writer to be, in Eva's words, "more demanding." "I wish I had a second to just breathe," she said (Eva, interview, April 16, 2015). Katherine, the writing center administrator who had until recently been a graduate tutor, spoke about the conscientiousness of tutors; in her experience, tutors she has supervised tried really hard to "get it right," and figuring out what

right is while handling both cognitive and affective elements of learning writing can be daunting, as Lape (2008) has suggested.

While some tutors in the study shared that it could be challenging sometimes to emotionally deal with writers' negative achievement emotions, not all participants in the study reported negative affective responses to writer's negative achievement emotions. Some reported deliberately cultivating a feeling of calm in order to offset student writers' anxiety, hopelessness, frustration, or anger (Eva, interview, April 16, 2015; Flynn, interview, April 3, 2015; Dawn, interview, April 28, 2015). Tracy and Dawn also reported sometimes feeling excited when a student was slightly frustrated, because they enjoyed the process of helping a writer figure out a writing challenge. Student writers' apparent boredom, however, seemed to elicit a consistently negative affective response from all the tutors except Dawn, who saw student writers' boredom as an opportunity for her enthusiasm for their writing to inspire students. The other tutors, though, wrote and spoke about feeling frustrated, impatient, offended, or even angered by students whose boredom for their assignments, the writing process, or the tutoring process was evident throughout a tutoring session.

Tutors' Negative Responses to Boredom

As I discussed above, while tutors in the study seemed able to conceptualize students' boredom as rooted in disconnection between the writer's own goals and their perception of an assignment's value in helping them progress toward those goals, the bad *feeling* of those moments seemed to outweigh the tutors' understanding of them. The writing tutors who work at this site, including the participants, are academic high achievers—there is a minimum G.P.A. requirement, undergraduate tutors are usually in the Honors Program, and the graduates are PhD candidates. This implies an inherent regard for academic pursuits as valuable. While three of the

tutors in the study did express that they, too, have had a hard time engaging with writing assignments or courses that they did not find particularly valuable to the pursuit of their own goals, they both also suggested that finding a way to discover a connection and a value was part of their responsibility as an engaged student. When tutors in this study felt that student writers did not value similar academic pursuits or the contribution the tutor was trying to make to the student's learning, one of the assumptions Bruffee (1984) made in his argument for the effectiveness of peer tutoring appears to break down. Bruffee (1984) claimed that peer tutors represent, "a group of people who accept, and whose work is guided by, the same paradigms and the same code of values and assumptions" as the student writers they work with. Participating tutors' negative responses in this study to students' boredom suggests this is not always true. This point of disconnection does not mean tutors in this study could not still collaborate with students who they assumed did not share the tutors' high value of academics or learning, but writing center literature has suggested that it might be more difficult for them to do so (Grimm, 1999) when a writer expresses an emotion that challenges Bruffee's (1984) assumption of peerness.

Empathy or Expectations of Empathy

Despite their discomfort with writers who they perceived as feeling bored by their writing assignments or the processes of the writing center, participating tutors' comments in interviews and reflections were characterized by the theme of empathy, or student writers' *expectations* of empathy. The direction or focus of the writer's emotion was a key factor in how the tutor felt in response. In Chapter Four, when I explicated theme two, tutors as confidantes and lay counselors, I noted that participating tutors frequently expressed empathy for student writers, particularly when those writers seemed to be feeling anxiety, frustration, or hopelessness. Eva

articulated how student writers' anxiety, because of her empathetic response, may ultimately be beneficial to student writers: "A student's anxiety can motivate me to get more done in a session, so that the writer leaves with something tangible. I think anxiety can be a catalyst for productivity" (Eva, written reflection, April 7, 2015).

In addition to moments when tutors could recall genuinely feeling empathy for distressed students, tutors in the study also recounted times when they could tell a student writer expected empathy, whether or not the student actually got it. Tutors attributed this to the perceived peerness, or at least near-peerness of the writer-tutor relationship. This expectation of empathy is challenged when student writers are bored, as I have discussed. Some tutors in the study were also troubled by the expectation of empathy when student writers' negative achievement emotions were directed at faculty.

Faculty as Targets of Students' Anger and Frustration

In this study, undergraduate tutors were more inclined than graduate tutors to feel uncomfortable with student writers' criticism of faculty rooted in those students' frustration or anger. The undergraduates did share the concept that unclear assignments, insufficient scaffolding, or faculty members' unhelpful feedback processes could contribute to students' negative emotions. Yet, two of the undergraduate tutors seemed to feel comfortable when students expressed anxiety or hopelessness under those conditions, but not comfortable with frustration or anger. Sergei and Madison discussed their feelings about "professor hate" or "professor blaming" (in their words) in this excerpt from their interview:

Sergei: And so . . . a lot of times it'll kind of become the thing where it's like, you know . . . they're explaining to me how, like, so many things could have gone so much better if the professor had just done this or the professor hadn't assigned that—

Madison: That happens, like, professor hate. Like, ‘Oh this professor sucks.’ And then they look at you as if I should be like, ‘Oh, yeah, I hate professors.’

Sergei: Exactly. Like sometimes it can be constructive because you can be like, ‘Yeah, you know, that’s really annoying, but here’s how you can get around it.’ But sometimes it can be a little bit annoying for me as a tutor because then I’m like, ‘All right, well let’s just get focused on the assignment and stop worrying about the professor’ (Sergei & Madison, interview, April 17, 2015).

Madison had written in her reflection that she enjoys strong relationships with her professors, relationships she has been careful to cultivate, so “professor-blaming,” as she put it, is hard for her to relate to. In the passage above, Sergei seemed to acknowledge that sometimes professors’ expectations or instructions might be productively subverted, or approached not as absolutes, as Cooper (1995) suggested writing center tutors are in a position to do, but his overall tone throughout the study when discussing faculty expectations for writing conveyed trust in faculty and willingness to comply with faculty expectations.

Eva, the other undergraduate tutor in the study, seemed to have a different perspective, and talked about teaching students how to form relationships with faculty (much like Dawn did during the session with her angry writer) as part of learning about the culture of academia. A distinct difference in how Eva describes her academic experiences may be responsible for her perspective. Madison and Sergei’s experiences as students and writers are mostly about successes—they’ve always been good at school, and they’ve always valued it. Eva, though, wrote in her reflection and spoke in her interview about what she considered failures as well as successes. Eva had been enrolled at a previous institution, and had struggled with academic and non-academic factors of college life, eventually withdrawing from the school. To her own

experience of struggle, Eva attributed both her empathy for students and her realization that, as a tutor, she can have a profound impact on students' academic lives by helping them navigate the processes, procedures, and relationships important to success in college life, including mediating when students have negative feelings toward faculty. Since people tend to interpret others' emotions by tacit comparison to their own emotional experiences (Silani, Lamm, Ruff, & Singer, 2013), including tutors like Eva on writing center staffs provides a valuable connection to students whose life stories are not dominated by tales of academic success and nurturing mentoring relationships with faculty.

When the Writing Center is the Focus

Responses to the survey indicated that, according to tutors, of the writing assignment, instructor, writing process, or writing center or tutor, the writing center or tutor is the least likely to be the focus of a student writer's negative achievement emotions. Tutors in the study attributed this, at least in part, to how students come to the writing center. Tutors in the study speculated that when student writers do express frustration, anger or boredom with the tutoring process, that usually happens because they have been "sent" rather than having freely chosen to come to the writing center, or when they are fulfilling the short-term performance goal of visiting to receive extra credit, rather than electing to put in the effort due to their belief that tutors offer a valuable service. This observation complicates findings from research about the effects of required writing center visits. Writing center lore long held that a required visit would undermine the important element of a student's choice or agency, therefore making the visit less successful. But, that has not proven to surface in the results of research studies that have compared satisfaction survey results among students who have been required and those who have not (Gordon, 2008). However, the experiences tutors in this study shared suggested that even if we

do not see differences reflected in post-session satisfaction surveys, this group of tutors believe that their interactions with writers not internally motivated to visit the writing center *feel* more troubling, difficult, and less productive to tutors.

Tutors' written reflections and interviews indicated that sometimes students expressed frustration with either the process of tutoring or with the writing centers' administrative policies or procedures. Eva had experienced the latter, maybe more frequently than other tutors, because her isolated location in the library prompts students to ask her to transgress session limitations because, in her words, "no one can see us" (Eva, interview, April 16, 2015). Eva and other tutors in the study reported feeling frustrated or irritated when students put tutors in the position of having to say no to requests to subvert writing center rules. This may be because having to be the enforcer of rules pushed the tutors into a position of authority or "establishment" that they felt undermined the power of the peer-to-peer activity of tutoring. Or, it may be due to the tutors' belief in the effectiveness of writing center policies and procedures—the basis for the credibility of their own tutoring work.

Writing center literature has provided examples of moments when a student writer's expectations for what the tutoring process is like have differed from those of the tutor, resulting in mutual frustration (Munday, 2005). To proactively head-off such conflicts, Tracy's and Dawn's tutoring sessions were characterized by many explicit statements about the tutoring process: what they will be doing, what the writer will be doing, and why (Tracy, session 8, April 24, 2015; Dawn, session 2, April 21, 2015; Dawn, session 3, April 23, 2015). These strategies circumvented situations like one Sergei described, when a writer attempted to carry on a phone conversation while Sergei "fixed" her paper (Sergei & Madison, interview, April 17, 2015). Sergei's attempts to engage the writer were less direct than Tracy's and Dawn's and did not

include discussion of the rationale behind tutoring activities, in other words, what the writer would gain from cooperation. The writer did not ever fully buy-in to the session in the way Sergei wanted, and as a result, he simmered with anger and frustration throughout the session.

Participating tutors' affective responses to student writers' negative achievement emotions were complex, influenced by the specific nature and directionality of the emotion. It could be difficult for the tutors in this study, especially the undergraduates, to suppress negative affective responses when they interpreted a student's emotion as indicative of the student's devaluing of the help the tutor was offering, or academic pursuits and relationships with faculty that the tutors valued highly. At times, participating tutors' cognitive conceptualizations of student writers' emotions and their affective response to those emotions aligned, and at other times they seemed to contradict.

Tutors' Behavioral Responses to Student Writers'

Negative Achievement Emotions

Analysis of 12 recorded tutoring sessions and participants' written reflections and interviews revealed that tutors in this study regularly have responded to student writers' negative emotions through their tutoring strategies, both proactively and reactively. In Chapter Two, I summarized the concept of negative achievement emotions as influenced by a person's perception of their control of the situation, their perception of the value of the achievement task, and their perception of how successful completion of the task would or would not contribute to their own goals. Tutors in this study wrote about, spoke about, and demonstrated tutoring strategies focused on the emotions themselves, on writing goals, and on the control or value elements of the achievement task. Researchers suggest that focusing on any of these can help move students toward more positive emotions, more productive engagement with the writing

task, and higher writing performance, since all of these elements are reciprocal (Miron, Brummet, Ruggles, & Brehn, 2008).

Many of the tutoring strategies tutors described or demonstrated in this study have their roots in tutors' cognitive conceptions of student writers' negative achievement emotions-- strategies intended to increase confidence by engaging in positive talk with writers, emphasizing elements of student writers' control or choice in both their writing and in the session itself, and careful scaffolding of writers' learning about writing processes and expectations. In this section, I will discuss some notable examples of these strategies, and discuss what I heard from the tutors about how they learned these strategies. Findings discussed in this section are organized in this way:

1. Proactively addressing emotions
2. Increasing student writers' confidence:
 - a. Accentuating the positive
 - b. Scaffolding and meta-talk about writing
 - c. Offering choices
3. Tutors' life experiences as sources of strategies.

Proactively Addressing Emotions

As I have established, writing center tutors in this study anticipated that some students in the writing center would feel negative achievement emotions. This group of tutors addressed those emotions as part of their regular practice. As discussed above, participating tutors routinely asked writers how they felt about the assignment they brought to the center, or the class more broadly. This not only allowed the tutor to "diagnose" the writer's emotional state, but also established a personal connection and an invitation to trust the tutor--elements tutors in this study

identified as important ways they proactively address negative achievement emotions. Tracy and Dawn's explicit talk about what would happen in the session and why was also meant to put potentially anxious writers at ease.

Tutors in the study have developed strategies that anticipate and begin to alleviate anxiety, in particular among the negative achievement emotions, from the very beginning of the session. Dawn's demeanor during the recorded tutoring sessions was deliberately calm, even serene. She reported cultivating this affect, believing that her calm would have a positive effect on writers who might feel anxious. In both sessions recorded with Dawn, she listened closely to what writers said, usually repeated or reformulating their comments to demonstrate her understanding, and confirmed that she would indeed respond to any concerns they raised. The opening questions she asked writers during her recorded sessions were simply constructed, delivered in a relaxed manner, and allowed the writer to speak from his or her perceived writing strengths, experience with the genre, and assessment of their own needs. In one of her sessions, Dawn asked a writer from China when the assignment was due. The writer's response was "Um, like some further explaining, and uh, correct my citation." This response indicated to Dawn that the writer had not understood the question about a due date. Dawn acknowledged what the student had said she wanted to work on, then rephrased her question about the due date: "When is it due, or when do you have to submit it—submit . . . give it to your instructor?" (Dawn, session 2, April 21, 2015). Simply structuring opening questions, and reformulating when necessary so that they are easily answerable, appeared to be a positive-politeness strategy that reduced the potential for loss of face that could easily increase an already potentially anxious writer's anxiety about the session (Mackiewicz & Thompson, 2013).

Increasing Student Writers' Confidence

Accentuating the positive. Dawn spoke of her attempts to foster a positive environment during tutoring sessions as another strategy for anticipating and alleviating anxiety. She described closing a session with an especially distressed writer like this:

I concluded by saying, "Repeat after me. 'I can do this.'" She did. I made her repeat this statement three times with additional vigor and confidence. She smiled, and was ready to take on the task at hand. I left her with the notes we had taken, as well as a button from the Writing Center that said something to the effect of "get 'er done". This too helped to sustain the confidence that we had built with a positive, self-affirming statement (Dawn, written reflection, April 5, 2015).

Dawn was not alone among the study participants in accentuating the positive; others talked about attempts to "keep it upbeat" (Sergei, written reflection, April 10, 2015) or "have a positive attitude" (Tracy, written reflection, April 10, 2015). In Chapter Four, I recounted the repeated assurances Madison offered a writer at the end of a session: "It's okay. It's okay," and "I think you've got this" (Madison, session 5, April 16, 2015). In addition, Sergei reported often reframing writers' negative statements in a more positive light; for example, if a writer said a professor wrote a lot of negative comments on a draft, Sergei might suggest that this would help them more easily decide together how to approach revisions (Sergei & Madison interview, April 17, 2015).

In addition to positive talk during tutoring sessions, tutors in this study emphasized the importance of praise when writers they worked with felt anxious, frustrated or hopeless. All of the participating tutors mentioned that they have taken extra care to offer praise for successful moments in the draft, or for the student's hard work and determination when the student was

experiencing a negative emotion. Flynn, Tracy, and Katherine, who all have had writers with standing appointments to work with them repeatedly, sometimes across many semesters, recounted being able to acknowledge long-term growth and consistent strengths in writers they saw often, perhaps putting them in a better position to provide the kind of feedback on effort Dweck (2006, 2015) would argue fosters a growth mindset than tutors in the study who did not work with the same writers over long periods of time. When working with a writing center regular who was well known in the writing center for his frequent high levels of anxiety, frustration, anger, and hopelessness, Katherine reported often saying things like, “This looks similar to what you did last time, which you did so well on” (Katherine, interview, May 6, 2015), to assuage the writer’s negative feelings and help him transfer a writing skill to the new situation.

Scaffolding and meta-talk about writing. In the above example, Katherine used praise of a writer’s strengths to facilitate transfer of those strengths to a new writing situation. She helped him understand how the new writing context was similar to a previous one, providing a piece of the cognitive scaffolding the writer needed to grasp what he needed to do in order to take on a new assignment. There were several times in the study when tutors framed praise in a similar way, increasing writers’ understanding of how a genre or assignment worked by pointing out where the writer already demonstrated the requisite skill or knowledge, and explicating relating that skill or knowledge to the area the writer was trying to revise. Madison wrote about this in her reflection:

In terms of students who are anxious/disheartened/worried/etc., I may change my approach by spending a little bit more time pointing out the things they did well in the paper so they don’t believe they have to change everything they did or think they are incapable of doing anything right. For example, if they are overwhelmed by creating a

thesis statement and don't know what to do, I show them how by having organized body paragraphs they have already finished much of the hard work. My strategy for explaining the thesis statement to them will include showing them how to use all the hard work they already put into the paper into crafting a main thesis for the paper. When they realize they already did a lot of the hard work, or that the revision I am suggesting is not as demanding as they thought, their anxiety tends to dissipate (Madison, written reflection, April 6, 2015).

This passage demonstrates an emotional effect of scaffolded learning: the writer's anxiety decreased because his or her perception or control increased. Tutors in the study might describe that as his or her confidence increasing.

Throughout the study, tutors linked scaffolding writers' understanding of assignments, genres, and expectations for academic writing with increasing their confidence, positing that this not only addresses a negative emotion in the moment, but also could contribute to long-term change in the writer's feelings toward and abilities in writing. Research in motivation and learning suggests the tutors are likely right to believe that educational scaffolding that increases confidence can contribute to learners' performances (Etheride & Wachholz, 1996; Lavelle & Zuercher, 2001; Pajares, 2003; Pajares & Valiante, 2006). However, it would be unsafe to assume that what appears to be an increase in confidence will always result in increased performance. An appearance or even claim of confidence does not always mean that a learner has internalized a new idea and will be able to correctly apply it in future. A student might claim to feel more confidence than he or she really feels as a face-saving strategy, if it felt threatening to reveal vulnerability to a tutor. Additionally, research has suggested that students sometimes overestimate their own writing abilities, inappropriately assuming skills they have applied in

previous contexts will be adequate for new writing genres, purposes, or audiences (Pajares, 2003; Williams & Takaku, 2011).

To judge whether a piece of scaffolding, including meta-talk about writing, has helped a writer learn, a tutor would have to find a way to assess the outcome of the scaffolding. In other words, the tutor would need to see evidence that the writer can actually do what he or she is claiming newfound confidence about. During the period I was recording sessions, Tracy had a session with a writer feeling hopeless about a paper that asked her to analyze the arguments in two texts the class had read. I was not able to record the session, but Tracy recounted it for me immediately after. In the session, it was evident that the writer was able to repeat some of the writing terms used in the class: thesis, analysis, claims, support. But, she did not understand exactly what they were, and how they should work together in her paper. First, Tracy acknowledged the writer's summary of the texts she was writing about, then pointed the writer's attention to the assignment prompt, "The question is whether these are effective. Do you know what that means?" The writer had trouble answering, so Tracy reformulated, "Okay. So just tell me—which article do you think is more convincing?" With a few prompts from Tracy, who was writing down everything the writer said, the writer was able to list a few arguments from one article and a few from the other and explain why she thought one was more convincing. Tracy then moved the writer toward crafting a thesis statement by writing while saying aloud, "Cole's article is more convincing than Govnik's because. . ." The writer finished the sentence by summarizing the reasons she had just listed. The session went on to address the claims the writer would make in each paragraph, which Tracy pulled directly from the list the writer had given her when she had explained why one was more convincing than the other. By the end of the session, the writer was thinking of thesis, claims, support not as disparate and mysterious features of

academic writing, but as ideas she already had access to, and already knew how to verbalize to an audience to create a coherent, supported argument. Tracy knew her scaffolding had been effective, and knew that the writer's expression of increased confidence was likely to reflect real learning, because Tracy had the writer demonstrate the skill Tracy was trying to teach her.

In the session above, Tracy seemed not only to offer the writer access to knowledge about the genre of academic argument, but also demonstrated the mental process a writer goes through when constructing that genre. Often, tutors in the study attended to writers' emotions by engaging the writer in meta-talk about the writing or the writing process as a means of scaffolding their learning. This happened when tutors would suggest invention strategies, like freewriting or creating concept maps to get writers past the anxiety or hopelessness they felt at the beginning of a large writing task, or when they suggested reverse-outlining or paragraph glossing to revise for organization. These are not strategies tutors in this study reserved for writers experiencing negative emotions, but rather were strategies taught at this site as effective in many writing center sessions. Participating tutors might inadvertently ameliorate students' negative emotions by using these techniques even when they were not aware of the writer's emotional state. Tutors in the study, though, suggested that when they were aware that a writer was feeling anxious, frustrated or hopeless, they would take extra care to ensure that the cognitive scaffolding and insights into the writing process they offered were easily accessible to the writer, and that the writer could successfully demonstrate them during the course of the tutoring session. Careful scaffolding, like that described in Tracy's session, attends to both the cognitive and affective elements of language learning Vygotsky described as crucial (Levykh, 2008; Mahn & John-Steiner, 2002).

Among the various aspects of college writing processes writing center tutors help writers learn, the tutors in this study emphasized revising based on faculty feedback as an aspect of the process with the potential to both cause negative emotions and be hampered by those emotions. Participating tutors' stories about writers' extreme negative emotions usually had to do with feedback from faculty when the feedback was overwhelmingly negative with emotional undertones, when comments were so varied and prolific that students didn't know how to begin addressing them, or when comments were negative but too vague to be useful. Some tutors discussed emotionally reframing the feedback with writers, suggesting that criticism does not necessarily convey a professor's contempt or displeasure, but rather investment in the writer's success. Tutors also reported helping writers reformulate comments that were hard to understand, or categorize and prioritize comments when professors did not do so. Dawn related a story about a writer who felt hopeless in the face of overwhelming negative feedback, and angry at the professor for having made him feel that way. She worked with the writer to rewrite or summarize each of the comments. They then sorted them into columns, and found there were three major areas the professor wanted the writer to attend to. She reported that, "When we simplified the mass of red by noting that the remarks pointed him toward revising three items, the student began to feel more confident--'Oh, I can revise three things.'" (Dawn, interview, April 28, 2015).

Offering choices. Tutors' attention to the control element of negative achievement emotions, which they frequently associated with confidence, extended to presenting student writers with choices. As I asserted in Chapter Four, tutors in the study sometimes associated writers' confidence in their ability to accomplish a difficult writing task to the amount of control they had over not only their ability to accomplish the task, but also to choose different ways to go about accomplishing it. Repeatedly, I read, heard, and observed tutors offering choices to

writers. These choices included choices about the tutoring session itself and about the texts they were creating or revising. When asked about how the strategy of offering choices addressed emotions, tutors often spoke to the relationship between choice and confidence, as if making a series of small decisions empowered students to take on larger ones.

Helping writers see both their writing and a tutoring session as a series of choices the writer is empowered to make enhances the student's perception of their control of the achievement task. Control has to do with the student's perception of how much command he or she has over the outcome or activity—in other words, his or her ability to complete the task in a way that satisfies the goals he or she has for the task (Pekrun, 2009). When offering choices, tutors in the study not only enhanced a student's sense of control by increasing their confidence in their overall ability to complete the task, but also by emphasized that the student can approach the task in a number of ways. The student's sense of control and their engagement with the task can be even further increased when those choices are connected to the student's own goals for the writing. Flynn, Tracy, and Katherine stated that they do sometimes ask writers who seem anxious, frustrated, or bored what they want to accomplish with or get out of a piece of writing beyond a grade. In other words, these tutors tried to leverage a student's mastery goals—personal, long-term goals that go beyond an immediate, evaluated performance—in order to increase the student's perception of the value of a writing task. When paired with tutoring strategies that increase control, like showing the writer choices or increasing the writer's confidence, the effect is likely to be a more positive reorientation to the writing task, accompanied by increased persistence and satisfaction (Pekrun, 2009).

Tutors in the study wrote about, talked about and demonstrated a range of tutoring strategies intended to address student writers' negative achievement emotions associated with

writing. These strategies were grounded in participating tutors' concepts about what writers need to feel more positively oriented toward a writing task or writing context, including acknowledgement of their emotional response, confidence in their ability to accomplish the task, and choices about how to accomplish it. Where did the tutors learn these strategies? The final section of discussion in this chapter explores what I learned about how tutors in the study have developed the strategies they employ.

Tutors' Life Experiences as Sources of Strategies

At the site of the study, new tutors participate in a series of workshops about tutoring writing, and spend a week (sometimes two) observing and discussing the sessions of experienced tutors who have been identified as "trainers". Tutors are also periodically observed (never more than once per semester), and given feedback on those observed sessions. I initially anticipated tutors' training and their experiences in the writing center would be a primary source of their beliefs about student writers' emotions and knowledge about tutoring strategies, but found that the answer was more complicated than that.

Some tutors in the study explained that they have learned or refined some particular strategies, especially those associated with careful cognitive scaffolding, from reflecting on their earlier tutoring efforts. Madison and Eva, in particular, seemed aware of their colleagues' strategies, attributing some of their own approaches to having observed them in either trainers or other tutors. Only one tutor in the study reported remembering a concept about or approach to negative emotions from tutor training workshops, and that was Katherine, who, as an administrator, is now responsible for facilitating some of that training.

Instead of writing center training, tutors in the study related stories about experiences from their lives outside the writing center as instructive for learning how to address writers'

negative emotions. Sometimes they expressed an awareness of or concern about their lack of formal expertise in psychology, qualifying their statements with phrases like, “I’m not an expert, but...”. However, tutors could relate particular experiences that inform their work. Katherine described remembering how her mother, an elementary school teacher, handled difficult moments with students. Tracy and Dawn discussed their experiences as classroom teachers as and how connections with their students helped them understand the affective elements of writing in ways they enact in the writing center. Tutors in the study also described their own experiences as writers and learners as informing their understandings of, feelings toward, and approaches to working with writers feeling negative emotions.

Sergei, Flynn, Dawn, and Eva reported understanding how negative emotions can contribute to avoidance or procrastination, trouble gathering thoughts, and difficulty in responding to feedback because they have experienced these effects themselves. Dawn, Katherine, and Eva, related personal struggles with anxiety or hopelessness that were sometimes severe, attributing their empathy for student writers to those experiences. Flynn related two stories when he felt angry at and betrayed by professors who failed to scaffold his learning or listen to his concerns during the writing process, yet still held him accountable for the results, leaving him feeling, “under-served and dismissed” (Flynn, written reflection, April 2, 2015). His memory of this feeling contributed to his careful scaffolding efforts and his attempts to get writers to tell him what kind of help would be most useful to them. Tracy wrote about trying hard to adapt her approach to graduate coursework that was required of her, but not immediately relevant to her particular interests, so that she could find an angle closer in line with her research goals. She reported asking writers to think about the goals writing assignments can help them fulfill, even when it meant coming at the assignment from a very different angle than other

students might (Tracy, written reflection, April 10, 2015). In these examples, tutors in the study used their memory of something that was difficult or painful to inform their approaches to student writers who feel a negative emotion.

Sergei and Madison stood out as the two tutors who did not offer as many personal stories about their own struggles as learners as did the other tutors in the study. When they did acknowledge a difficult moment, it was a *moment* only—a short struggle that they had the resources to successfully resolve through their own intellectual capacity or through the mentorship of a faculty member. These two tutors also spoke at greater length than other tutors in the study about their negative affective negative responses to student writers' boredom with writing assignments and anger or frustration directed at faculty (Sergei & Madison, interview, April 17, 2015; Sergei written reflection, April 10, 2015; Madison, written reflection, April 6, 2015). Interestingly, Sergei wrote about his own negative responses to assignments he didn't understand and could not get clarification about from faculty, despite attempting to do so. However, he and Madison both expressed irritation when students engaged in "professor blaming," including students' insistence that their professors are unavailable or unapproachable (Sergei & Madison, interview, April 17, 2015; Madison, written reflection, April 5, 2015). In part, Sergei's and Madison's discomfort with criticism of faculty, and the apparent contradiction between Sergei's own experience and his feelings about other students' experiences are possibly due to the complicated role an undergraduate tutor takes on. While in a tutoring session with a student, Sergei and Madison may be occupying an identity that they might feel emphasizes their role as a representative of the university perhaps more than it does their role as a student (Cooper, 1995; Grimm 1999). Additionally, despite being able to name a few moments when writing involved struggle, Madison's and Sergei's overall orientations toward school and toward

faculty seemed distinctly positive, characterized by stories they shared in their written reflections and interviews about successful performance and good mentoring relationships.

I am not suggesting their success makes Sergei and Madison less able to support writers than other tutors in the study, or that they are incapable of empathizing with struggling students. Sergei and Madison wrote and spoke about sharing information with students about how to foster relationships with faculty, an importance piece of “really useful knowledge” about academia (Cooper, 1995). But, tutors whose experiences are like theirs may, as Grimm (1999) argued, need more help in cultivating understanding of students who may be less engaged with school, since their own experiences do not offer a source of insight into that kind of feeling.

Summary of Findings

My study provided insight into how participating writing center tutors respond to--in other words, how they understand, feel about, and use tutoring strategies to address--student writers' negative achievement emotions. Results from the tutor survey completed by 28 tutors, as well as the written reflections and interviews completed by the subgroup of 7 tutors, demonstrated that during their varying tenures as tutors, tutors at this site have encountered student writers who the tutors felt were experiencing anxiety, frustration, hopelessness, anger and boredom, and that tutors in the study believed that student writers come to the writing center experiencing anxiety and frustration more frequently than the other achievement emotions. Results of the tutor survey indicated that 18 out of the 28 participating tutors have experienced writers explicitly disclosing their feelings toward their writing in more than half of the total number of sessions they have completed as tutors. While writers have directly confided their feelings toward their writing to tutors in the study, tutors participating in the written reflections, interviews and recorded sessions reported also actively “reading” writers' tacit messages about

their emotional states by observing body language, tone of voice and word choice. Tutors who completed the survey indicated that they believed writing assignments to most often contribute to student writers' anxiety, frustration, hopelessness and boredom, and writing instructors to most often contribute to student writers' anger. Tutors who participated in the interviews, written reflections and recorded sessions provided further insight by specifying that, in their experience as tutors, faculty's lack of sufficient scaffolding of assignments and effective feedback on writing in progress contributed to student writers' anxiety, frustration, anger and hopelessness.

On the tutor survey, 24 out of 28 tutors described negative achievement emotions as either slightly or very harmful to student writers' writing. The subgroup of 7 tutors elaborated on this by attributing inability to stay focused on the writing task and procrastination in particular to anxiety, frustration, hopelessness and boredom. Two tutors in the subgroup of 7 discussed situations during which small amounts of frustration or anxiety could prompt student writers to expend extra effort and ultimately raise their achievement level on a piece of writing. However, the other 5 tutors spoke and wrote of negative emotions only having negative impacts, and did not make distinctions between short-term emotional experiences and long-term learning, perhaps overgeneralizing the link between positive affect and learning familiar to writing center scholars in self-efficacy theory.

In written reflections and interviews, tutors' own reported affective responses to writers' negative emotions were dominated by empathy, but did vary, usually due to the directionality of the emotion; anger and frustration directed toward faculty, and boredom with writing assignments or writing center practices sometimes made tutors in the study uncomfortable. Moments when participating tutors grew frustrated with student writers expressing negative emotions toward faculty or the writing center challenge the assumption seen in writing center

theory (Bruffee, 1984; Harris, 1995; McKinney, 2013) that writing center peer tutors will naturally relate to student writers, and provides support for the idea that writing center peer tutors sometimes occupy tricky social territory when their identities as students and identities as representatives of the university seem in conflict (Cooper, 1995; Grimm, 1999).

Tutors who participated in interviews, written reflections and recorded sessions employed a number of tutoring strategies to address writers' negative emotions, some of which related to the control-value and goal-orientation elements of negative achievement emotion theory. More tutors in the study seemed to be employing strategies meant to increase control elements of students' writing context than value or goal-orientation elements; all 7 participating tutors described or demonstrated strategies meant to increase confidence or self-efficacy, concepts closely related to perception of control, and 3 tutors described attempting to influence value elements of the writing context, particularly how writing assignments might further students' pursuit of their own academic and professional goals. Two tutors indicated that attempting to leverage students' short term goal of achieving a high grade did not, in their experience, tend to work to promote more active engagement in a tutoring session.

Participating tutors' perceptions of, feelings about, and some of their tutoring strategies to address negative emotions were grounded in their experiences as tutors and as learners, themselves, with only one tutor referring to tutor training material as informing her work.

In the next section of this chapter, I will consider implications findings from this study have for writing center studies and composition studies.

Implications for Writing Centers

Fallon (2010) argued that writing center tutors are "perceived" and "conceived" by student writers, by writing center scholars, and by other tutors, and that closely examining the

lived experiences of tutors allows the field to examine and test those perceptions and conceptions. By asking writing center tutors to report their experiences working with writers feeling negative emotions, his study has offered what Fallon (2010) referred to as the “lived experiences” of a group of writing center tutors.

Tutors participating in this study appeared to share writing center scholars’ belief that students with complex, sometimes detrimental emotional responses to college writing visit writing centers (Ariail, 1996; Babcock, Manning, & Rogers, 2013; Follett & Emmons, 2013; Harris, 1995; Hudson, 2001; Lape, 2008; Mills, 2011). The fact that participating tutors’ confirm that many writers in the writing center sometimes feel angry, anxious, hopeless, bored, or frustrated makes my findings about how tutors feel and what they do when confronted by these emotions all the more important. According to this group of tutors, working with a writer who is feeling a negative achievement emotion is not something that will happen only once or twice to a tutor during his or her tenure in the writing center.

According to tutors in this study, anxiety and frustration, both emotions that can have a detrimental effect on writers’ processes and performances (Pekrun, 2006), are prevalent among the negative emotions student writers’ express. Tutors in the study acknowledged that their role as tutors includes addressing affective elements of writing, and frequently expressed empathy for student writers’ emotional struggles. These findings seemed to support claims like Harris’ (1995) that writing centers can be places where student writers comfortably express negative feelings and receive the support of an empathetic peer.

On the other hand, tutors in this study seemed less comfortable with student writers’ negative achievement emotions when those emotions were directed toward faculty or toward writing center policies or procedures. This seemed to support Cooper (1995) and Grimm’s

(1999) assertions that to assume because tutors are also students they will naturally empathize with them is to oversimplify tutors' feelings, experiences and identities. When student writers criticized faculty members, Sergei and Madison did not see this as an opportunity to help the student learn to engage in productive critique of academia, as Cooper (1995) might encourage them to do, but rather were more likely to dismiss the students' claims about faculty. This is despite Sergei and Madison both also having asserted, along with other tutors in the study, that they understood insufficient scaffolding of learning and ineffective faculty feedback as factors contributing to student writers' negative emotions. In this case, Sergei and Madison's cognitive and affective responses to student writers' emotions conflicted. Writer center administrators would do well to acknowledge that their tutors, too, may have complex reactions to situations involving emotions and values, and find ways to explore those reactions with their staff.

Tutors in this study, despite not having studied theories of the control-value aspects of achievement emotions, were able to identify elements of control and value as essential to positive affective orientation toward a writing task, despite not using those terms. They had a number of strategies intended to increase students' perceptions of control, like scaffolding to increase confidence, positive talk to reframe elements of the writing context as controllable, and emphasizing students' ability to choose how to approach their writing processes. If writing center administrators see similar understanding and strategies among their own staff, they might affirm tutors' control-oriented strategies, assuring tutors that these strategies can have mitigating effects on students' negative emotions (Miron, Brummet, Ruggles, & Brehm, 2008). However, writing center professionals should also be mindful of the limitation of assuming that movement toward more positive affect, like higher confidence, is necessarily what makes a successful session. While research in self-efficacy suggests a students' confidence is important to their long term

development, it is not always reasonable for a tutor to expect to see an increase in confidence during the course of a single tutoring session. A student's confidence in their abilities is not likely to rise in one continuous arc; rather, there will be lows and highs of shorter duration, even if the overall trajectory of the student's confidence is rising (Pajares, 2003).

While seemingly equipped to address elements of control in students' emotional responses to writing, tutors in this study seemed less likely or less prepared to address elements of value. Control has to do with a writer's belief in his or her ability to successfully complete an achievement task, and value has to do with how important success or failure on the task seems to the student. Students tend to assign higher value to tasks that they perceive will help them move toward meaningful long-term goals. Some participating tutors reported sometimes trying to leverage students' long-term goals and convince them of the importance of writing assignments. But, tutors often found it difficult to see how a writing assignment might be connected to a student's goals beyond the short-term goal of achieving a grade. When tutors in the study had tried to use grades as a motivator, they found that to be ineffective much of the time, and dissatisfying to both the tutor and the student. Participating tutors' inability to address value and goals may speak to those tutors lack of awareness of curricular design. As an instructor, when I discuss the purpose of assignments with my students, we talk about the course's learning aims, how those aims fit within the aims and expected outcomes of the General Education Program and my students' chosen majors, and how this assignment will help them demonstrate their increasing skills as college students. I can do that because I designed the assignments, and have contributed to both departmental and college-wide discussion and assessment of program goals and learning aims. Writing center tutors, who do not approach work with individual writers with as deep a sense of context, need other means of engaging with students' goals and the value of

writing assignments if they are to have an effect on students' perceptions of value. The power of value re-orientation to motivate students, and to address their frustration, anger, and boredom, is worth investing more attention to how writing center tutors might become better able to discuss value and goals with student writers.

At the site of this study, tutors apply to work in the writing center, and are hired based on activities on their CV, writing samples, and an interview. Most applicants, and most hires, are students in the academic honors program. It seems not unusual for a writing center to attract tutors who have had a substantial degree of academic success, especially in writing. It is important for writing tutors to understand writing processes and products, after all. But, the findings of this study suggest that these participating tutors' emotional orientation toward writers are grounded in their own experiences as learners, and that having experienced struggle leads to empathetic, reflective, and inclusive attitudes toward other writers. If Madison and Sergei had more complex understandings of and appreciation for student writers' goals, beyond the goal of pleasing professors or achieving high grades, this might increase these two tutors' tolerance for students whose disengagement with writing tasks read to them as disdain or disinterest in learning. Perhaps leading tutors with histories of high performance and faculty-positive attitudes similar to Sergei's and Madison's in discussion of goal orientation and learning would offer such tutors a more complex understanding of the relationship between goals and engagement. This would allow these tutors to more productively intervene when the emotion hindering a student is value-oriented, and reads to the tutor as rejection of faculty or the academic enterprise.

In addition to helping tutors like Sergei and Madison examine their assumptions about the value of writing assignments and of faculty, writing center administrators might also reach out to tutors like Eva—tutors who have experienced significant academic challenges. When

writing center administrators listen to potential tutors in tutor training classes or in interviews, we should be listening for stories about challenge and vulnerability as well as stories about achievement, and we should facilitate tutors' reflection on how both their failures and successes have shaped their beliefs and feelings about themselves, and about teaching and learning. This is important if we want writing center tutors with to be able to connect with students, and for writing centers to be safe spaces for all writers, including those whose experiences call for critique of institutional practices and assumptions, as Cooper (1995) and Grimm (1999, 2008) assert they should be.

Writing centers should not only be emotionally safe spaces for writers; they should be safe spaces for tutors, as well. While tutors in this study seemed well-equipped to handle mild to moderate expressions of negative achievement emotions, some tutors reported feeling upset and concerned about moments when writers' emotions seemed extreme or when the emotions were directed at them, at the writing center, or at professors. These tutors might benefit from resources or avenues to express and mitigate their own affective responses to emotionally-charged tutoring sessions. This would help them more consistently examine their affective responses through their rational constructs, as Katherine described doing in the face of what looked like a student's resistance during a tutoring session. It would also help them construct some emotional distance from writers' negative feelings, cultivating what Eva referred to as "A moment just to breathe."

Implications for Composition Studies

Writing center scholars have long suggested that findings from our research have implications and applications in the broader academic community, especially concerning the lived experiences of student writers and the impact of peer collaboration (Bruffee, 1994, 1995; Fels, 2010; Grimm, 1999, 2008; Lunsford, 1991). Tutors in this study shared stories about the

emotional impact of different approaches to assigning, scaffolding, and responding to student writing that might help our colleagues across the university not only consider what their students might expect from writing center tutors, but also reflect upon the impact of their own teaching practices. Sharing out to our colleagues is essential if writing centers are to have a positive, visible, substantive impact on the teaching and learning of writing at the institutional level, instead of providing invisible, remedial care to individuals for whom the assumptions and practices of the academy are not an easy fit (Cooper, 1995; Grimm, 1999, 2008).

Of interest to composition scholars and teachers of writing in all disciplines is participating tutors' perceptions that student writers often feel negative emotions when they haven't effectively engaged in sufficient cognitive scaffolding. Some of the more poignant moments in participating tutors' experiences with distressed student writers occurred when those students expressed feeling hopeless, anxious or frustrated to the point of paralysis because they did not appear to have the resources to complete complex assignments that their professors seemed to assume they did. Tutors' stories about moments of students' emotional paralysis suggested that some of these students recognized that they had been let down by faculty and were angered by that. Others, like the writer Tracy worked with in the example above, internalized their emotional response, assuming that if they could not complete an assignment, it was due to something they lacked.

This feeling of being paralyzed or, as Flynn put it, passively "adrift" is far from the environment of productive, activating challenge that mild levels of frustration can create. While it can be helpful to individual students' success on writing assignments for writing center tutors to scaffold writers' learning in the writing center, to do so without making those efforts visible to the larger composition and higher education professional communities enables faculty to

continue to teach without reflecting on their expectations for students or their attempts to scaffold learning. This is precisely among the dangerous “good intentions” Grimm (1999) warned the writing center community about—hiding the work writing centers do with students who need more than their classroom learning provides. Further, tutors in this study spoke to the difficulty of addressing students’ expectations and emotions about faculty during writing center sessions; the field of composition studies might do well to consider those difficult moments in writing center sessions, and ask what faculty want their role and tutors’ roles to be in mediating student writers’ emotions toward faculty. It is not safe to say that, in all the stories tutors in this study related to me, the faculty member completely failed the student by not providing any scaffolding. Tutors relied on writers’ explanations of what happened, so heard only the writer’s side, not the faculty member’s. Perhaps in some cases, there were efforts to scaffold learning, but the student did not engage with those in productive ways. Further, there is an argument to be made that an active, engaged student should take on the responsibility of trying to find out what he or she needs in order to complete an assignment. However, I suggest that, in situations like the one with Tracy’s struggling student, it matters less who is at fault for what, and matters more that the student get the resources she needs somewhere. It is also important that faculty know about this kind of struggle among their students, so they might reflect on what they offer students, what they expect from students, and what teaching techniques in the writing center have worked to support struggling students’ learning.

In addition to stories about students with low perceptions of their control of writing tasks, tutors in this study shared stories about writers who were bored due to their low perception of the value of writing assignments as they pertained to the students’ own goals for learning. Oxford and Shearin (1994) claimed that, all too often, teachers are unaware of students’ real motivations

for learning, particularly how students view their learning as connected to long term goals. The findings of this study suggest that faculty who want more engaged students might heed that it was challenging for participating tutors to leverage students' goals as a strategy for enhancing engagement. Faculty might make efforts to learn more about their students' reasons for being in college; explicitly discuss the benefits of writing assignments for a broad spectrum of goal-orientations; reflect on how their own epistemological, social, and emotional experiences influence their own perceptions of the value of writing they assign; and share information that might help tutors better understand how they can support students' long-term goal orientation through writing assignments.

Writing center tutors and administrators, compositionists and instructors of writing in all disciplines, in order to create writing contexts in which their students can succeed, must pay close attention to the roles scaffolding and purpose of writing play in affective elements of learning and writing. It's also important to acknowledge that this is no easy task. Achievement emotions, while felt by individuals, are situated in those individuals' social constructs (Pekrun, R., Maier, M., & Elliot, A., 2006). Students come to college with different educational, social, economic, and cultural backgrounds, so predicting what they know, what they need, and how academic expectations may affect them emotionally is challenging.

A Call for Future Research

The control-value theory of achievement emotions is not the only lens available for studying students' negative emotions in the writing center or tutors' responses to those emotions. I chose it because its emphasis on control and value aligns with research in self-efficacy and motivation that informs much contemporary composition scholarship; the accessible definitions of emotions lent clarity to the study; and the discussion of the connections among context,

control, value, and goals position emotions as constructed and experienced in a social context. I acknowledge, though, that, “Given its considerable breadth, studying emotion and motivation necessarily means slicing off a piece of the theoretical pie” (MacIntyre, 2002, p. 55).

This study provided a view of a group of tutors’ understandings of and feelings about student writers’ negative achievement emotions, as well as glimpses of how those understandings and feelings get enacted in tutors’ practices. The study touches on tutor identity as a key element of the construction of their understandings, feelings, and practices in that it included discussion of tutors’ experiences with and self-perceptions concerning academia—tutors’ lives as students. The study does not, however, investigate other cultural constructions of tutor identity, like gender, race, class, ability or nationality. I will share some reasons why this study did not do so, then I will make an argument for why future research would benefit from closer attention to tutor identity.

In this study, I did not ask tutors to consider and discuss specific ways in which their culturally constructed identities or the identities of writers they worked with may influence their understanding of, feelings toward or strategies for addressing writers’ emotions. Open-ended questions allowed tutors to take up these themes, if they chose to. But, with one exception, tutors in the study did not volunteer this kind of analysis. Madison made one comment that might provide a portal to further research when she was talking about her responses when a writer expresses anger, particularly anger directed toward faculty or the university. She said:

It also sometimes kind of, it depends on, like, the student’s age, like their sex and their race. Sometimes that affects it, too. You know what I mean? If it’s, like, an older guy, sometimes I feel a lot more anxious because then I feel like he’s just, like, looking at me

as, like, a young dumb college girl (Madison, Sergei & Madison interview, April 17, 2015).

Madison's comment, at heart, was about perceptions of her own authority in tutoring sessions when her position as a young, white woman might be interpreted by a student as insufficient for her to be in a position to understand or to help. The comment speaks to her tacit awareness that cross-cultural communication, particularly concerning emotions, can be complex and challenging, since pervasive cultural assumptions are at work (MacIntyre, 2002; Pavlenko, 2006). Writing center scholars would do well to continue recent research about how tutors' cultural constructions of identity inform their experiences in writing centers and their tutoring practices, particularly focusing on the impact of those identities on tutors' responses to affective elements of writing.

In analyzing data from written reflections, interviews, and recorded sessions, I did not separate tutors' experiences with native, L1 writers from those of multilingual writers or speakers of global Englishes. It would be interesting to focus a study on tutors' responses to multilingual writers' emotions. We interpret emotions through a sociocultural lens, making assumptions about the nature of emotions, the experience of feeling them, and attribution of cause based on tacit cultural beliefs (MacIntyre, 2002; Pavlenko, 2006; Wierzbicka, 1999), grounded in our own individual, embodied experiences of emotions (Silani, Lamm, Ruff, & Singer, 2013). This makes cross-cultural interpretation of emotional expressions challenging, since our own sociocultural experiences and assumptions are difficult to see past. Further, the emotional experiences of multilingual writers and speakers of global Englishes in the writing center may differ substantially from those of monolingual, native speakers, since the use of English may have different historical, political and cultural meanings than it does for native

speakers (Pavlenko, 2006; Benesch, 2012). This complexity, and what happens when writing center tutors attempt to address multilingual writers' emotions, might be fruitful to explore in a study with methods more suitable for gathering complex cultural perspectives.

Conclusions

This study advances Fels' (2010) and Fallon's (2011) call to draw on the experiences and perspectives of writing center tutors to inform research and theory-building in writing center and composition studies. Findings from this study not only provides insight into the experience of being a writing center tutor, but also offers a glimpse of the emotional experiences student writers might have as they navigate academic discourse, since tutors in the study indicated that student writers do sometimes directly disclose their emotions. Additionally, achievement emotions have been studied broadly in university settings, but this is the first study to specifically use the lens to address writing only, rather than a wider array of academic achievement tasks, like studying, participating in class discussions, and taking quizzes or exams. Findings about tutors' perceptions of the nature and effect of negative emotions associated with writing, as they witness them in students they've worked with in the writing center, deepens our understanding of what how college students' feelings are likely to be addressed when students seek help from peer tutoring programs. For further research, scholars might apply the lens of achievement emotion theory directly to study of student writers' experiences, using the theory to examine college writers' emotional experiences with writing across their years in college.

As I explained in the introduction to this study, my interest in negative achievement emotions originated from undergraduate tutors' questions and concerns. Years after the initial research I conducted with Siobhan and her undergraduate colleagues, I continue to hear questions from the tutors currently working in writing centers. Just this semester, one of the

undergraduate tutors from my current writing center, Chelsea, conducted research about tutors' responses to student writers' anxiety and students' preferences for how they would like tutors to respond. This project was born out of an experience Chelsea had as a tutor, when a student's anxiety escalated during a tutoring session. The student seemed to become hostile and dismissive of Chelsea's tutoring methods and her genre expertise. The student was trying to cope with a high-stakes assignment very important to his major at the end of his session, he confessed he was worried enough about it to have been losing sleep. When Chelsea and I discussed the session after the writer had left, she expressed that she wished she had considered anxiety as a possible cause of the student's aggressive behavior early in the session, when she could have re-approached the interaction in a way that would better help the writer and prevent her own emotional damage. While supporting Chelsea's efforts to work through her emotional response to this writer's manifestation of anxiety, I was reminded of my participant Katherine's explanation of how she takes a step back from students' apparent resistance, wonders what underlying affective factors could be at work, and gently explores those with the writer. What if Chelsea had a heuristic more like Katherine's to help them uncover writers' negative achievement emotions when writers don't directly disclose them, so they could address the control and value elements of the student's perception of the writing situation and mitigate the bad feeling?

As I have explored the experiences of the tutors in this study and continued to work with tutors like Chelsea, I have been repeatedly reminded that writing center tutors do encounter student writers' negative emotions about writing, especially frustration and anxiety. We should consider tutors' concerns about emotionally-fraught tutoring sessions significant, since the extra weight given to negative experiences is likely to have a strong influence on both tutors' overall

impressions of the nature of writing center work, and how tutors expect interactions with writers to proceed (Vaish, Grossmann, & Woodward, 2008). Tutors need preparation to facilitate a tutoring pedagogy that effectively incorporates attention to negative affect. Without an understanding of the role of negative emotion on writing, and how to intervene when emotions overcome a writer's ability to learn, tutors may respond defensively to writers expressing negative emotions, uncomfortable with the extra challenge emotionally-charged sessions present (Lape, 2008).

Is a writing center tutoring session involving an extreme negative emotion an everyday occurrence? It wasn't at the site of this study. On the survey, tutors indicated that anger, hopelessness and boredom are expressed less frequently than frustration and anxiety—no more than 25% of the time was the most popular answer. However, when asked to tell stories about their experiences with writers' negative achievement emotions, participating tutors could vividly recall moments concerning all of these emotions, and sometimes became quite impassioned while related the harmful effects these emotions had on writers and on the tutoring session. It is important to the professional and emotional lives of tutors who have similar experiences to those in the study that writing center scholars continue to learn about the effect of negative emotions on student writers, so we can empower our tutors to meet students' needs.

While this study has focused on the experiences of writing center tutors, I want to acknowledge that college students' needs, too, will be better met if educators continue to consider students' emotions about writing and writing center tutors' responses to those emotions. "Success and failure in achievement settings are of critical importance throughout students' educational careers . . . success and failure in education are highly important to the individual student, to the extent that they influence completion versus drop-out, employment versus

unemployment, affluence versus poverty, and health versus disease” (Pekrun & Perry, 2014). As writing centers continue to reach out to faculty and administrators to sponsor ethical, effective, inclusive literacy learning practices, we must continue to consider the impact of student writers’ emotions on their academic achievement, and the responses writing center tutors may have to student writers’ emotions.

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Appendix A:

Survey: Tutors' Impressions of Student Writers' Negative Emotions

Thank you for participating in this survey! Please answer honestly. There are no right nor wrong answers. Your responses will be kept anonymous.

This survey asks you to share your beliefs about negative achievement emotions students who visit the writing center feel about their writing. An achievement emotion is an emotion felt before, during or after a task that can be completed with different degrees of success, and that will be evaluated by another person.

Please answer the questions below based on overall impressions you have formed during your time training and working in the writing center.

Participation is voluntary. If you are at least 18 years of age and agree to participate in this research, please click "agree" below to indicate that you read and understood the informed consent statement included in the email you received.

☐ Agree

☐ Disagree

Anger: Psychologists define anger as ranging from minor irritation to intense rage. People feel angry when they feel threatened (actually or symbolically), or when they feel that something or someone is unfairly impeding their needs, goals, plans or desires. Usually, people feel angry at a particular person, object or situation. For example, a student might feel angry at a professor for giving him a low grade, or for not allowing him to write about what he wants to.

1. How frequently would you estimate student users of the writing center feel **angry** about the writing they brought when they visit the writing center?

☐ 0-25% of the time ☐ 26-50% of the time ☐ 50-75% of the time ☐ 75-100% of the time

☐ I don't know

2. When you have known writers to be angry in the writing center, which of the following seemed to be the focus of that feeling? (Check all that apply)

☐ The writing assignment

☐ The instructor

☐ The writing process

☐ The writing center or the tutor

☐ Other: (please specify)

Anxiety (or anxiousness): Anxiety is a feeling of worry, nervousness or unease. It is typically associated with an event or activity that has an unknown outcome, including possibly damaging negative outcomes. Sometimes, though not always, a bad experience in the past can make a person feel anxious when approaching similar experiences another time. For example, a student might feel anxious about writing an essay for a class when she has not received feedback from this instructor before, or if she has received negative feedback from this professor (or others) in the past. Or, a student might feel anxious if a writing task counts for a high percentage of the grade for the course, and she can't confidently predict that she will do well on it.

3. How frequently would you estimate student users of the writing center feel **anxious** about the writing they brought when they visit the writing center?

- ☐ 0-25% of the time ☐ 26-50% of the time ☐ 50-75% of the time ☐ 75-100% of the time
☐ I don't know

4. When you have known writers to be anxious in the writing center, which of the following seemed to be the focus of that feeling? (Check all that apply)

- ☐ The writing assignment
☐ The instructor
☐ The writing process
☐ The writing center or the tutor
☐ Other: (please specify)

Hopelessness: A person feels hopeless when he or she cannot imagine successfully completing a task. For example, a student might feel he will never be able to write a paper well enough to receive a passing grade.

5. How frequently would you estimate student users of the writing center feel **hopeless** about the writing they brought when they visit the writing center?

- ☐ 0-25% of the time ☐ 26-50% of the time ☐ 50-75% of the time ☐ 75-100% of the time
☐ I don't know

6. When you have known writers to be hopeless in the writing center, which of the following seemed to be the focus of that feeling? (Check all that apply)

- ☐ The writing assignment
☐ The instructor
☐ The writing process
☐ The writing center or the tutor
☐ Other: (please specify)

Frustration: A person feels frustration when he or she is unable to complete a task to his or her satisfaction due to an obstacle or obstacles. The obstacle(s) can be internal (like not knowing how to do something) or external (like not being given enough time or resources). For example, a student might feel frustration when she doesn't think she has the skill to write a particular kind of paper, or if she doesn't understand the instructor's directions or requirements. Sometimes, an obstacle is beyond anyone's control or is hard to identify, so instead of being angry at a particular person (For example, angry at a professor for a grade), a student might sometimes feel frustrated instead. For example, a student might feel frustrated because a paper is harder to write

than he anticipated, but he isn't sure why; or because he lost a draft of a paper due to a power outage.

7. How frequently would you estimate student users of the writing center feel **frustrated** about the writing they brought when they visit the writing center?

- ☐ 0-25% of the time ☐ 26-50% of the time ☐ 50-75% of the time ☐ 75-100% of the time
☐ I don't know

8. When you have known writers to be frustrated in the writing center, which of the following seemed to be the focus of that feeling? (Check all that apply)

- ☐ The writing assignment
☐ The instructor
☐ The writing process
☐ The writing center or the tutor
☐ Other: (please specify)

Boredom: Boredom is a lack of interest in engaging in a particular task, which leads to difficulty sustaining attention or concentration on that task. For example, a student might feel bored with a writing assignment if she doesn't see its relevance to herself, if the writing task isn't sufficiently challenging, or if the reward for performance on it is insufficient to overcome a lack of interest in the task itself.

9. How frequently would you estimate student users of the writing center feel **bored** by the writing they brought when they visit the writing center?

- ☐ 0-25% of the time ☐ 26-50% of the time ☐ 50-75% of the time ☐ 75-100% of the time
☐ I don't know

10. When you have known writers to be bored in the writing center, which of the following seemed to be the focus of that feeling? (Check all that apply)

- ☐ The writing assignment
☐ The instructor
☐ The writing process
☐ The writing center or the tutor
☐ Other: (please specify)

11. Generally, how **negative or positive** do you think student users of the writing center usually feel about the writing they bring to the writing center when they visit the center?

- ☐ Completely to mostly negative ☐ neutral ☐ mostly to completely positive
☐ I don't know

12. How frequently do students **directly tell you** how they feel about their writing when they visit the writing center?

- ☐ 0-25% of the time ☐ 26-50% of the time ☐ 50-75% of the time ☐ 75-100% of the time

13. How detrimental or beneficial do you think student writers' negative emotions **while in the writing center** are to their writing process and/or performance?

- ☐ very detrimental
- ☐ somewhat detrimental
- ☐ neither detrimental nor beneficial
- ☐ somewhat beneficial
- ☐ very beneficial

About you:

Gender: _____ ☐ Undergraduate student ☐ Graduate student

How long have you worked in writing centers (this one and any others)?

Appendix B:

Reflection on Student Writers' Emotions

This study is designed to explore writing center tutors' perceptions of and responses to student writers' expressions of negative achievement emotions about their academic writing.

Achievement emotions are felt preceding, during and after an achievement task—an activity (like writing) that will be evaluated.

If you have worked as a tutor for several semesters, you may be thinking back over many tutoring sessions. I suggest that you read through the definitions of emotions I include on this form, read through the questions, then take a few days to think about the experiences you've had in the writing center. You may even want to browse through your entries in the writing center database to remember particular sessions, although I don't require that you do so. I hope taking your time with this form will help you recall more tutoring sessions.

It can be difficult to define or describe emotions. Below are definitions I am working from of the emotions described above: boredom, anger, anxiety, frustration, hopelessness. You may remember them from the survey you took at the beginning of the semester.

Boredom: Boredom is a lack of interest in engaging in a particular task, which leads to difficulty sustaining attention or concentration on that task. For example, a student might feel bored with a writing assignment if she doesn't see its relevance to herself, if the writing task isn't sufficiently challenging, or if the reward for performance on it is insufficient to overcome a lack of interest in the task itself.

Anger: Anger can range from minor irritation to intense rage. People feel angry when they feel threatened (actually or symbolically), or when they feel that something or someone is unfairly impeding their needs, goals, plans or desires. Usually, people feel angry at a particular person, object or situation. For example, a student might feel angry at a professor for giving him a bad grade, or for not allowing him to write about what he wants to.

Anxiety (or anxiousness): Anxiety is a feeling of worry, nervousness or unease. It is typically associated with an event or activity that has an unknown outcome, including possibly damaging negative outcomes. Sometimes, though not always, a bad experience in the past can make a person feel anxious when approaching similar experiences another time. For example, a student might feel anxious about writing an essay for a class when she has not received feedback from this instructor before, or if she has received negative feedback from this professor (or others) in the past. Or, a student might feel anxious if a writing task counts for a high percentage of the grade for the course, and she can't confidently predict that she will do well on it.

Frustration: A person feels frustration when he or she is unable to complete a task to his or her satisfaction due to an obstacle or obstacles. The obstacle(s) can be internal (like not knowing how to do something) or external (like not being given enough time or resources). For example, a student might feel frustration when she doesn't think she has the skill to write a particular kind of

paper, or if she doesn't understand the instructor's directions or requirements. Sometimes, an obstacle is beyond anyone's control or is hard to identify, so instead of being angry at a particular person (For example, angry at a professor for a grade), a student might sometimes feel frustrated instead. For example, a student might feel frustrated because a paper is harder to write than he anticipated, but he isn't sure why; or because he lost a draft of a paper due to a power outage.

Hopelessness: A person feels hopeless when he or she cannot imagine successfully completing a task. For example, a student might feel he will never be able to write a paper well enough to receive a passing grade.

Have you worked with a student in the writing center who has felt in any of the following ways about their academic writing? Check as many as apply.

- ☐ Angry
- ☐ Annoyed
- ☐ Irritated
- ☐ furious
- ☐ Indignant
- ☐ Anxious
- ☐ Nervous
- ☐ Worried
- ☐ apprehensive
- ☐ Hopeless
- ☐ Despondent
- ☐ Disheartened
- ☐ depressed
- ☐ Frustrated
- ☐ Exasperated
- ☐ Discouraged
- ☐ Bothered
- ☐ Bored
- ☐ Uninterested

If there are there other ways you would describe the negative emotions student writers in the writing center have about their academic writing, please list those here:

What particular experiences have you had with writers in the writing center who have felt any negative emotions about their academic writing? Write anything that you remember about the context, the student, the assignment, and so on.

How do you feel when a student writer you work with in the writing center seems to feel:

1. Bored?
2. Angry?
3. Anxious?
4. Frustrated?
5. Hopeless?

If you change your tutoring approach or strategies in response to a student writer's negative emotions about academic writing, what do you do differently? You may describe your approaches or strategies in general terms, if you like, or if you remember specific sessions when you did something differently, you may describe what you did in those sessions.

How important do you feel it is for writing center tutors to address students' negative emotions as part of supporting their writing development?

1 Not at all important 2 Not very important 3 moderately important 4 very important 5 Vital

As a student, have you felt any of these ways about academic writing? Check any that apply.

- ☐ Angry
- ☐ Annoyed
- ☐ Irritated
- ☐ furious
- ☐ Indignant
- ☐ Anxious
- ☐ Nervous
- ☐ Worried
- ☐ apprehensive
- ☐ Hopeless
- ☐ Despondent
- ☐ Disheartened
- ☐ depressed
- ☐ Frustrated
- ☐ Exasperated
- ☐ Discouraged
- ☐ Bothered
- ☐ Bored
- ☐ Uninterested
- ☐ Other negative emotions: (please describe)

Think about times when you have felt negative emotions toward academic writing. How did you feel? Why? What were the circumstances? Describe any experiences that come to mind when you have felt negative emotions about your own academic writing.

Appendix C:

Interview Questions

- Do you think students' negative emotions affect their academic writing performance? If so, how?
- As a tutor, how can you usually tell when a student is experiencing a negative emotion? Do they tell you? Do you infer it from other clues?
- When you believe a student is experiencing a negative emotion toward academic writing during a tutoring session, are there other ways you respond during the session, aside from the practices you described earlier?
- How have you learned the strategies you use during sessions when a student seems to be feeling negative emotions?

Appendix D:

Student Pre-Session Emotions Inventory

This inventory asks you to rate how strongly you feel particular emotions about the writing you brought to the writing center. Please answer honestly—there are no right or wrong answers. The best answer is what fits how you feel about the paper you have brought to the writing center today, which might not necessarily be how you feel about writing in general. If you want to share more details about any of the emotions the survey asks about, there is a space to do that to the right of each item.

1. I feel: <input type="checkbox"/> Not at all confident <input type="checkbox"/> A little confident <input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Very confident about writing this paper.	Comments:
2. I feel: <input type="checkbox"/> Not at all frustrated <input type="checkbox"/> A little frustrated <input type="checkbox"/> Frustrated <input type="checkbox"/> Very frustrated by writing this paper.	Comments:
3. I feel: <input type="checkbox"/> Not at all anxious <input type="checkbox"/> A little anxious <input type="checkbox"/> Anxious <input type="checkbox"/> Very anxious about writing this paper.	Comments:
4. I feel: <input type="checkbox"/> Not at all interested <input type="checkbox"/> A little interested <input type="checkbox"/> Interested <input type="checkbox"/> Very interested by writing this paper.	Comments:

<p>5. I feel:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Not at all angry <input type="checkbox"/> A little angry <input type="checkbox"/> Angry <input type="checkbox"/> Very angry 	<p>Comments:</p>
<p>About writing this paper.</p>	
<p>6. I feel:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Not at all hopeless <input type="checkbox"/> A little hopeless <input type="checkbox"/> Hopeless <input type="checkbox"/> Very hopeless 	<p>Comments:</p>
<p>about writing this paper.</p>	
<p>7. I feel:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Not at all bored <input type="checkbox"/> A little bored <input type="checkbox"/> Bored <input type="checkbox"/> Very bored 	<p>Comments:</p>
<p>by writing this paper.</p>	
<p>8. I would say I:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Not at all enjoy <input type="checkbox"/> Enjoy a little <input type="checkbox"/> Enjoy <input type="checkbox"/> Very much enjoy 	<p>Comments:</p>
<p>writing this paper.</p>	
<p>9. Overall, my feelings about writing this paper are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly negative <input type="checkbox"/> More negative than positive <input type="checkbox"/> Equally negative and positive, or neutral <input type="checkbox"/> More positive than negative <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly positive <p>Comments:</p>	

Appendix E:

Post-Session Assessment of Writer's Emotions

This writer seemed to feel: (check all that apply)

- ☐ Angry
- ☐ Annoyed
- ☐ Irritated
- ☐ furious
- ☐ Indignant
- ☐ Anxious
- ☐ Nervous
- ☐ Worried
- ☐ apprehensive
- ☐ Hopeless
- ☐ Despondent
- ☐ Disheartened
- ☐ depressed
- ☐ Frustrated
- ☐ Exasperated
- ☐ Discouraged
- ☐ Bothered
- ☐ Bored
- ☐ Uninterested
- ☐ Other negative emotions: (please describe)
- ☐ No negative emotions

I would say the writer felt this emotion (or these emotions):

- ☐ Strongly
- ☐ Moderately
- ☐ Slightly

Appendix F:

Seven Themes and Associated Codes

<u>Theme</u>	<u>Codes Associated with Theme</u>
Theme 1: Tutors' perceptions of the prevalence and detrimental effects of anxiety and frustration on student writers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Estimating high frequency of emotions • Understanding negative achievement emotions as distractions from learning • Attributing procrastination to negative emotions • Attributing composing problems to negative emotions • Noticing frustration with the writing center or the process of tutoring • Using tutoring strategies to respond to anxiety • Considering positive effects of negative achievement emotions • Using tutoring strategies to respond to frustration.
Theme 2: Tutors as confidantes or lay counselors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [students] disclosing emotions • Inferring emotions from indirect cues • Verbally acknowledging writers' negative emotions • [Students'] expectations of peer tutors' empathy • Feeling empathy for student writers • Trying to mediate or ameliorate emotions • Referring students to counseling services
Theme 3: The directionality of students' emotions determining tutors' affective responses to student writers' emotions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expressing discomfort at negative emotions directed toward faculty • Empathizing with negative emotions directed toward the writing process or writing assignments • Resenting students' feelings of boredom • Expressing frustration at students' dissatisfaction with writing center processes or procedures.
Theme 4: Tutors' own challenges as writers as a source of empathy and tutoring strategies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expressing empathy with students' anxiety and frustration • Coping with their own writing anxiety • Sharing strategies that have worked for them as writers • Having experienced challenges as a tutoring strength.

Theme 5: Tutors' belief in students' lack of preparedness for or awareness of academic writing processes and genres as a source of anxiety, hopelessness, and frustration.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [Students] struggling with college life • Engaging in metatalk about writing and writing processes to mediate emotions • Providing cognitive scaffolding to alleviate anxiety, hopelessness and frustration • Perceiving faculty's failure to provide sufficient cognitive scaffolding.
Theme 6: Tutors' belief that an important goal of tutoring sessions should be to help build writers' confidence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connecting confidence with persistence • Feeling troubled by writers' self-deprecating comments • Offering choices to increase writers' confidence • Engaging in positive talk with writers
Theme 7: Tutors' understanding of assignments that do not support students' goals as a source of boredom and frustration.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding students' perceptions of value of writing assignments as related to goals • Trying to connect to students' goals as a tutoring strategy • Resenting expressions of boredom that seemed to devalue academia.