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The Perceived, Conceived, and Lived Experiences of 21st Century Peer Writing Tutors

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THE PERCEIVED, CONCEIVED, AND LIVED EXPERIENCES OF 21ST CENTURY PEER WRITING TUTORS

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This study addresses the current state of peer tutoring in writing by considering the contributions that scholars and tutors have made to our understanding of the intellectual and pedagogical experiences of peer tutors. In order to explore this topic, the study examines the everyday interactions of tutors through three different lenses: the perceived, conceived, and lived experiences of peer tutors. This dissertation argues that the ways that tutoring is perceived and conceived have had the greatest influence in our understanding of peer tutors while the lived experiences of tutors are less likely to be represented in scholarly conversations on writing centers. This dissertation provides a space to bring the lived experiences of tutors into writing center scholarship and to argue for a renewed look at the state of peer tutoring at the college and university level.

The study's contribution is in its call for writing center scholarship to incorporate the lived experiences of tutors. This project offers a model for accomplishing this task, and the participants in this study focus attention on the importance of relationships, how lived experiences of tutors provide rich opportunities to theorize writing center work, and how peer tutors influence epistemology, identity, and production. The major contribution of this dissertation is that it addresses how peer tutors can provide writing center scholars broader perspectives on theory, how peer tutors contribute to teaching and learning, and how they change relationships between students and teachers, and theory and practice.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Purpose Statement

This study addresses the current state of peer tutoring in writing by considering the contributions that scholars and tutors have made to our understanding of the intellectual and pedagogical experiences of peer tutors. In order to do so, the study examines the everyday interactions of tutors through three different lenses: the perceived, conceived, and lived experiences of peer tutors. As will be discussed in this dissertation, the ways that tutoring is perceived and conceived have had the greatest influence in our understanding of peer tutors while the lived experiences of tutors are less likely to be represented in scholarly conversations on writing centers. This dissertation will argue for opening a space to bring the lived experiences of tutors into writing center scholarship and to argue for a renewed look at the state of peer tutoring at the college and university level.

Problem Statement: Where are Peer Tutors in the Peer Tutoring Debate?

Peer tutoring, from its very beginning, has been controversial and fruitful for a number of reasons. The controversy of peer tutoring begins with articles like Harvey Kail's 1983 "Collaborative Learning in Context: The Problem with Peer Tutoring," which addresses whether or not the academy was prepared to commit to collaborative learning. From the start, peer tutoring was an institutional dilemma, not so much a problem for those who already engage in collaborative learning but one for those who

held collaborative learning suspect. Bringing this controversy back to the individuals it affected, the peer tutors, Kail notes that some solutions to the problem of peer tutoring, such as student tutors who essentially take on the roles of quiz givers, do "not involve student tutors in the intellectual life of either the English department or the institution as a whole" (598). In many ways, the early controversy over peer tutors rested on the intellectual life of tutors, an important feature of early writing center scholarship that helped form an epistemological framework for early writing center programs. Kenneth A. Bruffee is credited for introducing writing center professionals to the significance of peer tutoring and collaborative learning, and his work will be under discussion throughout this study because he provides an important foundation for thinking about peers in terms of epistemology rather than simply in terms of institutional rank or age.

Bruffee notwithstanding, scholars have written extensively on the possibilities for intellectual growth that peer tutoring affords students. For instance, Harvey Kail and John Trimbur in "The Politics of Peer Tutoring" argue that, "Locating the sources of knowledge in the social fabric rather than in the power lines of generation and transmission offers a way to talk about peer tutoring that goes beyond the operational model of plugging tutors into the grid" (207). Peer tutoring helped to expose limited approaches to teaching and learning that were used to pass knowledge from teacher to student. Without peer tutors, arguments about collaboration and the production of knowledge could not have been articulated in the same way that they have been over the years. For example, Stephen North's "The Idea of a Writing Center" provides an argument for writing center work that was provoked by faculty members misunderstanding what tutors and writers accomplish together. North blatantly described

the role of the writing center to fellow faculty, asking them to broaden their perspective on pedagogy by considering how tutors contribute to the writing process rather than simply written products. However, just as peer tutoring was becoming common practice, the idea of peer tutoring was already under scrutiny within the writing center community.

Scholars concerned with the subject position of *peer* began to respond to some of the earlier discussions on collaboration by pointing out that not all tutors fit the peer model. The focus of their scholarship was on the individual's institutional status and how that seems to influence the tutorial interaction. Most notably, Linda K. Shamoon and Deborah Burns offer a critique of peer tutoring that provides a number of successful models for apprenticeship-type relationships that would be instructive for understanding tutoring. Others negotiate the subject position by considering that more advanced student tutors, like graduate students, might conceive of themselves as big students/little teachers, as Connie Snyder Mick has done. Peer tutoring opened up a debate that not only attempts to tackle epistemological concerns but also seems to suggest that a kind of identity crisis exists when it comes to trying to understand the institutional role that tutors play. A more in-depth account of these pieces and others will be offered in the literature review.

As the years passed, the debates always seem to focus on how institutional positions that tutors occupy limit or expand the different possibilities that exist for tutoring and epistemology in the writing center. In 1995, Muriel Harris comes back to the notion that institutionally granted authority influences how students learn to write effectively and comfortably. She writes: "The collaborative atmosphere of the tutorial, the sense of being with someone who does not assume any authoritative posture, seems to relieve the strain or eliminate the fear [of talking about their writing]" ("Talking in the

Middle" 35-36). The collaboration Harris addresses here is one that can only be accomplished by tutors with whom student writers can identify. Her work shows that the work Bruffee and others had done over a decade before is still a vital and fruitful area of exploration for writing center theory and practice. Although much discussion of tutoring has focused on peers, professionals in the field who have advocated for tutoring have produced most of the serious scholarship.

The Writing Lab Newsletter and *The Dangling Modifier* have provided important forum for tutors to discuss their work. Furthermore, the National Conference on Peer Tutoring in Writing has also provided many tutors the opportunity to share their writing center experiences. Despite these great forums, few tutor voices have seriously resonated in the literature, and this is the problem that this study is designed to address. One reason for this problem might be that our efforts to offer intellectual experiences to writing tutors is a far more difficult challenge than Bruffee and company had originally thought. It could also be that the writing center literature has tended to privilege the very epistemological structures that peer tutoring puts into question. My intent is to point out that there is still much for writing center professionals (directors and tutors alike) to do to continue developing opportunities for peer tutors to shape and contribute to scholarly discussions concerning writing center epistemology.

Research Questions

This study looks at the ways peer tutoring has been conceived, perceived, and how peer tutors' lived experiences speak to those conceptions and perceptions as they are represented in the writing center literature. Therefore, this study will seek to answer the following questions:

1. What are the perceived experiences of peer tutors?

2. What are the conceived experiences of peer tutors?

3. What possibilities for teaching and learning do peer tutors experience in their daily practice?

4. To what extent do these possibilities relate to the perceived and conceived experiences of peer tutors?

The literature review will provide answers to the first two questions. The last two questions will be addressed through observations of tutorials, answers to interview questions, and a discussion of themes emerging from the findings presented in this study.

In order to take a closer look at the perceived, conceived, and lived experiences of peer tutors, I have turned to Edward Soja, who has written extensively on how spaces influence epistemology in his *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*. Soja's understanding of epistemology provides a theoretical framework and foundation for the questions this study seeks to answer. In his discussion of epistemology, Soja uses the terms perceived, conceived, and lived to describe the ways that scholars have attended to or ignored the spaces that shape our experiences and ways of knowing in the world. The conception of peer tutoring and its relationship to collaborative learning, as introduced earlier, is something that needs further exploration to see how it informs the lived intellectual experiences of tutors over time. Additionally, the perceptions of the intellectual experiences of peer tutors provide a glimpse into the possibilities ascribed to peer tutoring. The literature review will dig deeper into these perceptions. Soja argues that granting special attention to lived experiences is important because these experiences are traditionally ignored in scholarly arenas. Therefore, this

study will investigate the lived experiences of tutors to learn more about intellectual experiences and possibilities for learning/teaching that exist because of peer tutoring.

Research Approach

A good of example of inviting lived experiences of peer tutors into mainstream writing center publications is Susan Dinitz and Jean Kiedaisch's "Creating Theory: Moving Tutors to the Center." Dinitz and Kiedaisch ask tutors to reflect on and inform writing center theory given their own tutoring practices. Dinitz and Kiedaisch contend:

> In inventing themselves through reflecting on theory and practice, these tutors not only drew from theory but also came up with ideas that can contribute to it: by examining how theory plays out in practice, thus complicating that theory; by offering concrete images of possible roles and relationships that can be constructed in a tutoring session, thereby making theory more accessible to tutors; and by addressing questions central to writing center theory, such as the appropriateness of directive tutoring, and what it means to be a "peer" tutor. (74)

Their work is important because it makes a concerted effort to bring tutor voices into writing center theory building, thus engaging tutors intellectually not only in their interactions with other writers but also in the field's scholarship. Simply put, tutors are vital to the future of our work and are absolutely necessary for our conversations to continue.

Careful attention to the roles that tutors play in our scholarship and in our institutions might be a healthy alternative to the tropes of marginalization that Michele Eodice discusses in her "Breathing Lessons *or Collaboration is . . .*" We can do better than the metaphors that have often served to describe our spaces in ways that distract us

from the important work that tutors do. An alternative to such descriptions is to simply do our best to describe what tutors have done and what they can do, just as Dinitz and Kiedaisch have done. Furthermore, tutor voices like Jeff Brooks or Renee Brown, Jessica Lott, Elizabeth Matthews, and Elizabeth Mintie have produced scholarship that has been recognized by the writing center community as premier contributions. Although so much important work has been done by writing center scholars who dive deep into postmodern studies, cultural critique, and high theory for answers to some of our most pressing questions, there is still more we can do. As Dinitz and Kiedaisch point out, a number of scholars from Muriel Harris to Kenneth Bruffee to Nancy Grimm envision the writing center as a place where particular theories meet/become practice, but, "Largely left out of these constructions of writing centers are tutor voices" (63). The more seriously we take our tutors, the more seriously the institution will take our writing centers.

In an effort to take the insights of peer tutors seriously, this study will provide examples of a number of tutoring sessions and attempt to make sense of these interactions using the perspectives of the tutors involved. After the tutors and their writing center are introduced, the study will focus on examining their interaction using both the theoretical concerns that the literature review will highlight and the themes that emerge from the tutors' interactions and their discussions of those interactions. The analysis will show the significance of the relationships that these peer tutors form with writers. Furthermore, the discussion will build connections between the perceived, conceived, and lived experiences of tutors, giving way to a consideration of the twenty-first century peer writing tutor.

Rationale/Significance

This study began out of a strong interest in peer tutoring and how it not only influences the tutors and tutees involved but, more importantly, how peer tutoring has changed our ideas about learning and writing. Throughout my career in the writing center, from the time I was a peer tutor until now as the director of a writing center, I have had to articulate what happens at a writing center to other members of the academic community. There have been many times when I have failed to articulate the significance of peer tutoring to others. Whenever I find myself in a moment when I feel it necessary to justify the existence of peer tutoring programs, I remind myself that it's not about justifying peer tutoring, it's about educating the individual I am addressing. In recognizing how these anxious moments have troubled me, I became interested in becoming more adept at expressing what peer tutors do for the academy that no one else can. In order to do this, one must be aware of the conditions that made peer tutoring possible, and it means understanding this history in order to have a clearer sense of where peer tutoring can go next. The hope is that the tutors who participated in this study have an opportunity to shape this history, to contribute to our understanding of epistemology, and to become comfortable articulating the important learning relationships they can build with writers.

Emerging Methods, Sites, and Names: A History

Since the first writing center opened its doors, those who have used them, described them, and studied them have discursively marked writing centers. As mentioned, the literature often assigns metaphors to describe such discursive markings. Michael A. Pemberton discusses some of these metaphors in his "The Prison, the

Hospital, and the Madhouse: Redefining Metaphors for the Writing Center." Such metaphors are used to suggest the type of function the writing center serves institutionally while at other times these metaphorical descriptors have been understood quite literally as in the case of the writing center as laboratory or composition clinic. Because metaphors are often important tools for making sense of the material reality that surrounds us, they also prompt us to consider descriptions of the kind of institutional space writing centers occupy. However, metaphors can be distracting, they can fail to represent the experiences had by tutors and writers, and they can create myopic views of what happens in the center. Michele Eodice cautions about tropes of marginalization, noting that, "By consistently reviving the tropes of marginality, disappointment, and disciplinarity-above-all-else, we have abetted our institutions, allowing them to draw our perimeters" (116). She goes on to discuss how writing center scholars can use collaboration to become better members of the university community and thereby position the writing center as a space that is integral to the workings of the institution.

In my consideration of Eodice's concerns and her proposition, I find myself asking for more scholarship that exposes how these tropes keep us from exploring how writing centers are changing the academy while becoming more respectable, intelligible, and possible places for both teaching and learning at educational institutions in the United States and abroad. A concern that stems from thinking about writing centers through the old tropes is that it sets a limit not only to what is already happening in these spaces but also on what will and can happen in these spaces. A failure to recognize and account for the ways in which outsiders to and members of the writing center community understand the space, and, furthermore, how they see it in relation to the classroom, could

create missed opportunities for educational reform and for advocating for the empowerment of student writers as learners and collaborators. The power in resisting a remedial brand and, as Neal Lerner has pointed out in his study of the Dartmouth Writing Clinic, in some cases acquiescing to it, has long lasting ripple effects not only felt at our local institutions but also in our larger community of scholars.

Eodice calls on us to move beyond the limited ways we construct our writing centers by embracing collaboration as it "trumps the old tropes" (121). In that vein, writing centers can bring about positive change for the institution because of what they bring to the table. One way to reconsider how these tropes have directed or deflected our attention is to reflect on how writing center history informs our current state of being. A brief yet pointed history of how the individuals who do writing center work helps to inform the significance of peerness to tutoring methods will be traced to show how a convergence of site and method has produced epistemological possibility that is realized through the figure of the peer tutor.

A number of writing center historians, including Peter Carino, Elizabeth Boquet, and Neal Lerner have done the groundwork of providing an exploration of how and why writing centers have emerged in the way that they have. While differing historical accounts provide particular focal points, the history offered here is mostly informed by Boquet's work with some insights from Carino. Boquet's careful attention to site and method and how these two relate to both the classroom as a site for discursive regulation and to the writing center provides a functional lens for observing the confluence of spaces, people, and methodologies that has produced present-day writing centers. In his "Open Admissions and the Construction of Writing Center History: A Tale of Three

Models," Carino warns that histories can often create problematic accounts in that some historical models will privilege either evolutionary approaches to writing center development or focus too intensely on certain individuals. He prefers a cultural model for writing a history, one that is aware of its historicizing and provides a thicker description of how certain phenomenon came to be. With this in mind, the account here is to highlight points of convergence that have provided important opportunities for reflection on how peers and tutoring came together and what that means for the writing center field.

According to Neal Lerner (ctd. in Boquet "Out Little Secret"), the conference method has been in use since the late 1800s. Carino pinpoints 1904 as the year that Philo Buck describes using this conference or laboratory method in the classroom. The laboratory method, as Buck described it, relied on direct and individualized instruction that Buck engaged in and then followed up with peer critique (Carino, "Early Writing Centers"). This technique for teaching writing is obviously recognized as similar to what we see happening in present-day writing centers with its attention to individuals and its attention to peer interactions. The difference is the site, or location, and that Buck was involved in the critique in addition to the evaluation of the student writers in his classroom. Carino goes on to note how the laboratory method was further discussed in the literature concerning the teaching of writing through the 1910s. Interestingly, Carino adds that the methodology was prevalent enough that by the 1920s it was the topic of an empirical study done for a Master's thesis written by Warren Horner, which provided evidence that using peer critique was efficient for teaching grammar and rhetorical concerns in half the time.

Carino's history continues by describing the beginnings of a site outside the classroom where this methodology is used. However, Boquet makes an important distinction about the laboratory method and the site(s) in which it is practiced. Boquet's historical analysis and her attention to Horner's work later published in *English Journal* show us that writing laboratories were conceived of as methods and not places, and she goes on to delineate between a method meant to reaffirm correctness in contrast to an epistemological imperative for tutoring. She writes: "That the method emerged from or resulted in a fundamental re-conception of knowledge production and dissemination in the classroom or beyond, however, seems doubtful. Rather, it seems to have simply shifted, slightly but significantly, the *site* of discursive regulation" (45). I want to point out that site here is not exclusively used for the writing lab, but rather the site where the laboratory method is enacted. The nature of the method was that it was used for classroom purposes, and there was no sense of a post-process "letting go" of mastery that we see many composition and writing center scholars discussing today. The method soon moved from the classroom into alternative spaces.

Carino informs us that by 1934 the University of Minnesota and the State University of Iowa (presently the University of Iowa) created new spaces for the laboratory method. Despite the coming together of site and method, these labs often operated similarly to scientific laboratories where full classes would make their way to the lab and instructors, assisted by a handful of graduate students, would assist students as they wrote (Carino, "Early Writing Centers" 13). However, these centers were constantly adapting and they soon began to break ties to the classroom. In discussing how this alternative site emerged, Boquet notes, "A slow drift occurred between the 1920s,

when the writing lab was most recognizably a method of instruction, and the 1940s, when it became most recognizably a site, and the writing on writing labs begins to show evidence of the tension emerging between the institutional space of the writing center and the individual pedagogies enacted in that space" (45). With this confluence of site and method, the stage was set for the not only the tension that Boquet mentions but also more possibilities for teaching and learning as a greater diversity of ideas began to develop about how students can learn about writing in these spaces.

At this point, I am going to jump forward to the introduction of peer tutors to the writing center in the mid to late 1970s. This introduction, ultimately, becomes a defining moment for how we think about practical and theoretical concerns for current writing centers. Boquet points out that, "The presence of peer tutors affected, naturally, the space of the writing lab and the method of writing lab operations, both in terms of the manner of work with students and the preparation of the staff for such work" (53). Interestingly, finding ways to staff writing centers affordably was a driving force in bringing in students to do the work of the writing center. Boquet suggests that in addition to this economic situation, a pedagogical one was emerging as scholars were seeking to change and foment the social context for learning (see Bruffee; Hawkins; Kail and Trimbur).

Peer tutors and a commitment to collaboration brings about an epistemological moment of change, as Harvey Kail discusses when he questions: "will the habits of our lineal epistemology prove so profoundly established in our institutional and professional lives that collaborative learning in the form of official peer tutoring will be perceived more as an annoyance than a contribution to literacy education" (598)? At the time, faculty often questioned whether or not peer tutoring was an effective model for learning,

so much so that Shamoon and Burns have pointed out that early peer tutoring programs had to defend against charges of plagiarism because writers' texts leaving the center were vastly improved ("Plagiarism" 184). Kail discusses some solutions to these types of problems, but what is more important about his question is its implications for an epistemological shift, as Boquet points out. Yet, it is this epistemological moment of change that allows us to think of peer tutors as a product of the confluence of site and method. Peer interaction and collaboration brings about a possibility for teaching and learning that would not have been fully realized if the methodology had either remained in the classroom or in writing laboratories like the ones at Minnesota and Iowa in the 1930s.

Collaborative learning in the form of peer tutoring initiated a reaction, but this reaction shifted over time as the peer tutor's role became less novel. The inherent structures of the institution have worked to re-inscribe the tutor's potential as groundbreaking figure to a supplemental helper. Even a number of writing center professionals and scholars have succumbed to this re-inscription. However, some writing center directors continue to privilege the opportunity to create learning opportunities for their tutors and writers, believing that there is more happening in our spaces than the academy at large is able to perceive.

Definition of Terminology

There are a number of broad terms that will be used throughout this study that need to be introduced and defined. I will further define many of these terms as the

findings from this study shape how these terms are used and understood in the analysis and discussion to come.

Peer tutor is used typically in this study to refer to undergraduate writing tutors who meet with writers one-to-one. While this term seems understandable at a glance, it is important to note that peer tutors have given rise to an approach to tutoring called the peer tutoring model. In this model, tutors and writers work collaboratively as co-learners. How this model was developed will be discussed in the literature review, but what is important to note here is that the idea of peerness in tutoring does not necessarily have to denote academic rank, age, or status. It involves an epistemological approach to tutoring. Thus, the word tutor is sometimes used interchangeably with peer tutor and I will make distinctions in the study if I am referring to a professional or faculty tutor.

With that said, the term *epistemology* is used frequently in this study. Often times the term is paired with possibility. For the purposes of this study, epistemology refers to the theory of knowledge and I rely heavily on Edward Soja and Henri Lefebvre's concepts of epistemological spaces. Lefebvre writes: "…the modern field of inquiry known as epistemology has inherited and adopted the notion that the status of space is that of a 'mental thing' or 'mental place'" (3). Many of the discussions of epistemology are predicated on ideas about perceived, conceived, and lived space. Epistemological approaches discussed in this study examine how writing center tutors help students acquire and/or construct knowledge; however, the epistemological perspective gained by examining peer tutors in this study will be used to consider possibilities for teaching and learning.

Possibility is an important term that will be used in two different ways throughout the study, and it comes, in part, from Judith Butler's notion that people count when they are acknowledged as possible beings. Given Butler's thoughts on identity politics, possibility will be used on the one hand to think about what scholars stand to gain by recognizing peer tutors as individuals who matter in teaching and learning. Furthermore, possibility, as mentioned above, has to do with discovering potential opportunities for learning by examining the experiences of peer tutors closely and by including them more productively in scholarly conversations.

Identity will also be addressed in this study relying on Judith Butler's notion that identities are performed (*Gender Trouble*), but I also seek to understand how identity is formed by relationships and environment. The work of Pierre Bourdieu, Jay L. Lemke, and Etienne Wenger all contribute to how identity will be discussed later in this project. Furthermore, I will consider how tutors are subject to institutional and social norms that influence how they perform during their sessions.

Finally, the idea of *productivity* is significant in this study because it has to do with what is accomplished as a result of tutoring sessions. Considering John Holloway, whose work will be discussed in the next chapter, I analyze tutoring sessions in terms of what tutors and writers ultimately produce as a result of their time together. Examining productivity is important because it offers a chance to understand better the values and beliefs that influence learning during a session.

Study Overview and Contribution

This study examines writing centers as spaces where students do the important work of teaching and learning with distinction. In order to do this, taking note of the historical trajectory tutoring has been on is important, but, additionally, a concern for how individuals talk about, think about, and write about tutoring is necessary. Moreover, asking individuals to reflect on their experiences with peer tutoring will help to show the ways in which a particular group, peer tutors, are instrumental in making an epistemology for the writing centers possible. When scholars privilege how tutor experience foments possibilities for meaning-making, they more clearly describe a tutor who engages intellectually because they clearly delineate between theories of tutoring that actively include tutors and those that push them to the side. Therefore, I believe that tutors and writers are able to have more pedagogically and intellectually significant experiences in writing centers if we pay closer attention to peer tutors' actual experiences. Furthermore, the study also points to limitations in the perceptions and conceptions of tutoring when these lived experiences are not taken into account.

What I have tried to provide in this introduction is a brief synopsis of how tutors have been written about and included in our scholarly work in an effort to emphasize how tutors, whether we call them peers or not, have invigorated our epistemological advancements. As someone who began his writing center career as a peer tutor, I have become increasingly concerned with preserving the experience of peer tutoring for others. What's more, I feel compelled to point to the epistemological lessons we learn from peers that can be carried into the work being done by those who would not consider themselves

peers and the academic contributions writing center scholars can make to education as a whole.

The tutors who participated in this study offer perspectives that complicate assumptions in the writing center literature and contribute to how we understand writing pedagogy. Among the many issues that came to the surface in this study, peer tutors contributed to discussions about issues such as confidence, listening, presence, and frame, concepts that will be used to further examine their experiences and trends in writing center scholarship. By exploring the epistemological and institutional spaces that peer tutors create and currently inhabit, I learned a great deal about what peer writing tutors can bring to discussions about the writing center and education.

In the chapters to follow, I will argue that scholars should reconsider the early work of Kenneth Bruffee, Muriel Harris, Harvey Kail, and John Trimbur as being vital for understanding possibilities inherent in writing center relationships. The review of literature will offer an in-depth discussion of peer tutoring and what the writing center literature has done to continue and at times diverge from this discussion. The literature review also provides answers to my first and second research questions about the perceived and conceived experiences of tutors. However, the literature review will also establish the theoretical framework for this study. Drawing on differing viewpoints about identitarian thought, I will argue for greater awareness of the ways in which the literature has essentialized peer tutors at the expense of the epistemological contributions they have made to the field.

Furthermore, I contend that greater attention needs to be paid to the lived experiences of tutors in order to provide a complete view of writing center epistemology.

In the second half of this dissertation, I investigate how tutors prompt us to consider alternative perspectives on how knowledge flows within the institution. In order to do this, I studied the Yeshiva College Writing Center, observing interactions in that center and interviewing a number of members of that writing center community. A description of the Yeshiva College Writing Center, the sessions that are discussed in this study, and the themes that emerged in this study are provided in the fourth chapter. In the analysis, chapter five, I take an in-depth look a four tutors' sessions using the following themes: confidence, listening, presence, and frame. Each of these themes emerged out of sessions and interviews with the tutors who participated in the study. In addition to interviewing Yeshiva tutors, I interviewed Kenneth Bruffee and Harvey Kail as representatives of foundational writing center scholars, and I discuss their responses in the sixth chapter. Also in chapter six, a more thorough discussion of themes and peer tutor interview responses is provided in order to examine perceived and conceived ideas about tutoring, epistemology, identity, and the 21st century peer writing tutor.

Ultimately, this study's contribution is in its call for writing center scholarship to incorporate the lived experiences of tutors. This project offers a model for accomplishing this task, and the participants in this study focus attention on the importance of relationships, how lived experiences of tutors provide rich opportunities to theorize writing center work, and how peer tutors influence epistemology, identity, and production. Therefore, the major contribution of this dissertation is that it addresses how peer tutors can provide writing center scholars broader perspectives on theory, how peer tutors contribute to teaching and learning, and how peer tutors can change relationships between students and teachers and theory and practice.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Writing centers have provided students with alternative sites for teaching and learning since the 1930s. The introduction of peer tutors to the writing center in the late 1970s, almost in tandem with efforts to introduce collaborative learning to the writing classroom, instigated the way we presently think about, write about, and theorize the writing center. After peer tutors came along, articles on writing center concerns and theory were published with greater frequency, especially with the launch of *The Writing Lab Newsletter* in 1977 and *The Writing Center Journal* in 1980. In fact, *The Writing Lab Newsletter* (*WLN*) provided peer tutors a forum to discuss their work with the one of the first articles written by peer tutor Gary Lichtenstein entitled "Super Tutor!" in 1983. The following year, Muriel Harris, *WLN* founder and editor, created a regular column called "The Tutor's Corner," with the first article, "Using Interview Techniques," written by Toby W. Malbec, a University of Vermont peer tutor. From early on, peer tutors contributed to writing center conversations, but unfortunately these voices are overlooked and even Michael Pemberton's history of the *WLN* in *The Center Will Hold* fails to mention the start of "The Tutor's Corner."

Despite such omissions, the kinds of histories told about writing centers are highly dependent upon the complex imbrication of tutors and their identities, the identities of the professionals who work in these sites, institutional contexts, theories of writing and learning, theories of literacy, etc. Throughout these intertwined identities,

theories, and contexts, many stories emerge in the literature that try to grasp at the tenor of writing center ideology, none so widely stated and often criticized as North's contention that "our job is to produce better writers, not better writing" (76). Although a hearty argument in 1984, North's sentiment seems to fizzle in 2010; it has become taken for granted—completely assumed in a variety of institutional contexts—without careful attention to the myriad discursive practices that shape the politics, the practices, and the identities of writing centers. In discussing the influence of North's maxim on writing center research, Elizabeth Boquet and Neal Lerner write: "Ironically, North's 'Idea' itself has become 'lore-ified'—a handy collection of statements about writing center identity and ethos, always at the ready to support writing center workers but with little explanatory power" (184). As such, the axiom became commonplace, unquestioned, and treated as gospel; arguments about writing center practice rooted in the phrase fail to account for a number of important issues implicit in making an argument about what the writing center does and does not do.

Part of the reason North's now famous turn of phrase lacks gusto in current writing center discussions is because of its sharp focus on writers and writing without thoroughly accounting for the "our" in his statement. Who is included in that "our"? One can assume that North was referring to writing center denizens in general here, but with an audience of college English professors in mind, that "our" seems to mostly represent writing center administrators. Tutors conveniently fall under the auspices of a director, a sanctioned authoritative figure responsible for the pedagogical practices in any given center. Of course, the problem with this is that it strips the tutor from having involvement in an intellectual transaction. Although North's point was important to express at the

time, it did fall short of expressing an important goal of writing centers as posed by Kenneth Bruffee, John Trimbur, and Harvey Kail: the intellectual life of the tutor. This study seeks to examine the everyday decisions and intellectual experiences of tutors to see what scholars might learn from tutors and to begin to think about how peer tutors can effect educational change, as discussed by Trimbur, Kail, and Bruffee so early on in the history of peer tutoring.

As introduced in the previous chapter, Edward Soja provides this study a way to categorize the experiences of tutors in the literature. The perceived, conceived, and lived experiences of tutors are a significant concern for this study, and the literature and the results of this study will be addressed by using these three terms. A more thorough description of the significance of these three terms and how they relate to epistemology will be addressed later in this chapter. What follows is a review of writing center literature that discusses how the perceived, conceived and lived experiences of peer tutors have been represented.

Susan Dinitz and Jean Kiedaisch's "Creating Theory: Moving Tutors to the Center" provides an example of the proposed study because it asks tutors to offer their own theoretical perspectives on what happens when they work with writers. In this vein, Dinitz and Kiedaisch have provided a model for allowing tutors to participate in our scholarly conversations. Another study that has been driven directly by tutor experience is Elizabeth Boquet's *Noise from the Writing Center*. Specifically, her third chapter recounts tutors grappling with theory and the work that they do within the institution. In addition, Kathleen Blake Yancey and Nancy Welch have each contributed scholarship that examines tutor reflection on their practice and on the theories that guide writing

center work. Outside of these few works, it is difficult to locate recent scholarship in which tutors build theory or comment on their lived experiences. Yet, there has been quite a bit written on the perceived and conceived experiences of tutors and the possibilities for teaching and learning that emerge from these experiences. Thus, the following review of the literature will explore these conceived and perceived epistemological possibilities while establishing the need for exploration into lived epistemological possibilities.

Peer Tutoring Conceived

As noted above, peer tutoring occurred almost in tandem with peer review in the classroom in large part due to Bruffee's efforts to introduce peer review methodologies to the field of English studies. As Bruffee published models for how to implement peer review in the writing classroom, he was also setting the stage for peer tutoring in the writing center environment. However, Bruffee, his contemporaries, and students understood that establishing and promoting a pedagogy that depended on using peer interaction in any context also meant establishing and promoting a philosophical framework that would shift pedagogy from a model that privileged a hierarchical flow of knowledge to one that relied on co-construction of knowledge. In chapter one, I mentioned Harvey Kail's concern that lineal education is so strictly ingrained institutionally that official peer tutoring might be considered a nuisance rather than a contribution to the teaching of writing ("Collaborative Learning"). In the same article, Kail warns that writing tutors who are not actively involved in the collaborative process are not involved in what he calls the "intellectual life" of the academy. Kail's concerns

point to the brand of institutional change required for peer tutors to be accepted as active contributors to the passing and production of knowledge. Despite Kail's concern, the work of peer tutoring moved forward, which required further explanation on how peer tutoring represented much more than just a shift in traditional understanding of learning relationships. To be specific, Harvey Kail and John Trimbur discuss the epistemological issues that arise from peer collaboration in their co-authored work, "The Politics of Peer Tutoring":

> Peer tutoring, in this view, is not a supplement to the normal delivery system but an implicit critique of gen/tran ideology and the official structures of curriculum and instruction. To reorganize the relationship among students is simultaneously to probe the traditional relationships of teaching and learning. (207)

Kail and Trimbur argue for peer tutoring in a way that puts it at odds with the prevailing epistemologies of the day and with the traditional hierarchies understood by the academy. Their focus on relationships is telling because it is in relationships established as a result of peer tutoring that we are able to locate possibilities for intellectual growth. As they write, reorganizing students to learn together challenges traditional norms that distinguish teachers and students. This challenge, therefore, escalates to the point that it has the potential to have larger institutional ramifications.

John Trimbur points to the dilemma of what it means to be both a peer and a tutor in his "Peer Tutoring: A Contradiction in Terms?" by expressing how differing models of tutor training place an emphasis on either being a peer or a tutor. The model which places emphasis on being a tutor, he contends, is one that assumes the tutor's role is like that of the apprentice writing teacher, while the peer model puts the tutor in the role of co-

learner. Trimbur writes: "Tutors need, that is, to develop confidence in their autonomous activity as co-learners, without the sanction of faculty leaning over their shoulder and telling them and their tutees when something is learned and when not" (293). The obvious subtext here is that the authoritative role of the teacher should be diminished while an emphasis on collaborative learning (free from the evaluative eye of the teacher) should be fostered.

An important issue for Kail and for Trimbur is to consider the roles that peer tutors play in the larger arena of teaching writing. The larger field of composition studies has addressed a number of theoretical and pedagogical issues when it comes to the teaching of writing and the nature of literacy. What compositionists bring to the writing center theoretically and practically has no doubt been significant in the ways that we think about one-to-one tutoring. Likewise, collaborative learning and writing center pedagogy are clearly important parts of ongoing discussions in composition studies that merit their own chapters in texts like Tate, Rupiper, and Schick's *A Guide to Composition Pedagogies* or Victor Villanueva's *Cross-Talk in Comp Theory*. What's more is that in works by scholars like Kail, Trimbur, Harris, and Dinitz and Kiedaisch, there is good evidence that peer tutors can contribute to the expanding knowledge of the field of composition studies. Namely, peer tutors are student writers themselves who possess special insight into the composing process of their fellow students. Their collaboration with other writers provides an opportunity for compositionists to see how everyday writers solve problems, struggle, and celebrate in the learning and writing process.

Foundational to Trimbur's and Kail's work is the kind of peer collaboration described by Bruffee—who draws from Kuhn and Rorty to provide a foundation for his

own thoughts on collaborative learning. Both Trimbur and Kail note the influence that Bruffee's "Brooklyn Plan" and the Brooklyn College Summer Institute in Training Peer Writing Tutors have had on how co-learning and collaboration is understood in the writing center. In a reflection on the Brooklyn Institute, Kail notes that, "What we learned about collaborative learning initially in 1980-1982 unquestionably reshaped our sense of ourselves as teachers and our sense of our students as active participants in their own educations" ("Innovation" 49). According to Kail, Bruffee was responsible for introducing him and other Institute Fellows to postmodern theories and initiated them in the field of writing studies since many came from a literary or historical background ("Innovation" 47). Bruffee's work in collaboration and his ability to teach others how to engage in collaborative learning made possible a career's worth of work for many of the Institute Fellows. In Bruffee's own words, "Collaborative learning is a way-station, therefore, on the path to students' greater educational self-possession, and, as well, to an increased maturity of teachers' conception of their own educational role" ("A New Emphasis" 11). Although Bruffee's early work focuses on collaborative learning in the classroom, we can already begin to see how the two components above, the students' self-possession and a modified educational role for the teacher, lay a foundation for peer tutoring. Moreover, this foundation insists on a practice of co-learning and a shift in traditional knowledge relationships between those who are doing the teaching and those who are doing the learning.

Bruffee's work continues to outline a plan for collaboration in the classroom in the early seventies before turning more specifically to peer tutoring in the late 1970s. In Bruffee's "Collaborative Learning: Some Practical Models," he argues that collaboration

is not only a successful means for the teaching of writing, but it is also important for all teachers to understand because of the increasingly important role collaborative learning plays in education. Bruffee made connections between how knowledge production happened in society to how it could happen in the classroom: "…the evidence provided by collaborative activity in the society at large suggests that people can gain both awareness and support as adequately in a small group of their peers as from the ministrations of a teacher" ("Collaborative Learning" 640). This idea recurs throughout his work and is central to both the collaborative learning and peer tutoring versions of his "'Conversation of Mankind'" pieces.

Of course the work of Vygotsky and Bakhtin have shaped what those of us in composition studies know about collaboration. Vygotsky's zone of proximal development, for instance, offers a model for learning in which a knowledgeable peer helps another student solve problems that are beyond their developmental level (187). Bakhtin's contributions to our understanding of dialogic discourse and double-voicedness have drawn our attention to how our use of language is always influenced by others. As Bakhtin writes: "When a member of a speaking collective comes upon a word, it is not as a neutral word of language…. No, he receives the word from another's voice and filled with that other voice" (201). We see how Bakhtin's work reminds us that tension is present in the ways we use language, and what that means for collaboration is that it requires a kind of productive struggle. Kami Day and Michele Eodice comment:

> Shared understanding points not to consensus as terminal agreement—as the final, ultimate, desired goal of collaboration—but to acknowledgment of differences

> and an attempt to comprehend them in an act of collaboration distinguished by respect and genuine interest. (37)

In this passage, we can see what Vygotsky and Bakhtin provide composition teachers—that is, collaboration requires a genuine relationship that can productively deal with tension to reach new levels of understanding.

In "Peer Tutoring and the 'Conversation of Mankind,'" Bruffee reiterates some of these ideas for writing center scholars: "Peer tutoring, like collaborative learning in general, makes students—both tutors and tutees—aware that writing is a social artifact, like the thought that produces it" (91). Thought itself, according to Bruffee and as theorized by Vygotsky and Bakhtin, can be understood as internalized conversation and, if we are to understand thought in this way, then we must also understand the social nature of conversation. That is, becoming a better thinker means being able "to learn to converse better and to learn to create and maintain the sort of social contexts, the sorts of community life, that foster the kinds of conversations we value" (90). Bruffee was fully aware of the possibilities for peer tutors engaged in a social context, an ongoing conversation, to be pedagogically and intellectually relevant players in the educational mainstream.

"The Brooklyn Plan: Attaining Intellectual Growth through Peer-Group Tutoring," published in 1978, showed others how peer tutoring programs can function to enhance students' learning experiences. In this work, Bruffee focuses his attention directly on the benefits of peer collaboration with less concern for the classroom and more concern for the intellectual growth of the students involved as tutors and tutees in the program. Results from the Brooklyn Plan showed that student writers craved more

than grammar instruction and that peer tutoring was effective in helping tutees overcome "intellectual paralysis," as Bruffee termed it. Yet the most unexpected result of the Brooklyn Plan, which is also the genesis of this study, was the beneficial effect peer tutoring had on the tutors' writing and thinking. Bruffee's focus on the writing center experience of the tutor is incredibly important to establishing a model of peer tutoring invested in co-learning. He maintains, "Besides learning to write better as they teach others to write, the tutors develop intellectually through a process of social exchange focused on a series of problems in judgment which emerge from their own work, and which must be resolved collaboratively" ("Brooklyn Plan" 453). Intellectual development proves to be a centerpiece in collaborative learning for all parties involved, and it is this line of thinking that should prompt writing center scholars to concern themselves with the intellectual lives of tutors.

When addressing the problem with peer tutoring back in 1983, Harvey Kail pointed out that if collaborative learning is not used, some writing centers will establish peer tutoring programs that would turn student tutors into "exercise givers." This type of solution to the peer tutoring problem, he argues, would keep tutors out of conflict with a teacher's instruction in areas such as development, organization, and voice; however, "the problem with this solution to the problem, besides its irretrievable dullness, is that it does not involve student tutors in the intellectual life of either the English department or the institution as a whole" ("Collaborative Learning" 598). The idea that the intellectual life of any institution can be informed by the use of student tutors is something the writing center community has been documenting since Bruffee first published the Brooklyn Plan. Conversations about tutoring, peers, graduate student tutors, and writers

have all worked to refigure the role the writing center plays institutionally, and this study seeks to add to those conversations by focusing on the intellectual life of tutors.

Perspectives on Tutoring

Foundational to writing center scholarship is that students are the catalyst for producing knowledge. As we have obviously seen in the works above, tutors are students; they are co-learners. Tilly Warnock and John Warnock clearly express this in their discussion of liberatory writing centers, noting that the learning relationship between tutors and tutees must be realized by a mutual understanding that both of them are writers. While conceding that the writing center staff is often made up of individuals who hold an array of institutional positions, they argue that, "Writing center teachers honor their own ignorance, and this attitude allows them to act with poise, confident in what they know and others know, and confident that they themselves can revise" (Warnock and Warnock 18). The idea of revision, the ability to change how we think of possible teaching and learning relationships, is the ultimate task of their work, and it builds for writing center scholarship an arena for rethinking the roles of tutors and the educational functions that places like writing centers serve in the academy. Warnock and Warnock leave us with the notion that, counter to traditional conceptions of knowledge, "The body of knowledge [in the writing center] is the students themselves" (22). With this in mind, this review of literature will point to a number of ways in which scholars in the writing center community have discussed the individual who is in many ways our most important body of knowledge, the peer writing tutor.

In an effort to renegotiate the idyllic nature of work by scholars like North, Bruffee, and Warnock and Warnock with the realities that students bring with them to the writing center, Nancy Welch discusses how tutoring to excess and using play in the center create potential spaces for students to substantiate their identities as writers. By considering the student as an individual who brings narratives and experiences that supersede the traditionally sanctioned experiences of the academy, Welch begins to consider a writing center in which both identity is in flux and institutional mission is forever changing and being reconsidered. Welch poignantly discusses the problem of abandoning the grand ideals and theories set forth in early writing center literature, while asking us to deal with the "gap between ideal visions and lived reality" (54). With this in mind, what follows is a survey of literature that inscribed new possibilities for the tutor that deal with the ideal and the lived. That is, in the literature we see an account of how theory has informed and can inform tutoring and an attempt to describe tutors' practical experiences. Welch prompts us to question how theory informs the roles we see writing tutors play and how closely those roles represent tutors as collaborators. Therefore, the following review will explore how epistemology and tutors' intellectual experiences have been perceived in the literature.

Meg Woolbright considers the writing center as a stronghold for feminism within the institution, pointing to how the interactions between tutors and students can easily replicate the patriarchal approaches to teaching writing that are still often taken for granted. In her depiction of how these patriarchal values commandeer a tutoring session, Woolbright is quick to point out where the tutor errs in her discussions with the student but fails to problematize the fact that both the tutor and the student are being asked to

acculturate into an academic discourse community that distances them from their home discourse. Thus, although Woolbright criticizes the institution for its patriarchal, traditional, and uncritical stance on literacy learning from the feminist perspective, she offers a limited critique of how the institution is actually impinging on the tutor and the student. She does not necessarily respond to how, "tutors not only are helping students learn how to improve their writing but also are developing better practices of teaching writing and really useful knowledge about the experiences of students writing in college and in our society" (Cooper 65).

In some respects, Woolbright's feminist perspective becomes just as overpowering and colonialist as the patriarchy she is trying to counter because the ideology is being employed top down rather than being used to account for the experiences and perspectives of tutors. Woolbright's analysis of the tutoring session fails to account for the tutor as a central figure in this collaborative learning engagement. The tutor is seen as an extension of the patriarchal ideological structure of the institution rather than an intellectual agent who must find ways to navigate this institutional structure just as the student must. As Bawarshi and Pelkowski point out:

> Occupying a space both within and at the same time on the margins of the university, the writing center is in a unique position to teach marginalized students how to negotiate diverse discourses, to encourage them towards what Joseph Harris refers to as "a kind of polyphony—an awareness of and pleasure in the various competing discourses that make up their own" (273). (92)

In arguing for an alternative kind of learning experience and space, Bawarshi and Pelkowski discuss the importance of not simply erasing or simplifying contradictory

subject positions but rather examining them critically in relation to one another. To explain the sensibility of tutors, they use Gloria Anzaldúa's concept of a *mestiza consciousness*. They believe that the *mestiza consciousness* is something that tutors develop when trying to occupy contradictory and conflicted subject position at the same time, which places tutors' experiences somewhere in between traditional subject positions of students and teachers.

Muriel Harris notes how a tutor's institutional position influences tutorial interactions when she writes, "Tutors are thus other than teachers in that they inhabit a middle ground where their role is that of translator or interpreter, turning teacher language into student language" ("Talking" 37). Harris positions the tutor in an identifiable academic middle space where the tutor must reconcile the contradiction of being a peer and a tutor simultaneously. To add to the complexity inherent in this contradiction, Harris also contends that tutors straddle the fence between teaching and learning. Although Bawarshi and Pelkowski hypothesize the theoretical intricacies informing writing center practice, their discussion still focuses on the writing center as an all-encompassing entity and its institutional role rather than specifically focusing on how tutors shape possibilities for institutional change.

In outlining a cultural studies agenda, Marilyn Cooper provides a preliminary argument for scholars like Bawarshi and Pelkowski that asks us to reconsider not only the affective role the writing center can play institutionally but also the epistemological approaches to writing center work. Cooper calls for writing center denizens to be "organic intellectuals" who "must work to achieve critical understanding of the current situation of a society" (61). Furthering the call that Woolbright makes for the writing

center to go beyond "reinforcing institutional norms of silence and obedience" (78), Cooper engages the literature in a larger discussion that questions how discourses within the academy serve to acculturate students with little or no regard for their own cultural backgrounds. Race, gender, class, nationality, ethnicity, and sexuality are able to enter the conversation through Cooper's work and are further considered in the postcolonial examination offered by Bawarshi and Pelkowski. Cooper, along with Bawarshi and Pelkowski and Nancy Maloney Grimm, expresses concern for how the institution privileges or disavows the experiences and linguistic backgrounds of those who work in and visit writing centers. For Cooper, tutors must be able "to create useful knowledge about writing in college and to empower students as writers" (54-55), and tutors undertake this task in efforts to help students gain agency in writing. Cooper's understanding of tutors as organic intellectuals puts them in contrast to many composition scholars and teachers, whom she terms traditional intellectuals because tutors are part of the social group that they try to help. Cooper provides ample evidence for the ways in which tutors can and have acted as agents of change by noting works by Alice Gillam, Nancy Welch, and Tom Fox that display the more radical roles of tutors. Cooper acknowledges that the institutional constraints placed on writing centers might diminish the effect tutors might be able to have, but in being excluded from disciplinary discussions, tutors may feel more connected to the needs of their peers than to the mandates of disciplinary beliefs and practices (144).

Elizabeth Boquet and Nancy Grimm have called for rethinking how the writing center's institutional role can be used to question commonly held beliefs and practices. Boquet, for instance, argues in *Noise from the Writing Center*, "The question of whether

our practices are central to the work of our universities is closely aligned with the degree to which we fail to adhere to those expectations (and to the extent to which our institutions fail us)" (32). Situating the writing center both at the center and in the margins of the university and trying to understand what those positions mean for those who work in and visit writing centers proves to be a complicated task in Boquet's work. She foments an approach that would have tutors operate on the edge of their expertise (81), and to perform from a third party position that has the potential to mutate the experiences students have with learning and writing within the academy (51). How Boquet negotiates a center's identity in response to institutional reciprocity and aversion is through an epistemological understanding of tutoring that calls for excess and play, for finding "the groove" (81), as she puts it, in our work and within our institutions.

Nancy Grimm's approach to this same dilemma in *Good Intentions: Writing Center Work for Postmodern Times* is to envision the writing center as a key player in the shaping of literacy education within our culture. By examining how literacy functions autonomously and ideologically, Grimm notes: "Rather than continuing to hold students individually responsible for their work, writing center workers need to hold themselves responsible not only for granting students membership to the academic literacy club but also for changing the gates of that club when change is necessary" (103). She charges tutors with the task of fostering students' *meta-discursive fluency* by helping writers to understand and express how "the different values, expectations, and habits of mind that underlie the competing cultural notions of literacy" (52) influence their literate practices in the academy. Like Boquet, Grimm focuses our attention on how writing centers can change the institution from within while holding to ideologies of tutoring that privilege

the experiences tutors and writers have when they work with one another. They both outline theories of writing center work that play with the writing center's position as being both central and marginalized within the institution. However, Boquet's scholarship dives deeply into the intellectual lives of tutors as it calls on them to operate from their own standpoint. While Grimm clearly asks tutors to engage in the academic game, she does so by carving their niche in the work of literacy scholars like Brian Street. Boquet, on the other hand, talks of the risk involved in being a tutor, the kind of risk Warnock and Warnock point to when they write, "liberatory learning is risky business for individuals who allow for revision in themselves" (22). Boquet does not necessarily ask tutors to become contenders in the academic arena as much as she imagines possibility in how knowledge is shaped and produced by the existence of writing tutors. For Boquet, tutors are agents of change not because they take the lead in changing the landscape of literacy learning but because they represent educational possibility.

The idea that the tutor is an important figure in the writing center epistemology is obvious from the literature reviewed above, and this review will continue to demonstrate how the subject positions of tutors have been perceived. In Chapter One, I mention the debates over peer tutors and the time the literature has focused on distinguishing the capabilities and limitations of the peer role in writing center scholarship. Yet, with or without the peer label, this discussion has focused on epistemological expectations for tutors to show that regardless of a tutor's rank or age, they have been ascribed particular jobs by our scholars. Tutors are named collaborators, co-learners, agents of traditional institutional values, middlemen, and even agents of change throughout the literature. It is

with these perceived accounts of tutors' academic lives that we can see there is still work to be done to deal with Welch's concern that a gap exists between the ideal and the lived.

Although a number of scholars have undertaken studies of tutorial interactions, written on cultural studies in the center, and addressed institutional concerns, it seems that, for me at least, something is still missing: more discussions of tutors and how their intellectual contributions to our work create possibility in the writing center. The problem I see is that people involved in the center become conflated with the center's identity itself. Furthermore, there is evidence that normative educational discourses and experiences influence the center more than how the experiences of these centers and those who inhabit them shape learning within the high school, the community college, and the university. As past editors of *The Writing Center Journal*, Boquet and Lerner contend:

> …although WCJ authors take up a variety of theoretical frameworks and topics that are germane to teaching writing as a whole, the perspective is largely an etic one, an application of ideas or theories developed outside of writing center work to one-to-one tutoring. (182)

This trend, however, is stifling writing center scholars' ability to articulate what has been learned in writing centers about student learning to those outside of the writing center field.

Writing centers are actively engaged in the identity construction of students because both tutors and students find themselves influenced through the social interaction of tutoring. More specifically, scholars in the field have made efforts to discursively construct tutors as professionals, which is an attempt to establish a more respected

institutional niche. However, John Trimbur reminds us why we need to be careful in becoming too active in developing tutors' professional identities, noting that writing center directors should recognize the tutor's status as student. He notes that in fact, the opportunity to work autonomously as co-learners without being under the scrutiny of a teacher is what "creates the social space for peer tutoring and makes writing centers an extension of the social solidarity and collaborative practices in student culture" (293).

Some important visions/missions for the writing center have been set forth by many of the scholars discussed. Many call for an understanding of the writing center as a literacy force that reaches across the institution. These writing center scholars have constructed a number of signposts to direct us to the future of the field. Yet, some clear signposts that came out of the Brooklyn Plan and the Brooklyn College Summer Institute provide sensible approaches to how we think about tutoring and tutors. As I mentioned earlier, Kail and Trimbur show great concern that tutors are not simply plugged into the academic power lines of the knowledge grid, but rather that tutors have the chance to be involved in substantive knowledge-building experiences with other writers. Simply put, the inhabitants of our writing center spaces are collaborators, and collaborative learning is what makes for successful interactions in the writing center.

Michele Eodice believes that collaboration is necessary for writing center directors to be good citizens at their institutions. In a warning about writing center identity, Eodice writes:

> Alternative, supplemental, radical, marginal—our identity preempts contact outside our walls. A kind of reciprocity with institutions could help to convert the identity of a marginalized site, although this would no doubt force us to give up

> the cachet of self-defining as the subversive-radical-moveable feast-carnival-safe house-literacy club. (117)

Eodice has us consider how collaboration can be at the centerpiece of the work of the writing center, the common denominator for the practices of directors and tutors alike. That is, the reciprocity Eodice speaks of with our institutions might be found in our ability to show others outside our walls how collaboration benefits their courses, their interactions on committees, and their scholarly work. Yet, with such an opportunity for us to move outward from our spaces, a clear picture of the identities we ascribe to tutors (identities ranging from arbiters of traditional institutional hierarchies to organic intellectuals to agents of change) sends a message to the institution at large. If writing center directors aim to create collaborative environments outside our spaces, then they must also create them within. Therefore, the question of how tutors' experiences as collaborators and co-learners persists as a central concern for establishing not only an intellectual life for the tutor but also for writing the tutor into "the lore of academia" (see Kail, "Collaborative Learning").

However, as this review has shown thus far, many scholars have already begun to take this path, and I believe that work done by scholars who are not dealing directly in the realm of cultural studies or social theory should not be discounted. Many scholars who have focused on pedagogical issues such as collaboration have much to add to any conversation that seeks to critically understand how the writing center functions and is identified as an epistemological space. Noting Eodice's piece as an example of how to fruitfully conceive of the writing center as a far-reaching epistemological space demonstrates the importance of not being seduced into discussions of identity that

potentially neglect the intellectual life of the tutor. My reflection on the literature and my thinking about the writing center as a place for learning and teaching has led me to consider a number of approaches to writing center theory that I feel the literature has yet to respond to in significant ways. Some of these issues include thinking of the center as a perceived, conceived, and lived space where knowledge is constructed and experienced by its inhabitants, a revolutionary space where individuals are constantly doing and being done by others, and a place that is both only as strong and fragile as the discourse used to construct the individuals who inhabit this space.

To say that no work has been done on any of these topics would be a mistake since work like that of Anne Ellen Geller, Michele Eodice, Frankie Condon, Meg Carroll, and Elizabeth H. Boquet's *The Everyday Writing Center* discusses writing center spaces as places where communities of learners push boundaries of learning and teaching. Their call for writing center directors to make the move from "tutor trainers" to encouragers of communities of practice is reminiscent of Bruffee's belief that, "The teacher must reconceive his role. He must become an organizer of people into communities for a specific purpose—learning" ("Collaborative Learning" 637). In many ways, their work continues to deal with the challenges set forth by Bruffee and Warnock and Warnock because they persuade writing center directors to engage in the co-learning and to revise themselves as administrators and educators as they create communities of practice that build knowledge about tutoring, working together, writing, and the many topics that come under discussion in our centers. *The Everyday Writing Center* authors highlight the need for more investigation into the kind of community of practice the writing center establishes in the academy.

Additionally, *The Everyday Writing Center* advises us not to be quick to always distinguish between theory and practice—a distinction too easy for many in the writing center community to make because of pressing practical concerns of administration that seem outside the realm of theory—but to see these two as existing together. Etienne Wenger, who is foundational to their work, writes in his *Communities of Practice*:

> The relation between practice and theory is always a complex, interactive one. From this perspective, theory is neither useless nor ideal. Practice is not immune to the influence of theory, but neither is it a mere realization of theory or an incomplete approximation of it. In particular, practice is not inherently unreflective. (48)

As the authors of *The Everyday Writing Center* discuss, and as Wenger argues, the intertwined nature of our theory and practice is far too complex for us to assume we could ever separate them and view them as mutually exclusive entities that represent the ideal and the real. This argument echoes a concern that has long been discussed in the literature from when North tried to delineate what we do for non-writing center audiences.

Muriel Harris, writing shortly after North's "Idea," takes on the issue of imagining the ideal writing center by trying to reconcile the realities of writing centers with theory. While acknowledging the myriad differences between writing centers, Harris claims that, "behind the flux of the observable world are ideals that guide and shape those specific instances" ("Theory and Reality" 5). However, it seems clear that the ideals she addresses in this piece have sprung from the pedagogical possibilities in these differences. That is, she positions writing center work in the process of writing and in the

writing across the curriculum movement, and she does this by describing the writing center as a place where a student engages in hands-on work that is most pertinent to the student's development as a writer at that moment. It is in this focus on individuals needs and interests that she begins to build a theory of tutoring that operates on flexibility, one that responds to the realities faced by writing center tutors. Harris seems to push a theory of preparing for the everyday encounters that lead to new potentials for our work.

When reality is not taken into account in theory building, the connection to everyday practice becomes meaningless. To provide an example of bringing reality into theory building, I will discuss the significance of a conversation on WCENTER following the IWCA/NCPTW conference in Minneapolis. This discussion offered scholars interested in how identity issues influence tutoring a chance to prod those who choose to circumnavigate conversations about identity politics. Many listserv members felt there was no connection between one's race and one's experience in the writing center, chalking these race discussions up to esoteric theories that do not come to bear on daily practice. Other listserv members felt race was a number one issue affecting tutoring sessions. What this discussion demonstrated was that a failure to see how theory and practice work together makes it possible to miss that if social inequities exist outside the writing center, they also exist within it. Therefore, if tutoring is not informed by a theory of how social inequality influences our well-being, then our practice lacks an important consideration for how people have had access to learning and language in their lives. On the other hand, to not inform social theory with what we learn from daily practice in a writing center is to do a disservice to those interested in understanding how individuals in learning environments navigate such issues. Simply put, writing centers are not simply

practical sites and they are not simply sites for theoretical pondering. They are spaces where things happen, where things are done, where people are doing and being done by knowledge, and where people exchange, create, destroy, and question knowledge.

Despite the measures scholars have taken to become aware of linguistic and cultural diversity, writing centers are still thought of as spaces that serve supplemental purposes. A recent posting entitled "Setting Boundaries" on *Tomorrow's Professor*, an online mailing list sponsored by the Stanford Center for Teaching and Learning and designed for faculty development, lumped writing centers into one of these support services that exist merely to alleviate professors from daily annoyances brought on by students dealing with a range of issues from academic preparedness to psychological issues. Such categorization is evidence that there is still much left to do in order to promote writing centers as models for excellence in teaching and learning. As I consider these kinds of views on the work, I grow particularly concerned for the way that writing centers are discursively constructed as supplemental support services at my own institution and in other institutional contexts. Part of the reason this discourse of support services happens is obviously because of the classroom's status as the principal space for teaching. Another reason, one could argue, is that tutors do not have the academic cache to be recognized as offering anything other than supplemental support. Because of the ways classrooms and centers rank in the academy, I began thinking about writing centers as spaces for teaching and learning that lack sufficient recognition in the institution, especially given that the day-to-day institutional accountability expected of writing centers is often more rigorous than the accountability required of faculty. That is, while it is taboo for the institution to question what goes on in the classroom of a faculty member,

it is common for both faculty and administration to question the practice and productivity of learning support services.

There must be other ways to articulate how writing centers are more than supplemental and that they provide students more opportunities to learn and grow intellectually. Thus, the goal of this study is to consider how tutors contribute to the ways we think about writing center spaces being important and productive in the teaching of writing. Examining the writing center as a space for teaching and learning prompted me to read outside of the writing center literature to construct a theoretical framework and argue a need for this particular study. My reading brought me into theories about revolution, gender identity politics, sociology, and geography. I believe this medley of perspectives offers a beneficial lens on not only those who do the work of writing centers do but also the possibilities for thinking of peer writing tutors as important educational figures for the 21st century.

Norms and Productivity—Doers Fractured From What is Done

Writing centers are not new to being at the forefront of educational revolution. For example, the work of scholars like Kenneth Bruffee and Thom Hawkins ushered in educational change that called for students to work together collaboratively in order to become better writers and learners. As discussed in the first chapter, Boquet points to Kail's 1983 article on the problem with peer tutoring as an intellectual event that not only foreshadows but also explains the source of the frustration North expressed in 1984. I would argue that Kail's work provides an intellectual basis for writing center work that is soundly grounded in the daily practice of peers working together on writing.

The brief history of the writing center presented in the introductory chapter shows that writing center spaces have participated in cutting edge of educational practices and have provided a space to discuss theoretical perspectives on writing and learning. One who would doubt that might simply look to post-process theories in composition studies and ask whether or not the writing center provides an appropriate site for a rejection of mastery and an embracing of the public, interpretive, and situated nature of writing. Post-process theorist Lee-Ann M. Kastman Breuch writes:

> Given that post-process theory emphasizes dialogue in writing instruction, as well as the importance of mentoring, and given that such dialogue in writing instruction is the core of writing center work, the connection between post-process theory and writing center pedagogy is easy to support. (121)

If this is the case, I question why more post-process theorists are not spending time at their local writing centers in an attempt to explore their philosophical ideas. Is it because they have a difficult time seeing the kinds of connections that Breuch highlights? Or is it because the writing center is not considered a serious place for academic research and inquiry? Or, possibly, is it both?

My point here is to illuminate the problem that writing centers have been spaces where educational and theoretical action and progress have happened, yet they seem to be consistently ignored as intelligible sites for this kind of action and progress by the institution at large and also, surprisingly, by some colleagues in the field of writing studies. The question this sparked for me is how a site with so much potential consistently gets reduced to a supplementary site for learning, a place where students go to clean up their language but not to intellectually engage in the language we use to

mediate our experiences with knowledge. And, are these sites ignored because peer tutors are often left out of the discourse shared by teachers of writing? These are difficult questions to answer, and, in some respects, we can begin to find answers in the writing center literature by focusing on how tutors are rendered educationally relevant and significant.

Considering revolution was a good place to start in considering how and why tutors are or are not included in the running narrative of writing teaching. While an epistemological shift in the teaching of writing occurred with the introduction of peer response, it will take revolutionary efforts to focus attention on how this shift operated outside the classroom; furthermore, the revolutionary thinking of those publishing on peer tutors and collaboration early on made the writing center's contribution to educational reform and epistemological change possible. John Holloway's *Change the World Without Taking Power: The meaning of revolution today* offers readers a perspective on revolution that does not rely on one group of people dominating another or changing government by force. Holloway contends that revolutionary change happens when individuals look to their everyday experiences as the basis for radical social change. He notes: "The aim of revolution is the transformation of ordinary, everyday life and it is surely from ordinary, everyday life that revolution must arise" (211). Most of Holloway's work is a Marxist critique of capitalism, suggesting that capital has fractured doers from doing and from what is done, and there are lessons we can learn from his discussion of doer, doing, and done.

After reading Holloway's work, I considered what it means to position the tutor, as Muriel Harris suggested, in the middle of teachers and students. If the tutor is a kind of

doer and learning or writing is what is done or produced in a session, then placing the tutor in the middle of an already established student-teacher binary threatens to fracture the tutor from what is done during a session. If a teacher only officially recognizes learning or writing, then what institutionally recognized claims can the tutor make to that learning? The binary of student-teacher makes it difficult to see where the tutor is positioned in that learning relationship, and the system in place potentially fails to recognize important learning opportunities only possible in tutorials. As a result, tutors are fractured from what is produced in their session and they are rendered unrecognizable as significant contributors to teaching and learning. Writing centers exist in an institutional context that makes possible the separation of tutors from the texts produced and learning done during their sessions. The challenge for writing center theorists and tutors is to position themselves against this separation, and this is where Holloway sees an opportunity for revolutionary social change.

Holloway's work on revolution piques the intellectual curiosity of those who are interested in reimagining the direction of education and liberatory pedagogy, especially for those of us who learn and teach in spaces outside of traditional classrooms. His discussion of work is intriguing because it calls for an examination of tutoring as a sort of doing—that the tutor is a doer who is constantly in threat of being fractured from the work that he or she has done. Holloway writes: "The separation of doer from doing and done creates a doer who is cut adrift from doing, who is subordinate to the done, but appears to be completely independent of it" (70). What comes to mind is that the tutor is often overlooked as a potentially vital component in the educational process—a figure best left out of the equation whenever possible despite the very real outcomes that a tutor

can help a writer accomplish. Holloway's discussion reminded me of Elizabeth Boquet's discussion of transmitting information from sender to receiver with the least amount of distortion possible, asking a vital question about the repercussions we face when we exclude a third party. To get rid of noise in a system is to try to create, "a theory of dialogue that depends upon the exclusion of a third party, whose contributions are dismissed as mere static in the system, whose mere presence is deemed unsanitary" (Boquet, *Noise* 51).

For Holloway, doing is the act that negates whatever the current social state happens to be (23). He contends that doing is part of a social activity, one that is not merely the actions of an individual. He writes:

> Our doing is *always* part of a social flow of doing, even where it appears to be an individual act. Our capacity to do is always an interlacing of our activity with the previous or present activity of others. Our capacity to do is always the result of the doing of others. (28)

Holloway here is describing how individuals have the power to do virtually anything. It is when this social flow is broken that individuals begin to lose that power and succumb to the powers that be. Whatever is done, consequently, is outside of them and they've lost their ability to be recognized as a contributor to the work produced. Because of how this influences the relationship of the doer's power to do something and the power someone has over the doer, Holloway contends that, "the vast majority of doers are converted into done-to, their activity transformed into passivity, their subjectivity into objectivity" (29). What I find most interesting in this discussion is that as the doer's involvement in the task becomes less recognized, so do the doer's actions, and it thereby becomes easier to ignore

the doer to the point that her individual contributions to the task become almost meaningless.

Given that Holloway and Judith Butler share similar roots in Hegelian thought, it is not surprising that Butler's *Undoing Gender*, a collection of essays on identity politics, also highlights the importance of doing. However, Butler's work has completely different aims and the two authors would likely disagree on the role identity plays in this whole process of doers doing. Butler reasons that, "Paradoxically, the reconceptualization of identity as an *effect*, that is, as *produced* or *generated*, opens up possibilities of 'agency' that are insidiously foreclosed by positions that take identity categories as foundational and fixed" (187). Here, Butler is pointing out that as identity is constructed, it is simultaneously bound by the rigid taxonomies of identity. She goes on to write:

> If identities were no longer fixed as the premises of a political syllogism, and politics no longer understood as a set of practices derived from the alleged interests that belong to a set of ready-made subjects, a new configuration of politics would surely emerge from the ruins of the old. (189-90)

Like Holloway, she sees how fixed identities can serve to reinforce normative social structures and parameters that keep people in their place and reify the existing state of being within a society or a culture. Thus, if we add Butler to the mix in our example of the tutor as doer presented earlier in this section, we might also find a challenge in thinking about how social and institutional norms shape peer tutors' roles in the teaching and learning.

Butler begins *Undoing Gender* by discussing whether or not being recognizable is worthwhile if it means that one is only recognized through already established social

norms. Butler argues that recognition is the "site of power by which the human is differentially produced" (2). It is important to note the emphasis on recognition in contrast to Holloway's emphasis on the relationship between the doer and done because, for Butler, the issue is that there are individuals who fail to be recognized before they even began to do anything. Thus, an important focus in Butler's discussion of doing and done is the idea of intelligibility. She writes:

> There are advantages to remaining less than intelligible, if intelligibility is understood as that which is produced as a consequence of recognition according to prevailing social norms. Indeed, if my options are loathsome, if I have no desire to be recognized within a certain set of norms, then it follows that my sense of survival depends upon escaping the clutch of those norms by which recognition is conferred. (3)

For Butler, becoming intelligible is only possible if one is able to create an "alternative, minority version of sustaining norms or ideals" (3) that enable him or her to act, meaning that becoming intelligible is a tricky task because accepting prevailing social norms could potentially lead to one's undoing if those prevailing norms have no room for those who seek recognition. In discussing existence as only being possible by doing, noting that the conditions of doing are partly the conditions of existence, Butler explains, "If my doing is dependent on what is done to me, or rather, the ways in which I am done by norms, then the possibility of my persistence as an 'I' depends upon my being able to do something with what is done with me" (3). Here Butler is trying to suggest that one is constituted by norms but also lives in relation to these norms in ways that aim to transform the norms.

This notion of living in a state that is both subject to the norms and critical of them brought to mind Eodice's "Breathing Lessons" when she advocates *working the margins* rather than *working in the margins* that many writing center scholars have lamented. Eodice's point is to flip the overdone and tired trope that we are constantly working in the margins rather than viewing the margins as workable and important spaces for possibility and growth. Knowing the system in which one finds him or herself is crucial to being able to understand how he or she is rendered intelligible. As Butler argues, "If I am always constituted by norms that are not of my making, then I have to understand the ways that constitution takes place" (15).

Where I left off with Holloway was his mentioning of how the doer is transformed into a less recognizable figure. This is the point at which Butler becomes helpful in understanding the relationships between doers, doing, and (un)done because her understanding of intelligibility adds a layer of insight into the ways that tutors operate, how they are subject to social and institutional norms, and the idea that the lack of recognition might run deeper than a simple fracturing of a doer from what is done.

Neal Lerner's account of the rise and fall of the Dartmouth Writing Clinic is a perfect example of how a writing center can be completely done and undone by or, in other words, subject to the norms that others privilege. Lerner's piece shows us how the constitution of a writing center is completely subject to the norms used by those who created, used, and dismantled the clinic. Lerner's historical account clearly exhibits the important roles that pedagogical and epistemological possibilities can play in the sustainability of a writing center. Possibility is not simply a matter of circumstance, but a matter of thinking about possibility as something only offered to those who already find

themselves within the norms. Butler contends that, "Possibility is not a luxury; it is as crucial as bread. I think we underestimate what the thought of the possible does for those for whom the very issue of survival is most urgent" (29). Writing centers trying to survive, such as the one in Lerner's article, might offer good case studies for examining how a center's success is dependent on possibility. But it is arguable that the Dartmouth center, as Lerner depicts it, while aching for possibility was not actually thinking about possibilities outside the conditions set for them by the prevailing academic norms of the time.

Our scholarship has pointed to many opportunities for writing centers to rethink possibility and achieve intelligibility. For example, Nancy Grimm's "In the Spirit of Service" argues for writing centers to be sites that advocate better and more informed understandings of literacy while scholarship like *The Everyday Writing Center* calls our attention to the importance of creating and maintaining centers that invest deeply in the intellectual lives of tutors. These are real examples of possibilities that render writing center work intelligible and foster intellectual growth not only in the field but also in local academic communities. Both of these examples seek to make writing centers and their people intelligible by creating an alternate version of sustaining norms that enable them to exist within prevailing norms that offer recognition, whether they be literacy norms or hierarchical norms in the academy.

What I hope to show in this discussion of doer, doing, and (un)done is how writing center scholars have begun to address the interesting issues that both Holloway and Butler bring up in their work. I am fascinated by how these two scholars address these issues because there are a number of lessons we can learn by thinking about how

tutors participate in the production of texts and in the learning process, how they are subject to social and institutional norms, and how they are often times left out of dialogues about teaching and learning. The reality, as mentioned in the first chapter, is that tutors are often absent from theory building discussions (see Dinitz and Kiedaisch) or that the umbrella term "writing center" is used as an all-encompassing identifying marker. Such an absence makes one wonder to what extent have writing center scholars fractured the doer from the doing and the done.

The work done in writing center spaces cannot be rendered unrecognizable because it is too important to an institution that is failing to produce desired learning outcomes through the traditional means in education. If fracturing the doer from the doing and the done is what prevents recognition, and if it is only by doing that one is able to become recognizable, intelligible, and possible, then writing center scholarship needs to find more ways to reconnect the doer to the doing; that is, there is a need for continued research and greater interest in how peer tutors influence writers, how they factor into learning and teaching relationships, and what they contribute to education.

(Third)Space and Tutor Epistemology

Edward Soja offers a concise critique of the philosophical differences between Butler and Holloway, and his discussion would most likely place scholars like Holloway in the modernist identity politics paradigm while placing Butler in the postmodernist identity politics paradigm. However, Soja begs his readers to push even further by considering how the concept of a thirdspace that creates, "possibilities for a new cultural politics of identity and difference that is both radically postmodern and consciously

spatialized from the beginning" (96). What Soja's work brings to the table is a clearer understanding of how space, space that is perceived, conceived, and especially lived, influences this discussion of identity politics and epistemology and can help us see past binaries that limit the intellectual identities of tutors. For Soja, spaces can change how we understand identity and epistemology, noting that "relatively little attention is given to the causal flow in the other direction, that is, to how material geographies and spatial practices shape and affect subjectivity, consciousness, rationality, historicality, and sociality" (77). His main task in discussing space, however, is to highlight what he has termed *thirdspace*, a concept that stems from Henri Lefebvre's work on space and which he defines as,

> the space where all places are, capable of being seen from every angle, each standing clear; but also a secret and conjectured object, filled with illusions and allusions, a space 'unimaginable universe,' or as Lefebvre would put it, 'the most general of products.' (56)

Soja's work offers an opportunity to discuss writing centers as spaces that enable peer tutors to create epistemological possibilities.

The Peer Tutoring Epistemological Map I constructed in Figure 1 on the next page demonstrates the relationship between Soja, Butler, and Holloway and offers a visual representation of how these theorists and their ideas relate. The map also shows how the concepts discussed thus far will be used to think about peer tutoring epistemology in this study. Up to this point, I have introduced layers of how I am thinking about these theorists, their concepts, and how they shed light on peer tutoring. Now that Holloway's and Butler's ideas have been introduced and Soja's theoretical

concepts are being introduced, this map should make the relationships between theorists, topics of discussion, and theoretical concepts clearer. Since I have built up to Soja's thirdspace, the map reflects what this study will examine in the thirdspace of peer tutoring. In particular, I will focus on how the lived experiences of tutors can be thought of in terms of production and identity. The threads that run through doers, doing, and done will be used to highlight some of the intersections and relationships between production and identity. Discussions of doers, doing, and done will be used to highlight the lived experiences of tutors involved in this study. Therefore, the major topics of discussion for Butler and Holloway and their theoretical concerns will be used to think about the lived experiences of peer tutors. Once a picture of lived experience develops, the thirdspace epistemology that emerges can be used to reconsider

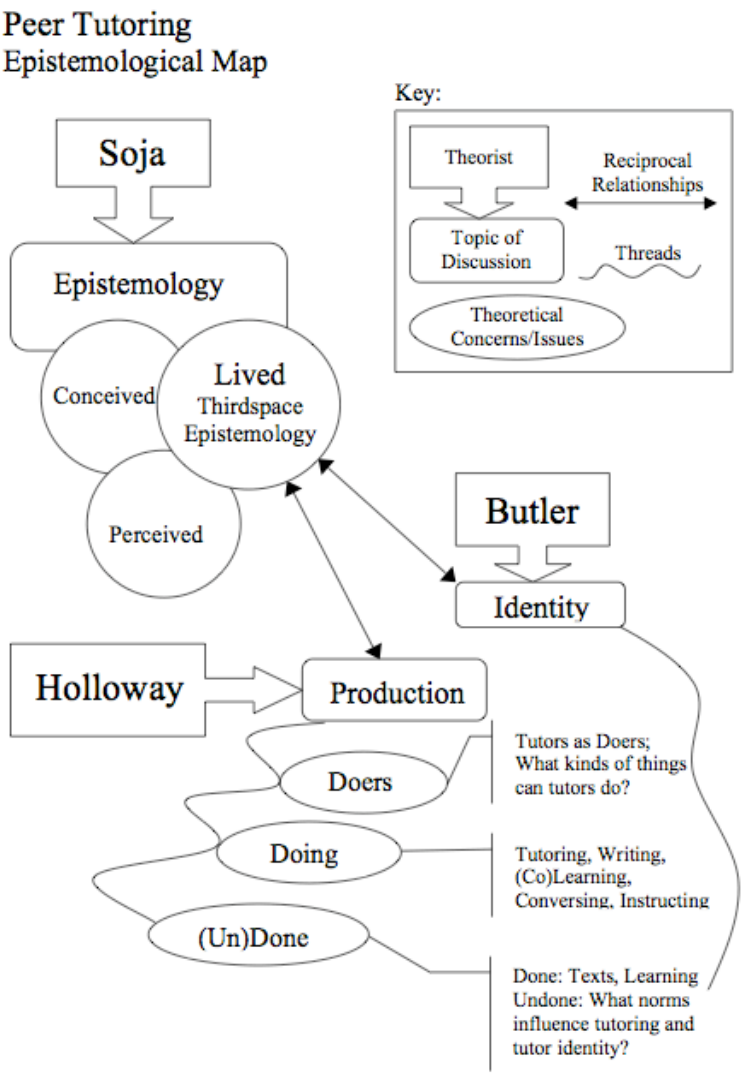

Fig. 1. Peer tutoring epistemological map.

the other two epistemological perspectives that Soja provides (the conceived and perceived). This map is a visual representation of how theorists, topics of discussion, and theoretical concerns/issues (see key for corresponding shapes) are layered and how they relate to one another in the current discussion and in chapters to come.

Soja's discussion of space is a critical component to the concerns of this dissertation because doers do not operate in a vacuum and one does not become intelligible without first being shaped by an environment. Although the previous discussion of tutors as doers, how they are fractured from what is produced during tutorials, will be an important part of this research project, it is also important to keep in mind that doing occurs in physical, social, and cultural spaces; writing centers are these kinds of spaces and what goes on in different spaces certainly changes the direction of how any writing center develops or any tutoring session, for that matter, progresses. In this dissertation, I wish to address a concept of space that focuses on how epistemological space informs intellectual possibility in the writing center. As I mentioned earlier, the idea that site and method had to merge before writing centers could even exist as we know them today places an importance on the power that space has in shaping methodological approaches in the writing center; that is, the ability to focus on individual writers rather than on large groups of writers. But there is more to it than simply creating a place outside the classroom to meet. As peer tutors made their way onto the scene, intellectual possibilities in the space shifted, creating new possibilities for teaching and learning that were certainly not a part of the academic norm prior to the early 1970s (see Boquet, "Our little secret"; Bruffee *Collaborative Learning*). In some sense, the circumstances of how tutors found themselves teaching and learning within these spaces

created a completely new learning milieu with new epistemological assumptions and possibilities.

This kind of a space made room for discussion about tutors as teachers or peers, making debate over the issues of authority in the writing center a particular interest for those invested in trying to understand how it is that tutors could help other writers write and learn when they did not have the traditional institutional authority to do so. Earlier, I presented questions about the institutional role that tutors play, and one way that some scholars have tried to answer these questions has been to try to make tutors intelligible by placing them on the power and authority continuum that already exists in academia. Not knowing how to think about tutors in terms other than ones already available presented a dilemma for many writing center scholars. Evidence of this can be seen throughout the literature in pieces like Peter Carino's "Power and Authority in Peer Tutoring," Linda K. Shamoon and Deborah H. Burns "a Critique of Pure Tutoring," and Connie Snyder Mick's "'Little Teachers,' Big Students: Graduate Students as Tutors and the Future of Writing Center Theory." Each of these articles highlight the dilemma of what it means to be a peer in an institution that privileges expertise when it comes to how, when, and where learning happens.

Carino warns writing center professionals not to deny the authority that tutors have; however, one must question Carino's use of authority because his argument simply suggests that tutors have no choice but to adopt traditional authoritative structures of learning. Carino suggests a risk-free model of writing center work that only strives to support traditional norms. Although this is certainly important, we can see the debilitating effects that adopting a discourse of support can have on possibility for writing center

tutors. Sure, they have authority, but it is ultimately that authority that renders them unrecognizable as intellectual contributors. This is the paradox that Butler suggests about being undone by the very discourses one strives to be recognized by. Likewise, Shamoon and Burns face a similar dilemma with authority in their critique of tutoring orthodoxies. Their work is certainly insightful and brings to mind a number of problems with the belief that good writing center work is non-directive, as popularized by Jeff Brooks. Again, though, Shamoon and Burns are situated in a discourse that only has a limited ability to address the complete epistemological situation that writing center tutors face. The conversation gives way to the available vocabulary in teaching that seems to limit the possibilities that peer tutoring offers education. In the same vein, Connie Snyder Mick asks whether an important portion of the writing center community have been left out of the conversation—graduate student tutors. Mick's work culminates in the decision that tutors at this level are actually "big students" rather than "little teachers," as Bruffee once suggested, yet this conclusion still falls into the taken-for-granted paradigm that learning only happens between a submissive student and a dominant teacher. The question that these pieces focus on is where the authority vested in the identity of a tutor comes from and how that authority influences the tutor's interactions with a writer. It seems that these discussions necessitate a privileging of identity over epistemology, however, because of a pedantic focus on the tutor's institutional rank. This narrow focus on rank begs the question of whether or not the educationally driven relationships that are likely to develop in writing centers have any influence on how knowledge is co-constructed during tutoring sessions.

In an early discussion of peer tutoring, Thom Hawkins wrote that, "Tasks are accomplished because there is a mutual effort between friends, a situation of closeness, not distance, that fosters a sense of community in which the language learner can take risks without fear of penalty, can let his language become personal, not impersonal" (66). Hawkins argued that the comfortable relationship between peer writing tutors and student writers fosters discursive practices that lead to improved writing through revision. He could conceive of relationships that did not seem as though they had to rely on established academic positions to explain how learning in a writing center was possible, and although the critiques mentioned above are all very important for coming to a better understanding of what happens in a writing center and for constructing the particulars of tutor identity, there are lessons embedded in Hawkins' passage about intimacy, learning communities, and learning spaces that have yet to be addressed in writing center literature. Writing center scholars still have yet to postulate the efficacy of the tutor in creating and teaching in a space that transforms current conceptions of learning.

As mentioned at the beginning of this review, Bawarshi and Pelkowski discuss the writer as a subject position that is not easily defined or elaborated upon by simplifying contradictory identities or erasing them all together. They look to other ways of thinking about tutoring, citing Anzaldúa's *mestiza consciousness*, which deals with the essence of what Soja refers to as thirdspace because it focuses on lived spaces rather than just on conceived or perceived spaces. Bawarshi and Pelkowski lament that "The writing center has traditionally been and continues to be unconcerned with critiquing academic standards, only with facilitating student's participation within them" (85), and argue for tutors to help writers understand the negotiation of their home discourse practices with

their academic ones. They see possibility in locating the writing center as a site for greater institutional awareness and recognition of such demands. Bawarshi and Pelkowski's writing center is a space that seems to be pedagogically and epistemologically positioned somewhere in between prevailing practices of the academy and the everyday experiences of students. Like Boquet, Grimm, and Eodice, Bawarshi and Pelkowski see this position not as a moment of distress, but rather as a moment of opportunity and possibility. In many ways, what we have under discussion is the possibility for an epistemological space that places the tutor in the educational borderlands; the tutor has the potential to be a representative for a way of thinking about pedagogy that happens in alternative spaces.

Soja suggests that we must think of spaces that we can conceive of and live in. Therefore, theorists might ponder what kinds of spaces are most livable for tutors by considering the writing center as a social space. Offering a brief discussion of space will help to clarify why it is crucial for more writing center scholars to think of our spaces as ones that are of our own conception and the conceptions of others—as places that constitute a physical and mental reality within a given institution. Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu provide explanations of social spaces that grow out of relationships, societal needs, and political and economic interests. As the premier scholar on life in institutions, Michel Foucault has much to offer on the social function of particular institutions. Foucault's interest in space was sparked by a concern with how events occur simultaneously rather than in linear time. He argues, "We are at a moment, I believe, when our experience of the world is less that of a long life developing through time than that of a network that connects points and intersects with its own skein" (22). Although

space is not a new innovation, according to Foucault, since places have historically been categorized and privileged in a number of ways (e.g., sacred places vs. profane places), we have innovative ways for thinking of space as a network. Our current concern with space is one that emphasizes the proximity of one place next to another, a concern for, "what relations of propinquity, what type of storage, circulation, marking, and classification of human elements should be adopted in a given situation" (23). Given the situated and relational nature of this concern for space, it is evident that Foucault's thoughts on places seek to understand how social conditions create and are created by space.

In line with thinking about space as a social phenomenon in addition to a physical one, Pierre Bourdieu tends to think of space as a networked relationship among people living in particular environments. Bourdieu's work with *habitus* offers us another way to consider social spaces. According to Bourdieu, *habitus* is simultaneously a system for the production and appreciation of practices, and he notes that *habitus* implies, "a 'sense of one's place' but also 'sense of the place of others'" (19). In order to elaborate this point, he offers an example of our ability to classify items such as clothing or types of food based on the social status they represent. He notes that, firstly, people will choose items that they find to be representative of their social standing and, secondly, as people who are socialized, we are able to see relationships between the representations and one's standing in social space. *Habitus*, thus, provides a kind of common sense. Essentially, people classify themselves through their practices into different social spaces. Bourdieu writes:

> Social space, as I described it above, presents itself in the form of agents endowed with different properties that are systematically linked among themselves… differences function as distinctive signs and as signs of distinction, positive or negative, and this happens outside of any intention of distinction of any conscious search for "conspicuous consumption." (19-20)

Basically, social space is made known by the distribution of properties, including intellectual property, among people, and how those properties are different from one another offers clues as to the position of individuals within society.

Foucault and Bourdieu provide insight into how individuals find themselves in particular social spaces and why it is that some social spaces have even developed over time. What's interesting in their discussions of space is that they do not tend to focus on chronological time to tell the story of what seems to be going on in a particular moment but rather focus on the relationships between people, goods, possibilities, disadvantages, and practices. Space is not merely a stage upon which history happens but rather it is a product and a shaper of that history, and it is not merely just a geographical or physical plane but also a social one that begs for consideration and study.

At this point, I am going to direct attention back on Soja and his concept of thirdspace because I think it is important for adding to this conversation on social space and to bring together these ideas about how space is lived in, perceived, and conceived. In an earlier discussion of Soja's *Thirdspace*, I noted how Soja sees a need for the recognition of space on progress through time, something that I think is in agreement with Foucault's sentiment and with Bourdieu's thoughts on space. Likewise, I noted earlier that Soja is interested in bringing about a new cultural identity politics that is

spatialized from the start. It is in Soja's work that I find a useful theoretical framework for the work of this dissertation. In order to discuss Soja's concept of thirdspace epistemologies, I think it is important to offer a brief explanation of what Soja means when he refers to space as first- and secondspace epistemologies. Since I've already offered the definition he provides for thirdspace earlier, I'll move into a deeper discussion of how thirdspace relates to the current study once I have provided the appropriate background information.

Soja refers to perceived, conceived, and lived space as the trialectics of spatiality, which provide bases for understanding first-, second-, and thirdspace epistemologies, respectively. Although not a single one of these three spatialities should be privileged above the others, special consideration is given to thirdspace/lived space in Soja's work primarily because first- and secondspace are traditionally favored. Henri Lefebvre favored lived space and, as a political choice, saw it as, "the space of radical openness, the space of social struggle" (68). For the trialectics of spatiality to work, all three most be considered, but Soja's argument is that, "a temporary strategic privileging is necessary to break the hammerlock of binarist logic and to prevent any form of reductionism from constraining the free play of creative spatial imagination" (65). Simply put, perceived and conceived spaces have traditionally been given close examinations in many academic disciplines.

Perceived space provides the basis for firstspace epistemologies while conceived space is the basis for secondspace epistemologies. Firstspace epistemologies, according to Soja, are ones that seek to analyze and decipher the material world. He states: "Firstspace epistemologies tend to privilege objectivity and materiality, and to aim

toward a formal science of space" (Soja 75). Basically, the focus is on being able to accurately describe surface appearances and to explain the space by examining social, psychological, and biophysical processes going on outside of the space. Secondspace epistemologies have grown out of a backlash to firstspace analysis. They are focused on the ideal rather than the material. Soja writes:

> Secondspace epistemologies are immediately distinguishable by their explanatory concentration on conceived rather than perceived space and their implicit assumption that spatial knowledge is primarily produced through discursively devised representations of space, through the spatial workings of the mind. (79)

First- and secondspace epistemologies taken together have tended to seem epistemologically complete, yet this sense of completeness has corralled the knowledge of space into two main pens. According to Soja, the duality of these two epistemologies makes necessary close attention to thirdspace epistemologies in order to not just deconstruct the duality of firstspace-secondspace but to also revive the approaches these two take with new possibilities (81).

In their *Teaching/Writing in Thirdspaces*, Rhonda C. Grego and Nancy S. Thompson articulate the ways that first-, second-, and thirdspace influence writing learners in terms of composition studies. Their example is particularly helpful in sorting through these complicated ideas in a more concrete fashion:

> Students enter Studio sessions with classroom-enforced secondspace conceptions of writing on the tips of their tongues, use this language (metadiscourse) to identify and articulate the difficulties a piece of writing might be causing for them or to check how a piece of writing is received by an audience. Then, however,

> ensuing discussion can and often does go beyond this initial terminology into a thirdspace. That thirdspace is opened up when the firstspace of their perceptions (drawn out by discussion and probing) and the secondspace of composition's current terminology for talking about writing interact, creating incipient awareness of the gaps of what is absent from the secondspace conceptions. (130)

What Grego and Thompson explain above shows us how writing center sessions provide a place where students are able to move beyond their first- and secondspace experiences with writing into a more meaningful thirdspace where their lived experiences with learning to write begin to provide a clearer understanding of how to write.

As I defined earlier, thirdspace is where all things can come together because of its radical openness—it is a place that "envisions a complex totality of potential knowledges but rejects any totalization that finitely encloses knowledge production in 'permanent structures' or specialized compartments/disciplines" (Soja 57). The come-one-come-all openness of thirdspace is what makes it attractive for writing center practitioners and theoreticians because so often writing centers are the site on which disciplines converge. Not only do we see that through the assignments, conversations, and tasks we see in the writing center but also in the continued interest in writing across the curriculum and in the disciplines. Writing centers become campus loci for interdisciplinary discussion, a space that remains open to alternative knowledges, a place that tries to adapt to the varied communication needs across academia. What I found even more potential in is that writing centers offer places where we can test the assumptions we have about learning, writing, and teaching because of their openness to potential

knowledges. With this in mind, I plan to discuss thirdspace epistemologies as useful theoretical frameworks for the study of writing centers.

Key to understanding thirdspace is Soja's discussion of thirding-as-Othering, which essentially grounds readers in Lefebvre's thinking about social space. Soja's entire argument rests solely on Lefebvre's work, and it was Lefebvre who deemed "the third possibility" to be an important feature in our understanding of space. Soja writes: "Lefebvre persistently sought to crack [binarized categories] open by introducing an-Other term, a third possibility or 'moment' that partakes of the original pairing but is not just a simple combination or an 'in-between' position along some all-inclusive continuum" (60). This is what Soja comes to term thirding-as-Othering, and it is more than a matter of thesis/antithesis/synthesis in the tradition of Hegel or Marx because it requires that we observe the third alternative as a thing of its own rather than something that has been derived from the existing binary. For instance, a quick example of this would be to think back to some of the writing center literature reviewed that discussed the tutor as sort of combination of teacher and student. While a particular tutor may claim these two identities, it would be entirely reductive to think of a tutor as a simple combination of these two because the tutor is in fact something other than both of these individuals. Furthermore, the tutor makes us radically rethink who teacher or who student actually are. Lefebvre used this thirding-as-Othering as a way to discuss how materialist and idealist understandings of space have obscured social space and to tap into the potential for envisioning an expanded "scope of the spatial imagination" (Soja 65).

Keeping in mind this attention to thirding-as-Other, I want to consider what it means for something to be possible. Soja urges us to consider thirdspace as the

"possibilities machine," noting that Lefebvre once referred to cites as such, and in that discussion, I was reminded of Butler's attention to possibility and specifically to what it means to be possible. Butler commented that, "The thought of a possible life is only an indulgence for those who already know themselves to be possible. For those who are still looking to become possible, possibility is a necessity" (31). If it is true that as Soja suggests that first- and secondspace epistemologies have eclipsed thirdspace epistemologies with their seeming completeness, then the possibility for thirdspace epistemologies to be recognized is a matter of necessity. Here, work like Bawarshi and Pelkowski's demonstrates the necessity to assert the writing center's potential and possibility. They write: "As such, the writing center can, in a truly postmodern sense, become a structure within the university that examines and exposes its own structurality, a place that is continuously engaged in deconstructing its context at the same time as it functions within it" (92). Seeing the writing center as a thirdspace, as a place that has been othered, requires that writing center scholars continue to affirm the writing center as a place where the university can better understand its own assumptions about literacy and learning. The writing center as a thirdspace is not some hybrid pedagogical holding ground for wayward students. If more writing center scholars considered what we do from a thirdspace perspective, the possibilities for how tutors do writing center pedagogy have the potential to expand and even transform how we do learning, teaching, and writing.

In order to bring this discussion of thirdspace epistemologies and how they relate to writing centers to a close, I want to include a lengthy passage from Soja's work. Reflecting on some of the early works in writing center scholarship and on where I have

experienced the field to be today, I read the following passage with thoughts that there is still much we need to do as writing center scholars and professionals:

> The starting-point for this strategic re-opening and rethinking of new possibilities is the provocative shift back from epistemology to ontology and specifically to the ontological trialectic of Spatiality-Historicality-Sociality. This ontological rebalancing act induces a radical skepticism toward all established epistemologies, all traditional ways of confidently obtaining knowledge of the world. Many, especially in the explicitly postmodern discourse, have reacted to this epistemological crisis by unleashing a free-wheeling anything-goes eclecticism or hyperrelativism, almost always without addressing the new ontological issues being raised. Addressing them directly, seeking to rebalance the ontological foundations of knowledge formation, however, makes a significant difference. Such ontological restructuring, at least for the present moment, re-centers knowledge formation first around the long-submerged and subordinated spatiality of existential being and becoming, and then in the spatialization of historicality and sociality in theory-formation, empirical analysis, critical inquiry, and social practice. (Soja 81-82)

I have decided to include this long passage because as I read it, I cannot help but to think about Harvey Kail's contention that collaborative learning in the form of peer tutoring may be too great of an epistemological shift for the university to handle ("Collaborative Learning" 598). What strikes me is that the transfer, creation, and criticism of knowledge in our institutions is only thought possible in certain contexts and under the guidance of particular kinds of experts. Scholars like Kail who voiced these concerns early on seemed

to be aching for recognition of another possibility, and as we have seen, many have tried to tackle the problem of peer tutoring in our institutions, which has gone on to be addressed as the writing center's institutional role. I believe that Kail, however, had the foresight to see that collaborative learning was an epistemological difference that would potentially change how we think of learning possibilities. More than that, Kail and his contemporaries (e.g., Bruffee, Harris, Hawkins, Trimbur) saw that it was the individuals involved, the peers, who were making this change possible. Because it was the peer tutors making this possible, the writing center was not just diving into epistemological discussions but also discussions of an ontological nature. What happens when you turn students into teachers, into collaborators, into writers, and, all the while, retain their identity as a student? This is an ontological re-balancing act, as Soja would suggest, and it is certainly one that makes many of those in the writing center field curious about how teaching/learning relationships develop.

Conclusion

In a sense, the peer tutor becomes a locus for understanding how writing centers function institutionally. As demonstrated in the literature, the kind of social space the writing center offers is completely dependent on the tutors performing multiple institutional roles and identities, and within the space there is epistemological and pedagogical possibility. This review of literature has attempted to provide a theoretical framework for this study and shows how further investigation into matters of epistemology, identity, and production are needed to begin to address how peer writing tutors influence learning and teaching. The writing center literature has certainly covered

a number of subject positions tutors claim, and the literature has also constructed a potential future for the writing center field. This study seeks to continue building on the foundation set by the scholars discussed in this review; however, in the interest of adding to the conversation, this study will closely examine how tutors' experiences as intellectual agents are conceived, perceived, and lived.

Throughout this review, I have looked into a number of discussions held in the writing center literature that deal with the roles and experiences of tutors. Many scholars have opted to use critique borrowed from other disciplines. Earlier I noted that Boquet and Lerner are concerned that theory developed outside is all too often applied to writing center work. They continue by noting, "Much harder to find is an emic theory or model, one developed by research that is conducted in writing center settings that could act as a lens to examine other teaching-learning contexts" (182). Part of the reason for this might be what Kurt Spellmeyer suggests in his *Arts of Living: Reinventing the Humanities for the Twenty-first Century*—an obsession in the humanities to favor critique and theory over the everyday experiences of our students. Spellmeyer writes:

> Teaching has lost its value precisely because the humanities no longer see their fate as linked to the future lives of ordinary citizens. Instead of asking how we might enable those citizens to act in the world that is likely to emerge ten or fifteen years from now, we have imagined ourselves as our society's principle actors, while those citizens, our students, have become superfluous in our eyes. (Spellmeyer 245)

What Spellmeyer has to say about teaching is troubling, but it suggests that a disconnect exists between what we research and write about in the humanities and the people who

are supposedly most affected, described, or helped by that research. Could it be that our application of theory in writing center scholarship has distanced us from being able to appreciate what peer tutors contribute to our professional and academic work?

Spellmeyer argues that, "What we need is a means of surveying the whole while placing ourselves somewhere within it—a way of working from a multiplicity of perspectives toward coherence and then to commitment" (170). Boquet's *Noise* and Susan Dinitz and Jean Kiedaisch's piece on tutors creating theory make a significant effort to work from "a multiplicity of perspectives" by accounting for the lived experiences of tutors. However, much of the writing center literature effectively ignores these lived experiences and opts to focus on theoretical concepts and frameworks established outside of the tutorial session. What we get from those are simply conceptions of perceptions of the work that tutors do. Spellmeyer contends: "The moment of synthesis takes place not on the level of words but on the level of life as lived or as imagined, while the words themselves are always empty vehicles" (212). It seems that scholars can write many pages on matters of tutoring, but until the lived experiences of tutors are used to support those pages, they have little value. Thus, this study is an attempt to get at tutoring from the lived perspective, to speak to the perceptions and the conceptions of the field using what we learn from the ways tutors work and what they believe about their work. Although this is not a replication of Boquet or Dinitz and Kiedaisch's study, it is in the same vein that I will be looking beyond theory and critique in the writing center to focus on the teaching and learning possibilities that result from peer tutoring.

As Holloway points out in his book, and the authors of the *Everyday Writing Centers* might agree, revolution is in the everyday. This study will look at the everyday

experiences of tutors to see what scholars might learn from the tutors themselves and to begin to think about whether or not change, as was conceived of and written about by Trimbur, Kail, and Bruffee so early on in the history of peer tutoring, is a possibility still at work in the writing center. In a chapter dedicated to institutional change and peer tutoring, Bruffee writes:

> Peer tutors can help colleges and universities bring about changes of four kinds: changes in human relations—among students, among professors, and between students and professors; changes in classroom practice; changes in curriculum; and even (often the last domino to fall) changes in the prevailing understanding of the nature and authority of knowledge and the authority of teachers. (*Collaborative Learning* 110)

These types of changes might already be happening at our institutions, but I am curious to learn the extent to which tutors, and specifically peer tutors, are engaged in making this kind of change possible.

Tutors are not always made privy to the large theoretical goals of our work, and, in some cases, our own literature removes them from the work in favor of a more inclusive less threatening blanket term "writing center." At the beginning, I pointed to North's use of "our" as a blanket term in attempt to show the ways in which tutors, from early on, have been left out of the equation despite their important role in making our work add up. Not only is the connection between the tutor and the outcome of their sessions diminished but also is the connection between the tutor and the work of the writing center when we choose to not represent tutors in our scholarship. By not including tutors, we essentialize them, which makes it easier to think of a tutor or a writer

"as a problem to be solved rather than as a soul to be touched" (Boquet, *Noise* 148). Tutors have a lot at stake in their sessions because they participate in activities that shape individuals, and when their voices are removed from our scholarship, the importance of the outcomes of their sessions are downplayed. As Dinitz and Kiedaisch note, "tutors are well-positioned to complicate theory, based on their experience of how theory plays out in practice" (64). For Dinitz, this has been a long-term belief. When Harris published Dinitz's peer tutor Malbec as the first contributor to "The Tutor's Corner" in 1984, she wrote that Dinitz, "encouraged her peer tutors to write articles which share their concerns with other tutors" ("From the Editor" 1). What Dinitz, Kiedaisch, and Harris suggest through their work inviting tutors into the conversation is that tutor experiences are needed for us to learn more about our work and to establish clear and practical connections between the significance of what they do and what they accomplish.

Yet, the writing center has an institutional identity that often envelops tutors, which has arguably been done to lessen the level of accountability the institution holds peer tutors to or to buy the writing center more academic capital. However, these discussions have focused the literature squarely on issues of identity and language politics, ironically, at the cost of recognizing the tutor, as Butler might argue, as intelligible. Therefore, the goal of this study is not to dismiss the work that has been done, but to add to it a dimension of how tutors create possibilities in learning and engage intellectually.

The avenue I have chosen to do this will use Edward Soja's trialectics of spatiality to begin to reconcile the perceived, conceived, and lived accounts of tutors. As Nicole Kraemer Munday suggests, "As with any social interaction, a tutoring session always

retains a hint of mystery because the true motivations and feeling of each participant are seldom explicitly stated" (17). In digging into the motivations and feelings of tutors, I hope to present a broader understanding of the literature reviewed and the direction the writing center field is heading. Because I have already begun to focus on two of the research questions posed in the first chapter (1. What are the perceived experiences of peer tutors?; 2. What are the conceived experiences of peer tutors?), the third question (3. What possibilities for teaching and learning do peer tutors experience in their daily practice?) will be used to guide the empirical research involved in the second half of this study. In the discussion chapter, I will tackle the fourth questions (4. To what extent do these possibilities relate to the perceived and conceived experiences of peer tutors?), which serves to tie the first three questions together. These questions serve to expose shortcomings in the current literature while providing a model for including peer tutors in the theory building of the field. Thus, the major contribution of this dissertation will be to address how peer tutors can provide writing center scholars broader perspectives on theory, how peer tutors contribute to teaching and learning, and how peer tutors can change relationships between students and teachers and theory and practice.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The goal of this study is to discover how tutor experiences have been conceived, perceived, and lived and how lived experiences shape writing center epistemology. This research project is primarily a theoretical exercise and attempts to build theory using data collected from writing center peer tutors. Alice Gillam writes that, "Rather than discovery of a comprehensive theory, the aim of much theoretical inquiry has been to offer various forms of critique—of practice, of writing center discourse and self-representation, of received writing center histories, and of literacy education generally" (xxiv). The types of critique that inform our knowledge of peer tutoring provide a variety of ways to understand tutor experience, but, as pointed out in the literature review, it is the peer tutor's contribution to these critiques that is most often absent in theoretical inquiry. The literature review provides an overview of how peer tutor experiences have been conceptualized and perceived by writing center scholars. Because there are a number of experiences that tutors have during tutorials, this study will focus on issues that shape epistemological and pedagogical possibilities during sessions. To be more specific, I am interested in examining the exchanges between writers and peer tutors and to hear directly from tutors whether or not those exchanges have any significance. An additional concern for this study is to locate points of departure, concurrency, and familiarity between the conceptions, perceptions, and lived experiences of peer tutors.

I have used Edward Soja's trialectics of spatiality to think about peer tutoring as a thirdspace epistemology. As a reminder, thirdspace epistemologies are closely related to

the lived knowledge building experiences had by individuals while first- and secondspace epistemologies are tied to perceived and conceived experiences, respectively. The trialectics of spatiality asks us to consider how the perceived, conceived, and lived intertwine to offer us a better picture of what is going on in social spaces; lived accounts of social spaces reveal the limitations of the dualistic thinking that is characteristic of a narrow focus on the perceived and conceived. Each of the research questions will help to expose different dimensions of the intellectual experiences of writing center tutors. Before getting into the design of the study, I will begin by mapping connections between the research questions, the goals of this study, and the research conducted:

1. What are the perceived experiences of peer tutors?

This question has been answered by the scholarship presented in the literature review. The function of this question is to show how writing center theorists have written about tutors so that we have a clearer picture of the intellectual experiences that these scholars have noted while also showing the epistemological claims that they have made about tutoring. The literature discussed in chapter two shows an array of perspectives on tutoring which will be later used to demonstrate how these epistemological possibilities relate to those that have been conceived and those that tutors actually experience.

2. What are the conceived experiences of peer tutors?

In addition to the scholarship reviewed in chapter two, this study also explores the conceived experiences of tutors by interviewing scholars who were at the forefront of peer tutoring and collaborative learning. Responses to the questions these scholars were asked add insight to and augment what is already available in their early publications. Furthermore, their thoughts on the direction that tutoring has taken since their work

began in the field helps to shape the discussion provided in chapter six. For instance, one participant was asked if he felt any disappointment in the direction of writing center scholarship. Participants were asked unique questions that resulted from issues and themes that emerged from the observations and interviews of peer tutors in this study. Additionally, both participants were asked what they felt their legacy would be. The goal of this inquiry was to gain a better understanding of how these individuals link peer tutoring to collaborative learning and how they feel the subsequent literature has redirected or enhanced these original conceptions. Their answers to these questions are used to contribute to the theory building in the discussion chapter.

3. What possibilities for teaching and learning do peer tutors experience in their daily practice?

The questions that consider perceived and conceived experiences of peer tutors are important in establishing a foundation for thinking about peer tutoring, but responses from tutors involved in this study help answer this question by adding layers that are missing in much of the current scholarship. Since tutor voices have largely been left out of scholarly discussions in a number of ways, answers to this question allow for the inclusion of tutor voices in the field's understanding of perceived and conceived possibilities. Additionally, this question connects to the theoretical framework discussed in the second chapter by exploring the ways that tutors understand the effect of their interactions with writers. That is, how do they see themselves in the process of doing? What kinds of possibilities do they think exist in their sessions that they have not explored? The tutor voices in this study will contribute to the ongoing discussion of

writing center epistemology while cluing us into the intellectual lives that tutors lead in the academy.

4. To what extent do these possibilities relate to the perceived and conceived experiences of peer tutors?

This question will be answered through the analysis provided in chapters four and five and in the discussion provided in chapter six. Demonstrating how the lived intellectual experiences of peer tutors respond to and inform what the scholars of the field say is important. Thus, throughout the second half of this study, the experiences of the tutors will be measured against what has been learned through a close review of the literature. The point of this study is to bring tutors' lived experiences into the larger discussions of the field to add to existing notions of what tutorial sessions make possible when it comes to knowledge and the intellectual vitality of students and tutors.

Design

The textual and field research of this study are designed to understand peer tutor experience from these three perspectives. Given that this theoretical inquiry into the lived experiences of peer tutors hinges on what tutors can share with me about their work, I engage tutors in discussions of their sessions and their roles in teaching and learning. The best way to accomplish this task is through qualitative research methods because appropriate answers to these research questions require description and an opportunity for unexpected findings to shape the study in progress. As already suggested above, the questions inspired by Soja's trialectics can be answered using several methods. The review of the literature provides an overview of the ways tutors engage a writing center

epistemology, thereby offering some thoughts on the perceptions and conceptions of the types of intellectual roles tutors play in their exchanges with writers. While there are a number of interpretations on what tutors experience, there are fewer first-hand accounts from tutors describing these experiences. Furthermore, much of the writing center literature tends to grapple with conceived ideas of peer tutoring—collaboration, co-learning, authority, academic rank, etc.— which tends to offer a perceived account of what happens to tutors in writing center spaces. Therefore, the primary focus in research involving participants will try to understand peer tutoring as a lived experience. The following provides an overview of the study's design. I will provide more details about site and participant selection, data collection, and data analysis in the following pages.

As noted earlier, there are a few examples of the type of research this study aims to do. First, I point to Susan Dinitz and Jean Kiedaisch's "Creating Theory: Moving Tutors to the Center." Dinitz and Kiedaisch ask tutors to offer their own theoretical perspectives on what happens when they work with writers and provide a model for allowing tutors to participate in scholarly conversations. Another study that has been driven directly by tutor experience is Elizabeth Boquet's *Noise from the Writing Center*. Specifically, her third chapter explores tutor reflections on theory and their work. Furthermore, Nancy Welch's "The Return of the Suppressed: Tutoring Stories in a Transitional Space" provides tutors with a chance to add to our theoretical conversations, noting that "with an excess of writing center stories, we also need excessive ways of reading those stories—if we're to hear all the questions they may raise" (219). Save a few notable exceptions, there is little recent scholarship in which tutors build theory or comment on their own intellectual experiences. Most scholarly work in writing centers

provides commentary or a framework to explain tutorial interaction with little input from the tutor. Thus, this study will use observations of tutorial sessions and interviews to try to depict theoretical, intellectual, and pedagogical issues from the perspective of the tutor.

In order to delineate between the kinds of experiences tutors have during the observed sessions, I established criteria for being able to recognize moments of interest during the tutorial. I call these moments of interest critical events, and I created this list as part of my methodology by deriving it from my knowledge of the literature, my previous research, and my experience as a tutor and tutor educator. Critical events are moments during the session that trigger, prohibit, or suspend opportunities for more substantive discussion about writing and learning. Oftentimes, these moments point to the kind of relationship that writers and tutors develop with one another because they illustrate the level of comfort between the tutor and writer. That is, the way that these moments happen during a session may have more to do with social relationships at times than they do with the abilities of a tutor. The following critical events provide a set of criterion for determining interesting interactions during the sessions:

- When the tutor and writer engage in dialogue on intellectual issues in the paper;
- When content knowledge of the paper is questioned or considered;
- When either party questions argumentation, organization, or genre;
- When conversations not directly related to the assignment or writing occur;
- When the tutor acquiesces to the writer on a point of contention;
- When the writer acquiesces to the tutor on a point of contention;
- When agreement is reached without substantial debate;
- When agreement is reached after substantial debate.

These critical events are highly dependent on context, the individuals involved, and even the topic of the paper. Therefore, as these events unfold in the tutorials observed, they will be presented to tutors during interviews to help make sense of what is happening during these moments.

The interviews with tutors helped to explain what happens during these critical events, but they also helped to explain what was driving these tutors as they made decisions during their sessions. The interviews provided insight into the ways that tutors theorize and make sense of the work they do with writers by establishing a praxis for tutoring based on the experiences these tutors had prior to and during this study.

Interviews with two prominent writing center scholars provide greater insight into peer tutoring scholarship, how these individuals' ideas and values have changed over time, what their thoughts are on some of the findings from this study, and what they think about their own experiences with peer tutors. The responses these scholars provide addressed their legacy for writing centers and peer tutoring's trajectory. The scholars were asked to discuss the significance of peer tutor experience and the relationships that peer tutoring can influence.

Once the data was collected, it went through analysis process that emerged from the theory presented in chapter two and the themes that emerged from tutor participant experiences. The basic structure for analyzing the experiences of these tutors was to look at relationships, themes, and productivity. I will elaborate on this process in the upcoming section on data analysis, and, ultimately, the library research, data collection, and analysis are put into conversation in the discussion chapter.

Site and Participant Selection

I chose to study peer writing tutors at Yeshiva University in New York City. The Yeshiva College Writing Center is directed by a writing center professional who values educating and preparing tutors to work with writers. Students at Yeshiva are drawn to this institution because of its Jewish heritage, yet they share the same goals and interests as students at other Universities and their discussions about the writing center, the problems and issues they deal with, sound similar to many of the writing centers I have been to and have read about. While the philosophical perspective provided by Judaic tradition has the potential to enrich interactions in the center and add to the responses I receive from tutors, it is no different from other influences that shape writing center sessions in other writing center contexts. Yeshiva stood out as a good research site to ask questions about collaboration, intellectualism, and possibility for teaching and learning through tutoring because of its staff education practices, its focus on collaboration, and its commitment to peer tutoring.

Yeshiva's mission for undergraduate students is to, "bring wisdom to life by combining the finest, contemporary academic education with the timeless teachings of Torah" ("Mission Statement"). Wisdom is an institutional value and is found in Yeshiva's mission for all its constituents and for society and the world. Yeshiva University has four core ideals that guide the institution: nobility, excellence, Israel, and community. There is a concern that students use their sense of humanity to frame their futures. The University is made up of five undergraduate schools, six graduate and professional schools including a graduate program in Advanced Talmudic Studies for Women, has four affiliates including a Seminary and a high school for girls, and has a

number of libraries, cultural resources, academic centers, and institutes. Yeshiva University has separate schools for men and women.

The Writing Center is housed in The Yeshiva College, which is one of the undergraduate schools. The Writing Center employs both undergraduate tutors who come from a range of majors as well as faculty tutors who hold advanced degrees. Peer tutors are expected to participate in staff education meetings and the faculty tutors often participate in these meetings, too. Four undergraduate peer tutors have been selected as participants in this study and their sessions were observed, recorded, and transcribed. Each tutor was interviewed about the session and asked to reflect on their relationship with the writers and their advice to writers. Student writers who participated in this study came from a range of backgrounds, but only four writers and their texts will be represented in this study.

The writing center director at Yeshiva was consulted in order to provide a better understanding of the institution and of the writing center. Dr. Lauren Fitzgerald provided information on everything from how tutors are hired to how they are educated. Furthermore, she provided insight into collaboration from a Jewish point of view. This will be further discussed in the discussion provided in chapter six.

Additionally, Kenneth Bruffee and Harvey Kail were asked to participate in this study as prominent scholars who can provide insight on collaborative learning in the form of peer tutoring. Both Bruffee and Kail have published seminal pieces on peer tutoring that continue to be cited today as essential theoretical underpinnings for writing center practice. These scholars provide discussions of tutoring that place tutors in the larger social framework of the academy. They discuss at length the potential tutors have for

teaching writing and the development of communities of learners that operate outside traditional notions of how knowledge is transferred and generated in the academy. Kail, in particular, has observed the nature of peer tutoring and has offered guidance and inspiration to a number of scholars who have helped shape the field. His initial insights helped to shape how current writing centers operate. Thus, Kail and Bruffee were interviewed to learn more about how peer tutoring and collaborative learning were set in motion as well as to hear their reflections on where tutoring stands today in terms of their early work.

Data Collection

The primary methods of data collection in this study are library research, tutorial observations, tutor interviews, consultations with the writing center director, and writing center scholar interviews. All participants were asked to sign voluntary consent forms after being briefed about the study and their rights and roles as participants. (See Appendix A for copies of the consent forms used in this study.) Other sources that will be collected include any materials used for staff education at Yeshiva and the Yeshiva College Writing Center Director's consultation.

First, I met with the director to ground myself in the local context while also learning more about how the tutors have been trained and educated and the kinds of expectations that have been established for tutoring. In the first few visits of my 16 visits at Yeshiva, I spent time introducing myself to tutors, gauging their interest in my study, answering any questions they had, and got to know how the writing center operates (the schedule, appointments, computer use, etc.). During three of my visits to Yeshiva, I

attended staff education meetings to listen to the kinds of conversations and concerns Yeshiva writing tutors discuss. After establishing rapport with a number of tutors, I began observing tutoring sessions, during which I took field notes to record any interesting events during the session such as physical proximity, non-verbal hand gestures and communication, and any other occurrences in order to help later interpretation of recordings and transcripts. After the observations, I interviewed four tutors whose sessions were of interest for various reasons to better understand the decisions they made during the session using data from the session such as the critical events discussed earlier. I also asked tutors about how they see their role in the learning and writing process. After reviewing the data from these tutors and their sessions, I interviewed the writing center scholars to learn more about their initial work in collaborative learning and peer tutoring and to ask them to reflect on the literature and what I found in the tutorial observations.

Tutor Observations and Interviews

I observed a total of ten tutors for multiple sessions (one to four sessions, depending on availability). After the observations, I conducted interviews lasting approximately 45 minutes. These interviews were audio taped and transcribed and there was no need for any follow-up interviews. The number of interviews was limited to four tutors because of the richness of their sessions. Since the goal of this study is not to generalize the experiences of tutors, a large sample of interviews is not necessary. This study focuses on specific experiences that are richly described and that speak to some of the lived experiences of tutors in the writing center. The observations and interviews were kept confidential by keeping the tutors and students anonymous and giving them pseudonyms. Observations were shared only with the tutors who participated during the

study and they were offered the chance to review their audio taped sessions. After observing sessions and reviewing them for interesting critical events, I interviewed tutors to learn more about their motives during those events, their perceptions of those events, and their explanations of their decision-making process during those events.

The tutors I interviewed were asked to share their perceptions on the interactions they had with writers. Other than questions that asked about background information (e.g., name, age, major, etc.), the majority of questions were open-ended in order to allow the tutor to explain his position. Although questions varied depending on the particular tutoring context, each tutor was asked a series of questions. First, they were asked questions about their interests and what brought them to the writing center. Second, they had the opportunity to provide any background information about their session that an observer might not have access to such as past sessions with the writer, unexpected issues that occurred during the session, etc. Third, tutors were played a brief interaction from their session and were asked to describe and reflect on what was happening. Tutors had access to the recording in advance of the interview to help them remember the session and to offer them a point of reference for this part of the interview. Finally, tutors were asked to consider the extent to which they influence the learning and writing process. For a framework for the tutor interviews and sample questions, please see Appendix B.

Writing Center Scholar Interviews

Finally, I asked the two scholar participants four basic questions. Each interview lasted approximately 35 minutes. Harvey Kail was interviewed in person at the National Conference on Peer Tutoring in Writing on November 8, 2009. Kenneth Bruffee first provided email responses to my initial interview questions and then agreed to meet me in

person to converse about my study on February 9, 2010. No follow-up interviews were deemed necessary. To begin the interview, I asked each scholar participant to reflect on recent conference addresses they gave at the NCPTW conference. The following questions focused on each participant's scholarly contribution to the writing center field. Next, I asked a question that dealt with themes or issues that emerged from the current study that seem to connect to their work. Finally, I asked each scholar to consider what they felt would be their legacy. The responses received from these scholars help to provide a broader representation of how they understand the lived experiences of tutors. However, the study will focus primarily on Kail's interview because he continues to work with peer tutors. While Bruffee certainly provides an interesting perspective, much of his contribution to this study can be found in his publications. Kail's commitment to peer tutoring and educating peer tutors will be examined closely to provide insight into those who are currently involved in peer tutoring programs. Please see Appendix C for a framework of the writing center scholar interviews and sample questions.

Data Analysis

To analyze the data collected during this study, I organized it into relationships, themes, and theoretical issues that were discussed in the literature review. The process of building categories for analysis in this study began with the introduction of Soja's perceived, conceived, and lived, or first-, second-, and thirdspace epistemologies. Joseph A. Maxwell discusses organizational, substantive, and theoretical categories as distinctive taxonomies used to understand data from perspectives the researcher develops prior to data collection, from descriptions of participant beliefs, and from perspectives of prior

theory or inductively developed theory (97). Maxwell contends that each of his categories offers researchers important perspectives on their data, which is reminiscent of Soja's claim that each of the epistemologies he discusses provides important insight into ways of knowing. Furthermore, both Maxwell and Soja argue for considering all three categories/epistemologies in order to broaden our understanding. Therefore, the perceived and conceived categories were used to provide taxonomies for the library research conducted in this study and offer perspectives of theory that this researcher explored and developed prior to data collection. The lived category, however, is where the majority of analysis will rest in the second half of this study and begins a discussion of participant beliefs and the theoretical perspectives that stem from the experiences of tutors.

Theoretical frameworks established and proffered by scholars like Andrea Lunsford and Eric Hobson are axiomatic categories for organizing writing center epistemology. Lunsford writes about the Storehouse Centers, Garret Centers, and Burkean Parlor Centers, noting that the differences between these centers have to do with ideas about who possesses knowledge—the tutor (Storehouse), the student (Garret), or both (Parlor) (96). Furthermore, Hobson clearly articulates that these types of centers employ positivist, expressionist/absolutist, or social constructionist epistemologies, respectively. However, these conventional ideas about writing center tutoring and theoretical monoliths in composition studies limit our ability to express the work of peer tutors. Therefore, the themes that emerge from this study will be used to shatter, as Eodice says, the old tropes and to provide a critique based in tutor interpretation and experience. The following steps were taken in analyzing the data collected in this study:

1. Review Audio Recordings

Each audio recording of the tutorial sessions observed were reviewed carefully. First, the researcher reviewed the entire session, listening for interesting exchanges between tutors and writers. The researcher made note of any interesting conversation that went beyond simple grammar instruction or clarification of syntax, jotting down the time in the session when conversations commenced.

2. Session Selection

The next step in analyzing the data was to select four sessions that provided interesting exchanges or scenarios. The researcher relied on the critical events criteria to find sessions during which interesting conversations or tutoring practices marked the session as one that would provide the researcher an opportunity to engage tutors in a conversation about the session. Selecting the sessions also meant paying close attention to the types of sessions, and the researcher tried to provide a variety of scenarios from types of writing (personal statements, literary analyses, personal reflections, etc.) to the different types of writers (graduate student writers, ESL writers, First-year student writers, Senior writers, etc.)

3. Note Emerging Themes and Issues

After interviewing tutors about their sessions, the researcher began to look for themes and issues that were salient in each of these sessions and in the interviews. The issues encountered in each tutorial were organized into a number of different themes that the tutors either dealt with or mentioned in their interviews. While each session seemed to present its own particular theme, the sessions observed certainly touched on many of the themes that came up in other sessions as well as in interviews and staff

education exercises. The researcher took note of many different issues, but settled on four themes that were most present in each session and that were touched upon during the interviews with tutors. These themes were established based on the tutors' interactions and their own language.

4. Categorize Sessions by Relationships

In noting and organizing the themes and issues, the researcher noticed connections between the types of relationships that tutors had with writers and the ability for sessions to address some of the issues that are discussed or occur during a tutorial. Analyzing the data in terms of the comfort level and acquaintanceship between tutors and tutees provided an opportunity to explore how the intimacy between writers and tutors has potential to impact the themes that emerge from the study.

5. Analyze Interactions Using Themes

Four salient themes, which will be discussed in the next chapter, were used to examine the moments and decisions during the tutoring sessions. While analyzing the specific exchanges that the researcher addressed with tutors during the interview, the themes were used to provide a view of writing tutorials that showed how tutors' decisions relate to their own values as tutors.

6. Examine Interactions Using Productivity

Part of the theoretical framework discussed in the literature addressed the issues of tutors being fractured from the products they help produce. As mentioned earlier, there are a number of reasons for this fracturing (i.e., institutional norms, social and academic rank, etc.). The interactions were analyzed to demonstrate the ways that

tutors' connection to the writing produced and the learning that happens during a tutorial can be productive.

After completing these six steps to investigate the lived experiences of tutors, the final step in the analysis was to build connections between the perceived, conceived, and the lived. This was accomplished by considering what was learned through the above steps in relation to what writing center scholars have discussed in the literature and what the scholar participants had to contribute to this study.

Conclusion

The methods used in this study are intended to find not specific answers to any of the research questions posed at the beginning of this chapter but rather an array of approaches to how scholars perceive and conceive epistemological possibilities. Additionally, the methodology will also help to shed light on what some tutors experience during their session, how those tutors respond to those experiences, and what they feel their role is in the intellectual life of the academy. Likewise, by comparing responses from scholars and tutors, there exists an opportunity to extrapolate from the discrepancies and correlations in their responses. Observations and interviewing provide the best chances at finding highly contextualized responses to the research questions. Moreover, the analysis of the data is squarely situated in the theoretical framework driving the research questions. Therefore, the link between the methodology and the research questions is one that is soundly established by the theoretical framework of this study and the issues that come to the forefront as a result of the review of writing center literature.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONTEXTUALIZING THE STUDY:

EMERGENT THEMES FROM THE YESHIVA COLLEGE WRITING CENTER

On each of my 16 visits to the Yeshiva College Writing Center (YCWC), I had the opportunity to observe daily operations and life in the center, which included casual conversations, staff meetings, a steady flow of students in and out of the center, and, of course, tutoring sessions. The YCWC acts as a social and academic hub for students on campus in that a number of students visit for a few minutes, check their email, chat with friends, and then head out to their next class or wherever else they are going. It was easy to discern that most students see the writing center as a useful space that can function in a number of ways: a communications hub, a place to print, a place to catch up with a friend, a place to seek feedback on writing, and a place to do homework. Upon my visits, I was able to speak with most of the peer and faculty tutors on staff, observe many of them in action, and converse with both the director and assistant director about their goals and mission for the writing center. Overall, the time I spent at the Center allowed me to move from an obvious outsider to a common and unquestioned visitor. As I became a regular visitor, I also had the chance to absorb the approaches to writing center work that were privileged at this center from the kinds of discourse encouraged to the décor on the walls to the toys on the tables and to the books on the bookshelves. All of these artifacts provide a broader picture of life in the YCWC and how the tutors who occupy this space made use of these tools and the surroundings in their sessions.

After visiting three staff education meetings and observing many tutorials, it was clear that tutors at this university enjoy a healthy debate. Argument was one of the most prominent features I saw in sessions upon my early visits to this YCWC. In fact, I noted a session in my observation journal on the first visit to YU in which the conversation was a significantly spirited argument between the writer and the tutor. It caught my attention because it threw into question what Peter Carino has written about authority in peer tutoring. As referenced earlier, Carino suggests that a tutor's authority can at times bulldoze what a writer needs or wants. What I was observing, however, was the complete opposite. The writer argued that the tutor was not doing enough to help him work through and develop the central argument of his paper; so, as the tutor made suggestions, the student forcefully (yet respectfully) pressed back insisting that the tutor clarify his suggestions and help the writer make changes more effectively. Another noteworthy observation about this interaction was the volume of their conversation. Many sessions were quite loud and energetic like this one, and many of the interactions I observed were performed like lively debates.

Debate is a part of the larger culture of the YCWC, and evidence of these ongoing conversations and arguments abounded in the daily conversations between tutors and writing center administrators. Yet, the staff education meetings I attended were the most interesting examples of how debate was used to fine tune writing center experiences. Given that the time I spent at YCWC was toward the end of the academic year, tutors were asked to attend one of two meetings that had to do with "looking back" and "looking forward." During the meeting about looking back, I was able to begin to see how a lively debate about what works at the writing center and what needs work can

clearly demonstrate how tutors feel about the institutional demands and expectations placed on them. For instance, in considering what it means when a professor writes "go to the writing center" on a paper, the tutors were quick to argue and weigh the value of such a statement. For some tutors, this rang of a negative remedial branding of the Center that made them suspect of the teacher's comment while other tutors thought of the comment as a positive sign of the Center's good relationship and reputation in the Yeshiva College community. From my own perspective, a perspective situated in an historical awareness of how such statements have worked to brand the writing center as a site for remediation or a site for punishment (see Lerner "Rejecting the Remedial Brand"; Boquet "Our Little Secret"), I was fascinated to see so many tutors treat this issue as an easy decision and move on to more pressing concerns. The director warned that this kind of text was one with "multiple meanings," which I believe these tutors grasped; however, one response was that such a statement raises the expectations students have for their writing tutors. Essentially, these tutors have found a way to redirect the effect of such a statement from how it impacts students or the way it casts the writing center as a place for remediation to how it effects an individual tutor's role in the teaching/writing process. That is, the tutor is now not only trying to meet the expectations of a writer but also the expectations of a teacher who is at such a loss for how to handle student writing that "go to the writing center" is a last resort in salvaging some meaning in the student's text.

The conversation did not linger on this topic for very long, and I remember wishing that more tutors had voiced concerns about this issue, pointing out the negative implications of punitively sending students to the center. They, however, had many more important issues to discuss, especially when it came to what needs work. The debate

during the meeting resulted in items being added to a list of things that worked and things that need work, and this debate was reminiscent of the conversations we have in the larger field about what works within our own institutions and what still needs work. The reality is that just as we think we are on the same page when it comes to what works, there is always room for a little debate. As I reflected on this particular meeting, I realized that these tutors are not bound to the issues and ideas that bind me as a more experienced member in this field. That is, I feel a responsibility to the history of writing centers in such a way that it is unacceptable for me not to think about the clinical and remedial implications of a teacher writing "go to the writing center" on a student's paper. A tutor on the other hand does not have that same type of obligation, and it is in that lack of being held accountable to a larger scholarly community that the tutor can clearly begin to see how this statement will influence the tutor.

The conversation then moved to a discussion of whether or not students should be able to spend time writing their papers in the writing center. This was very much a logistical conversation in that these tutors were discussing the physical act of writing a paper, considering what their role is in that task, and deciding what it means to over- vs. under-tutor a writer. To take a step back, however, and think about what compels a group of tutors to ask whether or not writing can happen in a writing center is an interesting problem. The reason why this might be a problem is because it questions what productivity looks like in the writing center. Their discussion asks us to consider whether or not learning to write is the same thing as "Writing," whether or not a tutor's role in the process of writing negates writing or promotes it, and whether or not we privilege writing as a tangible product to be read or an experience through which meaning is constructed.

Some of these tutors have questions about the nature of writing, whether or not writing is a social or solitary activity. For some, it seems that the social nature of the writing center has more to do with the art of learning to write rather than on forming the ideas that shape a written text. In some ways, by asking these questions, the tutors find themselves in a situation that forces them to see writing and learning as two separate issues. Making such a distinction makes it difficult to see how a tutor working with a writer while s/he writes might be a productive activity.

A broader picture of the YCWC shows that this kind of debate and these prolific staff meetings represent only a part of the ways tutors engage at the YCWC. Play is obviously an important element in the everyday lives of YCWC tutors. From the collaboratively constructed, fully functioning catapult to the hand-drawn Writing Center crests and signs on the walls, it is clear that tutors are encouraged to think about writing and tutoring in abstract and kinesthetic ways. Some of the posters created for the writing center show how tutors incorporate what is happening in the world around them with the ways they envision the writing center. For instance, one of the signs played with President Obama's 2008 campaign slogan, "Change We Can Believe In," writing "~~Revision We Can Believe In~~ Revision in which We Can Believe" and below that, "Paid for by WC '08." As an observer, these signs, the crests, and the fully functioning catapult were

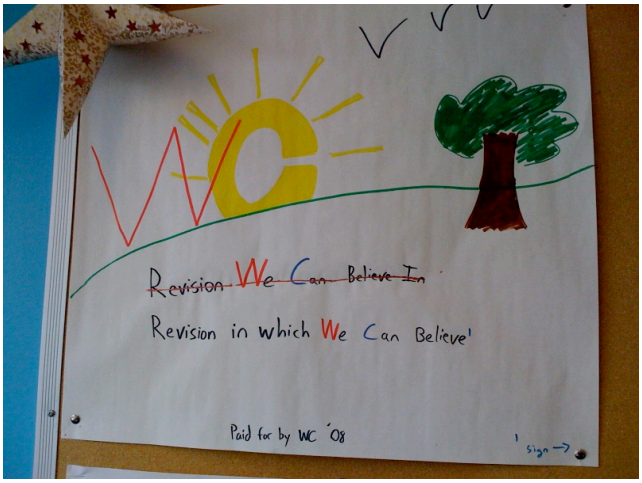

Fig. 2. Writing Center campaign sign.

conversation starters with tutors and provided important avenues for learning more about the culture of the YCWC. They represented not only the way that these tutors choose to think about their environment but also the ways that they understood how their experiences in the writing center might speak to the world beyond the university walls and vice versa. Essentially, these other outlets provided ways for the tutors at the YCWC to reconcile what they learn in school and what they learn in the writing center with what they know about the world around them. More evidence for this could be seen in the crests they made, which made use of images from popular culture and academic culture to define the writing center's mission.

There are two important points that emerge from observations of the day-to-day life, the artifacts mentioned, and staff meetings at the YCWC. The first is that tutor experiences will often have us rethink what we feel certain about as scholars who discuss writing center theory, practice, and lore. The second is that tutors can be incredibly self-aware when it comes to how they engage writers, assignments, and writing (Fels). Considering these two points when reflecting on what we know about writing centers and what we hope to know can influence how we choose to discuss the effects writing centers have on a campus and the individuals who frequent them as either writers or tutors. The everyday experiences tutors have in their sessions and in their other interactions in our centers should influence the ways that we choose to discuss epistemology and pedagogy. It is the self-awareness of these tutors as individuals in a larger educational environment that most directly influence how they relate to writers. Furthermore, their involvement in the everyday life of the writing center instigates, or at least should instigate, how we find possibilities for teaching/learning in tutoring, how we should rethink what we know

about tutoring, and how we should proceed to criticize the theories that drive the conclusions we make in the field.

The time I spent at the YCWC offered me a glimpse into the everyday life of tutors, their interactions, and their thoughts on what they do and what they accomplish during their sessions. The longer I was able to spend in the center, the more opportunities I had to capture these sessions on tape and to begin digging into the process of reflection, reassessment, and theory building that the everyday experiences of tutors should instigate. After taping ten sessions, I identified five sessions for further examination. These five sessions were conducted by four of the peer tutors who each met with four different writers, and each session had a unique topic. Two of the sessions were with the same writer and tutor, offering an example of what happens moving from one session to the next. These sessions were fairly representative of the different tutorial interactions that happen in the spring semester at this writing center. The four tutors agreed to become involved in this study and were willing to be interviewed about their sessions, the decisions they made, and their general thoughts on tutoring. The writers involved included both undergraduate and graduate level writers, Native and Non-Native speakers of English, young writers and advanced writers, and writing tasks such as literary analysis, response writing, and personal statements. As one can see, these four sessions/tutors represent a range of experiences that tutors often come across in writing centers. Also striking about these examples is that they show diverse types of interactions and relationships. As I noted above, I was impressed by student writers' willingness to engage in debate, but not all the writers in this study were as willing or demanding as the one I observed on day one.

The Tutorial Interactions: Four Overviews to Consider

As the study progressed and I began to analyze the data, an obvious approach for thinking about the tutorial interactions was to examine the relationships these tutors had with their tutees. I intentionally introduce readers to the participants in this study in a progressive manner. I will start with Seth and Rosa, two people with little in common, at least on the surface, other than occupying the same time and space in the writing center. Next I will discuss two tutors and tutees who share a lot more in common such as their ages and majors, and the last tutor/tutee relationship is an example of best friends working together. The organizing principle that I kept recognizing not only in these four sets of people but also in other interactions I witnessed at the YCWC was that the comfort level, familiarity, and intimacy between two people in the writing center seems to have an influence on what happens during a tutoring session. This seems to be a fairly obvious conclusion, but it is one that should be examined carefully because no two interactions share the same dynamics. There will always be familiarity issues due to age differences, intellectual disparities, linguistic capability, and life experiences. However, these familiarity issues provide an occasion to question assumptions about tutoring issues that have long been discussed and debated in the field. Authority, directive vs. non-directive tutoring, peers vs. professionals, and even epistemological metaphors like the Storehouse, the Garret, and the Burkean parlor do not seem to be determining factors in tutoring quite as much as how tutors first negotiate this familiarity and then choose how to negotiate these issues as they have been presented to them in their tutor education.

In the remainder of this chapter, I will provide an overview of each of the sessions that have been chosen for further investigation and discussion in this study. I will also

provide some basic information about how these sessions were influenced by YCWC policies and pedagogical expectations. After these overviews are provided, I will identify themes running through these sessions and provide framework for further inquiry into what each of these tutors think about their sessions and how their interpretation speaks to the theoretical framework established earlier in this study.

Seth and Rosa: Responding to Theories of Social Work

The first session I am going to present involved a Master's of Social Work student, whom I will call Rosa, writing a paper that asked students to respond to different theories of social work using their personal experiences. The point of the paper was to explore a time in one's life when they made a mistake and then respond to that mistake using the theories presented in class on human development. Rosa came to the writing center with a primary concern for grammar, spelling, and the past tense. As a native speaker of Spanish from the Dominican Republic, Rosa expressed that she needed help with her English language skills. Rosa also demonstrated how engaged she was with her language development by showing the tutor, Seth, that she had been trying to correct her paper while she waited for her session to begin based on what she had learned in prior tutorials.

Rosa disclosed the personal nature of her paper at the beginning of the session, expressing a concern that the information was somewhat private and personal; thus, she instructs Seth by saying, "so don't shout!" Essentially, as the session went on, Rosa and Seth worked on a number of grammar, spelling, and past tense issues as they worked their way through their 50-minute session. Seth's technique was notable in that he was the model of patience while letting Rosa come to answers on her own. In many respects,

the session was particularly successful because of Seth's ability to help Rosa focus directly on a number of spelling, grammar, and tense issues. He even helped her to begin to see the difference between *no* and *not*, a particularly difficult task for a native speaker of Spanish because there is no difference between *no* and *not* in the Spanish language.

In addition to this success, there was also a captivating story unfolding as Rosa continued to read her paper aloud. Rosa chose to describe a number of difficult experiences she has gone through in her life that ranged from a troubling relationship with her past partner to a difficult birth of a sickly child. Rosa's story becomes even more fascinating when she takes time in her session to warn young Seth that he should not treat his future wife the way she had been treated. Her story is, in many ways, a lesson to be learned, which no doubt was an intentional move by the professor who assigned this paper. And although Rosa and Seth worked through the objectives Rosa set in the first few seconds of the session, this story went largely unattended to, and there were only a few instances in which Rosa's story became the topic of conversation in the tutorial. Rosa's experience, however, provided her the opportunity to make the lessons she learned through her ordeals to come front and center.

In an interview with Seth, I asked him about the story, but he was confident that his task was to primarily deal with Rosa's initial concerns. In fact, Seth noted that she might have been very conscious of what she was reading while he was, "dividing the sentences into halves" and concentrating primarily on grammar. But one might have to wonder if Seth's default to work on grammar provided him a sense of confidence when he was unsure of what to do when it came to Rosa's account of her life experiences. What makes this session interesting is that it is an example of a successful session ripe with a

number of possibilities for how this tutoring session could have played out. For instance, we have a situation in which the writer and the tutor bring some authoritative experience: Seth's command of the English language and his ability to explain it is impressive while Rosa's wisdom and life experience offer a critical perspective that influences the human condition. However, in the context of this tutoring session, there seems to be only an opportunity for Seth to use his authority throughout most of the session. Although authority is at play here, this old bit of writing center lore may not be the central agent influencing the outcomes and conversations we see happening in Seth and Rosa's session.

Skip and Sam: Writing a Literary Analysis

There were two sessions with peer tutor Skip and writer Sam who met weekly throughout the spring semester. Sam's task was to write a literary analysis for his second semester English class, a task that Sam was not very motivated to complete due to a number of factors. Sam valued his science and math classes more than his English course, and even felt that he was not going to do very well anyway because it was an honor's course. It was evident that Sam, a physics major, had made a decision long before the two sessions I observed that this class was one he simply needed to survive. Skip felt especially connected to this tutee given that he himself was a computer science major, and he could relate to having to write a literary analysis when you would rather be spending your time in the science lab.

Sam wanted to work on interpreting the literary work in his first session with Skip, a session that focused on organizing and vetting quality sources that offer a cultural interpretation of the text. In this first session, Skip helped the student to figure out how to

use the different sources to begin interpreting the text. Sam had nine books that addressed concerns in the text he was interpreting, so part of the task was to establish which of those texts would be useful and which would be superfluous. In addition, they spent a good portion of this session discussing the cultural context of Egypt, which is the setting of the book.

At one point, Skip says, "remember, everything we're doing now we're trying to give you…something to work with." The paper Sam was writing needed to be about 15 pages in length, and a lot of this first session was focused on coming up with ideas to expound upon by using Sam's sources. Skip's advice in this session is for Sam to take notes from each of his sources and create a page of notes on what he plans to write about from each of those texts. Skip wanted to outline yet Sam did not think he was ready for that, and after some discussion, Skip persuaded Sam to make a list of things to write about. Toward the end of this session, Skip urged Sam to get more ideas down on paper. Sam added four items to his list of ideas by the end of the session, and Skip asked him to have ten items on the list by his next session. Skip was promoting a process-based approach to writing the paper that was predicated on the idea that if Sam could get the basic framework or structure down, then he would easily be able to fill that framework with content.

A week later, Sam and Skip met to discuss the same paper. The beginning of their session was dedicated to who will be conducting lab sessions for a science class and then picking up where they left off at the end of the first session. Sam successfully compiled his list of ten ideas. They again discussed the importance of citing sources and how to vet worthwhile sources while taking into account some suggestions that the professor had

written on a draft. They spent time discussing the teacher's comments, focusing on developing arguments that are relevant for the point Sam is trying to make. It's in this session that Skip realizes that the essay was due in just a week or so, and there is a distinct difference in the kind of advice he had been offering. Skip eventually asks if Sam feels close to being able to articulate his ideas in order to add more content to the paper.

Now that time was running out, Skip began to address how the professor will take off a lot of points for handing in the paper late. He warns Sam to devote a significant amount of time to accomplishing this paper, and then he goes on to explain that a C in this class will have a negative effect on Sam's GPA and, ultimately, his ability to get a job. Throughout the second half of this session, Skip continues to urge Sam to develop his ideas from paragraphs into pages in order to reach the length expectations of this analysis, going so far as to tell Sam that by next week he needs to have a rough draft prepared. For all Skip's urging Sam to spend the next few nights "working hardcore" to save time later, Skip noted later in our interview that Sam came to their last session with only three pages of writing.

Overall, these two sessions were ultimately about structure, sources, and time. However, despite that there was evidence that Sam might have lacked motivation to complete this writing assignment, there's also a lot of evidence that he was actively involved in crafting this rather demanding writing project. For instance, Sam was coming weekly to his sessions with Skip, and he came prepared to the second session. He had a lot of good ideas and a lot of things to say about the text he was analyzing and had collected a good number of sources to provide evidence for the points he was trying to prove. He was, for all intents and purposes, progressing toward a completed project.

Despite this, there was definitely something amiss. In their interactions, it seemed that Skip was constantly trying to persuade Sam that he needed to pay more attention to this course, that he needed to develop his ideas, and that he needed to think carefully about how to incorporate his sources.

Skip took on an interesting role at times by trying to express the dire consequences of not doing well in this course or, specifically, on this paper. He spoke authoritatively on the punitive actions that the professor might take. He also continuously stressed the importance of structuring and framing this paper as an important avenue for completing the entire project. Again, authority is at work in this session with a tutor acting in both directive and non-directive ways, but there is a tremendous concern over textual productivity in this case. To be more specific, Skip is concerned that not enough writing is being produced for the student to successfully accomplish this paper and pass the class. Sam, on the other hand, seems fairly content with the progress he's making and a lot less concerned about completing this project. Despite their similarities as students of science, Skip never seems to be able to persuade Sam completely despite his appeals to authority. In fact, he begins to nag the writer during the session, an approach to communicating an idea that rarely leads to desired results.

The interview I had with Skip revealed that he was frustrated over how little text production occurred over the course of the three sessions we discussed (the third session being their final one, a session I did not tape but one that Skip told me about during the interview). Furthermore, the interview illuminated how Skip viewed his role as a tutor during these sessions—an older, wiser instructor who had some answers for how to write an English paper when you yourself are a science major. He is indeed experienced both

as a tutor and as a student who had the same professor for a similar class. He also happens to be *the* computer science department tutor, a role that he admits influences how he tutors writing. As was the case in Rosa and Seth's session, Skip and Sam are an example of how authority in tutoring can influence a session; however, what I noticed most about Skip and Sam's sessions is that they were so focused on structuring a paper that did not exist. The focus on outlining or listing produced some writing, but ultimately there was very little text produced as a result of their interactions. For all Skip's harping on time spent writing and getting the ideas down, there was still some question as to whether or not Sam made his deadline. Skip's attempt to professionalize his identity and appeal to authority seemed to fail when it comes to helping this writer produce a text. As Muriel Harris warns, "The tutor, then, is a hybrid somewhere between a peer and a teacher, who cannot lean too much one way or the other" (Collaboration is" 284). What does Skip show us about how tutors understand this hybrid identity? His experience suggests that there could be other reasons to question fashioning peer tutors as mini-teachers other than John Trimbur's argument that professionalizing tutors could create a breach in the social contract between tutors and writers ("Peer Tutoring" 294).

Matthew and Tom: Working on a Med School Personal Statement

A number of writers were visiting the writing center looking to enhance their personal statements for graduate school. Tom was writing a personal statement for a Medical school application. Two aspects of this session made it an intriguing interaction to explore further. The first is that Tom and peer tutor Matthew were meeting weekly this semester to work on this statement, which meant a lot of time was put into developing this statement, thinking about the best information to include, and creating a text that will

allow Tom to distinguish himself from other applicants. The second interesting aspect of this session had to do with a passage during which Tom discussed his experiences tutoring elementary school students, which created the opportunity to discuss the roles tutors play in sessions. An obvious issue during this session was the significance of listening to patients/tutees and the presence of writers and tutors in the tutoring session.

Tom had created, with the help of Matthew, a wonderful anecdote to begin his essay with that told the story of a father who had to listen to his toddler's heart monitor to know whether or not she was in pain. Tom follows this anecdote with an example from his experience tutoring an elementary school student in math. The reason this is particularly fascinating was because Tom had to find an alternative way to listen to his tutee to understand how the student was struggling. Tom realized that he had not communicated to the student how to multiply when the student could find the solution to 2 X 3 but not to 3 X 2. As Tom recalls this experience, he cannot help but feel that he had tutored ineffectively because the student had not completely learned how to multiply. Matthew, however, is quick to counter this realization and tells Tom that "he is not convinced of his presence" in this example. He is worried that Tom will make himself look bad by admitting that he had not tutored well.

As one might imagine, the session in its entirety was rather good in that Matthew helped Tom to focus his examples and to realize that he needed to build a strong link between the heart monitor story and the tutoring story that would cast Tom in the most positive light. Matthew began this session with a focus on a number of surface-level concerns and some advice to vary sentences but moved toward more substantial commentary on the content of the statement. His commentary ultimately served to point

out how Tom could enhance what Matthew kept referring to as his "presence" in the paper. I came to learn later in my interview with Matthew that presence, both the presence of the writer and the tutor in the session, are key to his understanding of the roles that tutors play helping others learn to write. Additionally, it is the notion of presence that makes their discussion of tutoring an interesting one, and one that provides an opportunity to not only discuss presence but also the importance of listening in tutoring.

At one point, Matthew expresses that he hopes that the theme of communication in this session would begin to "grow" and "inflate" in the statement. Communication is a central theme not only in this paper but also in this session, and just like Matthew's suggestion for the paper, his own tutoring seems to grow and inflate throughout the course of this session as he begins to tackle the most pressing concern for this writer: incorporating more of his experience and perspective into the personal statement. While reading a passage of Tom's writing aloud, Matthew says, "The human body has this tremendous ability to broadcast information--everything down to the last cell is announcing information, but only the properly trained receiver can interpret the information." This passage inspires a number of questions: Are properly trained receivers the only one who can interpret information? Was the father in Tom's heart monitor story properly trained to make a correlation between heart rate and pain? In what ways does training direct or deflect our attention from what is being broadcast? This particular passage not only seemed to point to Tom's main idea in his statement but it also casts an interesting shadow on the conversations Matthew and Tom have in this session because what Matthew chooses to listen to in his session may say more about him as a tutor than

it does about Tom's writing. This session displays how important listening from a different perspective can change a tutorial. Matthew and Tom show that it is possible that all the tips and tools that tutors find in guides and in training courses, the techniques that frame a session, mean nothing if a tutor is not listening carefully enough to the tutorial situation.

Chase and Jake: Revising an Analysis by Playing with Convention

In the final interaction I will explore, tutor Chase and writer Jake are discussing possible revision plans for an analysis they had been working on throughout the semester. During this session, Jake brings his literary analysis paper for an upper-level English literature course to the center to discuss comments he had received from the professor. Jake is trying to respond to those comments in an effort to push his analysis further. Chase and Jake have a pre-existing friendship in addition to the learning relationship they have built through their weekly meetings at the writing center. They have also been enrolled in similar classes. Chase's relationship with Jake is far closer than any of the other relationships between writers and tutors I've discussed because of their connection as friends, classmates, and readers of each other's writing. Chase revealed that Jake is one of his best friends and also commented to me in our interview that Jake is probably a better writer than himself. Moreover, Jake has been hired as a peer tutor at the writing center since I observed their session. Most fascinating about this session was that both the writer and the tutor had an excellent grasp on the assignment and the progression of the paper since Jake began drafting it. As a result, they barely took any time to read parts of the piece or to discuss sentence-level problems. As the session progressed, it focused on possibilities and potential for expressing how Jake's understanding of the text shifted in

unconventional directions, pushing him toward daring discourses that did not look like typical or novice approaches to analytical writing. Overall, this session was interesting because it reflected the way that professional writers might discuss their writing with colleagues, and their experience leaves observers wondering how to foster this type of conversation in the writing center more often.

A number of notable exchanges happened during this session that tell us a great deal about how possibility and practicality interact during tutorials. The first is that this was one of the only sessions to discuss the nature of what it means to be observed, signaling to me that these two participants were not only aware of the recording device but also found a way to incorporate their condition as subjects in a study to the topic of Jake's paper. Furthermore, as the session progressed, there seemed to be a tension between possibility and practicality, which suggests that tutors work in an arena where they can contribute to idea formation actively but must also be mindful of, and to some extent, submissive to the conventions of academic discourse. Many times during their discussion, Chase states that it is time to "thesisize" what they've been talking about, to focus the ideas on a single argument. In fact, Chase is incredibly skilled at reigning in a tremendously talented and prolific writer like Jake. However, the excitement of exploring new possibilities, in this case possible ways to recount what Jake had learned, is difficult to resist. Chase is able to manage this tension in the session—a tension that seems to exist between traditionally powerful discourses (e.g., academic research papers) and ones that are traditionally less powerful (e.g., first-person accounts/reflections)—and Jake is the kind of writer who is able to break through this binary way of thinking about writing because he has proven himself able to produce masterfully both of these types of texts.

During my interview with Chase, he spoke a great deal about the importance of risk-taking while writing. He told me about times he had taken a risk as a writer, and what I gathered from his story is that his taking a risk had more to do with learning from writing rather than learning to write. Chase felt confident that the risk Jake was going to take in revising this paper was one that the professor would appreciate. What I learned from Chase was that, in his opinion, taking a risk is "saying to yourself, 'go a step further and say something new.'" He seemed to see a lot of his tutoring as working with "the basics," which he indicated ranged from catching grammar errors to rephrasing sentences. With Jake, he could be a little more "daring."

As we began to conclude the interview, I asked him some questions about the nature of being observed. Jake's paper discussed a book that was about the colonized natives of Africa who lived under the condition of being observed. Despite the irony of writing about and discussing this topic while being observed, it helped to bring an important idea to the surface—that going to the writing center puts students in an observable position that opens them to critique. In this way, Chase understands student writers as "natives" who find themselves under observation. As Chase comments, "just showing something you wrote to somebody other than your teacher or professor, you know that itself is nativizing." Chase sees the writer who visits as one who acquiesces to being observed, and that writer's writing is wide-open to observation by those who are not ordinarily sanctioned to observe it. Of course, from this discussion a number of questions about what type of observer the tutor actually is begin to emerge. Jake and Chase's session provides a wealth of topics to explore in the coming analysis in that their friendship with one another, their beliefs about writing, and the topics they write about

can potentially influence how we think about tutors as individuals, learners, and educators who help students balance possibility with practicality. Given the momentum and the risks taken in this session as compared to the others observed, it seems plausible to wonder if their close working relationship had an influence on productivity. Chase and Jake's session makes me wonder if enough time has been spent looking into the ways that social relationships influence teaching and learning during a writing center session. The literature is fairly silent on this topic, but it seems that relationships have influenced this session as well as the other interactions observed in this study.

Emerging Ideas and Themes

The sessions discussed above provided some unexpected insight into the approaches and thoughts of tutors as they interact with writers and reflect upon their tutoring. In addition to layers of theoretical perspectives presented in the literature review, the following chapters will rely on the emerging themes from the sessions and the interviews to dig deeper into the lived experiences of these four tutors. Although the theoretical perspectives discussed in the literature review will be addressed in the chapters to come, the chapters themselves will deal with themes and issues that proved salient for these tutors.

Distinguishing between behavioral traits during a session (i.e., using certain expressions or approaches to communicate ideas, demonstrating frustration, etc.) and actual pedagogical problems, issues, and approaches that tutors negotiate as they interact with writers is important for being able to understand the difference between themes and the actions that address those themes. For example, a tutor nagging a student to work on

his paper might be a behavioral rather than pedagogical issue. Although this behavior is interesting for a number of reasons that will be discussed in a forthcoming chapter, it is nonetheless behavior that the tutor enacts during his tutoring. However, taking an issue like the presence of a tutor or the presence of the writer in a session is a pedagogical matter since this balance of presence has a lot to do with collaboration and engagement in learning and writing process. On the other hand, nagging shows us a specific action a tutor might chose to try to gain a presence in the session. Both nagging and presence influence the tutorial interaction, but the latter provides a theme and an opportunity for a pedagogical discussion about the ways that tutors see how they influence the production of texts.

However, the behavioral aspects of these sessions should not be ignored because the behavioral aspects help us gain insight into the habitus of tutoring. Habitus, according to Bourdieu, "produces practices and representations which are available for classification, which are objectively differentiated" ("Social Space and Symbolic" 19). Furthermore, he goes on to explain that the social meaning of these classifications are only understood by those who possess the codes to decipher them. Essentially, in the habitus of tutoring, we have a number of shared beliefs, expectations, and assumptions about what does and can happen to constitute the social situation of tutoring. As tutors in this center discuss their tutoring experiences, they begin to classify themselves as well as acquiesce to the classification systems already in place in education and in the collective wisdom of writing center scholars and tutor educators. These tutors choose from a number of different ways to position themselves in their sessions, in their discussion of what went on during their sessions, and in their understanding of their institutional role.

In order to explore these positions in greater depth, I will rely on the themes that have emerged from the interactions I observed and the interviews I had with the four tutors.

There are a number of interesting ideas in the sessions I described earlier that would help describe a habitus of tutoring. Filtering through the many interesting moments and decisions that give rise to themes is no easy task because there were so many significant tutoring issues in these sessions. In the descriptions above we can see how issues of voice, risk taking, frustration, patience, and momentum all play a role in the making of a YCWC tutoring session. In fact, each of these issues could easily become themes for consideration in the next part of this study. While significant themes like ownership and agency came up in sessions and the conversations I had with tutors, these ideas have been used many times in the past to describe writing center interactions and it was important to let the focus be on the themes that seemed to crop up most during my time at the YCWC. Furthermore, I was interested in themes that tended to come straight from the tutors involved in the study. Four notable themes emerged as the sessions and interviews were examined that will be useful in providing a richer analysis of the interactions being studied here. The themes that seem most noticeable are confidence, presence, frame, and listening. These four themes have the ability to feed into and off of one another. To offer a more comprehensive idea of these themes, I will elaborate on each of them and their significance:

- *Confidence* emerged as a theme out of the interview with Seth and his session with Rosa and was nicely exemplified in Chase and Jake's session. In fact, this theme permeated the culture of the writing center as evidenced by one of the crests some of writing tutors had created for a staff meeting, which read, "Always Confident" and

"Writing isn't as scary as it seems!" If tutors see themselves as being involved in building a writer's confidence, then they see themselves as vital participants a writer's ability to acquire a discourse that grants agency to that writer's voice. Furthermore, as Seth points out to us, many writers already know solutions to some of the problems they encounter in writing but need to feel more self-assured that they have the answers. With this as a given, tutoring becomes less about instructing or teaching something new and more about tapping into what the writer already knows and helping the writer to gain control over what she already knows about writing, casting out any doubts she might have about her writing abilities. As the crest says, writing only appears scary, and tutors can provide the confidence needed for a writer to be able to look beyond the way something seems or appears in order to realize that they can use language to their own ends. For instance, in Chase and Jake's session, the writer developed confidence to take a risk with his paper. Both tutor and writer were able to build substantially on the ideas Jake discussed once they opened themselves to the possibility of taking a risk with his paper, which ultimately built Jake's confidence as he became more self-assured.

Fig. 3. Writing Center crest.

- *Presence* comes directly from both Matthew's session and his interview, in which he discussed the importance of tutors and writers having a presence in a session and in

writing. When I first heard him use the term in his session, I was curious as to how he defined presence. Presence was a term that seemed to characterize a number of important issues in writing and tutoring. It can be taken to mean voice in some cases while Matthew also used it to describe the give and take between writer and tutor during a session. Presence is an assertion of one's intellectual energy during a session, which can be demonstrated by the demands or expectations of tutors or writers. Essentially, it is akin to the collaborative process in tutoring and writing because both parties need to be engaged for a successful experience of working and learning together. Matthew seemed particularly concerned that the writer had no presence in his personal statement, pointing out that while he provided interesting anecdotes, it was difficult to see how the writer was directly involved in each of them. Seth, in a similar way, recognized the importance of Rosa being able to write about her experience using words of her choosing when he lamented being too forceful in trying to get her to reword a section of her text. In this example, we can see how Rosa's presence in the session is being overshadowed by Seth's presence. Patience was most notable in Seth's session with his careful attention to detail and his calm and encouraging support, which provided Rosa an opportunity to feel a greater presence through her control of the English language. On the other hand, the frustration exhibited in Skip's session when he begins to nag the writer was partly due to the writer's decision not to engage in the project. On the other end of the spectrum, we can see what happens when the presence of strong writer matches the presence of a strong tutor in Chase and Jake's session. Their session was an example of how conversation can lead to a strong sense of presence in one's writing. Chase also noted

that because of the exposure writers are subject to in the writing center, a little more effort is necessary to help them establish an assertive presence. Overall, this theme emerged because all of the tutors involved in this study were aware of the idea of presence, in one way or another, in their sessions and showed a great concern for whether or not their presence respected the writer's voice and involvement in the session.

- *Frame* is an important theme in a number of sessions, and became most evident through my conversations with Skip. Framing has to do with the ways tutors structure and focus their sessions and deal with issues of focus and structure in writing. Matthew, Skip, Seth, and Chase all discuss these issues at one point or another with tutees. For instance, in Skip's sessions with Sam, there is a true sense of urgency with frame, and in particular with outlining, organizing, structuring, and keeping to a schedule for completing a paper. Seth frames his session with Rosa by asking her what she would like to work on during their time together. Seth's use of this type of frame is interesting because he uses Rosa's goals for the session as a reason to avoid discussing any content in the paper. Both Seth and Skip have frames in mind when it comes to providing writers assistance, and these frames are used to urge a writer to come to an understanding that the tutor already has in mind. Chase and Matthew also make use of frames in their sessions, particularly in trying to help writers focus ideas. Chase repeatedly says, "let's thesisize this" in an effort to get the writer to focus his argument. Matthew is also concerned with focus, constantly trying to get the writer to center his personal statement on what the writer has to contribute as a potential medical student. The different framing techniques that these tutors use provide insight

into what they value when they begin a session, and they also clue observers of these sessions into what these tutors think will help produce a successful paper and what it takes to write for academic audiences.

- *Listening* emerged as an important idea from Matthew and Tom's session. Tom's statement reflected on his experiences as an elementary school tutor and he discussed the importance of listening while tutoring. Listening for this study will be defined as an awareness of the concerns that emerge during a session. Often times, listening was a challenge in these sessions in that tutors often felt that writers were not actually listening to what they were trying to explain. But listening is also about hearing, and, in some cases, tutors seemed willing to listen only to what they were willing to hear. Seth, for instance, admitted to not focusing on the details of Rosa's story despite the fact that those details exposed some of the most intimate experiences of her life. Beyond validating another person's experience, listening is the only way to discern whether or not tutoring is doing any good. For instance, one might ask whether or not Skip was listening carefully enough to the response his nagging was getting. If he had, would he have searched for a different approach in communicating what the writer should do next? As writer Tom points out to us, being a creative listener means being able to be humble enough to see when someone is trying to communicate a problem to us in a nontraditional manner.

In the chapters that follow, I examine the tutorial interactions and the types of learning relationships observed using themes detailed above, excerpts from the sessions, and thoughts from the tutors themselves. The sessions under discussion will fall under the following categories: first timers, weeklies, and friends. While first timers and friends are

self explanatory, the category of "weeklies" is taken from the language of the YCWC and refers to tutors and tutees who meet each week over the course of a semester. A weekly session provides time for rapport to build; however, these tutors and tutees had no relationship prior to their writing center encounter.

Additionally, I will use the emergent themes to further investigate the idea of productivity in the session. The discussion of productivity in the next chapter is a consideration of Holloway's concern for what happens when individuals are fractured from what they produce and Butler's understanding of identity. The themes and this notion of productivity will be used to analyze the lived experiences of tutors to provide balance and respond to the perceived and conceived experiences of tutors discussed in the literature review. Epistemology and possibility are explored by presenting moments when these tutors push conventional and epistemological boundaries in their sessions, thereby allowing the lived experiences of tutors to speak to taken-for-granted tutor epistemologies. With these themes and the theoretical framework discussed in chapter two, the next two chapters will begin to examine how the particular interactions reflect tutors' lived experience and speak to their conceived and perceived experiences. The themes listed above will provide more significant insight into the values that these tutors have in their community of practice at YCWC, but the discussions to come will consider how these themes foment epistemological possibilities that challenge some commonly held beliefs about tutoring. Moreover, these themes will also help to examine the ways in which tutors participate in the production of texts and knowledge. Most importantly, the insight from these tutors will hopefully help to illuminate the extent to which tutors are intelligible and significant figures at our institutions. By considering these sessions based

on the level of familiarity between these tutors and writers, we already begin to refocus the way much of the debate about tutoring has tended to go since scholars like Bruffee and Thom Hawkins wrote about the social nature of tutoring in the 1970s. By looking at these sessions from this vantage point, the hope is to reconsider tutoring as a social milieu that is in fact dependent on intimacy and the kinds of relationships we are able to foster with other learners.

CHAPTER FIVE

ANALYSIS

TUTORING DECISIONS, RELATIONSHIPS, AND LISTENING TO TUTORS

Writing center scholars have put extensive effort into professionalizing the work and status of writing tutors, which tends to downplay how intimacy factors into the kinds of relationships tutors have with writers. However, intimacy plays a role in productivity by both adding to and limiting what can be done when two people work together. By ignoring the personal relationships built between co-workers, clients, tutees, and even superiors, we risk missing an opportunity to see a complete picture of what happens in writing centers. Therefore, to assume that intimacy has no business in a discussion of writing center tutoring would mean ignoring the significant number of complex and meaningful interactions that change how we think about learning and writing through a tutorial.

We listen to people we trust, and we trust people who seem to care about us. Institutions often operate under the assumption that they know what is best for the individuals who live and work within them; however, institutions are often not trusted because they have privileged the powerful and denied access to those in need. Institutions often serve to fracture individuals from one another and from the work that they produce. Writing centers, as places often sanctioned by an institution, operate counter-institutionally in their ability to focus so carefully and attentively on the learning needs of the individual. Those who call for the professionalizing of peer tutors without careful

attention to these matters lose sight of the power of intimacy, the power of social dynamics that influence the ability to make decisions and to take action in tutoring. Those who wish to claim that tutors should be professionalized often do so by noting the kinds of institutional authority granted to tutors. This kind of authority certainly exists, but it exists with or without the peer tutor. The tutor becomes a vehicle for this authority, sometimes knowingly and other times without knowing, and they thereby become a party to the kind of institutional fracturing mentioned above.

Intimacy, on the other hand, is something the tutor and writer bring to that authority—testing it, questioning it, manipulating it. The types of relationships that tutors and writers develop are incredibly important to what is possible during a session. For instance, in a previous study, I explored the effects of flirting on the productivity of a tutoring session. As the tutor and writer continued to flirt throughout their session, the tutor lost sight of her authority, making it more difficult to question the student on inconsistencies in his argument (Fallon). This study provided compelling evidence that there is something significant about how social dynamics influence tutoring relationships, and the tutor and student participants in the current study provide additional insight into the importance of these relationships in writing center tutorials. Furthermore, Terese Thonus has found that coordinated laughter during tutorial sessions was a sign of stronger acquaintanceship and familiarity. She writes: "In tutorials between unacquainted persons, the deployment of coordinated laughter, particularly occurring near the close of such interactions, constituted increasing familiarity" (347). Whether it be flirting or laughter, it seems that familiarity between tutors and writers begs for further investigation. Thus, this analysis will be discussed, as mentioned in the previous chapter, in three levels of

familiarity that were observed at the YCWC: first timers, weeklies, and friends. As noted earlier, the closeness of these tutors to their tutees—their comfort level and intimacy—definitely resulted in some interesting differences in their interactions, which will be discussed throughout this chapter.

The Analysis

For each level of familiarity, the sessions and tutor decisions during these sessions will be explored using the themes that emerged out of the study at the YCWC. The analysis will investigate how listening, presence, frame, and confidence shed light on the different interactions observed. As a reminder, I will offer brief definitions of each of these terms:

- Listening for this study will be defined as an awareness of the concerns that arise during a session.
- Presence is an assertion of one's intellectual energy during a session and is akin to the collaborative process in tutoring and writing because both parties need to be engaged for a successful experience of working and learning together.
- Frame has to do with the ways tutors structure and focus their sessions and deal with issues of focus and structure in writing.
- Confidence has to do with how tutors help and support writers in negotiating various writing tasks and in making decisions with conviction.

After this initial analysis, the exploration will continue by examining the tutor's role in production during the session. In chapter two, the discussion of doer, doing, and done focused on the ways that tutors take part in producing learning events and texts. It

was concerned with everything from how institutional forces influence tutor identities to how tutors can be fractured from the writing they ultimately help to produce. Thus, each of these sessions will be examined to explore production and the ways tutors are fractured from the products of their sessions.

Each relationship will be reviewed using a model for analysis that was developed out of the theoretical framework for this study and the themes mentioned above. Figure 2 offers a visual representation of how each session is analyzed. In this figure, there are three steps to analyzing the interactions had by tutors in this study. The first is to identify the kind of relationship the tutor has with the writer. Next the analysis will look at the lived experiences of these tutors by examining how the themes that emerged from the research shed light on what happens during these tutors' sessions. Finally, the third step will be to assess the productivity of a session and how tutors are involved in productivity in these sessions.

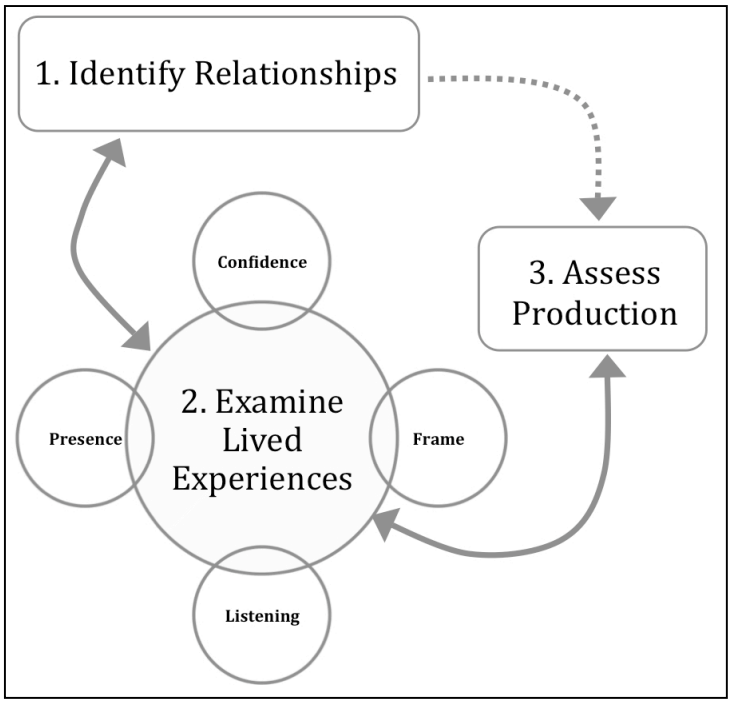

Fig. 4. Model for analysis of tutoring sessions.

The arrows on the model are in place to consider how these three steps relate to one another. For example, relationships have an effect on the lived experiences and on production, and the lived experiences can influence both relationships and production, as

will be discussed in the analysis. The dotted line leading from relationships to production is meant to show that although the analysis will progress from relationships to lived experiences to production, there is definitely a connection between relationships and production. The following investigation will try to account for how these tutors might process their own sessions by drawing on what these tutors had to say about particular moments in their sessions.

First-timers

When I finished introducing you to Seth and Rosa in Chapter Four, I noted that authority might not be a central agent in the outcomes of their session. Seth and Rosa, who met for the first time during this study and who have since continued to work together, provide an example of what happens in tutoring when individuals have yet to establish a relationship. In analyzing what is being done during this session, how this tutor is involved in doing something for and with this student, we can begin to discuss one of the problems presented in the literature review: reconnecting the tutor to what is being done. In this session, Seth accomplishes many tasks: he helps this multilingual writer understand nuances of the English language, he guides her to correct spellings of words and usage of grammar, and he asks questions that signal to the writer that a change is needed. For the most part, Seth is a model of productivity, providing us an example of how great care and patience can allow a writer to think through a number of language issues he or she might have.

Seth is empowered to work with Rosa by his native speaker knowledge of English and his even more impressive knowledge of English grammar. Seth's ability to communicate a concern or issue to this writer is outstanding mostly because of his patient

and supportive style. As he works with Rosa, he leaves her plenty of time to come up with solutions on her own.

Most of Seth's session with Rosa focuses on language issues in the writing: spelling, tense, and expressions. This session was successful in respect to how Seth tutors language issues because Seth was able to help Rosa accomplish her goals of working on grammar. Yet there are many other ways to read a session that expand our notions of what success might mean in a tutoring session. In some ways, Seth's decisions during the session serve to remove him from handling content issues in the text.

Rosa provided us a complicated and interesting story, shaped and framed by a social work assignment that asked students to recount a time in their lives when they dealt with some of the theoretical concerns under discussion in class. Rosa's response provided a detailed account of her life that included how she struggled with relationships, childbirth, and illness in her family. At the beginning of the session, Seth asks if this is a true story and Rosa whispers: "Yessss….So…don't shout." She does not want her private story broadcast to the rest of the writing center. She sees how what she is writing can be judged by readers who might not share, understand, or value her experiences. If we choose to pay close attention to this part of the session, the content that Rosa provides in her writing, we begin to address a number of questions that change the way we think about possibilities for Seth as a tutor.

The patience that Seth exhibits is nothing short of fantastic. It also provides a frame for approaching his session. He slowly and methodically works through linguistic errors, and he never reveals the answer but rather gives Rosa plenty of opportunity to think through and determine an answer on her own. The following exchange provides an

excellent example of Seth's patience and his ability to restrain from jumping to conclusions about word choice and spelling after coming to an understanding that Rosa means to say *test* instead of *text* (See Appendix D for Transcription Conventions):

Seth: Can I ask you one thing? What does it mean that the doctor made many types of texts?
Rosa: Because he was vomiting every time that he ate
Seth: But what is making many types of texts? Does that mean he was writing a lot? He was typing? Ohhh
Rosa: Oh↓
Seth: Tesssts, ok, alright, sorry
Rosa: No (laughs) so this is
Seth: Ok, text is words,=
Rosa: =MmHmm
Seth: you want to say tests

After learning that Rosa meant to write "tests" instead of "texts," Rosa begins to spell the word "test" with Seth's coaching:

Rosa: t
Seth: yeah
Rosa: a
Seth: nope
Rosa: Nope↑
Seth: T<u>eh</u>—
Rosa: Uhh
Seth: <u>Eh</u> nope like pest or rest
Rosa: t what? (laughs)
Seth: t—what sounds can make eh?
Rosa: t
Seth: what'd you say?
Rosa: e
Seth: a?
Rosa: a?
Seth: No, right
Rosa: e, e!=
Seth: =yeah e exactly=
Rosa: e
Seth: Exactly. Teh – tessst
Rosa: Tesst
Seth: Oh no, s sorry
Rosa: s?
Seth: sss

Rosa: sss
Seth: Tessst
Rosa: t
Seth: Yeah exactly t

As Seth helps Rosa through the spelling of test, we can see that he encourages her to continue to search for the next letter. He uses the sounds of each letter to clue her into which letter will come next. One trouble is at the beginning of this when Rosa answers *a*. For a bilingual learner like Rosa, she actually got the right letter but the wrong sound in English since *e* in Spanish is pronounced like *a* in English. Although there might be some phonetic confusion at that point, Seth's supportive approach helps the writer find the appropriate English pronunciation without labeling her pronunciation as a mistake. By focusing on trying to help Rosa come to the correct articulation, he opts to build her confidence as she comes to a right answer. The effectiveness of this approach is therefore twofold. First, he helps the writer discover the right spelling and word for this situation by listening patiently. Second, he accomplishes this goal without compromising the writer's confidence, something that could be even riskier in this situation given the phonetic confusion over how *e* sounds in English versus how it sounds in Spanish.

His presence allows him the ability to troubleshoot issues without making the mistake of providing a misinformed answer for a given problem. While Seth's presence is noticeable for those observing this session, it is also something that Rosa jokingly comments on, pointing out Seth's consistent assurance and persistence in getting her to come to a suitable answer. Here's how they conclude the spelling of test:

Rosa: You see how you are killing me?
Seth: (nervous laugh) no this is good so n-now you'll know it
Rosa: Yeah, I know (laugh)

Rosa acknowledges the hard work that she is putting into this session by pointing out Seth's ability to hold her to task. We also see what Seth values about tutoring in this exchange. When asked about this approach in an interview after the session, Seth responded by saying,

> Because that's how she'll learn. I could tell her the answer and maybe she'll remember it, but if she figures out the answer herself she'll for sure remember it much better and also even just the process we were doing, just sounding out a word to figure out how to spell, that's a valuable skill in and of itself. She wouldn't have gotten it if I just told her test is spelt…

He believes that sounding out a word will help Rosa in the future. While sounding a word out can be a helpful technique for spelling, we can see how second language speakers often become confused when the sounds and orthographic systems of two languages are sometimes different. Seth's presence as a tutor, however, helped to rectify this situation, providing Rosa the right sounds and the confidence to continue.

Seth's response also reminds us of the power of experimentation in learning. The process of solving a problem, in this case, provides the learner with the chance to take a risk. The outcome of that risk can be negative or positive, but engaging in the process provides the writer with firsthand knowledge of how to accomplish a task. Having a tutor like Seth present helps to steer the risk-taking task in a positive direction. The laughs that Seth and Rosa share also help to show that the rapport building that happens during a session can make it more comfortable for writers to take risks like the ones that Rosa takes during her session with Seth (Thonus). For example, Rosa is able to take a risk by saying the wrong letter when spelling a word or choosing between *no* and *not* because

she knows Seth will help her to find and understand the correct choice in these situations. Furthermore, becoming better acquainted with new words and learning how to spell builds Rosa's confidence, especially since Seth reports that Rosa had a better understanding of these issues in a subsequent session.

Despite Seth's attention to Rosa's grammar and overall use of language, he avoids addressing most of Rosa's content. Although Seth chooses to avoid content discussions, he does engage Rosa's story at one point. Below is an exchange where Seth calls on Rosa to expand how she values goals in her life:

Rosa: When we moved to the Bronx, I was twenty-seven years old with two children and I did not have any goal in my mind. The only thing that was in mind my was taking care of (inaudible)
Seth: I mean they are your children
Rosa: They are my children
Seth: I have a question for you. Is taking care of your children a goal?
Rosa: No, but like, for example, this (inaudible) you know I didn't have like I say oh I go to work or I go to school
Seth: Ok, so you didn't have any career goals, right? You did have a goal.
Rosa: Taking care of things
Seth: Your goal was taking care of your children. That's a very important goal and that's what you devoted your time to
Rosa: MmHmm
Seth: So I don't think its fair to yourself to say that you didn't have any goals. You did have a goal. So maybe, "I did not have any" … you could say career goals or you could say any other goals or any goals other than taking care of my children.
Rosa: Any? Any goal.

In this situation, Seth would like to add his opinion when it comes to how Rosa writes about goals in her life. This passage could be evidence of Seth's worldview when it comes to the importance of rearing children in one's life. If this is the case, then we have evidence of a moment in which he feels comfortable bringing in his own opinion. He also helps her to distinguish between personal and career goals. What's fascinating about this

part of their session is that it's one of the only times when Seth asks questions that focus beyond simple language or grammatical issues.

One way to read Seth's question is to see how it might be influenced by what he knows about the world, noting that taking care of one's own children is a very important goal. He wants Rosa to be able to distinguish that she did indeed have goals. Possibly, he knows and sees the value in goal setting, and wants to be sure that Rosa can situate herself within those values even if she initially was unable to recognize how her experiences were goal oriented. It might even be possible to read this exchange from a social perspective that illuminates the vastly different experiences that Seth and Rosa have had throughout their lives. Rosa has a number of years on Seth, is a mother, and has lived her life as an immigrant Latina. Age, gender, ethnic, and socioeconomic differences between two people no doubt influence how people communicate with one another, and as Victor Villanueva suggests, "our assumptions about how the world works are influenced by—might even be created by—the language we receive and use" (5). Even in how Rosa and Seth use and receive language, we can see obvious differences that clue us into how these two might have different life and world experiences. Thus, if goal setting for one person might be something that is totally different for another, then there is bound to be tension between what one person considers a goal and what another considers to be just a state of being. This tension is in part due to their very different life experiences.

It is also possible to think about this tension in terms of presence. Both Rosa and Seth have ideas that are in conflict when they come to this passage. Learning possibilities arise in moments like these because the conflicting sense of what is or is not a goal challenges both Seth and Rosa to rethink their experiences. Seth begins to be more

present in terms of his understanding of how Rosa shapes the content of her paper. Rosa, on the other hand, has written what she knows about her life and the world. Ultimately, Rosa decides to develop a presence in her own paper that allows for her desire as a mother to keep her children safe and happy to be thought of as a goal. Likewise, Seth uses this opportunity to contribute to the discussion in Rosa's text and, hopefully, he has learned something about Rosa and the way she thinks that will provide him a new perspective.

Despite this one example of Seth questioning Rosa's account of her experiences, he for the most part stays silent. In my interview with Seth, I asked about whether or not he thought Rosa read quietly because she was self-conscious about reading her experiences aloud. Specifically, I also asked if he helped her to rethink how those experiences played into the overall assignment. Seth answered:

> We didn't really discuss the specific content of her paper. I got the impression she was quiet because she didn't believe in her own grammar skills. And she was embarrassed about it, so a lot of the time I was trying to tell her, "you do know the answer." I got the impression that that's why she was quiet a lot.

As our interview continued, I pressed Seth about Rosa's use of humor referring back to when she mentioned he was killing her and another time when she tells him his future wife will throw him out the window if he behaves like her ex-husband. I wanted him to tell me more about his decision not to engage in content-centered conversations. He went on to respond,

> I was just concentrating on the grammar of the sentences and not at all on the content. Some of the content was really dark stuff. I was really not concentrating

on the content. Obviously she was perhaps very self-conscious about it. So maybe that's why she kept making humorous asides about it.

In Seth's admission that he felt her story was "really dark," he places a value on Rosa's story, but he also begins to form reasons for why Rosa might have been quiet outside of her limited proficiency in English grammar and vocabulary. Seth lets us know that his focus was solely on Rosa's request to review grammar, tense, and other minor linguistic errors. Seth's focus on these items, as he admits, made it difficult for him to listen carefully to the story unfolding before him, and it happens to be the kind of American story that all too often gets ignored: the struggle of hard-working and hopeful Hispanic immigrants. While he heard "really dark stuff," observers of this session might hear an incredible story about perseverance and dedication to family and education. He initially listens to the writer in her request for help, but Seth does not always seem to hear what the writer has to say in terms of the text she is writing. In fact, he attributes Rosa's quiet demeanor to her linguistic mistakes rather than the content of her paper, despite that she calls attention to her nervousness about the personal nature of her paper when she asks him not to "shout" her story out. Despite this criticism, it is important to note that at times Seth was allowing himself to shift focus from these surface concerns in order to listen to and to dig deeper into Rosa's ideas about her life, as we see in their discussion about child rearing and goals.

What I find interesting about this session is that, in many ways, it was incredibly successful, and Rosa returned to the writing center later to work with Seth for a second time. Seth reports that she had remembered a number of the language issues that they had discussed during their first meeting. During their first session, Rosa was an open book for

Seth. She *was* the text as her life story was read softly phrase-by-phrase and word-by-word. So much of the time these two spent together was spent looking at the minutia, and for as much as Seth says that was his focus, I cannot help but think that he was actually learning more about Rosa's history than he let on. People like Rosa come to our writing centers with so many language concerns, but what we get is not an opportunity to critique their language use, but a chance to listen to them, to learn from what they can tell us about the world, and to see life from their perspective rather than the perspectives we ascribe to their experiences.

I maintain that part of the reason that Seth spends less time diving into content is just as much a result of Rosa's original request as it is a result of their level of familiarity with one another. It could be said that Seth was searching for a thirdspace, a place from which to see all aspects of Rosa and her text. This was their first visit together and they have varied life experiences that mark them differently in the world. Even in Seth referring to Rosa's story as dark, we can see how he has constructed an understanding of her life as being in contrast to what one might consider light and happy. Everyone, however, will sooner or later have a dark story to tell. Most of us struggle with death, illness, financial concerns, and other kinds of trauma during our lifetime. That Seth, a young male student, has not been able to experience some of the life issues that Rosa has is not too surprising. So, in addition to this being their first meeting together, there is this added issue of the kinds of social differences that exist between this tutor and writer. Might Seth happily have chosen to focus on grammar to steer clear of the content, or if Seth had known Rosa better, would he have felt compelled to engage her story a bit more? It is possible to speculate answers to this question within the context of this

session and given the responses that Seth offers. I believe it is absolutely important to consider Seth's take on the situation, that his sole role was to help Rosa with language concerns, as being an honest perspective on why things happened in this session. But it is possible that Seth's focus on language concerns provided a kind of gateway to a thirdspace with Rosa in that his ability to gain Rosa's trust and to boost her confidence was to be as useful as possible when it came to helping her with grammar.

Seth's attention to protocol in this session was important. He used it to help him through a situation that for the most part was relatively unknown to him. He had no prior knowledge of Rosa and her needs as an individual writer, and he did what was needed in order to have a productive session that helped Rosa as a writer. While this session could have looked totally different if Rosa and Seth had been more familiar with one another, there are still many of other issues that we can analyze during their interaction. These issues have to do with production and more specifically with how texts are produced, how knowledge is produced, and how, as an outcome of production, both parties involved were able to learn. In order to examine this I would like to consider how Seth engages in a task and begins to help produce a text and help a writer produce texts and ideas.

Seth draws a perimeter on the kind of helper he will be in this tutoring situation. Seth's involvement in this tutoring transaction is governed by his adherence to an approach that many tutors follow: setting an agenda that focuses on the writer. This technique is a favorite of writing teachers who use agenda setting to ensure, as Thomas Newkirk puts it, students and teachers "come to a meeting of minds fairly early in the writing conference" (318). For instance, goal setting, an approach lauded by many tutor educators, allowed for the writer to declare the session's focus should be grammar. Goal

setting put power in the hands of the writer, who set a clear agenda for the session. These are all good things to do, and Seth is wise to take this approach. Where this approach begs for caution is in letting it become an excuse for not digging deeper into a text or into a writer's decision-making process. Goal setting, as William J. Macauley, Jr. argues, should be collaborative, because when it is not, tutors run the risk of "doling out generic advice" or becoming editors (3). However, there's an even greater concern here and it has to do with the tutor's ability to distinguish between seeing himself as helping a writer/learner or as helping a text meet institutional demands.

During this session, Seth is doing the work of institutional norms more than he is doing anything himself. His focus in the session on grammar and language concerns was much more a result of the expectations of academic writing than it was his training or own specific desires as a tutor. This is not to say that tutors should not help writers meet conventions of academic writing, but I think it is important to delineate between what is done in service to institutional expectations and what is done to help a writer learn. This gets tricky because not all language issues or grammatical issues automatically fall into what Brian Street has referred to as autonomous models of literacy, the model that insists, "the dominant literacy is neutral" (Grimm 30). Sometimes, our conversation about language and grammar can be socially, culturally, and politically revealing, as it would in Street's other model, the ideological model of literacy. Nancy Grimm further discusses the implications of Street's models of literacy for writing centers in *Good Intentions: Writing Center Work for Postmodern Times*, writing:

> Within an ideological model of literacy, writing center people would deliberately call attention to the ways that literacy practices carry cultural knowledge,

> ideology, and values. Academic literacy would not be imagined as an individual skill but instead as a set of cultural practices. Writing center workers would talk about the beliefs encoded in these practices, making the tacit understanding explicit, offering students more choices and more information about how these practices work. (32)

However, I wonder if such a discussion would have been possible upon Seth and Rosa's first encounter, especially if Seth, as a learner, is still coming to terms with Rosa's "dark" story. Seth, not being ready for this kind of a discussion for any number of reasons, is then left to working with what he knows about school: get the right words and get a good grade. What Grimm advocates for in this passage is good, and I believe that many tutors would be able to begin discussions about the ways that literacy is completely entangled in cultural practices. I feel confident that Rosa, as a graduate student in Social Work, would already have an understanding of how her English language proficiency positions her socially, culturally, and politically within the academy, her community in the Bronx, the larger New York City metropolitan area, and the United States in general. This situation makes me question whether or not it would be appropriate for Seth to enact an ideological model of literacy in his tutoring given what he knows about Rosa and her experiences with English.

Despite that institutional norms influence Seth's decisions, I am not convinced the autonomous model of literacy has prevailed. For example, when Seth helps Rosa to understand when to use *not* versus when to use *no*, we can see that Seth's desire to help her get a handle on this was closely focused on empowering Rosa as a language learner. Seth patiently helps Rosa understand when to use *not*, and all the while, he is learning

about the ways one's native language influences their literacy in a second language. Since *not* does not exist in Spanish as it does in English, Seth must provide several examples that were meant to help Rosa determine if *no* or *not* was appropriate for the situation. Later on, Seth also realizes that he faces a similar issue when he speaks Hebrew as *not* does not exist in Hebrew either. If Seth had been acting to serve only autonomous models of literacy, he could have easily helped Rosa make her corrections and then moved on to the next issue. Instead, as he does in many of his explanations, Seth puts Rosa's ability to "get it right" at the forefront of his efforts.

Seth does not feel empowered to engage in the content and he even comments that he is not aware of some of the vocabulary under discussion in her essay. In a case like this, one has to wonder about how the relationships between tutor and writer influence possibilities to move beyond language concerns in a session, particularly in a session like this when age, gender, language, and educational barriers exist between them and, on top of that, the writing was of a personal nature. I do not believe that any of the ideas that Rosa was responding to were beyond Seth's ability to comprehend. I do believe that he might not have felt completely comfortable at times with some of Rosa's experiences and this was also at times apparent by his nervous laughter. What we can learn from this is that our ability to connect with writers on more intimate levels can provide a certain level of safety that makes more content discussion possible, especially in a case like this.

Still, an even more important discussion to begin here is one that would have us consider the ways in which Seth was fractured from the final outcomes of this writing situation based on his decision to focus on grammar. The final text becomes the mark of Rosa's knowledge about the Social Work concepts she has been asked to consider. Seth

helps her articulation of those concepts, but does a lot less when it comes to rhetorically manipulating the concepts to illuminate Rosa's life experiences. Seth plays such a role in the session that the work that he does do, the patience he exhibits in helping Rosa, could evaporate in the background as a momentary event in the production of drafts. The roles that tutors play in our institutions often play out this way in the grand scheme of writing assessment and the corresponding grades used to place value on a student's work. However, Seth has not been fractured from the learning process, and his insistence on getting it right and his own openness to learning allow him to not only engage in that process but to contribute to it. More specifically, when learning becomes the focus of what is produced in the writing center, then a tutor is able to take credit for and enjoy what is done. Seth sees the fruit of his labor with Rosa in subsequent sessions when Rosa seems more equipped to deal with some of the language issues that they had discussed during their first session. Although Seth never substantially contributes to Rosa's content, he knows that he has played a part in her development as a language learner and has learned how to explain difficult linguistic situations such as *no* and *not*.

Ultimately, their interaction points to the complexity of decision-making tutors have to do and the potential danger of dogmatic tutor education. Returning to an earlier example, Rosa would more likely be able to teach Seth about how both ideological and autonomous models of literacy operate in people's lives, and their situation shows how wrong it might be for Seth to enact an ideological model of literacy in their session. The decisions tutors make, especially those that are richly described in writing center theoretical conversations, are never easy, and they require that tutors make their own praxis decisions about the values that scholars discuss in their work. And tutors like Seth

make these decisions daily with little room to be able to insert their own perspective on whether or not the theory held or the practice prevailed. How many scholars have provided tutors the space to do what Seth does here in their theoretical conversations? Scholars who focus on the collaborative nature of tutoring, scholars like Bruffee, Dinitz and Kiedaisch, Eodice, Kail, and Harris whom I wrote about in the second chapter, can imagine a space for Seth to make the decisions he did. While these scholars work with tutors, what happens when theoretical constructs of other scholars work against or rigidly constrain a tutor's decisions? It might be, as Spellmeyer suggests, that in a quest to "wage theory" on the field, we lose sight of the everyday practicality of the work done by tutors, and I will continue to explore what this means for peer tutors and their connections to our work and institutions in the next chapter.

Weeklies

In this section, I will discuss sessions held by two tutors in the last few weeks of the semester. These weekly sessions allowed the tutor and writer to build a relationship over the course of the semester. In the case of tutor Skip and writer Sam, they had worked throughout the semester on projects for an English literature class. Two of their sessions were observed, and each session focused on different aspects of the same writing project. The other weekly session was with tutor Matthew and writer Tom who were working on a personal statement for medical school. While there were definitely some important differences between these sessions, they are both examples of what can happen in a session when the tutor and writer have gone through a semester-long process of getting to know one another.

In Skip and Sam's sessions together, a lot of emphasis was placed on frame. Skip worked diligently as a tutor to try to impress upon Sam the importance of keeping a schedule, developing a useful outline, and following through on plans. Skip seemed to approach Sam's *laissez-faire* attitude when it came to this class with a sense of urgency about completing the paper and reasons for why this course was valuable to a science major. There was an obvious sense of frustration in Skip's voice as he tried to explain a number of issues to Sam during their sessions. Who could blame Skip for feeling frustrated and showing his frustration as a way of letting Sam know that he felt disappointed? He had spent many hours working with Sam, making attempts to encourage him to get this project done, and now, with only two weeks left in the semester, Sam had not even settled on a specific focus.

Skip's close attention to schedule, structure, and sources in these sessions often took on a nagging tone. Given the busy schedule of a college freshman, nagging Sam to complete a low priority task might not have been the best tutoring approach. In the following excerpt, we can see the kind of interaction that Skip consistently had with Sam:

Skip: Do you feel yourself, like you're getting much closer to being able to articulate some ideas and stuff? Like actually on the paper?
Sam: Uhhhh
Skip: I mean or no, you can say no.
Sam: No
Skip: Ok, so then we need to get closer to that.
Sam: Yeah. I mean I haven't spent so much time besides for just thinking of ideas.
Skip: I would say=
Sam: =I really tried to develop
Skip: I would say you really like should start that, cause this I'm saying this is a lot more challenging to write the amount of pages that you're talking about than it might seem. Where every page, like [the professor will] go through every single page as if it was a two-page paper.
Sam: Ok
Skip: Like it's a real … you know …

In this example, there's an indication that time has been spent planning but not actually writing. Skip presses Sam to think about what he has actually completed when it comes to this paper. What's interesting is that Skip chooses to jump in to let Sam know that he could say no and then mention that they "need to get closer to that." Then he immediately follows that comment by stressing the kind of challenge it will be to accomplish this task and continues by mentioning how carefully the professor will scrutinize the final paper. Skip's response comes off threatening and can be understood from two different perspectives—one of a frustrated tutor and the other of a tutor unaware of the kind relationship he has with the student.

The obvious frustration we see from Skip here is that he is trying to be supportive and trying to allow for Sam to be honest about his engagement in the writing process, but it is difficult for Skip to believe that Sam is working up to his full potential. The above passage, which is from the second session I observed, is an indication that Skip seems to be at wits end and is using anything that he can to try to get Sam to direct his attention toward committing his ideas to the page. In their previous sessions, they had already spent hours organizing ideas and talking about the importance of using sources to inform those ideas, so from Skip's perspective, there is obviously another problem keeping Sam from getting to the next step in the writing process. Discussing Sam's reluctance to make this step, Skip revealed to me:

> He either A) doesn't allocate the necessary amount of time to his liberal arts courses because he doesn't want to or B) he can't. It's pretty much those two—either he doesn't want to or he can't. I mean he does spend time but it's

> something we've been dealing with from week one. He is a weekly, and I'm on top of his assignments.

Skip went on to theorize that physics and computer programming, unlike writing, provide learners with instant gratification. Either their answers are right or wrong, he notes. He felt that this is what made it difficult for Sam to persevere through a twenty-page literary analysis.

Yet, the nagging was an interesting phenomenon to consider given the kind of relationship that Skip and Sam had developed over the course of the semester. It was Sam's choice to continue meeting with Skip despite his nagging and despite Sam's overall listlessness toward his English course. I was reminded by an article I read on CNN.com that nagging is normally something we do to those we care about and that, often times, people "who at first revel in their similarities but gradually come to see their differences often try to nag each other back to safe common ground" (Belkin). This sounded familiar in this situation because Skip, who happened to be a science-related major himself, also took the honor's English class Sam struggled with when he was a freshman. In fact, he had even had the same professor. In Skip's mind, he knew what it meant to think like a science major and he also knew what it took to succeed in this English class. In Skip's own words: "I felt bad for him. I liked him, and I felt bad that he couldn't do it; he couldn't pull it together. I'm assuming he handed it in, but I doubt it was on time." That Skip cared for Sam's development as a writer is obvious, and it's clear from Sam's testimony during his interview that he felt *he* identified with this writer. So why wouldn't Sam just take his advice the first time Skip offered it?

The reality is that Sam and Skip are two different students who value their educational experiences in distinct ways. Skip was a science major who joined the community of writing tutors at the YCWC. As much as Skip saw their relationship being grounded in their experiences as science majors taking the honor's English class, Sam might have only seen their relationship as being a necessity for completing the writing tasks in that class.

Interestingly enough, Skip was not the only tutor who had to repeat requests throughout the semester. Matthew also alluded to this type of frustration in his interview:

> Although I had suggested a number of possible or we had outlined a number of possible directions it just felt like we were outlining a lot of directions and kept outlining more; so, I guess as time went on, we just tried picking and sticking with the way that his paper should move. And I guess that as a result of that or because he wasn't taking as much initiative as would probably be necessary for your average paper, I guess I sort of felt like I needed to push him a little bit because at the end of the day this paper needed to be completed.

Matthew, too, felt he needed to prod and constantly remind the writer he worked with that the success of this piece depended on the work that went into it each week. There was a difference between Matthew's and Skip's sessions in that the personal statement that Tom was working on was further along, and Tom was motivated to work on his personal statement because doing so had obvious benefits to him educationally and professionally. Skip's attempts to convince Sam that his paper and success in this class would have professional consequences got to the point where they sounded like the examples of an alarmist:

Skip: A "C" in this class is the same, it's one credit less than a "C" in physics. It will do the same thing to your GPA. And when you apply to graduate schools and then when you apply to jobs and show your GPA, it will have the same impact…and they won't know that a "C" in physics or a "C" in in Comp one.
Sam: Really? They don't differentiate between something you major in and…
Skip: I mean they might, but I've never had a company ask me for my transcript. (pause) They see my GPA only, they don't know. They don't know what the determining factors are.
Sam: Let's say they don't know this is an honors course.
Skip: No, you can write on your resume, you know, I took an honor's course or whatever, but nonetheless I'm saying like play your cards right.

After some time, Skip ends this discussion by saying, "There is definitely something you can do. The thing you can do is to put your ideas down on paper until you get this thing done." Skip has to go to extreme examples to make a case for the importance of this writing situation in comparison to Matthew who is dealing with a writer who understands that an under-prepared statement could potentially jeopardize his potential to get into medical school.

In these weekly sessions, we can see how presence and listening come into play in interesting ways by considering the kind of nagging that happens at times to ensure a task is completed from week to week. Diana Boxer has studied nagging as a speech act and speech event in a number of contexts, finding that nagging most often happens in familial settings ("Nagging" 49). Boxer claims, "The sort of power possessed by the nagger is distinct from true power typically found in social and professional relationships" (53). Boxer goes on to explain that naggers are often in situations where, without their efforts, things would not run as smoothly. In some ways, they know what's best for the recipients of the nagging but lack the status or power needed for immediate action upon their request. Boxer also explains that nagging is most likely to happen in arenas that most closely resemble domestic scenes and that when it happens in friendships, it can have

some severe repercussions for those relationships (59). While Boxer places nagging squarely in domestic and familial arenas, it is obvious that nagging does happen in other contexts. What's interesting is that her findings about nagging can shed light on the relationships and interactions of the weekly tutoring participants in this study. If we think about how these weekly sessions have made Matthew and Skip turn to nagging at times, then we can also think about what implications weekly relationship building has for peer tutoring in particular.

First, in terms of listening, we have to wonder about how students as recipients of this nagging receive the information and the values that tutors are trying to impart. If listening is an active way of receiving information and being able to understand the circumstances of a given situation, then we would expect writers to act upon sound advice provided by knowledgeable peers. Likewise, if the tutor is a listener of the tutorial situation, then the question is whether or not they are actively listening to what the writers are trying to tell them when they repeatedly fail to accomplish tasks the tutor has recommended. This of course also lends itself to the kind of presence the tutor takes during a session.

Tutor Matthew often used the term "presence" to explain a fundamental part of one's engagement in the tutoring and writing process. In the tutorial situation, he explains, "The tutor's presence should adjust to the paper and to the session. Obviously, you're asking the tutor for his judgment and he can only judge based on what he's seen before and experienced, but he still should offer that judgment; but, I guess you sort of want to draw the line when its slowing down the production of writing by the tutee." Matthew believes that tutors who are present have something based in their own

experiences to offer writers, but that offering should be measured by how present a writer would like the tutor to be. In other words, a tutor's presence is not completely up to the tutor, but rather it is influenced by the expectations of a writer, and I would argue that it is also largely dependent upon other critical conditions such as demands of the writing situation, institutional expectation and evaluation, and social factors that exist in the relationship between the tutor and the writer.

A closer look at Matthew's session with Tom will help to flesh out some of the tug and pull between listening and presence. Tom's personal statement included an account of his experiences tutoring elementary school students how to multiply. Tom's tutoring experience led him to the conclusion that he must be a better listener when it comes to his interactions with others. He talks about alternative ways of listening in his statement that require individuals to look beyond the most noticeable features available. He writes about looking to a baby's heart monitor to determine his level of comfort when the baby is no longer able to cry. Listening, then, means being attuned to both things that are said and things that are left unsaid. In reflecting on his own experiences as a tutor, Tom felt he needed to reconsider the effectiveness of his math tutoring because the elementary school student's misunderstanding was proof of Tom's oversight.

> Matthew: (reading the paper aloud) What this conveyed to me was that he really did not understand what we were doing and that I had not tutored effectively (stops reading) ….does this work well? …ok
> Tom: Cool. The point that I was trying to make was that he communicated to the fact that he didn't know something
> Matthew: Right
> Tom: And I didn't and I sort of I mean and there and therefore it connects to this idea before. That you know uh listening and hearing and learning things that aren't … um…
> Matthew: So but why?

In this exchange, Matthew begins to question Tom on why he chose to write about the tutoring session, and in particular why he focused on his failings as a tutor. Immediately after Matthew questions why, he begins to read what Tom had written at length and then comes to a final statement, saying: "I'm not convinced, I'm not convinced of your presence in that paragraph at all. I'm only convinced that he doesn't know how to multiply in reverse." Matthew's point was that he felt Tom's example was a poor approach to highlighting his abilities. Although Matthew has a good point, I do believe there is merit in Tom's approach. Tom believed he recognized the math student's misunderstanding of multiplication because he had listened carefully to what the student was communicating about his multiplication skills. Matthew does not seem to see that Tom is trying to relate that he has learned how to read a situation carefully and critically and how to be sure that he's listened to all the evidence in a given scenario. He, in fact, is making an important point about learning. Matthew quickly dismisses the example, saying that his "presence" is not convincing, meaning that there simply is not enough of Tom in the example, but dismissing this example comes with a cost. The cost is proving Tom's ability to be a conscientious and careful observer.

Matthew's decision at this point in the session, however, is to address whether or not Tom is present in the paragraph. Matthew's need as a reader to see Tom's presence becomes a centerpiece of Matthew's comments about Tom's statement. Earlier I provided what Matthew meant when he discusses the presence of a tutor in a tutorial, but here, we see him defining presence in terms of how the writer establishes his identity in the statement. Based on his session with Tom, he is loosely operating with the idea that

writers of personal statements should be agents of change in their pieces rather than being subject to the occurrences surrounding them. Later on, Matthew commented:

> As it is, there was so little of him, per se, in this essay because he wasn't taking his own twist on—it was just him sitting back and being withdrawn, that I guess I just sort of felt that if there was somehow you could describe this interaction or describe this literacy program moment with more of your involvement with the child instead of just saying that you noticed that he didn't multiply in reverse…

Yet I still wondered if Matthew could have done more to help Tom use this idea of communication and listening to construct an effective sense of presence in the paper. I'm not sure that Matthew was able to see that Tom's example was not as passive as he presented it above.

When I first observed the session, I wonder how much of Matthew's response to Tom had to do with his own sense of a tutor's role in a session. It seemed that Matthew wanted to refuse to allow Tom to write about himself as an ineffective tutor. As a self-reflective writing tutor, Matthew was aware that hindsight is always perfect when it comes to judging the effectiveness of one's own tutoring. So, the decision Matthew made to steer Tom away from his example of listening in order to assert a stronger presence made me wonder whether or not this had to do with Matthew's own sense of what it means to critique tutoring. In explaining Tom's tutoring situation to me, Matthew noted that, "Maybe there was just a lot of one-sided conversation going on and the child didn't really have a presence in the session, and [Tom] recognized that, which was an educational moment for him, not just for the child." At this point, Matthew, who had done a lot of speaking during his own session, was beginning to see that in the act of

listening, Tom was able to learn as a tutor and was able to provide the tutee an opportunity to become more engaged in the session.

It is at this point in my interview with Matthew that he comes to the conclusion that he might have potentially gone down the same road that Tom had gone down in his math tutoring. He begins to think about his own tutoring as an act of listening rather than an opportunity to assert one's presence. Before his interview with me, I had asked Matthew to listen to his session, and he concludes, "Because listening to it the first time and listening to just a lot of the tangents I went off on, which were probably unnecessary, are probably not that well received because they sounded a little bit didactic." Matthew was a little hard on himself because he had done a good job of pointing out some important issues for this writer to consider. It just so happened that the conditions under which he accomplished this task provided an opportunity for us to explore the significance of both presence and listening since they were inherent in the interaction. But given Matthew's own reflection on what happened during the session, it would seem as though it is not possible for either party to be completely present when they do not listen adequately. He notes coming across "didactic" and the fact that this type of approach may not be well received, and although he came to this conclusion by listening to himself, he can see how a tutee might not respond to this style of tutoring.

In some ways, this realization puts Matthew at an advantage because it means that he is beginning to learn the importance of balancing listening and one's presence. Being a careful listener both of oneself and of others is something that does not always come easily. It encourages us to work without a script when it comes to approaches that we assume to be useful or effective. Skip, in contrast to Matthew, seems to be ruled by those

scripts, citing teacher expectations and other tools of academic bookkeeping, and when the writer seems most concerned about what to do, he replies: "There is definitely something you can do. The thing you can do is to put your ideas down on paper until you get this thing done." The obvious sense of frustration in Skip's reply clues us into his inability to move the writer further along. When Matthew is faced with a similar kind of exasperation, he notes that he himself is having a difficult time communicating what to do next. What I take from these examples is that being a good listener and understanding presence in a session means tutors have to be willing to not have all of the answers. It means that they have to listen to themselves in addition to what unconventional messages writers put out to them. It also means knowing when you have been too present.

In the process of completing a task with a writer, the tutor contributes to the final product in ways that are potentially difficult to measure. What's more is that tutors find themselves in situations that simultaneously demand their help (and expertise) and ignore the significance of their advice. This could not be more obvious than in Skip's case when he constantly struggled to motivate Sam who made a point to meet his tutor every week but did very little to follow through on their sessions. This is not to say that Sam's final paper did not reflect the long hours Skip spent helping him organize and categorize ideas and sources. Sam's final essay may have very well reflected this work, but the reality was that Skip was removed from knowing whether or not the final product did take this work into account.

Both Matthew and Skip encounter the dilemma of being fractured from the products of their sessions. They both do a lot: they ask questions, they nag, they propose solutions, and they use their own experience. They tend to overwhelm or worry writers,

providing copious amounts of feedback. Even Matthew suggests that he talks too much during the session, but a fairer assessment might be that Matthew was simply talking through his response, meaning that he tries to articulate and rearticulate what he means by his feedback. Skip, on the other hand, might be perceived as going overboard in terms of feedback in the evaluation process. He has a tendency to latch onto a discourse of consequences, which happens in several instances during his sessions. Both run the risk of overwhelming writers because of their sense of urgency and agency, which are demonstrated in their tutoring styles. But, as mentioned above, it is difficult to see how their actions influenced what was produced, and we know that at least in Skip's case there would be very little opportunity for him to stake a claim in what was done.

Although there are obvious reasons why these tutors are removed from the completed writing project in terms of its evaluation and maybe even in terms of their influence on the paper's structure, organization, and conceptualization, one interesting point to consider came up during my interview with Matthew. In commenting on how much speaking he did during the session, Matthew stated, "I mean we're tutors, we're not instructors, so it should be more or less proportional the amount of time that the tutee's speaking or the tutor is speaking." His claim reminded me of a project in my teaching and tutoring writing class during my sophomore year of college when I was being trained on how to be a peer tutor. One of my classmates, Debbie Berkowitz, had constructed a continuum that represented the balance of power during a session, which many of us in the class equated to the time we spent doing the talking during our sessions. Neal Lerner and Paula Gillespie write at length about many of the issues the tutors in this study encounter in their first edition of *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Peer Tutoring*. I cite the

first edition because its most likely where Debbie, my classmates, and I began understanding power balances in tutoring and why we might connect those to time spent speaking. Lerner and Gillespie write, "In tutoring, your attitudes toward the distribution of power will have a great influence on what occurs in your sessions" (41). Reflecting on this statement now, I am certain I would have had a difficult time articulating my attitudes toward the distribution of power, let alone comprehend the number of ways power can be distributed in our academic institutions and within different social circles. In fact, tutoring made it possible for me to learn about these distributions of power and was one of the central college experiences in opening my eyes to a larger intellectual world. Somewhere along the way, my classmates and I began to assume that balance of power could be directly measured by time spent speaking. And it seems that Matthew, probably relying on the same types of resources, has come to a similar conclusion.

But we know that power runs much deeper than can be judged by the amount of time one speaks in relation to another. And, what might be interesting to consider is that in observing times when tutors speak too much, there might actually be a loss of power. Just as we see in the nagging situation and as Matthew noted in his own session with coming across as being too didactic, the writers for one reason or another begin to tune out. In situations when a tutor speaks or does too much, Molly Wingate warns, "The writer might be happy with the well-constructed and well-edited result of such a session but he did not learn more about becoming a good writer" (12). As Wingate notes, this type of session is as equally unproductive as the kind of sessions described above. Essentially, a number of things can go wrong when tutors speak too much that have a negative impact on productivity.

Gillespie and Lerner note (in both editions) in their section on troubleshooting that some writers will not revise and others will not listen, no matter how much the tutor tries to convince them otherwise. They attribute the revision issue to writers still learning about the writing process, while they admit that when it comes to listening, not everyone is meant to be helped. They suggest that there is hope that writers might be changed from these contentious interactions, but these things do happen in tutoring. As my findings suggest, writers do not have to listen because the tutor simply does not have the same kind of authoritative control over student writing that an instructor does. That, however, is what makes tutoring interesting for there are times when tutors can choose to operate under the assumptions professors are perceived to have about writing, and there are times when no such assumptions can aid tutors. Hence, Skip aligns himself with the English professor while Matthew searches for ways to articulate a reason for revising part of the personal statement.

As my interview with Matthew continued, I became curious about how Matthew differentiates what he does with writers from what instructors do with writers. Matthew's initial answer was clear and to the point: "Well, this might sound pretty trite, but qualifications. Qualifications also means experience, being properly seasoned, seeing most of these cases before." But he continued to explain that professors have vast stores of knowledge and that "a tutor might have a strong interest and good background in the field but, especially a peer tutor, you're the same age of the student, you are not …" Yet it's at this point in Matthew's explanation that he begins to wander a bit. He tries next to differentiate tutors from the student writers they work with and then explains how

instructors need to be direct at times. It became clear that Matthew was still seeking a way to differentiate between tutors and instructors.

From what I observed during my time at YCWC, I would say that the tutors were qualified and not so much because they were experts in particular subject areas but because they were constantly engaged in a process of reflecting on the effectiveness of their tutoring. They were asked to define the 21st century tutor in their staff education meetings, and, of course, they were living the tutoring life, modeling what it means to ponder the ins and outs of their sessions. If this does not add to one's qualifications to practice, then I'm not sure what does. So, as I interviewed Matthew, I asked him to tell me more about his experience with personal statements and whether or not he felt qualified to tutor this type of writing. He replied, "I would say that probably anyone is qualified to tutor personal statements because anyone can read them." Again, Matthew gives up any claim to authority, but the reality is that Matthew had been writing his own personal statements and he knew to avoid certain pitfalls, so I was not completely convinced that Matthew was able to see the ways in which he was qualified to be Tom's tutor. John Trimbur suggests that, "[New tutors] feel pulled, on one hand, by their loyalty to their fellow students and, on the other hand, by loyalty to the academic system that has rewarded them and whose values they have internalized" ("Peer Tutoring" 290). This tension might help shed light on Matthew's perception of his tutoring because he seems to be engaged in a tug of war between how he thinks of himself as a student, a writer, and a tutor when he talks about qualifications.

I eventually asked Matthew whether he thought an instructor was qualified to tutor in the writing center. He pauses for a moment, says "um," pauses even longer and

finally says, “Qualified? Yes.” He continues to explain that instructors are in fact qualified to work in the writing center and that they should, yet, in his own words, “there’s something to be said about the duration of my hesitation.” It was clear to me that Matthew had difficulty communicating his qualifications and even why he might be more cut out for writing center work than an instructor, despite the fact that he believes they are qualified for the job. I found it interesting that the tutor most concerned with presence had a difficult time being able to articulate his own institutional presence as a peer tutor. Furthermore, I wondered what his inability to articulate this presence said about his confidence as a tutor. Clearly he was confident tutoring, but that did not seem to be the same thing as being able to be confident in his contributions to teaching and learning as a peer tutor. This brings me back to the larger discussion of the sort of doer that a tutor can be and, of course, the relationships they can have to what is being done. Tutors practice every day in environments that are already working to define the perimeters of their abilities and the possibilities available to them as co-learners.

Matthew and Skip put a lot of work into their sessions with both Tom and Sam and I’m sure, just as Gillespie and Lerner affirm, benefited in a number of interesting ways from their interactions. Their weekly sessions offered a glimpse of how listening, presence, frame, and confidence emerge when tutors begin to build relationships with writers. As these relationships developed, so did opportunities for a number of interesting possibilities. Nagging, frustration, and confusion seemed to be a product of the time these tutors spent with tutees, but it would be too easy to dismiss these things as negative occurrences. In fact, they were evidence that more was happening in these sessions, that tutors were expecting more from their tutees, and that the focus of the tutor’s work was

on the writer rather than on the assignment. There was also time to focus on what worked during these sessions, and because of their developing relationship with the writers, Skip and Matthew were able to celebrate the progress that they did see in these sessions. More importantly, Skip and Matthew may even be able to look at these weekly experiences and question assumptions they might have about whether or not the writers they meet with are always ready and willing to act on their suggestions.

Friends

In this section of the analysis, I present tutor Chase and writer Jake who have been working together on a weekly basis in the writing center but are also best friends. When I finished introducing these two in chapter four, I noted that their session begs for an investigation of how social relationships influence tutoring sessions. Therefore, their session is significant for a number of reasons. First, they entirely evoke Harvey Kail and John Trimbur when they write: "The experience of co-learning changes students and helps them to see that the power ascribed to faculty depends on the students' own sense of powerlessness and their need for omnipotent authority" (12). In the pages to come, I will demonstrate how Chase and Jake move from a focus on professor expectations to eventually transcending the original expectations of the assignment to produce a text that exhibits deeper learning than had been asked. Secondly, they demonstrate a stronger level of intimacy than any of the previous sessions. It would not be entirely fair to label their session as the most successful or the most productive, but it would be fair to say that it was one of the few sessions ripe with possibilities for new approaches to learning and writing. A number of factors made this possible, including their close friendship and the fact that they share much in common: age, major, educational background, interests, etc.

Jake is now a writing center tutor himself, showing the extent to which he is committed to being involved in writing center conversations.

This session was incredibly rich in terms of providing a writing center researcher a number of significant issues to discuss. Considering the friendship Jake and Chase have outside the writing center and how that relationship influences their session is only one of many interesting elements in this tutorial. These two students are advanced in their thinking about literary texts, which is evidenced in their discussion of post-colonialism and the literary text at hand, Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*. Ironically, as they were being observed for this study, they were discussing the nature of observation and whether or not an outsider could ever truly capture the actual experiences of the subjects under observation. They make note of this in the first few exchanges of their session. Additionally, the session demonstrates the tension between academic writing, the expectations of faculty, textual analysis, expertise, and the significance of learning through writing.

Although writers' texts are obviously important in most writing center sessions, this session was for the most part textless. In fact, tutor Chase and writer Jake spent most of the session in a dialogue about Jake's main points in the paper, how the professor responded to Jake's earlier draft of this piece, and what Jake should do in a subsequent draft. This is notable because it differs from the other sessions we have discussed thus far. Seth's session focused so narrowly on the text that it would be hard to imagine what their time together would have looked like without one. In the weekly sessions, we saw that in Skip's case, not having a text made moving forward difficult while in Matthew's case the text provided evidence that the writer needed to achieve a greater presence.

Chase did at times try to push Jake in the direction of a text, saying, "let's thesisize this" in an attempt to get Jake to commit to his ideas and form a manageable and focused claim. However, their session together helped to hone Jake's argument while resulting in possibilities for Jake to provide an account of his learning that moved beyond an a priori argument that simply restates other scholars' arguments.

Confidence, as a result, takes on a different kind of meaning in this session. Jake is already a competent and confident writer who is willing to take a risk. In fact, he wanted to postulate the author's intentions at the beginning of the book he was analyzing because she had not quoted an accepted translation of Sarte. Jake wanted to argue that this was done on purpose, yet Chase felt this was a dangerous argument to attempt, saying, "To hear that the author uses one translation over another, and to go into the author's mind like that would be pushing the bar a little bit more." My interpretation of what was happening was that Chase seemed to be cautioning Jake from taking a fairly authoritative move as a young scholar by offering suggestions on Dangarembga's intentions. Scholars are in the business of textual interpretation and establishing textual meaning that falls outside authorial intent, and I was hoping that Jake would try to tackle this issue because it was a fascinating read of her work. On the other hand, Chase felt that it was overstepping boundaries, particularly because it would be difficult for Jake to find evidence to support his claim. Playing it safe, in this case, means not taking on the kind of critique that Jake's teacher would likely be able to do. I decided to press Chase on this issue, asking him why he felt this was dangerous. He responded: "I just thought it should be a focused interpretation of the text. I don't want to limit him and say don't do that, but at least to recognize it's very shaky ground to [work with a misinterpretation], although I

know he would do it well." And what Chase was doing for Jake was helping him to get past an idea that might have ultimately been keeping him from getting at even more significant concerns with Dangarembga's text and his own.

As I discussed the situation with Chase, I began to see that Chase had a larger picture in mind. Some of his advice to Jake may have been steeped in an awareness of what professors expect and what it means to have not reached a level of expertise that affords one the ability to criticize a text; however, Chase could see that Jake was on the horizon of an even bigger idea. In some respects, Chase channeled the conversation toward pinpointing a specific argument so that Jake would be able to establish an authoritative voice. Confidence was not in short supply in this session, especially given that Jake was poised to take on a difficult argument, but confidence is also about being able to see past the way something appears so that more significant questions can be addressed. When Jake was able to move past this particular interpretation of the text, it set the stage for an even greater eye-opening experience: his realization that as an author himself, he had the right to create a non-traditional text in order to show his reader what he had learned.

In fact, the way that Chase and Jake moved from writing about a text to writing about how Jake related to the text demonstrated how their time together encouraged them to not just test their knowledge of the text but to test the constraints of the traditional essay. As the session moves forward, Chase and Jake build excitement when they come to the realization that Jake's experience with the text was in some ways paralleling the experiences discussed in the text. Consider the following exchange between these two:

Jake: It's almost like she's turning us into the natives … Our experience with her, with this one line, like if you stop and look at it, it's like stopping to the Caribbean, it's like, "oh, it's so pretty; let's keep on going." It's unknown; it's a big deal, but then when you look closer at the Caribbean, and it's like, wait a minute, there's like complexity, there's depth. She's asking us almost to like=

Chase: =It's almost like Sarte's introduction

Jake: You know what I'm saying with that

Chase: Yeah, yeah, you also have a separate part where you said he discusses the picture of the native, and it's like a picture of this group of people standing around a fire with their backs to you. And, he's like you can observe that all you want and you can draw all the conclusions you want, but ultimately their backs are to you. Like you're not actually seeing them face to face…there's more to them than meets the eye.

As the two of them go back and forth throughout the session, they discuss at length what it means to be a "native." Both Chase and Jake are fascinated with the idea that Dangarembga's work draws them in to understand the experience of the native, that it shows them something familiar and something at the same time obscure about a people. This exchange was an important turning point in their session because it marked the beginning of a series of discussions about what it means to be a native, which ultimately led to Jake's decision to write himself into the analysis he planned to submit to his professor.

How Chase and Jake find themselves at this conclusion is through a process of accepting and reevaluating the importance of framing academic arguments. As I have mentioned a number of times, Chase urges Jake to craft a thesis statement. All of the tutors in this study except for Seth, who was focused on linguistic concerns for most of his session, mentioned the importance of being able to conceptualize how a paper is structured, and this technique was used in a number of the sessions observed. Like other tutors at his writing center, Chase helps the writer through a process of getting ideas down on paper, forming a kind of skeletal structure for a paper, and then makes an

attempt to focus these ideas into one central argument. This approach is obviously one that tutors at YCWC use to help the writers who visit succeed, but it's in Chase and Jake's session that they begin to play with the idea that all papers must have a set structural component that focuses narrowly on the analysis. So, as Chase urges Jake to accept a thesis statement that will guide him through the rest of the writing process for this paper, Jake is reevaluating his own understanding of Dangarembga and how he has been choosing to analyze her text.

When Jake realizes that he himself can write about Dangarembga's text in terms of the ways the text invited him to be a part of the story, which ultimately exposed how little he knew about Dangarembga and the experiences of the people in her society. At one point during their exchange, Jake points out how scary it is to recognize yourself in another person:

> Jake: And ultimately the scary part of it is that you realize that they're not that different from you. You know what I mean? Like, ultimately, the more you read the book as an American reader you're shocked to find out that this African girl has bulimia
> Chase: Whoaaa
> Jake: You're like, and they say it in the book, that's not an African affliction. That's an English thing, and you're like, "yeah, that is an English thing. That's something that I identify with."
> Chase: Cool ok I like it
> Jake: That's a scary moment for you…that's where you're nervous.

Because Jake has this epiphany, Chase is provoked to ask him to consider how he engaged in this text. There is a lot of excitement in both of their voices, and you can even imagine Chase vicariously participating in Jake's realization and thinking about all of the possibilities that this kind of a breakthrough can mean for a writer.

When I asked Chase about this session, we talked for some time about styles of writing and what made Jake's piece able to move beyond the typical types of literary

analysis that most tutors at YCWC end up assisting. After explaining that by dangerous, he means different when it comes to writing, Chase said, "And different is often dangerous and scary to people because it's far from normal; so, some teachers of course want to see hamburger (claps as he says it) essays: intros, paragraphs, conclusions…nice buns on the top, three really yummy patties, lettuce and tomatoes, a nice essay." We can see in his metaphor for the five-paragraph essay that Chase is well aware of the expectations for academic writing that have dominated the academy. But in noting that some writing can be dangerous and far from normal, Chase is confirming that leaving behind those structural restrictions can, for some writers, help them to ascend to new levels of thinking, "to see beyond the limits, to see past what you thought were the limits. It's challenging what you can do. It's saying to yourself go a step further and let's do something new. How much can I expand what I thought was my limit."

According to Chase, not all writers are ready to transcend these structural restrictions. He discusses Jake's abilities as a writer, explaining that Jake is far advanced and ready to move to the next level. It sounds reminiscent of the old adage that you have to know the rules before you can break the rules. But I do think Chase has a good point in that Jake was ready to take on new ways of thinking about this text. The very paper he was working on was already a revision of a previous analysis, one in which he felt that he had missed the mark. He was looking for a new way to understand the text. I also wonder if Chase was trying to explain to me why he decided to go so far off script during this session, especially because he spoke at length to defend choices he made and to explain what he believes about good practices in writing and tutoring. To demonstrate how to help writers learn, Chase drew on the analogy of baseball. He noted that young baseball

players start with the basics and then eventually learn finer nuances like throwing curveballs. So, I questioned Chase about what a writer learns from "throwing a curveball":

> …as a tutor, it's also interesting to get to be the pitching coach as it were. It really works on these more advanced things. Also, I'll say this again, being our second semester together it's even more so … I know how he writes. I've even written essays and I've said you would be so proud of this sentence, it's so inspired by your writing. But the idea of being daring is important in writing. It's important in everything but I think in writing it makes for a lot more interesting written word.

I found it interesting that Chase started by suggesting he was going to explain an approach to tutoring but then retreated into a discussion of how well he knew Jake's writing and the fact that he has learned from reading Jake's writing. He explains that in working with advanced writers, it is ok to break out of structural norms and to do something dangerous. Yet, Chase recognized a difference between the kind of danger behind Jake's attempt to personalize his analysis and how it might be dangerous to assume authorial intent.

As the two of them continue to bounce ideas back and forth, Jake decides what must be done in this paper. What's interesting though, as is demonstrated in the following exchange, Chase and Jake still measure his ability to be adventurous against traditional academic expectations, and Jake makes a case for why this new approach will be sanctioned:

> Jake: Um yeah, so you assume that you understand everything, but then you take that opportunity to like actually engage, take that opportunity to actually read it and learn more about it you come across that scary realization it's nothing like you thought it was. Yeah so that would be an

interesting essay to write because that's not, that's an essay essentially that's about my mistake.

Chase: But that's really cool though

Jake: That's an essay that's examining how I screwed up

Chase: Yes but it also does more

Jake: Yeah I'm saying like in exploring that, it's doing very fascinating close readings that would hopefully be like my goal

Chase: So sort of like the introduction sets you up

Jake: Like that's totally not an essay I would write normally for a class.

Chase: That's allowed here in terms of classes … The key is to focus on literary analysis?

Jake: Yeah, but like I'm saying because this is a revision and because it's a revision where like he highlighted that I made a practical mistake, I'd be a little comfortable, like I'd be comfortable with saying that this was my own mistake.

It is at this moment in the session when Chase and Jake are sold on taking a risk and writing a paper that focused more on Jake's interaction with the text. This is a risky thing to do for several reasons. First of all, it means admitting a mistake, something that is not usually advocated in traditional forms of argument. Secondly, it means abandoning a familiar style of writing for one that creates more room for Jake to play and grow as a writer. Chase is still trying to caution Jake that this could be a risk, that it could result in a product too far off the mark, too nontraditional. However, ultimately Chase is persuaded that this is a sound approach for this particular revision.

Listening and presence come together in this session because these two students are very careful listeners when it comes to understanding writing expectations in the academy and when it comes to hearing what literary texts have to offer them. They also listen carefully to one another, and it is in this session that we see a tutor who can articulate his own abilities as a writer because he listens to and respects another writer's convictions and decisions. From the passages I discussed above, Jake's influence on Chase's writing is evident in how Chase chooses to discuss his session with Jake during

the interview. Just as much as Jake is looking for someone to listen to his ideas in their sessions, it is also clear that he respects what Chase can offer him as a writer. As a sounding board, Chase makes it possible for Jake to hone his ideas and to shape them into a meaningful piece of writing.

We can see how the conventions of a literary analysis guide these two learners and even how it has constrained what they can say about and do with a text, but Jake wants to push against the conventions, too. We also see in their discussion of Dangarembga's text that they are loosely listening to her choices as a writer and the experiences she recounts in her text. The way that they are able to listen to Dangarembga is influenced by how they feel they can intellectually engage her text given the expectations of an academic audience. Chase demonstrates an authoritative presence by reminding Jake to form a thesis statement and to only take on sanctioned or safe arguments for students to make. But, as we have seen in other cases of an authoritative presence in this study, it begins to fall flat as Jake abandons those conventions for new ways of thinking about his writing. This is not to say that Chase is lost in the shuffle. To the contrary, he adapts and becomes engrossed in the possibilities that this session presents. He concedes that it is acceptable to move away from these conventions when there is a viable opportunity to push the limits, even though he believes this to be only possible for writers prepared for this move. It is in moving away from these conventions that the writer is able to achieve a sense of agency in his own writing.

In a discussion I presented earlier in this section, I noted how Chase cautioned Jake from trying to make an argument about authorial intent. He believed that this was too risky of a move to make, stating, "I'm all for letting people go as long as it's founded.

I think mistranslation is definitely something founded; I just think approach with caution because you never know." The difference I noticed between this kind of risk and the risk that Jake ultimately takes is that to argue that an author uses a mistranslation with purpose requires expertise. To note one's own mistake does not take as much evidence to prove and requires a greater sense of humility. Why can Jake play with convention but not with the ways texts are interpreted? One answer might have to do with the ways texts are treated at this institution. There seems to be an assumption at work that student writers can respond to texts, but their response should not shape the meaning of a text. That is, meaning is coded only in the text rather than being subject to the intellectual experience of the student writer.

For a writer like Jake to gain this kind of intellectual presence, he must find a way to do so that focuses on him rather than on how the text can be read. Simply put, Jake is not able to make claims about authorial intent because he lacks the credentials to do so; therefore, as many other young writers end up doing in English courses, he personalizes his experience with the text. He places himself as the object to be read and interpreted because he can claim expertise when it comes to knowing himself. In this way, Jake is not constructing what the text means but rather he constructs a version of himself that is shaped by the meaning contained in Dangarembga's text. However, in doing so, Jake is able to suggest to his readers that meaning is not necessarily stable—that it shifts and changes, just as Jake's understanding of the text, himself, and the assignment did, over time and in different situations.

In this case, we also have to wonder how Chase's decisions are being directed by the same institutional norms that are affecting the type of intellectual presence that Jake

can achieve. Chase is aware of what is required and what is expected in the courses at his school, and he feels, to some extent, bound to those expectations. It is only when he sees potential for something interesting that he is also convinced to push the boundaries of those expectations. In the following exchange, we can see the conclusions that these two come to about this project:

> Chase: This is a really cool essay
> Jake: Yeah this will be a really cool essay
> Chase: Cause like you're going to write about your own experience. I think that's really cool and I think he'll like it. I don't care about [the professor]. I think it's cool
> Jake: Yeah I was gonna say, like, it really doesn't matter that he likes it or not; this will be one of the coolest essays I've ever written. And I'd love to like, just for fun, tack on one of those guys.
> Chase: I feel like every professor will appreciate it. You could even make it one essay and be like, with that said, my understanding, I still have to like, I even like, because I'm so native to my own experience as a writer, I have to tack on the classic essay to this.

Chase is quick to jump on board and even decides that what the professor thinks does not matter. Jake believes this will be the "coolest" essay he's ever written, and Chase is convinced that teachers will appreciate what Jake is doing despite that it might be radical compared to most literary analyses. But, what I think is most important about this passage is that Chase talks about Jake being native to his own experience as a writer. In terms of presence, I'm not sure there would have been a greater moment of self-realization as a writer than when Jake became convinced that not only can he make this kind of a rhetorical move but that he will do it regardless of how the professor will evaluate it. For Chase, he was content in being a part of this process. He has had his own "daring" moments as a writer, which he described in his interview, but as a tutor he was in some ways more present than most tutors because both he and Jake left this session confident that they had learned and that they had grown as intellectuals.

In so many sessions, tutors find themselves in positions that keep them from being able to stake a claim in what has been done. Chase not only is able to say that he directly influenced the final product that Jake will produce, but he is also able to revel in a learning moment that could not be measured by anyone other than the two people involved. Whether or not the professor is able to fully appreciate the work these two did over the course of their hour together is almost irrelevant in terms of what these two learned about writing and their relationships to other texts. At the beginning of this section on friends, I cited Kail and Trimbur, noting that Chase and Jake's co-learning experience shattered the power of the faculty member to the point that neither cared what the professor thought about the direction Jake was planning to take. This is a powerful moment, especially since this particular tutor seems to be fully aware of and sensitive to the traditionally powerful expectations of academic writing as evidenced by the way he terms it as the "classic" essay in the last exchange.

In his work as a tutor, Chase is doing what he believes will keep Jake within a safe academic zone. He cautions him about making a "risky" analysis of how an author intended to use a quote. He tries to get the writer to "thesisize" the ideas in the paper to ensure clarity and focus. And in all of this doing, he was also being done by academic norms in the way that Butler suggests we are being done by social norms. What makes Chase interesting is that he opens himself up to being done by social norms. Chase and Jake take the opportunity to discuss their personal lives and other issues a couple of times during the session. He admits to admiring and looking up to Jake as a writer. As a result of this and their relationship, he is open to listening to him, to going along with his ideas, and to being a risk-taker in order to push "the limits." Furthermore, he is subject to what

he has been taught to value as a tutor. Negotiating these three sources of pressure is probably not the easiest task for a tutor, but ultimately tutors must go in a direction that makes the most sense to them. It is interesting that in this co-learning situation, the direction that made the most sense was the one that made it possible for these two to push the envelope.

One interesting aside is that while Chase is doing the usual things he normally would do with a writer, he is also mentoring a future tutor. Since these observations occurred, Jake has been hired as a writing tutor at the YCWC. At one point during the session, another tutor interrupted them asking to borrow a jump drive, saying, "Sorry, I really apologize. Do you have a USB, either of you, that I could…for a second?" In response, Chase and Jake converse:

> Chase: That's totally against the rules you're like never allowed to interrupt
> Jake: That was pretty funny
> Chase: That was pretty funny
> Jake: Would you be angrier or less angry at him if he wasn't a tutor.
> Chase: No tutor has ever done that?
> Jake: A tutor did do it once, no?
> Chase: Oh really?
> Jake: I think someone once interrupted us and you were really upset
> Chase: Understandably so
> Jake: A tutor should know better

Although little to do with the topic, Chase provides us a brief lesson in tutor etiquette. Jake, on the other hand, is curious about the situation, and with good reason considering that at the time he was up for a position at the writing center. What I realized from listening to this exchange is that Chase provides a pretty good model for a confident writer like Jake who wishes to be a tutor. Chase's careful attention to getting ideas focused and structured have probably been an asset to Jake as he had his first few sessions.

And with this exchange, Chase and Jake exemplify multiple layers of learning during their session together. They show that much more than a text can be accomplished in the writing center and that when given the opportunity, writers and tutors can do impressive work together that is not easily measured by traditional forms of academic assessment. Their time together suggests that a heightened level of comfort can provoke a number of possibilities for learning and writing that happen with greater ease under such conditions. They also provide an example of how this level of familiarity with one another can get them not only to question traditional authoritative norms in academic writing but also to simply not care about the repercussions when skirting those norms.

On a final note, I was struck by their exchanges about the condition of being observed for a couple of reasons. First is that as the observer in this situation, it took me quite some time to understand the extent to which they had developed a relationship. They stopped at one point to discuss a movie that Chase had gone to see the night before with mutual friends, making it obvious that they knew each other fairly well. After Chase told me about his friendship with Jake during our interview, I got a clearer picture of these two students, and I began to understand their interaction in new ways as well. Their friendship coupled with their intimate knowledge of each other's learning and writing styles made for a productive session. Yet I was keenly aware that I was still, in many respects, "looking at their backs." And there's no better example of this than my misinterpretation of a number of occurrences in almost every session I observed. In fact, the opportunity to hear from the tutors after we both had time to reflect on the session showed me that I might have focused my interests too narrowly on certain exchanges during their sessions. I will address these issues in the next chapter, but I did feel it

necessary to disclose that my interpretations, while they are valid, also indicate my status as an outsider and are even greater indicators that my growing expertise in this field provides just as many blinders as it does lenses.

Moving Forward: "Let's Theorize This…"

The four tutors and the sessions that have been discussed in this section provide just a glimpse into what happens during tutorials at the YCWC. As the analysis details, there are a number of significant issues that these tutors themselves consider to be important in their sessions. What I find most interesting is that every tutor I spoke with imagined themselves as conduits, helping student writers tap into successful practices. Sometimes these practices had to do with structuring a paper while other times they had to do with finding an appropriate voice for their intended audiences. Even in the case of Seth and his narrow focus on language concerns, the session was sharply focused on helping Rosa to become a self-sufficient user of the English language. For Seth, helping Rosa correct her grammar and spelling had less to do with cleaning a text than it did with helping Rosa acquire the language. We know this from the patience employed during the session and by Seth's desire to help writers build confidence. The idea of these tutors as conduits is interesting, but it fails to capture the complete picture of what these tutors do and what they gain from the situation.

In addition to being a person who goes back and forth, a messenger, a conduit is also a tool, one that most often conveys water or can be used as a protective case for sensitive wiring. While this type of tool serves an important purpose where it is employed, it seems that the work of the conduit can often go unrecognized by the

untrained observer. It might be easy for tutors to recognize themselves as conduits through which knowledge and information about writing flow. However, if they were simply conduits, writing center directors would have very little to worry about when it came to working with peer tutors because they could be repaired or replaced with ease. It is when we consider how tutors behave as guides in the session, how they are influenced by myriad forces during sessions, and how closely they are connected to the work produced in our writing centers that we begin to see that we are working with people who are far too complex to be a simple conduit. Tutors grow and change over time and their experiences in their sessions change their perceptions on what works, what's important, and what to do next in their tutoring. And paying close attention to tutor experiences and what they have learned about the work they do is key in helping tutors gain recognition.

It is in tutor experiences like the ones described in this chapter where we see the good intentions of scholars like Nancy Grimm or Marilyn Cooper begin to break down. Grimm advocates that tutors adopt an ideological model of literacy and Cooper argues for a cultural studies agenda. Both would like to position writing centers, and thereby tutors, as places that critique hegemonic and traditional approaches to literacy learning in the academy, but neither seems to speak to the countless subtle decisions tutors must make in the moment. One reason for this is that writing center theories for tutoring thus far underdetermine the reality of tutoring; they fail to account for all perspectives, and, as will be discussed in the following chapter, they tend to focus too narrowly on borrowed theory rather than on the lived experiences of tutors. While there are many things that tutors ought to do during their sessions, the reality is that tutors find themselves making difficult decisions in regards to what should be addressed whenever they meet with

writers. Their relationships with writers present possibilities for the teaching of writing that might be overlooked or even undermined by cultural studies or new literacy studies agendas that do not take into account the complexity of tutoring relationships in the writing center. As Kurt Spellmeyer argues, "Either everyone makes knowledge or else no one really can, not even specialists" (233), and the next chapter continues to consider how peer tutors contribute to, alter, and shape the kinds of knowledge specialists like Grimm and Cooper put forward.

Beyond the different lenses used to examine the interactions in these sessions, the relationships between these tutors and the writers have a number of interesting dynamics. While what was observed in this study builds a case for how comfort levels between tutors and writers can lead to interesting possibilities during tutoring sessions, there is still much to explore when it comes to understanding how acquaintanceship influences tutorials. The obvious hunch is that it could have positive influences on tutoring sessions, but cases like Skip's sessions might cause pause in jumping to that conclusion. On the other hand, Chase and Jake seem almost to be the poster tutors of the positive benefits of acquaintanceship. And recall that Seth's session with Rosa, someone who shared very little with Seth in terms of life experience, was for all intents and purposes a successful one even if it did not push the envelope in terms of content. The analysis suggests that understanding the issue of intimacy in tutoring is an important one, and one that might not be clearly evident to tutors as they engage in sessions.

The problems that I have pointed to thus far definitely call for more empirical study, but they also need to be theorized with regard to the insight these tutors provide. The information provided by Seth, Skip, Matthew, and Chase in their interviews is

already beginning to consider some of these larger issues. In the next chapter, I plan to discuss professionalization in peer tutoring and the kinds of relationships that peer tutors foster between students, students and faculty, and teaching and learning. I will address how tutors are positioned to act within 21st century academic communities. Furthermore, much of the discussion to come will examine the ways the economy of the writing center interacts with the identities forged within its walls. The question that follows this discussion will be one that focuses on writing center epistemology and what makes learning and knowing possible when tutors work with writers.

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION:

TOWARD A 21ST CENTURY PEER WRITING TUTOR

"To reorganize the relationship among students is simultaneously to probe the traditional relationships of teaching and learning." –Harvey Kail and John Trimbur

Developing an epistemology of peer tutoring that includes the peer tutor's experiences is the central concern of this study because there is still much to be learned about how peer tutors influence the reading and writing of texts in addition to how peer tutors significantly contribute to student learning. Writing in 1983, Harvey Kail argued that, "If the lore of academia comes to include a tradition of student tutors as part of the official audience of other students' writing, it is my guess that we will have fundamentally changed our ideas of what teaching and learning writing actually involves" (599). The fundamental change that Kail writes about has begun, yet there is far more progress needed if we are to continue to effect change in teaching and learning. It is in part due to scholars and practitioners such as Kail that this kind of fundamental change has started. Kail participates in the lived experiences of the tutors who find their ways to the University of Maine Writing Center rather than sitting on the sidelines as a careful observer or a mastermind of sorts who determines the direction of tutoring without much input from the tutors themselves. In this chapter, I will demonstrate how tutors and directors have a shared responsibility for writing center pedagogy and how

valuing this sharing allows tutors to contribute to the intellectual rigor of our discussions. I will put the theoretical issues and the perceived and conceived experiences of tutors presented in the literature review in conversation with the lived experiences reported at the YCWC.

This study began by exploring epistemology because philosophies of knowledge provide rich descriptions of the kinds of possibilities tutors create for teaching and learning. Edward Soja's thirdspace epistemology becomes the foundation of this chapter, which will delve into a theoretical analysis of the lived experiences of peer tutors. In describing thirdspace, Soja writes: "What Lefebvre described specifically as lived space was typically seen as a simple combination or mixture of the 'real' and the 'imagined' in varying doses….the exploration of Thirdspace can be described and inscribed in journeys to 'real-and-imagined' (or perhaps 'realandimagined'?) places" (10-11). This study is a journey to thirdspaces in writing center theory and practice and has gone through a process of realignment based on "varying doses" of the real and imagined when it comes to peer writing tutors. By considering the perceived and conceived experiences of tutors provided by the literature and the lived experiences that I discuss in the previous two chapters, I will now begin to reconsider perceived and conceived experiences in peer tutoring with the lived experiences of YCWC tutors in mind. With that said, I am aware that I am offering yet another perceived and/or conceived account of peer tutors in this discussion; however, I am convinced that perceivers and conceivers of peer tutoring must continue to become better at understanding the roles they play in the lived experiences of peer tutors. Thus, this discussion will draw on some of the theoretical concepts

introduced in the review of literature while balancing them with the lessons offered by peer tutors at the YCWC.

The reality of scholarship in the academy, and writing center literature is no exception, is that the most privileged epistemological perspectives have been those first- and secondspace epistemologies, that is, the perceived and conceived. As Soja suggests, scholars have primarily focused on first- and secondspace epistemologies when discussing spatial knowledge. The way that first- and secondspace epistemologies have dominated scholarly work has served to distract scholars from thirdspace epistemologies, or lived experiences. What this means for writing centers is that scholars in the field have traditionally worked toward an understanding of 21st century peer writing tutors by narrowly focusing on the perceived and conceived experiences of tutors. Figure 5 provides a visual of how we have come to understand what peer tutors do and how they function in teaching and learning relationships. What we see in this figure is the ways that perceived and conceived experiences have been forced onto peer writing tutors. All the while, the

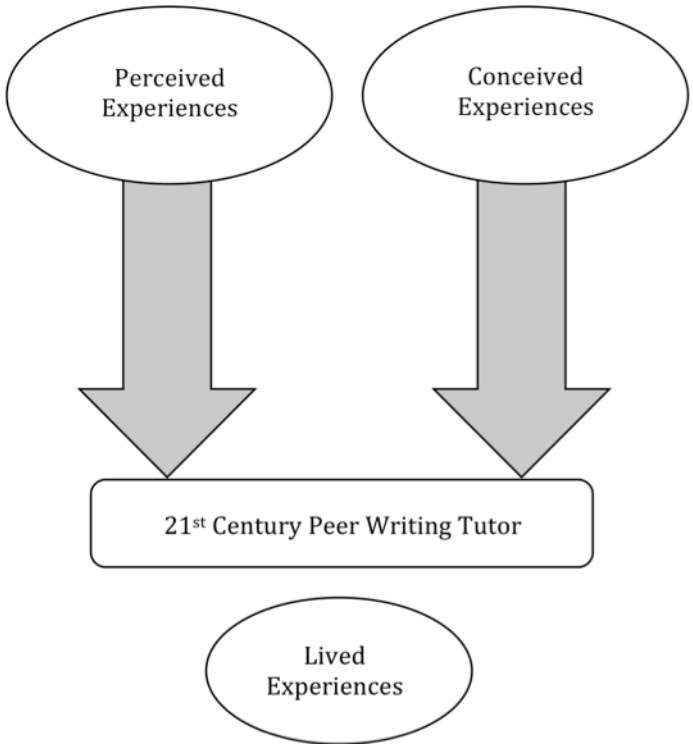

Fig. 5. Traditional model of writing center scholarship.

lived experiences are there, just below, with no influence or push back on the rest of the model. In fact, the perceived and conceived experiences that scholars account for have a tendency to speak for these lived experiences.

What this study aims to do is flip the script on this traditional model currently used by many writing center scholars by privileging the lived experiences of peer tutors. By starting from a thirdspace perspective on peer tutoring, there is an opportunity to account for voices and perspectives traditionally left out of writing center scholarship while also offering an opportunity to reexamine perceived and conceived experiences reported in the literature. In order to accomplish this, I began with the analysis provided in chapter five, which hinges on the kinds of relationships that tutors have with tutees. Examining tutoring in terms of relationships allows for an investigation into how acquaintanceship, comfort level, and intimacy can shape tutorials and possibilities for learning. By discussing the sessions in the previous chapter in terms of the relationships tutors had with writers (first-timers, weeklies, and friends), there was an opportunity to highlight how the tutors' intentions in helping writers are shaped by both acknowledged and unacknowledged social and institutional forces. The peer tutors at YCWC offered a number of interesting interpretations of their work that were described earlier, and four of these interpretations were used to describe what happened during their sessions during the analysis. These peer tutors' experiences and their attention to concepts like listening, confidence, frame, and presence will be discussed in terms of how production and possibility are subject to the major issues of epistemology and identity, as introduced early in this study. Layering these issues on the perceived and conceived representations of peer tutors will provide an ever-expanding examination of peer tutor experience.

As Figure 6 on the next page shows, this discussion will push the lived experiences of tutors through the study's major theoretical concepts, and the perceived and conceived experiences addressed in the literature review toward a consideration of the 21st century peer writing tutor.

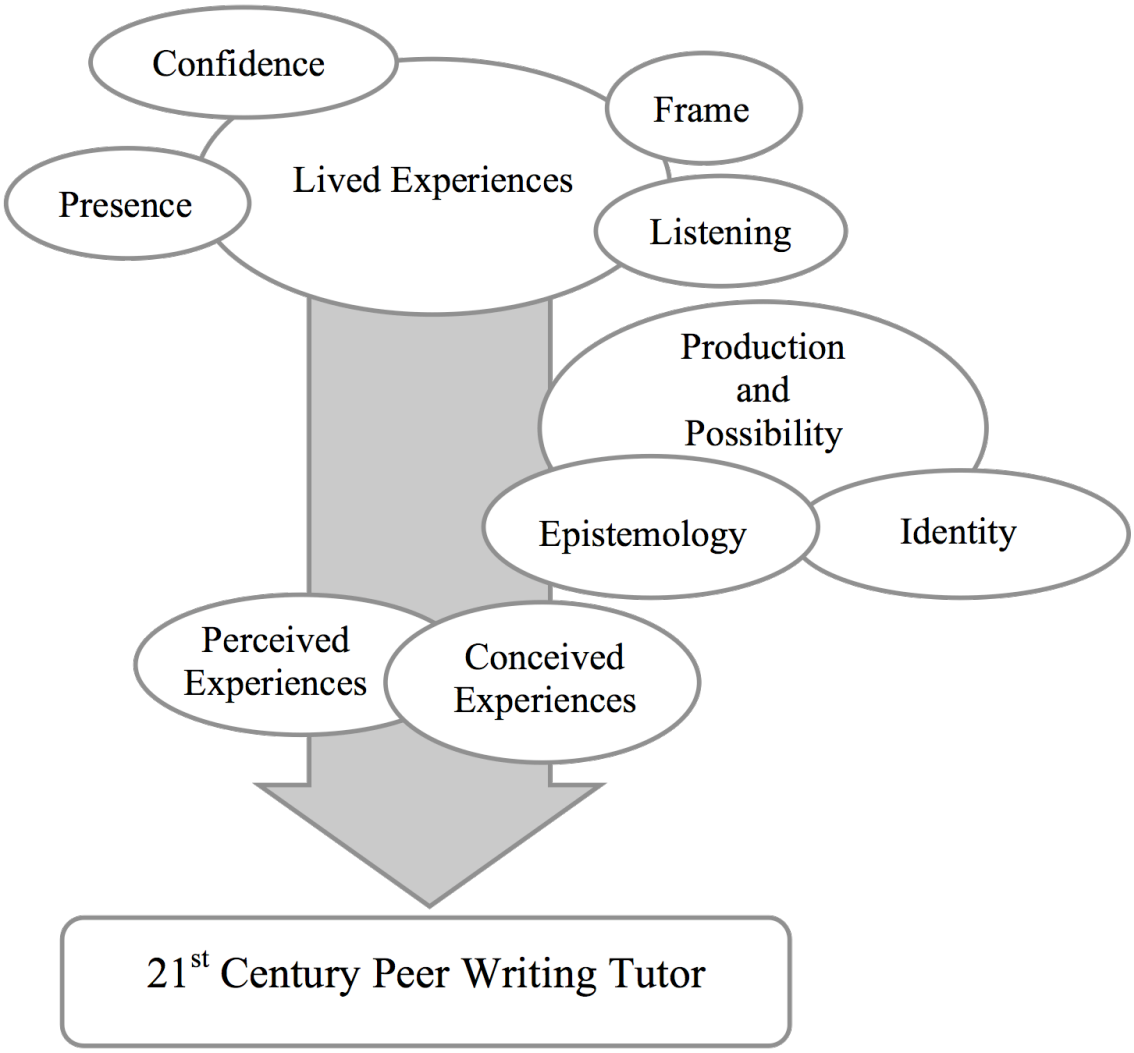

Fig. 6. Thirdspace model for discussing peer tutor experience.

In contrast to the traditional model in Figure 5, the model above provides a visual of how thirdspace allows scholars to flip the script on how peer tutors and peer tutoring are discussed. With a focus on the lived experiences of the tutors in this study, I am able to

discuss many issues that continue to be important in the field from a perspective initiated by peer tutor experience. The lived experiences of the tutors in this study provide insight into everything from what is possible in teaching and learning in the writing center to the roles that peer tutors play institutionally. Figure 6 also demonstrates one of the main contributions of this dissertation because it offers writing center scholars a new theoretical approach to examining the work of the writing center that adds to and confounds existing scholarship.

This model provides a way to journey into thirdspaces while accounting for a number of issues that come to the surface in this dissertation. The rest of this chapter will venture deeper into the issues highlighted in Figure 6. To offer additional support to the significance of themes and relationships observed at the YCWC, I will use Kurt Spellmeyer's work to reconsider the perceived accounts of peer tutors. Then the discussion will journey into what I learned from my interviews with Bruffee and Kail, with special attention to Kail's ongoing experiences with peer tutors. These scholars and the YCWC tutors will help realign the real and imagined as we approach possibilities for the 21st century peer writing tutor.

Lived Experiences: Peer Tutors as Doers, Doing

The analysis teased apart each of the participants' experiences by describing each tutor as someone who performs and is subject to norms whether they be norms set in social settings or by writing center ideals or the expectations of academic writing. Peer tutor identity is certainly influenced by a number of institutional ideas about teaching and learning, and the tutor, as an individual agent, is often subject to the ways that the larger

institution perceives a peer. In some cases, a peer tutor's lack of qualifications makes them suspicious to some while others see it is a grand possibility for learning on a large scale. What often happens to peer tutors is that they can be lost in the academic shuffle. As a paper transitions from an assignment sheet to a writer's head and, eventually, onto the page or a computer screen, the peer tutor sits waiting to provide input and feedback, to assist in the shape that the paper will ultimately take before being assessed by a teacher. In this scenario, it is easy to see how tutors, in general, can be fractured from what is done. With little to no say in how the final product is evaluated and, for the most part, with no acknowledgement of their help on the final draft, the tutor's ability to claim a part of this process withers away. This is the kind of scenario Holloway warns us about when he discusses the capacity to do, which "is always part of a social flow of doing, even where it appears to be an individual act" (28).

According to Holloway, one's ability to do is fixed in power, and while some individuals have the power to do, they are often in situations where other individuals have power over them. When power-to becomes power-over, "the vast majority of doers are converted into the done-to, their activity transformed into passivity, their subjectivity into objectivity" (Holloway 29). Tutors often find themselves in situations where their ability to do is diminished by the institutional powers that be. And in such situations, the tutor as doer is done-to not only in Holloway's sense of the word but also in the same way that Judith Butler would argue that individuals are done by norms. Holloway sums it up by writing: "Those who exert power over the doing of others deny the subjectivity of those others, deny their part in the flow of doing, exclude them from history" (29). The parallel being drawn here is that when tutors are done-to, they are fractured from the

work being done and pulled from the social flow involved in the learning and writing process. The tutor as a doer is fractured from the event, unable to stake a claim in the larger institutional narrative of who exactly is involved in learning, writing, and scholarly discourse.

Recall my conversation with tutor Matthew about whether or not a teacher could do his job. He had a long hesitation before ultimately saying "yes," but then followed up immediately by saying there was something to be said for his hesitation. There is something to be said about his hesitation, but Matthew either would not or could not say anything about it. My discussion with him led me to believe that there is something important about the relationships that peer tutors have with writers that needs to be articulated clearly and needs to be discovered by tutors. In my visits to the YCWC, I had the chance to casually observe some of the professional tutors who worked side by side their peer counterparts. They were all wonderful tutors themselves and brought incredible experience and skill to the YCWC. I did notice, however, a kind of assertiveness that did not turn up in my observations of the peer tutors. At one point, one of the professional tutors said, "I can't help you until you have something written." I don't think one of the peer tutors would have used this approach. From what I observed, I believe that the peer tutors would have engaged this writer differently. Even three out of the four tutors I wrote about in the previous chapter worked with writers who either had no text in front of them or were still developing ideas.

Why would this professional tutor have made such a declaration? Every session has its own driving factors, so it would not be fair to judge this session based on one statement. What's more interesting, I believe, is how this question might be sorted out in

terms of the kind of doer a peer tutor is versus the kind of doer a professional tutor with teaching experience might be. In other words, does the professional tutor, who has exercised power-over at this point in his career, have a different sense of his role in text production within the context of the writing center? I wonder if this professional tutor sees writing as an action or as an artifact to be critiqued. In his *Arts of Living*, Kurt Spellmeyer argues that as individuals become more professionalized within disciplines in the humanities, particularly in English studies, they become more specialized in critique. Spellmeyer believes that this focus on critique has distanced us from involvement in creation of the arts. With this in mind, could it be possible that because peer tutors are still able to engage in the art of creation, that their limited experiences in critique, and their abundant experiences of being critiqued by teachers makes them more able to help writers write?

The questions posed here will be taken up in greater detail when I deal with the problem of professionalism in peer tutoring, but they spring from this idea that the tutor's role is often undermined in the way that the texts that students write are assessed, evaluated, and read. I see the tutor as being fractured from the final product that is emphasized most in academia: the text. In discussing my concern about this problem, one tutor at YCWC told me: "it's the ideas that appeal to me." It was with that comment that I began to think about this problem differently. If it really is the ideas that are appealing, then the written product is only one brief and fleeting way to document those ideas. The conversation involved in a tutoring session is when learning happens, and it is the one thing that, regardless of the power structures that be, tutors and writers take with them from their experiences together. While the writing might provide some kind of proof or

documentation of that learning, it may pale in comparison to what both learn while working together.

What I lament is that tutors are often taken for granted in the learning process. The conversations that echoed long ago in the writing center community focused on a rejection of a remedial brand—tutors are not editors. Nowadays, I hear this concern less, but there is still a perception that the writing center is involved in remediation. The greater challenge for writing center scholars will be to determine the extent to which tutors are involved in the learning process. I become less concerned over resisting a remedial brand for the writing center and more concerned that the incredibly important role that peer tutoring and collaboration play in education is hidden from the larger institutional picture. What we know about tutoring is valuable not only for peer tutors but for students, faculty, and administrators alike.

What we know about peer tutors from this study is that they have clear ideas about how they help writers write and learn about writing. They are aware of the kinds of relationships that they are able to have with student writers that differ from other teaching and learning relationships. They employ techniques for helping writers that develop out of their personal experiences, their experiences in school, and their past experiences with other writers. They have ways of approaching and understanding their sessions that certainly drive them in their practice and in their philosophy of tutoring. For example, the idea of presence drives Matthew both epistemologically and practically in that he sees his ability to help students make meaning as resting in his ability to help them to tap into and use their experiences in their writing. Seth, on the other hand, uses the idea of confidence to guide his practice, helping Rosa gain more confidence in her language use.

Furthermore, this study has demonstrated that as tutors and writers become more familiar with one another, more possibilities for testing academic conventions and norms exist. Part of this might be due to trust in the learning relationship rather than trust in an individual's ability to either help with or accomplish a task. There is depth in the peer tutoring relationship that has the potential to change the ways that students and faculty think about learning. In being more aware of the depth of work that tutors do, other members of our academic institutions stand to benefit from what tutors can tell them about students, learning, and writing.

If what tutors actually do is to learn or to help a writer learn, then we might rethink the tutor's institutional role as an audience member for academic writing, as Kail noted. But there is more to including peer tutors in the audience of academic writing than what meets the eye, and the most important part of making the kind of institutional change that both Kail and Bruffee write about means thinking about peer tutors as significant contributors to learning. If we replace the idea that what is done in the writing center is writing with the idea that learning is the central product of any writing tutoring session, then we will have provided ourselves an opportunity to rethink the relationships between tutors and writers, tutors and texts, tutors and knowledge, and writers and writing. The remedial brand mentioned in the last paragraph loses all relevance as do so many arguments about why writing centers exist, who they help, and what they do. Additionally, thinking about productivity in terms of learning allows us to imagine peer tutoring as a productive type of tutoring: co-learning in action.

Theory from the Lived Perspective: Confidence, Frame, Listening, Presence

The journeys that peer tutors must take to become effective doers are fascinating because they entail more than what writing center scholarship may imagine. In fact, the peer tutors in this study offer us special insight into what it takes through the four themes they helped establish in this study: confidence, structure, listening, and presence. What these themes tell us about tutors as doers and doing has already been introduced in the analysis of the tutors' sessions, yet what these tutors have to say about these four issues provides a lens into the journeys these individuals have made as tutors. By recapitulating what the tutors say about these four themes here, I hope to build toward an epistemology of peer tutoring that splinters assumptions about tutors and tutoring and, at the very least, makes possible a theory grounded in lived experiences of tutors. Thus the following pages will address how tutors discuss their work.

If tutors see themselves as being involved in building a writer's confidence, then they see themselves as vital participants in a writer's ability to acquire discourses that grant the writer access. Furthermore, as one of the tutors pointed out, many writers already know solutions to some of the problems they encounter in writing but need to feel more self-assured that they have the answers. In this epistemological approach, tutoring is less about instructing or teaching something new and more about tapping into what the writer already knows, casting out any doubts they might have about their own abilities as writers. Seth puts it this way:

> My intent isn't necessarily to have her figure it out in a way that she'll be able to figure it out again as much as it is to make her realize she did know the answer.

> Especially with [Rosa], she didn't have a lot of confidence in her own writing and I wanted to just get her to say the answer...

For this tutor, confidence building means tapping into the knowledge one already has. His approach here is just as the writing center crest says: writing only appears scary, and tutors can provide the confidence needed for a writer to be able to look beyond the way something seems or appears and to realize that the answers were there all along. As writers and tutors build confidence, they find that either (A) they already have the knowledge they need or (B) they can find ways to construct knowledge.

In addition to confidence, tutors often frame their sessions or the writing experience to help writers achieve their goals. The tutors involved framed their session by discussing the importance of structure, goals, and organizing with tutees. Their sessions and interviews provide insight into what these tutors value when they enter a session and also clue observers of these sessions into what these tutors think makes a successful paper and what it takes to write for an academic audience. Here's what Skip, a computer science major, explained to me:

> I think that from real structure can real achievement come and real success. You can chance upon things in other ways, like non-deterministically. Something really great can come out when you accidentally mix two types of fluids together, but when it comes to accomplishment and achievement in any area, it takes a lot of structure.

He then continued, saying:

> All my writing people, they come in, and they have ideas and I'm really big on making some type of structure out of it. I think a lot of that comes from computer

> science because everything is intrinsic, it has to be logical or it's not true, right? And I think that's a big point—there's a lot of things we use in computer science when we're trying to describe certain types of phenomenon. Conceptually, when you're writing a program you have to do certain things like outline. You have to or else down the road it just doesn't work. And I think I use a lot of that in writing tutoring for sure. I don't talk about grammar, that's not what I mean by structure, I mean knowing what you're going to say way before you say it.

For this tutor, structure helped him to provide writers with a vehicle for learning. Just as confidence building was an approach that some of the tutors found effective in getting their points across, structure seemed to provide a reliable way to explain and demonstrate critical thinking and writing techniques. Yet there were also times when typical structure had to be abandoned. Abandoning structure is a risk, but there are benefits to it when it means coming to terms with difficult and new ideas. Chase commented:

> Yes there is danger in writing. I mean that's the truth: there's always danger in writing. That being said, there are dangerous styles of writing. But what I mean by dangerous is that there's different. And different is often dangerous and scary to people because it's far from normal, so some teachers of course want to see hamburger (claps as he says it) essays: intros, paragraphs, conclusions…nice buns on the top, three really yummy patties, lettuce and tomatoes, a nice essay…to embark on a different type of writing journey, in a new landscape of writing as per our conversation, that's a whole different type of dangerous.

These tutors seem to recognize that one's ability to understand, come to know, and to learn something can happen in both accepting and rejecting different ways to frame a paper or a session.

In the same way that framing was shaping the tutors' approaches, so was the idea of listening to tutees and the nuances of tutoring situations. As noted in the analysis, listening seemed to permeate the sessions held by these tutors. It wasn't that any one of them specifically addressed listening as a theme as they did issues like frame and presence, but there was a sense that listening was important. Matthew noted after listening to his own session:

> Because listening to it the first time and listening to just a lot of the tangents I went off on, which were probably unnecessary, are probably not that well received because they sounded a little bit didactic.

What makes this realization on Matthew's part interesting is that it requires some meta-tutoring: thinking about tutoring or an attempt to tutor one's tutoring. His session presented an opportunity to engage in this line of thinking because it discussed how to be an effective tutor. As Matthew further described the writer's experiences as a tutor, he makes a remark about his own tutoring:

> Maybe there was just a lot of one-sided conversation going on and the child didn't really have a presence in the session, and he recognized that, which was an educational moment for him, not just for the child. I think that's a great lens to look at my whole session now (chuckling).

What Matthew is getting at here is that in listening to his own session, he heard some things that he wished he had done differently. I told him that hindsight is always

twenty/twenty and that he had good reasons for approaching the session the way he did in the moment. What I became interested in, however, was the difference between how Matthew thought about listening and how I was thinking about listening. After I reviewed their session, I was struck by the importance of thinking about listening as a kind of critical thinking, as the writer in Matthew's session had done with the elementary school student. In other words, listening meant trying to figure out the unspoken, to solve the obscure problems that arise during a tutoring session, so that when one does respond, they do so with expanded awareness of what the situation entails. Matthew was thinking about listening as an act of reflection, something I think is very important for writing tutors to do. I, and nearly every tutor I have ever worked with, have been surprised by the things we hear when we listen to ourselves tutor. It makes us aware of when and why we pause, when we're not being clear, and when we talk too much or not enough. Listening to sessions gives tutors the chance to think about choices, and tutors as listeners of their own sessions can then make future choices based on the things they hear.

Kathleen Blake Yancey recounts her experiences working with tutors in the kind of reflection and listening mentioned above and comments:

> As is no doubt self-evident, I expected that tutors, through reflection, would learn more about their practice, would learn to theorize it, would begin developing a tutoring identity. Surprisingly (or not?), *by using the same processes, I am finding myself learning about how tutors learn to tutor.* (195)

Yancey also recognizes how her participation in the journey into thirdspace is influencing her own thinking, and the same kind of realization came to me as I asked: What if tutors as listeners in their sessions were the kind of listener that the writer, Tom, had been

describing in his personal statement? The tutor as that kind of listener is a tutor who begins to engage in the collaborative learning process in ways that will not only make him a better tutor but will promote his growth as a liberal thinker, as Gillespie, Hughes, and Kail pointed out during a discussion of their findings from the Peer Writing Tutor Alumni Research Project (PWTARP). When the tutor listens in this way, he becomes able to read between the lines and to learn more about why a significant idea to the tutee might change the way the tutor looks at a session and at the tutee's overall approach to living and thinking.

As I listened to the sessions under discussion in this study and the responses I received from the tutors involved, I began to think about how important it is to expand our notions of listening to ensure that our sessions are primed for learning. I wonder if more of this kind of listening had been employed in Skip's sessions, if he would have been able to see that while his nagging suggested that he cared for Sam's development as a writer, it was ineffective in motivating him. I wonder if Seth could truly hear Rosa's story, and if listening carefully to her story would have made him better prepared for the issues that she discusses in future sessions. I also wonder if listening more carefully provides us an opportunity to respond in ways that we might have been afraid to respond in the past or if simply listening to the full scope of the session is a way to develop deeper learning relationships.

Like listening, the idea of presence, a term that came from Matthew's description of his interactions, influenced the relationships between writers and tutors and writers and texts. Matthew discussed the importance of tutors and writers having a presence in a session and in writing. The other tutor participants discussed similar issues using the term

"voice" to describe a writer's presence, especially when it comes to writers' texts. One tutor seemed particularly concerned that the writer had no presence in his personal statement, pointing out that while he provided interesting anecdotes, it was difficult to see how the writer was directly involved in each of them. Another tutor, in a similar way, recognized the importance of the writer being able to write about her experience using words of her choosing and thought that he had been too forceful in trying to get her to reword a section of her text.

Overall, this theme emerged because all of the tutors involved in this study were aware of the idea of presence, in one way or another, in their sessions and showed a great concern for whether or not their presence respected the writer's presence, thereby allowing the writer's voice to carry. Here's how Matthew defines the tutor's presence:

> The tutor's presence really depends on the session: the nature of the session, the context, how many times he's worked with the tutee on the given subject—not necessarily in general. The tutor's presence should adjust to the paper and to the session. Obviously, you're asking the tutor for his judgment and he can only judge based on what he's seen before and experienced, but he still should offer that judgment, but I guess you sort of want to draw the line when its slowing down the production of writing by the tutee.

Presence made learning in these sessions a possibility. Only through the right balance of presence, and one's understanding of that presence, can there be an opportunity for knowledge construction. But I also felt that there was a greater meaning to the idea of presence; because tutors can have the above type of presence in a session, they must have

a greater presence as an audience for student writing within the academy, whether or not that presence is recognized outside of this writing center.

Given these four themes and the ways that the tutors in this study discuss them, it is evident that tutors have practical, intellectual, and philosophical understandings of their work with writers. The lived experiences of the four tutors involved in this study yielded such rich information about how tutors approach sessions and how they navigate institutional expectations for writing and learning. Their experiences make me wonder what we could learn from involving more tutors in this theory building process. While the four themes discussed here could be used in other contexts to describe tutoring, I would be more interested in what other tutors would add to the discussion that the four tutors in this study have started. The point is that the tutors who influenced this study and discussion provide alternative perspectives on peer tutoring praxis that challenge the perceived and conceived epistemological approaches established in writing center scholarship.

Epistemology

When I think of these tutors as doers and the things they are doing, I no longer think about them in the traditional ways (who's directive or non-directive, who's minimalist, etc.)—and I certainly think less about the Storehouse, the Garret, or even the Burkean parlor. In fact, even the epistemologies borrowed from composition studies and presented to writing center scholars by Andrea Lunsford or by Eric Hobson do little to capture what was happening in the YCWC. Rather than bolstering the work of tutors, these appeals to composition epistemologies and metaphors may actually do more to

fracture tutors from the texts produced in a session and the work they do in the writing center. Essentially, privileging the kinds of ways that Lunsford and Hobson think about what happens in writing centers requires us to ignore what tutors report their intellectual experiences to be. That is, tutors must be subjected to reigning epistemologies rather than provide the examples by which we theorize work, writing, and learning in the writing center.

However, these tutors are building, cheering, supporting, listening, structuring, arranging, shifting, challenging, judging, urging, being, and risking, and this list could easily continue based on the themes presented in chapter four. There's so much going on when writers and tutors come together that they certainly influence the ways we traditionally think about writing, learning, and teaching, and it is through their perspectives and actions that we can push beyond the theoretical, metaphorical, and practical boundaries that have confined collaborative learning in the form of peer tutoring to limited audiences within the academy.

Peer tutoring is thought to have changed the institutional landscape of colleges and universities since the 1970s, but it is specifically in the practices of teaching and learning that peer tutoring has its greatest effect. Grego and Thompson write, "As the shape of an institution changes, new possibilities arise, new fissures between spaces and places in the university can be identified for opening up new thirdspaces, and some previously sighted spaces close up" (85). As fissures between students and teachers opened due in large part to City University of New York's open admissions policy, dramatic changes in thinking about teaching, notably outlined in Mina Shaughnessy's *Errors and Expectations*, occurred; peer tutors also emerged from this fissure and they,

too, challenged the traditional relationships between teachers and students and teaching and learning (for a detailed discussion of CUNY and the beginnings of peer tutoring, see Eodice's "An Interview with Kenneth A. Bruffee"). Bruffee contends that peer tutoring "can involve students in one another's intellectual and social development" (*Collaborative Learning* 81), and this involvement exists ancillary to any content knowledge that could be provided within a classroom context. Despite the social, economic, and political changes that contributed to the institutionalization of peer tutoring, the practice did not emerge without an epistemological assumption that Bruffee and his contemporaries diligently articulated in the 1970s and 80s. In simple terms, relationships are at the heart of understanding the epistemology of peer tutoring.

Given the discussion of all the possible kinds of doing that tutors engage in, there must be something we can learn about peer tutoring and epistemology from the lived experiences of these tutors. It is not that there is one set epistemological approach in peer tutoring; however, the notion that peer tutors are co-learners involved in a collaborative exercise is a premise for understanding how different epistemological approaches operate in the peer tutoring model. Furthermore, once peer tutors acknowledge their roles as co-learners, they become open to a number of possibilities for making meaning.

All of the different ways of doing listed earlier indicate the types of relationships that tutors use to construct knowledge. They tell us a great deal about how the tutors in this study felt that it was possible to communicate an idea, to help the writer learn about writing, or to rethink their own tutoring. Moreover, they point to the ways in which tutors can tap into a number of possibilities for learning as they move through a session from one moment to the next. Whether dealing with the four themes discussed in depth or with

other themes that could emerge from any given tutorial interaction, there exists an opportunity to see the infinite possibilities influencing learning and teaching that flow from one decision to the next in a tutoring session. As the findings of this study suggest, the comfort level between writers and tutors also influences these possibilities.

The authentic relationships that tutors develop with writers is important in understanding the ways knowledge can be dealt with in a tutorial. The tutors who participated in this study provide clear examples of how their relationships with the writers inform and respond to the way they treat knowledge and define what is or is not worth knowing in their sessions. In large part, when I refer to relationships, I am referring to the kind of learning relationship that tutors and writers form together. However, the idea of relationships in tutoring is far more complicated than simply saying it is only about learning to write. The evidence from this study alone shows how social relationships can influence the learning relationship (such as best friends working together or relationships contending with race, class, religious, gender, sexual, or ethnic differences). Relationships in the writing center, then, are also tied to the ways that tutors establish trust, goodwill, and confidence in their interactions with writers and to some extent with other tutors.

This is not to say that the relationship strictly dictates what can be learned during a tutorial. As Judith Friedman Hansen points out in her article "From Background to Foreground: Toward an Anthropology of Learning," knowledge is both a concept and an experience. She argues that, "knowledge is always contextualized by its bearer, tied into the person's larger information set by various strands of interpretation, inference, and individual experience" (190-91). In many of the sessions I observed, the tutors relied

heavily on their own experiences as a reference point for knowledge making. For example, the drive to "thesisize" an idea or to appeal to literary conventions or to stick with grammar, were all actions that were most likely grounded in offering sound advice that had worked for these tutors as students. This is interesting because it demonstrates that sessions can provide important knowledge building experiences. One tutor might learn to take a risk and write what matters while another might, through reflection, see that he had failed to listen. The relationship, then, might play a role in providing the tutor an opportunity to gauge what they know against another person's experience and to see writing and tutoring from a new perspective.

The ability for a tutor to learn from a session is what brings tutoring full circle in terms of possibilities for knowledge making. *The Everyday Writing Center* authors discuss the opportunity for tutors as learners at length, folding Paul Kameen's distinction between pedagogies of display and pedagogy of construction into their discussion. They note that a pedagogy of construction runs counter to tutors' traditional experiences with knowledge, which Kameen refers to as a pedagogy of display in his *Teaching/Writing*. Geller et al. explain that pedagogy of display asks individuals to show an accumulation of knowledge while pedagogies of construction, on the other hand, focus attention on what can be learned through the process of an interaction (69). Geller et al. write that they "want to broker conversations among our staff about how what we do and what we learn in the doing might be radically transformed by the de-centering shift from display to construction " (69). Being involved in a process of interaction means having a presence in the relationships that are established in the writing center.

Lauren Fitzgerald provides special insight into the participants involved in this study when it comes to understanding the tutors' roles as co-learners. In her article, "'Torah is not learned but in a group' Collaborative Learning and Talmud Study," Fitzgerald explains the Jewish system of learning called the *havruta*. *Havruta* partners, she contends, engage one another much in the same way that Bruffee called for students to engage one another in his "Conversation of Mankind" pieces. Fitzgerald writes: "Connected to this emphasis on the social nature of learning, *havruta* partnerships, like collaborative learning groups, point up the importance of talk in group work" (27). She argues that *havruta* has much to offer how larger academic circles understand collaborative learning. Kami Day and Michele Eodice point out that Bruffee sees collaboration as facilitating "the discovery of nonfoundational knowledge (which is derived from creative and critical thinking and is inquiry based)" (29). Fitzgerald points to the importance of context in collaborative learning and that while Bruffee bases much of what he argues about collaborative learning on nonfoundationalist premises, Talmud study is the direct opposite. So why is *havruta* study such an important and successful system in yeshiva schools? Fitzgerald notes, "*Havrutas* are also a part of the continuum in Judaism that values community over the individual" (26). Fitzgerald writes about the cultural context that *havruta* operates within, noting that values and function of *havruta* rest in a different worldview than that of the typical Western academic.

Part of the reason for this discussion of *havruta* is to provide a fair and honest picture of the experiences of the tutors who participated in this study. It is also meant to consider what contributions these tutors make to our understanding of collaboration and co-learning. If I understand Fitzgerald's work, it would seem that collaborative learning

reaches into a number of philosophical traditions; the driving theoretical forces behind how we think about collaboration in most writing center and composition studies circles may be in need of closer consideration and revision. For example, what tutors from a college like Yeshiva provide in a discussion about collaborative learning is an opportunity to test what we take for granted about teaching and learning in tutorials. While many of these tutors would not agree with nonfoundationalist approaches to knowledge building because of their religious beliefs, they certainly value what they gain from and contribute to their sessions. These tutors have found ways to think critically about their collaborative work with writers that are fine-tuned in a community of practice.

Obviously, it is certainly possible that a tutor brings his experiences with collaboration from one context to the next, but I discovered that the relationships between writers and tutors at YCWC influenced how comfortable they feel addressing different kinds of writing issues. And if, for instance, a session like the one had by Chase and Jake showed us how lively, energetic, and productive a session can be when it comes to knowledge building, then these tutors have taught us a valuable lesson about the significance of cultivating an understanding of collaborative learning in students from an early age. The other lesson learned from these tutors is that when working with individuals outside of a tutor's social circle, there must be other avenues for building and nurturing a constructive relationship. Learning this lesson means asking tutors to be in a state of constant learning, not just about texts and subject areas, but about their own ideas and values and how those ideas relate to and inform their interactions with others. Geller et al. tell writing center directors that, "If we are able to cultivate in ourselves and in our tutors an awareness of teaching as learning, as *becoming* rather than as a display of *being*

knowledgeable, we will be well on our way to creating a sustainable learning culture within our writing centers " (59). In tutoring, knowledge results from relationships that engage difficult problems and test the assumptions people have at the beginning of a session.

Identity

Relationships also have a deep influence on how individuals understand their identity, and tutors' sense of who they are within the institution and what role they play is a product of their relationships with other students, faculty members, and writing center colleagues (including other tutors and directors). Many discussions about tutor identity in the writing center field have rested on institutional rank or status and much of what writing center theorists have tended to address as issues of power and authority might be better addressed as issues of identity. In thinking in terms of identity, we are able to more accurately gauge how power and/or authority influence any session. Much has been written about subject positions in the writing center—graduate tutors, professional tutors, peer tutors—and the different claims to institutional authority these tutors are able to make. Peter Carino suggests that a tutor's presence in a session is also mired in power and authority in the writing center and that the non-directive approach to tutoring is used to lessen peer tutors' inherent power and authority. It is quite easy to see how both power and authority operate in the academy in everything from the allocation of resources to the way language is used to control access. This makes it easy to want to bring this discussion to tutoring, and it is certainly a discussion that has gone on in the writing center community as evidenced in Carino's review of literature on the subject.

However, the tutors participating in this study were very aware of their decisions to behave in directive versus non-directive ways, and judging by the staff education meetings I attended, many YU tutors were skeptical of this dichotomy to begin with. Furthermore, they seemed to be intensely aware of the limitations and benefits of their institutional positions as tutors. For instance, Matthew is never completely able to articulate why an instructor might not be qualified, but he just knows there is something about the tutorial interaction between students that works. If identity, as Judith Butler suggests, is performed, then the better exercise for writing center theorists to engage in is to think through the ways that authority is performed by different tutors. It was clear that some of the tutors who participated in this study tried to tap into institutional authority; however, it was often these moments that seemed to have the least effect out of all the different types of efforts that were made during these sessions. If tutors, for one reason or another, believe that appealing to authority is a useful tool for constructing an effective tutor identity, then we have to get to the root of where they get that idea from and need to help them understand that performing authoritatively is not always the best choice.

In order to do so, two questions need to be addressed: 1) Who is a tutor? And 2) What is a tutor's role? John Trimbur argues, "we need to resist the temptation to professionalize peer tutors by treating them as apprentices and by designing training courses as introductions to the field of teaching writing" (294). The impulse to try to professionalize tutors is understandable. If we believe that the work we do is important and that it ought to be recognized as important, then granting tutors a kind of special distinction professionally seems like an appropriate action. The problem is that the same system of recognition that has doubted the seriousness of tutoring, and in particular peer

tutoring, is the system that many writing center scholars have appealed to for such recognition. While some have mistaken this rejection of professionalization as a way to protect the friend status of peers, it is actually about understanding that the type of professionalization often runs counter to the effectiveness of the pedagogy involved in peer tutoring.

For example, at my institution we have two models of tutoring. The Writing Studio employs a peer-tutoring model while the Academic Skills Center does not and hires mainly professional tutors deemed to have appropriate education and status in particular content areas. In the short two years since the Writing Studio opened, the faculty and administration has watched as we turned tutoring from a remedial service into a vital part of the college-wide curriculum. The Academic Skills Center has never been able to think of itself as anything but a remedial service to students, and the connection they have to faculty and the curriculum is close to non-existent. The professional tutors at the Skills Center have accepted their institutional identity, one that was provided by a very stratified educational system that views the work of tutoring as simply a remedial endeavor. Down the hall at the Writing Studio, the peer and professional tutors who work there have developed an identity less dependent on the institutional structures already in place and one completely invested in the possibilities that can be dreamt up for teaching and learning at the Studio. I have encouraged them to establish their own identities as tutors for the college rather than bending to the existing notions of how tutors function institutionally.

I return to *The Everyday Writing Center* for an approach to thinking about tutor identity. Geller et al. note that, "Learning in communities of practice implies, Wenger

tells us, a continual negotiation of our identities." They imply that measuring the growth of tutors as people invested in the intellectual dialogues that shape the way they think and experience the world is a more appropriate approach to gauging effectiveness than simply counting the number of sessions that tutors have. Tutors who are able to establish identities within a community of practice have an opportunity to test what is known or not known in an environment that encourages individuals to both learn and teach simultaneously. Just as students involved in *havruta* partnerships have an opportunity to bring together their talents to achieve a higher level of understanding than they would individually (Fitzgerald 26), peer tutors can begin to shape their understanding of who they are and how they function through a process of discovery that commences when students work together. The implication here is those individuals' ideas about themselves and what they can accomplish is largely dependent upon the communities that forge, give shape to, make room for, and adopt different identities.

In developing a place for peer tutors to have an institutional identity that exists outside of our traditional structures for identifying individuals within the institution, we can effectively make room for tutors as individuals who do not necessarily have to be "big students" or "little teachers." Jay L. Lemke believes, "We surf across the identity possibilities of our cultures, taking them as semiotic resources to play with rather than as essentialist necessities of our being" (73). Understanding identity possibilities for tutors rather than living within the confines of a student/teacher binary, we can discover better ways to think about tutors and the relationships they have with students and teachers. We can think less about "professionalizing" the tutors' identities through outside accreditations groups such as the College Reading and Learning Association and more

about the job a tutor does on a particular campus. When I asked Matthew about whether or not a faculty member could do his job, what if he had replied that faculty could not do his job? What if he said that a peer tutor has an important type of learning and teaching relationship with other students that is distinct from the learning and teaching relationships that faculty often develop with students? Had Matthew responded to me in such a way, there would be a sense that he had locked into an identity that developed out of his understanding of the relationships he has with other students whether they be fellow tutors or student writers. Negotiating a tutor's identity in this way ties peer tutors to the kinds of learning and teaching communities they help constitute rather than ones that are made for them and, in particular, the ones that limit how we define tutors. That is, we must resist developing tutor identities that rest solely in the ways we stratify them (i.e., "peer," "graduate," "professional," etc.) and welcome identities formed in the ways they function for students and each other.

Perceived and Conceived Revisited

Now that I have addressed relationships, possibility, and production in terms of epistemology and identity, I would like to reflect on how the perceived and conceived experiences of tutors line up with the lived experiences explored thus far. One of the goals of this study is to understand the extent to which the lived experiences of tutors relates to the perceived and conceived experiences of peer tutors. The discussion that follows provides a consideration of how the findings of this study interact with the literature, postulates reasons for why the literature ignores peer tutor lived experience, and builds a bridge between the perceived and conceived and the lived.

The perceived and conceived experiences of writing tutors have been the most dominant representations of tutors and are nevertheless important because they provide a catalogue of events that have brought writing centers to where they are today. As the study came to a close, it was clear that there must be a reason why so many writing center scholars have spent years writing about tutors and the roles that they play. The literature review provides a survey of the most significant pieces that have shaped our thinking about peer tutors in particular. These pieces serve to build a perceived knowledge of tutors, an account of how writing center professionals have discussed these individuals and the opportunities and experiences that they have had. At the very beginning of the chapter, I mentioned the irony that I am acting as both a perceiver and conceiver of peer tutors in this study despite my effort to push forward their lived experiences. But it is important for those of us involved in the task of perceiving to double check our perception and to rethink those conceptions that were offered early on.

Understanding why the literature has not adequately accounted for the lived experiences of tutors is important. Kurt Spellmeyer's *Arts of Living* provides insight into why the writing center literature has tended to move in directions that focus on theoretical perspectives borrowed from other fields. Spellmeyer's work offers a critique of criticism, theory, and the professions, showing how the disciplines have grown increasingly distant from the everyday lives of ordinary people. In understanding how this phenomenon has influenced writing center literature, there is an opportunity to argue for bringing in tutor voices like the ones from the YCWC to fill the void Spellmeyer exposes. Furthermore, I had the opportunity to interview both Kenneth Bruffee and Harvey Kail and will share what they discussed about peer tutoring and writing centers in an effort to rethink how

peer tutors' experiences were/are conceived. What Kail helps us to understand is that from listening to tutors like the ones involved in this study, we have a greater opportunity to expand how we see student and teacher relationships as well as how we think about learning and teaching.

Perceptions Steeped in Academic Exercise

Spellmeyer provides a helpful way to think through two of the most striking developments in writing center literature: The first is the need to critique what happens in the writing center using theory from other fields and the second is to get a better understanding of why academics push for disciplinary and professional boundaries. Both of these have resulted in the urge to professionalize tutors in a way that mirrors other academic exercises. However, as Spellmeyer points out, there is often an essential element lost when academic professionals get to work: the everyday lives of the people most involved in the communities they write about. In order to demonstrate this point, Spellmeyer offers a close reading of James Agee's journey to the tenant farms of the South as detailed in the book he collaborated on with photographer Walker Evan, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*. Spellmeyer attempts to show that Agee, a well-educated man, connects with a meaning to life in his exploration of the lives of tenant farmers. According to Spellmeyer, by living in the harsh conditions of these three families, Agee begins to realize that they have a far more profound understanding of the everyday connection to the world than anything he had learned about in his formal education.

This type of connection, Spellmeyer argues, is the kind of connection that those in the humanities should be creating for students, and our ability to help build this connection becomes more difficult as we focus our attention too narrowly on routine, yet

esoteric knowledge creation. In a slightly longer passage, Spellmeyer discusses what Agee learned from his experiences and what he warns about perfunctory knowledge production:

> Agee knew that all the things humans do in their everyday lives—preparing food or performing open heart surgery, writing novels or repaving roads—might be understood as acts, as arts, of compassion when they make possible an encounter, first with a world beyond the self, and then with the world as self. But Agee also recognized that the products of those same arts, if they are treated as permanent, obligatory systems, might be fashioned into instruments of our own self-oppression.… On the one hand, institutionalization demands that the production of knowledge be made routine, but on the other, as Agee warned, learning of the kind that restores our sense of connection to the world is the mortal enemy of routine. (116)

Two ideas presented in this passage can apply to the tension I see coming to a head in the writing center literature: an attempt to institutionalize a knowledge routine and an attempt to focus on the everyday lives of tutors.

In the ways that tutors are being discussed in the literature from 1984 onward, there is a strong attempt to make sense of the experiences of writing tutors by using borrowed theory and critique. Before 1984, when the idea of peer tutoring was emerging, there was a focus on the tutor, which, as mentioned early, sharply disappeared with Stephen North's "Idea." The focus shifted to the writing center and a growing number of critiques that provided everything from feminist to post-colonial critiques of writing centers, tutoring, and tutors. Criticism was changing the discourse in writing center

literature, creating a need to have specialized knowledge of theory to understand tutoring. This progression toward professionalization and disciplinarity is not surprising, especially if Spellmeyer's thesis about the humanities drive toward specialization is correct.

As writing centers continue to emerge as a sub-discipline within Composition studies, so will the constant application of theories. But much like the way theory operates in other disciplines, it can only offer a perception of what is going on, especially when it is borrowed to provide intellectual insight into tutoring. The question that emerges from this study's exploration is whether or not this progression in the literature will be what transforms the ways tutors operate institutionally or if there is something that is simply being overlooked. Spellmeyer contends:

> What we might call the democratization of the humanities, their transformation into arts of living accessible to everyone, will not begin until we have freed ourselves from the illusion that criticism and critique are necessarily the best paths to the changes we wish to see. (148)

Could the changes many writing center scholars would like to see be illusions created by criticism and critique? Could our own criticism and critique of tutoring, and peer tutoring in particular, be drawing our attention away from the potential in writing centers and tutors to be involved in educational and scholarly change?

If the ways that we perceive tutors are creating, in some cases, the "instruments of our own self-oppression," as Agee notes, then we must find a way to balance the knowledge that writing center scholars have produced and accumulated with the lived experiences of tutors. Spellmeyer is quick to point out to us that, "If knowledge is 'produced,' as we academics like to think, and if it therefore lends itself to production by

different people for different ends, then we might ask why the university has failed to produce forms of knowledge affirming the non-specialists' capacity to act" (233). Peer tutors are increasingly becoming the "non-specialists" of the writing center field, especially as the language of the discipline becomes more fixed in theory. Writing center theory and practice courses at colleges across the country confirm that the disciplinary language of writing centers is becoming more fixed and more specific and more inaccessible to outsiders. But there is so much to tutoring that depends on what tutors bring from their everyday lives to the writing center, and tutors and their lived experiences have much to offer our scholarly discussions. The reality may be that, "Far from looking to the disciplines as the place where knowledge properly gets made, we might see them instead as social locations where this making has become especially constricted" (Spellmeyer 233). Writing centers already operate in part like a kind of social location where knowledge is constricted. The kind of writing center that Bruffee imagined would have been a location for knowledge production. The writing center in this study certainly acted in both ways—some sessions focused on constricting knowledge while others created an opportunity to explore ideas with fewer boundaries. Looking to the writing center literature, however, offers little to explain why these tutors oscillated between constricting and expanding knowledge. It was the tutors who were able to clue us into these decisions, and they did so by relying on their own experiences in life and in the academy.

Conceptions Steeped in Tutor Experience

Kenneth Bruffee's experiments in collaboration and tutor training in the 1970s, which led to what is now a fairly common practice of employing peer tutors, were

invested in the idea that students could learn from one another through conversation. As Ben Rafoth notes, Bruffee believes that thoughts "can be enriched by the conversations writers have with tutors, expanding the ways students understand an issue by rendering new intellectual and emotional perspectives or directing their attention to something that has been overlooked" (108). These conversations make it possible for students to co-develop their intellectual and social awareness through peer tutoring. While Bruffee set this attention to the social dimension of tutoring in motion, he was certainly not alone.

In my communication with Bruffee, he believes that his legacy is in *A Short Course in Writing* (referred to as the *Short Course* from here on). In fact, much of my discussion with Bruffee focused on the *Short Course* and any number of people who have gone through the course, including the attendees of the Brooklyn Summer Institute. One of the questions I asked him had to do with the "Conversation of Mankind" piece. I, like many other peer tutors, was introduced to Bruffee and his ideas through this piece. He admitted to me that he had not thought all that much about it nor had he read it in 25 years. His first response was that the article had an incorrect word and that the work he has done since is much more focused and clear. What I found striking about this was that so many tutors read "Conversation of Mankind," a clear appeal to theory, in the courses they take to become writing tutors. I wonder, however, how many peer tutors are run through the *Short Course*, as Bruffee seemed to recommend.

When I asked if his peer tutors had read "Conversation of Mankind," he responded, "By the time I had written that, I was not doing it." His peer tutors were offered the *Short Course*, which engaged, "them together in what they're doing. So the kind of thing that you want to get to is them trusting each other and being able to lean on

each other and be more aware of difference in background and their family background and all that kind of thing" (Bruffee Interview). When I think about my own experiences as a peer tutor, I learned a lot on the job. I had taken a course that taught me about writing centers and about working with writers one-to-one, but it was the actual moments of interaction with writers and other tutors that shaped how I thought about my experiences as a tutor. It seems that the *Short Course* provides tutors in training the chance to have these moments. Harvey Kail still uses the *Short Course* to train the peer tutors at the University of Maine, a tradition that began after returning from his experience at the Brooklyn Summer Institute. Kail has been and continues to be a contributor to the ways that writing center scholars think about peer tutors.

Kail is highlighted in this study because he is emblematic of others in the field who have committed their careers to peer tutoring and the experiences that peer tutors have as a result of their work in the writing center. Kail blazed trails early on in the writing center community and has contributed over the years to both scholarship and service that highlights the importance of peer tutoring. Kail's scholarship is foundational for those who are interested in peer tutoring, and is quite frankly more important than the arguments made by Stephen North a year after Kail published his argument about institutional change in the way we think about student learning and writing. While others abandoned discussions about peer tutors to lament the institutional condition of the "writing center," Kail and a number of his contemporaries (Susan Dinitz, Muriel Harris, Leigh Ryan, and John Trimbur to name a few) continued to keep their focus on tutors and the relationships that they have with writers. Despite his relatively small corpus of publications, his earliest publications from the 1980s continue to be cited today. His

commitment to peer tutors continues both at the University of Maine and in his influence as a teacher-scholar in national forums on teaching writing.

His scholarly contributions include providing a matter of fact argument pointing to a central issue for writing center theory and practice in 1983 when he blatantly asks whether or not his colleagues were able to handle reorganizing students to work with and learn from one another ("Collaborative Learning in Context"). Along with John Trimbur in 1987, they discussed "how tutoring can best contribute to the development of writing abilities and the intellectual life of undergraduates" (203), and they argued that writing centers need to maintain a focus on providing educational environments that help students define themselves as learners. Implicit in this argument is the idea that peer tutors are learners as well, and that by focusing on them and their experiences, we stand a better chance at fomenting stronger learning and intellectual opportunities for students. A forthcoming article that he co-authored with Paula Gillespie and Brad Hughes, discusses the importance of learning about the skills, values, and abilities that tutors take with them when they leave the writing center, and the three of them recently presented findings from their study at the Conference on College Composition and Communication. Recently, Kail has discussed his career in writing centers and his experiences as a participant at the Brooklyn Summer Institute. In his "Innovation and Repetition," Kail writes about taking the innovative approaches he learned at the Brooklyn Summer Institute and applying them over the years. He also discusses the scholarly work of the Fellows who attended, noting, "It seems that we became career missionaries for collaborative learning, and as a cohort we have an impressive resume of workshop leadership in regional, national, and international venues" (50). In this article and his

other scholarly work, we are able to see Kail's main contribution to the field: he lives the life of a collaborator, working with tutors and colleagues overtime and across locations to add to our understanding of collaborative learning and peer tutoring.

His current role as the National Conference on Peer Tutoring in Writing (NCPTW) conference chair and his involvement in co-developing the Peer Writing Tutor Alumni Research Project (PWTARP) are testaments to his dedication to and belief in the benefits of peer tutoring. My interview with Kail was an opportunity for him to reflect on his scholarship and his experiences with peer tutors over the years. He noted that: "I think what happens in writing centers that make them really unique places on campus is the way students take each other seriously—the way the tutors learn to take themselves seriously and how they communicate that with students who come into work with them." I think Kail's observation about taking one another seriously is important because serious recognition of one another makes learning possible.

The tutors in this study take their roles seriously because they show deep concern for their performance as tutors, they are conscientious about their interactions with writers, and they believe what they are doing has a significant impact on a writer's process. They see themselves not only as supportive figures but also as providers of information that students need to know. Likewise, most of the student writers who participated in this study looked to these tutors for answers, and did so with serious intentions for their own thinking and learning. Skip, for instance, felt that his knowledge of how the academy operates, how GPAs influence job decisions, or how teachers' expectations should shape the planning and prioritization of a writing task was a very serious matter, as evidenced by his nagging. Although his approach was not the most

effective, Skip's notion that what he had to offer was of a serious nature is clear. Matthew, on the other hand, took the idea that the student's presence in a paper was a serious issue for any session. So we can see how seriousness comes into focus for the tutors and their relationships with writers in this study in a number of ways, whether it be from a tutor's awareness of academic and other outside forces shaping a writer's approach or their care for helping students find their own voices.

If tutors take their work seriously, they are likely to learn from their experiences as well. Kail mentioned the importance of tutors learning from their experiences: "I get student writers in [the writing center] so [tutors] can have the experience of working with writers. It's more of a lab school model in some ways than a service model. It's training for the tutors. And that's really where I keep my eyes—what kind of experiences are they having." Kail values the experiences that tutors have, and it is clear that both he and Bruffee placed and still place focus on how tutors benefit from their writing center experiences. To be more direct, in interviewing both Kail and Bruffee, I came to an understanding that peer tutoring was conceived as an opportunity to create new kinds of relationships between students, learning, and writing, and, furthermore, a chance to provide student tutors an arena to grow as intellectuals and individuals.

But Kail points out that writing centers have done much more for peer tutors than to provide this kind of relationship with other tutors. He commented:

> I've been really grateful to spend my career in writing centers because writing centers I believe have created a unique relationship between faculty and students. I don't see that going on anywhere else. I'm not friends with my tutors. I mean

> there's a huge difference between us, but there's a lot of mutual respect, not only mutual respect, but mutual affection.

He reflected on a relationship he had with one of his professors and remembers lamenting that he might not have the same kind of relationship with his own students in the writing center, but he went on to say:

> …it opened the door to a much better kind of relationship with students. The atmosphere in the writing center, the sense that they own the writing center as much as I do, that we have this shared responsibility in the writing center, that's very satisfying. So, I felt that over all these years (I started running the writing center in 1978 or 79, 30 years, 31 years), that I've gotten this tremendous energy from that environment. So I don't know about a legacy, but personally what I'm going to take away from this when I walk out the door is a sense of sharing my work with students in a way that my colleagues have not had the opportunity to do.

Kail's sense of shared responsibility and shared ownership seems to be at the heart of how he relates to peer tutors. From the very beginning of peer tutoring, shared responsibility and ownership were at the center of what it takes to be a tutor. What I learned from my conversations with both Kail and Bruffee, is that this shared responsibility is what writing center scholars must keep in mind as they conceptualize and perceive the relationships tutors have with writers. With Kail's thoughts on his relationships with tutors, I make an appeal to writing center scholars to think about ways to involve tutors in scholarship and to honor the lived experiences of tutors. Doing so will

help us to begin to understand who the tutor of tomorrow will be and how they will contribute to education.

The 21st Century Peer Writing Tutor

In my interview with Bruffee, he told me that, "people your age are in the admirable position of being able to contribute to peer tutoring's contribution to the vast changes Obama's education program, if successful, will make in American education." Obama's education plan has as one of its main focuses a goal that by 2020 all American students graduating from high school should be ready to perform in a career or in college ("Obama's Education Plan"). This is a shift from the No Child Left Behind's goal, "which calls for all students to be performing at grade level in reading and math by 2014" ("Obama's Education Plan"). However, the overall focus of Obama's education program on allowing flexibility and control on the city and state level with incentives for local reformers who can compete for federal funding creates an opportunity for peer tutoring to have widespread influence in the educational system.

With opportunity on the horizon for pre-K-12 education, there is more of a need now for the lessons we have learned about peer tutoring in colleges and universities to be articulated in ways that make peer tutors a significant part of everyone's education. There is still much work that needs to be done at the college and university level in terms of understanding how tutors, as Kail put it in 1983, are a "part of the official audience of other students' writing." During his interview, Kail admitted that we still have a long way to go with this issue. One possibility for what tutors this century will contribute to our

academic institutions is an ability to foster social and intellectual maturity among undergraduates. Bruffee writes in a chapter on "Peer Tutoring and Institutional Change":

> Peer tutors can help colleges and universities work toward that goal by reaching beyond their immediate impact on students to bring about changes of four kinds: changes in relations among students, among teachers, and between students and teachers; changes in the prevailing understanding of the nature of authority of knowledge and the authority of teachers; changes in curriculum; and even (certainly in many cases the last domino to fall) changes in classroom practice. (*Collaborative Learning* 82)

Of the four kinds of change that Bruffee believes peer tutors will assist in, I am most interested in curricular change and changes in classroom practice.

At my institution, the idea of peer tutors was little more than the blind leading the blind and "collaborative" learning, which was thought to be practiced in many classrooms, could probably be more appropriately labeled cooperative learning. For the most part, cooperative learning worked opposite to the kind of learning that Fitzgerald describes in her work on collaboration and *havruta* partnerships. Students are each expected to bring separate abilities and merge them in a final product, rather than to work through the process of creating a final product together. After peer tutoring was introduced at my institution, many faculty members began to rethink how collaborative learning could work both in and outside their classrooms. After retooling some of their collaborative assignments, they were able to see benefits from students working through problems together that ranged from clearer thinking to better writing.

Peer tutors have the ability to usher in these kinds of changes in the classroom in addition to changes in the curriculum. Bruffee writes that peer tutors are "students seriously engaged in the same educational enterprise that the faculty and administration are engaged in, but with an informed, independent perspective" (96). Bruffee continues to note that the perspective that peer tutors provide colleges and universities might lead to changes in everything from curriculum to strategic planning within an institution (96). Communicating to other faculty and to administration that peer tutors as student representatives who have a special knowledge of the relationships among students and learning, will be an important task for writing center professionals this century. But writing center professionals need to be more in tune with who peer tutors are and what they can actually offer our institutions. This is why the thirdspace model offered at the beginning of this chapter is critical for writing center scholars. It allows us to have a richer understanding of peer tutors' experiences and their specialized knowledge of student learning, which we can use to communicate ideas about learning and teaching to our colleagues and administrators and to inform curricular change and possibility.

The 21st century peer tutor will obviously be educated unlike other peer tutors in large part due to the incredible resources that are now at our disposal. But what will be key is educating these tutors to be involved in the relationships they build with other learners. They will need to rely on their experiences both inside and outside the academy, but they will have to be acutely aware of the ways that they build learning and social connections with the writers who visit the writing center. Possibilities for learning and for teaching in a writing center are so intrinsically dependent on relationships because educating one another means being able to make and appreciate connections between the

self, knowledge, and society. Peer tutors already have the sense that this is an important part of what they do, but there is still more that can be done to help peer tutors articulate their role in the educational process.

Writing center directors ought to take an approach to educating tutors that anticipates the kinds of relationships and experiences tutors will encounter in their professional and personal lives. Ultimately, peer tutors leave the institution and lead interesting lives. The PWTARP shows us just how much peer tutors have gained from their experiences in writing centers, and how the skills, values, and abilities they learned from their time as tutors have influenced everything from their work life to their home life. As noted earlier, Paula Gillespie, Brad Hughes, and Harvey Kail recently presented at the Conference on College Composition and Communication their findings from the PWTARP, and peer tutor alumni from their institutions reported many life and career benefits from their tutoring experience.

What can be learned from PWTARP, as the presenters told us, is that peer tutoring fostered a kind of liberal education that penetrated the relationships these individuals had with everyone from co-workers to family members. As this study suggests, there seems to be an interesting connection between the level of familiarity between writers and tutors and their ability to push their educational boundaries. Moira Ozias used the PWTARP to learn what tutors at the University of Kansas Writing Center valued and gained from their peer tutoring experiences. At the same conference, Ozias presented her results by focusing on the themes that emerged from her data—collaborating, mattering, and connecting—but she made sure to include stories from tutors whose experiences did not necessarily resonate with these themes. She asks writing

center directors to consider how to foster a community of practice that promotes an inclusive learning environment:

> How can we create communities of practice where the falling apart, the conflict, becomes a part of the mattering, the collaborating, and the connecting, and therefore a way of shoring up the gaps and re-engaging peer tutors who otherwise feel outside, unmattering, disconnected or othered? (Ozias)

What we learn from her study is that peer tutors teach us a lot about the types of problems that likely need to be addressed in the communities we establish with them. It is easy to focus on the responders who discussed at length the wonderful benefits of collaborating, mattering, and connecting, but it is in the stories of those who did not feel at one with the rest of the community of peer writing consultants that we can see the shortcomings in how we develop relationships in the writing center.

Exploring and understanding intimate learning relationships means recognizing the importance of a shared sense of responsibility over the information addressed during a session or even a staff education meeting. The idea that students are educating each other is central to how peer tutors help change the academy and pave the way for reconsidering learning and teaching relationships. What peer tutors offer is their student status, their ability to be representatives of the present moment as well as reminders that despite what we believe about our culture, they mediate their experiences in the world in ways that scholars and professionals in the field might not be able to imagine.

In the literature review, I mentioned that Holloway believes that revolution takes place in everyday life. He writes: “The aim of revolution is the transformation of ordinary, everyday life and it is surely from ordinary, everyday life that revolution must

arise" (211). Peer tutors have been involved in transforming our institutions since they first came on the scene in the 1970s. And it has been their ordinary and everyday experiences that have given rise to new possibilities for teaching and learning in the academy. As we move deeper into this century, more emphasis on peer education, on the idea that we can educate one another, will give way to a change in the way we think about learning and education. In writing about the school as a social setting, John Dewey notes that,

> It is not merely a place where ideas and beliefs may be exchanged in the arena of formal discussion, for argument alone breeds misunderstanding and fixes prejudice; but it is much more a place where ideas are incarnated in human form and clothed with the winning grace of personal life. (84)

The relationships that peer tutors are able to foster with learners make it possible for students to see ideas in such a way. When tutors form bonds with writers, it forces both to think about how one another may be invested in a particular argument. The participants in this study have shown that this can have different results that range from Seth's understanding that Rosa has a "dark" past to Chase urging Jake not to make a dangerous interpretation. When faced with the other in a learning situation, we have to find ways to look beyond ideas to see connections that make meaning for both parties involved.

I would like to begin to close this chapter by considering the work of Mark K. Smith, Michele E. Doyle, and Tony Jeffs who have created an online encyclopedia on Informal Education. In an article on friendship theory and practice in education, they write:

> Friendship can be a part of education. It may flow from the encounters between participants, it may be the focus for learning, and it may be part of what is offered by educators. However, to talk seriously of friendship within many of the current contexts within which informal educators have to operate, is to come to up against the impact of professionalization and the other forces that worked to limit our appreciations of the relationship. (Smith and Smith)

Too often, those of us in writing centers feel similar forces urging us to professionalize tutors (for examples see Shamoon and Burns "A Critique of Pure Tutoring;" Connie Snyder Mick's "'Little Teachers,' Big Students: Graduate Students as Tutors and the Future of Writing Center Theory."), to write about their experiences in ways that tend to shift the focus from their relationships with writers to other concerns that might be considered academically sound—e.g., power and authority, post-structuralist accounts of writing center work, etc. (for examples see Meg Woolbright's "The Politics of Tutoring: Feminism in the Patriarchy;" Nancy Grimm's *Good Intentions*). However, this pressure does distract from the interesting ebb and flow of relationships that can be observed on a daily basis in many writing centers. As Gian S. Pagnucci writes: "As with so many other dimensions of the narrative life, these academic restrictions, whether written or unwritten, spoken or inherited in silence, limit what we see and know" (98). Thus, there is definitely something to be said for friendship, for comfort level, and for intimacy when it comes to the learning relationships between tutors and writers. When we can learn to appreciate the relationships that build in the writing center, not just between tutors and writers but also between tutors and faculty and tutors and learning, we have a greater opportunity to imagine how the tutor of the 21st century will evolve.

How we do this depends largely on whether or not we take into account the lived experiences of tutors and then use those experiences to shape what we know about teaching and learning. This is not to say that work already done by writing center scholars has been misguided. To the contrary, much of the work has positioned writing centers as places where serious academic study and critique is possible. In an address Frankie Condon delivered to the National Conference on Peer Tutoring in Writing, she provided tutors with excellent information on racism, inequity, and white privilege. This kind of scholarship certainly has a place in the larger discussions of our field, yet Condon's address seemed to be missing an important element, particularly for the audience she was addressing. The peer tutors from my college and I were wondering what we could do and how we would be able to change the discourse in our writing center and on our campus to reflect the kinds of concerns that Condon highlighted. What we noticed in her keynote was a tendency to point to examples of tutors who failed to confront racist behavior in tutoring sessions and the writing center. While we could see what not to do, we had a difficult time trying to see what could be done from a tutor's perspective.

I wonder if the reason the address seemed to lack a compass for tutors to use to navigate racism in writing tutorials had to do with missing voices. While the eye-opening theory and anecdotes caught the interests of many listeners, I would have liked to hear more about and from tutors, their contributions to discussions on anti-racism in the writing center and their thoughts on dealing with these types of issues. Again, as in the case with Nancy Grimm or Marilyn Cooper, an agenda is set for writing tutors, and with their marching orders tutors are to fulfill the kind of institutional change that the critique motivating these orders has failed to do. It is not that what scholars like Condon, Grimm,

and Cooper have to offer is superfluous to peer tutoring, it is that the critique they offer lacks the lived perspectives I argue for in this dissertation. Simply put, if our analysis of peer tutoring rests solely on accounts that critique tutoring from the perspectives of scholars, then we miss an opportunity to witness the "whole" of tutoring. Including tutor perspective in our work, and taking that step forward and sharing our work with peer tutors, is what will help us to establish peer tutors as active contributors to 21st century education.

Kail noted during the interview that the changes he has made over the years to how he works with peer tutors have been due to the demands they place upon him as a director. He has changed and revised his course to help them gain the kinds of experiences they wished they had before becoming writing tutors. Kail is someone who has lived the values that have been addressed in this study because he is guided by the needs of peer tutors rather than by the direction of the field. While staying true to the foundation set for him at the Brooklyn Summer Institute, Kail has also allowed for changes in the field to test his assumptions about tutoring; ultimately, however, he is concerned for the experiences that tutors have in his writing center and the relationships that he knows peer tutors create and influence on campus. He is aware of how peer tutors reorient students as learners, how they change student/faculty relationships, and how they influence the way the academy thinks about teaching and learning. From having a sense of shared responsibility with tutors in his own writing center to contributing to the academy's understanding of peer tutoring, Kail's peer tutor advocacy provides a model of how we can bring students into our scholarly discussions and our professional activities.

This study's contribution is in how it calls attention to the need for writing center scholarship to incorporate the lived experiences of tutors and to expose the failings of old metaphors, ideas, and critiques with tutor experiences and voices. This study is an example of how to account for the lived experiences of tutors in scholarly work and how to participate in those experiences. I have allowed for tutors to theorize their experiences and explain their decisions while contributing that perspective to the established knowledge of the field. Furthermore, I have shown how a number of writing center scholars have invested in the lived experiences of peer tutors by including them in their scholarship and in the everyday discussion that shape teaching and learning in the writing center.

The participants in this study have focused our attention on the importance of relationships, how lived experiences of tutors provide rich opportunities to theorize writing center work, and how peer tutors influence how we understand epistemology, identity, and production. Kail would agree that the tutors who participated in this study are involved in the kind of work that tutors should be. They share the responsibility of deciding what works best for their writing center, and they actively participate in conversations about how to best help students and one another learn. They are involved in a process of becoming more aware of how their relationships with writers can change their relationships with ideas. Ultimately, these tutors have contributed to their own writing center but also to the ways that I have been able to make and build on knowledge in this study. Their contributions to this study exemplify the kind of investigation that this study calls for in the larger writing center community.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

The majority of writing center scholarship and the larger field of composition relies on theories to shed light on the experiences that students have with writing and with one another, and rarely is there an opportunity for student voices to seriously engage in the theoretical discussion most salient in the literature. This dissertation project's major contribution to the field is in how it interrupts the direction of critique on peer tutoring by questioning prevailing theoretical perspectives with tutor experience.

Throughout this study, I have put forth a number of arguments that build a case for more focus on peer tutors' lived experiences. I have demonstrated how writing center scholars conceive and perceive peer tutors and tutoring. Scholars in their perceptions of peer tutoring often rely too heavily on applying theoretical frameworks and concepts to the tutorial interaction. The result of this type of application of theory and critique has been an inability to use tutor experiences in theory building and to contribute to scholarship outside the field of writing centers. While many of the scholars involved in the conception of the modern writing center focused on relationships between peers, the push to make sense of the writing tutorial using criticism from outside the field was strong. In the move toward theory, this study suggests that research into the significance of relationships in the writing center needs to be revisited.

Another argument this study pushes forward is that we need a greater emphasis on how writing tutors fit into the teaching and learning matrix. While many scholars have

worked to establish a kind of institutional role for tutors (i.e., "big students," "little teachers," "interpreters," "organic intellectuals"), the fact remains that the educational role and the job of peer tutors will probably always be in a constant state of revision. With that said, a number of important issues that add to our understanding of how peer tutors contribute to teaching and learning came to the surface in this study.

Research Questions Addressed

To demonstrate this, I will provide an overview of answers to each of my research questions. These questions, which have underpinnings in Edward Soja's spatial understanding of epistemology, have been used throughout this study to offer a broad perspective of peer tutors and their work.

1. What are the perceived experiences of peer tutors?

Throughout the project, I have discussed scholars' perceptions and how they compare to the experiences reported by the tutor participants in this study. The nature of perceived commentary on tutoring often has to do with the ways that tutors are classified and written about. As demonstrated in the review of literature, many writing center scholars have chosen to discuss tutors in terms of what they know best: theory and criticism. Essentially, a good number of writing center scholars have used theory to explain the interactions they observe in the writing center. Reviewing the literature shows us how tutors are often expected to perform in ways that accommodate these theoretical frames. What the literature shows is that tutors are agents of change, non-directive, directive, minimalist, authoritative, misleading, interpreters, peers, not-peers, graduate

students, and this list could easily continue. These are among the many ways that tutors have been perceived and their experiences are described using these terms as well.

2. What are the conceived experiences of peer tutors?

As discussed in the second chapter, peer tutors were originally conceived to have learning experiences that challenge prevailing notions of how knowledge is handed down in the academy. What can be learned from close readings of the individuals who were involved in constructing peer tutoring and peer tutoring programs in the late 1970s is that relationships between students should be a significant part of the peer tutoring experience. From my interview with Harvey Kail, I learned that reorganizing students into co-learning relationships can have ripple effects not only on the way that we think about the flow of knowledge in educational settings but also on the relationships that students can have with their teachers.

3. What possibilities for teaching and learning do peer tutors experience in their daily practice?

In observing and interviewing peer tutors at the Yeshiva College Writing Center, I was able to identify potential for these tutors to experience productive teaching and learning moments in their sessions. This question provided an opportunity to delve into the lived experiences of peer tutors, which was the focus of most of the second half of this project. I learned that tutors, in addition to the kinds of theoretical and practical background we provide them, often drive their own practice with a personalized sense of a tutoring philosophy. They also bring their own communication styles and tactics with them, which definitely influence the direction of their sessions. What was one of the more interesting outcomes of asking this question was the extent to which relationships played

a role in productivity during sessions. Furthermore, these relationships could be confusing at times, especially in the case of the weekly sessions when tutors viewed their relationships differently than the writers did as evidenced in the case of Skip and Sam.

The four main themes that emerged from observing these tutors in action and discussing their sessions with them were confidence, listening, frame, and presence. Each of these themes emerged out of the sessions or out of the conversations I had with the tutor participants. While these themes permeated the sessions and influenced how tutors approached their interactions with writers, they were also subject to the kinds of relationships that tutors had with writers. For example, the difference between confidence building in Seth's session with Rosa and Chase's session with Jake is significant. In one session, confidence is about using the English language and, in the other, confidence means having the nerve to play with traditional academic conventions. The reasons why these tutors focused on language or genre were definitely in part due to the kind of relationships that they had with each writer.

What these themes helped clarify is that tutors find ways to help themselves work through problems they encounter in their sessions. We learned that the possibilities they have for teaching and learning can be tied to their relationships with writers, the decisions that they make during their sessions, and the ways that they think about their own work.

4. To what extent do these possibilities relate to the perceived and conceived experiences of peer tutors?

What these tutors contributed in their sessions and their interviews also demonstrated how their lived experiences either matched up with, diverged, or were completely different from claims about and expectations for tutorials in the literature. The

tutors involved in this study helped to sharpen some of the ideas that were discussed in the literature review, but what was learned by juxtaposing the lived, perceived, and conceived pointed to the larger problem Boquet and Lerner address in their article—the failings of a unidirectional approach to theorizing writing center work. In answering this question, this study exposed that how scholars apply theory in the field makes it more difficult to change the flow of direction so that theory and practice flow from tutors to writing center scholars and out to other fields. In interviewing Bruffee and Kail, I learned that we still have the ability to redirect the theoretical flow currently used in writing centers and to help position peer tutors in institutional spaces that draw on their ability to alter the relationships we think are possible in the academy. John Trimbur writes, "Harvey Kail says that peer tutors teach us how to train them" (288), and Kail told me that he has, "always been under pressure from the tutors to give them more practice and preparation in tutoring" (Personal Interview). Kail recognizes that the tutors he works with clearly have a sense of what they need or want in order to become members of their writing center community. Keeping in that vein, the way that tutor experiences reported in this study shade the perceived and conceived experiences also provided a chance to reflect on epistemology and identity, allowing to see how both of these can be thought of in terms of the communities of learners, writers, and thinkers that can be established with peer tutors. In considering how the lived experiences of peer tutors open up a space for possibilities, answering the above questions provided a comprehensive look at who the 21st peer tutor is and what peer tutoring can accomplish in the future.

Major Contributions

Overall, in answering these questions, this study contributed a number of significant points for the writing center field to consider and to research more closely. The first is a call for writing center scholarship to incorporate the lived experiences of tutors. This project offers one model for accomplishing this task, and the participants in this study focus attention on the importance of relationships, how lived experiences of tutors provide rich opportunities to theorize writing center work, and how peer tutors influence epistemology, identity, and production. Therefore, the major contribution of this dissertation is in how it addresses peer tutors' contributions to broader collaborative and writing center theories, how peer tutors contribute to teaching and learning, and how peer tutors can change relationships between students and teachers and theory and practice.

Moreover, this project also offers a framework for recognizing the work of writing center scholars like Harvey Kail who have dedicated their careers to understanding how peer tutor relationships have great impact on learning and teaching. He and others like Muriel Harris, Susan Dinitz, Paula Gillespie, and Jon Olson, to name a few, have spent their careers forming and valuing relationships with students that actually do serve to change people's relationships with reading, writing, thinking, and learning. And while many writing center scholars have built their careers applying the theory *de rigueur*, these scholars are deeply immersed in the everyday, lived experiences of the peer tutors with whom they work.

Questions for Future Research

Although this study demonstrated a number of interesting and important ideas about and perspectives on peer tutoring, there are a number of issues that could be addressed in future studies. This study included the voices of four tutor participants who each spent about three hours of their time being involved in the study. Their sessions and interviews were about 45 minutes to an hour in length, but they also participated in the staff meetings I observed and often had informal conversations with me while I spent time at the Yeshiva College Writing Center. One of the limitations of this study was the time I had to spend with these tutors. With more time, there is a greater opportunity to interview tutors a number of times and for them to read what has been written about their experience. An issue in this study was that the tutors who participated had commitments that made it difficult to get them as involved. As a result, the study had to be designed to take their busy schedules and their accessibility into account, particularly after the initial data was collected. A suggestion for future research would be to add a component to a study like this that invites tutors into a conversation on the themes that emerge from their interactions.

While this study established a case for how relationships between tutors and writers can lead to interesting possibilities during tutoring sessions, there is still much to explore when it comes to understanding how acquaintanceship influences tutorials. Future studies should definitely examine how the types of relationships that tutors have with writers are influenced by social and institutional factors while also trying to explore how these relationships influence teaching and learning.

Another possibility for future study is to look more closely at a scholar like Harvey Kail and the writing center program he directs. For instance, a researcher might look at trends in the PWTARP results from the University of Maine, observe sessions at the Maine Writing Center, and interview tutors to do a more thorough investigation into the kinds of relationships that exist at that writing center. Since the idea that relationships have significant influence in writing tutorials was a finding in this study, it would be interesting to run a follow-up study that looks closely at the teaching and learning relationships in a center, how those relationships are influenced by social and academic expectations, and how relationships influence expectations about learning and writing.

While there are a number of routes for further investigation, this study left me with a few questions that I felt the larger writing center field must explore. My first question for the field is: how can writing center scholars contribute to scholarly work in other fields using what we learn from tutors? In considering Boquet and Lerner's concern about how writing center scholars contribute to other fields and thinking about what Spellmeyer has to say about the current state of the humanities, I find myself interested in how the writing center field can contribute its knowledge of learning relationships and collaborative learning to other fields. My interest in this question has led me to ponder a second question about how individuals who publish theoretical work about writing centers can be motivated to theorize collaboratively with tutors. How might scholars work with tutors to think theoretically about writing center work and to understand how that work reaches outside the writing center's walls? Scholars like Harvey Kail and Susan Dinitz affirm how valuable it can be to apply theory in writing center work, to invite tutors into that process, and to continue to engage with tutors in a number of different

forums ranging from their writing centers to conferences like NCPTW to publications. In addition, we should be asking questions about what peer tutoring can tell us about pedagogical efforts in composition studies. In my developmental writing class, I am educating my students how to be peer tutors for one another rather than thinking about classroom workshop in more familiar terms for composition teachers, i.e., peer review, peer editing, etc. I have begun this experiment in part because of what I have learned from this study, which is that being a peer tutor shapes an individual's experience with both writing and learning in profound ways. Thus, I wonder what composition studies stands to gain from exploring a pedagogy that invites traditional composition students to engage one another in the ways that writing center peer tutors do. By exploring this kind of connection, I hope to understand what can be done to motivate individuals to study writing centers, but I would also like to understand how scholarly motivation could work to focus attention on peer tutoring.

The Debate Continues

In the introduction to this study, I gave an overview of the peer tutoring debate, showing a trajectory of the field that moved toward theory and criticism and a concern for institutional identity. However, I believe that the debate over peer tutors and tutoring continues to be an important one. This study demonstrates that we have barely begun to debate issues about peer tutoring and peer tutors because we have done little to account for the lived experiences of tutors in the scholarship. This project, then, is a kind of challenge to go back to those original conceptions of peer tutoring, to rethink Bruffee, Harris, Trimbur, Hawkins, and Kail, and to think about their early work in terms of the

lived experiences of present-day tutors. Writing center scholars have done their work when it comes to the perceived and conceived experiences of tutors, but it is time to fold a new voice into the debate by including peer tutors more substantially in our professional communities of practice. By seeing our field through the eyes of peer tutors, we stand a better chance of understanding the future contributions of peer tutoring to teaching and learning. This dissertation is one example in a growing number of studies that attempt to shift the focus back on tutors and what they teach professionals in the field. Hopefully, it will contribute to a healthier debate about who peer tutors are and how they continue to change how we relate to writing, learning, and teaching.

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Appendix A

Informed Consent Form
A Study of the Intellectual Engagement of Tutors

You are invited to participate in a study conducted by Brian Fallon, a doctoral candidate in English Composition and TESOL at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. The purpose of this study is to learn more about the decisions tutors make while tutoring. I will observe tutoring sessions and later interview only the tutors.

Tutorial Observations: If you agree to be a part of this study, I will observe one to four of your tutoring sessions. I will be audio taping and transcribing your session in addition to taking notes during the session.

Tutor Interviews: If you're a tutor, I will also ask you some questions after the tutorial. The questions I ask you will be about tutoring methods, goals and expectations for the session, and what you learned from the session. There may be a possible follow-up interview if needed. I will be audio taping and transcribing the interviews.

There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research. Some parts of the taped and transcribed session may be shared with writing center scholars participating in this study, but your identity will remain anonymous. There will be no compensation for participating in this study and audio tapes will be destroyed after the study is completed.

You are free to decide not to participate in this study or to withdraw at any time without adversely affecting your relationship with me, Yeshiva University, or the Yeshiva University Writing Center and its staff. If you decided to withdraw from the study, I will destroy any audio tapes from your observation/interview. Your real name and any identifying information will be left out of reports of the findings of this study.

If you would like further information about this project or if you have any questions, you may contact me, the project director, Dr. Ben Rafoth, or the Primary Investigator, Dr. Lauren Fitzgerald.

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

VOLUNTARY CONSENT FORM:

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

TUTORS AND STUDENT WRITERS: I agree to take part in (check below):

☐ Tutorial observation(s)

TUTORS ONLY: I agree to take part in (check below):

☐ Interview(s)

Name (please print):_____

Signature:_____

Date: _____ Phone where you can be reached:_____

Best days and times to reach you:

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

Date: _____ Primary Investigator's Signature:_____

Date: _____ Researcher's signature: _____

Informed Consent Form

A Study of the Intellectual Engagement of Tutors

You are invited to participate in a study conducted by Brian Fallon, a doctoral candidate in English Composition and TESOL at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. The following information is provided in order to help you make an informed decision whether or not to participate. The purpose of this study is to investigate tutors' intellectual engagement in their sessions and how this intellectual engagement is discussed by writing center professionals and scholars. In order to accomplish this, I am interviewing writing center professionals and scholars for greater insight into the intellectual engagement of tutors.

Interviews: If you chose to participate in this study, I will be asking a number of writing center and tutoring related questions. If you are the writing center director at the research site, I will be asking you questions about your institution and about tutoring methods, goals and expectations for tutoring sessions, and learning outcomes at your Center. If you are one of the writing center scholars and professionals invited to participate, I will be asking you questions about trends in writing center scholarship on tutors, the historical and political context of tutoring, and about the perceptions tutors in this study had about their work with writers. There may be a possible follow-up interview if needed. I will be audio taping and transcribing these interviews.

There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research. Participants will have access to copies of transcripts and will receive copies of interview transcripts in order to check for accuracy of representation. Participants will also be given the option of withdrawing comments.

Participation in this study is strictly voluntary. You are free to decide not to participate in this study or to withdraw at any time without adversely affecting your relationship with me. If you wish to withdraw, simply let me know.

If you would like further information about this project or if you have any questions, you may contact me or the project director, Dr. Ben Rafoth

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VOLUNTARY CONSENT FORM:

I have read and understand the information on the form and I consent to volunteer to be a subject in this study. I understand that my responses will be attributed to me, that I have the right to edit or withdraw responses, and that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. I have received an unsigned copy of this informed consent form.

Name (please print):_____

Signature:_____

Date: _____ Phone where you can be reached:_____

Best days and times to reach you:

_____

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

Date: _____ Investigator's signature:_____

Appendix B

Framework and Sample Questions for Peer Tutor Interviews

I. Background Information

- Name
- What is your major?
- What made you interested in becoming a writing tutor?

II. Session Background Information

- Before we begin, is there anything I should know about this session?
- Have you and the writer worked together before?
- What happened in previous sessions?
- Is there anything that you heard on the recording that you wanted to explain?

III. Session Experiences

- Tutors were played brief interactions from their session and were asked to describe and reflect on what was happening.
- What did you think was most successful in this session? Why?
- If you could do this session over, what would you do differently?
- Why did you make specific decisions during the session?

IV. Tutor Influence on Writing and Learning

- What do you feel was the most important thing you learned during the session?
- What do you feel was the most important thing the writer learned during the session? Please explain why.

Appendix C

Framework and Sample Questions for Writing Center Scholar Interview

I. Reflect on Recent and Past Scholarship

Bruffee: In your NCPTW keynote address delivered at Penn State in 2007, you spoke about genealogy and family history. I'm curious how you came to be interested in the connection between familial relationships and peer tutoring in writing.

Kail: Last year in Las Vegas, you mentioned that you've used the Bruffee approach for years and that you were rethinking that. I was wondering if you've put any more thought into that?

II. Reflections on Writing Center Field

Bruffee: As a follow up, how do you think our understanding of this connection will benefit writing center scholarship and the ways we educate peer tutors?

Kail: In your 1983 "Collaborative Learning in Context" you make a statement questioning whether or not this idea of collaborative learning is an epistemological shift academia can bear. Would you mind reflecting on that and telling me if you think we've made the shift or if you think there's still work to be done?

III. Thoughts on Study Findings

Bruffee: In my research for this dissertation, I have found that the greater the intimacy between tutors and writers, the greater the possibility for the two to engage intellectually. Do you have any thoughts on why intimacy plays a role in tutoring sessions?

Kail: Have you ever been disappointed by any developments in the field of writing centers or directions in the scholarship?

IV. Legacy

Bruffee: You are obviously one of the most influential people in peer tutoring and in discussions on collaboration, and many new tutors learn about collaboration for the first time by reading your "Peer Tutoring: the Conversation of Mankind." What would you like your legacy to be?

Kail: You've obviously accomplished a great deal in your career. You've published in many journals on collaboratively learning and have done a lot to produce many generations of tutors, and a lot of people respect you and the work that you've done. So I'm curious, what do you think your legacy is going to be?

Appendix D

Transcription Conventions

=	latching
↑	rise in intonation
↓	decline in intonation
!	excited speech
...	slight pause
(parenthesis)	nonverbal or inaudible sounds
underline	emphasis