

Writing Identities: The Transformation of Student-Tutors through Tutor Training

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May 2011

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Science in Teaching-English
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Abstract

This study examines a tutor training practicum, conducted in a writing center at a state university during the fall of 2010 and the ways in which training for tutoring is transformational for student-tutors. Though writing center research often focuses on the tutorial as the site of critical inquiry, this study's hermeneutical focus is analyzing how new tutors' understanding of writing transforms through tutor training and the effects of that transformation on their role as tutors. First, literature regarding writing center history, peer tutoring, tutor training pedagogy, and student writing is examined. Then, student data, collected through ethnographic techniques such as survey, observation, and textual analysis, is evaluated and conclusions are reached relevant to possibilities for further research.

Student-tutors reported more confidence in their writing as a direct result of tutor training. This increased confidence was described as due to a new awareness of the writing process. Student-tutors also noted improved grammar and punctuation skills and better attention to the idea of audience and discourse conventions. The awareness and confidence gained was interpreted as a result of students' conflict about their understanding of the writing process. Through theory and other classroom readings and discussions students explored their prior relationship to writing and questioned the strategies they used in their own writing processes. Skill improvement, though in part influenced by a small amount of direct instruction and discussion during the course, was considered primarily a result of tutoring and both observing errors and helping other students correct them.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I thank my husband, Cully, and my son, Eli, as well as our extended families, for their gracious patience throughout my pursuit of a graduate degree. Without their support, love, and hard work to off-set my focus outside of career and family, I could not have accomplished my goal. Second, I thank my mentor and friend Dr. Barbara Dixson for her consistently valuable advice. Barbara not only offered me personal support as I attained a graduate degree but also recommended me for the tutor position which led to this research.

I would also like to acknowledge the efforts of my advisor, Dr. Rebecca Stephens, and my mentor from the Tutoring-Learning Center, Dr. Maureen Giblin. Dr. Stephens allowed me the space I needed to take the project in my own direction, while motivating me, keeping me focused, and offering important insights and ideas along the way. Dr. Giblin not only opened up the tutor practicum course for my observation and shared her research expertise as we discussed both the course and my methods but also showed genuine interest in my observations and recommendations for future training.

The tutor practicum students who participated in this study deserve appreciation as well, and I am grateful for their willingness to allow me to observe them and read their work. I truly enjoyed the time spent in the classroom, and their honest reflections have made this research all the more valuable.

Finally, I am grateful to the English department and those professors who guided me throughout the degree and helped to improve my academic writing along the way. Their intelligence and kindness offer an important model as I embark on my own academic career.

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Preface

During the fall of 2009, as part of my graduate studies, I participated in an undergraduate/graduate tutor training practicum through the Tutoring-Learning Center (TLC). The tutor training course proved transformational for me in terms of my understanding of the writing process and academic discourse conventions. Not only did I gain a better understanding of how to help other students, but I also began to understand my own composing methods better as well. If the practicum course was transformational for me, I wondered if and how it was transformational for others. In light of this, I chose to study the students enrolled in the TLC practicum during the fall semester of 2010. I wanted to know where students began in their understanding of writing and tutoring prior to entering the course, and I also hoped to unpack students' construction of meaning both as individuals and as a group in response to writing center pedagogy and theory.

Introduction

Writing centers are important features of colleges and universities across the United States. Eric Hobson points out that in the early 1990s scholars indicated that almost “90% of institutions of higher education in the United States [had] developed writing centers or learning centers where writing [was] taught” (“Writing Center Pedagogy” 165). Though Hobson (2001) believes that percentage is a bit unrealistic for the early nineties, he suggests that the growth of centers over the following decade supports that number (“Writing Center Pedagogy” 165). Hobson also states that the prevalence of writing centers “...underscores the important role that [they] play in instructing and supporting writers...” (“Writing Center Pedagogy” 165). However, writing centers in academic institutions not only educate and support the student-writers who use their services but also educate and support the student-tutors whom they train. Therefore, it is important to better understand the role of the writing center in educating student-tutors who, in turn, feature in the education and support (through peer-tutoring) of other students.

Though a body of research exists on specific aspects of tutor training (from teaching students how to initiate meaningful dialogue to preparing them to work with English Language Learners), research on the classroom methods of tutor training courses and the response of student-tutors to the training process is not as widespread. Most writing center research focuses on the tutorial and the relationship or work between the tutor and the student as the primary site of critical inquiry. Still, there is some history of and a recent and growing interest in studying student-tutors and assessing the value of writing centers on their educational experience. One enlightening ongoing study is the Peer Writing Tutor Alumni Research Project instituted by Paula Gillespie, Bradley

Hughes, and Harvey Kail, writing center directors at three different American universities. In Kail's presentation paper to the Conference on College Composition and Communication in 2006 about the project and its initial findings, he acknowledges the need for this type of research:

The value of peer tutoring for campus writers is something that we assess in writing centers every day through tutorial evaluations of one sort or another. But what we don't as often ask ourselves about is the value of collaborative learning for the tutors themselves. Writing centers and peer tutoring have been around for twenty-five years and more, so now seems a good time to look systematically at what peer writing tutors take with them into their lives and their work from the training and experience in this unique "center space" of higher education.

(Kail, "Situated" n.p.)

The focus of the Peer Writing Tutor Alumni Research Project is, in part, a reaction to a need both to continually define and justify the role of the writing center in higher education. In fact, the scholars involved in this study intimate that though writing centers play an important role in the academy by helping student writers, their research also "offers another way of thinking about the educational work that is accomplished in writing centers and suggests a second, powerful claim to centrality in the academy" based on the opportunities for student-tutors as learners (Gillespie, Hughes, and Kail, "Nothing Marginal" 36-37). Recognition of the writing center's value for student-tutors who are directly educated through training is important in terms of establishing the writing center as its own discipline within the academy and one valued for its direct instruction as well as research in the field.

The call for writing center research is well established and the editors of the anthology *Writing Center Research: Extending the Conversation* recognize the potential professionals in the field have attached to studying the center's work. They claim that "the center has been imagined as a kind of 'natural laboratory,' a research site that would yield unique insights into students' writing development and the pedagogies that assist such development" (Gillespie et al., "Introduction" xv). However, they also admit that "this great promise remains as yet unfulfilled" (Gillespie et al., "Introduction" xv). Their book, exclusively dedicated to writing center research, merges discussion of research methodology with research results and critiques of those methods as a way of helping "inexperienced writing center staffers" undertake the important work of research in their own centers (Gillespie et al., "Preface" xi). The editors discuss the evolution of research throughout writing center history and cite the importance of practitioner inquiry in the form of "case studies and ethnographic studies free from the pretense of positivistic claims to generalizable truth" as a "valued...form of knowledge making by the writing center research community" (Gillespie et al., "Introduction" xxi).

This qualitative study pairs the practitioner inquiry research valued in writing center communities with New Literacy Studies' emphasis on "the importance of understanding education as a process of transformation rather than an assimilation" (Grimm, "In the Spirit" 53). In addition, this study responds to the call for writing center research in hopes of making a small contribution to the gap in studies about classroom tutor training and student-tutors as learners. Specifically, the study analyzes the ways in which student-tutors transform as writers and asks the question: How do student tutors'

writing identities transform¹ through tutor training and how does that transformation affect their identities as tutors?

To answer this question, it is important to consider writing center history, theory, and pedagogy, as well as college writing studies to compose a view of students within an institutional system that values writing as a process, but seeks, through writing center work, to move students into a dialectic that complicates and improves that process. First, literature related to writing center history, tutoring pedagogy, tutor training, and student writing is explored. Then, data gathered using ethnographic techniques such as observation, survey, and textual analysis is evaluated to illustrate how students transform as writers throughout tutor training.

Chapter I: Literature Survey

History of Writing Centers

In Stephen North's landmark essay "The Idea of the Writing Center," he reminds us that writing center "heritage...stretches back farther than the late 1960s or the early 1970s, or [even] the 1930s [when North claims the very first hints of writing centers appear in education]—back, in fact, to Athens, where in a busy marketplace a tutor called Socrates set up the same kind of shop: open to all comers, no fees charged, offering, on whatever subject a visitor might propose, a continuous dialectic that is, finally its own end" (85). This dialogue is, in part, the subject of North's essay—one of the most widely quoted articles on writing centers and what the editors of *Writing Center Research* describe, in 2001, as "...probably still the most influential essay in the field" (Gillespie et al., "Introduction" xix). North's comparison to Socrates, though dramatic, illustrates an

¹ Transformation indicates a change rather than simply the absorption of concrete knowledge through an educational experience.

attempt to link to a tradition of collaborative learning that some scholars assert writing centers have embraced throughout their history; one reason for North's influence is his effort to debunk the misunderstanding that writing centers are merely "fix it shop[s]" (North, "The Idea" 75) that attend to editing and proofreading student writing.

Some scholars believe the notion of the writing center as a "skills" lab that focuses on fixing grammar and punctuation deficiencies in students' texts has its foundations in the history of early writing center work in academic institutions. In *Landmark Essays on Writing Centers*, editors Christina Murphy and Joe Law discuss the misperception that writing centers came into being during the 1960s or 1970s ("Introduction" xi). They state that "writing centers have been part of American higher education since the 1930s," and they suggest that early writing centers were focused on local concerns such as grammar and punctuation that corresponded with writing instruction and "the text as a 'product' that could be modified to be brought into accord with the accepted standards and conventions of edited prose (Murphy and Law, "Introduction" xi). However, Peter Carino, a preeminent scholar of writing center history, claims that early writing centers were not simply assisting students whose grammar and punctuation skills were deficient ("Early" 113). Though Carino admits that grammar instruction and editing were part of the function of early centers, he posits that early versions of writing centers addressed global concerns in student writing ("Early" 113).

Carino calls for both a broad and local understanding of writing center history through a "cultural model," and, as part of that model, he highlights the influence of policies such as open admissions and current-traditional rhetoric on writing centers as they evolved ("Open" 43). Similarly, Murphy and Law recognize a connection between

writing centers and the institutional and instructional systems at work in higher education and state that writing centers “have undergone numerous redefinitions in responding to (and shaping) the dominant paradigms of writing instruction in the twentieth century” (“Introduction” xi). Though Carino asserts that writing center history is not “a neat progression from current-traditional rhetoric, to expressionism, to social construction in lab practice” (“Early” 113), scholars still frequently describe a shift, starting in the late 1960s or early 1970s, in the way centers operated.

North links the shift during that time frame to instructional writing practices aligned with the process movement (“The Idea” 76). However, rather than rely on what he considered a cliché statement at the time he wrote his influential essay—that writing centers from the 1970s forward emanated from the process movement in composition—he defined the objective of the writing center as one in which “writers, and not necessarily their texts, are what get changed by instruction” (“The Idea” 76). Though this statement works in conjunction with composition’s theory of process and a focus on the student, it also suggests a move away from the parent discipline of composition through the succinct articulation of an independent objective for writing centers (Clark 33-34, Carino, “Open” 45). Writing Center scholars regularly quote North’s statement, and it has become a leading philosophy for writing center work.

In a later article, North expresses discomfort with the “extent to which [the writing center community] has endorsed” his vision of the writing center (“Revisiting” 10). Though he does not change his statement about the objective of writing centers, North exposes his idealization of writing center work and indicates the need to examine the various relationships that affect that work, including the relationship between the

writing center and the academic institution (“Revisiting” 10). North admits “that institutional arrangements...[are] too idiosyncratic, and writing centers' political visions too varied, for...[him] to tell” in which direction “all writing center people-are going” (“Revisiting” 15), and describes writing center work based on his own. North’s article corresponds to Carino’s suggestion that understanding writing centers means “accounting for the multiple forces in play at various moments and demonstrating that writing centers and those who work in them are always imbricated in the history of writing programs, higher education, and public debate, as well as in local and even personal imperatives” (“Open” 39).

In an overview of writing center pedagogy, Hobson also addresses the idea that writing centers are shaped by their locales. He states:

The variety of programs and practices operating under the rubric of ‘writing center’ is one aspect of the writing center community that catches newcomers to composition studies off guard. No two writing centers are alike; each program has a distinct personality; each center is defined as much by its local context as by any overarching definition of ‘writing center.’ (“Writing Center Pedagogy” 168-69)

While it is true that each center has a personality dependent upon locale and even the imperatives of a specific academic department or writing center director, writing center pedagogy is consistent in some aspects, in particular in embracing the ideology of non-directive tutoring practices.

Non-Directive/Directive Tutoring Pedagogy

Steven Corbett posits that minimalist tutoring (non-directive tutoring)—collaboration between the tutor and the student during which conversation about global issues of writing such as content and organization are privileged—has become the “default instructional mode in one-to-one tutoring” (1). Corbett echoes Irene Clark who notes that for the several decades preceding the twenty-first century “writing center scholarship has embraced a non-directive pedagogy, characterizing the ideal interaction between a writing center tutor and a student client as one in which the tutor intervenes as little as possible” (Clark 33). Clark asserts that non-directive pedagogy results from several factors including: 1. open admissions as part of the social ethics of the process movement 2. the process movement’s rejection of current-traditional instruction 3. the need to assure other instructors that writing center work is not a form of plagiarism and 4. Stephen North's article “The Idea of a Writing Center” and its redefinition of the objective of writing centers (33-34). Though Clark acknowledges the place of North’s “The Idea” in the canon of influential writing center literature, she cites Jeff Brooks’ “Minimalist Tutoring” as the best articulation of non-directive pedagogy (33-34).

Brooks proposes strategies for “Basic Minimalist Tutoring” and “Advanced Minimalist Tutoring,” which include “discuss[ing] strategies for effective writing...[and] principles of structure,” “draw[ing] students’ attention to features in their writing,” “giv[ing] support and encouragement” and, even, adopting an adversarial stance when the student wants a tutor to give her explicit instruction (84). Brooks directs tutors to make the student do all the work and, like North, asserts that the student is more important than the paper (87). Corbett, however, finds flaws in Brooks’ ideology and argues for a

flexible approach based on criticism of strict non-directive tutoring (1). Corbett outlines the various critiques and specifically cites Irene Clark and Dave Healy who link non-directive practices to a “moral imperative” in academics that emerged from a “fear of plagiarism” (Corbett 2). Additionally, Corbett points out that some scholars believe “a strict minimalist approach forecloses the act of collaboration that could take place in a one-to-one, collaborative negotiation that takes both the tutor’s and the tutee’s goals into consideration” (2). Other scholars, claims Corbett, feel non-directive tutoring is “manipulative, and still leaves the tutor very much in control of the session” (2). Nancy Grimm, author of *Good Intentions*—a book length critique of writing center practice—, is particularly concerned about the effect of non-directive practices on students who are outside the mainstream. Corbett cites Grimm’s idea that non-directive tutoring “protect[s] the status quo and withhold[s] insider knowledge” (qtd. in Corbett 3).

Corbett illustrates that a flexible tutoring pedagogy is necessary and that tutors should concern themselves with each interaction and, in particular, the stage of the draft in question to establish an appropriate approach to peer-tutoring (6). Though contemporary scholars continue to debate the idea of peer-tutoring in terms of its relation to directive and non-directive tutoring practices, most peer-tutor training courses adopt an approach to tutoring that is primarily non-directive and collaborative in nature.

Peer Tutoring & Training

Kenneth Bruffee, a scholar of collaborative learning practices, claims that “...peer tutoring began as an educational experiment during the early 1970s” and that it is now “...an accepted part of American college and university education almost everywhere” (“Peer Tutoring and Institutional” 93). Bruffee also asserts that “[t]he degree of peership

(sic) that tutors maintain with their tutees is governed largely by the way peer tutors themselves are taught to tutor” (“Peer Tutoring and Institutional” 98). Though Bruffee finds peer tutor to peer tutor learning an effective guide to tutoring practice, he notes that the best college and university tutor training programs are “credit-bearing courses” that are “collaborative” because they “...help tutors learn to engage their tutees on substantive issues by fostering the tutors’ own active membership in a coherent learning community” (“Peer Tutoring and Institutional” 98). Bruffee also believes that effective tutoring courses teach tutors explicitly not to model their tutoring practice on teaching or “imitating their professors” (99). Bruffee’s comments, along with those of other scholars (Geller et al., “Origami” 49), lead to the understanding that tutor training needs to provide the type of environment writing center administrators wish tutors to adopt in tutorials.

To create this type of learning environment, tutoring courses typically rely on similar types of materials. Kathleen Blake Yancey, who created a writing center training course for UNC Charlotte, notes that the three-credit course she instituted was similar to programs across the United States in its use of tutoring manuals, theoretical articles, mock tutorials, and lectures from speakers about accommodating multiple styles of learning (190). Yancey is also one of many scholars who attends to the understanding of tutor learning, specifically how students acquire tutoring skills, and in particular through training.

Tutors as Learners and Writers

With a growing understanding of the need to study tutor learning, Geller et al. promote the creation of a learning culture for student-tutors that supports their changing

identity. In the article “Straighten Up and Fly Right: Writers as Tutors, Tutors as Writers,” the editors of *The Everyday Writing Center* state: “Those of us who educate tutors must be mindful...as we are in danger of forgetting one (at least one) powerful motivating factor that brings tutors to their work in writing centers: namely, their sense of themselves as writers” (Geller et al. 73). Writing is at the heart of not only writing center tutorials but also student-tutors’ identities.

Tutors are students from multiple literacy backgrounds immersed in academic culture, trying to use their varied experiences as they make sense of their new community. Student-tutors are by definition some of the most successful students in making sense of their new world (as indicated by grades and writing samples), so we should look at where they converge with and diverge from other student writers in the arena of writing.

Undergraduate Student Writers

Studies of undergraduate writing provide a framework for understanding student-tutors as student writers. These studies take many forms; academic institutions use them to assess and evaluate the effectiveness of their writing across the curriculum programs or to gain knowledge about students’ experiences with writing in college while other scholars use studies to posit theories about writing. The most useful studies are those that allow us to form a profile of students as writers. I intend to use the work of Nancy Sommers, a Harvard professor and writing research scholar, to build a profile of students as writers and later use some of her work to discuss theories surrounding their writing experiences in academia. One of Sommers’ studies, discussed in the article “Revision Strategies of Student Writers and Experienced Adult Writers,” though dated, offers a

good comparison of student writers to experienced adult writers that is helpful in the building of just such a profile.

Though Sommers describes students' revision practices, her work also illustrates an overall picture of student writing at the college level. Specifically, Sommers' comparison of student writers to experienced adult writers suggests that students typically follow a linear process to accomplish their writing, view composition as a series of parts, and use the thesis as a "controlling device" for their papers ("Revision" 48). Sommers posits that this limits "...not only the development of their ideas, but also their ability to change the direction of these ideas" ("Revision" 48). For students, Sommers claims, revision is not "an activity in which they modify and develop perspectives and ideas..." ("Revision" 58); instead, "student writers constantly struggle to bring their essays into congruence with a predefined meaning" ("Revision" 51) and view the entire revision process as a "rewording activity" ("Revision" 46).

On the other hand, Sommers notes, experienced adult writers do not follow a linear process as they create first drafts. In fact, Sommers classified these writers' first drafts as "...scattered attempts to define their territory," while later drafts serve as the beginning of a process to find "general patterns of development" in their writing ("Revision" 50). Sommers also noted that experienced adult writers were more apt to "imagine a reader (reading their product) whose existence and whose expectations influence their revision process" ("Revision" 50). Adult experienced writers, Sommers' claims, are "recursive" ("Revision" 52) writers who view writing as "the process of discovering meaning" ("Revision" 51). Sommers notes that it is "a sense of writing as

discovery—a repeated process of beginning over again, starting out new—that the students failed to have” (“Revision” 53).

Writing as a Process

Writing as a linear process and one that advances in stages and steps is a direct byproduct of composition’s process movement. Though the process movement shifted from a focus on the text to a focus on the student and his or her own interests through the learning process, it also produced a view of writing that moves through discrete linear stages. Lad Tobin, in his article “Process Pedagogy,” points out that one of the criticisms of process pedagogy is “that it has turned into the kind of rules-driven product that it originally critiqued” (10). Tobin qualifies this statement by revealing that it isn’t process pedagogy in and of itself that is flawed, but simply the way it has been used by certain instructors and the composition textbook industry (7). Still, he admits that writing “occurs in series of steps and stages” (Tobin 7).

Post-Process Implications

Recent composition theory critiques the process movement through the articulation of post-process theory and suggests a move away from process pedagogy. Lee-Ann Kastman Breuch notes that proponents of post-process theory “have suggested that process (prewriting, writing, rewriting) is no longer an adequate explanation of the writing act” and that “the process paradigm has reduced the writing act to a series of codified phases that can be taught” (97). Kastman Breuch argues that writing should be reconsidered as “an activity” with teaching as “indeterminate” rather than focused on “mastery” and should include “dialogic” interaction with students (98).

Kastman Breuch also discusses theorists who advocate a post-process pedagogy that involves dialogic classrooms, despite post-process theorists “claim[s] that writing cannot be taught” and that post-process theory “resist[s] pedagogical application” (99). Though Kastman Breuch generally agrees that instructors should not “[fall] prey to what Sidney Dobrin calls the ‘pedagogical imperative’” to teach writers the basic premise of post-process theory—that writing is public, that writing is interpretive, that writing is situated—, she asserts that there are “implications” for teaching “which include mentoring and tutorial approaches to writing instruction” (117). Specifically, Kastman Breuch cites writing center work, which is “reminiscent of the post-process rejection of a grand theory or narrative to describe communicative practice,” as a possibility for pedagogy and theory to work in harmony (121). Kastman Breuch does not directly explore the possibilities of writing center work as post-process pedagogy in her article, but she states that she “disagree[s] with those scholars who suggest post-process theory should remain a theoretical enterprise” (122).

I concur with Kastman Breuch that post-process theory fits within the framework of writing center work and has philosophical pedagogical applications. However, I also feel it is worth exploring what Dobrin classifies as a “pedagogical imperative” regarding post-process theory. Kastman Breuch cites Dobrin’s insistence that to “articulate any kind of pedagogy based on anti-foundationalism would be to support the claim that knowledge can be rooted in a particular approach or system and, therefore, would no longer be anti-foundational” (qtd. in Kastman Breuch 117). Dobrin states: “It is for this reason that I do not advocate a specific pedagogical agenda that espouses post-process theory, for I believe doing so presents an inherent paradox” (qtd. in Kastman Breuch 117). Kastman

Breuch furthers this argument by quoting Stanley Fish who states that “we ought not to place too much pedagogical stock in anti-foundationalist assumptions such as situatedness” (qtd. in Kastman Breuch 117) and clarifies his idea with the following statement:

To put the matter in a nutshell, the knowledge that one is in a situation has no particular payoff for any situation you happen to be in, because the constraints of that situation will not be relaxed by that knowledge. It follows, then, that teaching our students the lesson of anti-foundationalism, while it will put them in possession of a new philosophical perspective, will not give them a tool for operating in the world they already inhabit. Being told that you are in a situation will help you neither to dwell in it more perfectly nor to write within it more successfully. (qtd. in Kastman Breuch 117)

Kastman Breuch agrees with this powerful argument and uses it to articulate her claim that “accepting post-process assumptions truly implies a ‘letting go’ of the desire to find a right way to learn and teach writing” (118).

Though it makes sense that teaching situatedness as knowledge represents a paradox, I disagree with Stanley Fish when he claims that “being told that you are in a situation will help you neither to dwell in it more perfectly nor to write within it more successfully” (qtd. in Katman Breuch 117). Tutor training, in particular, appears to evidence something different, and it is interesting to consider tutor training as a pedagogical application of post-process theory. Tutor training does give into the “pedagogical imperative” and teaches students that they are situated, but through the exploration of the concept of social discourse, not directly. If tutor training is a

constructivist process, it appears that students face a conflict about writing and learning. That conflict does not necessarily fully resolve; instructors do not seek to tell students there is a right or wrong way to learn or teach or tutor writing. It is through this conflict that student-tutors create a new identity—one which includes a new awareness of writing and more confidence (without overarching, universal theories dictated) that ultimately allows them to “dwell within [a situation] more perfectly” (qtd. in Kastman Bruech), and it is with this in mind that I turn my attention to the study of student-tutor training and the awareness student-tutors gain through it.

Chapter II: Research Design and Research Question

Research Methodology

To understand and report on student-tutors’ learning, I chose to conduct a qualitative study using ethnographic techniques such as observation and surveying combined with extensive close reading of student work as a form of textual analysis, one borrowed from my discipline of English. As Wendy Bishop recognizes in her book *Ethnographic Writing Research*, “[a] careful reading and note taking and rereading of transcripts...is no less useful or meaningful than...numerical tabulations and is often much more accessible to readers” (116). My research was approved by the Institutional Review Board for Human Subject Research, and the participants all signed informed consent to participate forms after a brief presentation about the study.

Survey: I began the study by surveying the twelve student participants on the first day of the tutoring practicum both for profile data and to assess their understanding of the writing process and tutoring prior to instruction. I conducted a second survey on the final day of the practicum to help determine how student-tutors’ ideas had changed and also to

form a sense of their level of confidence regarding both writing and tutoring after completing training and a semester as practicing tutors.

Observation: I observed in-class 15 times over the course of the semester, primarily weekly, though on one occasion I attended both class periods during a week. The class periods were each one hour and twenty minutes long. Observation was a limitation of the study as the course met twice weekly for the duration of the semester, but, due to personal time constraints, I was able only to observe once per week (see Limitations of the Study). However, I observed primarily on the days when student-tutors led discussion about writing center theory or when the syllabus topics involved discussion of composing methods and tutoring in relation to those methods.

Textual Analysis: During the course, I collected student work, including written assignments, tutoring reflections, final published papers about individual tutoring practices, online discussion questions and answers relating to the theory student-tutors were reading from a forum called TutorTalk, and their final in-class writing in response to two prompts given by instructors. In *Ethnographic Writing Research*, Wendy Bishop suggests that "...while research entails unearthing information, it is the textual analysis that poses the questions which the research sets out to answer" (Bishop 167), and she describes her method of textual analysis as "[making] a list of the questions posed by the text and [arriving] at my own tentative, provisional answers..." (Bishop 160-161). I used this method in conjunction with close reading as a way of entering my own analysis, though I also read current literature and used it as a lens through which to understand tutor training and student learning and writing.

Limitations of the Study

Though the course met twice weekly, my observation was limited to once weekly over the course of 14 weeks, with one exception. Also, I was unable to interview participants or verify results by discussing my findings with them. Additionally, I did not record the class periods, but relied on note taking to provide transcripts of student discussion. Therefore, my samples of student conversation were not pure in the sense that though I noted the main ideas with the exact wording from student-tutors, the phrasing of discussions, including the exactness of article usage and other minor context, was limited by my note-taking abilities. Because of this I primarily used classroom observation as background for my interpretation and speak more generally about it, rather than using direct quotations from class conversation.

Profile of the Tutoring-Learning Center

The Mary Croft Tutoring-Learning Center (TLC) is housed under the umbrella of library services and serves the approximately 9000 student population at a four year public university. Free services include reading and writing tutorials and computer skills sessions. The TLC also houses a content tutoring program which is free to qualifying students or available for a fee. Additionally, an academic literacy coordinator is on staff and offers free assistance to those struggling with college transition, probation, and other academic difficulties. 6 full-time staff members operate the center, with approximately 150 (Giblin “Tutors”) tutors in all areas. In fall of 2010, 2145 (Giblin “Tutorials”) Reading and Writing tutorials were conducted by peer-tutors and academic staff, including the participants in this study.

The Role of the Researcher

My role in this study was primarily as an observer, though it is possible to consider me a participant-observer in the sense that I tutored regularly during the course of this study and joined some of the research participants at the tutor table, conversing each week informally and as a peer about tutoring. Though I did not participate in the training course as a student or instructor, on a few occasions I participated as a veteran tutor to share some of my tutoring experiences.

Research Question

I began the semester with a broad question, wondering in what ways tutor training was transformational for students. Though I had answers from my own experience three semesters earlier—it allowed me to examine my own composing behaviors in-depth and further highlighted the expectations of academic writing, all the while pointing out that a lack of understanding of discourse conventions may have explained previous academic writing struggles—I wondered in what way other students' experiences were the same or different from my own.

Initially, I was most interested in whether or not the course changed how student-tutors felt about their own composing processes. When I conducted my first survey, I asked questions to assess student-tutors' understanding of the writing process prior to entering the course, including whether or not their composing toolbox included collaboration, if they realized the ideas in a paper were more important than grammar or punctuation, and what they felt were their particular writing strengths. I also asked

student-tutors to describe their writing processes and what it meant to “edit”² their papers. In one sense, I wanted to test student-tutors against Nancy Sommers’, a Harvard professor and writing research scholar, description of student writers’ “understanding of the revision process as requiring lexical changes but not semantic changes” (“Revision” 48).

After giving and reviewing the first survey, I noted that all but one student understood that the most important part of writing an academic paper is the content, not mechanics. I considered that the thread I hoped to follow of classifying student-tutors based on Sommers’ definition of student writers who through the course moved closer to Sommers’ definition of adult experienced writers was a dead-end. For most of the semester, I naively considered this line of questioning a failure. As a result, I focused on understanding students as tutors and their reactions to both the theory they were reading and their actual tutoring experiences.

However, as I analyzed data and re-read literature, I returned to my original question and found both my understanding of Sommers’ work and the issue of student-tutors’ understanding of the writing process different and, ultimately, more complicated than I had first assessed. I also realized, since tutors are implicated in helping other student-tutors understand composing processes, there was a link between what student-tutors understood and learned about composing through training and tutoring. As Geller et al. acknowledge, tutors’ “identities as writers” affect their tutoring practices (“Straighten Up” 73). So I combined the idea of questioning how student-tutors’ ideas

² Though I used the term “edit” on the survey, a term used regularly in the publishing industry in which I work and one which denotes more than proofreading, I meant and the students understood that term as “revise,” the term more typically used in academics.

about the writing process transformed (as I originally intended) and that transformation was connected to their tutoring practices.

Chapter III: Profile Data and Classroom Information

Profile of Student-Tutors

The participants in this study are 11 undergraduate students and one graduate student who enrolled in the fall 2010 Education 370/570 University Level Reading and Writing tutoring practicum offered through the Tutoring-Learning Center at a mid-western state university. All twelve student-tutors agreed to participate after learning about the study through a brief in-class presentation and reading a description of the study on the informed consent to participate in human subject research form, the text of which was previously approved, as was the research, through the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRB). The eleven undergraduates were of typical college age (though I did not gather age specific data); 8 were first-semester sophomores and 3 were first-semester juniors. The one graduate student self-reported as age 25 (she turned 26 during the course) and was in the final year of her degree. Of the eleven undergraduates, 9 were female, 2 were male. The graduate student was female. Of the twelve students, only three of them enrolled in the 101/102 Freshman English sequence; 6 of the students were placed in Advanced Freshman English (150); and 3 received Credit by Exam (Giblin "Contact"). All undergraduate participants revealed during in-class discussions that they grew up in the state, most of them in smaller towns within a short radius of the university town where the study was conducted. The graduate student spent her childhood in California, but self-reported that she was raised with mid-western values and felt more at home in her current location, the college town in which

this study took place. She had also completed her bachelor's degree at the state university where she was pursuing the graduate degree. The participants were all white, and they gave the impression that they had little experience interacting with diverse groups of people, though both the graduate student and one undergraduate student had spent a semester abroad in Europe and several students had some other language training through high school and college. All of the students listed English as their native language. 4 of the 12 students listed prior tutoring experience. 2 of the 12 students reported reading material on tutoring, composition, or writing centers, prior to entering the course. The undergraduate students listed their majors/minors as follows: English Education, Biology, Undeclared, History and Social Science, Psychology/Biology/Creative Writing, Elementary Education, Spanish w/pre-PA (medical), Undecided/Spanish minor, Pre-physical therapy, Biology, English/Natural Science/Creative Writing, and the graduate student was pursuing a Master of Science in Teaching English.

Criteria to Enter the Course and Tutor

Education 370/570 is listed on the university timetable with a pre-requisite requirement. Professors recommend students for the position, and students apply to enroll in the course. The following is the criteria established by the Tutoring-Learning Center instructors (the Director of the Tutoring-Learning Center and the Coordinator of Tutoring) to determine eligibility:

1. Faculty Recommendation
2. Grade of A in the Freshman English sequence or English 150, or tested out

3. 3.5 GPA (with some exceptions for lower GPAs based on grades in difficult courses such as Chemistry)
4. Successful interview with either instructor, including agreement that all students will be served
5. Completed Application packet, including acceptable writing sample with evidence of documentation
6. Commitment to taking the class once permissions are sent out (Giblin “Tutoring Criteria”)

The Meaning of the Criteria to Tutor and Relation to the Profile

The requirements to enter the course lead to the conclusion that tutors are typically successful students with good academic standing and proven writing skills who are considered both able and responsible in the eyes of faculty, including the practicum instructors. Though the above holds true for all tutors entering the course, each semester a new group of tutors is chosen, so the group participating in this study is not necessarily a typical representation of students enrolled in the course beyond the criteria listed.

During my own enrollment three semesters earlier as a graduate student, participants included several non-traditional undergraduate students, with some ethnic diversity, and several students with out of country service experience through the military, volunteer missions, or global volunteer programs. The instructors strive to choose a diverse group of students from a broad range of majors and include non-traditional students and graduate students as recommended. However, they are limited by faculty recommendations and also the general make-up of the student body at the university. In 2010, there were 9,489 students enrolled (both undergraduate and

graduate). Of the 9054 undergraduate students, 8129 reported as White (Summers “Student Demographics”). The majority of students, 92%, are residents of Wisconsin; 61% of students grew up in smaller cities and towns with populations of 50K or less. 19% of students are from rural locations or farms (Summers “Student Demographics”).

Pedagogical Goals /Learning Outcomes

The following are the Learning Outcomes for the Tutor Practicum Course. Improved writing skills and confidence in writing are not listed as learning outcomes, though the course is a writing emphasis class and the synthesis of theoretical perspectives and translation from theory to practice plays a part in a writing learning outcome.

1. Participants will acquire a deep understanding of the various ways that students make meaning through language (reading, writing, speaking) as well as the social and cultural influences that also impact their learning.
2. Participants will be able to synthesize related theoretical perspectives and translate theory to practice.
3. Participants will understand the importance of collaborative learning.
4. Participants will be able to meet all of the recordkeeping requirements necessary to work in the TLC’s Writing Center and to serve as teaching assistants for English 157, 257, and 357 courses. (Giblin Syllabus)

Reading and Writing Tutoring

In the fall of 2010, student-tutors, of which the participants in this study were part, conducted 2,145 tutorials (Giblin “Tutorials”). In tutorials, Reading & Writing tutors specialize in discussing with other students any type of writing (academic papers, job applications, resumes, personal statements, and creative writing), as well as assisting

with reading strategies and study skills. Student-tutors also act as Teaching Assistants (TAs) for Independent Writing Courses offered by the English department, in which students enroll for 1 credit. The courses are not graded by either a professor or the TA (they are pass/fail), and most students who take the classes focus on creative writing or projects that will help them after college such as resumes or personal statements for graduate school or law school. The writing must be independent from the work in any other university course in which a student is enrolled. Additionally, students meet 12 times with a student-tutor and conform to word counts established based on the level of the course (157/257/357).

Student-tutors are trained to respond to these two roles in similar ways—as peer collaborators—but with instruction to align more closely to a Teaching Assistant as a tutor of independent writers by offering more direct advice, giving writing prompts as necessary, and guiding students more closely to help establish and adhere to deadlines as they progress through completion of their work.

Writing Emphasis & Types of Writing

Education 370/570 is designated as an official Writing Emphasis³ class through the university. The student-tutors enrolled in the course write extensively in a number of different ways. Student-tutors respond to their early readings from tutor training guides (*The Bedford Guide for Writing Tutors*, 4th ed. and *The Longman Guide to Peer Tutoring*, 2nd ed.) by answering open-ended writing prompt questions; complete two reflective

³ According to the university web site, Writing Emphasis “provides instruction necessary to develop skills for appropriate and successful writing within a discipline or profession.” Bachelor degrees require 6 credits of Writing Emphasis courses. (UWSP Catalog).

essays about tutorial sessions—one at the beginning of the semester and one later on—; pose questions to other student-tutors about the theory they read; formulate answers to other students' questions about writing and reading theory in an online forum; write weekly logs detailing tutoring sessions; and workshop two creative writing pieces for publication—one which is in a genre entirely new to them and one which is a final reflective essay about their semester of tutoring meant as a guide for student-tutors enrolled in the course the following semester. Though student-tutor writing is read by the instructors, writing, as an activity or as a product, is not graded; instead, instructors engage in dialogue with student-tutors simply by responding to their work in a conversational, rather than evaluative manner.

Classroom Method & Student Response

The Tutoring-Learning Practicum is a constructivist classroom. Student-tutors are collaborators in a discussion-based and sometimes student-led course; they are instrumental in creating their own meaning in relation to the tutor training guides and tutoring and composing theory they read. The course is typical of tutor training programs in the use of tutor training manuals, tutoring theory articles, and reflective writing as classroom practice. However, one of the distinguishing features of the course is the use of the online “TutorTalk” forum in which students generate questions and answers relating to the theory they read prior to each of five student-led discussions. The instructors do not participate in either the TutorTalk forum or student-led class discussions; however, they read the questions and answers generated online and are present in the classroom during the discussions. Student-tutors also write in-class in response to creative writing prompts and workshop two pieces of writing for a class publication.

The practicum as a constructivist classroom mimics the tutoring role. Just as student-tutors dissect their own composing, reading, and study methods and just as they develop questions in online dialogue and discussion (from which the instructors are excluded) to create their own meaning, they attempt to set up the same type of environment in the tutoring booth. However, though student-tutors are expected to work primarily in a non-directive manner using open-ended questions to elicit thoughtful responses from students, a flexible approach that includes some direct instruction is encouraged as needed.

Student Response to Constructivist Classroom

Student-tutors, as I observed, are nervous on the first day of class as they consider their role and wonder whether or not they need to be writing and grammar “experts.” Some students even wonder if they have made the correct decision to take the course and become tutors. Jeff⁴ revealed both his insecurity and the resolution of it in the following statement about the first day of class: “When I first walked into the room, I, as we all do, judged everyone in the room. At first glance, I thought there were people who I would never personally associate with on a regular basis. I was intimidated by others’ outward intelligence. I felt different somehow. But, as practicum and tutoring wore on, I found myself relaxed and comfortable in class and the booth. And, I was friends with everyone in the class and could honestly relate to everyone in the room.” Jeff also identified his inclusion in the practicum community as key in his training experience: “The most important thing I can take away from Practicum is my acceptance of and integration into a society of which I didn’t think I belonged.” By the end of the course, other student-

⁴ Student-tutors have been given pseudonyms to protect their identities as part of IRB Human Subject research requirements.

tutors reflected in similar and positive ways on the classroom training experience, as illustrated in the following sample of responses:

“This course has been by far the most valuable academic experience I have ever had.”

“I feel as though I have learned more in this class in a semester than I have learned in any other classes in college. This may be due to the fact that our class was very open and there were always intelligent conversations taking place.”

“I do not believe that I have ever felt as intellectually stimulated as I did during these discussions, which was an amazing feeling.”

“I felt really free to say what I thought without fear of judgment, and that’s a rarity...In my other discussion-based classes, the teachers like me only because I’m not afraid to speak up. Here, I feel like I am appreciated because I am me, and because I bring something unique to the table.”

“I will remember practicum as my safe class...I was not just another face in a lecture hall. I actually have relations with my professors and classmates! Participating in discussions was another outlet where I could speak freely and be heard.”

“...[I gained] a whole new outlook on education that I don’t think I’ll ever lose...”

These statements not only affirm constructivist methods but also evidence the positive influence of tutor training pedagogy, including dialogue and collaboration, on students, in particular in relation to their place within the social context of academics. Acceptance into a particular academic community, especially for those student-tutors like Jeff who began the semester with an undecided major, was integral to student transformation. Both early in their writings and at the end of the course, student-tutors describe the creation of a “new outlook” or “new mindset” as part of their educational

experience, and it is that transformed identity in relation to writing that this study examines.

Chapter IV: Findings & Data Analysis

Introduction

This study analyzes how student-tutors transitioned from what I term a pre-training student-writer identity to a post-training student-tutor writing identity. To illustrate this transition, I first introduce and interpret data related to a survey of student-tutors on the first day of the course, prior to training. The purpose of the initial survey was to gather basic background data (reported in the Profile of Student-Tutors) and to assess student-tutors' understanding of themselves as writers. Second, I report data from the final survey given to student-tutors on the last day of the course—to compare some of their previous answers about writing and also to better understand them as tutors—and briefly examine the relationship between the pre-training and post-training writing identity.

Though this presentation may seem to set up the dichotomy of pre-training and post-training identities as tidy representations that move student-tutors linearly from “novice to expert” (Geller et al., “Origami” 49), it is important to keep in mind Nancy Welch’s caution not to adopt the narrative of “innocence-to-experience” as we research and read students’ tutoring stories (Welch 218). Therefore, this study, though it reports themes and patterns found in student-tutors’ conceptions of themselves as writers and tutors both pre and post training, places additional emphasis on the middle space of student transformation. After presenting data related to student-tutors’ pre and post writing identities, I examine and interpret how and why student-tutors transformed

through training. I illustrate this transformation by discussing student-tutors' texts about the writing process and their online and in-class responses to theory about writing. I then consider students as tutors by evaluating responses related to their concept of peer-tutoring both pre and post training. Finally, I pose a brief interpretation of the relationship of student-tutors' writing identity to their tutoring identity.

Students' Pre-Training Writing Identity

To assess student-tutors' writing background prior to tutor training survey questions were asked to determine the following: 1. Perceived Writing Strength or Specific Ability. 2. Type of Writing Process from start to finish 3. Revision Strategies. 4. Perceived importance of global issues (ideas/content/organization) versus local issues (punctuation and grammar) in academic writing. 5. Collaboration as a strategy used outside of the classroom (both with students and professors). 6. Understanding of the concept of academic discourse conventions.

Writing Strengths

Finding: The majority of student-tutors listed typical academic abilities relating to argument, organization, research, and grammar and punctuation as strengths; no consistent pattern emerged in the specific strengths listed. However, over half the participants responded with language that denoted some form of personal or creative expression as either a primary or secondary strength. For instance, Lucy wrote: "I feel as though I am good at creative writing and organizing my papers," while Natascha stated: "I am very good at researching and organizing information, but I also love to do creative writing." Other student-tutors simply listed "creative writing" as a specific strength, and one used the non-specific phrase "Casual writing" that I interpret as some form of

personal non-academic expression because the term “casual” is defined as “natural and unstudied” (Princeton WordNet n.p.).

Analysis: Though it is not surprising that student-tutors are interested in creative writing (those who tutor are often interested in writing outside of academics, regardless of discipline), it is instructive that students listed it as a specific strength and that they sometimes tied it to an expression of their academic abilities as noted in Lucy and Natascha’s responses. In a four year study of student writing conducted by Sharon Thomas and Julie Bevins of Michigan State University and Mary Ann Crawford of Central Michigan University, Thomas, Bevins, and Crawford report student interest in writing about personal topics. The focus of the study was broad with two overarching questions: “How are these students using writing to learn, and what are they learning about writing?” (Thomas, Bevins, and Crawford 150). However, during the first year of their study they narrowed their question to focus on “students’ ‘efforts to situate themselves within the academic culture of the University,’” and their findings suggest that a conflict exists between students’ urges to write based on their own interests versus “writing to satisfy a course requirement” (Thomas, Bevins, and Crawford 153).

With this in mind, I wondered if training for tutoring and tutoring itself would move students in one direction or another in terms of aligning with the academy and whether or not personal writing interests would be subsumed by the necessity to comply with academic discourse conventions. It also made me wonder if, since these students were a sampling of successful undergraduate writers, engagement with writing outside of specific academic tasks is a necessary component for writing success.

The Writing Process

Finding: Students reported that a linear process (topic invention or the use of idea or concept maps to generate topics, followed by outlines, introductions, then writing and proofreading) governed their academic writing experiences. Olivia describes her process in the following statement: “I start by writing and rewriting my introduction until I have a really clear idea of where I am headed with the rest of the paper. After this, the body of the paper comes naturally and then I work my conclusion to go along well with the intro. Then I proofread my writing over and over.” Angela revealed selection of a topic prior to starting her writing: “I start by figuring out what I’m going to write about. Then I form a basic outline and write my paper from that.” Erica described herself as a “chronological [sic] writer” who moves from “one paragraph to the next straight through to the conclusion,” and Lucy noted that she “chooses a topic for each paragraph.” Only one student, Natascha, mentioned prewriting which might suggest the use of writing to discover a topic and create meaning, but she specifically reported: “too much prewriting gets me lost in my own thoughts.” Still, Natascha was one of the most advanced writers in the group and also expressed the following: “It’s better to get it all out, then organize.”

Analysis: Admittedly, the wording of my question—Describe your writing process. When you have a paper to write how do you start? What additional steps do you take to complete the process—may have suggested the idea of stages or steps in the writing process. However, studies such as Nancy Sommers’ “Revision Strategies of Student Writers and Experienced Adult Writers” and Joyce Magnotto Neff’s Representations of College Writing (partially described in her article “Capturing Complexity: Using Grounded Theory to Study Writing Centers”) both assert that students at the college level

view the writing process as linear. Sommers indicates that students are linked to a linear model because they have been taught to use “the thesis statement as a controlling device in their introductory paragraphs” and that they limit discovery of meaning (“Revision” 48) by using this approach to writing. For Sommers, use of a linear model is one of the reasons students fail to adequately revise their work (“Revision” 48) and corresponds to her finding that for students revision is a “rewording activity” (“Revisions” 46).

Likewise, Neff’s table of Representations of College Writing lists student representations of writing under her Process category as “Linear” and “revision=polishing” (140).

Neff, however, also acknowledges that students in her study represent the writing process as “solitary,” “mysterious,” “painful,” and “constrained by slippery rules” (140), while Sommers did not mention similar representations in her analysis. The differences between Neff’s study and Sommers’ may result, in part, from the demographics of students who participated in the studies. Sommers evaluated the writing of twenty freshmen at Boston University and the University of Oklahoma enrolled in first semester composition and with SAT verbal scores between 400-600 (“Revision” 45). Neff, on the other hand, studied students who were using tutoring services at a “writing center at a large, metropolitan community college” (141). This study is based on student-tutors, primarily freshman and sophomores, who have at least 3.5 GPAs and are considered successful writers. Throughout my observations, the participants in this study exhibited a good relationship with writing, even though they report more confidence as writers by the end of the semester (see Student-Tutors’ Post-Training Writing Identity).

Examination of the commonalities between these studies leads to questions such as whether or not topic invention and the use of guiding parts of writing such as

introductions which promote a linear process is important for students to be successful college writers. Though this study should by no means be directly compared to Sommers' and Neff's large and long-term studies, there are both similarities and differences between those studies and this one. Though students in this study appear to adhere to a linear process and are successful student writers, I interpret hints of access to a more complex revision processes than the students in Sommers' or Neffs' studies.

Revision Strategies

Finding: When students were asked to describe how they edit⁵ their papers, the following three themes emerged as most important to their revision processes: 1. Grammar Checking related to global changes 2. Organization 3. Re-reading and Reading Aloud

Grammar Checking: Five students indicated they checked for grammar prior to addressing global concerns such as organization. Naomi wrote: "First I focus on grammar and then the ideas presented and how well they flow together." Sarah also remarked that grammar was checked prior to considering the structure of the paper: "I look for grammatical errors after I finish my paper first. Then I move onto placement of information and if I want to move information or remove it from my papers." Three others noted grammar checking as the final step in their process, and four students did not mention grammar or punctuation checking prior to submitting their papers, instead choosing to focus on the global processes involved in revision.

Analysis of Grammar Checking: Though students are taught that grammar and punctuation proofreading is the final step prior to turning in work, the fact that several students grammar checked before thinking about organization suggests the intertwining

⁵ The term "edit" was used on the survey to describe what is currently understood in academics as "revise," but based on student responses it is clear they understood edit to mean revision.

of word-level and sentence-level revision with global revisions. Though students are sometimes taught that correcting grammar is a poor use of time when the content and organization of the paper is still in question, it remains an important part of the revision process as more than a final step. There is also evidence for this conclusion based on tutoring work with undergraduate writers. Often, word and sentence level revisions are the impetus for students to make global changes.

Organization: The structure of papers is the most important part of the revision process for student-tutors. They rarely mentioned revising the content or ideas in their papers, though two students suggested the addition or removal of content during revision. Erica suggested she “will further develop...paragraphs [sic] ideas after the initial write” and Sarah noted that she would “move information or remove it.” Primarily, though, students were concerned with making certain their work was well organized. Natascha wrote: “I read for consistency in my ideas, a good, organized thought pattern and clarity in descriptions.” Jeff noted: “When editing a paper, I make sure that the paragraphs flow together nicely as well as the individual sentences.” Lucy said: “When I edit my papers, I first make sure the order I put it in makes sense.”

Analysis of Organization: Organization is, obviously, a key component of writing a successful academic paper. However, most students merely checked their work for structural coherence, rather than realizing that revision may also necessitate changing the meaning of their work through organization, the addition of new ideas, or deletion of portions of their work.

Reading Strategy: Several students mentioned “reading” in some context of their revision work. Sophia connected her reading strategy to audience, writing: “I always reread it as if

I am another person looking in to see if I am fluid.” Ted noted the following which suggests he reads the paper out loud: “I read through it, and when I come upon something that doesn’t sound right I fix it.” Erica also used reading aloud to “help ensure the paper reads smoothly and isn’t choppy.” Finally, Angela described an aggressive reading strategy and tied her revision to collaboration: “When I edit I’ll read it to myself multiple times, often out loud. I then have someone else read it and tell me what they think. From there I read it again and make whatever changes I see fit.”

Analysis of Reading Strategy: Reading aloud is a simple strategy about which some students are unaware. In the tutoring booth, students are often surprised by a request to read the work aloud and often remark how much it helps their revision process.

However, except in the case of Sophia and Angela who use more sophisticated versions of the strategy, there is a danger that reading aloud on one’s own will lead only to local changes that can be “heard,” rather than global changes which require in-depth critical analysis of meaning and are not auditory. In this case, the collaboration of tutor and student becomes important; while students read their work and catch smaller errors based on an auditory strategy, student-tutors respond to the meaning of the work. Sommers articulates that writing studies have often focused on a relation of writing to speech; what isn’t possible in speech, Sommers claims, is revision (“Revision” 43). One technique of experienced adult writers in writing professions, according to Sommers, is the use of rereading with audience in mind and the consideration of that audience as collaborators (Sommers, “Revision” 50).

Collaboration

Finding: It was clear from the initial survey that collaboration was at work in students' academic lives. However, collaboration was limited primarily to speaking with one other student outside of class only once about a particular piece of writing. Most students reported that they rarely or never spoke to professors about either their writing plans or their drafts outside of the classroom environment in individual conferences.

Analysis: This suggests that the writing center is a crucial space and that peer-tutoring in particular is important in the sense that students already seek out other students more regularly than professors who presumably also have time and workload constraints that limit possibilities for individual conferences. However, the small amount of collaboration student-tutors mention also indicates that students don't regularly seek out any help with writing and that they consider the writing process solitary. Student-tutors who are already successful college writers may seek out collaboration even less frequently. Still, this group of student-tutors remarked on their final surveys that they would use the writing center and seek out tutoring for future papers and assignments (see Student-Tutors' Post-Training Writing Identity, *Collaboration*).

Writing an Academic Paper

Finding: While most student-tutors acknowledged they did not meet with professors outside of class to discuss plans or papers, they aligned themselves with what they reported were their professors' beliefs that content and ideas are the most important parts of academic writing. One student-tutor even wrote: "I feel as though professors feel the same as I do." Another student-tutor mentioned "I make sure I know what the teacher wants," and that including the requirements was of vital importance. With only one

exception, student-tutors did not report grammar or mechanics as the most important part of writing a paper.

Analysis: Student-tutors are aware of what counts as good academic writing. They realize that organization, clarity, and conciseness are the keys to writing successful papers and that adhering to assignment requirements and understanding the particular desires of individual professors are important as well. This indicates that though student-tutors expressed desires for a personal connection to assignments or a love for creative writing, they realize they must sometimes subsume their own desires to meet the requirements of their courses and disciplines.

Discourse Conventions

Finding: When questioned about the most important part of writing an academic paper, student-tutors were also asked if it changed depending on the class. Most student-tutors simply ignored that part of the question. Some of them mentioned adhering to requirements as discussed above, and the two students who answered the question more directly wrote that they did not change strategies, although Vanessa identified genre as important in deciding what is the most important part of writing the paper: “It can range because creative writing doesn’t necessarily require this [organization or conciseness].”

Analysis: Student-tutors were relatively unaware of the idea of discourse conventions or the fact that they would need to change strategies depending on the type of paper being written or based on their discipline. However, the fact that student-tutors are successful in their fields suggests to me that they are capable of modeling discipline specific conventions in their writing. Throughout the semester, as discourse conventions were discussed in more detail, students had many conversations about the specific conventions

of their disciplines without prompting from instructors. In particular, they discussed the major differences between writing for the humanities and writing for the sciences. Based on the enthusiasm I observed and the number of discussions surrounding this topic, it was the concept of discourse conventions that was new to student-tutors, not the ability to use them.

Summary of Student-Tutors' Pre-Training Writing Identity

Student-tutors aligned with other student writing studies in describing their writing processes as linear. They also exhibited a lack of collaboration with both students and professors and lacked knowledge of the concept of discourse conventions and the necessity to change writing strategies depending on the course. An interest in creative and personal writing that was sometimes tied to academics was noted; however, students understood the importance of adhering to assignment requirements and realized that professors want solid content, organization, and clarity first and foremost. Creative abilities were not listed as crucial to academics. Though student-tutors seemed to have similar attributes to studies of other student writers, there were hints of a more complex revision process than illustrated in Sommers' or Neff's assessment of student-writers.

Student-Tutors' Post-Training Writing Identity

On the final day of the course, I surveyed the student-tutors again, asking about both writing and tutoring. Though there is not a direct comparison to the Pre-Training Writing Identity findings, there are indications of a relationship between some of the direct findings of the Pre-Training Writing Identity and the Post-Training Writing Identity presented below. Discussion of the Pre-Training Writing Identity and its

relationship to the Post-Training Writing Identity is presented after the reported findings and analysis.

Writing Confidence

Finding: The first question of the second survey was open-ended and asked, “How have you changed as a result of this class?” The question was left purposefully vague in order to receive genuine, thoughtful responses without prompting student-tutors about the type of changes I expected to see. 7 of the 12 student-tutors responded to this question by mentioning writing. In their responses, these student-tutors regularly used the word “confidence” both as tied to writing ability and other skills. Ted stated: “I am much more aware of the writing process and what should be in a good paper. I am more confident in my abilities as a writer.” Jeff reported: “I have become a more mature student, writer, and person as a direct result of this class.” Student-tutors not only reported confidence in themselves as writers, they also tied that confidence to other things such as relation to other people and discourse convention. Sophia wrote: “I am more confident as a writer and how I relate to people.” Natascha stated: “I’ve learned to be more empathetic with other students, and have grown more confident in my abilities as a tutor and writer.” Erica noted: “It has changed the way I approach writing for different disciplines.” Vanessa reported: “I’ve become more cognizant of the overall writing process. Writing has always come naturally to me, after this class, I’ve really begun to look for reasons as to why it doesn’t come natural to others.”

Analysis: See *Analysis of Writing Confidence and Awareness of Writing Processes* below.

Awareness of Writing Processes

Finding: The second question on the final survey asked students directly if the course had influenced the way they wrote, studied, or read. Used in conjunction with question one, all students but one (the most confident in writing at the outset of the course) reported gains in writing. Students also used a variety of similar vocabulary to report the change in their attitudes towards writing such as “awareness,” “understanding,” “conscious,” and “discovery.” Sampling of responses:

“It didn’t influence me, it just made me aware of how I read, write, and study.”

“I am more conscience (sic) of my writing style and the correct way of using punctuation.”

“Discovering that I was a one-draft writer influenced my writing in a good way. I also learned many new things about sentence structure, flow, tone, audience, + much more. I still read & study the same.”

“I believe my use of grammar has been positively influenced. I also have found myself writing more creatively because of this course.”

“I don’t think it changed the way I study, but it changed the way I read & write. I’m now more in tuned (sic) to what’s acceptable for college writing, and I can look at it in different ways.”

“Yes, especially writing. My reading and studying didn’t change much...but this course taught me to think in new ways about my own writing, which has helped me become a better writer.”

“I think the course affected my writing—I got to see how others write and how their strategies, messages or voices could improve my writing. I also learned to keep my audience in mind while writing.”

“I definitely spend more time analyzing and coming up with a point worth making. Also, I’ve learned the importance of revising and have integrated into my own style of writing, which was previously straight one-drafting.”

“I’ve become more focused on my writing, particularly making an effort to be aware of social discourse within reader audience.”

Analysis: The descriptions in both the above findings are rich with a variety of themes. They illustrate the combination of a new awareness about writing with a better understanding of the concept of discourse conventions, attention to audience, improved grammar and punctuation skills, and a better idea of what is acceptable in college writing that produces more confidence. Two students expressed a change from their past methods related to their style of drafting (discussed in the Student-Tutor Transformation Section under *Questioning Composing Methods*). The responses above indicate the training course is exploratory for students who examine their own style as they begin to understand and learn to accommodate others’ needs. There is also a link to tutoring in the sense that students observe others “strategies, messages, and voices” which they adopt as needed for their own purposes.

Though students’ responses were diverse and marked a variety of ways they improved, their expression of “awareness” or “discovery” points to an important question: Is awareness of methods and processes most important in helping students gain confidence as writers? Students received little direct instruction in this course, yet all but one indicated more confidence as writers.

Collaboration

Finding: In students' Pre-Training Writing Identity, it was reported that there was little or no collaboration between students and peers or students and professors as student-tutors wrote academic papers. On the final survey, students were asked to define collaboration. Most students responded that collaboration was rooted in discussion of ideas. In response to "Define the word collaboration" Sophia wrote: "Both the learner and tutor are talking about an issue & sharing ideas." Jeff responded: "Sharing ideas with each other. Asking what the other person thinks. Talking things out together." However, some students still reflected a desire to teach or control the direction of the tutorial. One student-tutor responded: "The student should walk away with something new—either something they figured out or something I pointed out. Preferably both." Student-tutors were also asked whether or not they intended to use the writing center. In casual conversation, student-tutors had sometimes indicated they had no need to use the center because they already knew how to write their papers. Still, ten students responded that they would use the writing center to collaborate on papers, and some of them indicated that they had already done so. The other two students reported they might use the writing center if they felt they were having a particular difficulty with a paper.

Analysis: Most student-tutors gleaned the definition of collaboration through the training course materials; however, the word collaboration was not used much in conversation, nor was it found represented within student texts. The concept, though it was threaded throughout the course in a variety of ways, was not explicitly understood by students. Though they understood dialogue as part of collaboration, they made no mention of their own interest in or learning through a particular interaction. Most students understood the value of collaboration, however, and they all felt they would use the writing center, even

though they are successful students. They understood they could get something out of the interaction, but primarily as a writer, not a tutor.

Writing an Academic Paper

Finding: For comparison purposes, I asked the students a question on the second survey that was similar to a question asked on the first survey:

Survey 1: What aspect of writing an academic paper is most important to you?

Survey 2: What do you feel is the most important aspect of writing a paper?

Students still reported that content and organization were the most important aspects of writing an academic paper and some of them simply reiterated answers that were similar to what they expressed on the first survey. For instance, Olivia reported that the key for her was a “solid intro” just as she had initially noted. The one student who had previously explained that making no errors was most crucial to academic writing had moved to an understanding that “content” was more important. However, though most students expressed little change in the content of their answers, I found that several of them used new vocabulary, in particular the idea of a thesis or thesis statement as part of their answer. On the first survey students expressed that content and organization was most valuable, but only one student used the word “thesis” in relation to the most important aspect of an academic paper. Interestingly, she only used that vocabulary when asked what mattered most to her professors. In contrast, on the final survey, the word thesis was used by five student-tutors.

Analysis: While student-tutors seemed to report similar answers on the first and second survey which indicates little change in their ideas surrounding this topic, the fact that they expressed the importance of the use of a thesis statement indicates that they strengthened a tie to a linear process of writing in which the topic or thesis statement controls the direction of the paper. Though the idea of a strong thesis statement in and of itself is not negative, I question whether or not a focus on thesis statements and topics closes down opportunities to develop meaning, as Sommers suggests. I also interpret this result as connected to tutoring, during which students must find a way to talk about writing with other student-tutors and help others control their work. This finding is related to the idea that though students begin to question their prior relationship to writing, which I mark as the use of a linear process they have been taught, they do not entirely leave behind the idea of using a linear process in their work as student writers or as tutors.

Student-Tutor Transformation

If student-tutors identify more confidence in themselves as writers, better awareness of the writing process, and improved skills including knowledge of discourse conventions, the understanding of the importance of audience, and better grammar and punctuation, the obvious question is from what did this “new relationship to writing” (Kail “Situated”) result. As well as the obvious question, there are obvious answers. Though this study concentrates on the influence of tutor training, it would be impossible to understand new tutors’ transformations without considering the three hours weekly they spend tutoring (approximately 40 hours during their first semester). However, I focused my attention on how the training course in particular helped students transform and discover a new writing identity. It also seems obvious that a course devoted to in-depth discussion of writing, reading, and studying processes, including the chance to

explore one's own methods, would improve students' confidence or create new awareness about writing. Though this is true and verified through all observation and textual analysis, I also interpret the creation of conflict about the writing process and students' own strategies and methods as a key part of confidence building. It is that conflict, in particular, that I seek to illustrate as one part of the middle space in students-tutors' educational transformation. Additionally, student-tutors eventually move out of simply examining their own strategies in relation to the theory they read; data shows by the end of the course their changed identities as writers offer them a new understanding of writing that enables them to share their awareness with other students.

The Inadequacy of Writing as a Linear Process

As discussed in the Pre-Training Writing Identity section, students described the use of a linear model of the writing process. Below, I illustrate how students become conflicted about the use of a linear process and yet do not fully leave the idea of process behind.

Early in the semester, students spent time reading tutoring manuals and responding to open-ended assignment prompts. During the third week of the course, students were asked to read several chapters from *The Bedford Guide for Writing Tutors*, one of which was a chapter devoted to the writing process. The reading response assignment asked students to “discuss one thing that was either new [to them] or that [they] would find useful as a tutor” from each chapter (Giblin Assignment). Though student-tutors cited many different concepts within these responses, several of them mentioned a portion of the text that discussed the inadequacy of the linear writing model. What is most interesting is how those statements contradict the type of process students

described in their initial surveys. For instance, on her initial survey, Lucy wrote about how she begins a paper: “I make a mental note about what I want to write about and how I go about it. I choose topics for each paragraph if it’s a research paper.” Lucy expressed in several other answers on the first survey that the most important aspect of writing a paper is “knowing what I’m talking about” and “staying on topic.” Lucy’s responses correspond with Sommers’ idea that students pre-define a meaning for their texts prior to starting writing. However, Lucy contradicted those statements once she was prompted by the text’s argument about the linear process she has been taught to use. Further, she explored her own strategies and realized that they are not as linear as she first suggested and stated that the writing process as linear and topic oriented is insufficient. Lucy wrote:

...the topic of linear writing never crossed my mind! I definitely agree with the book when they argue that the linear model of prewriting, writing, and rewriting is inadequate. Many of the experiences that I’ve had with writing a paper immediately shoot that idea down. For instance, in the past I have tried to use outlines to formulate a paper, but my paper hardly ever would turn out the way I planned it in the beginning. New ideas would pop into my mind, which would make me eliminate previous points that I planned to make in my paper. This example goes to show that writing is the process of discovery and is not always as easy as just making a plan and sticking to it.

It is useful to extend this example because just after the student pronounces the linear process inadequate, she comments on helping others learn to use brainstorming as a technique to get started. Though this is certainly a useful strategy—one does have to have some idea of a starting point after all, and I would argue that becomes even more

pertinent for undergraduate students—Lucy ties it directly to a “focus on the topic.” In fact, several of the students who chose to write about the inadequacy of the linear process of writing, also listed brainstorming and topic creation as important to helping others. Sophia, for example, wrote that she had tried to use a linear writing process in discussion with a student in a prior tutorial. However, the text made her realize that the student might feel “constriction” if she continued to follow that method. Still, Sophia then mentioned helping a student select a topic. Though her strategy for brainstorming is certainly an adequate way of tutoring, idea generation was mentioned as leading into a process of making sure the ideas flow and make sense.

Student-tutors addressed a variety of issues in their written responses; they were not limited to the inadequacy of a linear writing process, but the idea of the insufficiency of linear writing processes is also evident in the observation of classroom discussion. The day the above response assignment was due student-tutors spent most of the hour and twenty minute class period discussing the linear model of composing. Student-tutors agreed that the linear model isn’t something that should be dictated and that it is often at odds with the way they work.

The instructor introduced the word “discursive” to which student-tutors did not respond. The definition of discursive was not made explicit, and the word was not understood by student-tutors; however, the instructors made clear the fact that the writing process may in fact be more fluid than how it is represented or taught. Still, instructors mentioned that, in a tutorial, tutors should ask what “stage” a particular piece of writing is in.

Analysis: This directly illustrates the difficulty of balancing the concept of a staged writing process which enables pedagogical application and tutorials as dialogic which produces a certain conflict through collaboration and is not constrained by stages. Again, we come back to the question of directive and non-directive tutoring theory. If students express the inadequacy of using stages and steps in the writing process, they might also begin to question the use of this method as an appropriate approach to tutoring.

Questioning Composing Methods

Though student-tutors seemed aware of and able to articulate their writing methods at the outset of the course, they began to question their own strategies and methods as training progressed. This examination caused conflict that led to different results for each student, including a back and forth movement between styles for different genres, embracing an already established style more fully, or adopting a new style.

The article that was important to student-tutors' examination of methods was Muriel Harris', former Director of the Purdue Writing Lab and creator of The Online Writing Lab (OWL), "Composing Behaviors of One- and Multi-Draft Writers." "Composing Behaviors of One- and Multi-Draft Writers" is an article describing Harris' study of students who categorized themselves as extreme one- or multi-draft writers. Simply put, Harris argues that not everyone composes in the same way, and the assumption that multiple drafts are necessary to complete or improve papers is flawed ("The Composing"). Harris describes one-draft writers as those who "plan extensively before their pens hit paper (or before the cursor blips on their screens)" (177). She continues: "Their planning is so complete that their texts generally emerge in a single

draft with minor, if any, editing as they write” (177). Multi-draft writers, on the other hand, complete multiple drafts of papers and use writing as an act of discovery to find out what they want to say (177).

Harris focuses her article on a study she conducted of writers [graduate students who were teaching composition and could “more easily categorize and articulate their own writing habits” (179)] who described themselves at either end of the continuum of writing processes. Harris points out that “most writers are not one or the other but exist somewhere between these two ends of the continuum” (178); focusing her attention on those writers at either end of the spectrum allowed her to articulate both the positives and negatives of each distinct strategy. Harris concluded that one-drafters “expressed a strong need to clarify their thinking prior to beginning to transcribe” and revealed they “are either not ready to write or cannot write until they have a focus and organization in mind” (180). One-drafters also “do little or no scratching out and re-writing; and they do a minimum of re-reading both as they proceed and also when they are finished” (183). Multi-drafters, Harris says, “generat[ed] and explor[ed] many options, spending a long time in making their choices, and making frequent and large-scale changes on paper” (183).

After exploring and explaining these writing styles, Harris discusses the positives and negatives for each type of writer. In Harris’ study she found that one-drafters can “perform comfortably in situations such as the workplace or in-class writing where it is advantageous to produce first-draft, and final-draft pieces of discourse. Their drafts are readily accessible to readers, and they can expend effort early on in polishing the text for greater clarity” (187). Still, Harris feels the disadvantage for this type of writer is that

they are “in danger of cutting themselves off from further exploration, from a richer field of discovery than is possible during the time in which they generate options” (187).

Harris’ finding appears to resemble Sommers’ idea that pre-determining topics leads students to miss opportunities to derive meaning. Multi-drafters, however, are obviously at a disadvantage in time bound situations and “their relative inefficiency causes them to miss deadlines, to create Writer-Based first drafts, to produce large quantities of text that is discarded, and to get lost in their own writing” (187). Though, multi-drafters are “more likely to be writers who will plunge in eagerly, will write and re-write, and will use writing to explore more widely and richly” (187). Harris proposes several strategies for extreme one- and multi-draft writers to move more to the middle, though she acknowledges that, in fact, each style has attributes that might be explored for pedagogical reasons (174).

There are several reasons this article, in particular, was key in student transformation. It allowed students to explore their own methods and evaluate how the strategies of one style or the other might be helpful depending on the writing situation. It made visible the idea of a continuum of writing process strategies both figuratively through the article and literally through the visual aid used during class as students placed themselves on a line between extreme one- and multi-draft writing. Finally, it gave students a direct understanding of how others’ styles may be different from their own and offered advice on the positive and negative attributes of each style.

Most of the students’ questions during the online tutor talk forums revolved around placing themselves as one or the other type or in critiquing the study and a possible bias toward one style of writer or another. Analyzing their questions and answers

during their tutor talk online forum shows a trend similar to the one above regarding the linear writing process during which past experiences and methods are evaluated and thinking about those experiences and strategies becomes conflicted, sometimes without full resolution.

Olivia is one student who expressed confusion about her methods and where she might fall on the one or multi draft continuum. She wrote: “Going in to the Harris piece, I was without a doubt sure that I was a multi-drafter. However, after reading the article, I found that while I show some multi-draft characteristics, I am more inclined towards the one-draft end of the spectrum.” Olivia continued to question her composing methods and strategies and addressed her confusion in her final paper when prompted to write about the piece of theory that most influenced her: “The piece that resonated with me the most was Harris’ piece on one-draft and multi-draft writers...Harris made me question my writing style.” However, in contrast to Olivia’s expression that she realized she had tendencies towards one drafting, in her final paper she also said: “When it came time to write our exploratory pieces in class, I found myself re-writing and re-working almost the whole of my exploratory piece, until the final product barely resembled what I had first put together.” Olivia realized she might not be a one drafter all. In fact, she felt Harris’ article caused her to believe one drafting was more desirable and acceptable:

I think that there is the possibility that I had put too much faith in Harris to tell me what is right and what is wrong...I dropped my negative multi-draft identity and picked up the more acceptable identity of a one-drafter. Harris’ piece influenced me so much that I think it contributed to me changing my identity as a multi-

drafter to a one drafter just by reading it. While it was a negative influence, it was a great one.

Olivia's conflict throughout the semester with this issue is a good representation of how students negotiate the territory of tutor training. Harris' piece made her question her strategy and, as she expressed, pick up a new identity. Though Olivia does not explain why the negative influence was a great one, I speculate that her confusion about composing methods made her examine her personal strategies in-depth in a way that she had never done before. First, she questioned her past methods. Second, she changed to try to fit into an identity that seemed more desirable, and, in particular, I believe for a student writer. She then observed her own process as she wrote her exploratory piece for publication and realized that she wrote multiple drafts; she was unable to completely leave her past identity behind.

Though this was an enlightening experience for the student, I think there are some interesting implications even beyond the conflict she experienced about her writing methods. Olivia may have realized that she has one drafting tendencies, but this may be more true in certain situations. When she examined her writing process as she wrote in a new discipline, she noted that she used multi-drafting strategies. It is possible that one draft strategies may have suited Olivia when she was writing within her own discipline or in genres in which she felt more comfortable, while the exploratory piece (a composition or creative piece written in a new discipline or genre) caused the need to revert to revision strategies that were more complex as she tackled new discourse conventions. Though the student did not come to this resolution, instead classifying herself as a multi-drafter after much questioning and reflection about her method, her experience is

indicative of others in the class who questioned their styles, had similar conflicts, and arrived at new understandings.

Ted, for example, reported that he “had never considered the fact that there was more than one way to write a paper” and said he “never thought to analyze [his] style of writing a paper.” In fact, Ted expressed frustration about his method, which was primarily one drafting; he had been taught multi-drafting in middle school and high school, and his style was in conflict with the dominant mode of teaching. Harris’ article gave Ted the encouragement he needed to embrace his style of writing. In his final piece he articulated:

I’m a one-draft writer. Discovering this about myself really put me at ease about my writing. Prior to this discovery, I had always wondered why I had a difficult time revising and making multiple drafts. However, now it makes sense. I also believe I have become a better writer because of this revelation. I know that I don’t have to make significant changes to a paper just for the sake of making some changes.

Natascha also expressed conflict about her style of writing after reading Harris’ article: “Before reading this article, I was certain I was a one-drafter.” Afterwards, she concluded that she is a recursive writer who works on one piece of writing (with one draft tendencies such as thinking and planning quite a bit before composing) and makes multiple changes rather than multiple drafts. Though Natascha’s response indicates that she had thought previously about her writing methods (perhaps not classifying them in Harris’ terms), the article caused a re-examination that led her to a new conclusion. That conclusion was developed further in a paper Natascha wrote to make up for her absence

during discussion. Most importantly, looking deeply at the variety within her style (both one- and multi-draft characteristics), she began to understand the subtleties involved in her writing process and realized categorization as either extreme was impossible for her.

After student-tutors answered other students' questions about the Harris article, they came to class for a student-tutor led discussion about one- and multi-drafting. The conversation in the classroom built from their TutorTalk forum and centered around whether or not one drafting and multi-drafting exists, whether or not the author was biased toward one way of writing or another and what that might mean for students, and if there was a difference between drafting in one's head versus drafting on paper.

Most student-tutors agreed that the characteristics of one and multi drafters seemed true to form, and they discussed appropriate ways to help their peers based on their tendencies to use these types of strategies. Sophia pointed out the importance of helping students realize what kind of writing methods they use: "I do not believe everyone knows what kind of drafter they are. I found out what kind I am discussing options in depth for our class. I think people realize they have a certain way they do things and what works for them but I don't think they actually think about it in depth."

After student-tutors conversed about the two styles of writing introduced in Harris' article, the instructors drew a line across the large white board, labeling one side "Multi-Draft" and the other "One-Draft." They asked student-tutors to identify where they fit on a writing continuum between one- and multi-drafting. Interestingly, most of the student-tutors gathered near the one draft end of the spectrum. It is important to keep in mind that Harris points out that even the students in her study were not always

successful at classifying themselves; students who felt they aligned with an extreme position sometimes turned out to be in between the two styles (180).

The writing center directors have been gathering data about each class of new tutors. Their informal results yield the insight that most student-tutors align themselves closer to a one-draft mentality. It should also be noted that student-tutors discuss the idea that one drafting is not simply quickly producing one draft because time has run out, and they must complete a required assignment. Though “procrastination” is an attribute of a one drafter mentality (most likely because the paper is extensively planned in a student’s head prior to putting words on paper just before an assignment is due), student-tutors classified their styles with multiple one-draft characteristics in mind. Of course, time is an important element of writing in an academic context, and it is possible that competent student writers (those who become tutors) are able to adopt one-drafting strategies in order to be successful.

Understanding Social Discourse and Disciplinary Writing Conventions

It was during discussion of social discourse and disciplinary conventions that students began to tie their personal strategies to something larger, namely participation in a discourse community that led them away from examination of their own strategies and into applying what they were learning about writing to tutoring.

Student-tutors read two pieces of theory regarding academic communities and writing in relation to those communities. The first, an unpublished draft of an article by Jim Gee titled “Learning Language as a Matter of Learning Social Languages Within Discourses,” illustrates that students need to understand the social context of their participation within academics. Gee’s main point is that students must accept that they are part of a community of learners and that their role as students means they must situate

themselves within that community by adopting its practices in order to become successful. Gee's article focuses on the behavioral aspect of entering a learning community and learning the social language of academia, in particular in the context of professor and student relations.

Student-tutors' responded to Gee's work primarily in a personal way. They touched mainly on the idea of social languages and situated meanings of words in their online discussion. Their classroom discussion was one of their most stilted with lots of stops and starts. Students were bothered by Gee's insistence that they must fit the social discourse of their situation. Olivia said, "It's important to have yourself in each interaction," and Angela noted, "It's a balance between self and fitting a social situation." Jeff, on the other hand, felt that "in discourse there are certain things you just don't say." Students debated these issues and eventually decided that it was necessary to try to change the institution from the inside, which meant complying with the social discourse of the academic community. For some students, this idea was unsettling. Annie was the one student who chose to write exclusively about this issue when asked how she had changed as a result of the course. She wrote: "I think I think more about the academic system, instead of just accepting that things are the way they are. I still have no influence on it, but I feel less passively accepting."

Though the students' conversation seemed to indicate they did not fully understand or accept the idea of discourse conventions and were reluctant to comply completely, by the end of the course, Gee's work began to have a broader meaning. In fact, it was the two articles about social discourse and disciplinary writing that began to move students forward from an examination of their own methods and into thinking more

deeply about how others respond to social writing situations in academia. Vanessa articulated this in her final written response about the theory that most influenced her: “As our discussions developed...I recognized a much broader significance to Gee’s thesis within my own writing and the writing of other students. This point didn’t become clear until recently, when I needed to reference this paper in a tutorial.” Vanessa described a learner who had written a “beautiful report on Elk populations” for which he had received a poor grade. She realized that the student had not written the paper in the appropriate language of his discourse. Vanessa wrote: “According to Jim Gee, ‘situated meanings...are negotiated between people in and through communicative social interaction.’ My initial interpretation of Gee was primarily focused on words and how their meaning is subjective.” Vanessa realized that her original understanding of Gee was not broad enough; once she was confronted with a paper written for a scientific discipline of which she was part, she realized how important Gee’s work was to her own writing and in helping other students improve by using a social context to understand her own and others’ work.

Though Gee’s article was instrumental in introducing students to the idea of the situated meaning of words within discourse communities and moved a few of the students in the direction of understanding its meaning in terms of their own writing and tutoring processes, it was the work of Gregory Colomb that provided more direct insight into discourse conventions within written work. Colomb’s article “Disciplinary ‘Secrets’ and the Apprentice Writer: The Lessons for Critical Thinking” was a speech given to The Institute for Critical Thinking. In his speech, Colomb discusses the idea that writing is not

“generic” (1) and cannot be taught in generic writing courses. Colomb evidences student writing that does not fit the disciplinary standard and thus fails to achieve a good grade.

Colomb’s work continued what Gee’s started but also pushed more students to understand how those concepts related to writing and tutoring or teaching writing. The conversation in class surrounding Colomb’s work revolved around questioning the idea of teaching writing as a generic concept rather than through disciplinary writing classes. Most of all, through their discussion and responses, students believed it was crucial to at least make students aware of the concept of disciplinary conventions. Vanessa and Annie both tied Colomb’s work to tutoring. Vanessa said, “Telling a student in the booth that discourse and ways to approach a paper vary from discipline to discipline can often be eye opening for students.” Annie distinguished Colomb’s work from other theorists who focused on ideas such as “making sure to take a student’s social or economic background into account before passing judgment on them.” Instead, Annie felt Colomb’s ideas were more directly applicable to working with learners: “This one was about the learners. Why they aren’t doing well even if they’re decent writers [and] which conventions get in the way of understanding and success.” Erica and Sophia, on the other hand, related Colomb’s work to teaching writing. For Sophia it was awareness of academic discourse that was important: “I think the most a teacher can do to establish a base is to teach good study skills and bring awareness to the student of what he or she might face in the future when it comes to academics.” Erica related her understanding to the possibility of teaching Freshman English courses:

I didn’t realize that each discipline will have its own criteria for writing...Colomb helped me realize this...This concept was new to me and made

me question the format of English 101 and 102 classes. My goal for the future is to someday be a professor for English, and hopefully, in the near future, I hope to teach 101 and 102 classes...This discussion has also prompted me to further study how a writing across the disciplines program works and how to do it successfully in a classroom...Colomb challenged my past theories...and inspired me to do more research on the idea of developing a writing across the disciplines program. I am of the same mind of Colomb that students need to be given the tools to know how to write in all disciplines.

Transformation Summary & The Concept of Peer-Tutoring

Student-tutors worked through a process of questioning prior writing methods and strategies and re-examining in-depth the processes they actually use. The theory readings caused student-tutors to question teaching methods in contrast to their style; though theory caused re-examination, students did not always achieve a final resolution to their thoughts about the writing process, writing methods, or disciplinary conventions. However, the student-tutors did move from an interest in themselves as learners to an interest in how a new awareness could help them in their role as peer-tutors.

Pre-Training Tutoring Ideas

At the beginning of the semester, student-tutors arrived with various notions of what it means to be a peer-tutor. On the first day of the course, they were asked by survey how they could most help other students. Student-tutors' answers came in several forms; however, their responses generally fell into two categories: 1. Use of personal strategies to help students 2. Teaching tied to direct skills

Sample of Student Responses: Use of Personal Strategies

“I can give advice about schoolwork that worked for me.”

“I can use my strengths as a writer and student to help them be more successful in college and their future jobs.”

“I have an extensive knowledge of grammar, and I write a lot myself, so I know what works and what doesn’t.”

“Teach them what you know.”

Sample of Student Responses: Teaching/Direct Skills

“I love writing and I love teaching and helping others that struggle with it.”

“Help them obtain more skills and become better students.”

“I feel that I will be able to help students make more concise arguments in papers and help to make their papers easier to read.”

“I am a science major looking to assist students with lab reports and technical writing.”

“Helping them understand content, how to better their writing in creative ways, and how to express ideas confidently.”

“As a tutor, I can help students comprehend required textbook readings. I can also help students with their college writing.”

Only one student characterized the tutor’s role as looking directly at the methods and strategies the student already uses as a way to assist her. It should be noted that it was the graduate student, someone with extensive prior tutoring experience, who responded in this way:

“Helping students to understand their work and study habits and utilize the tools they already possess to produce quality work.”

Analysis: Student-tutors began the semester with the idea that their own strategies would benefit other students. During observation and through reading their work, it was clear that they had ideas about tutoring that fit a more directive approach. It was also clear by looking at their reflections on tutoring and listening to their conversations that they were tied to a “help” model of tutoring, often linked to the idea of students who struggled. By the end of the semester, training had assisted students in moving somewhat out of a focus on themselves and their own skills to help students even though teaching skills directly, students felt, was a responsibility and part of that “help” model was still strongly represented in their language.

Post-Training Tutoring

On the final survey, student-tutors were asked to answer two questions that related to the question asked on the initial survey: “As a tutor, how can you most help other students?” First, they were asked what they felt was their tutoring strength and, second, what they felt was a tutor’s most important responsibility.

Most student-tutors answered the first question in a similar way and with similar vocabulary that illustrated a collaborative experience, one in which listening (a word used by several students) and connection during the interaction were important.

Student Responses to Survey 2: “What is your particular strength as a tutor?”

“I think that I am respectful to my learners.”

“Asking the learner what they want to focus on—hitting that aspect.”

“My ability to connect with my learners through conversation...”

“My strength as a tutor is listening.”

“I am a good listener, and I’m not afraid of silence.”

“I think that my particular strength as a tutor is listening to my learners and addressing areas of their writing that they are most concerned with.”

“I think I’m able to relate well to how students are feeling when they come in.”

“My ability to relate with others and make them feel comfortable eases any tension in the booth and allows for a much more efficient tutorial.”

At first, the recognition of a switch from the necessity to teach direct skills on the first survey to a more student focused and collaborative response on the second, seemed a major finding. However, taken in conjunction with a similar question on the second survey, the idea that students had completely changed from teachers to collaborators was reconsidered.

Student-tutors responses to the second question also showed strikingly similar content in the sense that most student-tutors tied tutoring responsibility to teaching or helping students acquire specific skills.

Student Responses Survey 2: “What do you feel is the most important responsibility of a tutor?”

“Help teach the learner something that could help them in the future.”

“To help your learner improve his/her skills.”

“To help learners using every resource available to us.”

“To help students gain skills that will allow them to be more successful in college, and give them a greater sense of confidence.”

“To allow the student to walk away with the tools to continue to improve their writing and reading at home.”

“To teach the learner how to function as well as possible in college (including becoming a better writer).”

“I think its for learners to understand what a thesis is and how to organize an effective paper around that.”

“My most important responsibility is to teach my learner one way or the other.”

Analysis: Consideration of the answers on both questions reveals that though student-tutors become more collaborative in their thinking and strengthen their connection to others with a commitment to listening to students’ needs rather than dictating a process, student-tutors are still tied partly to a directive style or “help” model of tutoring that involves teaching writing (or reading and studying) as a skill. It is also interesting that though two students did not answer the “tutoring strength” or “tutoring responsibility” questions in the same style as other students, they simply reversed the way they answered. For example, unlike most other students Annie wrote that her strength as a tutor is tied to her skill ability: “I have an encyclopedic knowledge of grammar and tons of writing experience.” However, she described a tutor’s greatest responsibility in the following way: “Listen. That will solve all your problems. Hear what the learner is saying. Study them.” Vanessa also inverted her responses to these two questions. She listed her tutoring strength as “the ability to explain structure and language of scientific writing,” while she felt the greatest responsibility of a tutor is to “[l]ook at Global Revisions, and if necessary, just be a therapeutic listener.”

To me, this is clear evidence that the two questions are connected and should be considered in conjunction with each other. Responses to these two questions illustrate that students fall on a continuum between directive and non-directive tutoring practice.

As the role of tutors is to work both with writers who walk-in to the TLC and writers who are enrolled in credit bearing courses, this balancing act makes sense. It is telling, however, that most student-tutors dropped their previous language about their tutoring strengths as tied to skill work and realized their strengths were in listening, relating, and connecting to their peers even in an academic context.

Relationship of Tutoring Identity to Writing Identity

Tutor Training is effective in the sense that students adopt a tutoring identity that involves a deeper commitment to collaboration, even though they still view tutoring as a role in which writing skills are taught. Their new relationship to writing may, in part, be traced to the idea of writing as a social act. In observation notes from the first day of class, I wrote about the students: “They seemed to be a group with the attitude ‘I am what I am’.” During the semester, this theme echoed throughout their discussions of writing and tutoring; my journal displays frequent notations about the self-focus of the group and the difficulty moving beyond their past understanding of themselves and even more difficulty moving into an understanding of the other. Student-tutors had difficulty imagining that some students might not have the same preparation, support, mentoring, and understanding of the social context of academics as they did when they entered college.

However, as students read more theory surrounding these issues they were able to move out of a connection to the self and into an understanding of others. In fact, I suspect that a conflict about their own relationships to writing was crucial in moving them into a space in which they could begin to relate to other students without simply imposing their own views about writing or strategies in writing on others. In fact, they began to relate to

students with difference in mind rather than similarity. Kathleen Blake Yancey addresses this issue in her article “Seeing Practice Through Their Eyes: Reflection as a Teacher.” Yancey remarks that “tutors do need to see themselves—identify with—the students with whom they work; this is the humanity that is, ultimately, our common text. But we also have to be able to separate, to see and appreciate the other in our students; that difference is what enables us to bring to them what they need” (200). Natascha articulated this in her response to the question “How did the theory you read change the way you viewed students?” Natascha wrote: “It gave me new information about how other people learn or what other students go through. It’s easy to project your own experiences and assume everyone else goes through the same, but that couldn’t be more wrong.”

Chapter V: Conclusion, Implications for Teaching & Further Research

Conclusion

Training for tutoring improved students’ understanding of themselves as writers and increased student confidence in writing. Though this knowledge is hardly surprising and aligns with other studies of learning outcomes for tutors, this study illustrated that this new found confidence was, in part, a result of intense exploration of past strategies and methods in relation to the introduction of theory that proposed new understandings of methods, but also, and more importantly, the result of conflict about writing styles and methods. Student-tutors also seemed aligned with characteristics found in other studies of student writers, but student-tutors’ success as writers may be in part a result of access to more complex revision strategies and the ability to model appropriate conventions, regardless of their lack of knowledge about the concept of discourse conventions or the ability to fully articulate at the beginning of the course what college writing entailed.

Finally, student-tutors' understanding of discourse through theory readings and work with others began to broaden their perspective about writing as a social act that involves collaboration.

This study begins the work of assessing what might be termed a writing center model of literacy in relation to writing. However, New Literacy theorists offer an important consideration. Juan Guerra explains that Brian Street and other scholars realize that simply adopting the idea of multiple literacies, with each literacy played out within an individual social context, does not go far enough to truly understand literacy (1646). Guerra says that New Literacy Theorists have redefined literacy as “situated literacy” which allows for “the fact that the situatedness of any literacy is highly nuanced and that there is always more than one literacy being practiced by members of any community at any given time” (1646). While this study has shown that students make similar strides in their transformation from the beginning to the end of the semester, it has also illustrated that transformation is not the same for every student. Though students enact transformed identities related to tutor training, individuals vary in their responses to classroom pedagogy and the ways in which they both adopt new identities and move back and forth between their past and present awareness of writing styles and methods. Guerra, though he supports the idea of situated literacies, reminds us that “change from an unreflective state of mind to a state of self-awareness is neither linear nor progressive” and argues for what he terms a “nomadic consciousness” (1648). Guerra states that we do not “move inexorably from a false or naïve perspective to a self-reflective and critical one,” but instead move “unsteadily and unpredictably between and among a variety of possibilities” (1649). Student-tutors will continue to negotiate their writing identities,

based on past, present, and the possibility of future writing experiences; awareness gained through training for tutoring will not remain static, but will change and re-form as students adapt to new social circumstances, because, as Jessica Benjamin reminds us, “there is no penultimate stage in learning and development” (qtd. in Welch 218).

Implications for Teaching Writing

This study has implications for the teaching of writing in other contexts. Creating opportunities for students to acknowledge that they are situated within a social context allows students to gain confidence and realize that writing is a social act dependent upon the community of which they are part. In fact, increasing students’ awareness about writing and its social context or provoking students to think deeply about the concept of discourse convention may be as important as teaching conventions directly. There are also possibilities for making students aware of linear and recursive models of the writing process, as well as the advantage of using different types of processes for different genres or in different settings and situations. Additionally, students can be empowered to use their own experiences and interests to guide them in approaching academic writing. As both Sommers’ studies and The Portfolio project show, students have an interest in the use of writing for personal aims.

The methods by which students learn about composing also speak to the importance of creating a constructivist classroom. Rather than dictating how students interpret or use knowledge, a constructivist classroom opens the door for students to negotiate their relationship with writing from multiple past and present standpoints and on a variety levels, allowing them to construct themselves as writers within any community.

Further Research

There are several promising avenues for further research regarding writing, tutoring, and tutor training, through questions that present themselves as a result of this study.

Writing

It was beyond the scope of this project to examine and analyze specific student texts; however, examination of student-tutors' writing to understand changes from the beginning to the end of tutor training in relation to grammar and punctuation, vocabulary, and discourse conventions is warranted. It is possible that student-tutors, who help correct the errors of others, may be impacted positively by their experience with tangible results. Also, student-tutors could be surveyed about their writing processes more directly and asked to reflect on them throughout the semester to analyze possible changes in their processes.

Additionally, it interests me to know more about how students feel about their writing as they progress through the training course and after they complete it. One student-tutor from my own training course, commenting on the subject matter of this thesis during conversation, revealed that the training course had made him question his own strategies so much that he would not have reported more confidence about writing. Though I suspect he had a result similar to the students in this study (a conflict about his past writing history and writing methods), his experience unsettled him to a point that he could not claim to be comfortable any longer with his approach to writing. The course prompted him to examine more closely his relationship with writing, and that examination continued after the course was completed.

Tutoring

One of the most interesting research possibilities, to me, is to understand how students shape their tutorials based on classroom training. Are student-tutors approaching writing as a linear process that includes a pre-defined topic or thesis as they help students compose? Or, do student-tutors approach tutoring in the way in which they were trained, using questions to generate new and possibly conflicting meanings? How often do student-tutors ask other students about their past and current writing methods, including how they were taught to write and how they are currently being taught to write? Finally, it would be interesting to chart and understand how often student-tutors use their own strategies as they help other students negotiate composing? Do they rely primarily on what works for them or do they more often take into consideration the students' own learning styles, methods, and needs? Though training courses, as discussed in the literature survey, try to emulate the tutoring environment, it is still uncertain whether or not student-tutors model the training course in tutorials, though there are hints of that result within this study.

Training Impact on the Future

As mentioned in the introduction to this study, the Peer Writing Tutor Alumni Research Project seeks to evaluate the impact of tutor training on student-tutors' futures outside of academia. However, I would add that studying the immediate impact of training and tutoring on students' overall educational experience prior to leaving the university is also important. In this course, several students listed that their majors were undecided. Questions about their future resolved somewhat during this course. In addition, one student mentioned that the course reinforced her desire to teach; at first, she

worried that tutoring might show her that her intended profession was not the correct choice. However, she expressed that her choice was, indeed, confirmed by the training and tutoring experience. Questioning whether or not tutor training and tutoring compels students to make specific academic choices related to coursework, majors, and the pursuit of higher education towards specific professions will further develop our knowledge about the impact of training as an undergraduate educational experience.

Another line of thinking that has developed from observing student-tutors, is wondering whether tutors have a continued drive to do well in academics based on their tutoring experience. Contrasting the experiences of student-tutors' writing, GPAs, and general interest in writing throughout their academic career to those students with similar GPAs, ACTs, and success in writing to see how they relate in terms of confidence in their writing and sustained interest in writing may help understand the broader impact of a composition methods course and the tie to peer-learning.

Finally, considering how student-tutors change both as tutors and writers when removed from the direct influence of classroom training may help instructors understand how students translate training experience into the future.

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